

ANTICOMMUNIST RESISTANCE GROUPS IN CENTRAL TRANSYLVANIA – THE APUSENI MOUNTAINS (1948–1957)

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While in the first post-war years, the Romanian Communist Party mimed a democratic practice, in 1947 it hurried to take the full power in State and in society. After having abolished, in the summer of 1947, the National Peasant Party, and having cast away the monarchy at the end of the same year, in 1948 the Communists set up the political monopoly by absorbing the Social-Democratic Party. Furthermore, in May 1948 the Iron Guard activists were arrested, although in December 1945 a non-aggression pact existed between them and the authorities. At the end of 1948 the government of Bucharest dissolved the Uniate Church, with the direct participation of the Orthodox Church, which took over the believers and one part of its patrimony.

Some of the outcasts for political and religious reasons tried to escape arrest by joining clandestinity, sometimes making up groups. In some of the cases, the fugitives had coherent plans of anticommunist action, while in others the only reason for getting all together was survival until a political favourable moment would come, allowing the removing of the communist regime. Sometimes, the groups decomposed out of different causes, and there also existed groups that fused with others. In the area of the Apuseni Mountains existed several such anticommunist groups. In the pages to follow, we focus on several resistance groups from the eastern side of the Apuseni Mountains, coagulated around Leon Şuşman and Simion Roşa, which finally fused. Our sources are unedited documents – from Arhivele Serviciului Român de Informaţii (the Archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service) and Direcţia Judeţeană Cluj a Arhivelor Naţionale (the Cluj County Branch of National Archives) – and published documents, together with the survivors' testimonies.

1. LEON ŞUŞMAN GROUP

1.1. INITIATORS

Leon Şuşman also called Moşu (Old Man) or Leul din Măhăceni (the Lion of Măhăceni)¹ was born on 5 June (or July) 1910, in the commune of Măhăceni, Alba

¹ Marius Cristea, "Rezistenţa anticomunistă în zona Aiud. «Grupul Spaniol»", in *AIO – Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Orală*, vol. III, 2002, p. 200 (*Memoriile lui Aron Spaniol*).

county, in a family of Uniate middle peasants, with ten children. He went to “Titu Maiorescu” High School in Aiud and the Law Faculty in Cluj, becoming a lawyer. As for his material possessions, a document reads that he had no fortune.² According to a testimony, Leon Șușman initially had Peasant Party-like convictions, often arguing with his brother Iuliu, who was a member of the Iron Guard. The latter’s assassination by Carol’s regime might have determined Leon’s joining the Legionary Movement.³ The documents speak about this moment as being the year 1936, the year after which Leon Șușman reaches important positions in the far right group, like chief of garrison and adjutant in the Legionary Police of Turda during the “national-legionary State”. For having participated in the rebellion of January 1941, he was sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment. He did not do any of the days of prison, because he fled to the Apuseni Mountains. In September 1945, he was still chased, to be sent to a camp. There were indices that he was still hiding in the mountain area. After the agreement between Nicolae Petrașcu, the leader of Sima faction of the Legionary Movement, and Teohari Georgescu, minister of Domestic Affairs, on 10 December 1945, Leon Șușman was one of the numerous iron guardists who left clandestinity. He settled, together with his wife and their three or four children, in the commune of Uioara de Sus, Alba county. For several years, he worked as a lawyer in Ocna Mureș, a locality a few kilometers far from his natal commune.⁴

Leon Șușman was proposed to join the communist party and become a judge, but he refused. A Militia (the Police of the period) document reads that, feeling that he was watched, Leon Șușman left in March 1948 to Măhăceni, becoming a fugitive. After almost a decade, during the Securitate investigations, Gheorghe Șușman will mention the fact that in May 1948 Leon Șușman had met the former Mayor of Măhăceni, Gheorghe Gherman, who warned him that he had been looked for by the head of Securitate of Turda. Moreover, he found out that he had been looked for in Uioara too. Whichever variant might be true, his leaving home saved

² Direcția Județeană Cluj a Arhivelor Naționale (Cluj County Branch of the National Archives), “Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj” fund, dos. 69/1951, f. 4 (f.), 11 (hereafter: DJAN Cluj); Elisabeta Neagoe, “Grupul de rezistență Leon Șușman (1948–1957)”, in the Consiliul Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității, *Mișcarea armată de rezistență anticomunistă din România, 1944–1962*, București, Editura Kullusys, 2003, p. 46 (doc. from the Arhivele Consiliului Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității/ Archives of the National Council for Studying the Securitate Archives, “Penal” fund, file no. 31, vol. 38, f. 4; hereafter: ACNSAS); “Rezistența armată anticomunistă din România”, in *Memoria*, no. 26, martie 1999, pp. 106–107.

³ Ieronim Șușman, “Familia pădurarului”, testimony, in *Tribuna*, no. 37, 17–23 septembrie 1992, p. 7.

⁴ Arhivele Serviciului Român de Informații (Archives of the Romanian Intelligence Service), “D” fund, file 1774, f. 143 (hereafter: ASRI); DJAN Cluj, “Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj” fund, file. 69/1951, f. 4 (f.v.), 11; Florica Dobre (ed.), Florian Banu, Camelia Duică, Silviu B. Moldovan, Elisabeta Neagoe, Liviu Țăranu, (eds.), *“Bande, bandiți și eroi”. Grupurile de rezistență și Securitatea (1948–1968). Documente*, Introduction by Florian Banu and Silviu B. Moldovan, București, Editura Enciclopedică, 2003, p. 273 (doc. from ACNSAS, “documentar” fund, file no. 31, vol. 21, f. 1–5); Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, pp. 46–47 (doc. from ACNSAS, “Penal” fund, file no. 31, vol. 38, f. 4; Idem, vol. 42, f. 20). See also Ieronim Șușman, *op. cit.*, testimony, p. 7.

him from a certain arrest, given that on 14/15 May 1948 many arrests were made among the iron guardists. Yet, he was sentenced in contumacy to five years in prison and a 40,000 lei fine. At the beginning of his fugitive life, Leon Şuşman was supplied with what was necessary by his brother, Gheorghe Şuşman, who shortly after joined him, as he was also chased by Securitate.⁵ Probably in order to avoid the authorities' persecutions, Leon Şuşman's wife divorced him. At the beginning of the '50s, she was working in the People's Council of Dej Department.⁶

As we have already mentioned, Gheorghe Şuşman was Leon Şuşman's brother and was born on 3 March (other documents present the dates of 10th and 16th of May) 1921, in the same commune of Măhăceni. He went to the Trade School of Arad.⁷ During the Second World War, he fought on both eastern and western fronts, where he was even decorated by the Soviets.⁸ In Militia's papers, his basic occupation was agriculture, but he held no fortune. He was an iron guardist as well, but he had not been incriminated.⁹ Leon found out that Gheorghe would have problems for helping him, so he advised him not to sleep home any more. One morning, when he was going home from the place where he had spent the night, the night watch Dima told Gheorghe Şuşman that the head of the police station in the commune had asked about him, suggesting that he would better disappear. Gheorghe Şuşman took it seriously and left to the neighbouring commune, Dumbrava, where Leon Şuşman was hiding.¹⁰

Another brother, Ieronim Şuşman (born in 1924), priest at the Uniate Seminary of Blaj, made a contact with Gheorghe Broscăţeanu, the head of the Odd Man Out Body in the Legionary Movement, trying to set up a legionary nucleus in the school where he was working. He became a fugitive as well when he found out he was chased, joining Leon Şuşman. But Ieronim Şuşman was caught on 26 October 1948¹¹ and was imprisoned for several years, being released in 1956 through a governmental decree. Another brother, Vasile Şuşman, suffering from bone tuberculosis since he was 15, was arrested and cruelly beaten by Securitate in Turda. He was trailed and sentenced, doing three years in prison at Gherla. Shortly

⁵ DJAN Cluj, "Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj" fund, file 69/1951, 4 (f.v.), 11; "*Bande, bandiți și eroi*"..., p. 273 (doc. from ACNSAS, "documentar" fund, file no. 31, vol. 21, f. 1-5); Ieronim Şuşman, *op. cit.*, testimony, p. 7.

⁶ DJAN Cluj, "Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj" fund, file 69/1951, f. 11.

⁷ *Ibidem*, file 71/1951, f. 2 (f.v.), 9; ASRI, "D" fund, file 7778, vol. 3, f. 70; *Ibidem*, file 7805, vol. 1, f. 174; Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 47 (doc. from ACNSAS, "Penal" fund, file no. 31, vol. 42, f. 20).

⁸ Marcel Luduş, "O crimă a Securității: împuşcarea fraților Şuşman la Poşaga", in *Nu*, no. 80, 3-4 iunie 1992, p. 14; "Rezistența armată anticomunistă din România", in *loc. cit.*, p. 107.

⁹ DJAN Cluj, "Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj" fund, file 71/1951, f. 2 (f.v.), 9.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*; Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48 (doc. from ACNSAS, "Penal" fund, file no. 31, vol. 42, f. 20); Ieronim Şuşman, *op. cit.*, testimony, p. 7.

¹¹ Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 47. See also "Rezistența armată anticomunistă din România", in *Memoria*, no. 26, martie 1999, p. 107.

after his release he died.¹² Silvia Şuşman, their sister, although she had nothing to do with the resistance group, was arrested and investigated for long periods of time at Medgidia and Cluj. Because of the bad treatments, she remained seriously psychically disturbed.¹³

Since their leaving home and until December 1951, Leon and Gheorghe Şuşman were seen at the frontier between the communes of Măhăceni and Ciugudu de Jos, as well as in the woods of Ponor, Mogoş and Cluj towards Huedin¹⁴. They were hiding in different places, trying not to become conspicuous, and therefore not to challenge authorities¹⁵, which was, anyway, a good survival strategy. The authorities thought that “from a political point of view [the group, *D.D. note*] represents a danger because, travelling through different areas of the territory, it could get in contact with different individuals whom it might influence against the regime of the people’s democracy, and it is also possible that it might commit terror and robbery deeds”.¹⁶

1.2. FIRST LEON ŞUŞMAN GROUP, 1948–1949

Leon and Gheorghe Şuşman were joined in the years 1948–1949 by Cornel Deac, Nicolae Moldovan, Iacob Târziu, Simion Bărduţiu (or Părduţiu, but also Părdut), Alexandrina Teglariu, Ioan Dumbrăveanu and Maria Gligor. The group operated in the area Turda-Ocna Mureş-Aiud-Blaj, more precisely near the localities of Dumbrava, Cisteiu de Mureş, Micoşlaca, Ciugudu de Sus, Alecuş, Ormeniş, Cicău, on Mureş valley. The rebels were living at locals’ or in shelters built in the wood.¹⁷

This was a heterogeneous group from a political standpoint, and the reasons why the people mentioned above were fugitives were quite diverse. Cornel Deac and Nicolae Moldovan had killed, in the last phase of the Second World War, several Soviet soldiers who had committed robberies in Uioara de Sus commune. The priest Iacob Târziu had not agreed with the abolition of the Uniate Church; furthermore, he was coming from the national-peasant resistance organization led by Ioan Robu and Alexandru Maxim, where he had been the head of the nucleus in Cisteiu de Mureş commune, before the group was destroyed by Securitate.¹⁸ Alexandrina Teglariu had held the position of head of the legionary students in the

¹² Marcel Luduş, *op. cit.*, p. 14; “Rezistenţa armată anticomunistă din România”, in *loc. cit.*, p. 107.

¹³ “Rezistenţa armată anticomunistă din România”, in *loc. cit.*, p. 107.

¹⁴ DJAN Cluj, “Inspectoratul de Poliţie Cluj” fund, file 69/1951, f. 11; *Ibidem*, file 71/1951, f. 2 (v.); *Ibidem*, file 75/1951, f. 56, 76.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, file 69/1951, f. 11; *Ibidem*, file 75/1951, f. 76.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, file 69/1951, f. 11; *Ibidem*, file 71/1951, f. 9.

¹⁷ Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 48 (doc. from ACNSAS, “Penal” fund, file no. 31, vol. 43, f. 11).

¹⁸ “Bande, bandiţi şi eroi”..., p. 273 (doc. from ACNSAS, “documentar” fund, file no. 31, vol. 21, f. 1–5); Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, pp. 48–49 (doc. from ACNSAS, “Penal” fund, file no. 31, vol. 1, f. 39–40).

university centre of Cluj, leading, at the same time, the whole organization of Cetățui (legionary women) in Transylvania. Maria Gligor was also a member of the Legionary Movement.¹⁹ The period when the two young women joined the group led by Leon Șușman was indicated by Alexandrina Teglariu as being the spring of 1949. The two women had previously been in contact with Ștefan Popa's group. Before Easter 1949, Leon Șușman decided that the group should leave from the area of Aiud to Ocna Mureș. The rebels were living less in the people's houses during the day, and more in stables, barns and deserted mills, continuing their way over the night. In a brushy wood nearby they arranged a hovel, equipped with a stove, where they were making the fire only during the night, while preparing food, in order not to expose themselves. Priest Roșa (we do not learn his first name, so we cannot know whether he is Simion Roșa, see *infra*), coming from a neighbouring village, was celebrating services for his parishioners, who have kept their Uniate faith, in spite of the fact that their church had been abolished by the authorities during the previous autumn. For instance, the mass during the Easter night of 1949 took place in the forest, on which occasion the locals offered the partisans the food specific to this holiday. Shortly after, Alexandrina Teglariu Voinea and Mărioara Gligor left this group²⁰, for unknown reasons.

The group members were equipped with military weapons, burp guns, revolvers, grenades. The group also held a weapon deposit in a hovel in Dumbrava commune wood (the place called "Față" (Face)). Some of the weapons were coming from the legionary teams that the Germans had parachuted in 1944–1945, and whom Leon Șușman had met in the Apuseni Mountains.²¹

1.3. THE SECOND LEON ȘUȘMAN GROUP, APRIL–JUNE 1949

At the end of April 1949, brothers Leon and Gheorghe Șușman together with Simion Bărduțiu separated from the other members of the group. The causes were clearly explained by Gheorghe Șușman. The group was too numerous, raising feeding problems and it was creating good conditions for the authorities to find it.²² But Securitate thought that the group divided because of some quarrels between Leon Șușman and Cornel Deac for the leading position.²³

¹⁹ "Bande, bandiți și eroi"..., p. 273 (doc. from ACNSAS, "documentar" fund, file no. 31, vol. 21, f. 1–5); Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 49 (doc. from ACNSAS, "Penal" fund, file no. 31, vol. 1, f. 158–159).

²⁰ Alexandrina Teglariu Voinea, "Învierea", in *Lacrima Prigoanei. Din lupta legionarelor române. Pagini din istoria Gărzii de Fier*, Tmișoara, Editura Gordian, 1994, p. 87–89.

²¹ "Bande, bandiți și eroi"..., p. 273–274 (doc. from ACNSAS, "documentar" fund, file no. 31, vol. 21, f. 1–5).

²² Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 49–50 (doc. from ACNSAS, "Penal" fund, file no. 31, vol. 1, f. 63).

²³ "Bande, bandiți și eroi"..., p. 273 (doc. from ACNSAS, "documentar" fund, file no. 31, vol. 21, f. 1–5); Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 50 (doc. from ACNSAS, "Penal" fund, file no. 31, vol. 3, f. 157).

Whichever the real motive might have been, it is sure that Leon Şuşman, Gheorghe Şuşman and Simion Bărduţiu passed on the territory of the communes of Podeni, Ciugudu de Sus and Răchiş, finding their refuge in a bunker in Pârâul Corbului.²⁴ Between the three fugitives, differences of opinion appeared as for how they should react in case they met Securitate forces. Leon Şuşman was for opening the fire and then drawing back, while Simion Bărduţiu was for avoiding Securitate, and in case they were seen, for trying to escape.²⁵

In June 1949 as well, because several of the people who helped the fugitives were found out, brothers Şuşman decided not to take useless risks, and leave in the Apuseni Mountains, given that Leon had had contacts there since the first half of the 1940s.²⁶

The repressive services did not have, for a while, any certain piece of information about this group, or about their leaving. For instance, at the beginning of September 1949, the group Leon Şuşman was reported in the area Aiud-Alba, made of six or seven locals. They were said to wander through the mountains, taking refuge in the communes of Măhăceni and Ciugudu de Sus, passing sometimes through the county of Turda. In order to find the group, Securitate had sent an informer since the summer of 1949, who had not provided yet, by the beginning of autumn, any important datum.²⁷

Under certain conditions, that we do not know, Securitate made arrests among the relatives and supporting individuals of Leon Şuşman group. A lot of 10 persons, led by Victoria Şuşman, Leon's and Gheorghe Şuşman's mother, was at the end of September 1949 under investigation at the Securitate Branch Cluj²⁸, more exactly at the Securitate County Service of Turda. The 10 persons involved in supplying with food the Leon Şuşman group were: Victoria Şuşman, Vasile Şuşman, Valeria Pop, Iacob Pop, Silvia Ilea, Alex. Ghirisan, Ioan Popa, Viorel Salagean, Ioan Cocan, Ioan Resneres. The date when the investigation of the 10 had to be finalized was 20 November 1949.²⁹ Other 11 persons were arrested on October 13th, 1949, for connections with Leon Şuşman group. Five of the arrested individuals were released and six were sent to court³⁰, but we are not aware of the court decision.

During the next years, in order to capture brothers Şuşman, Militia drew up, several times, papers with their relatives and friends in Măhăceni commune. The ones they mainly had in view were Victoria Şuşman, Silvia Şuşman, Maria

²⁴ Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 49 (doc. from ACNSAS, "Penal" fund, file no. 31, vol. 1, f. 63).

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 49, note 8 (doc. from ACNSAS, "Penal" fund, file no. 31, vol. 1, f. 41).

²⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 49–50 (doc. from ACNSAS, "Penal" fund, file no. 31, vol. 1, f. 63; *Idem*, vol. 3, f. 157).

²⁷ ASRI, "D" fund, file 2168, f. 410.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, file 9051, vol. 2, f. 38.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 55.

³⁰ "Bande, bandiţi şi eroi"..., p. 265 (doc. from ACNSAS, "documentar" fund, file no. 82, vol. 2, f. 3–23).

Șuşman, the fugitives' sisters, and Ioan Șuşman, Iosif Șuşman and Vasile Șuşman, cousins. Except for Maria Șuşman, all the others were living in Măhăceni.³¹

The Militia of the department of Aiud recruited in 1950–1951 a number of informers in the communes of Măhăceni and Ciugudu de Sus in the “issue” of Leon Șuşman group. Among them, we find two with conspiracy names: “no. 5”, from Măhăceni, and “Ciocan” (Hammer), from Ciugudu de Jos. They both had the mission to gather and provide information about Gheorghe Șuşman.³²

As Leon Șuşman's chasing had not given the expected results, the head of the Militia station of Măhăceni was replaced in October 1951 with one “habilitated in the problem of chasing and discovering this band”. In November 1951, a special delegate of the General Militia Office charged with “bands and fugitives” instructed the new station chief of Leon Șuşman's chasing.³³

2. SIMION ROȘA GROUP

Simion Roșa was born on 15 September 1903 in Poșaga commune, the current county of Alba.³⁴ He became a Uniate priest, got married and had three children. According to Securitate documents, the priest was involved in National Peasant Party activities, “as county deputy”.³⁵

During the October 1948 action meant to abolish the Uniate Church and to forcibly pass its adepts to the Orthodox Church, Securitate captain Kiss arrived to the village of Poșaga. By the agency of Partenie Lobonț, the Securitate official, Kiss, ordered that each householder should be called to the village Hall to sign adherence to Orthodoxy. The locals, Uniate in their majority, refused, most of them, to give up their old faith. This determined the authorities to resort to pressure, threats, blackmail, promises, and eventually to torture and crime. To get rid of this inferno, directed by officials, some of the opponents fled to the woods. Among them, we can find priest Simion Roșa as well.³⁶ The priest had been arrested on 15 October 1948, but he had managed to escape with the help of

³¹ DJAN Cluj, “Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj” fund, file 69/1951, f. 4 (v.), 9; *Ibidem*, file 71/1951, f. 2 (v.), 7.

³² *Ibidem*, file 69/1951, f. 10.

³³ *Ibidem*, file 75/1951, f. 84.

³⁴ Justice Ministry's Address no. 4915 from 18 November 1991. Service of Military Courts to Elena Roșa, in Oradea, in Anton Moisin, “Uciderea preotului Roșa Simion. Un crâmpoi din Rezistența greco-catolică în centrul Ardealului (1948-1957)”, in *Dreptatea*, no. 637, 15 iulie 1992, p. 2.

³⁵ Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 51, note 12 (doc. from ACNSAS, “Informativ” fund, file no. 2701, vol. 5, f. 293).

³⁶ Fl. Mircea Corcoz, Mircea Arieș, “Crimă și teroare în Apuseni! Din nou...Securitatea”, IV, in *România liberă*, no. 736, 3 septembrie 1992, p. 1.

Nicolae Bleanț, his neighbour and godson, and of another believer.³⁷ Simion Roșă was sentenced in contumacy by the municipal Court of Cluj to 5 years of forced labour and 3 years of civic degradation.³⁸ His wife was barbarously tortured by repressive services, in order to make her denounce him, but she never gave in.³⁹

Over the next period, priest Simion Roșă received the Uniate believers' help, officiating clandestine masses specific to their church. Near him was the fugitive priest Grigore Jaflea (the spellings Jeflea, Javlea, Joflea, Iaflea or Geaflea can also be found), from the village of Săgagea, Poșaga commune.⁴⁰

At the beginning of September 1949, Securitate recorded the existence of a group made up of four persons, out of whom three were priests – Simion Roșă among them – hiding in the region Poșaga de Sus and hamlet Săgagea. In their travels, the group members had adopted a preventive method, one of them going as vanguard, at about 800–1,000 meters distance from the others. The purpose was, naturally, to avoid everybody's capturing in the ambushes organized by Militia and Securitate. According to the latter institution, the members of the group were devastating homes, taking with them food, clothes and money.⁴¹ The information does not seem credible, at least for one reason: without the locals' help, the fugitives would have been quickly caught. The group's action area included the villages of Poșaga, Belioara and Săgagea, all of them in the commune of Poșaga, Turda county.⁴² Priests Simion Roșă and Grigore Jaflea, both of them from Poșaga de Jos, were chased in April 1951 by Militia of the department of Câmpeni for "religious propaganda".⁴³

3. LEON ȘUȘMAN-SIMION ROȘA GROUP

As we have already mentioned, after leaving their birthplace, brothers Leon and Gheorghe Șușman went to Apuseni Mountains. Archive documents show that they travelled across one part of the territory of current counties of Cluj and Alba, a route including Pietroasa, Gârbova de Sus, Hidiș (presently the village of Podeni, Moldovenești commune), Vârful Trascău, Sângeorz, Ponor, Lunca, Muncelu, Ocoliș, Muntele Bedeleu, Negrești.⁴⁴ According to oral sources, it seems that in

³⁷ Anton Moisin, *op. cit.*, p. 2 (Vasile Roșă's testimony, Simion Roșă's son).

³⁸ Fl. Mircea Corcoz, Mircea Arieș, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 1, 3.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Anton Moisin, *op. cit.*, p. 2 (Vasile Roșă's testimony, Simion Roșă's son); Fl. Mircea Corcoz, Mircea Arieș, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 3. See also "Bande, bandiți și eroi"..., p. 274 (doc. from ACNSAS, "documentar" fund, file no. 31, vol. 21, f. 1–5); Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 50–52.

⁴¹ ASRI, "D" fund, file 2168, f. 418.

⁴² Anton Moisin, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁴³ DJAN Cluj, "Inspectoratul de Poliție Cluj" fund, file 58/1951, f. 15.

⁴⁴ Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

1949–1950 the two brothers roamed big distances in the Apuseni Mountains, reaching the Ponor area, near the communes of Răchițele and Beliș, south Huedin, where they were helped by spouses Mihai and Lucreția Jurj, and the former's parents, who were, at the same time, supporters of the group led by Teodor Șușman, whose members came from that zone. The two families were not akin⁴⁵, not directly at least. Traian Șușman, Teodor Șușman's son, stated that his father had met Ieronim Șușman in 1937 and they had squared up to the genealogy of the two families, among other things. Both of them seem to have come from the locality of Cavarna, Dobruja, with German roots. There existed a possibility that their ancestors might have been related.⁴⁶ According to the same Traian Șușman, Teodor Șușman and Leon Șușman had met at the end of the '30s – beginning of the '40s, when they established a durable relationship. They met again at the end of the fifth decade in Răchițele, where Leon Șușman lived for a short period of time.⁴⁷

Eventually, brothers Leon and Gheorghe Șușman settled in a region places between massifs Trascău and Muntele Mare. They found out that the Uniate priests Simion Roșa, from Poșaga de Jos, and Grigore Jaflea, from Poșaga de Sus, had become fugitives. By the agency of shepherd Teodor Trâncă and of Ilie Vlad, from Săgăgea, brothers Șușman managed to contact the two priests, who were hiding, at the moment, in Bicașei forest. Leon Șușman and Simion Roșa had known each other from a long time, probably from the period when the former had taken refuge in the area to escape prison, a sentence given by the officials of Antonescu's regime. The four fugitives decided to stay together.⁴⁸

Brothers Șușman's association with the two Uniate priests represented a sensible widening of the support network, given the symbolic capital that the two priests were holding in the area. The group had numerous supporters in the villages and hamlets around: Poșaga de Jos and Poșaga de Sus, Săgăgea, Belioara, Pleșești, Incești, Poiana Horea, Ponor, Podeni, Arada, Câmpeni. Among the supporters, there were: Ilie Vlad, from Poșaga de Sus, Ioan Ștefan Boboiaia, Teodor Laos (or Leaș) and Eugenia (Genea) Pârțilă, from Săgăgea, Teodor Beț, Isidor Măgurean, Valer Crai, Gligor Bedelean, forester and carpenter Simion Roșa (he accidentally had the same name with priest Roșa). These were modest people, without any

⁴⁵ Dan Cureau, "Singura mea crimă e că mi-am urmat soțul", Lucreția Jurj's testimony, in *Nu*, no. 73. 17–23 aprilie 1992, p. 13; Lucreția Jurj-Costescu, "Patru ani de rezistență cu arma în mână în Munții Apuseni", in *Memoria*, no. 26, martie 1999, p. 101. See also "*Bande, bandiți și eroi*"..., p. 273–274 (doc. from ACNSAS, "documentar" fund, file no. 31, vol. 21, f. 1–5).

⁴⁶ "Rezistența armată anticomunistă din România", in *loc. cit.*, p. 107.

⁴⁷ Traian Șușman's testimony, Iași, in *Rezistența armată anticomunistă din România. Grupul "Teodor Șușman" (1948–1958). Mărturii*, Editors: Denisa Bodeanu, Cosmin Budeancă, Introduction: Cornel Jurju, Cosmin Budeancă, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Argonaut, 2004, p. 221–222.

⁴⁸ Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 50–52 (doc. from ACNSAS, "Penal" fund, file no. 31, vol. 1, f. 47–48); "*Bande, bandiți și eroi*"..., p. 274 (doc. from ACNSAS, "documentar" fund, file no. 31, vol. 21, f. 1–5). See also Ieronim Șușman, *op. cit.*, testimony, p. 7.

remarkable political horizon, but loyal to their Uniate faith and implicitly to the spiritual leaders that they acknowledged as such. The two priests were still spiritual leaders, for at least one part of their former communities, especially that they were coming from the villages where they had served for decades, being poor peasants at their origin themselves. In the period when they were fugitives, the two priests officiated, for the believers, usual or special masses (baptisms, weddings, funerals). At the same time, they catechised, according to the Uniate dogma.⁴⁹

An important role was played, in the support network, by the legionaries, who were very attentive to the situation in the neighbouring villages, but also to the domestic and international political issues. Furthermore, they were able to create new contacts and find new hosts.⁵⁰ The supporting people – sometimes involved because of kinship or neighbouring relationships – offered lodging, food, clothes and information about the chasing actions organized by the authorities, but also about the morale in their localities and the neighbouring ones.⁵¹

The members of this group had an ingenious self-protection strategy. They were trying to establish relationships with Securitate agents, people with administrative responsibilities and members of the Romanian Labour Party [PRM]. These ones were either convinced by the partisans to help or they offered themselves to do it.⁵² One of the important supporters of the group and host was Vasile Crișan, the secretary of the constitutive organization of PRM in the village of Săgăgea, Poșaga de Sus commune, and also a “village delegate”.⁵³

During the summer, the members of the group were staying in the wood, coming down to the communes especially in the evening, mainly in Poșaga de Sus, placed very near to the mountain and where they were known by almost the entire community. During the summer, the partisans were living in underground shelters, in the area of the coniferous woods, where they had brought in due time provisions, from the neighbouring localities. The measure was important, because this way they had to go down to the villages quite rarely, so they did not leave traces that would have called the attention of the Militia and Securitate officers, as well as that of their informers.⁵⁴ Over the years when they were in clandestinity, the members

⁴⁹ Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 52–56 (doc. from ACNSAS, “Penal” fund, file no. 31, vol. 7, f. 191, 208–209, 281; *Ibidem*, vol. 8, f. 13; *Ibidem*, vol. 9, f. 43; *Ibidem*, vol. 15, f. 40; *Ibidem*, vol. 42, f. 28; Idem, “Documentar” fund, file no. 82, vol. 2, f. 7); “*Bande, bandiți și eroi*”..., p. 261 (doc. from ACNSAS, “documentar” fund, file no. 82, vol. 2, f. 3–23); Ieronim Șuşman, *op. cit.*, testimony, p. 7; Anton Moisin, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁵⁰ Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 56 (doc. from ACNSAS, “Penal” fund, file no. 31, vol. 1, f. 49–50).

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 55–56.

⁵² “*Bande, bandiți și eroi*”..., p. 257 (doc. from ACNSAS, “documentar” fund, file no. 41, vol. 2, f. 7–21).

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 261 (doc. from ACNSAS, “documentar” fund, file no. 82, vol. 2, f. 3–23); Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 64–65 (doc. from ACNSAS, “Penal” fund, file no. 31, vol. 3, f. 6–7).

⁵⁴ Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 56–57 (doc. from ACNSAS, “Penal” fund, file no. 31, vol. 42, f. 13).

of Leon Șuşman group built in the mountains a number of 11 shelters, appearing in the political police's documents under different names: "catacombs", "hovels", "bunkers" and "blockhouses". These were made with tools taken from the locals: caved in the earth, consolidated with wood and covered with board and then camouflaged so that they could not attract the attention of possible passers-by or even chasers. Such shelters were built in different places: Dosul Pietrii, in April–June 1950, May 1951, 1953; in the woods of Dumbrăveni, the place Din Față, May 1951–spring of 1952; near Pârâul Haiducului, winter of 1951/1952, but also during the winter of 1953; in the place Prag, fall of 1952 – winter of 1952/1953; place Tâmpăna, autumn – 10 December 1952; Dealul Gruiful Uliului, winter of 1952/1953, January–May 1953, but also in 1956, being used in the same time with the one in the place Hârtoape, 10 December 1952 – spring of 1953; in the woods După Bulz, autumn of 1953 – summer of 1956, used simultaneously with the one in Dâmbul Bradului, spring of 1953 – summer of 1956; other hovels were those in Dealul Burzul and Dealul Mare, the place "Țărmure", used in the years 1951–1957. Cautious, to avoid espial, the group members used a shelter only for a brief period of time, camouflaging it as well as possible before leaving it. When the shelter was accidentally discovered by locals or this became possible, they were leaving the place without hesitation, choosing another one. To make it easier to find the place where the hovel was, they were marking the trees with different signs, dates included, allowing them to identify the period when they had passed by there.⁵⁵ But there were also situation when the fugitives were not staying in one particular place, but they were splitting and running about the area for food and game. They were previously establishing meeting points, but sometimes they did not meet for days or weeks.⁵⁶ Other times, they were earning their lives working (especially by mowing) at the peasants' farms and picking up raspberry, sold through contacts at Iara and Turda. They were doing it so that their livelihoods do not depend exclusively on what they received from the locals.⁵⁷

The members of the group did not start armed actions, but they were convinced, just like the population in the area, that the communist regime would not last, that one day it would collapse. The partisans tried them too to prepare for

⁵⁵ ASRI, "D" fund, file 8600, vol. 3, f. 12, 14, 16, 19; "*Bande, bandiți și eroi*"..., p. 257 (doc. from ACNSAS, "documentar" fund, file no. 41, vol. 2, f. 7–21), 274 (doc. from ACNSAS, "documentar" fund, file no. 31, vol. 21, f. 1–5); Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 57–58 (doc. from ACNSAS, "Penal" fund, file no. 31, vol. 1, f. 52–55; *Ibidem*, vol. 21, f. 52). On the occasion of the reconstructions made after the liquidation of Leon Șuşman-Simion Roșă group, Gheorghe Șuşman showed the prosecutors, on 6–7 and 20 August 1957, where all these shelters were (*Ibidem*, p. 58, note 27, doc. from ACNSAS, "Penal" fund, file no. 31, vol. 21, f. 25–32). The shelters and the marks were filmed by Securitate (ASRI, "D" fund, dos. 8600, vol. 3, f. 12, 14, 16), and then destroyed (Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 57–58 (doc. from ACNSAS, "Penal" fund, file no. 31, vol. 21, f. 25).

⁵⁶ Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 57 (ACNSAS, "Penal" fund, file no. 31, vol. 42, f. 28).

⁵⁷ Ieronim Șuşman, *op. cit.*, testimony, p. 7; Marcel Luduş, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

the so much expected favourable moment, from a political and military point of view, at the international level. For this purpose, people were recruited and weapons and ammunition was gathered. Such a “deposit” existed at Dumbrava. They had one part of the armament (a German burp gun, a Browning pistol and a grenade) from the legionary team that had been parachuted by the Germans in the area in 1944/1945.⁵⁸

Leon Şuşman charged his supporters with talking to the locals, with the young people and to carry on anti-governmental activities, to urge them not to participate in the politico-propagandistic meetings, to urge the young people not to join the army, not to subscribe to the State obligations, etc. Furthermore, the members of the group were confident that the war would start and the communist would consequently collapse.⁵⁹

In 1953, the peasant Ioan Boboia (or Boboia or Bobaia) called Forgău, from the village of Săgăgea, county of Alba, joined the group. He was an old supporter of the partisans. In May (or July) 1953, he was called at the Military Commissariat of Turda and before going there, he consulted with Leon Şuşman, who advised him to go, as other people from the village were called too. As the officer to whom he had to go was not there, and he was told to wait a little more or to come back the next day, he thought that his relationship with the partisans had been disclosed. For this reason, he went to the mountains as well, joining the other members of the group. As other Securitate documents will reveal, Ioan Boboia's intuition was correct. He had actually been called to Turda not to be arrested, but to be recruited as an informer by Securitate.⁶⁰

Because of a stomach disease, priest Grigore Jaflea died in July 1954. Given the conditions, he was secretly buried in a crypt built in Teodor Trâncă's sheepfold (or courtyard) in Săgăgea.⁶¹ Subsequently, Securitate discovered the tomb, unearthed the priest and took one part of the skeleton.⁶²

About Ioan Boboia called Fargău the suspicion appeared at a certain moment – founded on the statements that he himself had made in front of different

⁵⁸ Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 54–55 (doc. from ACNSAS, “Penal” fund, file no. 31, vol. 1, f. 55, 122); “*Bande, bandiți și eroi*”..., p. 274 (doc. from ACNSAS, “documentar” fund, file no. 31, vol. 21, f. 1–5).

⁵⁹ “*Bande, bandiți și eroi*”..., p. 257, 274 (doc. from ACNSAS, “documentar” fund, file no. 31, vol. 21, f. 1–5; *Idem*, file no. 41, vol. 2, f. 7–21).

⁶⁰ “*Bande, bandiți și eroi*”..., p. 265 (doc. from ACNSAS, “documentar” fund, file no. 82, vol. 2, f. 3–23); Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 50–51, 60–61 (doc. from ACNSAS, “Penal” fund, file no. 31, vol. 1, f. 86–87).

⁶¹ Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 64, note 40 (doc. from ACNSAS, “Penal” fund, file no. 31, vol. 42, f. 12–13); “*Bande, bandiți și eroi*”..., p. 274 (doc. from ACNSAS, “documentar” fund, file no. 31, vol. 21, f. 1–5); Fl. Mircea Corcoz, Mircea Arieș, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 3; Anton Moisin, *op. cit.*, p. 2 (Vasile Roșă's testimony, Simion Roșă's son).

⁶² Fl. Mircea Corcoz, Mircea Arieș, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 3; Anton Moisin, *op. cit.*, p. 2 (Vasile Roșă's testimony, Simion Roșă's son).

locals – that he intended to give himself up or even betray the members of Leon Şuşman group. This would have logically led to the arrest of many locals in the area, who were supporting the partisans. To avoid such a situation, three of the group supporters, Vasile Răfăilă, Andrei Bicuţ and Spiridon Boboiaia, acting by order of Leon Şuşman, shot Ioan Boboiaia in September 1954. His body was found in 1955 in the Apuseni Mountains.⁶³

4. END OF LEON ŞUŞMAN-SIMION ROŞA GROUP

Securitate did not get between 1949–October 1952 any certain information about Leon Şuşman group. In December 1952, it went out that Victor Jenci was hiding the fugitives in a shelter built under the barn floor. Jenci was arrested, and during the interrogation he admitted that had been hiding the rebels for two years. He was recruited as an informer, but he announced the partisans, disclosing, at the same time, agent “C.V.”, who had been sent to infiltrate in the group.⁶⁴

The group led by Leon Şuşman appears in Securitate’s central documents regarding “bands” only very late, on 5 March 1953, and then with the mention that it had not been chased “almost at all”.⁶⁵ Securitate was going to notice that since its forming and until December 1955, the group had been observed only three times, a proof that the fugitives respected the rules of conspiracy. Furthermore, the repressive services’ intervention had been defective.⁶⁶ Even if it had not been involved in open actions and had not produced victims, the group Leon Şuşman acquired, step by step, much importance in the eyes of Securitate officials, given that it had tried to extend, involving many persons.⁶⁷

Oral sources accredit the idea that the group members would have decided in 1956 to give themselves up. Their decision was determined, on the one hand, by the fact that their chasing was more and more hardened, and, on the other hand, by the life getting harder and harder in the mountains. The relationships between the Soviet bloc and the free world had become more relaxed after 1955 (Geneva moment), which also reflected in the attenuation of terror in Romania. The Leon Şuşman-Simion Roşa group members’ decision to surrender was however not carried into effect⁶⁸, because Romanian Securitate, under the fright conditions provoked by the

⁶³ Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 64, note 41 (doc. from ACNSAS, “Penal” fund, file no. 31, vol. 18, f. 48–49); “*Bande, bandiţi şi eroi*”..., p. 238, 257, 274 (doc. from ACNSAS, “documentar” fund, file no. 31, vol. 21, f. 1–5; Idem, file no. 36, f. 24–35; Idem, file no. 41, vol. 2, f. 7–21).

⁶⁴ “*Bande, bandiţi şi eroi*”..., p. 265 (doc. from ACNSAS, “documentar” fund, file no. 82, vol. 2, f. 3–23).

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 187 (doc. from ACNSAS, “documentar” fund, file no. 36, f. 70–72).

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 238 (doc. from ACNSAS, “documentar” fund, file no. 36, f. 24–35).

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 235 (doc. from ACNSAS, “documentar” fund, file no. 36, f. 24–35).

⁶⁸ Ieronim Şuşman, *op. cit.*, testimony, p. 7.

Revolution in Hungary (October 1956) among the communist leaders in Eastern Europe, took special measures for the annihilation of any form of resistance, particularly of the armed one. This is the reason why, starting with the end of 1956, the Cluj Branch of the Ministry of Domestic Affairs pay further attention to the group led by brothers Leon and Gheorghe Șuşman and Simion Roşa. This is when a plan of measures for the annihilation of the group was drawn up. The families' and close relatives' informative inserting was aimed at, using, to this purpose, the operative surveillance, and also the secret checking of correspondence, etc., the utilization of agents spying on the persons suspected to be supporters in the area of the localities of Turda and Câmpeşi. There existed 10 agents, out of whom remained eight, two of them being disclosed. Agents "Maxim Ionescu", "Popescu" and "Piatră Nicolae" had to be verified, suspicions existing as for their loyalty. Furthermore, the informers had to be instructed, that is they had to be given precise assignments and objectives; informative combinations had to be made, using as a cover for an agent the fact that he would have contacted a group a five anticommunist fighters in Hungary, who had fled to their relatives in Romania and were chased by Securitate. A plan of measures had to be drawn up in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' branch Stalin [Braşov], using materials obtained from the mail checking. The possibility was taken into consideration that an agent be recruited who should be in contact with the fugitives. As it usually happened with the intent documents of Securitate, in the case of Cluj branch too were shown the "deficiencies" of those involved in Leon Șuşman group's chasing: the agents used were disloyal, double sometimes, presenting invented fact or deforming reality; there also existed contradictory information, unsolved even after months; the agents had not been correctly instructed, violating the rules of conspiracy – for instance, they had been taught to ask direct questions about the partisans, attracting thus the attention on them; there was no good conspiracy relationship with the agents; the legends on which the informative combinations were built were sometimes phantasmal.⁶⁹

In chasing Leon Șuşman group were used 22 agents, generally under conspiracy names in Securitate documents: "Piatră Nicolae", "Piatră Nicodim" or "Piatră N.", "Bucur Petre", "Maxim Ionescu", "Brad Gheorghe", "Popescu", "Bucur", "Doru", "Mogoş Petru", "Mogoş", "Popa N.", "Bucur Ilie", "Barbu", "Valentina G." etc.⁷⁰ Among these, some proved to be incompetent or were disclosed, while others played a double game, being loyal to the partisans and thus systematically misinforming Securitate.⁷¹ Under the code name of "Piatră

⁶⁹ Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 61–63 (doc. from ACNSAS, "Informativ" fund, file no. 2701, vol. 5, f. 201, 204–205).

⁷⁰ "Bande, bandiți și eroi" ..., p. 266 (doc. from ACNSAS, "documentar" fund, file no. 82, vol. 2, f. 3–23); Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 63 (doc. from ACNSAS, "Documentar" fund, file no. 82, vol. 2, f. 8).

⁷¹ "Bande, bandiți și eroi" ..., p. 266 (doc. from ACNSAS, "documentar" fund, file no. 82, vol. 2, f. 3–23).

Nicodim” was hiding Vasile Răfăilă. From subsequent investigations, it came out that Răfăilă was actually the closest person to Leon Şuşman. He offered the latter information about everything he found out, including the meetings with Securitate. Besides, Şuşman was telling Răfăilă how to offer Securitate distorted information.⁷² Misinformed by the double agents, Securitate did not hold data about the place where the partisans were hiding, although almost all the inhabitants of the village of Săgăgea knew them and knew where they were hiding.⁷³

Of all the agents recruited by Securitate for infiltration in Leon Şuşman group, only one proved to be “honest and capable” and this was “Maxim Ionescu”⁷⁴, Ioan Mazăre in reality. He was an instructor in the URCC (Cooperation) Turda department and had been infiltrated in Poşaga zone, most likely, in the spring of 1957. There existed two elements that allowed Mazăre’s rapprochement to priest Siomion Roşa and brothers Şuşman: he was a Uniate and had studied theology for three years at Blaj. Securitate taught him to speculate the religious (Uniate) feelings of certain supporters in order to contact the group members.⁷⁵ Simultaneously with Mazăre’s supervision, Securitate introduced in the region of Poşaga a team made of 10 Securitate officers, presenting themselves as “geologists” led by “Professor Constantinescu”, captain Constantin Vieru in reality. The Securitate officers managed to stay in the field unnoticed by the Şuşman group members or by their supporters. For the possible intervention in case the partisans were found out, a company of Securitate troops, camouflaged in troops of the Ministry of Armed Forces, was installed near by.⁷⁶

By the agency of Ioan Mazăre, Securitate found out in the middle of July 1957 that in several days a meeting between the people in Şuşman group and their supporters was going to take place. Through the same agent, Securitate learnt that the long expected meeting would occur in the evening of 18 July 1957, in Vasile Crişan’s house, the secretary of the constitutive organization of PMR in the village of Săgăgea, Poşaga de Sus commune, but also a “village delegate”, one of the partisans’ host. After they made sure that brothers Leon and Gheorghe Şuşman, Simion Roşa and agent Mazăre, arrived at Crişan’s house, the Securitate officers surrounded the house and tried to get in. That moment, the people inside were sitting at the table and heard someone closing to the door and trying to open it,

⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 257, 262, 266 (doc. from ACNSAS, “documentar” fund, file no. 41, vol. 2, f. 7–21; *Ibidem*, file no. 82, vol. 2, f. 3–23).

⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 266 (doc. from ACNSAS, “documentar” fund, file no. 82, vol. 2, f. 3–23).

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 266 (doc. from ACNSAS, “documentar” fund, file no. 41, vol. 2, f. 7–21; *Ibidem*, file no. 82, vol. 2, f. 3–23).

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 254–256 (doc. from ACNSAS, “documentar” fund, file no. 41, vol. 2, f. 7–21); Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 64–65 (doc. from ACNSAS, “Penal” fund, file no. 31, vol. 3, f. 6–7). See also Marcel Luduş, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁷⁶ “*Bande, bandiţi şi eroi*”..., p. 254–255 (doc. from ACNSAS, “documentar” fund, file no. 41, vol. 2, f. 7–21). See also Ieronim Şuşman, *op. cit.*, testimony, p. 7.

unsuccessfully however, as the door was locked and furthermore Gheorghe Șușman was blocking it with his leg. Summonses were heard immediately, urging the people in the house to surrender. Leon Șușman advised his brother Gheorghe to open the fire, which the latter did, shooting twice through the door. Leon Șușman also shot several times through the window. The lamp in the room turned off, and Leon Șușman ordered the ones in the room to lie down and shut up. From outside several volleys discharged, and the people in the house responded with gunshots. The Securitate team blocked the house and asked for the help of the company trained for these particular occasions. The troops arrived in the morning, opened a violent fire (over 1,300 bullets were discharged), after what they entered the house and apprehended the survivors: Gheorghe Șușman was un wounded, Vasile Crișan had been relatively slightly injured at his legs and arms, Leon Șușman was gravely wounded at his head and abdomen. Simion Roșă had been shot dead. Agent Mazăre had been wounded at his left leg, was gravely injured by the soldiers who entered the house and bitten by their dog, remaining thus disabled. The leader of Securitate team, captain Vieru, had also been dead shot since the beginning of the fight, during the night. With the partisans were found only two small guns, a ZB military weapon, 25 bullets and a grenade.⁷⁷ After the operation ended, the partisans' bodies were climbed on a cart and drove to an unknown direction, according to an oral version⁷⁸, while another one says that they would have been incinerated at Cluj.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ "Bande, bandiți și eroi" ..., p. 255–256, 266, 275 (doc. from ACNSAS, "documentar" fund, file no. 31, vol. 21, f. 1–5; *Ibidem*, file no. 41, vol. 2, f. 7–21; *Ibidem*, file no. 82, vol. 2, f. 3–23); Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 64–65 (doc. from ACNSAS, "Penal" fund, file no. 31, vol. 3, f. 6–7). Two decades later, Securitate gave the public its own version on how one of the last resistance groups in Romania had been liquidated. Radu Vaida, an author of detective stories, published in 1978 a volume including the episode of Leon Șușman-Simion Roșă group's annihilation. For this, he resorted to the account of a Securitate officer woman who had participated to the operation in captain Vieru's team, and who could not forget "those facts that occurred 20 years ago, memories of our romantic youth" (*sic!*). This short story does not bring much precise information of chronologic or spatial nature (Radu Vaida, „Casa din viroagă”, in *Misiune neobișnuită. Povestiri*, București, Editura Militară, 1978, p. 25–29). If we turn to the testimonies favouring the fugitives, it seems that the Securitate officers opened the fire without summoning. Priest Roșă died at the very table where he was eating, Leon Șușman was seriously wounded at the neck, dying a few hours later. Gheorghe Șușman sheltered in a corner of the room, being only slightly touched at one finger. Vasile Crișan had an arm injured. Even Mazăre, Securitate's man, was slightly wounded at his forehead. It was said that the head of Securitate team, Vieru, was shot by his own colleagues while approaching the house, the people inside shooting no fire (Marcel Luduș, *op. cit.*, p. 14. See also Ieronim Șușman, *op. cit.*, testimony, p. 7; Anton Moisin, *op. cit.*, p. 2; Fl. Mircea Corcoz, Mircea Arieș, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 1). Yet, the assertion does not seem credible. A photography took by Securitate at the reconstruction of the scene shows us that the entrance door had many holes made by the bullets fired from outside, but also four holes made by bullets fired from inside the house. One of these might have touched captain Vieru ("Bande, bandiți, eroi" ..., picture 54 at the end of the volume).

⁷⁸ Marcel Luduș, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

⁷⁹ Ieronim Șușman, *op. cit.*, testimony, p. 7.

Captain Vieru was honoured by the regime he had served, the mechanism of State “gratitude” being set on the very second day. By decree no. 357/20 July 1957, he was decorated post-mortem with “Apărarea Patriei” (Country’s Defence) IIIrd class, and by the order no. 2456/20 July 1957 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs he was promoted Major post-mortem.⁸⁰ Furthermore, after 21 years, in 1978, two writers in Securitate’s service wrote in captain Vieru’s memory a series of texts on the edge between mystification and reality.⁸¹ Captain Grigore Mândruț, the one who had replaced Vieru in the night of 18/19 July 1957, was also decorated in September 1957 with “Steaua Republicii Populare Române”, Vth class.⁸²

5. ARRESTS, TRIALS, SENTENCES

Ieronim Șușman, Leon’s and Gheorghe Șușman’s brother, had been preventively arrested on 28 April 1957.⁸³ Shortly after (it seems that in the night of 18/19 July 1957), after Șușman group’s annihilation, were also apprehended Teodor Belea, former iron guardist, and Aurel Puf, one of the main supporters of the anticommunist fighters. Aurel Puf was “more actively investigated”, a formula by which we should most probably understand that torture was used, with the purpose of verifying and extending the prisoners’ first declarations.⁸⁴

Yet, Securitate officers waited a considerable period of time until they started massive arrests among Leon Șușman group’s supporters. This started on 4 August 1957 and continued until 20 October 1957. The people arrested were brought to Cluj, where they were submitted to the hard investigations of the political police.⁸⁵ Gheorghe Șușman remained diehard, in the initial phase at least, a fact acknowledged by Securitate in the phrase “he has reserves during the inquiry”.⁸⁶ Because of the two leaders’ death – Leon Șușman and Simion Roșă – during the group’s liquidation, the Securitate officers could not find out many things for sure. For instance, whether this was true or not that Leon Șușman had built a subversive organization and that it had contacts with the legionaries abroad, from whom he

⁸⁰ *Bande, bandiți și eroi*..., p. 485, 537 (doc. from Arhivele Ministerului de Interne/ Archives of the Ministry of Interior Affairs, “Direcția Management Resurse Umane” fund, inv. 7389, file no. 34, f. 448–472, 480–481; hereafter: AMI, “DMRU” fund).

⁸¹ Radu Vaida, *op. cit.*, p. 25–29; Olimpiu Unghelea, “Ultima dorință”, in *Pentru Patrie*, no. 10/1978, p. 29.

⁸² *Bande, bandiți și eroi*..., p. 346, 494 (doc. from AMI, “DMRU” fund, inv. no. 7389, file no. 34, f. 77–79, 448–472).

⁸³ Ieronim Șușman, *op. cit.*, testimony, p. 7; Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

⁸⁴ *Bande, bandiți și eroi*..., p. 256–257 (doc. from ACNSAS, “documentar” fund, file no. 41, vol. 2, f. 7–21).

⁸⁵ Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 65–66 (doc. from ACNSAS, “Penal” fund, file no. 31, vol. 29, f. 246).

⁸⁶ *Bande, bandiți și eroi*..., p. 257 (doc. from ACNSAS, “documentar” fund, file no. 41, vol. 2, f. 7–21).

would have even received a manifest addressing the legionaries within the country. All this could be found in Aurel Puf's declaration, who pretended that Șușman himself would have told it to him in April 1957.⁸⁷

By the end of 1957, almost 70 people were to be sent to court. They were too many to be tried in one lot, so a partition in two and then in four lots was indicated.⁸⁸ The defendants were Gheorghe Șușman, the only survivor of the group, being therefore accused of "the crime of having conspired against internal security of the People's Republic of Romania (RPR)", and 68 supporters, accused of "the crime of not having denounced and having favoured the crime of conspiracy against internal security of RPR". The incriminations were built upon the corpus delicti in the file and especially on the declarations obtained by torture during the inquiries. The trials took place in the Military Court of the IIIrd Region of Cluj, in four lots, in 1958.⁸⁹

The first lot was composed of 18 persons: Gheorghe Șușman, Ieronim Șușman, Teodor Crișan, Vasile Crișan, Teodor Belea, Mircea Ludu, Maria Cremene, Ioan Pârțilă called Arlus, Irina Boboiaia, Ioan Belea, Nastasia Sdeorna, Dănilă Cremene, Vasile Pârțilă a Jenchii, Victor Bodea, Ioan Pârțilă a Jenchii, Petru Mățiș, Ioan Mățiș called Chitoc, Gligor Popa. Sentence no. 463/12 April 1958 of the Military Court of IIIrd Region of Cluj sentenced to death Gheorghe Șușman and Vasile Crișan, the other defendants receiving punishments between 5 years of forced labour, the case of Ioan Pârțilă a Jenchii, and 18 years, Maria Cremene's case. Confiscation of the defendants' assets and payment of law expenses – varying between 800 and 2,300 lei – were also fixed.⁹⁰ We should also mention that Lucreția Jurj, a former member of Teodor Șușman group of Răchițele, sentenced to 25 years of prison in 1955, was taken in 1958 to Cluj as a witness in this lot's trial, focusing on brothers Gheorghe and Ieronim Șușman.⁹¹

The second lot was composed of 20 persons: Ilie Vlad, Teodor Trâncă, Marc Rus, Sabin Zdiorna, Ioan Ștefan Boboiaia called Cuc, Teodor Beț, Victor Belea, Izidor Măgureanu, Iacob Cirebea, Ilie Brad, Valer Crai, Pavel Pitea, Vasile Rus, Ioan Puf called Țiganul, Sabin Puf, Simion Bota, Ioan Cremene, Simion Rus, Vasile Boboiaia and Aurel Crai. The Military Court of IIIrd region of Cluj

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 266 (doc. from ACNSAS, "documentar" fund, file no. 82, vol. 2, f. 3–23).

⁸⁸ Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 66 (doc. from ACNSAS, "Penal" fund file no. 31, vol. 29, f. 246).

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 66–67.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 67–68 (doc. from ACNSAS, "Penal" fund, file no. 31, vol. 3, f. 147–179). After many years of prison, Ieronim Șușman continued to clandestinely officiate for the Uniate believers in his natal locality, Măhăceni. For this reason, he was again arrested by Securitate in 1967. To sum up, Ieronim Șușman spent in prison 17 years, at Gherla, Cluj, Sibiu, Alba Iulia, Turda, Caransebeș, Pitești, Aiud, as well as in the colonies of Giurgeni, Strâmba and Salcia, in Balta Brăilei (Ieronim Șușman, *op. cit.*, testimony, p. 7; Marcel Luduș, *op. cit.*, p. 14; "Rezistența armată anticomunistă din România", in *loc. cit.*, p. 107).

⁹¹ Lucreția Jurj-Costescu, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

stipulated by the decision no. 464/12 April 1958, the sentences to death for Ilie Vlad and Teodor Trâncă, the others getting punishments between 5 years of forced labour, as in the case of Ioan Cremene and Ilie Brad, and 18 years, Iacob Cirebea's and Valer Crai's cases. Confiscation of defendants' assets and payment of law expenses – varying between 600 and 2,300 lei – were also fixed.⁹²

16 persons were included in the third lot: Aurel Puf, Cornel Puf, Nicolae Pârtilă called Dora, Gligor Bedelean, Nicolae Stejar, Teodor Urs, Nicolae Roşa called Cula, Nicolae Popovici, Vasile Popovici called Surdea, Teodor Leaş, Maria Popovici, Vasile Stejar, Simion Roşa (the forester mentioned above), Alexandru Popovici, Nicolae Urs and Miron Bodea. According to sentence no. 465/12 April 1958 of the Military Court of IIIrd Region of Cluj, they received punishments between 5 years of forced labour, in Alexandru Popovici's and Simion Roşa's (the forester) case, and life prison, Aurel Puf's situation. The defendants' assets were entirely confiscated, together with the payment of law expenses between 500 and 2,300 lei.⁹³

Finally, the fourth lot was made of 15 individuals: Vasile Răfăilă, Andrei Bicuţ, Spiridon Boboiaia called Donu, Pavel Turc, Zaharia Botaş, Gherasim Vlad, Aurel Pleşa, Teodor Răfăilă, Iulian Sdeorna, Ştefan E. Boboiaia called Cerb, Dumitru Cruciţa, Ioan Bodea, Ilie Boboiaia, Ioan Bicuţ and Teodor Botaş. The Military Court of IIIrd Region of Cluj stipulated by decision no. 561/30 April 1958 Vasile Răfăilă's and Andrei Bicuţ's sentence to death, the other punishments varying between 6 years of forced labour, as in Ioan Bicuţ's case, and 20 years of forced labour, in Spiridon Boboiaia's case, called Donu, and in Pavel Turc's case. For all defendants, confiscation of all assets and payment of law expenses between 600 and 2,000 lei were also stipulated.⁹⁴

The Military College of the Supreme Court of the People's Republic of Romania rejected all the defendants' appeals, arguing that they had consciously joined the anticommunist activities.⁹⁵

Gheorghe Şuşman, Vasile Crişan, Teodor Trâncă and Ilie Vlad were executed at Gherla penitentiary on 4 August 1958, at 21.30.⁹⁶ Strangely, in a document from

⁹² Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 68–69 (doc. from ACNSAS, “Penal” fund, file no. 31, vol. 9, f. 122–149).

⁹³ *Ibidem*, p. 69 (doc. from ACNSAS, “Penal” fund, file no. 31, vol. 15, f. 110–132); Anton Moisin, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 69–70 (doc. from ACNSAS, “Penal” fund, file no. 31, vol. 19, f. 138–161).

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 70 (doc. from ACNSAS, “Penal” fund, file no. 31, vol. 16, f. 48–49).

⁹⁶ ASRI, “D” fund, file 7805, vol. 1, f. 173–174; Liliana Bocu, Victor Lungu, “Transformarea adversarului politic în delincent de drept comun la Tribunalul Militar al Regiunii a III-a Militare Cluj”, in *Analele Sighet*, vol. 7, 1999, pp. 343–344 (doc. from the Arhiva Centrului pentru Recuperarea Adevărului Istorice, din cadrul filialei Cluj a Fundaţiei Academia Civică/Archives of the Centre for Historical Truth Retrieval within Cluj branch of Civic Academic Foundation); Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 67–68 (doc. from ACNSAS, “Penal” fund, file no. 31, vol. 6, f. 4; vol. 22, f. 5–6).

January 1959, the four men were recorded as non-executed.⁹⁷ Vasile Răfăilă and Andrei Bicuț were also executed at Gherla, on 2 September 1958, between 6 and 7 p.m.⁹⁸

Of those sentenced to several years of prison, Nicolae Roșă and Vasile Ștezo died during detention.⁹⁹ Aurel Puf will be transferred to several penitentiaries – Gherla, Dej and Jilava.¹⁰⁰ Certain families were almost entirely imprisoned. For instance, in Nicolae Popovici's family, were imprisoned the father, the mother (sick), the son and the daughter-in-law.¹⁰¹

Victoria Șușman was arrested by Securitate in Turda in 1957 and bastinadoed to divulge where her children were. After five months spent in Securitate's custody in Turda, in 1958 she was deported to Bărăgan, where she left until 1964.¹⁰² Victoria Șușman died in 1974 hoping that his son Gheorghe was still living in some prison in Romania or somewhere in Siberia's lands. A few years after the old woman died, and at the instance of the family, the prosecution in Cluj communicated that Gheorghe Șușman had been executed. Colonel Magda, the one who transmitted the message, admitted verbally that this was wrong and that "under current circumstance, your brother [Gheorghe Șușman] would not have been dead".¹⁰³

The families of the persons sentenced to prison from the zone of Poșaga were also deported to Bărăgan, old people, women (even pregnant ones) and children included. At the beginning of the 1990s, the League for the Defence of Human Rights, Alba branch, drew up a list with 49 persons from the commune of Poșaga who had been deported. In reality, the total number of the families from this commune who had been forcibly moved to the steppe zone in south-east Romania was 58, representing one third of the families in the locality of Poșaga. These were families with many children: Ioan Roșă, Ilie Puf, Teodor Bot and Iacob Cirebea had 6 children each; Ioan Pîrțilă and Isidor Măgurean, 7 children each; Ioan Puf, Ioan Boboia and Spiridon Boboia 10 children each.¹⁰⁴ The houses and estates of the deported were confiscated by the State. After they returned, their received their houses back, but were obliged to pay rent, while for the land they paid taxes, as if it was rented too. The people who remained home did not have a better life. Priest Simion Roșă's wife and children were evicted with nothing but the clothes they were wearing; all their movables disappeared afterwards.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁷ ASRI, "D" fund, file 7778, vol. 3, f. 70.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, file 7805, vol. 1, f. 173–174; Elisabeta Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 69 (doc. from ACNSAS, "Penal" fund, file no. 31, vol. 22, f. 8–9).

⁹⁹ Anton Moisin, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*; Fl. Mircea Corcoz, Mircea Arieș, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 3.

¹⁰¹ Anton Moisin, *op. cit.*, p. 2; Fl. Mircea Corcoz, Mircea Arieș, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

¹⁰² "Rezistența armată anticomunistă din România", in *loc. cit.*, p. 107.

¹⁰³ Ieronim Șușman, *op. cit.*, testimony, p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ Fl. Mircea Corcoz, Mircea Arieș, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 1, 3; Anton Moisin, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ Fl. Mircea Corcoz, Mircea Arieș, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 3.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Political persecutions that accompanied the installation of the communist regime in Romania after the Second World War led to the creation of numerous groups of anticommunist armed resistance. In Transylvania's central area and in the Apuseni Mountains these groups appeared chiefly at the end of the '40s. Some of them acted by themselves, others fused.

Leon Şuşman was the leader of two partisans groups founded in Turda-Ocna Mureş-Aiud-Blaj area in the years 1948–1949. During the last year, Leon Şuşman and his brother Gheorghe Şuşman went to the Apuseni Mountains, settling in the zone of the commune of Poşaga, in the current county of Alba. There, they fused with the group of fugitives of the Uniate priests Simion Roşa and Grigore Jaflea. The rebels benefited by the local population's generous support, a mainly Uniate population, which allowed them to survive for years, the authorities getting no clear piece of information about them for a long period of time. The group members hoped for a long while that the communist regime would collapse in a favourable international context. Although it had weapons, the group was not involved in confrontations with Militia or Securitate.

Securitate successfully infiltrated agents to the group only in 1957; in July, the same year, the group was liquidated and its leaders, Leon Şuşman and Simion Roşa, were killed. The other members and supporters of the group – almost 70 persons – were arrested, distributed in several lots, inquired and tried in the Military Court of Cluj. The punishments were particularly hard, including several death sentences, hundreds of years in prison and confiscation of assets for the other defendants. The whole families of resistance movement's supporters were deported to Bărăgan – a form of collective punishment, in fact.