

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) (I)

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The southern slope of the Făgăraș Mountains together with the Iezer Mountains were largely part of Muscel County by the end of 1940s. These mountain ridges, particularly the first one, comprise the highest mountain peaks of the Romanian Carpathians, and at the installation of the Communist regime they were covered with forests and pastures, while the communication means hardly existed. The inhabitants of the villages settled in the valleys of these mountains – almost exclusively Romanian ethnics – earned their living by exploiting wood and rearing cattle.

Politically speaking, the County of Muscel had been an elective reservoir for the National Peasant Party (NPP) in the inter-war period, but also in the aftermath of World War II, Ion Mihalache being a prominent figure in the region. The instauration of the Communist regime after 1945 led to the escalation of tensions between NPP members and the Communist Party members who had been recruited from the insulated people of that district, especially from the former prisoners held in USSR and returned in the country by Tudor Vladimirescu Division. The hostilities between the members of these two parties ended with human losses¹. The Liberal Party was also well represented in the area, mainly in the town of Câmpulung. The repression measures taken by the Communist authorities had similar consequences in different parts of the country: the political persecuted became clandestine creating resistance groups.

¹ For example, on August 9, 1946, the local NPP leaders went to the Court House of Pitești to present their candidate lists for parliamentary elections. The school teacher Popescu, from a village near Pitești, was shot dead right in the premises of the Court House. A similar fate had the solicitor Gheorghe Mihai, from the village of Vâlsănești, the County of Argeș, who was shot dead at daytime in an area between the Court House building and the Tax Administration building of Pitești (*Povestea Elisabetei Rizea din Nucșoara. Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi* (ed. by Irina Nicolau and Theodor Nițu; foreword by Gabriel Liiceanu), Bucharest, 1993, p. 107. I will further quote from the two separate testimonies: *Povestea Elisabetei Rizea*, and *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi* respectively). Gheorghe Șuța from Domenști, a small entrepreneur and local NPP leader was lifted by the Communist Security in 1946 (it seems this happened right in the middle of the November parliamentary elections) or in 1947 and assassinated (*Mărturia Elisabetei Rizea [rudă cu Gheorghe Șuța]*, in Roland Cătălin Pena, «Cuminșenia pământului». *La Nucșoara, martiriul adevărașilor luptători anticomuniști continuă*, “Dreptatea”, no 660, 15 august 1992, p. 3; *Povestea Elisabetei Rizea*, p. 17-18, 25; *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi...*, p. 107; Alexandru Marinescu, *Pagini din rezistența armată anticomunistă. Zona Nucșoara-Făgăraș*, “Memoria”, no 7, 1992, p. 47).

The armed anti-Communist resistance on the southern slope of the Făgăraș Mountains and in the Iezer Mountains has been widely debated by the media and relatively studied after the demise of the Communist regime. There were printed several volumes of documents, studies and articles, as well as documentaries. In this study I am approaching the micro-history of the groups led by Colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu and Lieutenant Toma Arnăuțoiu. My research is based on records unpublished (from the Archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service) or published in memoirs and testimonies.

1. The Gheorghe Arsenescu Group from Dragoslavele (1948)

1.1. An innate military: Gheorghe Arsenescu

Gheorghe Arsenescu was born on the 31st of May 1907, in the town of Câmpulung-Muscel², in the family of a career officer who had taken part in World War I, had been wounded in the battles of Mărășești in August 1917, and apparently died in a campaign hospital. His three sons embraced the military career, and his three daughters married militaries³. The young Gheorghe Arsenescu attended Dinicu Golescu High-school of Câmpulung, No 2 Military School of Infantry Officers of Sibiu, graduating with highest honours (he distinguished as a sharpshooter among others). After training in a frontier guard regiment, he was assigned on his request to the 30th Dorobanți Muscel Regiment. From there he left to the War Superior School. After graduation he was sent to Târgoviște in order to perform his military duties as

² Maria Arsenescu-Buduluca, *Sunt soția «teroristului» Gheorghe Arsenescu*, “Memoria”, no 8, [c. 1993], p. 50; Corina Caramete, *Acesta a fost tatăl meu*, interview with Melania Boriceanu, daughter of Colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu, “România liberă”, no 1086, 23 octombrie 1993, p. 6; Ion Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *Un erou de legendă: colonel (rezervă) Gh. Arsenescu*, “Memoria”, no 49, 2/2004, p. 82. The text has been previously published in a slightly modified form under the title *Un erou de legendă. Colonelul Gheorghe Arsenescu*, “Analele Sighet”, 8, 2000, p. 565-571. I will further use the version published in “Memoria”; *Luptătorii din munți. Toma Arnăuțoiu. Grupul de la Nucșoara. Documente ale anchetei, procesului, detenției* (ed. by Ioana-Raluca Voicu-Arnăuțoiu), Bucharest, 1997, p. 18 (records from the Archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service (further, ASRI), fonds “P”, file 1238, vol. 50).

³ M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 50; C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, interview with Melania Boriceanu, p. 6; *O mărturie: cum s-au falsificat alegerile în armată*, interview with captain (in reserve) Petre Cojocaru, brother-in-law of Colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu, “Dosarele istoriei”, no 11(51)/2000, p. 43; I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 82. One of Colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu’s brothers, Nicolae Arsenescu, a professor at the War Military School, was promoted general in reserve (C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, interview with Melania Boriceanu, p. 6; *O mărturie: cum s-au falsificat alegerile în armată*, p. 44).

officer in the general staff (the 3rd Infantry Division)⁴. Gheorghe Arsenescu married Maria Buduluca from Câmpulung, a graduate from high-school. They had a son⁵.

As an officer Gheorghe Arsenescu proved to be honest, self-determined and energetic. During the uprisings of January 1941 he had a prompt intervention as chief of a tank division banishing the iron-guardists who had seized the Prefecture of Târgoviște and other buildings⁶. According to an account, when Romania entered WWII, the general staff officer Gheorghe Arsenescu voiced his views before some Romanian military commanders, among whom general Ion Antonescu, declaring that Romania would lose the war, being crashed between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia⁷. His conviction was that “*Nici alături de nemți, nici alături de ruși, nu avem nici o șansă. Vom fi sacrificați* / Neither with the Germans nor with the Russians we would stand a chance. We shall be sacrificed”⁸. Arsenescu, however, was a professional military and Romanian patriot, which explains why, according to certain information, he left to the front on his own request⁹. He took part in the battles on the East front as general staff commander of the 2nd Mountain Corps Division. During the battles of Crimea he was severely wounded, being taken back to the country for recovery. He returned to his troops and reached to the Caucasus. In August 1944 he was promoted major¹⁰, and further on he became lieutenant colonel¹¹. After being decorated in 1940 with the “*Steaua României clasa a III-a / 3rd class Romanian Star*”, in 1941 he was given the “*Vulturul german / German Vulture*”, and in 1942 he was recommended for the “*Mihai Viteazu*” order¹².

After August 23, 1944, Gheorghe Arsenescu was designated representative of the Romanian party in the local Commission for the Implementation of the Armistice Convention. In this position Arsenescu strived to defend the Romanian

⁴ M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 50; I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 82-83. See also Dan Cătănuș, *Gheorghe Arsenescu (1907-1962)*, “Arhivele Totalitarismului”, no 2/1995, p. 186; *Luptătorii din munți* cit., p. 18 (records from ASRI, fonds “P”, file 1238, vol. 50).

⁵ M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 50; Excerpt from the Sentence no 11/February 12, 1962, given by the Military Court of the Military Region of Bucharest; The request addressed by Maria Arsenescu-Buduluca to the Commission Asserting the Combatant Capacity in the Anti-Communist Resistance. We thank for these documents to the Memorial of Communism Victims and of Resistance, Academia Civică Foundation, in particularly to Miss Ioana Boca.

⁶ *O mărturie: cum s-au falsificat alegerile în armată*, p. 43; I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

⁷ M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 50-51. This account should be given reserved consideration since it is not confirmed by other sources.

⁸ C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, interview with Melania Boriceanu, p. 6.

⁹ D. Cătănuș, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

¹⁰ *O mărturie: cum s-au falsificat alegerile*, p. 44; M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 51; C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, interview with Melania Boriceanu, p. 6; I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 83; D. Cătănuș, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

¹¹ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 2168, p. 37.

¹² *Luptătorii din munți*, p. 18 (records from ASRI, fonds “P”, file 1238, vol. 50); I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

interests, which he partly succeeded¹³. Another function he performed was that of commander deputy of the Muscel Territorial Recruiting Centre¹⁴. All of these explain why Gheorghe Arsenescu held an influent position in Câmpulung and the County of Muscel¹⁵.

1.2. The settling and activity of the Gheorghe Arsenescu Group from Dragoslavele

In the critical post-war context, Gheorghe Arsenescu considered the option of settling a resistance movement. He established ammunition stores in Dragoslavele and Rucăr¹⁶. The subordination of government organisations by the Communists, including the army, led to the discharge of Arsenescu on November 2, 1946, with the rank of lieutenant colonel¹⁷. On August 18, 1947, he was to be put in reserve as colonel¹⁸.

Gheorghe Arsenescu owned a farm in the village of Mioarele, County of Pitești¹⁹. Due to his friendship with Nicolae Enescu (former NLP deputy), Ion Constantinescu and others leading Câmpulung Branch of Tătărăscu National Liberal Party, Gheorghe Arsenescu became a member of this political group after the war. He proved to be an active member particularly during the parliamentary elections of November 1946, when he was accredited to a polling station in Câmpulung²⁰.

Being pursued for “sabotage” by the Economic Service of the Security of Muscel County, and receiving a penalty of 6 months imprisonment, Colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu disappeared from his residence in the summer of 1947. He hid for a while in a small convent named Cetățuia/Cetățue, in the village of Cetățeni, where he had also taken his ammunition²¹.

¹³ *O mărturie: cum s-au falsificat alegerile*, p. 43.

¹⁴ *Luptătorii din munți*, p. 18 (records from ASRI, fonds “P”, file 1238, vol. 50).

¹⁵ *O mărturie: cum s-au falsificat alegerile*, p. 43.

¹⁶ C. Caramete, *op.cit.*, interview with Melania Boriceanu, p. 6.

¹⁷ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 10762, p. 1 bis; I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 83; C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, interview with Melania Boriceanu, p. 6; D. Cătănuș, *op. cit.*, p. 186-187. A witness argued that Arsenescu had left the army of his own accord (*O mărturie: cum s-au falsificat alegerile*, p. 43).

¹⁸ D. Cătănuș, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

¹⁹ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 10762, p. 1 bis; I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

²⁰ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 10762, p. 1 bis; Excerpt from the Sentence no 11/February 12, 1962, given by the Military Court of the Military Region of Bucharest. In an interrogatory record, of February 4, 1960, Gheorghe Arsenescu stated that in 1946 he had become a member of Tătărăscu National Liberal Party, assisting in a polling section of Câmpulung-Muscel (*Luptătorii din munți*, p. 18 (record from ASRI, fonds “P”, file 1238, vol. 50)).

²¹ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 2168, p.437; *Ibidem*, file 10762, p. 1 bis; Excerpt from the Sentence no 11/February 12th, 1962, given by the Military Court of the Military Region of Bucharest. The request addressed by Maria Arsenescu-Buduluca to the Commission Asserting the Combatant Capacity in the Anti-Communist Resistance. We thank for this document to the Memorial of the Victims of Communism and of Resistance, The Civic Academy Foundation, and to Ioana Boca; M.

In spite of him being pursued by authorities, Gheorghe Arsenescu kept relations with Nicolae Enescu, Ion Constantiescu, Ion Purchinescu, etc., land-owners and industrialists, who had been NLP members. In the context of the totalitarian transformation of Romania, they decided to fight for the ousting of the Communist regime. They were hoping for the outbreak of a war between the democratic states and USSR²². In the spring of 1948, Gheorghe Arsenescu, Longin Prediou (a close relative of Arsenescu), Constantin Greculescu, Gheorghe Greculescu, Pimen Bărbieru (a former member of the Iron-Guard Movement and the abbot of a small convent in the village of Cetățeni), Petre Cojocaru (from the county of Iași, former officer, and brother-in-law of Gheorghe Arsenescu) had a meeting at the residence of the Purchinescu brothers, in the village of Cetățeni. As far as one can notice, they were people coming from different social environments and sharing different political inclinations. Those taking part in the meeting decided to continue their political activity clandestinely, to set up an anti-Communist organisation, to arm themselves, and to prepare a combat in order to defend liberty and property. Moreover, they decided to create an armed group in the mountain region of the county of Muscel, meant to take open offensive against the Communist authorities. Colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu was appointed leader of this armed group. On the same occasion, the participants drafted and made an oath of allegiance to the monarchy, engaging to fight for its restoration and the banishment of the Communist regime²³. A former member remembered how the partisans had taken an oath that “as long as the Russians lingered in the country, the Romanian tricolour would fly all above the Carpathians”²⁴.

Colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu recruited in his armed group different people pursued by the Communist authorities for political reasons: Gheorghe Hachentelner (or Hachentzelter or Hachensenler, former mayor), Vasile Săndescu, Petre Diaconescu, Constantin Banu, Traian Marinescu (all registered as iron-guardists by the Securitate), Ion Purchinescu, Gheorghe Purchinescu (members in NLP), Grigore Miron (discharged militaries), Ion Vasilescu, Sever Vasilescu (former industrialists),

Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 52. See also *Luptătorii din munți*, p. 18 (record from ASRI, fonds “P”, file 1238, vol. 50).

²² ASRI, fonds “D”, file 10762, p. 1 bis-2.

²³ *Ibidem*, file 2168, p 437-438; see also p. 317; *Ibidem*, file 9585, p. 4, 79; *Ibidem*, file 10762, p. 2; Excerpt from the Sentence no 11/February 12th, 1962, given by the Military Court of the Military Region of Bucharest. See also the testimony of Longin Predoiu, in Vera Maria Neagu, *Eroii anticomuniști n-au dreptul la o cruce sfințită?*, “România liberă”, no 681, June 26, 1992, p. 4; I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 83. Members of the same group were Elena Cojocaru, the sister of Colonel Arsenescu, married to Petre Cojocaru (C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, interview with Melania Boriceanu, p.6), Gheorghe Chiriță, Florian Potcoavă, the teacher Dumitru Burtea, etc. (I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 83), Gheorghe Zechil (M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 52).

²⁴ The testimony of Longin Predoiu, in V. M. Neagu, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

etc.²⁵. From the perspective of the Securitate, the political inclinations and social strata featuring the above mentioned men placed them directly in the “enemy of the people” category.

The location for the settling of the camp was found by Arsenescu on Mount Roșu, 5 km eastwards from the Câmpulung-Rucăr road, near the village of Dragoslavele, county of Muscel. A cabin was built storing great amounts of ammunition and food. A part of the ammunition was provided by lieutenant colonel Gheorghe Duteanu. Colonel Arsenescu gave military ranks to the men under his command, instructed them on how to fight and so on²⁶. In order to support the group in the mountains, Arsenescu and his men recruited other people. At the same time they carried out an intense propaganda against the Communist regime, with emphasis on the idea of war outbreak inevitability. Through the Purnichescu brothers, Colonel Arsenescu maintained his connections with the former local leaders of NLP Dumitru Alimănișteanu, Nicolae Enescu, Ion Constantinescu, and others²⁷.

In the vicinity of Câmpulung, Gheorghe Arsenescu met major Ion Dumitrache, from the Romanian army, giving him instructions on how to create a subversive group within the militaries of the Câmpulung garrison. Dumitrache set up an organisation, which was discovered and annihilated by the Securitate in 1952²⁸. Major Dumitrache was to be sentenced to death and executed on May 11, 1952, in Jilava prison²⁹.

Arsenescu also received support from his father-in-law, Gheorghe Buduluca, a veteran in the two world wars. Buduluca provided money, food, clothes, medication, and a ZB rifle, and thus became some sort of a courier for the organisation³⁰.

In the summer of 1948, the Arsenescu Group planned to take punitive actions against the zealot Communist activists in the region. Petre Diaconescu was an agent of the repressive services, which enabled him to inform the higher authorities of the location where the partisans were hiding. The latter ones learnt about

²⁵ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 2168, p. 437-438; also see p. 317; *Ibidem*, file 9585, p. 4, 79; *Ibidem*, file 10762, p. 2.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, file 2168, p. 437-438; also see p. 317; *Ibidem*, dos. 9585, p. 4, 79; *Ibidem*, file 10762, p. 2-3; I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 83. According to certain information, other members in the group on Mount Roșu were: Constantin Stănescu, former officer, from the village of Țigănești, county of Muscel (ASRI, fonds “D”, file 2168, p. 59); Victor Suicescu, accountant, from the town of Câmpulung, graduate from the Superior School of Commerce, former manufacturer, sympathizer with NPP (*Ibidem*); Ioan Roșca known as Aurică, from the village of Cetățeni, county of Muscel, worker, owning 4 hectares of land, former chief of cell in the Iron-Guardist Movement, then sympathizer with Maniu NPP (*Ibidem*, p. 58).

²⁷ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 10762, p. 3.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 4. See also I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

²⁹ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 7805, vol. 1, p. 46; *Ibidem*, file 10762, p. 4.

³⁰ The request addressed by Maria Arsenescu-Buduluca to the Commission Asserting the Combatant Capacity in the Anti-Communist Resistance; M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

Diaconescu's denunciation from Petre Alexiu, chief of Security of Muscel County, they seized him on Mount Roșu and killed him³¹.

Dumitru Apostol, the leader of the iron-guardist group from the Șuici region, County of Argeș, arrived in September 1948 near the village of Suslănești, Muscel County, where the group of Gheorghe Arsenescu was settled at that moment. Although the discussions lasted six days, the two leaders did not come to terms on the unification of the groups they were leading, each of them choosing to take action remotely³².

The partisans of the Arsenescu group did not stay in the shanty permanently, but they would go to the town (Câmpulung). They left the mountain shelter in September 1948, and were to come back in the following spring when they thought/hope the war would break. In that case they could have started to take action, which was to block the road linking Bucharest to Brașov. It was later on inferred that Arsenescu had built a different shelter else where, but it was not identified by the Securitate³³.

Arsenescu's organisation and other armed groups from the country shared many similarities: they were made of discharged militaries, former members of NPP, iron-guardists, priests, wealthy peasants (kulaks); all these groups intended to take action in case of armed conflict. The discrepancies between them were however interesting: apart from Colonel Arsenescu, the other members of his group were not people pursued for their political activities in NPP or the Iron-Guard, for "war crimes" or penal offences. For the first time the partisans counted people coming from the landed gentry (the engineer Radu Rosetti, son of General Rosetti) or having landed gentry roots (the engineer/technician Gheorghe Bosie), as well as the nationalised industrialists (the Purchinescu brothers and Andrei Gheorghe). Again, for the first time an armed group counted members of Bejan National Liberal Party (former Tătăreșcu), people of a particular importance in this political group: Nicolae Enescu, solicitor and former Bejan NLP deputy, Ion Constantinescu, solicitor and former Office Director of Alexandru Alexandrini, Gheorghe Chirita (or Chiriță), pharmacist and member of Bejan Câmpulung NLP Committee, who had strong connections with the leader of the party (Petru Bejan). Meanwhile, no relationship was noticed between the Arsenescu Group and the peasants in the region. For this reason, the Securitate considered it as a mere "izolare de țărâtime / isolation from the peasantry"³⁴, a rather strange statement given that the politic police registered

³¹ ASRI, fonds "D", file 10762, p. 3.

³² *Ibidem*, file 9585, p. 3-4; *Ibidem*, file 10762, f. 3-4; *Idem*, fonds "P", file 1238, vol. 14, p. 217. We thank to Mrs. Ioana-Raluca Voicu-Arnăuțoiu for this last document (but also for others from the same file, which are to be quoted further on). See also Răzvan Ciolcă, Claudia Căpățână, *Rezistența anticomunistă de pe Valea Topologului. Interviu cu Dumitru Apostol*, "Arhivele Totalitarismului", no 22-23, 1-2/1999, p. 221-222.

³³ ASRI, fonds "D", file 2168, p. 437-438; see also p. 317; *Ibidem*, file 9585, p. 4, 79.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, file 2168, p. 438; *Ibidem*, file 9585, p. 4. See also I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 83; *Povestea Elisabetei Rizea*, p. 108-109.

itself the existence of a certain number of “kulaks” (4) and poor peasants (8) among these partisans³⁵.

According to some 1949 data of the Securitate, the Arsenescu Group had registered 41 members, with the observation that unlike other armed groups, there was not a specific distinction between the real partisans and “sympathizers”³⁶. In 1951, in a document issued by the same repressive organisation it was specified that the group counted 100 members in the mountains and the villages down the mountains³⁷.

The Arsenescu Group was eventually discovered by the Securitate. 26 arrests were operated (many of them on March 30, 1949), including the discharged captain Petre Cojocaru, lieutenant colonel Gheorghe Duteanu, the abbot Pimen Bărbierul, the solicitors Nicolae Enescu and Ion Constantinescu, the pharmacist Gheorghe Chiriță³⁸. The age of the arrested men could have been distributed into the following categories: three of them were aged from 17 to 25, six were aged from 25 to 35, 14 were aged from 35 to 50, and three were over 50. The social structure looked as follows: four were wealthy peasants (“kulaks”), eight were poor peasants, five priests, three tradesmen, two workers, two were “retired clerks”, one discharged military, and one freelancer. From a political point of view, one was a member of Brătianu National Liberal Party, two of Bejan National Liberal Party, two were members of the Romanian Labour Party, while their majority (21) had no affiliation³⁹. The Securitate succeeded in capturing from the Arsenescu Group the following ammunition materials: four weapons, 10 machine guns, three pistols and revolvers, 220 cartridges and 50 grenades⁴⁰.

1.3. The trial of the Arsenescu Group (Dragoslavele)

The interrogation of those arrested for being members of the Arsenescu Group took place in Pitești, and it was led by Ion Cârnu (former cabman). The accused refused to acknowledge before the Military Court the statements made during the inquiries, and for this reason they were crossed-examined again on December 22, 1949. Together with Dumitrescu, the prison governor, Captain Cârnu

³⁵ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 2168, p. 423.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 441.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 317.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 437-438, 442; I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *Refulări din închisoare*, “Memoria”, no 30, 1/2000, p. 120; Cicerone Ionițoiu, *Victimele terorii comuniste. Arestați, torturați, întemnițați, uciși. Dicționar C*, Paper revised by Mihaela Andreiovici and Florin Ștefănescu, Bucharest, 2002, p. 179; C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, interview with Melania Boriceanu, p. 6. In a report by the Securitate of 1949 it was mentioned that in the mountain region of Muscel County there was an armed group led by Ioan Purchinescu, a former member of the Arsenescu Group, which counted 9 people: “kulak” peasants, students and former tradesmen (ASRI, fonds “D”, file 2168, p.408). In further reports of the political police this group is no longer mentioned.

³⁹ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 2168, p. 423.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 444.

revenge on the arrested (54 in total) locking them in a damp narrow room at the basement of the prison, when there were -15 degrees Celsius outside. The prisoners were subjected to a “*regim de teroare și subnutriție / terror and malnutrition*” regime: they were cudgelled and cursed by the wardens; the meals consisted of “*soi de lături calde cu iz dezgustător / some sort of warm disgusting slops*”, “*apă fiartă, cu câteva bucățele de cartofi în coaja lor murdară, parte chiar stricați, sau fire de varză și gogonele murate / boiled water with few pieces of unpeeled muddy potatoes, some even rotten, or cabbage stalks and pickled autumn tomatoes*”⁴¹.

Ion Constantinescu was one of those brutally beaten by Captain Cârnu and his assistants, Zanfirescu and Onea. Slapping was nothing compared to sole lashing:

*“Cei doi torționari [Zanfirescu and Onea, D. D.] m-au fixat cu fața în jos pe canapea. Mi-au scos pantofii, m-au legat fedeleș cu mâinile la spate. Mi-au pus în gură un prosop ca să nu urlu. Căpitanul își fuma nervos țigara ținându-mă strâns de picioarele legate ca să nu mă zvârcolesc./ Călare pe mine, Onea îmi strângea mâinile la spate în timp ce Zamfir, frizerul, mă lovea la comanda căpitanului cu vâna de bou. Operația a fost de scurtă durată. N-am putut scoate nici un scâncet. Cu prosopul în gură, abia respiram. O șuviță de spumă albă mi se scurgea din gură. După 10-12 lovituri, n-am mai simțit nici durere, nici fierbințeală. Părțile lovite îmi amorțiseră. Sângele îmi zvâcnea în tâmple / The two torturers had me face the couch. They took off my shoes, bound my hands tight at the back. They stuffed a towel in my mouth so that I don't wail. The Captain was nervously smoking his cigarette holding my feet tight so that I don't struggle./ Onea had mounted me squeezing my hands at the back while Zamfir, the barber, was cudgelling me under the Captain's order. It didn't last long. I couldn't even wail. With that towel stuffed in my mouth I could barely breathe. A small stripe of foam was streaming out of my mouth. After 10-12 cudgels, I couldn't feel any pain and any fever. The beaten parts had become numb. The blood was pumping up in my temples.”*⁴²

Scenes similar to the one described took place for days (especially for evenings and nights)⁴³. Captain Cârnu, Lieutenant-Colonel Târziu, and Lieutenant Iordache even framed an execution to Constantinescu, who had been taken out of the town one night. “The ride” was meant to destroy the prisoner's spirits, but not to kill him⁴⁴.

Other apprehensions took place by the end of 1949 or in 1950. For example, Elena Cojocaru, the sister of Gheorghe Arsenescu was apprehended in November 1949⁴⁵. Longin Predoiu, from the village of Dragoslavele, was arrested in 1950. He

⁴¹ I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 119-120.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 121.

⁴³ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 122.

⁴⁵ C. Ionițoiu, *op. cit.*, p. 177; C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, interview with Melania Boriceanu, p. 6.

was severely beaten for two weeks. Forced by the Securitate, the abbot Pimen Bărbieru, of Cetățeni, tried to make him talk (“*Longine, taică, spune tot, că au trădat ceilalți! / Longin, my dear boy, tell them everything, tell them that the others betrayed!*”)⁴⁶.

The first lot of 42 convicts from the Arsenescu Group, trialled twice, was cross-examined for the third time before court, after the action for cancellation lodged at the Supreme Court by Alexa Augustin, the Public Prosecutor of the People’s Republic of Romania. After 17 extenuating sessions, the court increased the penalties of the accused⁴⁷.

Captain Petre Cojocaru was sentenced to 20 years of hard labour and was released in 1964. Elena Cojocaru was imprisoned for 7 years. They had a daughter who was raised by their relatives⁴⁸. The solicitor Ion Constantinescu was sentenced to 16 years of imprisonment, changing 12 detention camps: the Ministry of Interior, Pitești (the Securitate and prison), Uranus, Jilava, Aiud, lead mines of Baia Sprie and Valea Nistrului, Văcărești (the prison-hospital), Gherla, Galați and Botoșani. He was released by a grace-decree on June 24, 1964⁴⁹. Other convicts of the Arsenescu Group included: Nicolae Enescu, Ioan and Gheorghe Purchinescu, Gheorghe Chiriță, Florian Potcoavă, Ionel Dumitrescu-Lazea, Gheorghe Cotenescu, the priest Iosif Mușatescu (brother of the writer Tudor Mușatescu), Radu Rosetti; we do not know the total of their penalties⁵⁰. Sentenced by the Communist justice, Longin Predoiu spent 15 years in the Communist prisons⁵¹.

2. The Gheorghe Arsenescu-Toma Arnăuțoiu Group in the region of Nucșoara (1949)

From the group of Dragoslavele 15 people were not arrested, including two of the subversive group founders, Colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu and Quarter Master Grigore Miron⁵². From mid-December 1948 to March 1949 Gheorghe Arsenescu hid in Bucharest where his wife had rented an apartment. During this period, the Colonel met Nicolae Enescu, Ion Constantiescu, Gheorghe Purnichescu, General Gheorghe Mosiu, pursued for his activity in the organisation named “*Haiducii lui Avram Iancu-Divizia Sumanelor Negre / The Outlaws of Avram Iancu-The Black Coats Division*”, Nicu Nicolae, former industrialist and member of NPP, Ion Dumitrescu called Lazea, former landowner and member of NLP, Gheorghe Andrei, former iron-guardist and industrialist, Iosif Vișoianu, iron-guardist, Toma Arnăuțoiu, “son of kulaks” and

⁴⁶ V. M. Neagu, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁴⁷ I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *Un erou de legendă*, p. 85.

⁴⁸ C. Ionițoiu, *op. cit.*, p. 177, 179; C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, interview with Melania Boriceanu, p. 6.

⁴⁹ I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *Refulări din închisoare*, p. 120-121.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 120; *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 109.

⁵¹ V. M. Neagu, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

⁵² ASRI, fonds “D”, file 2168, p. 437-438, 442.

former officer⁵³. Together with these men, Arsenescu decided to form a new anti-Communist armed group. During several meetings they came to terms on the structure and action plan of the group: it had to be military; the members had to be instructed and armed according to military rules; the recruits had to be known for their anti-Communist stance (probably to avoid the Securitate penetrations); the group had to start guerrilla warfare⁵⁴. Concomitantly, by the end of 1948 – beginning of 1949, Gheorghe Arsenescu and Toma Arnăuțoiu contacted (or attempted to contact, the records show contradictory information) – with the help with Gheorghe Bosie – the US and French legations in Bucharest, revealing their plan to form a resistance organisation. The two diplomatic agencies ensured them that a war between the democratic and Communist states was to break at any time, and the first ones were to provide material support (ammunition and money) to the Romanian resistance⁵⁵.

The region of the village of Dragoslavele could no longer be considered for the settling of the organisation action location. Colonel Arsenescu's group used to operate in that region, but it was now controlled by the Securitate⁵⁶. The camp and action location were therefore settled in the mountain region of the village of Nucșoara, Muscel County, which gave the possibility of deploying vast actions⁵⁷.

2.1. The geographic, social and political radiography of Nucșoara (the spring and summer of 1949)

Nucșoara is a village on Doamnei River, on the southern slope of the Făgăraș Mountains, with the houses scattered in orchards and forests. In the late 40s it used to be part of Muscel County. The region was afforested and extremely broken, being a good place to shelter and operate for the partisans⁵⁸.

The most important families in the village of Nucșoara had been ever since the inter-war period those of the teacher Ion Arnăuțoiu and of the priest Ion Drăgoi⁵⁹. Through the very common system of god-father standing, the social liaisons of the foremost people in the rural world were widely spread in Romania during the inter-war and post-war period. A similar situation was in Nucșoara⁶⁰.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, dos. 9585, f. 4, 79; *Ibidem*, dos. 10762, f. 4; Excerpt from the Sentence no 11/February 12th, 1962, given by the Military Court of the Military Region of Bucharest; The request addressed by Maria Arsenescu-Buduluca to the Commission Asserting the Combatant Capacity in the Anti-Communist Resistance; M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 52; *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 109.

⁵⁴ ASRI, fond "D", file 9585, p. 4, 79; *Ibidem*, file 10762, p. 4.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, file 9585, p. 4, 79; *Ibidem*, file 10762, p. 4-5.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, file 10762, p. 5.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, file 9585, p. 4, 79; *Ibidem*, file 10762, p. 4.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, file 11251, vol. 1, p. 568; Al. Marinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

⁵⁹ *Povestea Elisabetei Rizea*, p. 21.

⁶⁰ For example, Gheorghe and Elisabeta Rizea had Ion Drăgoia as a god-father at their wedding ceremony; he was the priest of the village of Nucșoara (*Ibidem*, p. 21, 28).

Ion Arnăuțoiu also known as Iancu was born on October 11, 1887, in the village of Nucșoara. He was a priest and became a member of NPP before 1944, but he distinguished for his activity in this party particularly during the elections of 1946, when his party accredited him to a polling station⁶¹. Iancu and Lucreția Arnăuțoiu had five children: Nelu, Elena, Toma, Petre and Anton. The eldest son, Nelu Arnăuțoiu, was a cavalry officer and died on the battle-front in 1944, in Baccisarai, Crimea. He was promoted captain post-mortem⁶².

Toma Arnăuțoiu was born on February 14, 1921, in the village of Nucșoara, Muscel County. Like his elder brother, Nelu, Toma pursued a military career. In 1944 he graduated from the Officers Military School with the rank of sub-lieutenant, and on September 3, 1944, he left for the battle-front with the 3rd Roșiori Regiment. He distinguished on the battle-field and was awarded the “*Coroana României*” order (5th rank with swords, and “*Virtutea Militară*” ribbon with oak leaves) on November 1, 1944. He was wounded during the battles of December 26, 1944, near Budapest. After a three months hospitalisation he was sent to “*Regina Elena*” 9th Guard Regiment.

He was discharged in 1946 and was appointed secretary of NPP-Youth organisation in the village of Nucșoara, distinguishing himself particularly during the elections of 1946. In 1947 he was put in reserve as lieutenant⁶³.

Anton Arnăuțoiu was an officer in reserve and his lungs were severely wounded during the battles against the Germans in Băneasa, near Bucharest, on August 24/25, 1944. He was declared disabled (1st degree) and he would spend a great part of his life in Romanian sanatoria. In the first post-war years he attended the Law School of Bucharest, being concomitantly the president of NPP-Youth in the village of Nucșoara. Since he was suffering from tuberculosis, he settled in the town of Sighișoara, where the climate was appropriate for him. Due to this reason he was

⁶¹ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 9585, p.90, 111; *Luptătorii din munși*, p. 757 (records from ASRI, fonds “P”, file 1238, vol. 72). In other records, Ion Arnăuțoiu was remembered as a former member of Averscu People’s Party, but also of the National Liberal Party, as well as an “outstanding member of MNPP [Maniu National Peasant Party]” (*Ibidem*, p. 243, record from ASRI, fonds “P”, file 1238, vol. 14).

⁶² The testimony of Elena Ion (born Arnăuțoiu), in C. Caramete, *Ne vrem pământul înapoi!*, “România liberă”, no 1022, 11 august 1993, p. 7; Răzvan Ciolcă, Claudia Căpățână, *Haiducii Muscelului*, “Arhiva”, supliment de istorie al ziarului *Cotidianul*, no 4 (64), 18 aprilie 1997, p. 7 (interview with Elena Florea, born Arnăuțoiu). We thank Mr. Cristian Vasile for this material; *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 109-110.

⁶³ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 2168, p. 37; *Ibidem*, file 9585, p. 11, 70; *Ibidem*, file 10764, p. 2; *Banalitatea răului. O istorie a Securității în documente. 1949-1989* (ed. by Marius Oprea; introductory study by Dennis Deletant), Iași, 2002, p. 285 (records from ASRI, fonds “P”, file 1238, vol. 43) and footnotes 2-4. See also D. Cătănuș, *Toma Arnăuțoiu (1921-1959)*, “Arhivele Totalitarismului”, no 3/1995, p. 210.

not much involved in the “*hora / dance*” (this expression belongs to Cornel Drăgoi) his family and village had to dance⁶⁴.

Petre, the youngest of the Arnăuțoius’ sons, was born on January 16, 1926, in the village of Nușoara, Muscel County⁶⁵. The Securitate would report about him during his trial of 1959 that when he had been a student attending the Commercial High-school of Câmpulung “*a făcut parte din organizația legionară FDC / he had been a member of the FDC iron-guardist movement*”⁶⁶. We do not know whether this information is somewhat true. At any rate, during the elections of 1946 he made propaganda for NPP, being further on considered a member of this party⁶⁷. He was married to Victoria Năstase, a native of the village of Corbi⁶⁸.

The priest Ion Drăgoi was born on October 20¹, 1900, in the village of Vălsănești. He attended both the Seminary and the Faculty of Orthodox Theology of Bucharest. He settled in Nușoara in 1926 and became a member of NPP in 1932. He was devoted to his community and was deeply involved in its social problems⁶⁹. One of his sons, Cornel Drăgoi, was 22 in 1949 and a student in the 2nd year at the Faculty of Letters – University of Bucharest. His dream was to become a philologist⁷⁰.

Another important family in Nușoara was that of the teacher Virgil Marinescu, married to Ecaterina Marinescu. They had two children, Ion and Alexandru Marinescu⁷¹. Titu and Maria Jubleanu were registered in the Securitate records as a family of poor peasants⁷². This family was to play an important role in further events. One of their children, Constantin Jubleanu, would distinguish along his parents.

Maria Plop was born on September 14, 1927, in the village of Prisecani, Iași County. By the end of the war, when a part of Moldavia was supposed to be cleared out, the young woman of Prisecani arrived in the village of Nușoara, in the spring of 1944, and became a servant for the Arnăuțoius⁷³.

⁶⁴ The testimony of Elena Florea (born Arnăuțoiu), in C. Caramete, *op. cit.*, p. 7; R. Ciolcă, C. Căpățână, *op. cit.*, interview with Elena Florea (born Arnăuțoiu), p. 7; R. Ciolcă, *Anton Arnăuțoiu (1924-2000)*, “Arhivele Totalitarismului”, no 28-29, 3-4/2000, p. 220-221; *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 109-110.

⁶⁵ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 9585, p. 70; *Ibidem*, file 10764, p. 2.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, file 9585, p. 25, 70.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 25; *Ibidem*, file 10764, p. 2.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, file 10764, p. 2.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, file 9585, p. 61, 71; *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 147-148.

⁷⁰ The testimony of Cornel Drăgoi, in R. C. Pena, *op. cit.*, p. 3; and in *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 110; also in Irina Nicolau, *A doua mărturie a lui Cornel Drăgoi*, “Revista de Istorie Socială”, II-III, 1997-1998, p. 245.

⁷¹ Al. Marinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

⁷² ASRI, fonds “D”, file 10764, p. 2. See also I. Nicolau, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

⁷³ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 2168, p. 246, 249; *Ibidem*, file 9585, p. 70; *Ibidem*, file 10764, p. 2; *Ibidem*, file 11251, vol. 2, p. 614; *Luptătorii din munți*, p. 727 (records from ASRI, fonds “P”, file 1238, vol. 81). The people of Nușoara knew that Maria Plop had come to that region in 1944

The region of Nucșoara was seized by the same fears after 1944: fear of Communists, of Russians, of land confiscation and collectivisation, of being all forced to eat “*la cazan / from a pail*”⁷⁴. The people of Nucșoara earned their living cleaving wood, raising poultry and cattle, tilling the small piece of land they had. The nationalisation implemented by the Communist regime in 1948 was also a blow to the wood-owners or to those entrepreneurs exploiting the wood. Gheorghe and Elisabeta Rizea were among them. The feeling of injustice and of pillage sponsored by the government deeply affected these people who considered property as a sign of social success, of self-respect⁷⁵.

2.2. The creation of the “*Haiducii Muscelului / Muscel Outlaws*” organisation

In March 1949, Gheorghe Arsenescu and Toma Arnăuțoiu went to Nucșoara, and contacted teacher Ion Arnăuțoiu, priest Ion Drăgoi, Nicolae Milea, teacher Virgil Marinescu, teacher Lemnaru, teacher Alexandru Moldoveanu (awarded the “*Mihai Viteazu*” order during the battles in the Caucasus Mountains), Gheorghe Rizea, Gheorghe Popescu, Cornel Drăgoi (former NPP member), Constantin Popescu (former NLP member), Petre Arnăuțoiu, Titu Jubleanu, Ion Preda, Constantin Samoilă, Nicolae Samoilă (all of them considered iron-guardists by the Securitate), Aurel Chirca, Ion Chirca, Benone Milea, Maria Plop, Maria Jubleanu, Marina Chirca, Ana Simion, Elisabeta Rizea etc. They were all given details of the plans for creating an anti-Communist organisation and its objectives, and then recruited within the resistance⁷⁶.

The member of this group made an oath of allegiance before the priest Ion Drăgoi in the house of Petre Arnăuțoiu and Gheorghe Rizea. Those who vowed were: Ion Drăgoi, Gheorghe Arsenescu, Toma Arnăuțoiu, Petre and Victoria Arnăuțoiu, priest Virgil Marinescu, Gheorghe and Elisabeta Rizea, Ion Chirca and his two sons, Titu and Maria Jubleanu and their son Constantin, the college graduate Benone Milea, the peasant Constantin Popescu (born in Oltenia), and the driver Nicolae Ciolan (also a new comer in the village)⁷⁷. The oath was made according to the directions given by Gheorghe Arsenescu:

“*În numele lui Dumnezeu Atotputernicul și pe sfânta cruce eu... [and the name was uttered, note by D.D.]/ Jur să mă fac haiduc, de bună voie și nesilit de*

during the clearing of the eastern part of the country, but they did not know precisely where she came from, some thought she was Bessarabian (see *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 164).

⁷⁴ *Povestea Elisabetei Rizea*, p. 48-49.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 25.

⁷⁶ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 9585, p. 5, 80; *Ibidem*, file 10762, p. 5. See also Al. Marinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 48; *Povestea Elisabetei Rizea*, p. 26; *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 109, 148. Although Cornel Drăgoi was in Bucharest to study, when he learned the organisation was created by the partisans, he returned home joining the resistance (The testimony of Cornel Drăgoi, in R. C. Pena, «*Cumînțenia pământului*», p. 3; and in *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 110; and in I. Nicolau, *op. cit.*, p. 245).

⁷⁷ *Povestea Elisabetei Rizea*, p. 28; Al. Marinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

nimeni, pentru a lupta la salvarea și eliberarea Patriei și neamului, din ghearele fiarelor comuniste-bolșevice și de sub jugul greu al rușilor./ Jur credință Majestății Sale Regele Mihai I, Regele tuturor românilor;/ Jur credință Guvernului liber al Patriei;/ Jur supunere și ascultare, fără murmur și fără șovăire șefilor haiducilor;/ Jur săucid fără milă și fără cruțare pe toți streinii și ticăloșii, care ne-au trădat țara și vândut Patria și neamul și au adus dezastrul țării;/ Jur să nu mă despart de frații mei de luptă, decât după victoria finală;/ În caz de trădare sau de călcare a jurământului, să fiu ucis atât eu, cât și întreaga mea familie./ Așa să-mi ajute Dumnezeu / In the name of God the Almighty and the Holly Cross, I ... swear to become an outlaw on my own accord, to fight, rescue and save our Country and nation from the claws of the Communist-Bolshevik beasts and from the Russian oppressive yoke./ I swear to be loyal to His Majesty the King Mihai I, the King of all Romanians;/ I swear to be loyal to the free Government of our Country;/ I swear to be loyal and submissive to the outlaw captains without a murmur and a waver;/ I swear to kill mercilessly and ruthlessly all the villains that betrayed and sold our Country and nation bringing it to ruin;/ I swear not to separate from my brothers in arms, after our final victory only;/ In case of betrayal or perjury of this oath, I should be killed together with my family./ So help me God.”⁷⁸

The priorities were to arm, recruit as many members, prepare military and politically in order to take armed actions provided a war would break, and the Communist regime would be overthrown⁷⁹. Once recruited, the previous political affiliation was not considered. A former member declared:

“Această mișcare nu a fost nici țărănistă, nici liberală, nici legionară, ci anticomunistă și antirusească / This movement was neither Peasant nor Liberal nor iron-guardist, but anti-Communist and anti-Russian.”⁸⁰

⁷⁸ *Luptătorii din munți*, p. 83 (records from ASRI, fonds “P”, fle 1238, vol. 2). The oath was to be known under different forms (ASRI, fonds “D”, file 8600, vol. 1, p. 22; *Ibidem*, file 9585, p. 5-6, 15, 80). The partisans were responsible for the mission accomplishment (the anti-Communist fight) “*în fața comandanților, a țării și neamului / before their commanders of the country and nation*”. (*Ibidem*, file 8600, vol. 1, p. 22). In case of oath breaking, both the accused and his family were liable of death penalty “to the 9th generation” (*Ibidem*, p. 23), under the reserve that this was however a common rhetoric in the popular milieus. One of the partisans – who used the conspirative name of Radu Craiu” – wrote the “*Jurământul Haiducului / Outlaw’s Oath*”, a ballad made of six four-line stanzas. The divine intervention was invoked in the battle against the enemy: “*Întărește brațul meu/ În momentul cel mai greu/ Să răpun fiara păgână/ Peste Țara mea stăpână/ Pe dușmanul blestemat/ Ca haiduc ce am jurat/ Să-lucid fără cruțare/ Să-l dau afară din hotare / Strengthen my arm/ When it’s most rough/ To kill the pagan beast/ That rules over my country// The damned enemy/ As an outlaw/ To kill ruthlessly/ To chase them over the borders*”. In the last part of the ballad the promise to bind by vow took the form of self-damnation in case of betrayal (*Ibidem*, f. 25).

⁷⁹ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 9585, p. 5, 80.

⁸⁰ *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 111.

2.3. The partisans' road of no return

Further to the arrests operated within the members of the Dragoslavele Group (March 30¹, 1949)⁸¹, the Securitate discovered on April 1, 1949 the apartment where Gheorghe Arsenescu was hiding in Bucharest. In order to avoid the arrest, he left for Nucșoara together with Toma Arnăuțoiu⁸². Because Gheorghe Arsenescu, Toma Arnăuțoiu, Ion Chirca, Titu Jubleanu etc. were pursued by the Securitate, they decided to withdraw in the mountains, where to build shelters and prepare for attacks against the Communist regime. Those who were not followed were supposed to stay at home and recruit new members, procure ammunition, collect food and clothes, gather information on the internal and foreign political situation, but also on the steps taken by the repressive services against the organisation⁸³.

The partisan leaders managed to have on their side someone who had been an outlaw for 14 years: Ion Chirca called the Deserter (since he had run away from the army). He knew the best the mountains in the northern part of Nucșoara, he knew all the hiding places in the woods, "*chiar scorburile / even the hollows*" as the locals would say. Moreover, he was a good shooter, probably mixing a native talent with the long practice of the years he had spent in the mountains, when he must have lived from hunting for the most part⁸⁴.

Gheorghe Arsenescu, Toma Arnăuțoiu, Ion Chirca, Titu, Maria și Constantin Jubleanu, Petre Arnăuțoiu, Maria Plop, Constantin Jubleanu, Gheorghe Chirca, Benone Milea, Elena Chirca, Constantin Popescu, Nicolae Ciolan, and Aurelia Costea armed themselves, brought food (from their supporters too) and settled in the mountains around Nucșoara, where they built shelters to hide⁸⁵.

After the discussions carried by Gheorghe Arsenescu, Toma Arnăuțoiu and Ion Chirca, it was agreed that they should be organized according to a military pattern, in battle groups, platoons, head-quarters, ammunition supply service, and recruiting service. A general order was given in this respect, being read together with all members of the organization. On the same occasion, they all made an oath⁸⁶ (most

⁸¹ I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *Un erou de legendă*, p. 83.

⁸² Excerpt from the Sentence no 11/February 12th, 1962, given by the Military Court of the Military Region of Bucharest; *Banalitatea râului*, p. 285 (records from ASRI, fonds "D", file 10104, p. 13-44); "*Bande, bandiți și eroi*". *Grupurile de rezistență și Securitatea (1948-1968)*. *Documente* (co-ordinator Florica Dobre, ed. by Florian Banu, Camelia Duică, Silviu B. Moldovan, Elis Neagoe, Liviu Țăranu; introductory study by Florian Banu and Silviu B. Moldovan), Bucharest, 2003, p. 80 (records from Arhivele Ministerului Justiției, Direcția Instanțelor Militare, "penal" fonds, file no 27463, vol. 4, p. 89-93, what follows: AMJDIM); M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 53; I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 83-84.

⁸³ ASRI, fonds "D", file 9585, p. 5, 80.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, file 11251, vol. 1, p. 536 (f.), 568, 575; *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 114-118; I. Nicolau, *op. cit.*, p. 247. See also *Povestea Elisabetei Rizea*, p. 52.

⁸⁵ ASRI, fonds "D", file 9585, p. 5, 80.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 15; *Ibidem*, file 10762, p. 5.

probably a reconfirmation of the previous one) – pledging loyalty in the anti-Communist fight⁸⁷.

Colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu bestowed military ranks to the organization members and also conspiring names that reminded of famous outlaws, as it had been done in the Dragoslavele Group in 1948⁸⁸. Colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu considered himself and was recognized as “*comandantul tuturor haiducilor Muscel-Argeș / commander of all the outlaws of Muscel-Argeș*”, known by the name of “Colonel Craiul Făgărașului”⁸⁹. Toma Arnăuțoiu became a captain, known as “Mereanu”, and leader of the “Muscel Outlaws”; Titu Jubleanu was promoted lieutenant, known as “Iancu Jianu”; Petre Arnăuțoiu was promoted senior-sergeant and secretary of the group, known as “Bujor”; Constantin Popescu became also a senior-sergeant, known as “Moangă”⁹⁰. For the training of the group members there were organised both firing sessions with the ammunition supplied and instruction sessions⁹¹.

As we have already seen, the organisation was named the “*Haiducii Muscelului*”⁹², while the combatants considered themselves “*haiduci / outlaws*”⁹³. Over the following years other names were used: “*Gruparea de partizani (haiduci) de pe râul Doamnei / Doamnei River Partisan (outlaws) Group*”⁹⁴, “*Rezistența Națională / National Resistance*”⁹⁵, and “*Partizanii Libertății / Liberty Partisans*”⁹⁶. As for the Securitate, it registered in its records the name of “*banda Arsenescu-Arnăuțoiu / Arsenescu-Arnăuțoiu gang*”⁹⁷.

The Securitate was to learn from its informers that the Arsenescu group had settled on Mount Oticul, at Colțul Cremenii. The new partisan group was formed of kulak peasants, a priest, two teachers, and a few iron-guardists. There were identified 14 (or 16) members, of whom three were women⁹⁸. Based on the information held, the General Directorate of the Securitate sent a battalion of MIA (Ministry of Internal

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, file 9585, p. 5-6, 15, 80.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 5-6; *Ibidem*, file 10762, f. 5; *Luptătorii din munți*, p. 82-83.

⁸⁹ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 8600, vol. 1, p. 22.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*; *Luptătorii din munți*, p. 82-83. See also *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 129.

⁹¹ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 9585, p. 15; *Ibidem*, dos. 10762, p. 5.

⁹² *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 108; I. Nicolau, *op. cit.*, p. 246.

⁹³ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 8600, vol. 1, p. 22-23.

⁹⁴ *Luptătorii din munți*, p. 134 (records from ASRI, fonds “P”, file 1238, vol. 53).

⁹⁵ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 8600, vol. 1, p. 31. See also general-maior Luigi Martiș, general-maior Constantin Mleşniță, colonel Ion Șerbănescu, colonel Ilie Coman, *În slujba patriei socialiste. File din istoria trupelor de securitate*, Ministerul de Interne, Comandamentul Trupelor de Securitate, Serviciul Editorial și Cinematografic, 1980, p. 48. We thank Mr. Romulus Rusan for this paper.

⁹⁶ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 8600, vol. 1, p. 33; *Ibidem*, file 11251, vol. 1, p. 347. Vezi și *În slujba patriei socialiste*, p. 48.

⁹⁷ ASRI, fonds “D”, dos. 2168, *passim*; *Ibidem*, file 9585, *passim*; *Ibidem*, file 10762, *passim*.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, file 2168, p. 407; “*Bande, bandiți și eroi*”, p. 80 (records from AMJDIM, the “penal” fonds, file no 27463, vol. 4, p. 89-93).

Affairs) in the region so as to round up the rebel group⁹⁹. Witnesses argue that in the area had been brought: mountain corps from Făgăraș to Câmpulung, a Securitate battalion from Găești, but also members of the Securitate offices in the regions of Câmpulung, Pitești, Curtea de Argeș, Onești, Râmnicu-Vâlcea, and from over the mountains. There were thousands of people who quickly installed telephone stations and wires to the mountains. The aim was to “comb” the mountains and control step by step. In Nucșoara there were squads of four or five soldiers led by officers or sub-officers to control the “villains” houses¹⁰⁰.

Few of the mountain group members (Gheorghe Arsenescu, Toma Arnăuțoiu, Petre Arnăuțoiu, Benone Milea, and Ion Chirca called the Deserter) descended in the night of June 18 to 19, 1949 in Nucșoara, to get supplies from the house of Ion Arnăuțoiu. Here they were caught by a Securitate squad. In the conflict that took place, the Securitate warrant officer Constantin Apăvăloaie and major Florea Lungu were killed. The partisans withdrew in order to the mountain area without having the troops firing back¹⁰¹.

On June 20, 1949, Colonel Arsenescu issued general orders (registered in a note-book), promoting all the participants in the event of June 19, 1949: Toma Arnăuțoiu, was promoted from major to captain, since he had been wounded during the conflict of Nucșoara; Ion Chirca was promoted from captain to lieutenant; Benone Milea from warrant officer to sub-lieutenant; Petre Arnăuțoiu, from senior sergeant to warrant officer, the three latter ones “*pentru curajul dovedit în acțiune / for the courage they proved in action*”¹⁰².

The Securitate operated several arrests within the organization in the morning of June 19, 1949. The priest Drăgoi managed to escape¹⁰³. His son, Cornel Drăgoi, made his escape from a pursuing squad and hid in the lake from the village of Nucșoara. However, one of the villagers evinced him to the Securitate agents and he was seized¹⁰⁴.

The members of the mountain group carried out an intense anti-Communist propaganda in the region through manifestoes (“*fițiuci cu conținut contrarevoluționar / leaflets containing counter-revolutionary slogans*”), urging the population to disobey the rules enforced and to overturn the totalitarian regime,

⁹⁹ “*Bande, bandiți și eroi*”, p. 80 (records from AMJDIM, the “penal” fonds, file no 27463, vol. 4, p. 89-93). See also Al. Marinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

¹⁰⁰ *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 118-119; Al. Marinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

¹⁰¹ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 9585, p. 6-7, 81; *Ibidem*, file 10762, p. 5; *Ibidem*, file 10764, p. 1; *Banalitatea răului*, p. 285 (records from ASRI, fonds “D”, file 10104, p. 13-44); *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 118-119-120, 126-129; Al. Marinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 48-50.

¹⁰² ASRI, fonds “D”, file 8600, vol. 1, p. 22; *Ibidem*, 10762, p. 5-6; *Luptătorii din munți*, p. 133-134 (records from ASRI, fonds “P”, file 1238, vol. 53). See also *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 118, 129.

¹⁰³ *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 149-150.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 119-122; I. Nicolau, *op. cit.*, p. 246; *Mărturia Elisabetei Rizea*, in R. C. Pena, *op. cit.*, p. 3

cultivating the hope of war-breaking and so on¹⁰⁵. For example, on June 26, 1949, they placed slogans on trees and wood paths, stating that they were many and supplied by the Anglo-Americans, etc.¹⁰⁶.

Two cells of the group attacked in the summer of 1949 the caravans transporting food for the workers in the mountain forestry operations, then the sheepfold on Mount Drăghia, where they collected the food. The day of August 11th was marked by the attack performed by the entire Arsenescu Group on the food centre of IPEIL Domnești, where they collected maize flour and all the clothing in stock¹⁰⁷.

After the repression actions of the Securitate in the summer of 1949, 23 people of this group got away from apprehension including the leaders Gheorghe Arsenescu and Toma Arnăuțoiu¹⁰⁸. On the initiative of Toma Arnăuțoiu, the members of the organisation decided in June-July 1949 to split into two groups, which would take action separately so as to be efficient. One of the groups – made of 15 people (according to certain data) – was to be led by Gheorghe Arsenescu, while the other – made of eight members – by Toma Arnăuțoiu. The two groups agreed to keep contact and draft joint plans of attack¹⁰⁹. The Arsenescu (sub)group operated on Doamnei River and the Arnăuțoiu (sub)group on Vâlsan River¹¹⁰. From other documents of the Securitate proceeds that the group split in the autumn of 1949 due to some misunderstandings, a part of the members remaining under the command of Gheorghe Arsenescu, while others recognised Toma Arnăuțoiu as leader¹¹¹.

¹⁰⁵ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 9585, p.6, 81. Such a “fișuică / leaflet” was addressed to militias: “Către purtătorii stelei cu 5 colțuri/ Când porțile temnițelor se vor deschide larg, când cătușe sfințite în sânge de eroi se vor sfărâma, când gloanțele dreptății românești vor șuera liberatoare, din capăt în capăt de țară, voi care azi purtați la caschetă steaua blestemată a satanei moscovite nu veți scăpa/ Nici în mormânt / To the bearers of the 5-edged star/When the gates of the prison are wide opened, when the shackles blessed by the heroes’ blood are broken, when the bullets of Romanian justice whiz the sound of freedom from one country boundary to the other, you with your caps bearing the star of the damned Muscovite Satan will not get away/Not even in your graves”. After being threatened, the militias were urged not to comply with the “tyrants” orders. And: “Voi care v-ați vândut Moscovei, luați aminte: Prigoaniții de azi vor fi judecătorii voștri de mâine / You who sold yourselves to Moscow pay attention: The oppressed of today will be your judges tomorrow.” Signed by the “Rezistența Națională” (*Ibidem*, file 8600, vol. 1, p. 31). Similar manifestoes were addressed to the MIA/ Securitate troops (*Ibidem*, p. 32).

¹⁰⁶ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 2168, p. 408.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 407-408.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 317; *Banalitatea răului*, p. 285 (records from ASRI, fonds “D”, file 10104, p. 13-44).

¹⁰⁹ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 2168, p. 301-302, 317-318; *Ibidem*, file 9585, p. 6. See also *Luptătorii din munți*, p. 661 (records from ASRI, fonds “P”, file 1238, vol. 49); Al. Marinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

¹¹⁰ Al. Marinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

¹¹¹ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 10764, p. 1; *Banalitatea răului*, p. 285 (records from ASRI, fonds “D”, file 10104, p. 13-44); *Luptătorii din munți*, p. 661-662 (records from ASRI, fonds “P”, file 1238, vol. 49).

3. The Gheorghe Arsenescu Group at Nucșoara (summer – autumn 1949)

Although the Arsenescu (sub)group was credited with 15 members in the summer of 1949, it was not any longer signalled in action or with all its members¹¹². The known members of the group were: Colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu, Ion Chirca together with his sons Gheorghe and Nicolae, Benone Milea, Constantin Popescu, and Nae Ciolan¹¹³. After the split, only one recruiting took place. Gheorghe Mămăligă called Titi, sub-officer, born in Edineț, Hotin County, was brought into the group by Gheorghe Arsenescu, making an oath on October 16, 1949¹¹⁴.

The Securitate managed to recruit Aurel Chirca as agent in the autumn of 1949, he was the connection of the Arsenescu group. Aurel Chirca recruited in his turn Ion Chirca, his brother and member of the group. The latter settled the date when Gheorghe Arsenescu and the other partisans would go to Bughia, Muscel County, to meet the supporters of Câmpulung. The host of the reunion was also recruited and the Securitate installed a station there. Arsenescu became aware from the host's behaviour that something was wrong and so managed to shun the Securitate firing. Only Mămăligă was slightly wounded, but he managed to escape as well¹¹⁵. Further to this action, but also to some misunderstandings between Gheorghe Arsenescu and the rest of the group members, he fled the region, hiding with other partisans near Câmpulung¹¹⁶.

Ion Chirca was directed by the Securitate to organize a trip for the Arsenescu Group in a pre-established direction so as to go to the forestry operation of Isvorul Surlei, Aurel Chirca being in charge of it. The partisans would walk at night and they would be usually armed, but this time agent Ion Chirca convinced them to leave at day time unarmed. The Securitate organised a trap point where Benone Milea, Constantin Popescu, Nicolae Ciolan and Eugen Chirca were caught on November 1 (or 4), 1949. Ion Chirca was staged an attempt to escape from the trap¹¹⁷.

The only ones who had not been caught from the group were Gheorghe Arsenescu and Gheorghe Mămăligă¹¹⁸. The Securitate charged Ion Chirca with the pursuit of Mămăligă, so as to eventually reach to Gheorghe Arsenescu, but also to re-establish connection with the Arnăuțoiu group. Certainly, the aim was the annihilation of all partisans¹¹⁹. In order to ensure the connection with Ion Chirca, the Securitate made use of agents, their network being disclosed by Marinica Chirca, loyal to the partisans. She warned Gheorghe Mămăligă, urging him to kill Ion Chirca,

¹¹² ASRI, fonds "D", file 2169, p. 301; see also p. 318.

¹¹³ Al. Marinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

¹¹⁴ ASRI, fonds "D", dos. 8600, vol. 1, p. 23; *Ibidem*, file 10762, p. 7; Al. Marinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 49; *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 131.

¹¹⁵ ASRI, fonds "D", file 10762, p. 6. See also *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 131-132.

¹¹⁶ ASRI, fonds "D", file 10762, p. 6. See also *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 132.

¹¹⁷ ASRI, fonds "D", file 9585, p. 35, 41; *Ibidem*, file 10762, p. 7.

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*, file 9585, p. 6; *Ibidem*, dos. 10762, p. 7.

¹¹⁹ *Ibidem*, file 10762, p. 7.

her brother-in-law, which the Bessarabian did (he shot him) in November 1949¹²⁰. Through Marina Chirca, Gheorghe Mămăligă established connection with the Arnăuțoiu group, where he integrated¹²¹.

The political police proved to be incapable for a long time to find out what had happened to Ion Chirca. Although he was dead, the Securitate agents believed he was hiding somewhere. For this reason they maltreated the locals, including the children of the disappeared. One of them, Gheorghe Chirca, remembered:

*“Ăla de m-a anchetat pe mine m-a bătut rău de tot, m-a pus pe brânci pe o bancă și m-a luat de la picioare până la cap, să spun unde-i tata. Și eu știam că tata e mort, dar ei nu m-au crezut, au zis că nu vreau să spun. Căpitanul Cârnău m-a bătut mai rău, cu o bâtă / That who interrogated me beat the hell out of me, he had me kneeled on a bench and beat me from bottom to top to tell him where my dad was. And I knew that dad was dead, but they didn't believe me, they said I didn't want to tell them. Captain Cârnău was even worse, he cudgelled me”*¹²².

With the help of Pavel Necula, Colonel Gheorghe Arsenescu hid during October-November 1949 in the house of Ion Marinescu from the village of Mioarele (today Mățău), Muscel County. After investigation made, the Securitate reached to Pavel Necula, who being probably subjected to tortures revealed where Arsenescu was hiding. The Colonel's leg was wounded during the Securitate intervention, but he managed to get away¹²³. Realising that he had no other possibility to form a new armed group, given that previous one had been completely destroyed, Arsenescu abandoned his activity in the mountains, protecting himself from conspiracy. Indeed, until 1959 the Securitate would not learn anything about where the Colonel was hiding¹²⁴.

In the following period, the Securitate continued to carefully monitor the Arsenescu group, a fact revealed by the consideration it was given in the reports made on the mountain “gangs”. Search was made with impressive forces; new information networks were established to permit the partisan identification, all that with no result¹²⁵.

In February 1951 (but also in July the same year) the Arsenescu group was on top of the Securitate reports of all resistance armed groups in the country, being followed by the Arnăuțoiu and Gavrilă groups. Therefore it is not surprising that

¹²⁰ *Ibidem*, file 2168, p. 272, 287; *Ibidem*, file 9585, p. 10; *Ibidem*, file 10762, p. 7. See also *Mărturia lui Cornel Drăgoi*, p. 164.

¹²¹ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 9585, p. 6, 18; *Ibidem*, file 10762, p. 7; Al. Marinescu, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

¹²² C. Căpățână, R. Ciolcă, *Grupul «Haiducii Muscelului»*, “Magazin istoric”, no 6, June 1998, p. 43 (interview with Gheorghe Chirca, village of Nușoara, Argeș County, July 1997).

¹²³ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 10762, p. 8-9. See also I. Constantinescu-Mărăcineanu, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

¹²⁴ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 10762, p. 9.

¹²⁵ *Ibidem*, file 2168, p. 342, 351-353.

among the duties performed by the “gangs” bureau, the annihilation of this group was a priority. In order to achieve the objective, it had been settled that on March 5, 1951, one Securitate officer would be sent to each of the regional offices of Argeş and Vâlcea, Sibiu and Stalin, where together with the directors they would verify the existing material with reference to these groups and make a joint action plan for their annihilations. The central Militia command was contacted so as to assign tasks to its regional offices to cooperate with the Securitate¹²⁶.

The political police made a series of lists of “bandits” hiding in the mountains with their relatives, of people only suspected of supporting them, etc.¹²⁷. In the autumn of 1950 there had been drafted “nominal lists and profiles” for the first lot of family members, close relatives and acquaintances of the Arsenescu-Arnăuțoiu group members. At the end of November 1950, the Securitate was working on the lists of the “rest” of supporting “elements”¹²⁸. The repressive services would appraise in the following years that the Arsenescu-Arnăuțoiu group had been supported by approximately 200 people: families, relatives, “găzduitori și alimentatori / hosts and suppliers”, most of them kulaks, former members of historic parties from the mountain region of the Muscel County (or Curtea de Argeş district). Of these people, 12 were arrested between 1949 – 1950, the others being followed for holding information¹²⁹.

The Securitate continued to pursue the members of the Arsenescu groups, of both Dragoslavele and Nucșoara, operating many apprehensions¹³⁰. Due to the

¹²⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 324; see also p. 283-284.

¹²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 21-23; *Ibidem*, file 11251, vol. 1, p. 1-4, 38, 503-504, 507; *Ibidem*, vol. 2, p. 1-3, 485-488, 607-612.

¹²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 353.

¹²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 21-23; *Ibidem*, file 11251, vol. 1, p. 1-4, 38, 503-504, 507; *Ibidem*, vol. 2, p. 1-3, 485-488, 607-612.

¹³⁰ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 2168, p. 244, 272, 285-286, 301, 318. Dumitru Burtea was arrested in early 1951. Due to an occasional piece of information given by an inhabitant from the village of Cetățeni, the district of Câmpulung, Gheorghe (or Ioan) Purnichi was caught. During his interrogation indications were revealed on the place the brothers Ioan and Gheorghe Purchinescu were hiding, the first seized in Buzău, the latter in Bucharest (*Ibidem*, p. 244; see also p. 301, 318). In some of the memoirs it was argued that Gheorghe (or Ioan) Purnichi was a Securitate agent in the Arsenescu group, uncovered and killed by Ion Purchinescu (M. Arsenescu-Buduluca, *op. cit.*, p. 56, 58). In the records of the political police we did not find the confirmation of this statement. Still, from Gheorghe Purnichi it was found that Romu Luca and the brothers Ioan and Sever Vasilescu were hiding in Bucharest or its proximities (ASRI, fonds “D”, file 2168, p. 245-246). Romu Luca and Ioan Vasilescu were seized in the summer of 1951. From their interrogatory resulted that Ioan Mușatescu from the village of Stoenestî-Muscel was the liaison person of some of those pursued by the Securitate within the Arsenescu group. Inquiries were made in Bucharest at the locations he had lived and it was determined that he had returned to his home village. He was found at this residence of Stoenestî. The “prey” was even richer for the Securitate as in the same location they found Iosif Cotenescu, a former member of the Arsenescu group. At the same time, Constantin Pieleanu was also seized; he was the main liaison agent of the abovementioned (*Ibidem*,

interrogation of the arrested and to the missing evidence of the Arsenescu group in that region (the one from Nucșoara), the Securitate concluded that it no longer hid in the Muscel Mountains, which determined both the pursuit of the “gangs” and of the fugitives secluded in other places in the country. Some of them were arrested or killed during the conflicts with the Securitate in 1951-1952, whereas others were seized only in 1958¹³¹.

p. 286, 245-246; see also p. 301, 318). However, in 1951 Ioan Predescu and Grigore Miron were arrested (*Ibidem*, p. 245-246; see also p. 286, 301, 318).

¹³¹ ASRI, fonds “D”, file 2168, p. 272, 245-246; “*Bande, bandiți și eroi*”, p. 546 (records from AMI, fonds “DMRU”, inv. No 7389, file no 34, p. 23-26).

In September 1951, six other persons in the Arsenescu group were pursued based on a plan conceived by the General Directorate of the Securitate and the regional agencies of Argeș, Putna and Timișoara. 29 informers were used in this operation (ASRI, fonds “D”, file 2168, p. 287, 246). Different materials were used and many direct verification actions were undertaken for the identification of the fugitives and especially of Gheorghe Arsenescu, the most important item missing from the Securitate collection, all without any result. Concomitantly, they proceeded to obtain information from the family members, relatives and close acquaintances (*Ibidem*, f. 245-246).

The six members of the Arsenescu group who were not arrested in August 1952 were: Gheorghe Arsenescu, Victor Suicescu, Ion Andreescu, Sever Vasilescu, Aurel Roșca and Constantin Stănescu. According to certain information, in August 1952, Constantin Stănescu was accompanied by the fugitive Mihai Șerban, a former student sentenced to seven years of prison for iron-guardist activities. Since it was known that the group took no longer action compactly, and his former members had become isolated fugitives scattered all over the country, their pursuit continued individually. The information activity focused on their families, without any results (*Ibidem*, p. 224). Constantin Stănescu and Mihai Apostol Șerban were identified in the spring of 1952 in the village of Topoloveni, where they had managed to escape during a Securitate raid when a militia officer and a Securitate soldier were killed (*Ibidem*, p. 224, 137). In other records, the killing of the two was registered in September 1952 (Marius Oprea (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 287-288, records from ASRI, fonds “D”, file 10104, p. 13-44). For two years no information was known on the other two members (ASRI, fonds “D”, file 2168, p. 224-225). Gheorghe Arsenescu, Victor Suicescu, both from Câmpulung, and Ion Andreescu, from the village of Schitu Golești, were recruited in an “active information operation” which was to be performed by the agents in their area. It was believed that most of the partisans of the Arsenescu group had left their home villages, and with the help of relatives and acquaintances they were hiding in different places throughout Romania using old connections. Hence, all their relatives and acquaintances were being identified, particularly those of the abovementioned. After identifying these relatives and acquaintances, they would be subject to direct verifications aiming at finding the fugitives. This method proved to be successful in 1951, when six members of the Arsenescu group had been captured. Direct verifications implied in most of the cases the recruitment of the targeted people, who should signal the appearing of the fugitives. In fact, there was a vast “preventive” information network in the pursuit of the fugitives (*Ibidem*, p. 226, 137). The research carried out by the Securitate on the other members of the group led to the identification of some of their relatives and acquaintances in that region or elsewhere in the country. Many of these people were recruited and had the obligation to inform the Securitate in case fugitives would appear (*Ibidem*, p. 137). On October 21, 1952, the Securitate was informed that Gheorghe Stănescu and Mihai Apostol Șerban were hiding in the house of Ioan V. Dinu, in the village of Rădești, Muscel District. During the operation a conflict took place between the Securitate agents and the two partisans. They were deadly wounded; two Daimler Puch pistols and six pocket pistols were found on them. One lieutenant from the Pitești

The members of the Arnăuțoiu group attempted, unsuccessfully, several times along the 50s to re-establish connection with Gheorghe Arsenescu¹³².

(to be continued)

Translated from Romanian by Adina Rățoi

Securitate Region was shot in action (*Ibidem*, p. 59, 137; *Banalitatea răului*, p. 265, 287, records from ASRI, fonds “D”, file 10104, p. 13-61); “*Bande, bandiți și eroi*”, p. 468, 493, records from AMI, fonds “DMRU”, inv. no 7389, file no 34, p. 342-347, 448-472). It was further established that Stănescu and Șerban had created a support organisation of 30 people, all being arrested (*Banalitatea răului*, p. 288, records from ASRI, fonds “D”, file 10104, p. 13-44). The usage of family members as informers enabled on November 7th, 1952 the arrest of Ioan Roșca called Aurica (or Aurică) by the Militia at his home-residence in the village of Cetățeni-Muscel, where he had dug an underground shelter (ASRI, fonds “D”, file 2168, p. 59; *Banalitatea răului*, p. 287, records from ASRI, fonds “D”, file 10104, p. 13-44).

¹³² ASRI, fonds “D”, file 10762, p. 8.