

TEO, ISSN 2247-4382
73 (4), pp. 88-102, 2017

Monks-Confessors of the Arad Diocese during the Communist Regime

Nicolae M. Tang

Nicolae M. Tang

“Hilarion V. Felea” Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Arad, Romania
E-mail: marceltang@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study presents faces of clergy and confessors to the forefront of the national and local ecclesiastical history, who stood against the red roller with dignity and abnegation. They rose up in defence of the faith and tradition of the Romanian people and were able to overtly reject the atheistic and materialistic ideologies of a group of people forcibly installed at the leadership of a free state. Among these, the monks from Arad grouped around Bishop Andrei Magieru, were particularly distinguished as spiritual elites and pillars of the Orthodox faith and the national being.

Keywords

Manks-Confessors, Orthodox Faith, The Diocese of Arad, Bishop Andrei Magieru, The Communist Regime

I. General Considerations - The Political and Religious Context

The tumultuous history of the interwar period ends with the establishment of the communist regime at the leadership of Romania. On March 6, 1945, the so-called democrat government was established, headed by

Monks-Confessors of the Arad Diocese during the Communist Regime

Petru Groza, a former bourgeois; a series of antidemocratic acts followed that ended with the banishment of the traditional political parties and the imposed abdication of King Michael on December 30, 1947.

After the political power was taken over, the communists went on to submit the ecclesiastical institution, aware of the importance and influence of the Church in the life of the Romanian people. In August 1948 the *Law on the General Regime of the Cults* was promulgated, a law that will suppress the missionary-pastoral activity of the Church. Moreover, the School will be separated from the Church, and the monastic life threatened with abolition, the Romanian monasticism having to embody the principle of the social apostolate. The contemplative monks were forced to turn into workers for the cause of the new social regime, being considered to be subversive elements hidden under a monk's coat. In fact, the Church was regarded as a mystical-religious institution, and her representatives: hierarchs, priests, monks were accused of perpetuating a massive and superstitious atmosphere in the mass of ordinary people¹.

In this general political and religious context, through the person of the worthy Bishop Andrei Magieru (1935-1960), the Diocese of Arad opposed a resolute resistance to communism both before and after its establishment in Romania. The actions and attitude of the Bishop of Arad are a part of the attitude of the Transylvanian bishops, such as Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan from Sibiu, Bishop Nicolae Popovici from Oradea and others who formed a compact and reactionary bloc against communism. The constant opposition of Bishop Andrei Magieru triggered several waves of arrests, particularly among his collaborators and relatives: in 1945 the following people were arrested and sent to the Caracal Labour Camp: Cornel Magieru - the eparchial vicar and the bishop's brother and rev. Prof. Ilarion V. Felea; in 1948, on the night of May 31, all students and priests-professors from the Theological Academy in Arad who had files at the former Siguranța were arrested. Between 1958 and 1960, a massive wave of arrests took place among the elite of the priests from Arad, meant to annihilate any form of resistance from Bishop Andrei Magieru and his priests. In the spring of

¹ For a detailed political and religious context in the early years of communism, see: Cristina Păiușan, Radu Ciuceanu, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română sub regimul comunist (1945-1958)*, vol. I, Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului, București, 2001, pp. 17-22 and Vasilică Militaru, *Biserica din temniță*, Editura Vicovia, Bacău, 2008, pp. 18-49.

1959, the main inhabitants of the Hodos-Bodrog and Gai Monasteries were arrested, a heavy blow that the communist regime gave to the Diocese of Arad and directly to Bishop Andrei Magieru, who made monasticism of Arad a major preoccupation of his activity. Moreover, the Bishop found a real missionary, spiritual and educational support in his monks and nuns from his eparchy².

II. Monks-Confessors from Arad

During the pastoral period of Bishop Andrei Magieru, the monasticism from Arad passed through a vast spiritual revival, which led to a strong resistance against the communist regime. First of all, the Bishop of Arad co-opted monks and nuns with a real monastic vocation and a thorough intellectual training. Thus he managed to transform the monasteries from Arad into true monastic schools, especially Hodos-Bodrog and Gai, with spiritual impact not only on the monks and nuns, but also on the faithful who attended these monasteries. Under these circumstances, the Hodos-Bodrog and Arad-Gai monasteries became true missionary and religious-moral education centres, but also monastic centres. All this could not be overlooked by the communist regime, which gave the activities carried out here a subversive character, undermining the newly established regime³.

During this period, the image of four monks / nuns who were arrested, imprisoned, traced and even killed by Securitate distinguished by their attitude of true confessors of Christ. Thus, there are two monks from the Hodos-Bodrog Monastery: Iov Volănescu and Irineu Lupei and two nuns from the Arad-Gai Monastery: Patricia Codău and Maria Izdrăilă. Our study will stop on hieromonk Iov Volănescu and on nun and abbess Patricia Codău. We just reminded the other two, but because of the lack of information, we cannot have a complete biography of their life and activity. Both hieromonk Irineu Lupei, and nun Maria Izdrăilă were direct disciples of the two mentioned above. Hieromonk Irineu (Ioan) Lupei (1928-2005) lived in Hodos-Bodrog Monastery following the spiritual line

² See: Adrian Nicolae Petcu, *Introducere*, in: "Clerici și teologi din Eparhia Aradului în închisorile comuniste (1945-1964)", Editura Arhiepiscopiei Aradului, Arad, 2017, p. 15-20 and Adrian Nicolae Petcu, *Episcopul Andrei Magieru al Aradului și comunismul*, in "Biserica și Școala", year XCVII (2017), new series, nr. 12, p. 4.

³ A. N. Petcu, *Episcopul Andrei Magieru al Aradului și comunismul*, p. 4.

Monks-Confessors of the Arad Diocese during the Communist Regime

initiated and sustained by hieromonk Iov Volănescu. He was arrested in 1959, passed through the penitentiaries of Timisoara, Arad, Gherla, and the forced labour camp at Periprava, and he was released on July 28, 1964. After changing many places and after forced services in the parishes of the diocese of Arad, he lived the last part of his life in his beloved Hodos-Bodrog monastery⁴. Nun Maria Izdrăilă was arrested on April 21, 1959 and released in 1963. Until now, we have no other information about her life and activity, except that she had been the secretary of the Gai Monastery during the period of Abbess Patricia Codău⁵.

II.1. Iov (Ion) Volănescu (1903-1976)

He was born on April 12, 1903, in Căndești village, Buzău County, having faithful parents: Nistor and Elisabeta. His grandfather occupied a distinct position among the village people being a teacher, a cantor and a mayor (1868-1916). At the same time, he loved the monastic life very much, as demonstrated by the frequent pilgrimages to the local monasteries and not only. Certainly his grandfather's personality and conduct will leave deep traces in his education and character. He attended the primary school in his native village, then the School of Commerce from Ploiești and the School of Administrative Sciences from Bucharest. He worked as an accountant and then as chief accountant at the Agricultural Chamber of Prahova County. In 1938 he became the director of the Federation of People's Banks in Prahova⁶.

As to his political orientation, he was involved in the National Liberal Party, then in the party of Nicolae Iorga, and since 1937 he went to the legionnaires. Faithful to the legionary ideals, Volanescu also wanted a reformation of the country from a Christian perspective. In 1938 he was arrested for 45 days, and during the legionnaire rule he became the head of Drăgănești-Prahova region. His involvement in the legionnaire politics as well as in the Legionnaire Rebellion (1941), even if passively, leads him to four years of imprisonment for the crime of "complicity in rebellion". He was imprisoned at Ploiesti, Deva, Alba Iulia and Aiud. In Aiud prison he had contact with the group of mystics gathered around the former legionnaires: Traian Trifan, Anghel Papacioc and others⁷.

⁴ A. N. Petcu, *Clerici și teologi...*, pp. 115-118.

⁵ A. N. Petcu, *Introducere*, in "Clerici și teologi...", p. 15.

⁶ Arhiva Mănăstirii Hodoș-Bodrog, *Protocolul tunderilor în monahism*, poziția 40.

⁷ A. N. Petcu, *Clerici și teologi...*, pp. 165-166.

The meeting with the group of mystics will have a decisive effect in his life. After liberation (May 30, 1944), he was aware of the frustration of the political struggle, as well as of this world, being fully convinced that he must follow the monastic path. He had a divorce agreement with his wife, and on September 1, 1944 he retired at the Ciolanu monastery, from Buzău county. On January 20, 1945, he was tonsured as a rasophore. The ideological stigma followed him in his new life, which forced him to move to another monastery in order not to create problems for the Ciolanu monastery. Thus, on October 15, 1947 he moves to the Vărzărești monastery in the same county. The same problem led him to leave this monastic hearth on June 4, 1948⁸.

Upon the recommendation of Father Florea Mureșan from Cluj, and being invited by Bishop Andrei Magieru, brother Ion Volanescu went to the Hodos-Bodrog Monastery. This was a secular monastery on the western border of the country, which had been waiting for some time for a spiritual man to renew the spiritual life of this monastic settlement of great importance in the history and life of the diocese of Arad and not only. This was also Bishop Andrei Magieru's intention: to find a suitable man whom to begin a vast program of spiritual and missionary life with. On June 12, 1948 he was taken into the monastic community⁹, and on July 18 he was tonsured in monasticism in the church of the monastery, the service being performed by Bishop Andrei Magieru himself. He was presented before the holy altar by protosyngellos Ilarion Iova (1882-1953), and received the name of Job, a prophetic name, a name that will draw the spiritual-existential coordinates of the new monk: patience and steadfastness in faith. In fact, at the end of the service of tonsuring Bishop Andrei Magieru held an emotional speech highlighting the meaning and beauty of the monastic life, its responsibility and calling, but also the meaning of the name of the new monk¹⁰. In the same year, he was first named storeman, then helper of cashier and economist, and in December secretary and treasurer of the monastery until his arrest on October 12, 1952¹¹.

⁸ A. N. Petcu, *Clerici și teologi...*, pp. 166-167.

⁹ See: AMHB, *Acte administrative și corespondență* (1948), Actul nr. 2128/1948.

¹⁰ See: AMHB, *Protocolul tunderilor în monahism*, poziția 40.

¹¹ See: AMHB, *Acte administrative și corespondență* (1948 și 1952), Actul nr. 280/16 octombrie 1948; Actul nr. 159/1948 și Stat de plată/ianuarie 1952.

Monks-Confessors of the Arad Diocese during the Communist Regime

On January 30, 1952, Bishop Andrei Magieru ordained him as hieromonk and he also received the gift of spirituality, thus becoming one of the few spiritual fathers Bodrog had at that time. Immediately after his tonsure in monasticism he initiated an intense spiritual, liturgical and missionary program, trying to train both the monastery community and the faithful who attended this monastic settlement. He combined prayer with work, and with the biblical and patristic reading, paying special attention to the faithful who attended the monastery through word and spiritual discussion. His spiritual, ascetic, missionary and intellectual status is also revealed to us from a report submitted to Bishop Andrei Magieru on the actual state of the Hodos-Bodrog monastery, but also on the proposed solutions for the renewal of the monastic life of the secular settlement¹². The report, extended on 9 typed pages, reveals its theological orientation as well as the way of addressing the spiritual, missionary and pastoral problems the monastery was facing at that time. As a matter of fact, he is a true hesychast monk. In the ample introduction of the report he appeals to patristic and philokalic authors, but also to their writings, to the Holy Scripture and the Lives of Saints. The first part of the report can be an admirable dogmatic-ascetic synthesis in the neo-patristic spirit, as demonstrated by the quotations of Father Stăniloae. He speaks of holiness as the ideal of human life, of faith, of the new man in Christ, of contemplation, of the monastery's role in people's lives, its importance in the life and history of the Romanian people. He also captures less pleasant realities, and offers remedies for them, all in the spirit of the Fathers and in the Eastern tradition. Besides the theological, spiritual and disciplinary part, the report is an objective radiography of the social, political and church situation at that time, both in the Hodos-Bodrog monastery and the diocese of Arad, as well as in the Romanian Orthodox Church¹³.

This entire atmosphere created in Bodrog was not watched with good looks by the new regime, who wanted to end the mystical influence of the Bodrog monastery in the Arad area. Using the allegation that the hieromonk Iov Volănescu was head of an Iron Guard group, and adding to it that at

¹² AMHB, *Raport despre starea și problemele vieții monahale în genere și în Mănăstirea Hodoș-Bodrog la data de 20 noiembrie 1951*, de monahul Iov Volănescu.

¹³ See: AMHB, *Raport despre starea și problemele vieții monahale în genere și în Mănăstirea Hodoș-Bodrog la data de 20 noiembrie 1951*, de monahul Iov Volănescu, pp. 1-9.

that time arrests were made for such political guilt, on October 12, 1952, while he was in a spiritual visit to Afteia hermitage, he is arrested by the Securitate. He was investigated for almost a year under extremely harsh conditions. The investigation was finished by sending him to a colony of labour for a period of 60 months. He passed through the Sorting Centre in Bucharest, Capu Midia, Canal and Onești. In November 1954 he was moved to Arad and sent to the Securitate. With all the allegations in 1952 being resumed, it is proposed to bring legal proceedings. Thus, through Sentence no. 25/14.01.1955 of the Military Tribunal of Timisoara, he was sentenced to three years of correctional prison, for the offense of “intense activity against the working class”. He passes through the prisons of Timisoara, Jilava and Gherla, being released on October 11, 1955¹⁴.

After release, he returned to the monastery and being unconditionally supported by Bishop Andrei Magieru, he continued the ample spiritual work commenced before detention. Moreover, he performed memorial services for the imprisoned, many considered dead, he also confessed many people released from detention, and called the believers to the path of salvation. Also during this period, Father Iov became the confessor of the nuns from the Gai Monastery. He cultivated relationships and had spiritual dialogues with professors of theology from Arad and other parts, such as: Florea Mureșan, Ilarion Felea, Demian Tudor. Together with Bishop Andrei Magieru, he fought for the preservation of the monastery as a monastic settlement, against the intention of the authorities to turn it into an annex of Gostat. These energetic actions caused his arrest for another time¹⁵.

On April 22, 1959, he and his apprentice Irineu Lupei were arrested and joined the group of nuns from Gai: Patricia Codău and Maria Izdrăilă. Under the same accusation of legionnaire activity, he was investigated under harsh conditions and subjected to austerity. From the informative notes of Securitate we learn that he prayed all the time, he did not talk to anybody, kept fasting and stayed in contemplation for hours. Following the investigation and allegations of legionnaire activity and education with the youth, through Sentence no. 532/22.10.1959 of the Military Tribunal in Timișoara he received a 15-year prison sentence for the offense of “conspiracy against the social order”. He executed this sentence in the

¹⁴ A. N. Petcu, *Clerici și teologi...*, pp. 168-169.

¹⁵ A. N. Petcu, *Clerici și teologi...*, p. 170.

Monks-Confessors of the Arad Diocese during the Communist Regime

prisons of Timisoara, Arad and Aiud. At Aiud he refused to undergo the re-education coordinated by Col. Gheorghe Crăciun. On numerous times he was sent to isolation because of “religious attitudes”. In fact, he fearlessly confessed Christ to the prisoners through his attitude, words and deeds. On July 28, 1964 he was released from Aiud Penitentiary¹⁶.

Shortly after his release, he was canonically rehabilitated, and since October 1, 1964, he served as a priest in the Agrișu Mic parish. Here he also had an admirable missionary work, as he did not follow the directives and limits set by the Securitate: he renovated the parochial church, adorning it with painting and furnishings; he also renovated the churches from the neighbouring villages, Botfei and Comănești. Proving to be full of great courage and love for Christ, Father Iov catechized the parish children and even sent open letters to the Romanian Television condemning the religious confinement of the political regime. The attitude towards the state organs led to his dismissal from the post of parish priest and his appointment as a confessor at the monastic hospice from the Dealu monastery near Târgoviște. Here he continues his spiritual ministry, but also the protests. He addresses letters to the press, radio and television, incriminating the atheistic and materialist orientation of the communist state. It is easy to understand that his entire activity led to a new arrest, which took place on September 12, 1975¹⁷.

On August 26, 1975, the Military Tribunal in Bucharest sentenced him to six years of correctional prison. He was briefly imprisoned at the Mărgineni prison, and on October 27, 1975, he was hospitalized at Hospital no. 9 in Bucharest. On January 19, 1976, the faithful confessor of Christ moved to the eternal rest, the death being recorded at the People’s Council of Jilava. The death was caused by a shot in the back of the neck¹⁸. It is also confirmed by the oral tradition of the Holy Monastery Bodrog. One of the father’s disciples, monk Damaschin Ban (1911-1985), attended his funeral and saw the body of the father. He was buried in the cemetery of the Viforâta monastery.

An image drawn from the Synaxarion of the Church in the time of persecutions, the hieromonk Iov Volanescu remains a vivid parable of confession of Christ, living on the highest exigencies of monastic life, a

¹⁶ A. N. Petcu, *Clerici și teologi...*, pp. 171-172.

¹⁷ A. N. Petcu, *Clerici și teologi...*, p. 173.

¹⁸ A. N. Petcu, *Clerici și teologi...*, pp. 173-174.

peerless missionary, a profound theologian, a spiritual father like the ones in Paterikon, and the embodiment of Christ's gospel. The four imprisonments suffered, his patience and his courage, as well as the parable of his life, show that in his earthly life he even embodied the name of the monk he had worn, prophetically received from Bishop Andrei Magieru. All these put him in the long martyrdom line of the Romanian Orthodox Church during communism, but also in the history and tradition of the Diocese of Arad and of the Hodos-Bodrog Holy Monastery as a venerable confessor.

II.2. Patricia (Ecaterina) Codău (1915-2013)

She was born on December 21, 1915, in Sicula village, Arad County, being the seventh child of her parents. The father, a leading peasant in the village, managed to establish a well-equipped household with land and vine. He was an active member of the Romanian National Party, and after the Great Union he was a cadastral technician for the division of land. Patricia's brothers and sisters benefited of a good education: two of the sisters became teachers, and the younger brother a lawyer. In such a family, with strong Romanian and Orthodox feelings, the little one Ecaterina Codău is raised close to the village church and priest, to the traditions and customs of the people from that place, which will be deeply imprinted in her conscience. She graduates the five elementary classes in the village, and in 1929 she attended "Elena Ghiba-Birta" High school for girls in Arad. In the 1933-1934 school year, she had to interrupt the studies due to her father's sudden death and her health problems. With many difficulties and trials she succeeded to graduate high school in 1938 and to obtain a baccalaureate diploma. During the high school studies she distinguished herself by participating in various contests with literary-artistic and patriotic themes, even at a national level. In 1937 she participated at "Tinerimea Română" competition in Bucharest, where she met the *Captain* (Corneliu Zelea Codreanu). In the last two years of high school she was elected president of "St. Ecaterina" Religious Society from the high school where she was learning. Also in 1937 when the remains of the first martyrs of the Legionnaire Movement, the heroes Ionel Moța and Vasile Marin were brought from Spain, Ecaterina Codău was involved in gathering a collection from the young high school students from Arad¹⁹.

¹⁹ Maica Patricia Codău, *Ale Tale dintru ale Tale*, Editura Învierea, Timișoara, 2006, p. 270 and 277-281; A. N. Petcu, *Clerici și teologi...*, p. 67.

Monks-Confessors of the Arad Diocese during the Communist Regime

Between 1938-1942 she attended the courses of the Theological Academy in Arad, dispensed by Bishop Andrei Magieru, being the first female student in this educational institution. Simultaneously she was employed as an educator at the Diocesan Boarding for Girls, where she showed a real vocation of teacher and spiritual guide. After learning the news that the one who was to become his fiancée died in the war, she decided to enter the monastic life. Towards the end of the fourth year, she asked Bishop Andrei Magieru to give her the blessing to enter monasticism, but he proposed her a period of reflection. In the autumn of 1942 she went to Bucharest to attend the courses of the Faculty of Theology, for the equivalence of her studies and the license, which will take place in 1944, receiving the qualification “Magna cum laude”. In parallel, she attended the courses of the Faculty of Pedagogy and “Titu Maiorescu” University Pedagogical Seminar, obtaining the graduation diploma mark - 9.50. In 1943, in the winter, her brother Ioan arrived from the war, mutilated and with serious health problems. In order to be able to care for him, she joined the Social Assistance Institute. She remained in Bucharest until the summer of 1945 to take care of him²⁰.

In April 1945 she visited the monastery of Sâmbăta and Father Arsenie Boca (1910-1989) in order to ask him for advice on the entrance to monasticism. The Father agreed confirming that she will confess Christ all her life. He originally wanted to send her to the Vladimirești monastery, but due to her pedagogical training he recommended the Bistrita monastery in Oltenia, where a confessional school functioned. Thus, on July 11, 1945 she entered the Bistrita monastery, where she was included in the community, and from September she was appointed teacher of religion. With the blessing of Patriarch Nicodim Munteanu (1939-1948) - at that time the Bistrița monastery was a patriarchal stavropighy - on April 26, 1946, she was tonsured in monasticism, receiving the name *Patricia*. Besides teaching, she also had weekly biblical and educational speeches for the entire community. In the summer of 1948, the superior of the monastery, Mother Olga Gologan (1889-1971), also known as “Mother Olga”, entrusted her with the organization of a seasonal kindergarten in Pietreni village, a settlement 4 km away from the monastery²¹.

In the autumn of 1948 mother Patricia was in Bucharest, where she was called by Patriarch Justinian Marina (1948-1977) who gave her the task to

²⁰ M. P. Codău, *Ale Tale dintru ale Tale*, p. 281-286; A. N. Petcu, *Clerici și teologi...*, p. 68.

²¹ M. P. Codău, *Ale Tale dintru ale Tale*, p. 271-272; A. N. Petcu, *Clerici și teologi...*, p. 68.

lead the new seminar at the Plumbuita monastery. Due to the difficulties and misunderstandings between the Patriarchate and the abbess of the monastery, Mother Patricia submitted her resignation. In the following school year 1949-1950 she was transferred as a teacher at the monastic seminary in Varatec Monastery where Mother Veronica Constantinescu was the director (1912-2004). At the end of the school year, with the support of Archimandrite Bartolomeu Anania (1921-2011), a theological education inspector, she returned to the monastery. Here the communist authorities sustained a permanent conflict between the nuns entered into monasticism at the advice of Father Arsenie Boca and the nuns raised in the Bistrita settlement. To settle this conflict, in 1951 Patriarch Justinian decides that the 20 "arsenite" nuns should be entrusted to Patricia Codău and leave for the Tiganesti monastery, and the other group, headed by Mother Nicodima Vasilache, go to the Tismana Monastery. Thus, Mother Patricia became the director of the monastic school in the Tiganesti monastery, and in 1952 she became the abbess of this monastery, which had 250 nuns at that time. As abbess of this monastic settlement, she revived the spiritual life, but also the organizational aspects of the monastery, as well as the monastery workshops that functioned at that time. We should recall that in July 1954 the monastery received the visit of Father Cleopa Ilie and his apprentice, Father Arsenie Papacioc. All these achievements were not appreciated by the communist authorities, who in 1954 demanded mother Patricia her resignation from the position of abbess. By May 1, 1955, she worked as a simple worker in the monastery's workshops²².

In May 1955 she was summoned by Bishop Andrei Magieru to reorganize and lead the monastery Arad-Gai, which was immediately closed after the First World War. The intention of the Bishop of Arad was to revive the monastic life of the diocese and to have a monastery of nuns together with the monks of Hodos-Bodrog. Thus, Mother Patricia returned to her native place and she proceeded to the reorganization of the monastic life in this settlement with a holy and strong zeal, under the guidance of Bishop Andrei Magieru. She restored about 10 hectares belonging to the monastery through justice, she supplied the monastery with the necessary objects for daily living from the Diocesan Institute of Girls and the Theological Academy, as well as the necessary equipment

²² M. P. Codău, *Ale Tale dintru ale Tale*, p. 273-274 și 287; A. N. Petcu, *Clerici și teologi...*, pp. 69-70.

Monks-Confessors of the Arad Diocese during the Communist Regime

for a household. She managed to conceive a community from her former pupils and apprentices. On August 4, a group of five nuns arrived at the monastery, headed by Mother Anatolia Roman, whom she met at the Plumbuita monastery and had a permanent connection with. She is constantly concerned with deepening the godliness and working faith in the authentic spirit of the Eastern tradition, both for the monastery community and for the faithful who attended the monastery. In this sense she organized spiritual conferences, religious concerts, individual and public communications and catechisms, and, of course, a liturgical program following the monastic order²³. The most notable achievement is the establishment of a monastic school by over 20 sisters. The courses of this school were supported by the great professors from the former Theological Academy in Arad: Ilarion V. Felea, Petru Deheleanu, Demian Tudor, Octavian Lipovan. Also in this school, in 1957, Father Cleopa Ilie was invited for spiritual courses and conferences²⁴. All these actions and achievements of the Gai monastery but especially the mission she made among the people drew the attention of the communist repression organs.

In the wave of massive arrests of 1959, more precisely, on the evening of April 21, 22 pm, Mother Patricia was arrested by Securitate. Mother Maria Izdrăila and three other laymen who helped to restore the settlement from Gai were also arrested. The two nuns joined the group of monks from the Hodos-Bodrog Monastery and started the long torture of investigations at the Securitate in Timișoara. The abolition of the Gai monastery begins with the arrest of Patricia Codău. Securitate did more searches at the Gai Monastery to discover incriminating evidence, which is not plausible at all. She was accused of maintaining conspiracy links of Iron Guard origin with political convicts: Ilarion Felea, Bartolomeu Anania, Arsenie Papacioc, Sofian Boghiu, and that she participated at the meetings of the organization "Oastea Domnului" (The Army of Lord). The visits and confessions of Father Iov Volanescu were considered legionnaires meetings. The trial took place on October 22, 1955, at the Military Tribunal in Timisoara: through the sentence no. 532 she was sentenced to 15 years of hard labour,

²³ M. P. Codău, *Ale Tale dintru ale Tale*, p. 275 și 287-288; A. N. Petcu, *Clerici și teologi...*, p. 70.

²⁴ Gherasim Putneanul, *O școală monahală din trecut, de nivel academic*, in "Biserica și Școala", year IV (1995), new series, nr. 5, p. 1.

10 years of civilian degradation, and the confiscation of personal property in its entirety for the offense of “conspiracy against the social order”. She was imprisoned at Timișoara, Arad, Oradea, Miercurea Ciuc and Jilava. She is pardoned and then released on July 27, 1964, but forbidden to return to monasticism²⁵.

“Thus ended my part to the sacrifice brought by the fighters against communism. I would be hypocritical if I said I did not cry in some circumstances. But I did it in secret, retracted in a cell corner, praying and crying”²⁶.

Between 1965 and 1969 she worked at the accounting department of OCL Arad. In 1970, she retired for sickness, and then for old age. In 1974 she was summoned by Metropolitan Nicolae Corneanu to the metropolitan residence in Timisoara (1923-2014), where she was employed as administrator of the Eparchial Centre. In 1977 she re-retired but reinstated with a fixed allowance, having the duties of accounting for maintenance expenses, keeping records of meals and ensuring the good order of monastic discipline, until 2006. She spent the last part of her life in her private home in Arad. She went to the eternal on April 18, 2013, the service being performed at the Gai monastery and she was buried in the cemetery here.

After releasing from detention, she wrote studies, articles, akathistos, and lives of saints, advice, exhortations, and brief biographies of some reference monks from the history of Romanian monasticism and the post-war period, and short monographs of some monasteries in Banat. This preoccupation from the last part of her life reveals the writing side of mother Patricia, but also the exceptional theological training, the rigor and the acrimony of the information transmitted, as well as the poetic sensitivity, the inspiration and the liturgical elegance demonstrated by the composition of akathistos. Her entire work, published in various local magazines and periodicals, radio speeches, some of her letters, her confessions, as well as an autobiography were gathered in a volume, published with the blessing of the honourable Metropolitan Nicolae Corneanu²⁷.

²⁵ M. P. Codău, *Ale Tale dintru ale Tale*, p. 289-291; A. N. Petcu, *Clerici și teologi...*, p. 71-72.

²⁶ M. P. Codău, *Ale Tale dintru ale Tale*, p. 291.

²⁷ Maica Patricia Codău, *Ale Tale dintru ale Tale*, Editura Învierea, Timișoara, 2006, 302 p.

Monks-Confessors of the Arad Diocese during the Communist Regime

Nun with a real vocation, darn and fearless, fighting and confessing, a living parable of sacrifice and dedication, Mother Patricia Codău writes an emotional page in the history of Romanian monasticism and of the fighters against the communist regime, in a constant state of awakening and desire for perfection:

“O, my Mother, Mother of Mercy, Mother of Holiness, Mother of Wisdom, Mother of the Great Love, help me to look at you so my hunger be satisfied of Your beauty and kindness! O, Lord, glory to Thy loving-kindness!”²⁸.

III. Conclusions

The establishment of the communist regime in Romania brought faces of clergy and confessors to the forefront of the national and local ecclesiastical history, who stood against the red roller with dignity and abnegation. They rose up in defence of the faith and tradition of the Romanian people and were able to overtly reject the atheistic and materialistic ideologies of a group of people forcibly installed at the leadership of a free state. Among these, the monks from Arad grouped around Bishop Andrei Magieru, were particularly distinguished as spiritual elites and pillars of the Orthodox faith and the national being.

Under the guidance of the martyr bishop, Andrei Magieru, the monks from Arad were the force of this diocese, the first row in the struggle against the atheist regime, strong missionaries, intellectuals and theologians with thorough training, but also by practising the Eastern monastic tradition they received the strength and courage of confession, the dignity and humanity that even their enemies marvelled at. Some of them sealed the confession of Christ with their lives, others became marginalized by society, but their deed opened them the eternity and provided them with a well-deserved place on the pages of history.

Founders of spiritual establishments and spiritual leaders of the people, the monks from Arad during communism gave a vivid witness that the Church of Christ cannot be kneeled by any human ideology or political regime. The Church of Christ is eternal and above history, although she lives and unfolds in time and history.

²⁸ M. P. Codău, *Ale Tale dintru ale Tale*, p. 269.

The message of these monks and nuns who have suffered for Christ can be profoundly and directly materialized in one of the testimonies of Mother Patricia Codau:

“There is no negative force that overwhelms peace and the positive force of love. The devil is the identification of hatred. Jesus is the personification and fullness of love”²⁹.

²⁹ M. P. Codău, *Ale Tale dintru ale Tale*, p. 255.