

Bishop Márton Áron: Resistance and Martyrdom.

International Implications

The twentieth century represented for the Transylvanian society a period of unrest, insecurity, persecution and its entry, after the end of the Second World War, under the leadership of an authoritarian regime, represented by the communist regime. The exhausted and destroyed society, due to the events of the two world wars, the financial crises and the systematic destruction of its resistance towards the decisions of the governments, determined the inevitable approach of the society towards the historical churches of this Territory. The approach of society to the Institution of the Church in difficult times of life is not a modern "invention" because, especially for ordinary people, this institution represents the continuity and the only safe point in their lives, which, despite repression, persecution, atrocities and destructions, caused by some movements, wars and systems, remained solid and resistant, surviving (even underground, if necessary) to the attempts of historical events. During these turbulent times of the twentieth century, especially in terms of the history of Romania, a cultural elite of the Roman Catholic Church rises in Transylvania. Within this elite, Bishop Márton Áron, through his attachment to Transylvanian society, his attitude and character and his loyalty to the Holy See, managed to become one of the most important figures of the public scene, between 1938-1980.

Bishop Márton Áron represents one of the main (or even the main) elites of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania. His personality arose from the problems of the twentieth century, and through his detachment from his followers and his loyalty to the Roman Catholic Church, he provided spiritual peace and an example to follow for minority nationalities. The bishop took over the leadership of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Alba Iulia, on December 24, 1938. His character, his attitude, his devotion to the Roman Catholics, his loyalty to the Holy See and his humankind, put him to difficult attempts, but instead of compromise, he chose the path of resistance and martyrdom, always raising his voice against injustice, endangering his life, liberty and health several times. The activity of Bishop Márton Áron during the regime, is characterized by his resistance to the injustices of the system, his "fight" to ensure equal rights and equal opportunities between ethnic minorities and the ethnic majority of the

country. We must also remember to raise our voices against the atrocities of the regime against the Greek Catholic Church and after their entry into illegality, the help of the devoted believers and priests of this cult. After the suspension of the sentence, especially after the elimination of his home restrictions, he tried with the help of his international connections to help the Romanian society, with the help coming from church institutions and organizations from abroad.

In this thesis, it appears that this resistance of Márton Áron, had nothing to do with the ethnic origin of the members, or with their belonging to a certain political colour, it simply resisted in front of them, when these governments wanted to impose something inhuman, or contrary to the dogmas and laws of Christianity. Thus he showed resistance to the Hungarian government, harshly criticizing their activity against the Jewish community and so behaved in cases when he harshly criticized fascism, the Marxist system and ideology or Romanian governments, when they brought decisions against the Catholic Church (regardless of their rites), against ethnic minorities, or against society. The martyrdom of Bishop Márton Áron, consisted in the first phase of events (interwar period and World War II period), in the difficulties imposed by the Governments of Romania and Hungary, in carrying out Diocesan activities, due to its resistance to the wishes and expectations of these governments. Because of his resistance, the authorities began to pursue him and tried by various means to blemish the image of the Bishop. During the communist regime, the struggle of the system intensifies against the Roman Catholic Church in Romania, thus automatically against the Bishop. Seeing his resistance and attitude, they gently wanted to marginalize him, but because of this, the resistance of the Bishop intensified, appealing to the public criticism of the communist regime and the Hungarian People Union, especially regarding their decisions taken against the Greek Catholic Church and the institutions of the Catholic Church. This form of resistance and the growing popularity of the Bishop, among the Catholics and national minorities, generated the action of the regime. During the pre-trial detention, in front of the investigators, he kept his behaviour resistant, accepting his fate for martyrdom. During his detention, he was repeatedly humiliated, beaten and subjected to the regime's specific "treatment", in which political detainees took part (and bishops and high hierarchs of the Catholic Church were considered political detainees). Even after the suspension of his conviction and his resignation to return to the head of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Alba Iulia, his period of martyrdom did not end, because following the decision no. 6826 of June 5, 1957 of the Ministry of

Internal Affairs, he was sentenced to home restrictions, which were extended several times, being released only at the end of 1967, due to international pressure.

In the last period of his life, the Bishop's international relations intensified, but these relations were reduced only to international church relations. Following this international activity of the Bishop, the Romanian society had a direct gain, because many financial aids, clothes, food, cars, motorcycles, equipment, medicines and medical equipment, reached the Romanian Socialist Republic, through the Bishop, keeping close ties with the "Caritas" institution and the "Ostpriesterhilfe" organization from The Federal Republic of Germany.

Keywords: resistance, martyrdom, international implications, bishop, diocese, arrest, restrictions, searches, surveillance, obedience, pursuit, communism, attitude, minority, confession, problems, restrictions, institutions, criticism.