

The Anti-Communist Armed Resistance on the Southern Slope of the Făgăraș Mountains and the Iezer Mountains. The Groups Led by Colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu and Lieutenant Toma Arnăuțoiu (1948-1960) (III)*

Dorin Dobrinu

5. A loaded check

5.1. Investigations, trials and convictions in the case of the Arnăuțoiu group

The Securitate made five groups with the members and arrested supporters of the Arnăuțoiu group²⁹⁴.

Group I was made of 18 people: Toma Arnăuțoiu, Petre Arnăuțoiu, Maria Plop, Benone Milea, Titu Jubleanu, Constantin Popescu, Ion Sândoiu, Nicolae Andreescu, Ion Constantinescu, Nicolae Ticu known as Sorescu, Nicolae Bășoiu, Gheorghe Tomeci, Alexandru Moldoveanu, Ion Drăgoi, Ion Grigore zis Leparau, Ilie Dragomirescu, Ion Dumitrescu-Lazea, and Nicolae Vasilescu²⁹⁵. They were investigated in the detention centre of Pitești from May 20, 1958 to May 5, 1959. The investigation of Nicolae Andreescu had started in March 1958, taking place initially in Bucharest. The enquiries were not only frequent, but also long, especially in the case of leaders: Toma Arnăuțoiu was investigated 42 times (4 investigations from 0 to 3 hours, 21 from 3 to 6 hours, 11 from 6 to 10 hours, and 1 from 10 to 15 hours, for other 5 cases the number of hours is missing); Petre Arnăuțoiu was investigated 37 times (2 from 0 to 3 hours, 9 from 3 to 6 hours, 4 from 6 to 10 hours, 11 from 10 to 15 hours, for other 11 cases the number of hours is missing); Maria Plop, 7 enquiries (1 from 3 to 6 hours, 3 from 6 to 10 hours, 3 10 to 15 hours); Nicolae Andreescu, 19 enquiries (6 from 0 to 3 hours, 4 from 3 to 6 hours, 9 proceedings of enquiries not mentioning the number of hours); Ion Constantinescu, 5 enquiries (2 from 0 to 3 hours, 2 from 3 to 6 hours, 1 from 6 to 10 hours). All the other arrested members were investigated from 3 to 6 times, under 6 hours each on average²⁹⁶.

Toma Arnăuțoiu had been chained during his entire detention in Pitești being habitually interrogated at night²⁹⁷. Titu Jubleanu had been already imprisoned for

* See "Revista Arhivelor. Archives Review" 84 (2007), 3-4, p. 249-272 and 85 (2008), 1, p. 283-311.

²⁹⁴ R. Ciolcă, C. Căpățână, *Haiducii Muscelului*, p. 7.

²⁹⁵ ASRI, fonds "D", dossier 9585, p. 1. Alexandru Moldoveanu, a teacher of Nucșoara, had been invested "Mihai Viteazu" order (Irina Nicolau, *op. cit.*, p. 247).

²⁹⁶ We thank Mrs. Ioana-Raluca Voicu-Arnăuțoiu for this information resulted from the consideration of all investigations in the Arnăuțoiu group I.

²⁹⁷ R. Ciolcă, C. Căpățână, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

seven years and one could see it on his face: “*era bătrân, slab / he was old, skinny*”, as one of his daughters remembered having seen him before the trial. Besides Titu Jubleanu, in the same group there was his son-in-law, Constantin Popescu²⁹⁸. Being asked during the enquiry what made him help the partisans, priest Ion Constantinescu replied: “*Ce? Mila creștinească / What? Christian sympathy*”²⁹⁹.

The women arrested for liaisons with the resistance were also imprisoned in Pitești: the wives of priests Constantinescu and Andreescu, the wife of teacher Lemnaru of Nucșoara, Elena Mica, Victoria Năstase (who had divorced Petre Arnăuțoiu), Elisabeta Rizea, the wife of shepherd Sorescu, of din Poienărei, Gîncă, from Gălești, the wife of Băsoiu, Elena Florea, the sister of the Arnăuțoiu brothers. Elena Florea remembered: “*La început, toate femeile care erau cu mine în celulă îmi povesteau cu multă plăcere cum îi ajutau pe frații mei. Dar apoi, când au început chinurile, bătăile... veneau bătute și udate cu apă și nenorocite și amenințate că le iau copiii dacă nu spun tot... Suportau cu tărie și nu le-am auzit niciodată regretând ce-au făcut sau să spună un cuvânt de ură contra fraților mei. Intelectualele mai ziceau, dar țărâncile sub nici o formă / In the beginning, all the women that were with me in the cell accounted me willingly how they helped my brothers. But then, when tortures started, beatings... they came back beaten, wet and abused, and threatened to be taken children if they didn't confess everything... They resisted and I never heard them regretting what they did or say anything against my brothers. The intellectuals slipped bad words, but the peasants in no way*”³⁰⁰.

Elisabeta Rizea was interrogated by the Securitate agent Tănase Bădicuț. A guard named Oprea came one day to bring her and hit her with his boot in the liver area telling her: “*Te-aș împușca, bandito, dar glonțul costă trei lei! / I'd shoot you, bandit, but this bullet costs three lei*”³⁰¹. The enquiry of E. Rizea in Pitești lasted one year: “*Un an de bătăi, de torturi, de amenințări încât ajunsesem să-mi fie indiferent ce-mi făceau / One year of beatings, tortures, threats so that I had become indifferent to what they were doing to me*”³⁰². The Securitate agents wanted to find details about the involvement of priest Constantinescu (“*țapul / the goat*” as he was called by the torturers). E. Rizea even dared mock at the investigators. “*Atunci începea o altă serie de bătăi și amenințări. M-au lăsat când le-am spus că eu nu mai judec, să mă bată, să mă omoare, pentru că nu mai știu nimic. M-au dus într-o zi la «spălat». M-au pus sub un duș rece, în plină iarnă, și m-au uitat acolo cam o oră. M-am îmbolnăvit rău. Aveam febră mare și tușeam. Tușeam așa de rău încât se văitau celelalte deținute că nu puteau dormi din pricina mea. Până la urmă m-au dus la infirmerie. Văzându-mă în ce hal eram, unui om de suflet i se făcu milă de mine. Mi-a făcut o injecție. Așa am*

²⁹⁸ Verona Popescu [daughter of Titu and Maria Jubleanu]. *op. cit.*, p. 93.

²⁹⁹ Testimony of Iuliana Constantinescu (daughter of priest Ion Constantinescu), in C. Caramete, *Ne vrem pământul*, p. 7.

³⁰⁰ R. Ciolcă. C. Căpățână. *op. cit.*, p. 6.

³⁰¹ V. Theodoru, *op. cit.*, p. 5; *Povestea Elisabetei Rizea*, p. 78.

³⁰² V. Theodoru, *op. cit.*, p. 5. See also *Povestea Elisabetei Rizea*, p. 78.

scăpat cu viață / Then another series of beatings and threats started. They left me alone when I told them I wasn't capable to think anymore, they could beat me, kill me, because I didn't know anything anyway. One day they took me to 'shower'. They put me under a cold shower in full winter and left me there for one hour. I caught a serious cold. I had fever and coughed. I coughed so badly that the other detainees were complaining not to be able to sleep because of me. I was taken to the nursery eventually. Seeing my condition, one good-hearted man felt pity for me. He gave me one shot. So this is how I was saved"³⁰³.

Ecaterina Sândescu went through similar experiences: "*Au adus vreo cinci sergenți, între care și Oprea (ăla era o bestie). Bătaie, cădeam pe jos, iară mă ridicam... Îmi puneau mâinile pe birou și cu o vergea de fier dădeau peste ele. Mă bătea ba unul, ba altul. Și parc-am vrut să mă bag după sobă, ca măcar capul să-l salvez, dar nu am putut, că era îngustă firida aia* / They brought five sergeants, among whom Oprea (that one was a beast). Beating, I would fall to the ground, I would stand up again... They had my hands put on the desk and hit them with an iron rod. I was beaten by either one or the other. And I think I somehow tried to hide behind the stove to save my head, but I couldn't because that niche was narrow"³⁰⁴.

Other convicts were treated as inhumanely. Old Ion Arnăuțoiu was unbearably tortured in Pitești. He used to often shout after being brought back from the interrogation: "*împușcați-mă, nu mă mai bateți, că nu mai pot* / shoot me, but don't beat me anymore, 'cause I can't take it"³⁰⁵. Victor Berevoianu was beaten by the Securitate in both Pitești and Jilava: "*La Securitate îți puneau cătușele la mâini, îți băgau mâinile după genunchi și îți puneau o rangă pe sub vinele picioarelor și te puneau între două birouri cu capul în jos. Când îți dădeau cu ranga pe talpa piciorului, se zdruncina măduva oaselor, durerea îți venea în vârful capului și înapoi în picior. Era exact ca un trăznet și atunci îți venea să spui tot. Asta era bătaia la rangă./ Cu cearceaful ud am fost bătut la Jilava, unde am stat două luni. M-au dezbrăcat la pielea goală și au pus cearceaful ud pe mine și au început să dea. Am simțit prima lovitură, mi s-a părut că mi s-au desprins picioarele de corp, pentru că a pus cearceaful ud pe noi. Scopul era să nu pleznească pielea* / At the Securitate centre of operations you were being handcuffed, your hands were being tied behind the knees, they set a rod under the heels and they placed you between two desks with your head hanging. When they hit your heels with the rod, you could feel it from the backbone to the brain and back. It was like a lightening and that's when you felt like telling everything. That was the beating with the rod. / In Jilava, where I spent two months, I was beaten with a wet sheet. They took off all my clothes, wrapped me in a wet sheet and started to hit. I felt the first blow as if my limbs detached from the

³⁰³ V. Theodoru, *op. cit.*, p. 5. See also *Povestea Elisabetei Rizea*, p. 77-78 and the following.

³⁰⁴ C. Căpățână, R. Ciolcă, *Grupul «Haiducii Muscelului»*, p. 43 (interview with Ecaterina Sândescu, Câmpulung-Muscel, July 1997).

³⁰⁵ R. Ciolcă, C. Căpățână, *Haiducii Muscelului*, interview with Elena Florea [born Arnăuțoiu], p. 6.

body, because I were wrapped in that wet sheet. The idea was not to have our skin split³⁰⁶.

On March 17, 1959, the Securitate Agency of Pitești sent to trial bloc I of the Arnăuțoiu group³⁰⁷. The criminal trial had been filed ex officio on March 1, 1958³⁰⁸. By ruling no 107/May 19, 1959³⁰⁹, the Military Court of the 2nd Military Region of Bucharest passed severe sentences. Of the 17 convicts, no less than 12 were sentenced to death: Toma Arnăuțoiu, Petre Arnăuțoiu, Titu Jubleanu, Constantin Popescu, Ioan Sândoiu, Nicolae Andreescu, Ion Constantinescu, Nicolae Ticu known as Sorescu, Nicolae Bășoiu, Gheorghe Tomeci, Alexandru Moldoveanu, and Ion Drăgoi. In the same trial, different sentences were passed for: Maria Plop, Ion Lazea-Dumitrescu, Ioan Grigore known as Leparau, forced labour for life; Ilie Dragomirescu, 15 years of forced labour and 10 years of loss of civic rights; Nicolae Vasilescu, 10 years of correctional detention. All the convicts were confiscated their properties, each of them being obliged to pay 1,000 lei for legal charges³¹⁰.

Benone Milea was trialled separately and sentenced to death by sentence no 108/May 19, 1959 by the Military Tribunal of Bucharest 2nd Military Region; his property confiscated and obliged to pay 1,000 lei for legal charges³¹¹.

By the end of March 1959, the Pitești Securitate Agency sent to court the 2nd lot of the Arnăuțoiu group, made of 16 people. In this case, the criminal trial had been initiated ex officio on March 1 1958³¹². Sentence no 119/June 4, 1959 of the Military Tribunal of Bucharest 2nd Military Region included the following sentences: Ion Mica, Gheorghe Popescu, and Nicolae Nițu - to death and property confiscation; Elisabeta Rizea and Nicoale Ionescu - to 25 years of forced labour and 10 years of loss of civic rights; Ion Preda - 20 years of forced labours and 10 years of loss of civic rights; Ion Tomeci, Ion Grigore known as Podea, and Nicoale Pavel - each 20 years of forced labour and 8 years of loss of civic rights; Ion Arnăuțoiu - 18 years of prison and 10 years of loss of civic rights; Maria Andreescu and Justina Constantinescu - each 15 years of forced labour and 5 years of loss of civic rights; Paul Pavel - 10 years of correctional detention; Gheorghe Chirca - 8 years of correctional detention. In all of the cases above total confiscation of property was stipulated, and each was obliged to pay 600 lei for legal charges³¹³.

³⁰⁶ C. Căpățână. R. Ciolcă, *Grupul «Haiducii Muscelului»*, p. 43 (interview with Victor Berevoianu, village of Nucșoara, county of Argeș, July 1997).

³⁰⁷ ASRI, fonds "D", dossier 9585, p. 1.

³⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 2.

³⁰⁹ See details in Vasile Novac, Gheorghe Nicolescu, *Procesul grupului Arnăuțoiu, 1959*, I, "Arhivele Totalitarismului", no. 2/1995, p. 142-162; II, no. 3/1995, p. 151-180.

³¹⁰ *Ibidem*, II, p. 178-179; *Luptătorii din munți*, p. 707-710 (records from ASRI, fonds "P", dossier 1238, vol. 49).

³¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 729-732 (records from ASRI, fonds "P", dossier 1238, vol. 70).

³¹² ASRI, fonds "D", dossier 9585, p. 76.

³¹³ *Luptătorii din munți*, p. 739-743 (records from ASRI, fonds "P", dossier 1238, vol. 24).

Sentence no 174/September 21, 1959 of the Military Tribunal of Bucharest 2nd Military Region the following were charged: Gheorghe Băsoiu and Petre Popescu, each to 20 years of forced labour and 10 years of loss of civic rights; Ioan Oproiu, 20 years of forced labour and 8 years of loss of civic rights; Ion Tefeleu, 15 years of forced labour and 8 years of loss of civic rights; Filofteia Băsoiu, 15 years of forced labour and 5 years of loss of civic rights; Filofteia Tomeci and Victor Berevoianu, each to 14 years of forced labour and 5 years of loss of civic rights; Iuliana Preduț and Elena Lemnaru, each to 12 years of forced labour and 5 years of loss of civic rights; Gheorghe Paul and Mihail Dumitrașcu, each to 10 years of correctional detention; Grigore Nicolae Podea, 8 years of convict prison and 5 years of loss of civic rights; Gheorghe Popescu, 8 years of correctional detention; Eugen Popescu, Ioan Bănățeanu and Gheorghe Sorescu, each to 7 years of correctional detention; Ioan Chirca, 6 years of correctional detention; Mucenic Comăndașu and Ioan Diaconu, each to 5 years of correctional detention; Nicolae Mănescu, 4 years of correctional detention; Maria Ticu-Sorescu, 3 years of correctional detention. Their properties were all entirely confiscated, and they were forced to pay each 1,000 lei for legal charges. In the case of Toma Cujbescu, the criminal suit was closed. Ioan Andreescu was exonerated, and the case of Ioan Alecu, known as Bârlogeanu was disjoined³¹⁴.

The Military Tribunal of Bucharest 2nd Military Region sentenced the following by ruling no 203/November 4, 1959: Iosif Vișoianu to 25 years of forced labour, 10 years of loss of civic rights and 1,000 lei for legal charges; Vasile Pascu, 15 years of convict prison, 8 years of loss of civic rights and 800 lei for legal charges; Ion Jubleanu, 14 years of convict prison, 8 years of loss of civic rights and 800 lei for legal charges; Paul Tache and Elena Mica, 12 years of forced labour, 7 years of loss of civic rights and 700 lei for legal charges; Laurenția Toncea, 10 years of forced labour, 7 years of loss of civic rights and 600 lei for legal charges; Gheorghe Butoi, 10 years of forced labour, 6 years of loss of civic rights and 800 lei for legal charges; Victor Popescu, 8 years of forced labour, 6 years of loss of civic rights and 800 lei for legal charges; Maria Popescu, 8 years of forced labour, 6 years of loss of civic rights and 500 lei for legal charges; Gheorghe Bojog, 8 years of convict prison, 6 years of loss of civic rights and 800 lei for legal charges; Eugen Alecu and Constantin Săndulescu, 7 years of forced labour, 5 years of loss of civic rights and 600 lei for legal charges; Ion Măriuț, 7 years of correctional detention, 5 years correctional interdiction and 600 lei for legal charges; Iuliana Lemnaru, 6 years of forced labour, 5 years of loss of civic rights and 600 years for legal charges; Constantin Pașol, 6 years of correctional detention, 4 years of correctional interdiction and 500 lei for legal charges; Elena Florea, 5 years of forced labour, 4 years of loss of civic rights and 500 lei for legal charges; Daniel Popescu, 5 years of correctional detention, 4 years of correctional interdiction and 600 lei for legal charges; Petre Berja and Simeon Derioiu, each to 5 years of correction detention, 4

³¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 761-766 (records from ASRI, fonds " P", dossier 1238, vol. 42).

years of correctional interdiction and 500 lei for legal charges; Gheorghe Șuța, 3 years of correctional detention, 2 years of correctional interdiction and 500 lei for legal charges. The properties of the convicts were entirely confiscated³¹⁵.

If in the case of the first four groups the meetings were secret, in the case of the fifth some of the family members were allowed to attend³¹⁶. Sentence no 18/February 13, 1960 of the Military Tribunal of Bucharest 2nd Military Region specified the following convictions: Alexandru Marinescu and Dumitru Burtea, each to 20 years of forced labour and 10 years of loss of civic rights; Nicolae Petre known as Băețelu, 16 years of forced labour and 6 years of loss of civic rights; Iosif Nițu, 15 years of forced labour and 8 years of loss of civic rights; Luca Petrică, 12 years of forced labour and 8 years of loss of civic rights; Victoria Năstase and Ioan Florea, each to 12 years of forced labour and 6 years of loss of civic rights; Laurenția Arnăuțoiu, 10 years of forced labour and 5 years of loss of civic rights. In each of the above cases, properties were also entirely confiscated, and each of the convicts was obliged to pay 600 lei for legal charges³¹⁷.

5.2. Death, afflictions, prisons

The Presidium of the Grand National Assembly rejected on July 16, 1959 the amnesty requests of the 16 people sentenced to death from the abovementioned groups³¹⁸. Toma Arnăuțoiu, Petre Arnăuțoiu, Titu Jubleanu, Benone Milea, Constantin Popescu, Ion Sândoiu, Nicolae Andreescu, Ion Constantinescu, Nicolae Ticu known as Sorescu, Nicolae Bășoiu, Gheorghe Tomeci, Alexandru Moldoveanu, Ion Drăgoi, Ion Mica, Gheorghe Popescu, Nicolae Nițu were executed during the night of July 18, 1959, in Jilava prison. Executions started at 21:00 and continued all through the night, every 15 minutes³¹⁹. The evangelic minister Richard Wurmbrand was at Jilava at the time of the execution of the Arnăuțoiu brothers and the described the episode in one of his books: *“Execuția s-a desfășurat după un ceremonial sinistru. Înainte de miezul nopții, gardienii au făcut de strajă pe coridoare, când a apărut procesiunea. Doi ofițeri mai în vârstă înaintau primii; apoi pășeau cei doi frați, în lanțuri, ținându-și strâns de fiecare parte de către un gardian; urmau un doctor și gardienii înarmați cu puști./ Am auzit sunetul loviturilor de ciocan când li s-au scos lanțurile. Li s-au tras niște saci peste cap și au fost împinși în mașina care i-a dus la o mică depărtare, până într-un loc unde au fost împușcați în ceafă./ Călăul era un țigan pe nume Niță, care primea o gratificație de cinci sute de lei pentru fiecare execuție. Era cel mai cuviincios dintre gardieni: i se spunea Îngerul Negru de la Jilava / The execution took place according to a sinister ritual. Before midnight, the*

³¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 785-790 (records from ASRI, fond “P”, dos. 1238, vol. 39).

³¹⁶ R. Ciolcă, C. Căpățână, *Haiducii Muscelului*, interview with Elena Florea [born Arnăuțoiu], p. 7.

³¹⁷ *Luptătorii din munți*, p. 794-796 (records from ASRI, fonds “P”, dossier 1238, vol. 35).

³¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 714-717, 745 (records from ASRI, fonds “P”, dossier 1238, vol. 24, 49).

³¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 717-724, 746-753 (records from ASRI, fonds “P”, dossier 1238, vol. 49, 73, 77-78), and reference I, p. 717. See also I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 84-85.

wardens were on guard on the corridors when the procession passed by. Two older officers walked in front; then the two brothers, in chains, held firmly by a warden on each side; they were followed by a doctor and wardens armed with rifles. / I heard the sound of hammer strikes when the chains were removed. Sackcloth was pulled over their heads and they were pushed in the car that drove them not far away, to a place where they shot in the back head. / The executioner was a gypsy named Niță, who received a bonus of five hundred lei for each execution. He was the most polite of the wardens: he was called the Black Angel of Jilava³²⁰.

In the winter of 1959-1960, several partisan-women, wives, relatives or aides to the anti-Communist combatants were imprisoned in Miercurea-Ciuc prison, especially from the Arnăuțoiu group. We learn from a testimony related to Maria Plop that "*comuniștii lansaseră calomnia că partizanii i-au omorât copilul născut în munți. O învățătoare, Popescu, fusese condamnată doar fiindcă le-a dat celor din munți niște prune* / the Communists had spread the calumny that the partisans had killed her child born in the mountains. A teacher, Popescu, had been sentenced for having given plums to those from the mountains"³²¹. Maria Plop died in the cell of the "*viețaze*" (sentenced to life imprisonment) from Miercurea-Ciuc prison, from circulation insufficiency and TB" (sic!)³²².

Lucreția Arnăuțoiu died in Gherla prison (according to records)³²³ or in Miercurea-Ciuc (according to testimonies)³²⁴. Iancu Arnăuțoiu deceased in Botoșani prison on August 4, 1962³²⁵. The house of Arnăuțoiu family had been confiscated and changed into Miliția headquarters³²⁶.

Elena Florea was sentenced to five years of prison for "undisclosure", being released in 1962, suffering from TB. She was also acquainted with the camps and prisons of Ghencea, Pipera, Ocnele-Mari, Pitești, Jilava, Miercurea-Ciuc, and Arad.

³²⁰ Richard Wurmbrand, *Cu Dumnezeu în subterană* (translation from English by Marilena Alexandrescu-Munteanu and Maria Chilian), Bucharest, 1993, p. 181.

³²¹ Testimony of Zoe Vlaicu (Porsenna), in Roxana Iordache, *Arestată pentru tănuire*, "România liberă", no. 514, October 24, 1991, p. 5.

³²² *Luptătorii din munți*, p. 727 (records from ASRI, fonds "P", dossier 1238, vol. 81); M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 60; Irina Nicolau, *A doua mărturie a lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 247.

³²³ *Luptătorii din munți*, p. 797 (rec. from ASRI, fonds "P", dossier 1238, vol. 76 bis).

³²⁴ Testimony of Elena Florea [born Arnăuțoiu], in C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, p. 7; R. Ciolcă, C. Căpățână, *Haiducii Muscelului*, interview with Elena Florea [born Arnăuțoiu], p. 7; M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 60; Irina Nicolau, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

³²⁵ *Luptătorii din munți*, p. 757 (rec. from ASRI, fonds "P", dossier 1238, vol. 72); testimony of Elena Florea [born Arnăuțoiu], in C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, p. 7; R. Ciolcă, C. Căpățână, *Haiducii Muscelului*, interview with Elena Florea [born Arnăuțoiu], p. 7; M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 60; Irina Nicolau, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

³²⁶ Roxana Iordache, *Procesul «paraziților» din rezistența română*, "România liberă", no. 537, November 26, 1991, p. 2. In early '90s, the new Police continued its activity (*Ibidem*).

Her house had been confiscated in early '50s, and she paid rent with her husband for their own house for over 30 years³²⁷.

Iuliana Constantinescu, daughter of priest Ion Constantinescu, had been arrested as well in June 1958, when she was seven months pregnant. After being sent to Pitești, she delivered her baby in Văcărești prison, but they took her child and she had no information about her for many years. The woman was a convict in Jilava, Miercurea-Ciuc, Arad, and Oradea, too³²⁸.

Held in Jilava, Elisabeta Rizea was handcuffed: "*Pe locul unde picioarele mele erau înlanțuite, neputând face prea mulți pași, era un grătar pe sub care curgea o apă. Așa am stat împreună cu Maria Plop, partizană din munți, supuse aceluiași tratament. Într-o lună mi-au căzut părul și dinții din cauza umezelii și a lipsei de mâncare, iar picioarele s-au făcut cum vedeți* / Right where my feet were chained, not being able to walk much, there was a scraper, and under the scraper water was running. I stood there with Maria Plop, a partisan from the mountains, who had been subjected to the same treatment. In just one month I lost my hair and teeth because of the dampness and lack of food, and my feet turned into what you can see now" (she had multiple fractures at both feet). The inquirers would come at times, looking through the peep hole and saying: "*Își merită pedeapsa. E din rădăcini și tulpini de țărâniști și liberali* / She deserves her sentence. She's made of roots and stems of Peasants and Liberals"³²⁹. From Jilava, Elisabeta Rizea contracted rheumatism, disease that had her limbs deformed and which she never got rid of³³⁰. One year later, Elisabeta Rizea was "delivered" to Miercurea-Ciuc prison, then to Arad. When colonel Arsenescu was caught, E. Rizea was taken back to Pitești, together with Victoria Arnăuțoiu, for further investigations. She was released in 1964 by an amnesty order³³¹.

It was only then that Elisabeta Rizea met her husband, after Gheorghe Rizea had been imprisoned for 14 years. They were both physically and mentally traumatized by the extreme experiences from detention³³². They had no place to live, their house being confiscated, and they had nothing to eat either. They were taken by their god-mother, Elena Drăgoi. Upon insistence, Elisabeta Rizea was hired as cleaning attendant at the bank (CEC), cutting wood, cleaning, and so on, with a monthly salary of 100 lei, which was very little³³³. In order to retrieve their house, Gheorghe and Elisabeta Rizea wrote memoranda to the authorities in Bucharest that

³²⁷ R. Ciolcă, C. Căpățână, "Haiducii Muscelului", interview with Elena Florea [born Arnăuțoiu], p. 1, 6-7; testimony of Elena Florea [born Arnăuțoiu], in C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

³²⁸ Testimony of Iuliana Constantinescu (daughter of priest Ion Constantinescu), in *Ibidem*, p. 7.

³²⁹ V. Theodoru, *op. cit.*, interview with Elisabeta Rizea, p. 5. See also *Povestea Elisabetei Rizea*, p. 80-94.

³³⁰ The former political detainee would tell and show to the reporters after 1989: "My feet are killing me, just take a look at them" (*Ibidem*, p. 21, 26).

³³¹ V. Theodoru, *op. cit.*, interview with Elisabeta Rizea, p. 5; *Povestea Elisabetei Rizea*, p. 94-103.

³³² Testimony of Elisabeta Rizea, in R. C. Pena, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

³³³ *Ibidem: Povestea Elisabetei Rizea*, p. 21, 103.

reached the supreme post-1965 political leader, Nicolae Ceaușescu³³⁴. Elisabeta Rizea summarized her post-detention life as follows: “*Am trăit cum am putut. Cu o familie de «reacționari» ca a mea era greu să supraviețuiești. Am muncit din greu. Dar nu ne-am lăsat. De câte ori era să mor, dar uite, n-am murit. Eu și Gheorghe al meu, și el condamnat pe viață, am primit o pensie de 100-150 de lei pe lună, asta până-n revoluție* / We lived as we could. With a family of ‘reactionaries’ like mine, it was hard to survive. We worked hard. But we didn’t give in. How many times I was about to die, but see, I haven’t. Me and my Gheorghe, sentenced for life too, we received a pension of 100 – 150 lei a month, but that until the revolution”³³⁵.

Cornel Drăgoi was also released from prison in bad health. After 1989, he would try a bitter joke with a reporter: “*Dacă vreți vă spun de ce nu sufăr, că termin mai ușor. Sunt pe cale de a paraliza. Ce nu mă doare? Stomacul* / If you want, I can tell you what I don’t suffer from, to finish quickly. I’m about to become paralyzed. What doesn’t hurt? The stomach”³³⁶.

After feeling their residence, in 1958 (whom Toma Amăuțoiu had called “*cea mai devotată grupului* / the most devoted to the group”³³⁷ in a letter to her parents) and Ana Simion managed to hide for five years in the house of Florea Ion, a mixed family of Romanians and gypsies. They stayed in an attic, they ate when they could, being in their turn “eaten” by lice, bearing it all lest be seized. Marinica Chirca would state later on: “*Mi-era frică să nu cumva să le zic de băieți. Te băteau de te omorau. Poate nu puteam rezista* / I was afraid to tell them about the guys. They’d beat you to death. I mightn’t have born with”. The two sisters were nonetheless caught in 1963. By sentence no 66/December 17, 1963 Marinica Chirca received 15 years of forced labour, Ana Simion 10 years of forced labour, and Florea Ion 4 years in prison. Marinica Chirca was released in 1964 by an amnesty order. Her husband, Aurel Chirca, imprisoned since 1950, was released at that same time³³⁸.

5.3. A traumatized village: Nucșoara

After disintegrating the Amăuțoiu group, authorities started to send signals that situation was under control in Nucșoara, that “silence” was to set in the village, that life had to “become normal”. One year after seizing the last partisans in the area, the Securitate agent who had performed the duty of chief of the Miliția station in Nucșoara was replaced by a 21 years old Miliția agent, Ion Suceavă. He published his memoirs after the fall of Communist regime and among other things he described the atmosphere in the village in 1959: “*Am găsit oameni triști, frământați și îndurerați, peste comună plutea o atmosferă de teamă și incertitudine, ca urmare a*

³³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 21.

³³⁵ V. Theodoru, *op. cit.*, interview with Elisabeta Rizea, p. 5.

³³⁶ Testimony of Cornel Drăgoi, in R. C. Pena, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

³³⁷ Aurora Liiceanu, *Rănilor memoriei. Nucșoara și rezistența din munți*, Iași, 2003, p. 101.

³³⁸ Testimony of Marinica Chirca, in L. Tudoran, *op. cit.*, p. 29; A. Liiceanu, *op. cit.*, p. 110-111.

prinderii unui grup care a acționat în munți, sub conducerea unui fiu de învățător, fost ofițer, Toma Arnăuțoiu. Locuitorii au avut însă multe de suportat și din partea celor retrași în munți, dar în mod special din partea Securității, care arestase din rândul lor zeci de oameni. Deși sub acest aspect problema se încheiase aici, spaima mai plutea încă asupra oamenilor, eu având misiunea de a restabili acum problemele muncii de miliție, căci înaintea mea în Nucșoara lucrase ca șef de post un ofițer de Securitate, care însă a purtat ani de zile uniforma de milițian. Mă încerca o deosebită durere în suflet când a trebuit să anunț câteva familii să meargă să ridice hainele de la penitenciar și să le comunică că un soț, tată sau rudă a decedat sau pur și simplu a fost executat / I found distressed people, troubled and grieving, an atmosphere of fear and insecurity was hovering over the village due to the capture of a group from the mountains, led by the son of a teacher, former officer, Toma Arnăuțoiu. The inhabitants had much to put up with, though, especially from the Securitate, which had apprehended many of them. Although, under this aspect, the issue had ended here, fear was still hovering over the people and I had the mission to restore the Miliția work, given that before me the chief of station of Nucșoara had been a Securitate officer, wearing Miliția uniform for years. I felt extremely sorrowful when I had to inform a few families to go reclaim from prison the clothes of a husband, father or relative, to tell them that they died or were simply executed”³³⁹.

6. Gheorghe Arsenescu, a lone fugitive (November 1949-January 1960)

Disappointed by so many betrayals, which nearly caused his capture by the Securitate, with a substantial reward on his head, Colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu decided after 1949 to enter anonymity to secure his survival³⁴⁰. He hid in Câmpulung for a while with his father-in-law, then at the house of a family named Aldea and then with Nicoale Bivol (6 weeks)³⁴¹. Most probably, due to security reasons, Gheorghe Arsenescu hid in 1951 at the house of the family Apostol Poștoacă, made by the latter, his wife, three daughters and a son-in-law, the house being located on the outskirts of Câmpulung³⁴². He arrived here helped by Ion Poștoacă, a former

³³⁹ Ion Suceavă, *În numele adevărului*, Bucharest, 1991, p. 22-23 apud Dan Petrescu, *Deconstrucții populare*. Iași, 2002, p. 141. In an insufficiently documented dictionary, it was insinuated that Ion Suceavă had been involved in the repression of Nucșoara, “in the ‘50s” (Doina Jela, *Lexiconul negru. Unelte ale represiunii comuniste*, Bucharest, 2001, p. 266). As we have seen, Ion Suceavă arrived in Nucșoara only in 1959, one year after the annihilation of the Arnăuțoiu group by the Securitate, hence he cannot be blamed of taking part in actions against the partisans (Dan Petrescu. *op. cit.*, p. 141-142; Bogdan Suceavă, *O carte cu greșeli*, “România literară”, no. 27, July 11-17, 2001, p. 10).

³⁴⁰ C. Caramete, *Acesta a fost tatăl meu*, interview with Melania Boriceanu, p. 6.

³⁴¹ ASRI, fonds “D”, dossier 10762, p. 10; C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, interview with Melania Boriceanu, p. 6.

³⁴² ASRI, fonds “D”, dossier 10762, p. 10-11; Excerpt from sentence no 11/February 12. 1962 by the Military Tribunal Bucharest Military Region; C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, interview with Melania Boriceanu, p. 6.

partner and friend³⁴³. Ion Poștoacă had worked in the former Security and had become a semi-fugitive himself since late '40s, hiding in Brașov, a fact not admitted even by his own family³⁴⁴.

In the spring of 1951 two letters by Gheorghe Arsenescu from February and March were intercepted as being sent to an address of Câmpulung-Muscel. It was further concluded that the letters (one sent from Brașov, with the stamp of București-Câmpulung ambulance, and the other from the North Station, Bucharest) were meant to delude the Securitate as they were not written by the colonel himself, but only signed with his conspiring name "Muta". In order to capture Arsenescu and his fellows, it was decided that the members of their families should be checked, since it was thought they were exchanging "sustained" information. Also, there were going to be verified on site the most used addresses by Arsenescu in Bucharest and other towns³⁴⁵.

Colonel Arsenescu left the Poștoacă family in 1951 so as to get into contact with a person. On the night of September 14, 1951, while he was crossing Măgura peak towards Târgu river, he entered an ambush planned by the Securitate and was wounded in the stomach and the left shoulder. He managed to save himself and returned to his host, where he treated himself with medication brought by his father-in-law, Gheorghe Buduluca. He never again tried to leave the house on the outskirts of Câmpulung, but he kept himself informed of what was happening around³⁴⁶. Meanwhile, the colonel had become a myth in the northern part of the Muscel, the peasants calling him secretly "Păunașul codrilor" (the Peacock of the woods)³⁴⁷.

In the following years, Gheorghe Arsenescu maintained contact with certain supporters, giving them hope that the Communist regime was about to be overthrown "soon"³⁴⁸. During all this time, Arsenescu worked on manufacturing different fabrics, thus contributing to his support and of the family hiding him. The colonel was a balanced person, but his seclusion conditions and perhaps losing hope that things would change into better for him, apparently led him to a suicidal attempt³⁴⁹. Gheorghe Arsenescu had an affair with one of the Poștoacă daughters, Elena, with whom he had a child³⁵⁰, Melania. He only succeeded in teaching the girl to read³⁵¹.

³⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

³⁴⁴ ASRI, fonds "D", dossier 10762, p. 9.

³⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, dossier 2168, p. 301-302.

³⁴⁶ I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 84; C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, interview with Melania Boriceanu, p. 6. See also Excerpt from sentence no 11/February 12, 1962 by the Military Tribunal Bucharest Military Region; The request by Maria Arsenescu-Buduluca forwarded to the Commission.

³⁴⁷ M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

³⁴⁸ ASRI, fonds "D", dossier 10762, p. 11.

³⁴⁹ C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, interview with Melania Boriceanu, p. 6.

³⁵⁰ Excerpt from decision no 47/May 11, 1992 by the Supreme Court of Justice of Romania.

³⁵¹ C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, interview with Melania Boriceanu, p. 6.

Maria Arsenescu, wife of the colonel Arsenescu, was arrested in 1950 (or 1951) on the street and submitted for a long time to enquiries at the seat of the Ministry of Interior. Her child with Gheorghe Arsenescu, Dragoș, who was four years old, had been left alone in a damp basement in Bucharest. The wife of the "brigand" arrived then in Jilava, where she was informed that without being trialled she received two years of "administrative conviction". Until 1954, she executed her sentence at Dunăre-Marea Neagră Canal (Cernavodă, Saligny), picking cotton in the Caras Valley, in Târgșor and Văcărești prisons³⁵². After being released, Maria Arsenescu was forced to become a worker in order to sustain herself. He learned from her father where the colonel was hiding. At all risk, Maria Arsenescu managed to get into contact with her husband through her father, sending him several times packages of food, clothing, medication and letters. Maria Arsenescu urged her husband not to leave the hiding and to be patient, expressing her faith that the situation in the country would change³⁵³. Harassed by the Securitate, Maria Arsenescu was forced to divorce in 1958 (or 1959), taking back her maid name, Buduluca, and ceasing her relations with Gheorghe Arsenescu³⁵⁴.

6.1. The capture, interrogation, trial and sentence of Gheorghe Arsenescu and his supporters

Although the Securitate had no information of Gheorghe Arsenescu for nearly a decade, it never stopped looking for him³⁵⁵. A man who had fought with

³⁵² Excerpt from sentence no 11/February 12, 1962 by the Military Tribunal Bucharest Military Region; The request by Maria Arsenescu-Buduluca forwarded to the Commission; M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 53-55; I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

³⁵³ Excerpt from sentence no 11/February 12, 1962 by the Military Tribunal Bucharest Military Region; The request by Maria Arsenescu-Buduluca forwarded to the Commission; M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 55; I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 85. This is what Maria Arsenescu wrote in one of the letters to her husband: "Be strong! Bear your cross with faith in God that He will not abandon us. All I do is live with the memory of the times we spent together and with the hope that the happy day when are back together will come. I returned ailing. I am wandering in the streets of the capital looking for shelter for me and our son, with no job and no money. I could not find a thing of what we had. Our old friends are afraid to come near me, as if I were plague-stricken. I did not go see your brother either when he told me not to come by because he was scared too. I found a job as a dyer in a carpenter's cooperative where I work with two older people from 6 in the morning to 6 in the evening for just a few lei, because we are unable to meet the output quota. I am being followed everywhere, both me and the boy, but we became stronger. They drove me to the *Miliția* station by that jeep, pressuring me to divorce you. If I do not do it, they will take me to Aiud. I am afraid I will not be able to stand this anymore. I remained faithful to you and righteous. I am giving my life for Gigi, this child who is also being pointed to. This is the 8th Easter that we celebrate apart. Still, the Holy Resurrection gives us strength to take this ordeal through. I do not know how long I will be able to withstand it" (*Ibidem*).

³⁵⁴ Excerpt from sentence no 11/February 12, 1962 by the Military Tribunal Bucharest Military Region; M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

³⁵⁵ ASRI, fonds "D", dossier 10762, p. 9.

weapons in his hands against the “people’s republic” could not get away unpunished, as it was believed by the leaders of Romania at that time. The perseverance of the Securitate was successful.

Agent “Petrescu Vasile”, born in Câmpulung and relocated in town, had a lead that eventually ended with the arrest of colonel Arsenescu³⁵⁶. Ion Poștoacă was apprehended on January 27, 1960, taken to Bucharest and interrogated. In the beginning he refused to reveal anything about Arsenescu, but he was most probably tortured (“*pus în fața probelor de netăgăduit* / facing irrefutable proofs” as mentioned by a Securitate record) until he told what he knew. Corroborated with the information obtained from agent “Preda Vasile”, the Securitate was able to conceive a plan to seize Arsenescu³⁵⁷.

During the night of January 31/February 1, 1960, 30 people split into three groups blocked the house of the Poștoacă family, taking all measures to stop Arsenescu from fleeing. At the breaking dawn, the colonel was asked to surrender³⁵⁸. Arsenescu was wearing a uniform made by himself, with braids made of cans. He apparently told the Securitate agents that he would only surrender to their superior. The latter arrived and removed the braids while a soldier who had come from behind to show his bravery hit the colonel’s face with the stock of his rifle. Meanwhile, Elena Poștoacă was beaten in the yard by the Securitate captain, Toma Codreanu, after being pulled by the hair tens of meters. The child of Elena Poștoacă and colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu, Melania, who was five years old, was yelling at the Securitate agents to stop beating her mother. Taken behind the house, she was laid on the snow and guarded by a police dog for several hours. The house was rummaged and the wooden floor removed with the bayonet, in search for the ammunition which was thought to be held by colonel Arsenescu³⁵⁹.

Other six members of the Poștoacă family were arrested: the old Apostol Poștoacă, his children Elena Stanciu, Florica, Elisabeta, Ion Poștoacă, as well as his son-in-law, Ion Jinga. The only ones to have escaped from being arrested were the old Elisabeta Poștoacă (73 years old) and the child Melania³⁶⁰. There were also

³⁵⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 10-11. See also the Excerpt from sentence no 11/February 12, 1962 by the Military Tribunal Bucharest Military Region. Oral sources reveal that a neighbour of the Poștoacă family, Ion Croitoru, was an accountant and had embezzled an amount of money. Hoping that he would escape prison, he turned in colonel Arsenescu. Nevertheless, he was sent to prison for embezzlement, the Securitate not taking into account his services. He would leave until the collapse of the Communist regime in Romania (C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, interview with Melania Boriceanu, p. 6; I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 85). The Securitate version of this story is different, as it may be seen from the text.

³⁵⁸ ASRI, fonds “D”, dossier 10762, p. 11.

³⁵⁹ C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, interviu cu Melania Boriceanu, p. 6. See also the Excerpt from sentence no 11/February 12, 1962 by the Military Tribunal Bucharest Military Region.

³⁶⁰ C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, interview with Melania Boriceanu, p. 6.

arrested Nicolae Bivol, Gheorghe Buduluca (on February 1, 1960) and Maria Buduluca (on February 6, 1960)³⁶¹.

Gheorghe Arsenescu was subjected to interrogations for two years. According to some information, he was tortured and then put in the psychiatric hospital of Poiana Mare-Dolj³⁶². The colonel was ill, as one of the MAI doctors would note: "*suferă de boală hipertensivă, boală ulceroasă (operat pentru sindrom stomacal), tahicardie sinusală, amigdalofaringită acută având și cicatrice după plagă în coapsa dreaptă, în regiunea stângă a abdomenului și umărul stâng* / he suffers from a hypertensive disease, an ulcerous disease (operated for gastric syndrome), junctional tachycardia, acute amigdalofaringitis, with wound scars on the right thigh, on the left side of the abdomen and the right shoulder"³⁶³. The other detainees of Arsenescu group were also long examined and subjected to tortures³⁶⁴.

The trial of Gheorghe Arsenescu and of those who had been supporting him in the last decade took place on February 1962. The Military Tribunal of Bucharest Military Region, which had convened in Pitești, pronounced by ruling no 11/February 12, 1962 the following sentences: Gheorghe Arsenescu, death and property confiscation, and 1,500 lei for legal charges; Ion Poștoacă and Gheorghe Buduluca, 15 years of forced labour, 7 years of loss of civic rights, total confiscation of property and 1,200 lei for legal charges each; Maria Buduluca, 10 years of forced labour, 5 years of loss of civic rights, total confiscation of property and 1,000 lei for legal charges. Other people were also condemned: Apostol Poștoacă, Floarea Poștoacă and Elisabeta Poștoacă, but we have no information of their sentences. Their appeals were overruled by decision no 66/March 17, 1962 of the Supreme Court of the People's Republic of Romania³⁶⁵.

On May 29, 1962, at 20:30, colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu was taken out from his cell in Jilava prison, "*legat la ochi și executat prin împușcare cu pistolul de către o echipă formată din trei militari reangajați din personalul locului de deținere* / blindfolded and executed with a pistol by a squad made of three soldiers re-employed from the prison staff". His death was registered under number 13/May 30, 1962 – on the same day he turned 55 – in the death register of Jilava village, the body being buried in the cemetery of Jilava prison³⁶⁶.

Elena Stanciu was not trialled nor sentenced, but was confined for 2 years and 9 months, being released on November 23, 1963 from the hospice of Văcărești penitentiary with a neuropsychiatric diagnosis. Those who knew her admitted she

³⁶¹ Excerpt from sentence no 11/February 12, 1962 by the Military Tribunal Bucharest Military Region; M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

³⁶² I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

³⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 86.

³⁶⁴ M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 55-58.

³⁶⁵ Excerpt from sentence no 11/February 12, 1962 by the Military Tribunal Bucharest Military Region; see also M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 58-60.

³⁶⁶ The request by Maria Arsenescu-Buduluca forwarded to the Commission; M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 61; I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 85-86.

looked older than 30 years. Apostol Poștoacă was released on January 1, 1964, but he lived just half a year more, and died on July 16, 1964. In April 1964, Florica Poștoacă was released from Oradea and Elisabeta Poștoacă from Miercurea Ciuc. Ion Poștoacă had passed by Balta Brăilei, from where he was released in August 1964, as well as Ion Jinga³⁶⁷.

Gheorghe I. Buduluca executed one part of his sentence in the prisons of Pitești, Jilava and Botoșani. He was absolved by decree no 176/April 9, 1964. His property confiscated and not being able to work anymore because of his age (he had been born on May 28, 1886); he survived for a few years more in extremely harsh conditions. From a social aid of 200 lei, received on a regular basis, he had to pay rent for his own house, taken over by the state, and also pay the legal charges stipulated by the sentence of 1962. He died on January 6, 1971³⁶⁸.

Maria Buduluca was imprisoned in Pitești, Gai (near Arad) and Miercurea-Ciuc. She was absolved by decree no 176/Aprilie 9, 1964³⁶⁹. Her son with Gheorghe Arsenescu faced difficulties because of his name, not being accepted to high-school. Because of this, he was adopted by a sister of his father and thus became Dragoș Mușatescu. He studied engineering and then he chose freedom, leaving a country controlled by a totalitarian regime³⁷⁰.

7. The Securitate theories on Arsenescu-Arnăuțoiu groups

13-15 years after the annihilation of Arsenescu-Arnăuțoiu group, the members became the “bad heroes” of a police novel written – by Ion Ochinciuc, *Noaptele colonelului Bârsan* (The Nights of Colonel Bârsan) – in bold letters featuring this genre in Communist Romania³⁷¹. Evading the historic truth, the Securitate

³⁶⁷ C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, interview with Melania Boriceanu, p. 6.

³⁶⁸ The request by Maria Arsenescu-Buduluca forwarded to the Commission.

³⁶⁹ Excerpt from sentence no 11/February 12, 1962 by the Military Tribunal Bucharest Military Region: The request by Maria Arsenescu-Buduluca forwarded to the Commission; M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

³⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 61.

³⁷¹ Ion Ochinciuc, *Noaptele colonelului Bârsan*, novel, Bucharest, 1973. The abovementioned novel is qualified as so-called police literature (as it was understood in the national-Communist Romania, but apparently, highly “sniffed” by a large category of public). In order to “restore” the history of Arsenescu-Arnăuțoiu group, the author had most likely access to certain records of the Securitate from the ‘50s – ‘60s since many of them are rather close to reality, even though tendentiously presented. The names of the partisans are slightly changed: lieutenant-colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu becomes “lieutenant-colonel Gheorghe Arsene”; lieutenant Toma Arnăuțoiu is “Arnăutu cel mare”; Petre Arnăuțoiu is “Arnăutu cel mic”; the med student Ion Marinescu is “Marineanu”; Maria Plop is “Maria – the gang’s sutler” and also “Maria Ulm” (for the Securitate agents it was... still a tree) [plop (in Rom.) = poplar; ulm (in Rom.) = elm, n. tr.]. There were also other fictitious characters: Crăcană and Aurel Ciocan, the latter holding an important role in the end of the story. The anti-Communist fighters were ridiculed, depicted as craving for power and blood, merciless, and cruel even with their supports. They had been assigned tasks they never had (nor any other resistance group had in Romania): the installation of a “phantom government”, where Gheorghe Arsenescu

regarded the Arsenescu-Arnăuțoiu groups as iron-guardist in propagandistic papers (so as to indoctrinate their own squads). It was admitted though that these groups together with the Gavrilă group had caused the biggest problems to the Securitate, on the northern slope of the Făgăraș Mountains. Complex actions and many agents were needed to fight the partisans³⁷².

After 1989, the theories on the Arsenescu-Arnăuțoiu groups continued to be disseminated in national-Communist publications: *România Mare*, *Totuși iubirea*, *Europa*, *Lumea Magazin*³⁷³, *Spionaj-Contraspionaj*³⁷⁴, on TV stations, etc. One of the most "horrific" fighters was the Securitate general Nicolae Pleșiță, who was directly involved in repressing the anti-Communist armed resistance, including the groups on the southern slope of the Făgăraș and Iezer Mountains³⁷⁵.

would have been prime-minister, Toma Arnăuțoiu Minister of War, Petre Arnăuțoiu Minister of National Education, "Aurel Ciocan" Minister of Interior, and Ion Marinescu Minister of Health. The partisans were held responsible of 18 attacks in the northern part of the Muscel. 6 crimes and "tens of tortures and injuries", whose victims were "Party activists, civil servants, men of law". "The bandits" were not only murderers, but also thieves, pillaging peasants. The cruelty of the partisans towards their own supporters is pure invention, given that they would have never resisted for so long without the help of the locals. The novelist also presented (quite minutely) the tensions within the group, the split of Arsenescu from the Arnăuțoiu brothers and also the killing of Marinescu by the brothers. The annihilation of the group is similar to reality, too, except for the fate of Maria Plop and her child (whose father was allegedly unknown, although the real father was Toma Arnăuțoiu: the Securitate agents are depicted as extremely sensitive towards the child, who was 4 in the novel – actually only 2 – allowing him to integrate together with his mother in the Communist society, while the truth was/is much more painful). However, the capture of Gheorghe Arsenescu is completely distorted, with a pursuit in the woods and the mountains, and the family where he had integrated perfectly turned against him because they hated him. In order to fill the end of the book with the entire propaganda means of the epoch, the novelist created a former policeman from the Safety of Deva, "Aurel Ciocan" (already mentioned; a potential reference to Ion Poștoacă) who, before the annihilation of the "brigand" group, managed to flee in the West, served the "American imperialism" and returned in the country as a Norwegian confectioner. Arthur Ecklund, to get into contact with former members of the Arsenescu group. In change, the Romanian Securitate accomplished its duty towards the "people" and annihilated the espionage network. And thus we have in this novel bad characters – the "bandits" (former war criminals, cruel policemen who had tortured Communists and members of the Romanian Young Communist League underground), Romanian deserters in the West who returned as American spies – as well as good characters – i.e. the vigilant and efficient Securitate agents annihilating the conspiracies of the "people's enemies". In this novel, the truth was distorted for propagandistic purposes, and we cannot comment on its aesthetic value. Nevertheless, in terms of historical reality, it is undoubtedly counterfeit.

³⁷² *În slujba patriei socialiste*, p. 48.

³⁷³ Ioana Raluca Voicu-Arnăuțoiu, *Torturi și torționari. Memoria*, no. 40-41, 3-4/2002, p. 64.

³⁷⁴ B. Răducanu, *Adevărul istoriei nu suportă variante. "Spionaj-Contraspionaj"*, no. 6, October 1991, p. 2; Gheorghe Dumbravă, *Grupul Arsenescu-Arnăuțoiu din Munții Muscelului – eroi de mucava. "Spionaj-Contraspionaj"*, no. 57, November 1992, p. 4; Gh. Dinu, *Profilul moral al vajnicului «Luptător și erou»-Gh. Arsenescu. "Spionaj-Contraspionaj"*, no. 62, December 1992, p. 3.

³⁷⁵ The evidence of the importance of this Securitate officer in the fight against the resistance can be also inferred from the fact that in 1960, when he was only a captain, he was assigned to draft

8. Resettling things. Post-Communist compensations, run for prestige, etc.

Many people were involved in the "Arsenescu-Arnăuțoiu" resistance groups. For example, Cornel Drăgoi recreated in the Nucșoara groups only the full names of 145 people involved in the resistance in a way or another (fighters in the mountains or supporters). Some were killed in the conflict, other were executed or died during investigations, in prisons or after being released, but quite many outlived so as to testify after the fall of the Communist regime³⁷⁶.

8.1. In Nucșoara

Not even after the fall of the Communism the life of resistance survivors was spared of trouble. Those who had been imprisoned received pensions for those respective years, but the properties confiscated in the '50s, especially land, were difficultly returned. This was impossible during the first post-Communist years. For the former Communists who were still leading the country in the first years after the revolution, the ex-partisans were the same "bandits" for whom there no rights³⁷⁷. Act

notes on the destruction of the Arsenescu-Arnăuțoiu groups (ASRI, fonds "D", dossier 10762, p. 1 bis-11). His ascent in the repressive system of the '50s-'80s was remarkable to the point that he became the chief of the Romanian intelligence service after the defection of Mihai Pacepa in 1977. This fact proves that he enjoyed the trust "of the Party and State leadership", of Nicolae Ceaușescu in particular. The Securitate general Nicolae Pleșiță became the most visible character to glorify publicly the institution he had served for 40 years. He did this in magazines ("Lumea Magazin", no. 8/1999) and books (*Ochii și urechile Securității. Convorbiri cu generalul Nicolae Pleșiță. Dialoguri consemnate de Viorel Patrichi în decembrie 1999-ianuarie 2001* (foreword by Dan Zamfirescu, Bucharest, 2001), but also on the television. The appearance of Pleșiță on OTV, in the show "Dan Diaconescu Direct", of January 18/19 and February 14/15, 2005 – where the victims of the Communist regime were defamed, especially the partisans Gheorghe Arsenescu and Toma Arnăuțoiu, the dissident writer Paul Goma and professor Ioan Petru Culianu – drew the reaction of the civil society, disturbed by this propaganda in favour of the totalitarian state and the vindication of the Securitate criminal actions. On February 23, 2005, a debate was held by *Grupul pentru Dialog Social* with the participation of *Centrul Medical de Reabilitare a Victimelor Torturii, Alianța Civică, Liga Română de Presă, Institutul Național pentru Memoria Exilului Românesc*, journalists, writers, historians, doctors and researchers. A press release was made (*Apel – Appeal*), requesting solidarity from organisations of the civil society and press, as well as the information of authorities (*Consiliul Național pentru Combaterea Discriminării, Consiliul Național al Audiovizualului, Parlamentul and Guvernul României*) so as to eliminate disinformation, denigration and discrimination towards the victims of Communism, to start and sustain regulations against the vindicators of the Communist regime. We thank Mr. Gabriel Catalan – one of the initiators and signers – for the text of this *Appeal*.

³⁷⁶ Irina Nicolau, *op. cit.*, p. 246-249.

³⁷⁷ V. Theodoru, *op. cit.*, interview with Elisabeta Rizea, p. 5; *Povestea Elisabetei Rizea*, p. 21-22; testimony of Elena Florea [born Arnăuțoiu], in C. Caramete, *Ne vrem pământul*, p. 7. For a presentation of post-Communist Nucșoara, see Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, Gérard Althabe, *Secera și ciocanul. Scornicești și Nucșoara. Mecanisme de aservire a țaranului român*, Iași, 2002, p. 79-108.

no 118/1990 on the retrieval of landed property was implemented against the former victims of Communism in many locations throughout Romania, including Nucșoara. "Comisia pentru cercetarea abuzurilor" (The Commission for the Investigation of Abuses), the so called "Commission 14", which was led by a former political prisoner, server – perhaps unwillingly – the interests of those who took advantage during the previous regime. The Parliament of Romania issued a document registered under no 2478/March 1991 to the Prefecture of Argeș County and the village-hall of Nucșoara requesting the revision of the files pertaining to those people subjected to Act no 118. Specifically, "the people sentenced for offences against humanity or who proved to have carried out fascist activities" did not benefit from the legal provisions. In this category were abusively included the partisans on the southern slope of the Făgăraș Mountains, especially that in the early '90s of the past century the accusation of "iron-guardism" was thrown over the anti-Communists as easy as in the aftermath of W W 2. Moreover, the former partisans were threatened by the local authorities (the Prefecture of Argeș County and the Village-hall of Nucșoara, where the law was dictated by the direct descendents of the former Communist activists of the '50s) to be sent back in the accused box. The Commission of 1991 proved to be more radical than the hearing of 1959³⁷⁸.

Nucșoara continued to be a divided village in the years that followed. In 1992, a group of 42 locals wrote and sent a memorandum to the president in office at that time (Ion Iliescu). Brief, the signers (who called themselves "veterans") requested to be returned their lands, which they had worked for decades since "it is not normal to give these lands to prisoners who made no efforts to tend them" and "where houses and stables for cattle were built, trees were planted that we do not benefit from". The former partisans were still labelled as "iron-guards" ("the Arsenescu-Arnăuțoiu iron-guardist gang") and "fascists", in other words the old theories of the Securitate and Communist justice. The request of the ex-

³⁷⁸ Ion Diaconescu, *Privind cazul de la Nucșoara-Argeș. Intervention in the Parliament the deputy Ion Diaconescu to Biroul Adunării Deputaților*, "Dreptatea", no. 375, May 29, 1991, p. 4; I. Raluca Voicu-Arnăuțoiu, *op. cit.*, p. 64-65. A newspaper registered in 1991 less than 30 people who had been done injustice in the village of Nucșoara: Laurenția Toncea, Eugen Popescu, Constantin Pașol, Petre Berga, Vasile Pascu, Ion Jubleanu, Constantin Săndulescu, Gheorghe Borjog, Victor Berevoianu, Ion Tefeleu, Ion Preda, Elisabeta Rizea, Gheorghe Rizea, Virgil Marinescu, Ana Simion, Aurel Chirca, Maria Chirca, Cornel Drăgoi, Ion Oproiu, Iulia Lemnaru, Gheorghe Mihai, Luca Dumitrescu, Nicolae Adămoiu, Constantin Tefeleu, Nicolae Pățitu, Gheorghe Chirca, Ion Chirca, Elena Drăgoi (wife of Ion Drăgoi, executed), heirs of Ion Săndoiu (executed), heirs of Benone Milea (executed). In addition: Elena Ion of Câmpulung Muscel, Ilie Dragomirescu of Câmpulung Muscel, Doru and Ion Arnăuțoiu (sons of Petre Arnăuțoiu), Anton Arnăuțoiu (brother of Toma and Petre Arnăuțoiu), residing in Sighișoara (R. Iordache, *Procesul «paraziților»*, p. 2). Many articles were published against the injustice done to former anti-Communist fighters after 1989 (mainly in "România liberă" and "Dreptatea"), TV documentaries were made – on TVR: Lucia Hossu-Longin, *Memorialul Durerii*; Constantin Martiniuc, *Viața Satului*; on SOTI: Florin Țanovici (Roxana Iordache, *De ce nu prefectul Argeșului, domnul Stolojan?*, "România liberă", no. 708, August 1-2, 1992, p. 2).

collaborationists of the Communist regime was solved positively by the neo-Communist Parliament of Bucharest³⁷⁹.

Also some annulling appeals by the former opponents of Nucșoara were rejected in the '90s of the past century on motivation of having breached the laws in force in the '50s³⁸⁰.

The inhabitants of Nucșoara who had taken sides with the Communist regime in the '40s - '50s being fully rewarded with properties confiscated from the "ex-enemies of the people" attempted to stop equally the valorisation of partisans' memory. In June 1992, there was to take place in Nucșoara the sanctification of a triptych to be installed near the Orthodox Church or the village cemetery, given that there had registered nearly 20 dead people in the mountains, sentenced to death and executed, other 20 dying in prisons or soon after release. Only that the Orthodox priest refused to sanctify the triptych saying that he had been threatened by the ex-Communists (originally grouped under the *Frontul Salvării Naționale*, then *Frontul Democrat al Salvării Naționale*) to have his house set on fire if he had gratified the former partisans. The diocesan council itself voted against the symbolic installation of the cross in Nucșoara. The cross and the zinc plates bearing the names of those who disappeared in the fight against the Communist regime lay for a long while on the porch of Elisabeta Rizea's house³⁸¹. The inhabitants of Poenărei – where the last partisans were caught in 1958 – were eager to keep the memory of the latter and asked their neighbours of Nucșoara to bring the cross to them³⁸².

Undoubtedly, the hostility of a part of the population (perhaps the most important) towards the memory of the former partisans was especially strong in Nucșoara in 1992-1993³⁸³. It was not a matter of a conspiracy set by authorities, but of something much more easier: the ex-beneficiaries of the Communism did not want to lose their positions in the village nor to surrender the assets obtained as a result of the services they rendered or of profitable exchanges. The former anti-Communist fighters were permanently taken for "bandits" and were often threatened by death. Fear was still present in the first years following the systemic changes of 1989³⁸⁴.

³⁷⁹ Vera Maria Neagu, *op. cit.*, p. 4. See also the text in A. Mungiu-Pippidi, G. Althabe, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

³⁸⁰ I. Raluca Voicu-Arnăuțoiu, *op. cit.*, p. 64-65.

³⁸¹ V. M. Neagu, *op. cit.*, p. 4; testimony of Elisabeta Rizea, in R. C. Pena, *op. cit.*, p. 3; *Povestea Elisabetei Rizea*, p. 22; C. Caramete, *Ne vrem pământul*, p. 7.

³⁸² Testimony of Iuliana Constantinescu (daughter of priest Ion Constantinescu), in C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

³⁸³ R. C. Pena, *op. cit.*, p. 1, 3; C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

³⁸⁴ Testimonies of Ecaterina Marinescu și Elisabeta Rizea, in R. C. Pena, *op. cit.*, p. 1, 3; C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, p. 7; *Povestea Elisabetei Rizea*, p. 26. Cornel Drăgoi described perfectly what was happening in Nucșoara in 1993: "sunt două aspecte, dar de neseplat, cel agrar și cel politic. Exact ce se întâmplă în țară în mare se întâmplă în Nucșoara în mic. / Și mai vine câte unu' și zice – shilodu' ăsta, ce-a mai venit aici, ce mai vrea? Auzi, ce caut în satul meu în care m-am născut, unde-mi sunt strămoșii, unde am și eu o bucată de pământ... Ce mai eată shilodu' ăsta? Alții vin și strigă la fîna Rizea la poartă: s-a culcat, bă, las' fir-ar a dracului, o aruncăm noi în lac! Și ea – nașule. mă omoară ăștia! Lasă, fină că nu te omoară. Dacă ar fi fost să te omoare, veneau pe

Little by little the voice of the former partisans of Muscel was heard in Romania, a juncture that favoured this type of symbolic equity. Due to survivors endowed with narrative skills and particularly the interest of mass-media or ethnologists, but also to those who rummaged the archives, the Arnăuțoiu group probably enjoyed the greatest favourable publicity than any other resistance group after 1989. Their descendents tried to make of them role models, which makes less comprehensible this phenomenon that was nonetheless complex.

What happened to the child of Toma Arnăuțoiu and Maria Plop, the little Ioana, after 1958? In a photograph taken by the Securitate shortly after the annihilation of the group, the little girl (who was younger than 2 years) appears next to her mother³⁸⁵. Subsequently, she was separated from her mother and entrusted to a children shelter of Câmpulung. The real name of her mother (Maria Plop) was registered on her birth certificate, while for the name of father it was written "unknown". Ioana had the chance to be adopted by a family, Voicu, when she was 4 where she felt loved and received a good education. After 1989 she accidentally learned that her family that had raised her was not her real family. She had already graduated from the Academy of Music (Conservator) of Bucharest, the violin section, and had followed an academic career. The research let her to the identification of her real parents and the history they had made, but which had destroyed them. Her interest to know the history of her family was natural and determined her to involve in the investigation of the Securitate archives, but also to publish some authentic records on the Arnăuțoiu group. At the same time she strove to regain the right to bear her father's name³⁸⁶. And she succeeded.

tăcute.../ Vor numai să ne sperie / here are two inseparable aspects, agrarian and political. What happens in the country at a larger scale, happens in Nucșoara at a smaller scale [underlined in the original, emphasis mine]./ And then sometimes, someone comes and asks – what's this crippled, doing here, what does he want? Indeed, what am I doing in the village where I was born, where my forefathers are buried and where I own a strip of land... What's this crippled doing here? Others come to the gate of my god-daughter Rizea: is she the hell sleeping, we'll throw her in the lake! And she tells me – god-father, they're going to kill me! Don't worry, they won't kill you! If they were to kill you, they would have come in silence... / They only want to scare us" (Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi, p. 188).

³⁸⁵ *Luptătorii din munți*, p. 911.

³⁸⁶ Doru Cosma, *Un erou al rezistenței armate la opresiunea comunistă: Toma Arnăuțoiu*, "22", no. 25, June 28-July 4, 1991, p. 6; I. Raluca Voicu-Arnăuțoiu, *op. cit.*, p. 9; Idem, *Torturi și tortionari*, p. 65. Ioana-Raluca Voicu-Arnăuțoiu published records (*Documente despre grupul de partizani din comuna Nucșoara*, "Analele Sighet", 2 (1995), p. 303-307; *Luptătorii din munți. Toma Arnăuțoiu. Grupul de la Nucșoara. Documente ale anchetei, procesului, detenției*, Bucharest, 1997, 925 p.), notes (*Începutul rezistenței anticomuniste în sudul Munților Făgăraș*, "Analele Sighet", 6 (1998), p. 238-249), testimonies (*Toma Arnăuțoiu. Entretien de sa fille, Ioana-Raluca Voicu-Arnăuțoiu, avec Marie-Joëlle Deseerre*, in *Voix de l'effroi. La Roumanie sous le communisme. Recits et Témoignages*, Bucharest, 2000, p. 182-183), and articles (*"N-a existat nici o luptă de rezistență"....?!*, "Lumea Magazin", no. 10/1999, p. 61).

In 1992, Lucia Hossu Longin was making investigations all throughout Romania for the well-known *Memorial al Durerii* (The Memorial of Misery). She accidentally encountered Elisabeta Rizea, the woman who had fully borne the tortures of Communism. "The woman without hair" (which had fallen almost completely after having been hung from the girder by the Securitate) gave a touching testimony that could be seen by an entire country on the national television on July 29, 1992 during the 13th episode of *Memorialul Durerii* (subsequently rebroadcast). The woman of Nucșoara was on her way to celebrity, which meant a long interview made by the ethnologists Irina Nicolau and Theodor Nițu, published in 1993; the attendance to several electoral meetings in 1996 with Corneliu Coposu, leader of the National Peasant Party, Christian and Democrat; the visit made by King Mihai to her home in 1998, in Nucșoara, followed by another encounter in 2001; the visit of president Emil Constantinescu to her home, on May 22, 2000³⁸⁷. Probably, the closeness to Bucharest played a good role in making Elisabeta Rizea a public person (her image was significantly built by the media) and her clear identification with the political opposition and civil society made her desirable to be included in the democratic memory of the anti-Communist resistance. All these drew the envy of some Communists of Nucșoara, although this little village had become famous because of Elisabeta Rizea's story and of the partisans who had sacrificed in the '40s-'50s. At the same time, the overappreciation of E. Rizea's role made the former victims of Communist repression to have "reservations" towards her³⁸⁸.

In her own view, Elisabeta Rizea was helped by her faith in God and justice to overcome all obstacles. She could not forget the injustice done to her and her family, the damage caused by the Communists and so on. In the early '90s, a female journalist asked E. Rizea if she would punish the ex-torturers in case they met her. The old lady gave a memorable answer: "*O să vă răspund cu niște vorbe din Cartea Sfântă, din care citesc aproape mereu. «Cel Atotputernic veghează casa și pe cei nelegiuîți îi prăbușește în adâncul pieirii.» Răsplata nu ți-o primești azi, mâine, peste o săptămână, dar ea va fi într-o zi. Nu vă puteți închipui cât de mult m-a întărit credința, când zăceam fără vlagă după torturi, când numai moartea părea singura ieșire din temniță sau din boala chinuitoare. Am supraviețuit. Ar fi multe de spus. Numai cu viața mea s-ar putea scrie un roman, în care totul ar fi adevărat. Nimic născocit. Iar dacă ar fi s-o iau de la capăt, la fel aș face, fără să șovăi, fără să crănesc* / I will answer you with a quote from the Holy Book, which I read almost

³⁸⁷ For a presentation and extensive framing of this retrieval of a memory long obscured, see Monica Lovinescu, *Infernul portativ*, "22", no. 36, September 11-17, 1992, p. 8-9; Idem, *Insula Șerpilor (Unde scurte)*, VI, Bucharest, 1996, p. 336; Adrian Marino, *Represiune și confesiune*, "22", no. 28, July 10-16 1996, p. 9; Nicolae Stroeșcu-Stănișoară, *La Răscruce. Gânduri spuse la Radio Europa liberă și în Jurnalul literar*, Bucharest, 1996, p. 388-389; Liviu Vălenaș, *Memorialul stalinismului. România între anii 1949-1965*, interviews, Bucharest, 2003, p. 18-20 (interview with King Mihai I); Claudia Dobre, *Elisabeta Rizea, un «loc al memoriei» pentru români*, "Memoria", no. 46, 1/2004, p. 76-81.

³⁸⁸ A. Liiceanu, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

all the time. 'The Almighty ...' You will not receive your reward today, tomorrow, in a week, but you will receive it one day. You cannot imagine how much strength faith gave me when I was lying helpless after tortures, when only death seemed to be the only way out of prison or the tormenting disease. I survived. There would be much to say. You could write a novel simply based on my life, where everything would be real. Nothing invented. And if I were to start fresh again, I would do the same, without hesitation, without uttering one word"³⁸⁹. Elisabeta Rizea never regretted what she did in the '40s-'50s. In an interview given to a female journalist in 1992, she declared: "*Și acum, dacă aș mai avea putere aș lua pușca-n mână și aș lupta împotriva comuniștilor! Dar nu mai am putere, uite în ce hal am ajuns! / Even now, if I had the strength, I would arm myself with a rifle and fight against Communists! But I no longer have strength and look at me now!*"³⁹⁰. She made use of a stronger weapon, though, the word. She believed it was her duty to tell what had happened in the dawning years of Communism. She expressed herself artistically among weeps: "*Păi aș zbiera [...] ca o vacă, nu ca un om! Atâtea sunt de spus... / I would low [...] like a cow, not like a human being! There is so much to say...*" or: "*Da' poți să taci [...]?* Nu pot, nu pot! *Îmi vine să zbier ca o vacă, prin câte am trecut... / But can you keep quiet [...]?* I cannot, I cannot! It makes me low like a cow that much I went through..."³⁹¹. The thirst for justice was explainable and justified for a woman who had suffered enormously together with her family for half a century, as she stated in 1993. "*Trei zile dacă mai trăiesc, da' vreau să știu că s-a limpezit lumea / If I live three more days, I want to know that world has become clear*"³⁹².

Elisabeta Rizea would live not three days, but ten years, her testimony changing significantly the perception of the Romanian public with regard to the anti-Communist partisans. The fighting peasant woman died on October 7, 2003. Although her funeral was attended only by the representatives of the Asociației Foștilor Deținuți Politici din România (the Association of Former Political Prisoners of Romania) and the Royal House, not those of authorities in office from Bucharest (at that time, the country was led by the main neo-Communist party and a president who had started his political career while his fellow Securitate agents were hunting partisans), this moment did not pass unnoticed, on the contrary³⁹³. Many journalists and opinion makers of Romania published texts or gave speeches on radio and television shows³⁹⁴.

The cultural establishment *Academia Cațavencu* took initiative in 2004 to build a monument in the honour of Elisabeta Rizea, "the symbol of resistance against

³⁸⁹ V. Theodoru, *op. cit.*, interview with Elisabeta Rizea, p. 5.

³⁹⁰ *Ibidem*.

³⁹¹ *Povestea Elisabetei Rizea*, p. 26, 86.

³⁹² *Ibidem*, p. 22.

³⁹³ Claudia Dobre, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

³⁹⁴ For example, Cornel Nistorescu, *Adio, iubită doamnă!*, editorial in "Evenimentul zilei", October 7, 2003.

Communism". It was suggested to place the monument in *Presei Libere* Square (former *Scânteii* Square), on the same location of Lenin's statue before 1990. For the project of this monument a national contest was to take place. In order to cover costs a subscription list was opened³⁹⁵.

Not one partisan in Romania enjoyed so much publicity as Elisabeta Rizea and especially the idea of having a monument in her honour. This, in fact, gave way to unfavourable comments – mostly in informal milieus – among some of the survivors of the resistance from other regions (we should like to specify that many women-partisan, who had fought with weapons in their hands, were still alive at that moment, not to mention men in the mountains). Beyond any doubt, Elisabeta Rizea represented/represents a symbol of anti-Communist armed resistance, but it would be a bit too much to be considered the *symbol* of this phenomenon. The enclosure of the whole within the part is not a desirable practice for a phenomenon as near in time and yet as sensitive as the anti-Communist armed resistance.

It would be highly recommendable to install (another) monument symbolising the entire anti-Communist armed resistance of Romania in the capital-city (where most political decisions were made in support of the Communist repression). A true debate on this issue has been missing so far, but time is not yet lost.

The majority of the people involved in a way or another in the resistance were discreet, some of them even frustratingly discreet (for historians). Cornel Drăgoi, a man of a rare modesty declared: "*În fond, contribuția mea la activitatea grupului de partizani a fost scurtă și fără importanță. Consecințele, pentru mine, au fost mai lungi. Doisprezece ani, șapte luni și cinci zile de detenție, plus o viață stricată. Atât./ Și nu vreau să mă laud, să mi-o ia cineva așa... / My contribution to the partisan group was in fact short and unimportant. The consequences were longer for me though. Twelve years, seven months and 5 days of detention, plus a degenerated life. That's it./And I don't mean to brag, but this is how it should be taken...*"³⁹⁶. He did not shrink from accounting the "dark moments" in the history of the "Haiducii Muscelului" resistance group because "*trebuie să se știe. Să nu se spună despre noi că «uite, ăștia au știut numai să se laude» / they ought to be*

³⁹⁵ ***, *Pentru monumentul unei femei monumentale*, "Academia Cașavencu", no. 25, June 22-28, 2004, p. 4. The journalist Liviu Mihaiu wrote on this occasion: "*Monumentul propus să ia locul statuii lui Lenin în Piața Presei Libere este nu numai o simplă statuie a unei femei-simbol al luptei populare împotriva comunismului sau un exemplu de verticalitate pentru toți ziariștii care trec pe lângă el, ci și o satisfacție profund umană că, cel puțin o dată într-o sută de ani, se face un pic de dreptate / The monument proposed to replace Lenin's statue in Presei Libere Square is not a simple statue of a woman symbolising the fight of the masses against Communism or an example of intransigence for all the journalists passing it by, but also a deeply human satisfaction that at least once in a hundred years a bit of justice can be done*" (*Cine este Elisabeta Rizea și cui folosește acest monument*, "Academia Cașavencu", no. 25, June 22-28, 2004, p. 4). See also the website dedicated to Elisabeta Rizea: <http://www.elisabetarizea.ro>.

³⁹⁶ *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 113-114.

known. So that people won't say of us 'look, they only bragged'".³⁹⁷ The man who missed his potential philologist career sought to "complicate" things because he had a strong moral consciousness. In other words, his life seemed to have been guided by ethics.

8.2. The descendants of Arsenescu

After 1989 the story (and the public image in particular) of the resistance groups in the northern part of the former Muscel County was slightly distorted. The emphasis was more on Nucșoara, the brothers Toma and Petre Arnăuțoiu, and some supporters, while Gheorghe Arsenescu, a main character in the first resistance stage was somewhat placed in the background.

At the insistence of the ex-wife of Colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu, after the fall of the Communist regime, the Supreme Court of Justice of Romania ruled the extraordinary annulling appeal by the General Prosecutor of Romania against sentence no 11/February 12, 1962 of the Military Tribunal of Bucharest Military Region and against decision no 66/March 17, 1962 of the Supreme Court – Military College. By decision no 47/May 11, 1992 of the Supreme Court of Justice of Romania all the decisions re-examined were annulled, but only those relating to Maria Buduluca, discharging her of all the offences she had been sentenced for in 1962, including the additional sentence confiscating her entire property³⁹⁸. Further on, Maria Buduluca regained her right to bear the name of her husband, Arsenescu. In March 2000, Maria Arsenescu-Buduluca forwarded to the Commission several requests demanding the post-mortem recovery of civil rights for her husband, Colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu, and her father, Gheorghe I. Buduluca, as well as to be granted to her the distinction of fighter in the anti-Communist resistance³⁹⁹.

Melania Boriceanu herself, daughter of Gheorghe Arsenescu, testified after 1989 in favour of her father. She wrote in one of her memoirs volumes: "*Acesta a fost tatăl meu, omul cu un curaj ieșit din comun, care pentru țara lui a dat totul. Pentru el nu și-a oprit nici măcar viața. Dumnezeu, viața lui n-a contat absolut deloc când a fost vorba de patrie, când viața este bunul cel mai de preț de pe lumea asta* / This was my father, the man with a remarkable courage, who gave everything for his country. He did not even keep life for himself. Oh Lord, his life did not even matter when his country was at stake, when life is the most precious thing in this world".⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 163-165.

³⁹⁸ Excerpt from the decision no 47/May 11, 1992 by the Supreme Court of Justice of Romania. We thank the Foundation *Academia Civică* and Ioana Boca for this record.

³⁹⁹ Requests by Maria Arsenescu-Buduluca forwarded to the Commission.

⁴⁰⁰ C. Caramete, *Acesta a fost tatăl meu*, interview with Melania Boriceanu, p. 6; Melania Boriceanu, *Un strigăt dincolo de barieră. Amintirile fiicei colonelului Arsenescu* (with a foreword by the editor), Bucharest, 1993 apud C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

Similar to the case of the Nucșoara survivors and their descendents, there was a certain competition among the heirs of Colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu as regards his memory. Although it is not explicit, this tendency is visible in articles and interviews from the '90s.

9. Conclusions

The southern slope of Făgăraș Mountains and the Iezer Mountains, located for the most part in the former Muscel County was in the aftermath of World War 2 the stage of some of the most important anti-Communist armed resistance groups. Not only geography, but also the nature of the population played a role in the resistance. The villages in this area were inhabited by Romanian ethnics, the majority peasants growing cattle or loggers and supporters of the National Peasant Party. In the main town of this region, Câmpulung, there were many followers of National Liberal Party, particularly of the Tătăreșcu faction.

Those who took initiative to organise an anti-Communist armed resistance in the region were a few former militaries, discharged after the great cleansings implemented by the Communist Party. Colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu, a capable officer, with a strong personality, who had taken part in the battles on the East front, where he had been wounded, was cleansed in 1946, in the same year becoming a member of Tătăreșcu National Liberal Party. He came into conflict with the Communist authorities in 1947, which determined him to lead a secret life. Together with other people of Muscel sharing similar anti-Communist feelings, he created an anti-Communist organisation, then an armed group, which settled on Mount Roșu in 1948, near the village of Dragoslavele. It was a large group of 40 to 100 members, keeping shelters, ammunition dumps and support networks. The group was annihilated by the Securitate in the spring of 1949. The members seized were interrogated, tortured, trialled and sentenced to years in prisons.

Colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu hid in Bucharest in the winter of 1948-1949, where he contacted different anti-Communists. A distinguished figure was the former lieutenant Toma Arnăuțoiu from the village of Nucșoara, county of Muscel, who had taken part in the battles on the West front, where he had been wounded. He had been discharged himself in 1946 when he became a member of the National Peasant Party, playing an active role in the electoral campaign of that year. Followed by authorities, but hoping that a war between Anglo-Americans and Soviets was to start soon, which would have banished the latter from Romania and would have implicitly caused the demise of the Communist regime, the two officers created a new armed organisation in 1949, whose action theatre became Nucșoara, at the foot of the Făgăraș Mountains. The advantages of this region were obvious: troubled land, support from a population who was to a great extent unhappy with the political, social and economic measures taken by the Communist authorities. The organisation founded by Arsenescu and Arnăuțoiu was called "Haiducii Muscelului" [the Muscel Outlaws] (later on it received other names such as "the partisan group (outlaws) on the

Doamnei river", "the National Resistance", and "the Liberty Partisans"). Many of the recruited were villagers from Nucșoara. When they joined the group, they gave oath of allegiance, received code names, military ranks and functions. Due to the Securitate intervention, some of the group members hid in the mountains. There several conflicts between the two parties in 1949, ending with dead and injured people. The Securitate arrested resistance members who had stayed in Nucșoara, while in the following years they arrested supporters of the group. The resistance organisation split in the summer-autumn of 1949, apparently because of some misunderstandings between the two leaders. Some of the people followed Gheorghe Arsenescu, while others decided to side with Toma Arnăuțoiu. The group led by Arsenescu was penetrated by the Securitate, being annihilated in the autumn of 1949. Only the leader escaped and left the Nucșoara region, heading towards Câmpulung, and another member, who joined the Arnăuțoiu group.

The nucleus under the command of lieutenant Toma Arnăuțoiu was the nightmare of the Securitate, which was incapable to catch him for years. Never more than eight (men, but also women), the partisans survived in the mountains with the help of the inhabitants of the villages in the valleys, but also requisitions made to "socialist agencies" (sheepfold, chalets, etc.), while other times even to private individuals. The conflicts with authorities abounded; many Securitate agents, Miliția agents and members of the Romanian Labour Party were killed or wounded. The partisans registered losses to, some were killed or seized. In 1952-1953, the Arnăuțoiu group changed tactics, avoiding appearances and hiding in the proximity of the Corbi-Poenărei village, where they were helped by locals and spread contradictory rumours that they died in the mountains or crossed borders. The Securitate never ceased to pursue them, in 1958 managing to arrest the last partisans, including the leader with the help of informers. Tens of people were arrested, tortured and trialled by a military court, in 1959. No less than 16 individuals were sentenced to death and executed in Jilava, other tens were sent to convict prison (where some died). The price of resistance was enormous, especially if we relate it to a small village such as Nucșoara. A survivor told the story of this sad reality: "*încet-încet, ne-au decimat. Da' decimat... știi cum, nu unul din zece, nouă din zice. Ne-au prăpădit / little by little they ploughed us down. But they ploughed us down... and you know, not one of ten, but nine of ten. They killed us*"⁴⁰¹.

Colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu hid from 1950/1951 to 1960 in the Câmpulung area, being sheltered by trustworthy people. In his case too, the Securitate did not stop the hunting, which led to his apprehension in 1960. He was investigated, trialled, sentenced to death and executed in Jilava in 1962. His supporters received cruel sentences, too.

After the annihilation of these anti-Communist armed resistance groups, the Securitate sustained that they were iron-guardist groups, which proved to be completely false. The Securitate theses were perpetuated even after 1989 by certain

⁴⁰¹ *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 111.

employees of this institution. Nevertheless, things started to settle after the demise of the Communist regime. The Arsenescu-Arnăuțoiu groups had the benefit of a positive image created by talented witnesses, articles, television documentaries and so on. After all, it was some sort of justice in the memory of some people who had sacrificed their lives to fight for freedom.

Translated from Romanian by Adina Rățoi