

Archimandrite Filaret Jocu – a Life Between Serving God and Espionage

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Abstract. *Archimandrite Filaret Jocu was one of the most controversial figures of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the first decades of the 20th century. The controversies are not related to his theological education or his moral quality, which were both remarkable, but to the role he played in a few important issues regarding the Church. While studying in Athens, Filaret Jocu managed to position himself within the influential circles of the Church of Greece and make several connections which would prove extremely important over the years. He was one of the clerics who officiated the religious wedding between Carol, Crown Prince of Romania, and Princess Helen of Greece. After Princess Helen's arrival in our country, Filaret Jocu was one of the closest people in her entourage. Being sent as a secret agent to Greece, he had the mission to examine the Greek people's attitude towards monarchy compared to the republicanism of Eleftherios Venizelos. A few years later, in 1929, Patriarch Miron Cristea and the Romanian Government entrusted Archimandrite Jocu with undertaking a tour in the Patriarchates of Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem and Alexandria in order to understand their attitudes in terms of the calendar change, while the official purpose of his visit was searching for carpets for the Romanian Patriarchal Cathedral in Bucharest. After having served for several years at the Patriarchal Cathedral, in 1941 he was elected Bishop of Argeș, an election which was later revoked due to tensions within the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church and several political interests.*

Our paper, by means of original archive sources, aims at presenting the main aspects of Archimandrite Filaret Jocu's life, a servant of the altar and a spy in the benefit of the Romanian Orthodox Church and Romania.

Keywords: *Patriarch Miron Cristea, Jerusalem, Athens, Patriarchal Cathedral, Romanian Orthodox Church.*

Espionage and faith, faith and espionage are two directions which sometimes converge towards a point where the Church and the State meet in a different manner than the usual relation between the two entities. The idea of monks or priests working as spies and vice versa, spies working undercover as priests or monks, may give rise to diverse interpretations and controversies despite the obvious presence of this phenomenon throughout history¹. For a long time, discussing about people with double identities represented a taboo, so that, most of the times, without the presence of factual evidence, the

¹ Ecclesiastical espionage has been treated in several studies and volumes in international historiography, such as: Nikolas K. Gvosdev, „Espionage and the Ecclesia”, in *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 42, Nr. 4 (Autumn 2000), Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 803-823. In Romania, research on this topic has received little attention and is still limited to volumes or studies that provide general information about well-known international cases: Vasile Dumitru Fulger, *Spioni în sutană*, București, Aldo Press, 2008; Alexandru Popescu, „Clericii, preoții și călugării: din amvon pe frontul „secret””, in *Historia* (electronic version), consulted on 12.10.2018, etc.

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majority of people considered the existence of such cases more likely to be a rumour. However, this does deny the historical truth: for hundreds of years, monks, priests, bishops, or pilgrims used to carry out espionage activity in favour of their own churches or states, as the intelligence services infiltrated the churches and operated with covert agents of the clergy. In a highly religious European society, the presence of a man of the Church was almost never considered a threat, as people were willing to open their hearts and souls in front of a representative of God, without being aware that he might serve different interests than those of spiritual nature. In the Romanian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, sometimes, monks or priests have played the role of spies or messengers of important secrets, working either in favour of their own country or, sometimes, for a foreign power. This role offered them the opportunity to enjoy the advantages of anonymity and freedom of movement, and those responsible for gathering political, economic, and military information understood how to exploit them to the maximum.

We will dedicate the following pages to the biography of Filaret Jocu, whose fascinating destiny has received little attention in the literature and only a few studies explored and analyzed his life, so that the biographical data that has been published so far is rather poor². The National Romanian Archives represent our main source of information providing details on Filaret Jocu's life and journey, a man who was fully dedicated to God and to his country.

Filaret Jocu was born on the 23rd of January 1882 in Coteana village, Olt county, being christened Florea³. Of humble origins, he was born to a hardworking, devoutly Christian peasant family, who understood the God-given calling of their child at an early age and sent him to Stânișoara monastery at the age of 10. He was accepted at the monastery and started attending the classes of the elementary school in Jiblea. This is where he would later meet Bishop Gherasim Timuș. Observing the child's intellectual and spiritual qualities, Bishop Gherasim Timuș decided to take him under his wings, and to join him to Curtea de Argeș. After finishing the 6th grade, he registered for the theological seminary courses. He soon became an altar boy at the Eparchial Cathedral at the age of 15, and four years later, in 1901, he was received into the monastic community under the name of Filaret. The next year, on the 8th of September, Filaret was ordained a deacon, beginning his preparation for the high-school admission exam. In June 1904, at the age of 22, he was admitted to the high-school in Pitești, where he studied for two years until he was transferred to Bucharest, under the care of the new Bishop Calist Ialomițeanu,

² It is at least surprising that very few dictionaries and encyclopedias on Romanian theology and the history of the Romanian Orthodox Church mention Filaret Jocu's name. Archimandrite Filaret Jocu was a part of the highest Romanian clerical circles, being involved twice in the election for the vacant episcopal thrones.

³ Timotei Aioanei, *Slujind lui Dumnezeu în Catedrala Patriarhală*, București, Ed. Basilica, 2013, p. 74.

being named deacon at the Delea Nouă church⁴. He finished high-school in 1910 and was transferred to the Metropolitan Cathedral as a deacon. In the same year, he applied for the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Bucharest, graduating in 1914. During the First World War, he remained in Bucharest, even if the city was under German occupation, trying to perform his duties without being distracted by the dramatic events. On 21st of May 1917⁵, while in the middle of the war, he was ordained a hieromonk, continuing his activity at the Metropolitan Cathedral.

The end of the war and the peace building in the Balkans area would open new perspectives for the Romanian hieromonk. Urged by his University professor Dragomir Demetrescu, Filaret was encouraged to study as a PhD student at the Theological Faculty in Athens. This new experience did not estrange him from the Romanian Orthodox Church, as he officially remained a servant to the Orthodox Cathedral in Bucharest. During the three years that he spent in the Greek capital, Hieromonk Filaret officiated at the Agia Irini Cathedral, distinguishing himself by his interest in research, and by becoming close to the highest clerical and administrative circles in Greece, in which he was integrated very well. All the relations that he had built and strengthened during the years he spent in Greece would open the highest doors in the Orthodox world. Therefore, it was not surprising that, on 10th of March 1921, he became part of the group of priests performing the religious marriage ceremony of Prince Carol of Romania, heir to the throne, to Princess Helen of Greece. The great honour would later be reflected in the close relations with the Romanian Royal Family and the political environment, which marked the framework of his future collaboration to carry out intelligence gathering activities.

On 1st of August 1923⁶, he was appointed Grand Ecclesiarch of the Metropolitan Cathedral (Patriarchal Cathedral starting with 1925), replacing Archimandrite Gherontie Nicolau. The following year, he earned the PhD title (certificate no. 6592/1924) in Theology with a thesis called “The relations between the Church and the State in Romania”⁷, which was later published both in Romania and Greece. Two famous Romanian professors were part of his examination committee: Dragomir Demetrescu (who encouraged him to study in Greece) and Teodor Popescu.

Between 1923 and 1930, Filaret Jocu was sent in several missions across the border, either through ministerial order, or as a representative of the Romanian patriarch. All missions had a secret character, many times camouflaged under the form of ordinary travels, „official history” recording them as such, without revealing their real purpose. In order to better

⁴ Ioan Opreș, „Alegeri episcopale la Argeș în 1941”, in *Argesis*, XVII (2008), p. 271.

⁵ Timotei Aioanei, *Slujind lui Dumnezeu în Catedrala Patriarhală*, p. 74.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 74.

⁷ Ioan Opreș, „Alegeri episcopale la Argeș în 1941”, p. 271.

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understand the aim of these travels, we highlight the importance of the following report, dated 5th of March 1943, written by Dudu Velicu, the former Private Secretary to Patriarch Miron Cristea, and addressed to the State Security (Siguranța Statului). In this report, Dudu Velicu summarized Filaret Jocu's work, presenting his example as a pattern for other similar situations involving Romanian priests or monks. “5th March 1943. A Romanian monk, an intelligence agent abroad. Regarding the proposals presented in the report entitled „The Church and the State Security”, towards a better documentation, it reveals the case of a Romanian monk, an intelligence agent in Greece and the Near East. Archimandrite Filaret Jocu, who currently serves at the Patriarchal Cathedral in Bucharest, studied Theology at the University of Athens, earning a PhD title in Theology before 1924. During his studies (in Greece), the Archimandrite has created a vast network of people, both from secular and ecclesiastical circles, including the Palace. In these circumstances, he executed a clever and fruitful policy, being appointed priest at a church in Athens, where he received a monthly salary from the Greek state. In Athens, he enjoyed the entourage of Princess Helen, the current Queen Mother of Romania, whose marriage he officiated together with Patriarch Photius of Alexandria. Returned in the country, he prepares a Romanian-Greek manuscript of the Divine Liturgy, to the personal use of Her Majesty Queen Helen, who didn't know the Romanian language at the time. Afterwards, Mișu Nicolae, Minister of the Palace, and Prince Șuțu, Marshal of the Palace, assign him to travel to Greece with the mission to inform them about the public's attitude towards monarchy: if the people is royalist or a follower of Venizelos. For this mission only, Mișu Nicolae offered him 10.000 drachma, while Prince Șuțu 20.000 lei. When he arrived in Athens, the Archimandrite started his activity among the inferior and superior clerics, including the Patriarch, and among the laics as well. He would receive the information while he was in town, in certain established places, or at the church where he was serving. At church, the informants would slip the notes into his arm together with the diptychs at the Divine Liturgy. In the Altar, the Archimandrite separated the notes from the diptychs, systemized them and started writing the reports that he would later send to Bucharest, twice a week, via a courier directly to his political superiors. In the spring of 1929, in act No. 3074 on 6th of March, Patriarch Miron Cristea sends him in a new mission, in which he had to officially visit the ecclesiastical centres in the Near East so that, on the one hand, to inform the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Romanian Government on the Orthodox Patriarchs' attitudes towards the event that was taking place in our country: the calendar change, as it was thought that the Constantinople Patriarchy would interrupt any relation with our Church, declaring it schismatic – on the other hand, to stop a potential decision against our Church. The official reason for Archimandrite Filaret Jocu's travels was the acquisition of carpets for the Patriarchal Cathedral in Bucharest. Archimandrite Filaret remains abroad to fulfill his mission from April until June 1929. Arrived in Constantinople, the Archimandrite was received by the Patriarch immediately, due to his old acquaintances, right during the Synod's meeting, disregarding any protocol standards, which shows the importance that was given to the Romanian guest. During his stay in Constantinople, where his aim was to accomplish his mission given by the Romanian Patriarchy dignitaries and the members of the Holy Synod, Archimandrite Filaret made the necessary research. He focused

*on the same mission in Athens, Alexandria and Jerusalem as well, fulfilling it successfully. On his return to the country, the monk brought several precious information, raising a number of ecclesiastical and political topics regarding Romania in the Near East. We provided this example in order to demonstrate, as proposed in the above-mentioned report, several young monks could be sent in such missions, especially in Bulgaria. Dudu Velicu*⁸.

During his missions in Jerusalem, one of the main objectives on his agenda was to determine if the building of Romanian settlements on the Holy Sites could be feasible, as this was a project that had started two decades earlier. In 1906, at the initiative of Professor Teodor Burada from the Conservatory in Iași, they rented a building in Jerusalem, with the purpose of establishing a home for the Romanian pilgrims at the Holy Sepulcher. In time, new locations were rented, and small areas of land were also purchased to this end. The involvement of the Holy Synod was not so visible at first, but it increased in time, as the Synod tried to intervene with the Jerusalem Patriarchy and the civil authorities in order to solve that matter.

The issue of acquiring a home in the Holy Land has been resumed and discussed by Patriarch Miron Cristea in 1927, without any significant progress. After returning from an official visit to Jerusalem, Patriarch Miron Cristea intervened with act no. 213 from the 28th of June 1927 to Patriarch Damianos, asking him to facilitate the acquisition of a home for the Romanian pilgrims in the Holy City. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem returned with an evasive answer in act No. 785, registered with the Holy Synod in Bucharest under No. 473 on the 21st of August 1927. Patriarch Miron made a new attempt in 1929, by sending Archimandrite Filaret Jocu to Jerusalem⁹, as a person who was well-informed about the situation, and with multiple contacts there. The attempt failed to be successful again, however, a new round of discussions was planned for the following years.

On the 5th of March 1930, as a person whose merits and qualities have been recognized by his superiors, and who enjoyed their trust, Filaret Jocu was named Exarch of the monasteries in the Archdiocese of Bucharest, a position he will hold for more than six years. As he was well-informed of the Romanian settlements in the Holy City, Filaret was also involved in the delegation of the Romanian Orthodox Church to Jerusalem between the 2nd and the 21st of April 1931 for a new round of negotiations, which was hoped to be the last one. Bishop Visarion Puiu of Hotin and Professor Constantin N. Tomescu from the Theological Faculty in Chișinău joined Archimandrite Filaret to Jerusalem. Following this visit, Bishop Visarion prepared an ample report that he directed to the Holy Synod. A copy of this report has found its way into the hands of King Carol II (who was very interested in the matter), as an annex to the report sent to His Majesty by the Bishop of Hotin on the 1st of May 1931.

⁸ Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (further referred to as ANIC), Fond *Dudu Velicu*, Vol. 770, ff. 82-84.

⁹ ANIC, Fond *Casa Regală*. Vol. III. *Regele Carol al II-lea*, Vol. 14/1931, f. 7.

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“Your Majesty, According to the mandate received from the Holy Synod by the meeting decision on the 14th of June 1930, communicated on the 5th of November 1930, and empowered with the letter addressed to His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Damianos by His Beatitude Patriarch Miron, as president of the Holy Synod, under No. 460 from the 23rd of March 1931, in order to continue the acquisition of a Romanian home in the Holy City so that Romanian pilgrims travelling to the Holy Sepulchre could be accommodated, I travelled to Jerusalem between the 2nd and the 24th of April 1931, accompanied by Archimandrite Filaret Jocu from the Patriarchal Cathedral in Bucharest and Mr. Constantin N. Tomescu, professor at the Theological Faculty in Chişinău, who have provided significant support in our mission. The travel expenses were covered by Prime Minister G. Mironescu, who provided us the amount of 140.000 lei from the funds of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by the Government Order No. 5536/1930. The results of this mission will be found in the annexed report. The attempt to acquire a Romanian home in Jerusalem started in 1906. A few sporadic attempts were made since then, but without sufficient support neither from the Synod, nor from the State, nor the ordinary people. During Patriarch Miron Cristea’s visit to the Holy Places in 1927, this topic was brought into discussion, reinforcing the property rights on the land acquired in the past (now legally belonging to a member of our Holy Synod, namely His Grace Bishop Tit Târgovişteanu). On the other hand, discussions with the Patriarchy in Jerusalem continued for the acquisition of a place or land more appropriate to this destination than the inadequate land we currently own. There are two means to reach this purpose: a) the acquisition of such a home for free from the Patriarchy of Jerusalem, and b) the acquisition of a ready-to-use building or the construction of a building. Our mission was to continue the discussions with the Holy Patriarchy in Jerusalem in order to receive such a place free of charge. However, if we are not going to succeed, the procurement of land and the construction of our home will only be possible through acquisition, with help from the State and money received from the Orthodox Christians in the Romanian eparchies. This topic being very important to us both from the church and political perspective, as shown in the reasons stated in the annexed report that we bring to the attention of Your Majesty, we consider it must be continued and completed, and we ask for the royal support of Your Majesty. Your Majesty’s humble prayer to God, Visarion, Bishop of Hotin, 1st May 1931”¹⁰.

After all the missions abroad, Filaret Jocu’s life has undergone a period of stability and tranquility, which lasted for almost ten years. During these years, which coincided with the reign of King Carol II, a few changes have taken place. At the end of April 1932, he was replaced in the position of Grand Ecclesiarch of the Patriarchal Cathedral by Archimandrite Galaction Cordon, but he continued to remain a servant of the church and Exarch of the monasteries in the Archdiocese of Bucharest. On the 1st of April 1935, he was reappointed Ecclesiarch of the Cathedral, but only for a short time, as the next year, his term of office as an Exarch ended, and he was replaced by

¹⁰ ANIC, Fond Casa Regală. Vol. III. Regele Carol al II-lea, Vol. 14/1931, f. 18.

Archimandrite Efreem Enăchescu¹¹. From this moment on, he only functioned as a servant to the Patriarchal Cathedral in Bucharest, holding no other important administrative positions. This was the general context in which Filaret Jocu participated at the funeral of Patriarch Miron Cristea (whose important collaborator he had been for more than a decade), where he served together with the other concelebrants present on that occasion¹². During these years, we also consider relevant his close relation to Dr. Nicolae Lupu, an important figure in the Romanian political environment¹³. This friendship would later propel Filaret Jocu to become a candidate for the vacant eparchial throne on several occasions.

Taking into account the personal experience and theological formation, together with his constant presence in the entourage of Romanian patriarchs and metropolitans (which helped him be well-informed about the most important themes within the Romanian Orthodox Church), Archimandrite

¹¹ Timotei Aioanei, *Slujind lui Dumnezeu în Catedrala Patriarhală*, pp. 74-76.

¹² “After the end of the divine service, all the clergy and official guests surrounded the church, as is usual in the Orthodox tradition, while the patriarchal choir was singing „Adusu-mi-am aminte” (“I remembered”) and “Veșnica pomenire” (“Memory Eternal”). The cortege then left the church. The wreath of red carnations sent by His Majesty the King was carried by two monks at the head of the procession. The Christian koliva and the church apparel came next, followed by the imposing group of bishops, dressed in beautiful vestments, in front with Archimandrites Filaret Jocu and Atanasie Dincă. After the bishops’ group, that also included the foreign religious cults representatives, followed the Patriarch’s coffin that was solemnly carried by the military guards and archpriests. The family members followed the coffin. Next followed His Majesty the King, together with the Grand Voivode Mihai. Prime Minister Armand Călinescu came next, followed by the royal counselors, the members of His Majesty’s civil and military entourage, and all the Government members. Next followed the ambassadors, the diplomatic corps members, the four Inspector-Generals of the Army. The officers of the General Staff of the Armed Forces, former ministers, the knights of the Military Order “Mihai Viteazul”, the higher magistrates, the minority cults representatives; the deans and professors from the theological faculties; the guards’ commanders, etc. The procession surrounded the church, making a stop, according to custom, in front of the window on the southern side of the church, in front of the altar, and then in front of the window on the northward side, where prayers were made. Afterwards, in the same order, the procession entered the Patriarchy, lowering the coffin into the crypt.” ANIC, *Fond Miron Cristea*, Vol. 22, ff. 65-66.

¹³ Dr. Nicolae Lupu (6/19 November 1876 – 4 December 1946) was a prominent member of the Romanian political environment in the interwar years. Working as a physician, Nicolae Lupu entered politics in 1907, being a member of the National Liberal Party until 1918. During the Great Union year, he enrolled into the Peasant Party, becoming the president of this party in 1924. He held this position until 1926, when the party changed into the National Peasant Party. Starting a conflict with the party leaders, Nicolae Lupu founded a new peasant party, detached from PNȚ, becoming the president of this political party until March 1934, when he returns to the original party. Later on, during the first years following World War II, he was in conflict with Iuliu Maniu, and separated from PNȚ with a group of politicians that had been active in the National Peasant Party and founded the Democratic Peasants' Party, which was closer to the communists. Throughout the years, he occupied several important positions: prefect of Fălciu county, a deputy between 1918 and 1938, and Minister of Interior (1919-1920), Minister of Education (4-20 June 1927) and Minister of Labour (1927-1928). A very influent figure in the Ministry of Cults and Arts and in the ecclesiastical circles, he took action against the legionaries, which was later reflected in the repeated failures of validating the election in the episcopal throne of Filaret Jocu.

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Filaret Jocu was aware of the importance and responsibilities of the episcopal dignity, considering himself prepared for this hierarchical position¹⁴. Hence, at the beginning of June 1941, the throne of the Diocese of Argeş became vacant due to the transfer of Bishop Grigorie Leu to the Diocese of Huşi, and Archimandrite Filaret Jocu was interested to apply for the vacant position. On the 4th of June 1941, the Electoral Congress of the Romanian Orthodox Church elected him in the new position, with 50 votes in favour, out of a total of 137 votes for all the candidates¹⁵. What seemed to be a mere formality, namely the validation by the Holy Synod, proved to be far from the truth. Given the intrusion of political factors, the appointment was invalidated three days later, invoking the lack of an absolute majority of votes. In this context, the Eparchial Assembly of the Diocese of Argeş filed a motion in which they requested that Bishop Dionisie Erhan, who was exercising the function of *locum tenens* of the vacant throne, should remain as Titular Hierarch of the Diocese. “*Motion. The undersigned Members of the Eparchial Assembly of the God-protected Diocese of Argeş, informed of the intention of filling the vacant episcopal position in our Diocese, which is currently led by Bishop Dionisie of Ismail, we find it appropriate to express our confidence in His Grace Dionisie for leading the diocese with tact, kindness and wisdom, and for fostering closeness between people, for earning the love of priests and the appreciation of people in his short-term mission. We respectfully ask General Ion Antonescu, as leader of the Romanian state, that this revered hierarch and experienced nationalist personality may continue to be our leader until God will allow him to return to his dear Bessarabia.*”¹⁶

The motion, dated the 7th of June 1941, offered the legal support to cancel the election, while, at the same time, Ion Antonescu considered that he and the country should focus on Romania’s imminent entrance into the war, not on conflicts within the Church. Another factor against Filaret Jocu’s election was precisely the support offered by Dr. Nicolae Lupu. Instead of being an advantage, this support proved to be less significant because the doctor’s political opponents exercised a big influence at the Ministry of Cults and Arts and the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. As expected, Doctor Lupu reacted by writing a pleading that was addressed to the Ministry of Cults and Arts, in which he argued against the cancellation of Archimandrite Filaret Jocu’s election to the throne of the Diocese of Argeş. The letter reached Mihai

¹⁴ Archimandrite Filaret Jocu would characterize himself as follows: “*There have been 49 years since I entered the monastery, out of which at least 46 years were spent in a very close contact with hierarchs and leaders of the Church [...]. I learnt the pastoral methods and the beautiful customs, that are no longer practiced today. If I became a bishop, I would work hard in order to reconnect to the beautiful church traditions I have experienced in the past, also considering the times we live in, and I would encourage those who serve and intend to serve the Church to come to terms with their lives first, that is to order and discipline their lives and deeds, according to the teachings they preach, and touched by the fire of evangelical love, and only by this, to be able to warm up and enlighten the ones whom they have the duty to lead to the land of redemption.*” ANIC, Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Artelor, Vol. 3/1941, f. 41.

¹⁵ Timotei Aioanei, *Ștăind lui Dumnezeu în Catedrala Patriarhală*, p. 76.

¹⁶ ANIC, Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Artelor, Vol. 3/1941, f. 45.

Antonescu (the President of the Council of Ministers), but the Government provided a trenchant reply to the Minister of Cults and Arts on the 13th of June 1941, which clearly indicates the subjective human factor behind the cancellation of election and the blocking of the Holy Synod decision. “*Dear Mr. Minister, Following Doctor N. Lupu’s pleading regarding the cancellation of election for the position as a Bishop of Argeș by the Holy Synod, we are honoured to kindly ask you to condescend to acknowledge the following resolution by General Antonescu: «10.VI. (10th of June), The Synod shall close with no further discussion. We are currently under negotiation regarding serious problems that concern the future of the nation. I do not want trouble within the Church. We need to be united. General Antonescu.» Please accept the assurance of our highest consideration. General Secretary C. Vlădescu*”¹⁷

As a result of the State leader’s decision, the election of Filaret Jocu could not be put into practice. However, this first episode represented the preamble to several other moments in which Filaret’s name was taken into consideration as a possible candidate to the vacant eparchial thrones. For Achimandrite Jocu, on a personal level, the invalidation was a heavy blow. On the 4th of March, Dudu Velicu would note in his journal: “*In the evening, I went to Archimandrite Filaret Jocu, from the Patriarchy, who lives in the home once occupied by Master Gh. Cucu, my former music professor. Filaret Jocu unveiled all the injustices done by the Church, through Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan of Ardeal, invalidating his election to the position of bishop at Curtea de Argeș. Dr Lupu supported him, but it was too late. He showed me and handed me his pleadings, asking me to intervene with the Presidency in order to repair the injustice, so that he could be elected in the future. I promised him all my support, because he is an astute connoisseur of the Church-related problems, especially of divine service, the liturgical norms and the Typikon.*”¹⁸

Thus, a new occasion emerged in January 1944. At that time, several metropolitan and eparchial thrones were vacant, as the unfolding war made the new elections much more difficult, especially in the Bessarabian dioceses. Additionally, the tensions within the Synod, with two main groups formed around Patriarch Nicodim Munteanu and Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan, and the intrusion of politics, made elections very hard to make, each group desiring to impose their own candidates. Filaret Jocu was also proposed, his case (regarding the invalid election from 1941) being well-known. Once again, we have additional information about the tensions within the Romanian Orthodox Church from Dudu Velicu: “*21st January 1944. On the occupation of the five vacant episcopal thrones, and of the one vacant Metropolitan throne, the Government has expressed its desire that only the worthiest candidates should be elected, also highlighting that it will take into account Patriarch Nicodim Munteanu’s wish. Hence, the names of people who had to occupy the new vacant positions had been established in advance. There are two reasons which did not make the accomplishment of the Government’s wishes difficult, but they created some momentary concerns. Thus, Doctor Lupu really wanted Archimandrite PhD Filaret Jocu to*

¹⁷ ANIC, Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Artelor, Vol. 3/1941, f. 43.

¹⁸ ANIC, Fond Dudu Velicu, Vol. 770, f. 97.

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be elected in the vacant throne of the Diocese of Argeș, as a compensation for the fact that his election in the above-mentioned throne hadn't been validated by the Holy Synod two years earlier. However, the Government's option was bishop Emilian Antal to be elected as Lieutenant Bishop of the above-mentioned diocese, however, at the Patriarch's suggestion, it later opted for Archimandrite Iosif Sinaitul. Doctor Lupu's wish was also fulfilled with the election of Archimandrite Ph.D. Filaret Jocu as a bishop of Bălți. Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan had in plan the election of two Transylvanian hierarchs in Bessarabia, namely bishop Nicolae Popovici for the Metropolitan throne of Chișinău and bishop Policarș Morușca as a bishop of Ismail. [...] Following the above-mentioned events, and at His Beatitude Patriarch Nicodim's suggestion, the Government decides on the following candidates: Bishop Efrem Enăchescu, for the Metropolitan throne of Chișinău; Archim. Ph.D Antim Nica, for the episcopal throne of Ismail; Archimandrite Iosif (Gașton) Sinaitul for the episcopal throne of Argeș; Archim. Ph.D Antim Angelescu, for the episcopal throne of Buzău; Archim. Chesarie Păunescu, for the episcopal throne of Constanța, while at Bălți the bishop of the Army Ph.D Partenie Ciopron would be elected. Partenie Ciopron does not stand as a candidate because the General Staff of the Armed Forces wouldn't let him leave for Bălți. As a consequence, the only available candidate was Archim. Filaret Jocu, but the electors claimed they would not elect him under any circumstance. Given the situation, another option was Archim. Benedict Ghiuș, who found it difficult to accept the proposal, knowing the issue of compensation in the case of Archim. Filaret Jocu. The Prime Minister Mihai Antonescu appreciates Benedict Ghiuș's reserved attitude, so he included him in the elections. The candidacy of the two was put to vote, but Benedict Ghiuș was still missing two votes, besides the 61 already obtained, in order to be elected bishop. A new round of votes followed, after which Benedict Ghiuș was declared the winner. Observing the situation, Benedict Ghiuș declared in writing that he would not accept the position. In the evening, he was called by Nicolae Bălan and Tit Sîmedrea, who convinced him to sign a declaration that he agrees to occupy the new position. On the 19th of January, during the Synod meeting that would validate the election, a conflict between Mihai Antonescu and Nicolae Bălan took place, as Antonescu was resentful because Benedict Ghiuș changed his mind and did not keep his word. Consequently, the Synod did not validate his election, and did not consider the possibility of electing Filaret Jocu either, as their debt towards Dr Lupu was considered to have been paid in full.”¹⁹

The episcopal elections represented more than a simple option for one of the few candidates worthy of fulfilling this dignity. The interferences of politics were major, and the Church often became a victim of the backstage games. In the conflicts between pro-legionaries and anti-legionaries, between people pro-Antonescu and those who contested the Marshal's authority, between hierarchs from Transylvania and the hierarchs from the rest of the country, the least gained were exactly the candidates who were proposed to occupy these episcopal thrones, many of which were situated in Bessarabia (already lost to the U.S.S.R.), with no real perspectives for pastoring their

¹⁹ ANIC, Fond *Dudu Velicu*, Vol. 205, ff. 3-8.

people there. The case of electing Benedict Ghiuș for the diocese of Bălți is very relevant²⁰, and the elements already presented by Dudu Velicu represent only the general framework. Filaret Jocu was also dragged into this internal ecclesiastical conflict, as he became the candidate “on duty” for any vacant position. “Regarding the elections in Bessarabia, the Government and the Patriarch were looking for people who were willing to make a vow that, irrespective of the situation, even if the Romanian Army retreats, they will remain with the believers in their dioceses. Two hierarchs, His Grace Efreim and His Grace Policarp Morușca were asked if they would accept these conditions, and without consenting to this, the attention was focused on His Grace Antim Nica, but he could not be found. His Grace Partenie Ciopron (Bishop of the Army) would have agreed to go, being a Bessarabian, but the General Staff of the Armed Forces wouldn’t let him go. I asked if there was anyone else available at the Patriarchy and I called Archimandrite Jocu. Archimandrite Jocu, when asked by the His Eminence and myself, if in case of an election, he assumes to remain in Bessarabia, regardless of the circumstances, he answered as follows: «If God offers me, an old man, this last joy of sacrifice, I will not promise to die; I will be at one with the Bessarabian land²¹.» [...] Archimandrite Jocu made this vow without being specifically asked for it and considered this final stage of his life to be the coronation of his old age, if God shall allow it. He even claimed that: «Taking the bishop dignity, I promise to leave my life in the hands of God». [...] The Holy Synod meeting on the 14th of January 1944 was a consequence of the veiled accusations brought by His Eminence Nicolae Bălan against the Government and especially Mihai Antonescu, accusing the latter of interfering with the episcopal election at Bălți. Together with Tit Simerea, Mihai Antonescu managed to persuade Benedict Ghiuș to candidate at the last minute, although the latter expressed his conviction and desire not to candidate, especially as he was considered a traitor (in his homeland) because he took refuge in Romania, leaving Bessarabia on the arrival of the Soviets in 1940. Changing his mind was viewed as a strategy against the Patriarch’s and Government’s group. On the day when the diocese delegation came to support Benedict Ghiuș, one of the members declared: «Truly speaking, we have only heard of Archimandrite Ghiuș this morning. We came here to elect His Grace Ciopron, however, this morning we were informed that Archimandrite Ghiuș is the Governments’ candidate»”.²²

Following all the above-mentioned delicate moments, Archimandrite Filaret Jocu did not manage to see his dream accomplished. During the following two years, the situation remained the same, although his case was on the Synod’s agenda on the 30th of July 1945²³, and despite the fact that his name was taken into consideration several times for the election in the position of assistant bishop. Most of the times, usually when Dr. Lupu was announced as a

²⁰ ANIC, Fond Președinția Consiliului de Miniștri. Cabinetul Civil Mihai Antonescu 1940-1944, Vol. 466, ff. 1-81.

²¹ ANIC, Fond Președinția Consiliului de Miniștri. Cabinetul Civil Mihai Antonescu 1940-1944, Vol. 466, ff. 6-9.

²² ANIC, Fond Președinția Consiliului de Miniștri. Cabinetul Civil Mihai Antonescu 1940-1944, Vol. 466, f. 17.

²³ Dudu Velicu, *Însemnări zilnice. 1945-1947*, Vol. I, București, Arhivele Naționale Române, 2004, pp. 19-20.

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potential minister, Filaret Jocu was mentioned among the potential candidates, however, he was not included on the eligible list.

Grown old and exhausted with all those constant hopes and disillusionings, Archimandrite Filaret Jocu passed away on the 9th of March 1947²⁴, a few months before the official installation of the communist regime in Romania. Most certainly, looking back through the lens of history, Filaret Jocu might have undergone the terrible fate of many of his “contenders”, Vasile Vasilache, Benedict Ghiuș, etc., who were politically detained and imprisoned by the communist regime.

As Dudu Velicu noted, Filaret Jocu closed his eyes for eternity with a deep grief²⁵. In a different political and ecclesiastical context, Archimandrite Jocu may have seen his dream to become a bishop accomplished, but the complex situation in Romania during the 1940s did not allow this to happen.

Filaret Jocu left behind a unique biography in the recent history of the Romanian Orthodox Church, a destiny in which we can identify not only faith in God and serving the Church for more than half a century, but also the services he brought to the State and the Church. Several times, these activities took the form of what we can call today espionage actions. We hope that our paper brings a meaningful contribution to a better understanding of Archimandrite Filaret Jocu’s life and activity, because he was a personality we know little about and who was unfairly forgotten in the recent decades.

²⁴ Timotei Aioanei, *Slujind lui Dumnezeu în Catedrala Patriarhală*, p. 76.

²⁵ Dudu Velicu, *Însemnări zilnice. 1945-1947*, p. 249.