

THE GOGA GOVERNMENT (1937-1938) AND THE REVISION
OF ROMANIAN CITIZENSHIP. A CONTENT ANALYSIS
OF THE PRESS IN POLITICAL CONTEXT

NICOLAE DRĂGUȘIN*

Abstract. The paper aims to analyse the Octavian Goga's government decree-law on the revision of citizenship in the political and ideological context. By political context we understand the unclear outcome of the general elections from December 20, 1937 and King's political game to call to govern the party that won the fourth place in the elections. By ideological context we understand the Goga's governing program with references the ideological orientation of National Christian Party that he chaired. It does so by using mainly the mainstream press of the time as first-hand historical source. The method employed is a content analysis of the remaining nationalistic press (*Universul, Curentul, Porunca vremii*) after the center and center-left press, the so-called "Sărindar press" (*Adevărul, Dimineața, Lupta*) was suppressed as the very first act of the new Goga Government. This paper mirrors the official statements of the King, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice as the three main institutional actors of the revision of citizenship and the way in which the press reported and commented the appointment of the new government, the announcement of the program and, precisely, the measure for the revision of citizenship. Hence the span of time covered by this press analysis dates from 28 December 1937 until 22 January 1938. This systematic reading of the press will show the way in which the electoral results, the announcement of the governing program and the measure of the revision of citizenship were commented by these mainstream newspapers of center-right and radical right orientation. Applauding the ruling of the reconsideration of citizenships granted to Jews after 1918, the press not only backed the government but became in itself an nationalistic actor that paved the way to dictatorship and and although unintended or at least not publicly affirmed made the first step toward the revision of the Versailles treaties.

Keywords: *Citizenship Revision; Anti-Semitism; Octavian Goga Government; Interwar Romania; Press Analysis*

* PhD student in Political Science at the University of Bucharest (2020-present), PhD in Philosophy at the Romanian Academy (2013) and Scientific Researcher III at "Elie Wiesel" National Institute for the Study of the Holocaust in Romania; email: nicolaedr@yahoo.com.

Introduction

The present study aims to analyze the political and ideological context in which the Government chaired by Octavian Goga (29 December 1937 – 10 February 1938) adopted, and King Carol II sanctioned, the decree-law for the revision of Romanian citizenship. The history of the citizenship revision should not be reduced to this decree-law. It also includes the previous stage of the Gh. Tătărescu's government, during which two essential changes took place: 1. the public debate based on specific cases of fraudulent acquisition of citizenship took the subject of the revision out of the strict sphere of the extremist parties' agenda and made it a matter of public interest¹; 2. the three attempts to legislate the revision, one by the Minister of the Interior, Mr. D. Iuca, in the form of a circular to the prefects², and others by the Parliament, on the initiative of the deputy Pamfil Șeicaru and on the initiative of the Minister of Justice, in the form of draft laws³. In the present case, being a law adopted and applied, the understanding of its legal content requires first of all an analysis of the political and ideological context of the executive power's (King – president of the Council of Ministers) work of governance.

In dealing here with the first actual revision of citizenship it must be said that it is not the work of a single government. If the Goga government was responsible for the legislation, the subsequent governments were responsible for its implementation. In terms of lawmaking, we can identify a succession of key moments: the announcement of the revision as a legal and political project through the radio declaration of Prime Minister O. Goga (January 1, 1938) – the approval of decree-law no. 169 in the meeting of the Council of Ministers on January 21, 1938 (and its publication in the Official Gazette of January 22) as a result of working meetings on January 19-20, 1938? publication of the Minister of Justice's report to the Council of Ministers in the January 28, 1938 issue of the Official Gazette – publication of the implementing regulation of Decree-Law no. 169 (Official Gazette, March 10, 1938) – communication of instructions from the Ministry of Justice on April 13, 1938. The enactment of the revision is the work of the 44-day government of Goga, followed by the two Miron Cristea governments (February 11, 1938 – January 31, 1939)⁴. The date from which the revision starts to be applied is debatable, each option needing to be reasoned. The reason for this vagueness lies in the obscurities in the decree-law and later in the implementing regulation. As it is beyond the scope of this study to analyze

¹ The topic was analysed in Nicolae Drăgușin, "Discursive Strategies in the Central Press about the Revision of Romanian Citizenship (1936-1937)", *Holocaust. Studii și cercetări*, no. 1 (16), vol. XV, 2023, pp. 117-168.

² See Nicolae Drăgușin, "Minoritățile, cetățenia română și naționalismul. Studiu de caz: zvonul privind circulara ministrului D. Iuca pentru revizuirea naturalizărilor (decembrie 1936)", in Radu Carp, Ștefan Herchi (coord.), *Minoritățile naționale. Stadiul cercetării din România și modelul european*, Eikon, Bucharest, 2024, pp. 73-99.

³ Nicolae Drăgușin, "Who is Citizen Among Citizens? Public Debates and Draft Laws on the Revision of Romanian Citizenship (1936-1937)", unpublished.

⁴ Stelian Neagoe, *Istoria guvernelor României de la începuturi – 1859 până în zilele noastre – 1995*, Machiavelli, Bucharest, 1995, pp. 121-125.

these normative acts, we take January 22, 1938, the date of publication of the decree-law in the Official Gazette, as the effective beginning of the revision.

The present study will analyze the enactment of the citizenship revision (January 1-21, 1938) and the public debate that accompanied it in the political and ideological context of the Goga Government. As far as the public debate is concerned, given that the parliament was not convened and parliamentary discussions could not take place, the only historical source is the press of the time, from which we will select only the large-circulation press (*Universul*, *Curentul*, *Porunca vremii*), since the so-called Sărindar newspapers of center-left orientation (*Adevărul*, *Lupta*, *Dimineața*) had been suppressed. There was a preparatory debate between the announcement of the measure (January 1, 1938) and the approval of the decree-law (January 21, 1938) and a debate after the decree-law came into force (January 22, 1938). This subsequent debate will gradually die down after the publication of the implementing regulation.

Following these chronological landmarks, the paper contains two parts. The first part will present the political context and ideological discourse in which the general elections for the new Parliament were held and the Goga government was formed. Of particular interest in this part will be the analysis of the government program, as it resulted from the address of King Carol II, the statements of Prime Minister Goga and the Minister of Justice, V. Rădulescu-Mehedinti, responsible for issuing the decree. The second part of the paper will integrate in the overall analysis the way in which the national press of the time debated the constitution of the government, the government program and the measure of the citizenship revision.

There are at least two reasons why it is worthwhile to analyze the process of legislating the citizenship revision in the political and ideological context of the Goga government, as well as in the context of the press debates. First, in order to explore the dynamics of the law-making process at the intersection of several factors, such as the composition of the Goga government in terms of its members and parties of origin; the ideology and the government program as it emerges from the speeches of the King and the Prime Minister at the swearing-in, as well as Goga's statements to the press and on the radio; the way the press commented on the formation of the government and the outcome of the elections, Goga's statements and the citizenship revision both before the decree-law was passed and afterwards. Second, because the technical analysis of the decree-law, possible in a future study, will not say much if the programmatic statements of the policy makers and the press debate are not taken as hermeneutic grids. Last but not least, as in the already studied case of the attempts to legislate the revision, the nationalist press has played a crucial role in broadening the topic of the revision from a topic of interest for far-right parties to a topic of discussion for actors in the public space. Just as now, when the democratic press had been suppressed, the nationalist press played the same important role, which was to ensure that the law of revision was implemented after February 1938 in a silent manner and under several governments until November 1939.

From the perspective of secondary literature, it should be emphasized that there is no analysis of the enactment of the revision of citizenship in a political context, marked by the will of King Carol II and the unclear outcome of the parliamentary elections of December 1937, and ideological, marked by the program of a government lacking homogeneity. Apart from Philippe Henri Blasen's *La «Primauté de la nation roumaine» et les «étrangers»*⁵ that discusses the issue of minorities in relation to the right to work during Goga Government and the King's personal dictatorship that could only tangentially interest this paper, there is no other analysis of this political regime based on the way in which the press of the time discussed these political events. And all this in spite of the historiographical significance of this government, considered as a preparatory moment of the Holocaust. The present study aims to fill this gap and to introduce the press of the time as a primary source in the analysis of the Goga Government.

However, there are studies that come very close to the aim of this study. We will say that they have remained relevant despite the years that have passed since their publication. The first is Carol Iancu's book, *Evreii din România. De la emancipare la marginalizare. 1919-1938*, in particular section 4 ("The anti-Semitic legislation of the Goga-Cuza government and the revision of the citizenship of Romanian Jews")⁶ of chapter eight ("The new state anti-Semitism during the Tătăărăscu and Goga – Cuza governments"). This book provides the reader with a brief presentation of the political structure of the Goga government, with an exposition of the essential points of the decree-law, its effects and the reactions within the Jewish community and the international community. Another excellent analysis was written by historian Paul A. Shapiro⁷. It is the first to signal out the relevance of *Partidul Național Creștin* ("National Christian Party" hereafter PNC) considered as "watershed in Romanian interwar political development"⁸. Only decades after PNC received its full attention by the research in Ion Mezarescu's perfectible but nonetheless useful monography⁹. Shapiro's inspired me in analysing perhaps the most important anti-Semitic component of the Goga government within the electoral context of December 1937 elections and the political context of the new government. However none of these directly relevant works cited above consider the press debate as an analytical variable in assessing the dynamics of anti-Semitic governmental policies. Precisely, as I will show later in the paper the press debate accompanies, legitimizes and formulates new expectations in relation to the citizenship revision measure. It is explainable since at the time these works were conceived the collections of the press were not easily available. Hence, this paper is meant to fill in this gap.

⁵ Philippe Henri Blasen, *La «primauté de la nation roumaine» et les «étrangers»*, Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj Napoca, 2022, 408 p. The author discusses the issue of citizenship and the connection between the right to work and the citizen status in the second chapter "La citoyenneté roumaine des minoritaires", pp. 36-64.

⁶ Carol Iancu, *Evreii din România. De la emancipare la marginalizare. 1919-1938* (trans. with Goldstein), Hasefer, Bucharest, 2000, pp. 256-265. The original French was published in 1996.

⁷ Paul A. Shapiro, "Prelude to Dictatorship in Romania: the National Christian Party in Power, December 1937-February 1938", *Canadian-American Slavic Studies*, VIII, 1 (Spring 1974), 45-88.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 46.

⁹ Ion Mezarescu, *Partidul Național Creștin. 1935-1938*, Paideia, Bucharest, 2018.

1. Political Context and Ideological Discourse

1.1. The Electoral Ballot and the Formation of the Goga Government

In order to understand the political dynamics of the period under analysis, we must start from the constitutional role that King Carol II had as head of state (1930-1940). According to the Romanian Constitution (1923), the King appoints the Prime Minister (“President of the Council of Ministers”) and entrusts him with the formation of the entire government (Art. 93). The King also “has the right to dissolve both [Parliamentary] Assemblies at once or only one of them”, and “the act of dissolution must contain the convocation of the electors within two months and of the Assemblies within three months”; last but not least, the King opens the parliamentary session with a message and also pronounces the closing (Art. 90)¹⁰. Thus, with its powers to dissolve the chambers of Parliament, to open and close parliamentary sessions and to appoint the Prime Minister responsible for forming the government, the Constitution gives the head of state a status as a political actor of unparalleled importance. All of this will matter enormously in the sequence of events that we will analyze below. Another essential detail is that in the political life of inter-war Romania, the King appointed the Prime Minister who then formed the government, after which the King dissolved parliament and called a general election. In other words, the King formed the government which was then responsible for organizing general elections, if he deemed it necessary. This explains why the political press spoke meta-constitutionally of “election governments” (in orig.: *guvern de alegeri*)¹¹ whose mission was to organize the general elections. The fact that the way in which the royal prerogatives were exercised made the legislative power subordinate to the executive power, despite the constitutional principle of the separation of powers in the state, represents an “organic contradiction of parliamentary democracy in Romania”, which can also be expressed in the joke widely circulated in the inter-war period that “in Romania there are no parliamentary governments, but governmental parliaments”¹².

One such “election government” was Gh. Tătărescu’s which the King appointed on November 17, 1937¹³, after having previously received the resignation of the same Tătărescu who had been in charge of Romanian government since January 5, 1934. That the King’s intention was to organize general elections can be seen from the fact that not two days after appointing Tătărescu to form the government, Carol II decreed the dissolution of the legislature, the convocation of the electoral body for general elections for the Assembly of Deputies (20

¹⁰ *Monitorul Oficial. Partea I-a*, no. 282, 29 March 1923.

¹¹ See, for instance, the PȚR’s call during Spring 1936 through its press organ for an election government as a solution to the “crisis of the regime” invested with the capacity “to guarantee the free manifestation for the popular will”: Deșteptarea, “Guvernul de mâine: Guvern de alegeri”, *Deșteptarea*, no. 75, 20 May 1936, p. 1.

¹² Al. Gh. Savu, *Sistemul partidelor politice din România 1919-1940*, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică Publishing House, Bucharest, 1976, pp. 26-27.

¹³ *Monitorul Oficial. Partea I-a*, no. 266bis, 17 November 1937, p. 1.

December 1937) and the Senate – the universal college, and the convening of the newly elected Parliament on 17 February 1938¹⁴. The elections were held on time (December 20, 1937) and the results were published in the Official Gazette ten days later (December 30, 1937). It seems that the King did not wait to see what the political configuration of the new Parliament would be, as on December 28, 1937 he appointed Goga to form the new government, and on December 29, 1937 the government took office by taking the oath of office before the King. Therefore, there is no correlation between the result of the Parliamentary elections and the formation of the new government.

The lack of connection between the parliament elected by the citizens and the government appointed by the King is best seen in the political configurations of the two constitutional powers. According to the data provided by the Central Electoral Commission, the result of the general election for the Assembly of Deputies can be expressed in the number of votes obtained by each candidate party, in nominal and percentage terms, as well as in seats. The mandates were determined on a proportional basis, in accordance with the provisions of Article 93(4) of the 1926 Electoral Law. The election results were as follows¹⁵:

No.	Political Party	Number of votes	Percentages obtained	Percentages calculated	Mandates awarded
1.	National Liberal Party (hereafter PNL)	1.103.353	35.92%	39.21%	152
2.	National Peasants' Party (PNT)	626.612	20.4%	22.26%	86
3.	All for the Country Party (PTȚ)	478.378	15.58%	17%	66
4.	National Christian Party (PNC)	281.167	9.15%	9.99%	39
5.	Magyar Party (PM)	136.139	4.43%	4.84%	19
6.	National Liberal Party-Gh. Brătianu (PNL-Brătianu)	119.361	3.89%	4.24%	16
7.	Peasant Radical Party (PȚR)	69.198	2.25%	2.46%	9

The other parties competing in the elections failed to pass the 2% electoral threshold and thus remained outside the Parliament¹⁶.

A few observations should be made on these results. First, in this election the PNL did not achieve the 40% that would have given it the status of “majority group”. It was thus the first time since elections were organized on the basis of the 1926 electoral law that no party had obtained the first electoral majority (*in*

¹⁴ *Idem*, no. 268bis, 19 November 1937, p. 1.

¹⁵ *Idem*, no. 301, 30 December 1937, pp. 9716-9717.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 9717.

orig: “prima electorală”) in Parliament¹⁷. The score obtained by the PNL was rather a victory à la Pirus because although it had the most votes, it did not have the parliamentary majority to establish the government that was a constitutional need. The King’s solution of nominating the same person (Gh. Tătărescu) who had headed the government for the past four years as Prime Minister with the task of organizing parliamentary elections was also unheard of¹⁸. This idea, however, was not well received by the electorate, who invalidated it at the ballot box, which meant a defeat in the political game that the King had started¹⁹. Secondly, the far-right parties (PTȚ led by Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu and PNC led by A.C. Cuza and O. Goga) combined 759,545 votes out of a total of 3,071,695 voters. This calculation is particularly relevant for the ideological orientation of Romanian voters at the halfway point between 1937 and 1938. Both parties obtained a historic score – although in relative terms the PTȚ was the electoral winner – which means that this represents the electoral peak of the far right in Romania. A count in terms of seats showing that the two parties together had won 105 seats is irrelevant both because they had less than a third of the Assembly of Deputies and because the adversarial relationship between the two parties made a parliamentary coalition unlikely.

As for the government, the King entrusted Goga with the formation of the Council of Ministers. Goga’s appointment was made without prior consultation with the heads of the political parties²⁰, which meant breaking a political custom in inter-war Romania. On the same day, the Prime Minister-designate submitted the list of ministers to the King for ratification by royal decree. The nominal composition of the members of the Council of Ministers is useful in determining its political orientation. Thus, the new government was composed of A. C. Cuza (Minister of State, but without portfolio), Ion Petrovici (National Education), Ion Lupaș (Cults and Arts), Virgil Potârcă (Public Works and Communications and ad interim at Agriculture and Domains until January 8, 1938, when D. R. Ioanișescu was appointed), Armand Călinescu (Interior), Radu Irimescu (Air and Navy), V. Rădulescu-Mehedinți (Justice), Stan Ghișescu (Cooperation), Ion Antonescu (National Defense), Istrate Micescu (Foreign Affairs), Eugen Savu (Finance), G. Banu (Labor, Health and Social Welfare), Gh. A. Cuza (Labor) and Ion Gigurtu (Industry and Commerce)²¹. Paul Teodorescu, Tilică Ioanid, Dinu Simian and Alexandru Hodoș²² were under-secretaries of state, and the list was completed

¹⁷ In brief, Shapiro explains “the electoral/parliamentary majority” based on the provisions of the 1926 electoral law as follows: “the party gaining [...] at least 40% of the popular vote receive[s] half of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies plus a number of the remaining seats corresponding to its percentage of the total votes cast. Thus, any plurality party with at least 40% of the vote was assured of at least 70% of the parliamentary seats. The rest of the seats were divided among the other parties which had received 2% or more of the popular vote”; Shapiro, *op. cit.*, p. 58 (Note 76).

¹⁸ Cristian Preda, *Rumâni fericiți*, Polirom, Jassy, 2021, p. 158.

¹⁹ Ioan Scurtu, *Istoria României în anii 1918-1940*, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică Publishing House, R.A., Bucharest, 1996, p. 156.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ *Monitorul Oficial. Partea I-a*, no. 299, 28 December 1937, pp. (1)9665-(2)9666. Stelian Neagoe, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-122.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 2 (9666).

on December 30, 1937 with new under-secretaries of state: Silviu Dragomir (Minister Secretary of State), Sebastian Bornemisa, Lucian Blaga (Foreign Affairs), Ion D. Enescu (Finance), Aurel Baci (Justice), Ion Gh. Savin (National Education), C. Tomescu (Culture and Arts), V. Prelipceanu (Agriculture and Fields), Leon Scridon (Labor)²³. On December 29, 1937, by taking the oath of office before the King, the government took office. In addition to the already emphasized fact that the political outcome of the parliamentary elections did not prompt the formation of the government, the rapid sequence of events leading to the formation of the government is also noteworthy: the appointment of the Prime Minister without prior consultations with the leaders of the parliamentary parties, the proposal and approval of the government list, and the swearing in of the government were accomplished in just two days, including the signing of the related royal decrees and their publication in the Official Gazette (December 28-29). O. Goga was not just a Prime Minister, he was also the leader of the PNC. By December 30, 1937, it had become clear that the party around which the government had been formed had barely obtained fourth place in the elections.

The nominal list of ministers shows that the government was not exclusively a PNC emanation, having a “heterogeneous character”²⁴. Four “political groupings” can be identified in the composition of the Goga government. The first is the Goga-Cuza group, which, in turn, is divided into the group around the Prime Minister (Hodoș, Lupaș) and the group around A. C. Cuza. Cuza’s collaborators occupied “positions of secondary importance” as compared to Goga’s faction²⁵. It was followed by the center grouping of the National Peasant Party (Călinescu, Rădulescu-Mehedinți, Potârcă, Șimian), the grouping of Alexandru Vaida-Voevod’s Romanian Front, also called the “Vaidist grouping” and, finally, the “so-called technicians” (Micescu, Teodorescu, Gigurtu, Antonescu)²⁶. Out of these groups, the most influential posts were ascribed to “men more loyal to the King than to the prime minister”²⁷. Each of these groups was to fulfill a specific role in the work of government. Goga’s wing was intended, according to one interpretation, “to reduce the excesses of the Cuza’s adherents”²⁸ and, in any case, to put him “in the background”²⁹. The center grouping recovered some of Iuliu Maniu’s closest collaborators (PNT) whom the King had cultivated since 1933. If in 1933 the King’s association with this group was intended to “create divisions” within the party led by Maniu-Mihalache³⁰, four years later the purpose of this faction’s presence in the Goga government was to give it a “democratic appearance in the eyes of public opinion”³¹. The members of this peasant faction were known as “fierce opponents of fascism”, but also “adherents of traditional Anglo-French alliances”, which implied opposition to Nazi Germany and fascist

²³ Stelian Neagoe, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

²⁴ Ion Mezarescu, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

²⁵ Paul A. Shapiro, *op. cit.*, p. 71.

²⁶ Ion Mezarescu, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

²⁷ Paul A. Shapiro, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 230.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 243.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 244.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 230.

Italy³². The Vaidist group, organized around the dissident D. Ioanițescu of the Romanian Front, sought “to broaden the government’s political base” both by attracting its leader, Vaida-Voevod, and by winning sympathy in peasant circles in Transylvania³³. Finally, the “technicians”, who were divided between pro-Charlists (Micescu, Teodorescu, etc.) and pro-German and pro-Gardian (Gigurtu, Antonescu), were intended to give “strength to the government”³⁴. Specifically, however, the Gigurtu-Antonescu group aimed to obtain “a benevolent attitude on the part of” the legionaries of the PT³⁵ and, at the same time, to fulfill “a diversionary and confusing role” because not only the legionaries were expected to “change their attitude towards the government”, but Germany was also expected to “change its attitude towards the country”³⁶. Instead, the Micescu group was tasked with “not to lose alliances” and “to explain to foreigners the changes after December 1937”³⁷.

Given the heterogeneous nature of the government, it “was hardly a stable one”³⁸; it lacked cohesion³⁹, having “a contradictory political orientation”⁴⁰. However, was government action united? The question can only be answered convincingly by an exhaustive analysis of the government’s acts as they were expressed first and foremost in decree-laws, council of ministers’ journals, but also in measures at ministerial level. The anti-Semitic component in which the decree-law on the revision of citizenship is also included appears to be fairly well integrated, which justifies the conclusion that the politically heterogeneous nature of the government’s actions does not prevent ideologically coherent government action. Apparently, the Goga Government did not follow the anti-Semitic policy desired by A.C. Cuza, which led him to withdraw to Jassy after January 6, 1938, without giving up his second most important position in the government, and to stop participating in governmental acts⁴¹. However, “the wave of discrimination that culminated in the Royal Decree on the Revision of Citizenship”⁴² proves that the Goga government had made anti-Semitism a “state policy”⁴³. This was evident even in Berlin, for Alfred Rosenberg, in a diary entry dated January 31, 1937, writes that with the establishment of the Goga government “a second [emphasis in orig. – my note N.D.] anti-Jewish state in Europe was born”⁴⁴. The same optimism can be recorded at Rome, in

³² *Ibidem*, p. 245. See also, Paul A. Shapiro, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-72.

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 246.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 230.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 247.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 246.

³⁸ Paul A. Shapiro, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

³⁹ Ion Mezarescu, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 248.

⁴¹ Ioan Scurtu, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

⁴² Dennis Deletant, *România 1916-1941. O istorie politică* (trans. Monica Mărgărit), Humanitas, Bucharest, 2024, p. 124.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 123.

⁴⁴ Alfred Rosenberg, *Jurnal 1934-1944*. Edited and commented by Jürgen Matthäus and Frank Bajohr. Edition in Romanian by Elisabeth Ungureanu (trans. by Ioana Constantin), Editura Institutul Național pentru Studiarea Holocaustului din România “Elie Wiesel” Publishing House, Curtea Veche, Bucharest, 2017, p. 222.

Mussolini's minister of foreign affairs⁴⁵ although this optimism will soon be tempered down already in the first half of January⁴⁶.

How much of this governmental structure is due to the Prime Minister and how much to the King? According to one interpretation, the government reflects “more the work of the King and A. Călinescu than that of O. Goga”⁴⁷. In this hypothesis, the King has created a situation in which he has demonstrated that it is not the citizens, through their electoral choice, who determine the orientation of the government, but the head of state⁴⁸. Thus, if there was a “king's game”, it aimed at paralyzing the government in the face of the difficulties created by the political crisis at home and abroad and thus smooth the path towards personal dictatorship⁴⁹. It is more reasonable to believe that appointing Goga and his PNC to establish the government was the only solution the King had at hand due the electoral outcome⁵⁰. From an ideological point of view, the royal sanctioning of a radical right-wing long-lasting claim (the revision of citizenships), unlike the hesitations of the previous Tătărescu government, is an act of “promoting anti-Semitism”, whether this was done for reasons of political calculation⁵¹ (“Decree No 169 was the legal expression of Carol II's desire to combat Corneliu Zelea Codreanu's Iron Guard, adopting – even partially – its very program”⁵²) or personal conviction. The royal sanction of an anti-Semitic aim represented an explicit acknowledgment that “anti-Semitism had become such a sensitive issue in Romania that no government could afford to ignore it”⁵³. This was recognized by the King himself in his interview with A. L. Easterman, the Daily Herald correspondent, published in the 10 January 1938 edition. Here too, however, the King assumes the radical right's narrative of the need to revise the citizenship granted to Jews after the war as a matter of “an invasion of Galician and Russian Jews” and became citizens “illegally” by fraud⁵⁴. However, this view is considered by some as moderate in tone because “while not very friendly, were obviously preferable to the views of Codreanu”⁵⁵.

⁴⁵ Galeazzo Ciano, *1937-1938. Diario*, Capelli Editore Bologna, 1948, p. 78.

⁴⁶ See his entries in 7 and 11 January: Galeazzo Ciano, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-93 and, respectively, pp. 95-96.

⁴⁷ Ion Mezarescu, *op. cit.*, p. 229, 232, 247. See also, Paul A. Shapiro, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-72.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 248.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 229. According to Mezarescu, the choice of Goga as a “pawn in the game towards dictatorship” was ultimately aimed at achieving the objectives “pursued since 1930” (p. 248). But there are sufficient reasons to be cautious about the hypothesis that the king set his personal dictatorship as his goal as early as 1930. Chronologically, perhaps the first to propose this explanation that made its successful way into scholarly research was Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, *Sub trei dictaturi*, 3rd ed., Forum, Bucharest, 1945, p. 105.

⁵⁰ Paul A. Shapiro, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

⁵¹ Dennis Deletant, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

⁵² Radu Ioanid, *Holocaustul în România*, Editura Institutului Național pentru Studiarea Holocaustului din România “Elie Wiesel” Publishing House, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Polirom, Jassy, 2019, p. 43.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, p. 125.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 124.

⁵⁵ Ezra Mendelsohn, *Jews of East Central Europe between the Wars*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1983, p. 206.

1.2. The Ideology and the Program of the O. Goga Government

We will start from the assertion that the ideology of the government is made up of the beliefs and convictions of the members of the government and, above all, the doctrine/doctrines of the party/parties that make it up. The Program of Government is the Prime Minister's solemn declaration of the concept and main directions of government. Although formally different, there are inevitable overlaps and determinism between the government ideology and the government program. This fact is recognized by Goga himself: "The ideas that I have propagated until today" will have to be realized "on a methodical plan, gradually from today onwards"; "my political judgment has followed the same straight line, which today has reached a decisive point"⁵⁶. Of course, consolidating the doctrinal profile of this government also requires consideration of the ideology and program of activities of the PNC, the party that gave the Prime Minister and around which the government was formed. From this point of view, it should be said that the PNC emerged on July 14, 1935 through the merger of the National Christian Defense League (LANC), chaired by A. C. Cuza, and the National Agrarian Party (PNA), chaired by O. Goga. The theme of the revision of citizenship was a central demand of the LANC⁵⁷, while the alienation of Romanians in their own country and the danger of foreigners were distinctive elements in Goga's rhetoric⁵⁸. Thus, the doctrine of the PNC represented a blend between the doctrines of the two original political groups. For the purpose of this study, we consider that the focus of attention should fall particularly on the government program, without discussing in detail the political convictions of O. Goga and A. C. Cuza as the main exponents of the government⁵⁹.

⁵⁶ ***, "Declarațiile d-lui prim-ministru Octavian Goga", *Universul*, no. 358, 31 December 1937, p. 11.

⁵⁷ "Art. 7. For the settlement of the Jewish (in orig.: *jidovești*) question until the complete elimination of the Jewish element in the country, the following measures shall be taken with a view to this elimination: a) Withdrawal of political rights and removal of the Yids from the land; [...] c) Revision of all citizenship and annulment of those made on the basis of false documents."; ***, *Programul Ligii Apărării Naționale Creștine*, Tipografia Națională S.A., Cluj, 1934, p. 13.

⁵⁸ He elaborated the "Romania of the Romanians" doctrine during the sittings of the Assembly of Deputies on December 5 and 9, 1935: Octavian Goga, *Discurs rostit în Camera Deputaților*, Tipografia Săteanului, Sibiu, 1936. Elements of this doctrine can be found in the public writings from Our Country (1922-1925), collected in O. Goga, *Mustul care fierbe*, Imprimeria statului, Bucharest, 1927. On how this phrase was revived by the press during the liberal Gh. Tătărescu and how it inspired the citizens' review as a solution see Drăgușin, "Discursive Strategies...", pp. 128-141. How this rhetoric was used in relation to the minorities (defined as "strangers") in relation to the right of work see Blasen, *La «primauté de la nation roumaine»...*, pp. 36-129.

⁵⁹ See Ana Bărbulescu, "A. C. Cuza, evreii și lupta împotriva lui Satan" and "Octavian Goga: același sânge, același suflet și același dușman", in Alexandru Florian, Ana Bărbulescu, *Elita culturală și discursul antisemit interbelic*, Editura Institutului Național pentru Studiarea Holocaustului din România "Elie Wiesel" Publishing House, Polirom, Jassy, 2022, pp. 83-130. A. Bărbulescu demonstrates the congruence between Goga's conception of the presence of Jews in the press and the measures taken at the first government meeting regarding the so-called "de-Judaization (in original: *desjudaizare*) of the press", as well as the coherence between his vision of the "invasion of foreigners" and the provision for the revision of citizenship.

1.2.1. King Carol II and O. Goga at the Swearing-in Ceremony

The presentation of the government program, more precisely the statements made by O. Goga to the press (December 30, 1937) and on the radio (January 1, 1938), was prefaced by the speeches made by the main protagonists of the moment at the swearing-in ceremony. The first to speak was King Carol II who, addressing the members of the government, began by saying that he had “[entrusted] the leadership and administration of the country” with “profound thoughtfulness” in “these difficult moments” (this supports the argument that the King had no other choice but to appoint Goga). Admitting that what now lies ahead “are moments of anxiety, moments of inestimable labor”, he asks the members of the government “[to be] moved by the most perfect sense of patriotism and of faith in the Sovereign of the country”, that is to say, by “high sentiments”. He then goes on to talk about the appropriateness of the government to the party’s slogan of “God, King and Nation” and which should be the “basis of government”. Of the three, “nationalism” (nationhood) represents a “new road” on which the government is treading and at the same time “it is a beautiful slogan, but it is also a difficult slogan to fulfil”, which the King confessed that he was aware of when he made his decision. However, it requires “wisdom and a spirit of sacrifice” to fulfill it “without hesitation, but at the same time with deep prudence and with all the necessary thought”. He concludes by wishing “my government every success – a success which will strengthen the nation, strengthen the Fatherland (in orig. *patrie*)”⁶⁰.

The Prime Minister responds to the King’s address, beginning by expressing his “respectful thanks” and “the honor of Your Majesty’s confidence”. The appointment to “direct the public affairs of the country” is an “honor”, “but also a task which we are ready to fulfill with manly determination”. Turning to the context of the times, Goga says that “the foundations of peace in the world have not yet been clarified”, “our country is gripped by an undeniable inner turmoil” which, in his view, is “a prelude to the great creative works that are still waiting to be accomplished”. Speaking of the government, he said that its activity “will respect the constitutional forms” and that “our State life”, “framed in order and authority, must be characterized by an atmosphere of work and honesty”. Important to emphasize, Goga says that “at the basis of our conception of government” lies “the national-Christian idea, with all its logical attributes”, and that the main addressee will be “our peasantry” which represents “the supreme basis of the State settlement”. “In this sense,” Goga concludes, “precise indications can be deduced from all our programmatic endeavors to date. It is in this sense that the country will record our efforts of tomorrow”⁶¹.

⁶⁰ ***, “Guvernul Octavian Goga a depus jurământul”, *Universul*, no. 357, 30 December 1937, p. 1. See and ***, *Cuvântările Regelui Carol al II-lea*, vol. II, Fundația pentru Literatură și Artă “Regele Carol II”, Bucharest, 1940, pp. 294-295.

⁶¹ ***, “Guvernul Octavian Goga a depus jurământul”, p. 1.

We notice in these two speeches two important points of contact: the “new road nationalism”, in the King’s vision, and the “national-Christian idea, with all its attributes”, in the Prime Minister’s conception; then, the peasant as “the country’s sole” but also “the power of nationalism”, respectively “our peasantry as the supreme basis of the State settlement”. Given that the “national-Christian idea” had already been in the making for several years, the “new road” of which the King spoke must be understood as expressing the investiture of the first officially nationalist government; in other words, the King was speaking of his constitutional act as the establishment of nationalism at the basis of state government. Thus, the two visions meet in the metaphor of old wine in a new cask.

1.2.2. O. Goga: Press Statements and Radio Speeches

Large-circulation newspapers reproduced “Statements by Prime Minister Octavian Goga” that he had made to representatives of the press. From the outset, Goga warns journalists that the statements he is about to make do not represent “a detailed plan” or a “programmatically exposition of our government’s action”. Why? Because “I still lack the necessary time, being busy with the first installations of government”⁶². This is a hint or, rather, a tacit acknowledgement that the King’s decision to appoint Goga was untimely and, in any case, unexpected. But he promises to return with “a broad exposition and the first measures which the government intends to take, as well as the close unfolding of some provisions” as early as “on New Year’s Eve on the radio.” If we compare the statements with the facts, we can see that public opinion, in theory at least, came to two different conclusions on the same day: on the one hand, the press reported these statements, but on the other hand, the Official Gazette announced that, since the first government meeting on December 29, the so-called newspapers from Sărindar (*Dimineața*, *Adevărul* and *Lupta*) had been suspended by a Cabinet of Ministers’ journal, as early as the first government meeting. What could one understand: that the government had already begun to act in the absence of a program? That Goga had mocked public opinion? That the suppression of the newspapers expressed a personal conviction that had to be fulfilled by institutional means even before there was a conception of the work of government?

Goga now speaks “to friends and adversaries, in the fullness of my responsibilities, in the name of the Romanian destinies with which fate today places me in direct correlation”, about “the spirit in which the new state leadership will be carried out”. The exposition of this spirit begins with a confession of faith: “a national creed [...] has guided me throughout my life”: “I believe in the nation and in its prerogatives as the real master of the State”. What does mastery mean? “our right of national guidance in all branches of State life”.

⁶² ***, “Declarațiile d-lui prim-ministru Octavian Goga”, *Universul*, no. 358, 31 December 1937, p. 11. All quotes in these statements will be taken from the source indicated, even if there are other newspapers that have reported them; see ***, “Declarațiile d-lui prim ministru Octavian Goga”, *Curentul*, no. 3561, 31 December 1937, p. 5. These statements deserve to be recorded in all their diversity only from the perspective in which the editors have managed to organize them on the page and, above all, to give them intertitles.

This conviction led him to meet A. C. Cuza and the formation of the PNC. He then continues with the “national-Christian program”. Recalling the King’s address and explaining the meaning of “our coming into government”, Goga says that the national-Christian idea must “create a new framework of life for our people”. Linking the two components of the spirit of government (the personal creed and the national-Christian idea), Goga says that “the slogan ‘Romania of the Romanians’” expressing the personal creed “derives from the triptych of our doctrine CHRIST, KING, NATION” and therefore the time has come for it to “inspire the state leadership”. The nation defines it as the “living being of the Romanian ethnic group” and has as its attribute the “creative thirst” that it must assert within the institutional framework that the new government is creating.

Goga notes the presence in the government of “prominent leaders of PNȚ” who are “valuable collaborators” and who “in a kinship of conscience and program [...] have established with us a unity of thought and an organic unity of action”. In fact, the entry of A. Călinescu’s group into the government was characterized as treason by the PNȚ leadership and they were excluded from the ranks of the peasants. Goga’s assertion is not supported from another point of view: Minister A. Călinescu had taken measures against the militant wing of the PNC, the so-called “lăncieri”, which created the “unprecedented situation” in which the government took measures against members of the ruling party⁶³.

In terms of activity, Goga assures that “as our installation in the government was carried out in accordance with the constitutional forms, so our government will be carried out in accordance with the Constitution”. The Prime Minister’s assurances of respect for constitutional legality were contradicted by reality because the King did not convene the elected Parliament and the government carried out its work of government through decree-laws, in matters pertaining to fundamental rights, a fact criticized by the traditional parties⁶⁴. It must be said that the government by decree-laws was based on an authorization granted by Parliament to the Tătărescu government in 1934, which at the time sparked wide discussion in the press⁶⁵. The dissolution of the Parliament on January 18, 1938, before it had even convened, sparked wide discussion about the legality of this royal measure⁶⁶. What is interesting in Goga’s statements only now follows: we will respect the constitution “*not losing sight for a moment of the fact that the safeguarding of national interests is above a pseudo-legality in the shelter of which our springs of life have so often yearned* [my emphasis – N.D.]”. In other words, the constitution is observed, but legality can be questioned in the name

⁶³ Ioan Scurtu, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

⁶⁴ ***, “Partidul Național Tărănesc contestă dreptul guvernului de a uza de decrete-legi”, *Curentul*, year XI, no. 3580, 20 January 1938, p. 12.

⁶⁵ See, for instance: ***, “Proiectul legii prin care se acordă guvernului puteri depline”, *Universul*, no. 165, 20 June 1934, p. 9; ***, “Legea deplinei puteri. Proiectul a fost depus eri la Senat”, *Universul*, no. 175, 25 June 1934, p. 1.

⁶⁶ George Plastra, “Dizolvarea Parlamentului”, *Curentul*, year XI, no. 3574, 14 January 1938, p. 8. “Cum poate fi dizolvat Parlamentul? Răspunsul d-lui prof. universitar Paul Negulescu”, *Curentul*, year XI, no. 3578, 18 January 1938, p. 3. “Dizolvarea Parlamentului este un act de putere discreționară. Explicațiunile d-lui conferențiar universitar I. V. Gruia”, *Curentul*, year XI, no. 3579, 19 January 1938, p. 9.

of a meta-legal commandment (“our sources of life”) and soteriological exigencies (“safeguarding national interests”). Even if the principles of the supremacy of the law and the primacy of international treaties did not at that time enjoy a precise constitutional codification and thus had not yet produced a uniform legal consciousness, it is reasonable to infer that it would have been impossible for the two commitments to stand together without the first having a rather purely declaratory value.

Goga goes on to say that the government enjoys support both internally and externally, as “a wave of confidence and optimism for tomorrow, without which no constructive work can be imagined for a people that has recently come into its rights”; “the new government, guided by the idea of reparation, will seek to introduce reforms in all areas of state life”.

These words “to friends and adversaries” are an appeal for help to “all conscious citizens of Romania”, but they also concern “the minorities who honestly fall within the boundaries drawn by the historic mission of Romanianism”. Above all, “the supreme feeling that I feel at this moment” has a precise recipient: “Romanians, thanks to King Carol II, Romania has begun to be yours”.

On New Year’s Day O. Goga spoke on the radio about the government program. *Curentul*⁶⁷ was as prompt as *Universul*⁶⁸ in reproducing the radio speech, even though the former placed it on the front page, while the latter reserved space for it only in the second half of the newspaper, in the section devoted to the “political arena”. The radio address is described as a “public confession on the intentions that guide me” with the aim “to see with what thoughts and with what guidelines for action the first counselor of the Throne appears before the Romanian people”⁶⁹. We note that Goga, as Prime Minister, speaks of himself as “the first counselor of the Throne”. The remark is not accidental as long as the government itself is presented as an expression of the King’s will and not as an emanation of the elections or, at least, of a political direction that the elections would have suggested according to some basic criteria (e.g. right-wing/center parties vs. extreme right-wing parties). The manner in which the government came into being provides a first clue as to the purpose of government: “The new government is itself an act of high political sincerity prompted by the wisdom of the Sovereign who wished to emphasize the strongest and most decisive feeling of popular conscience in our country”, a “feeling” which has its own genealogy: “starting from the bottom up, – from the depths of our reservoir of ethnic energy – a wave of protest against the foreign foreignness of the oppressors, an organic impulse of health shouted from one end of the country to the other: we want Romania of the Romanians”. As a reader of the times, “Our Sovereign August, the Head of State, thus sealed with the royal emblem the rescue aspirations

⁶⁷ ***, “Programul ce-l are de înfăptuit guvernul. Cuvântarea rostită aseară la radio de d. Octavian Goga”, *Curentul*, year XI, no. 3563, 2 January 1938, p. 1.

⁶⁸ ***, “Cuvântarea-program rostită la radio de d. Octavian Goga, Președintele Consiliului de Miniștri”, *Universul*, no. 2, 2 January 1938, p. 7.

⁶⁹ ***, “Programul ce-l are de înfăptuit guvernul. Cuvântarea rostită aseară la radio de d. Octavian Goga”, *Curentul*, year XI, no. 3563, 2 January 1938, p. 1. All further citations will be made from this source.

advocated by the instinct of self-preservation”. The identity of the government is expressed not only by its origin, but also by its opposition to the previous government – “the national idea with the rebirth of the latter time after a period of apparent weakness of our state body”. With this statement, Goga is visibly alluding to the hesitations of the Tătărescu governments in the nationalist plan, the most important of which was the revision of citizenship.

If the Sovereign, in appointing Goga to form the government, read the tendencies of the times (“the instinct of conservation”), Goga, at one of the “great crossroads of our history”, will take up the “cravings for salvation” and transform them into “state actions”. Before enumerating the immediate and longer-term actions, Goga takes up the question of the spirit of government, starting with the question: “What do we believe?” As for his own convictions, Goga reduces them to “three ideological categories”: “the spiritual rebirth of Romanianism” within the “Christian Church”; “royalty”; “the prerogatives of the nation that makes up the State from which the wellspring of collective life derives” (i.e. “the impregnation of the stamp of our ethnic dominance in the vast ramification of public life, from top to bottom”). How does Goga see the realization of these guiding principles? Essentially in two ways: by “legislating, under cover of the fulfillment of all constitutional formalities” (which turned out to be false) and “by direct provisions taken by the government within the framework of the rights and responsibilities that concern it” (again false, since the law passed by Parliament in 1934 authorized the government to legislate only in fiscal matters, not in matters of fundamental rights and citizenship).

Goga goes on to explain how he sees the relationship between the electoral scrutiny and the parliamentary configuration, as well as the distinction he makes between the direct provisions of the government and the “law-making work” of the parliamentary assembly: “In relation to the law-making work, the government will pronounce its word of program once the current legislative bodies are dissolved, which by their composition can provide neither a platform for political understanding or pacification, nor a solution for fruitful work for the country”. So, what Goga enunciates is nothing but “a preamble to government”. Probably in view of the exceptional procedure for realizing this preamble – through decree-laws – and the radical nature of the measures, Goga makes “two reassuring statements”: on the domestic front, the inhabitants of Romania must not see “in our government action, aimed at bringing Romanian reparation to the helm of the state, an opportunity to pile up the natural rights that the minorities in the country should enjoy. Justice: yes, persecution, no!”; externally, “let foreigners see in us only what we are: an internal upheaval which, invested with all legal forms in the midst of a perfect tranquillity, having obtained the consent of the masses of the people, establishes the rules of state life”. A few observations are immediately in order. As regards the revision of citizenship, the principle of “justice: yes, persecution: no!” could be acceptable only in the hypothesis of the systematic citizenship frauds with which the public had familiarized itself since the summer of 1936. With regard to the declaration to foreigners who understood the language of the general elections, we note that Goga invokes the “consecration of the masses of the people”.

As for the immediate measures that the government had already taken, Goga lists six acts of government that were carried out in the first three days: “[suppression] of the newspapers *Adevărul*, *Dimineața* and *Lupta*”; “[withdrawal] of the free movement tickets on the C.F.R. [Romanian Railways] of more than 120 Jewish journalists”⁷⁰; “[the] immediate [withdrawal] of all liquor licenses granted to Jews”; “[the] study for the most prompt resolution [of the re-examination] of the post-war citizenships of the Semitic element, who by the hundreds of thousands invaded Romania after the war, – remaining here for the sake of gain through corruption and fraud. The removal of these intruders calls for a broad instrumentality, the provisions of which will soon be made public”; “[taking under investigation the question] of the appointment of Government commissioners to foreign enterprises” in order to comply with the law for the protection of national labor, and “[taking under study the romantization] of enterprises and companies.”

As a general remark, it is noted that of the six measures, three had already been realized. Two realized measures and one to be realized directly and immediately concerned the Jews, while the one concerning the suppression of newspapers concerned them indirectly. The measures in the sphere of national labor protection merely implemented an already existing law, one of the accusations against the Tătărescu government being precisely that it adopted the law on national labor protection but did not apply it. Finally, referring to the revision of citizenship announced as a problem under study, it should be noted that the “reality” invoked to justify the revision is not as much the fraud, a very possible problem in the context of the time whose remedies were judicial, but the post-war invasion of the “Semitic element” which represented the leitmotiv of Cuza’s and Goga’s speeches. Also, in comparison with the previous initiatives during the last Tătărescu government, the revision no longer concerns those from the annexed territories, but the entire “Semite element”; thus, it is no longer only about the citizens of the annexed territories, but about the Jews who were citizens of the whole country after 1918.

After announcing some specific measures in the sphere of making living cheaper, Goga concludes his speech, in this “solemn moment for me”, with an address to “friends and adversaries” and another to all Romanians whom he seems to invite to participate in the work of government: “Romanians, discover the thieves, wherever you find them, in politics or administration, and denounce them to the government, which is committed to the country to crush them”. Here again, as in the case of the citizenship revision project submitted by P. Șeicaru in the parliamentary procedure⁷¹, the denunciation is preserved as an institution and as a meta-constitutional instrument of political participation.

⁷⁰ The measure is nothing new. Discussions about travel permits for “minority journalists” have happened before. For example, at the meeting of the Assembly of Deputies on March 17, 1934, some of the nation’s elected representatives wondered who profited from free movement on the railways. The discussions at that meeting, which were reported in the newspapers, inspired the editorial “Datoria guvernului” (*The government’s duty*), which called for the abolition of these permits; see: ***, “Datoria guvernului”, *Universul*, no. 76, 19 March 1934, p. 1. So, it is no coincidence that the new government is determined to see through measures that in previous governments had remained at the draft stage.

⁷¹ ANIC, fond Parlament, dos. no. 2737/1936-1937, ff. 2-43.

*1.2.3. Minister V. Rădulescu-Mehedinți:
Statements when Taking Office and to the Press*

Another layer of investigation of the government program consists in the statements of the ministers when they took up their portfolios. Since this study is not about the work of the O. Goga government, but about the citizenship revision law, we will investigate the change at the Ministry of Justice, since this is where the draft decree-law on the revision originated. *Curentul* informs its readers that the installation of V. Rădulescu-Mehedinți took place on December 30, 1937, at 10 a.m., in the presence of former minister V. P. Sassu⁷². Surprisingly, the new minister's priorities did not include the task of revising the citizenship, which Goga declared on January 1, 1938, had already been transmitted. Could this be because on taking over the portfolio, Rădulescu-Mehedinți spoke of "the concerns that have long been in my soul" and not of what had come/was about to come from the Prime Minister? Or, on the contrary, is it an argument in support of the heterogeneous character of the Goga government? These concerns are essentially related to the judicial sphere: "rural justice", "the distribution of justice in general", such as "the regulation of appeals" or "the speedier resolution of trials" and "administrative justice" in terms of finding a way to establish "a unified line between the administrative courts and the courts of jurisdictional control" because "this formula of collaboration is the last means of defense of the parliamentary regime in Romania". Moreover, Rădulescu-Mehedinți deploras the unrepresentative nature of some political groupings: "Nothing is more unhealthy for the state order and the life of a nation than the existence of currents of ideas that are not represented in parliament", so that neutralizing the danger posed by the clandestinity of political currents consists in bringing them to the attention of "public opinion" by "entering parliament, [where] the battle will be fought on the terrain of ideas, under the permanent control of public opinion". It is paradoxical that Rădulescu-Mehedinți expresses his priority as a minister in a government (led by Goga) and in an executive constitutional power (steered by the King) that prevented the gathering of parliament and subsequently dissolved it without it having been constituted for a single day. Even more ironic is the conclusion of the newly installed minister's speech, according to which "on the basis of these considerations I have responded to the appeal made to me [to be part of the government]" and "I hope that [...] I will be able to achieve the desired goal".

A few days after Goga's radio statement, the Minister of Justice returns on January 4, 1938 with his own statements to the press. Since it was not a conference but a press statement, Rădulescu-Mehedinți says only what he wants. We learn, however, that he and his friends (V. Potârcă, A. Călinescu and Dinu Simian), "as [disavowed – my note N.D.] members of the PNT, we were allowed to take part in the government presided over by Octavian Goga after we had previously

⁷² ***, "Instalarea nouilor miniștri. La Ministerul Justiției", *Universul*, year 54, no. 358, 31 December 1937, p. 6. All quotations will be made from this source.

agreed on the main points of the new government's program and after we were convinced that our participation would be of real service to the parliamentary regime in Romania (sic!)"⁷³. It is ironic, if not downright sarcastic, to talk about service to a Parliament that is not convened and at a time that soon was about to end to the parliamentary tradition in Romania⁷⁴. Rădulescu-Mehedinți goes on to reiterate "the programmatic points that we have been working on for more than ten years", "on which we have reflected deeply", namely "the code of village justice", "the simplification of procedural forms [...] and a new regulation of appeals", "the standardization of administrative justice" and "the restriction of the competence of the High Court of Cassation". Thus, "[...] I could not refuse a collaboration that would allow me to implement a program that has guided my steps [...] and which constitutes the only ideal of my life". However, nothing of what he set out to do was achieved and, what is more, within a few days he was to take on the citizens' review project that he had not announced publicly.

What is interesting in these statements is not only that he reiterates the "programmatic points", but also expresses his opinion about the "nationalist current" as it was shaped in the first measures taken by the government. So the real novelty of this statement to the press only now follows: "with regard to the latest measures taken by the current government towards minorities, I would like to let it be known that my friends and I stand in solidarity with the head of government". The reason? "We are convinced that they are dictated by the exceptional circumstances in which Romania finds itself." What are the exceptional circumstances? What produces them? Nothing other than "a strong nationalist current" that "dominates the entire public opinion in Romania", and the peremptory proof he finds is the one offered by "especially [the] last elections". "The government is duty-bound to take this reality into account and take measures accordingly", and if it does not take them in an orderly manner – insinuates the Minister of Justice – the nationalist current will find its own means of realization, but in a disorderly and dangerous way for "public order". Apart from the fact that these statements are also characterized as "the guiding ideas that I have in my head", we note here that in the Minister of Justice's view these are measures that must be taken as the effect of personal will but also as the effect of an impersonal will ("the nationalist current").

2. Press Debates

2.1. Press on Government Formation and Election Results

How was the installation of the Goga government received by the press? The analysis of the press as a relevant historical source in this case is not only an elementary methodological requirement, but also a tuning to the beliefs of the political actors of the time. For example, the first statement that Goga made to the press as Prime Minister expresses his joy, but also his conviction that

⁷³ ***, "Declarațiile d-lui V. Rădulescu-Mehedinți", *Curentul*, no. 3565, 5 January 1938, p. 9.

⁷⁴ Cristian Preda, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

“journalism is a lung through which the public conscience breathes and at the same time a means of guiding the masses”. Moreover, he asks journalists to be “collaborators with the government, collaborators with the ideas that we have propagated until today”. “Calling on the Romanian press for constructive ideas and impetus in formulating them for a new country of great national reforms”⁷⁵, Goga addressed the newspapers that remained after the removal of the so-called Sărindar press.

The *Universul*'s account of the swearing-in ceremony at the Palace has a peculiarity worth noting. It is not, of course, the fact that it was published on the front page, because it was somewhat in the habit of the publication for important events or, at least, events of interest to find this privileged place; rather, it is the fact that what should have been a simple account of the facts was accompanied by a comment of the *chapeau* type. As a journalistic technique, this detail takes the article out of the realm of reporting in order to insinuate to the reader a certain key to interpreting events. Right from the first two paragraphs, we can see how the Brezoianu Street editorial office refers both to the election results and to the inauguration of the new government. The elections are given first place: “The country has categorically expressed its support for those political parties or groupings whose programmatic basis is the national idea, the protection of Romanian labor, and the promotion of the autochthonous ethnic element”. The three “desiderata” are also “a condition of life for the Romanian kin (in original: *neamul românesc*)”⁷⁶. Then, in the second paragraph of the exposition, the reference to the government: “The National Christian Party, under the leadership of Mr. A. C. Cuza and Mr. Octavian Goga, a resolute exponent of these desires [...] has been called to the helm of the country”, which represents “a victory of the national struggle” but also “a continuation of the just cause for which the *Universul* has been fighting for decades [...]”⁷⁷. After the outpouring of enthusiasm comes caution, because the *Universul* fears that “the new government will have many difficulties to face”; it is skeptical in view of “so many disappointments of the past” and expresses “some reservations” because “the new government is not an exclusively national-Christian unitary formation”⁷⁸. In other words, at a time when “the country has categorically shown its allegiance” to radical nationalism, the composition of the new government does not reflect this electoral expression. In spite of the fact that the far-right parties won the elections, strictly in quantitative terms the majority of the electorate opted for the traditional parties, even if the latter were not immune to the temptation of ethnic nationalism. It is hard to explain why *Universul* expected the new government to have exclusively the political coloring of the party that had only just come fourth. Did *Universul* not realize that this government had nothing to do with the elections? Finally, the commentary that prefaces the account of the swearing-in concludes with “hope in the determination of the old fighters” and the commitment that

⁷⁵ ***, “Declarațiile d-lui prim-ministru Octavian Goga”, *Universul*, no. 358, 31 December 1937, p. 11.

⁷⁶ ***, “Guvernul Octavian Goga a depus jurământul”, *Universul*, no. 357, 30 December 1937, p. 1.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*.

Universul “will support” Cuza and Goga “in the struggle of self-defense” waged by “the Romanian people”, even if “we will do our duty to remind them whenever someone in the government forgets the great imperatives and commandments of the Romanian nation”. And to make everything clear, *Universul* repeats the refrain that the “Romanian nation” is “suffocated to suffocation by the intruders who have recently invaded the hospitable land”⁷⁹.

Curentul expresses itself more clearly and extensively through the voice of its director. And it does so with just two articles, which is unusual in the context of Șeicaru’s daily contributions. About the first article we learn from an editorial note that it had been written on the morning of December 29, “for the provincial edition”, that is, “on the eve of the political crisis being cleared up by the Goga solution”. The article is instructive, if only for the fact that it was written on the border between the officialization of the election results and the announcement of Goga’s appointment as Prime Minister, and it shows how Șeicaru sees the problem and proposes solutions. In terms of political diagnosis, Șeicaru starts from the premise of the contrast between the “optimism of the Tătărescu government” and the “arithmetic of the ballot box” and deplores the attempt by the government and its acolytes to proceed with an “ingenious interpretation of proportional representation” in order to “patch up a majority”, which shows “an inability to grasp the terms of the political problem” and “indicates the perimeter of a regime”⁸⁰. For Șeicaru, the election result shows a categorical defeat for the Liberals, and the outlook is not good: “instead of a homogeneous majority, we will have a majority made up of a coalition of several groups”. But in order to understand “the terms of the problem and, implicitly, its solution”, the figures should not be interpreted arithmetically but psychologically. If the government that organized the elections proceeds with “interpretations designed to reassure, to give the possibility of deception”, the stake is to “read the meaning of some figures, to see what moods are hidden behind these figures”. In this interpretation, Șeicaru sees “a state of dissatisfaction spread across all classes, a distrust in the elements of leadership [...], a yearning for a different order”; “the country is in search of a new principle of authority, the country wants to believe in something [...]”. And if this is the diagnosis, then comes the treatment, which must not mean “the removal of one-party government and its replacement by another party government, but the removal of the party regime and the establishment of a regime of harsh fairness [...]”. These are “courageous solutions”, of “courageous therapy of the entire State organism”, and not solutions based on “arithmetical ingenuity in the distribution of seats”. The appointment of Goga was soon to be announced. Is this a “courageous solution”? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to analyze the second article in the same issue of the newspaper, published in its usual place on the front page, dedicated to editorials⁸¹.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁰ Pamfil Șeicaru, “Retranșările perimaților”, *Curentul*, no. 3560, 30 December 1937, p. 5.

⁸¹ *Idem*, “Regim nou”, *Curentul*, no. 3560, 30 December 1937, p. 1. When not otherwise noted, all citations will be made to this article.

Like *Universul*, Șeicaru discusses both the elections and the formation of the government, but unlike his Brezoianu Street brethren, the periodical from Domnița Anastasia Street talks a lot about the King, convincingly proving that he had an intuition of the King's role. As far as the elections are concerned, the editor of *Curentul* at first glance shows an ambiguity of wording that may also be an ambiguity of understanding: on the one hand, "the configuration of the elections" defines "perfectly the country's line of thought"; on the other hand, he deplors those who see in the results "arithmetical configurations of electoral indications". Does the historic victory of radical nationalism matter more than what might result from the tallying of the votes and possibly their translation into more ideologically natural coalitions of parties? It seems so because "electoral arithmetic" implies "numerical hazard", and this is not a question of how the parties resulting from the elections organize themselves in parliamentary alliances, but of what the commandment of the time is: "the country demands something other than the will of electoral chance, the country demands wills, determined energies, freedom from any prejudice". A closer look at the article reveals not only the ambiguity of Șeicaru's article, but also the ambiguity of the election itself: "the still undefined, confused aspirations of the country" ("The country has not yet made a precise statement", says another place in the same editorial). And this is where the King comes in, called "the one who bears the historical responsibility of the State", invested with the role of "lucid interpreter of the country's [...] aspirations". The appointment of O. Goga as Prime Minister shows that the King "read a new discipline, a new creative will of the Nation", that he "detached [...] the disciplines of the nationalist idea in the victorious outpouring, the will of a Romanian justification". At the same time, however, the fact that the King remained in the game of the parties shows that the King was not sensitive to "the country's turn against the parties" and that he "respected the prejudice of constitutionalism, the democratic lie". Thus, the King, on the one hand, "[rallied] resolutely to restore the Nation to its rights" but showed "weakness to constitutional bias". And to make things even clearer, Șeicaru tacitly distinguishes between the "popular will", which is nothing more than a "conventional lie" that the King nevertheless ignores out of "excess of scruple and care", and "the expression of the nation". The solution? In principle, it consists in "an act of courageous suspension of a fiction" (the parties) that gives rise to "parliamentary spectacle". In concrete terms, the Goga government must "remain faithful to a line of ideological discipline" which means "the harsh necessity of reviewing all hospitality titles, of scrutinizing all the beneficiaries of Romanian hospitality". Only in this way will the new government "receive the replica of our loyalty". Like *Universul*, *Curentul* conditions its support for the government, but something more precise: the review of citizenship.

We notice that although he seems to take into account the important aspects of the political moment, Șeicaru expresses himself confusingly with the help of important notions of the political vocabulary, but with imprecise content: "Nation", "King", "country", "state", "popular will". Paradoxically, the only concept used with precision is that of the citizen: "no citizen cares to respect the syllables

of the Constitution; but every one revolts at any outrage against any outrage to the moral discipline of the idea of authority". So the citizen is not defined in relation to the constitution, but to authority. If we were to attempt a certain clarification of the argument, perhaps Şeicaru understood the electoral ballot not as a moment that would generate a new parliamentary configuration and, hence, a new government, but as a plebiscite of nationalism. Otherwise, we cannot understand why, on the one hand, he shows sensitivity to the "electoral configuration" and, on the other hand, deplors the "parliamentary spectacle" or sees a certain sense of humor in the royal act, but regrets the realization of this act in terms of the parties. What is very interesting in this effort to reconstruct the argumentation in order to make it more intelligible to the contemporary reader is that, intentionally or not, P. Şeicaru deplors to the King exactly what he needed to have a dictatorship: the suspension of the parties and the parliament, with the consequence that the elections would become a plebiscite. This proves that the columnist had the precise intuition that this new government was only a (last?) step before realizing the dictatorship. Under these circumstances, the new government had "national" and "moral" obligations. Speaking of Goga, if "he was entrusted with the government", it was not "to devise a solution", but "to prepare new state disciplines, to restore to the nation confidence in the morals of the state".

Later, *Universul* publishes an article entitled "Political education" on its front page, in the editorial section⁸². The article notes that despite compulsory voting, there is "a relatively large number of citizens" from the ranks of "most intellectuals and [a good part of] the bourgeoisie" who "are disinterested in elections and their outcome". This indifference is a bad thing because "the right to elect [your] representatives to parliament by direct and secret ballot" is "the most important right of citizenship"; in fact, the anonymous author seems to correct himself, "it is not only a recognized right but also a duty". What are the causes? In addition to indifference, another cause is "the way in which the election is based on lists, with all sorts of geometric signs reminiscent of cabalistic formulas". But that's not all, because there's more to it than "the flaws in our electoral system", something that "is worrying": "the lack of political education". This gives rise to a series of confusions, such as those between "politics [and] politicianism", "democracy [and] demagoguery", "Parliament [and] a collection of people wasting their time in sterile discussions" and, last but not least, "elections [and] debauchery". Another consequence is the creation of an appearance that those who "are not affiliated to political parties or groupings" are "not obliged to vote", and this category of people is also called "apolitical". Moreover, apolitical people do not realize that "their lack of interest in this matter could cost them dearly on the day when they find themselves dominated by the least prepared elements, or even by those who are in the service of an ideology in opposition to the national one". Thus "universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage needs correctives". But since the apolitical category does not only draw its inspiration from the shortcomings

⁸² ***, "Educația politică", *Universul*, no. 358, 31 December 1937, p. 1.

of the electoral system, a solution is needed that considers the fact that “politics cannot be confused with politicianism” because “politics is a science and an art”. This solution aims to “form a political elite and political education”. The columnist’s conclusion that it is precisely the intellectuals and the bourgeoisie, from whose ranks the “apolitical” come, who lack political education and/or “civic courage” (a criterion that the columnist mentions only once, but does not problematize) is bizarre. In any case, the fact that 3,071,695 of the 4,649,163 registered voters turned out to vote (meaning that 1,577,468 were absent) supports, if not the explanation of absenteeism, at least its relevance to the functioning of democracy. In conclusion, we need, as in France, “a higher political school” to “prepare young people for political life”, but in addition “we also need the political education of citizens”.

Also, on the front page of the same issue, *Universul* publishes another article, this time by Stelian Popescu, dedicated to a member of the government: Ion Antonescu⁸³. In it, the editor recalls the moment in Predeal in 1929 when he met “Colonel Antonescu”, although he had heard of “Captain Antonescu who was in charge of operations at the army’s main headquarters” during the second part of the war. Subsequently, “General Antonescu’s name could no longer appear in the press”, and any mention of him in *Universul* was censored to such an extent that “General Antonescu was doomed to the fate of the famous ostracized of antiquity, the Athenian Aristides”, an ostracization that “took on unimaginable proportions”. His induction into the government led by Goga is for the director of *Universul* a reason for rejoicing that he has been removed from marginalization and for religious hope about his role: “May the God of our fathers [...] help and give the necessary energy and courage to yesterday’s ostracized to do what was long overdue, not only to save our nation, but also to play in this part of the world the role that destiny has fully endowed us with [...]”. He is the only member of the government to have enjoyed such a reception at least in the pages of *Unviersul*.

2.2. The Press about O. Goga’s Statements

How did the mainstream press receive the announcement of the government program? How was the announcement of the citizenship review received? In probably his first commentary on Goga’s statements, P. Șeicaru describes them as “calm in form, vigorous in content”, with “a natural elegance of expression, a clarity in the presentation of the problems he will try to solve”⁸⁴. According to Șeicaru, one proof of politeness is that the Prime Minister also has a word for his adversaries: “it is a form of politeness because even Mr. Octavian Goga does not believe that he could reduce the storm of adversity”. But are the adversaries the problem? Not on either side. “The real enemies of your success are often your own partisans”, “your own downfalls”. If opponents by their actions “stimulate

⁸³ Stelian Popescu, “Ostracizatul”, *Universul*, no. 358, 31 December e 1937, p. 1.

⁸⁴ Pamfil Șeicaru, “Atenție la partizani”, *Curentul*, no. 3561, 31 December 1937, p. 12.

your powers of self-control”, partisans “lie to you, prevent you from having contact with realities”, flatter you, “often liquidate the moral content of an ideology”. In these circumstances – says Șeicaru – “we recommend one slogan: beware of partisans”. He also recommends “continuing the policy of arming the country” initiated by the former liberal government, which “was due to a very good financial policy”. If this was a merit of the previous government, “for a nationalist government [...] the question of national defense comes first”. Linking the two recommendations, if “the government’s financial policy conditions [its] viability”, “moral discipline, partisan behavior conditions the country’s rallying”.

P. Șeicaru comes back with a new article in which he assesses that the Goga government proves “a spirit of determination, an authoritarian will in action”. However, the realization of a “national revolution [...] by legal means”, which means “restoring Romanians to their usurped rights”, is incompatible with “electoral concerns”⁸⁵. Moreover, the “national revolution” needs not only the “qualities of each member of the government”, but also the “the fervor of faith of the collaborators in subordination”. If he talked more about people in the previous article, here Șeicaru is more concerned with how elections make the government’s work more difficult. We note from Șeicaru’s argument that the “electoral race” is a “wicked game” because it leads to “distortion of ideas” and “twisting of programs”. And the government will not be able to keep up with the “electoral demagogy” of the partisans and the opposition: “no matter how hard the government tries to apply its program with perfect moral probity [...] it will not be able to defeat what the opposition will undertake to do”. To this must be added the “state of unrest” in which the country finds itself, namely “the anarchic mood rife in the masses of the people” and “the protest mood in the middle classes”. So the government is hampered in its work not only by its own partisans or the opposition, but also by the “mood of the country”. In these circumstances, “the interest of the integrity of the state” obliges to “avoid mobilizing electoral demagogy”. In other words, the government should carry out its program in the absence of an electoral horizon, and how can this be done if not in a dictatorship that nullifies the idea of electoral competition? Thus, the government has a good program, it shows determination, but the electoral scrutiny gets in the way.

Universul publishes two articles: one announcing the suppression of the so-called Săringar newspapers, reproducing the decision expressed in a decision of the Council of Ministers and the comments of the publication⁸⁶; the other one talking about the “duty of the new government” to “verify the management of the past government”, especially in terms of censorship to cover up “scandalous affairs” and to apply sanctions “that the whole country has been waiting for so long”⁸⁷. With regard to the suppression of these newspapers, it should be recalled that this is an act of government carried out on the same day on which the government took up its full duties by being sworn in. While the ceremony

⁸⁵ *Idem*, “Starea de spirit a țării”, *Curentul*, no. 3565, 5 January 1938, p. 12.

⁸⁶ ***, “Un început de românizare a presei”, *Universul*, no. 1, 1 January 1938, p. 13.

⁸⁷ ***, “Datoria guvernului”, *Universul*, no. 1, 1 ianuarie 1938, p. 13.

took place at the Palace in the morning of December 29, the Council of Ministers met in the afternoon and took decision no. 4344, and in the evening the newspaper was published in the Official Gazette so that the suppression became effective the very next day. It was only on December 30 that Goga made his first statements to the press. Goga justifies the haste in the very report he signed to adopt the decision: the Council of Ministers wished to remove “from the first moment all obstacles that stand in the way of the national-Christian idea”, and the formation of public opinion (“the guidance of the public conscience”) is “a family matter of the native people, the state-builders”⁸⁸. Unlike *Curentul*, which did not show the same interest, *Universul* had been waging a real campaign against the Sărindar newspapers for almost two years, which were perceived as Jewish offices that “systematically dug at the foundations of the Romanian state”. This explains why the Brezoianu Street editorial office is not content with simply reproducing the government’s decision to suppress newspapers competing with the Sărindar Street editorial offices, but comments that “this beginning of Romanianization proves that the national-Christian government [...] is following the programmatic path of nationalist ideas for which the whole of Romanianism is fighting”. In *Universul*’s view, this first decision of the Goga government is a preparation for the generalization of the measure: “We are now awaiting the decision on the effective Romanianization of the press by deciding that the guides of Romanian public opinion should be exclusively Romanian, by blood”, and that minorities should be able to write “in their own newspapers, in their mother tongue” (actually the Yiddish and Hebrew regional newspapers were closed too⁸⁹). The reason for this expectation is that “[...] it is not permissible for guests who have just arrived from abroad to give lessons and guidance in domestic and foreign policy, in the economic, cultural and even religious affairs of the host kin (in orig: *neam*)”.

If *Universul* is more cautious in stating that it “awaits the decision” to Romanianize the press, the anti-Semitic and radical right newspaper *Porunca vremii* sees it as already accomplished: “in this order of purifying the press of all poisoners of souls” not only have newspapers and free circulation permits “granted to Jews” been abolished, but “a decree has been made up (my emphasis – N.D.) whereby the profession of journalist is forbidden to all those who are not Romanians by blood, minorities being allowed to practise it only in their own language, provided they are uncontested Romanian citizens”⁹⁰. It is difficult to say at this stage of research whether the draft decree actually existed or is just a wishful thinking; what is certain is that the decree was not adopted. It is worth noting that citizenship (in the view of *Universul*) or contested citizenship (in the view of *Porunca vremii*) does not confer a right of participation in public life on journalists of Jewish origin, a legal situation in which the right to freedom of expression is indistinctly intertwined with the right to work. On the contrary, the

⁸⁸ ***, “Un început de românizare a presei”, *Universul*, no. 1, 1 January 1938, p. 13.

⁸⁹ International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania, *Final Report* (ed. Tuvia Friling, Radu Ioanid, Mihail E. Ionescu), Polirom, Jassy, 2004, p. 40.

⁹⁰ Rep., “Guvernul în fața opiniei publice românești”, *Porunca vremii*, no. 962, 1 January 1938, p. 12.

solution lies in assuming the blood criterion; it is only blood that confers the right to citizenship.

It is not by chance that *Universul* announces that “among the measures that the government will take is that of the revision of the citizenship”, being about “all the citizenships since 1920”, with the consequence that “those who obtained them by fraud should leave the country”⁹¹. And, like *Universul*, *Porunca vremii* announces in an article signed by Radu Iliescu that “the government will immediately implement a review of all the citizenship certificates since 1919, most of which are fraudulent. It is estimated that some 800,000 Jews entered the country by fraudulently crossing our border into Galicia, Jews who were transformed overnight into Romanian citizens on the basis of false birth certificates issued by rabbis in Bessarabia”. The procedural principle is also announced: “all the citizenship of these fraudulent Jews will be canceled [by the Government] [...] and each one will have to prove his entitlement to citizenship”⁹². A third article, signed by Victor Mocanu, develops the measures about which the Prime Minister “will speak (my emphasis-N.D.) to the country on Radio”: the regulation by decree-law of the profession of journalist, the nationalization of press associations, the “expropriation of Jewish estates”, the cancellation of “patents for tobacco and spirits sales held by Jews”, and among these “a special chapter will be devoted to the cancellation of Jewish citizenship”. Once again, *Porunca vremii* assures its readers that “the government is determined – and for this it will not get entangled in too many bureaucratic formalities – to proceed, as a matter of urgency, with all severity, to cancel all Jewish citizenship from 1920 to the present day”, and that those fraudulent citizens will leave the country (“where will they go? We don’t care!”), and “the guilty officials [...] will have to suffer draconian sanctions”. The consequence? “Economic life, in particular, will be significantly decongested and sufficient places will be created for the native elements”⁹³. Thus, the anti-Semitic newspaper saw the abolition of citizenship as a consequence of the revision as another way of protecting national labor that had already been subject to special regulation. Thus, citizenship here seems to be linked to work and not to participation in political life, which is a patrimonial rather than an eminently political conception.

What is particularly noteworthy is that the articles in *Universul* and *Porunca vremii* talk about the citizenship revision measure when it had not yet been officially announced by Goga. While the New Year’s editions of the two publications would probably have appeared during the morning, Goga did not make the radio statement until 8 p.m. So readers will have already known about the citizenship revision by the time Goga announced it. *Porunca vremii* even titles one of its articles “Gleanings from the Goga government program”. It shows that some publications had privileged sources of information, based on hard facts but also on rumors. The hypothesis that Goga himself passed on ideas

⁹¹ ***, “Revizuirea încetățenirilor dela 1920”, *Universul*, no. 1, 1 January 1938, p. 13.

⁹² ing. Radu Iliescu, “După Sărindar, dinamită trusturilor!”, *Porunca vremii*, no. 962, 1 January 1938, p. 12.

⁹³ Victor Mocanu, “Spicuiuri din programul guvernului Goga”, *Porunca vremii*, no. 962, 1 January 1938, p. 12.

from the program is not verified since not all the measures announced by *Universul* and *Porunca vremii* were confirmed in what Goga announced. The fact that Goga's radio intervention did not seem to be of the same interest can also be seen from the fact that *Porunca vremii* published it two days later than *Universul* and *Curentul*⁹⁴.

As the analyzed press content is presented, after January 6, 1938, the issue of citizenship will gain autonomy, with special articles dedicated to it. Under these circumstances, it is methodologically useful to introduce a new periodization and to talk about how the citizenship revision measure was discussed up to the moment when the decree-law was signed and published in the Official Gazette.

2.3. Review of Citizenship: between the Announcement of the Measure and the Publication of the Decree-law

Between the announcement of the citizenship revision measure (January 1, 1938) and the publication of Decree-Law No. 169 of January 21, 1938 on the revision of citizenship (Official Gazette, January 22, 1938), a press debate took place, the content of which was determined by the fact that it was known what was going to happen, but not how it was going to be done. In the periodization that we propose, we will consider this debate as preparatory to the debate that will begin after the publication of the decree-law and, more importantly, after the publication of the implementing regulation.

The first newspaper to show interest in the citizenship revision measure is *Universul*; and it does not do so in any way, but through a front-page article, in the place reserved for the editorial which, in the absence of any signature, seems to express the point of view of the publication. For the Brezoianu Street newspaper, the revision "is an action which, if carried through to completion, will result in the country being cleansed of Semitic elements"⁹⁵. If the revision signifies an operation of "de-parasitization", how did the reverse operation, let's call it parasitization, happen? At first it was "the flood of foreigners [who] poured in from across the Dniester", "after the war, in a compact mass". Then there was the "[fabrication] on the spur of the moment [of] false citizenship papers", based on "simple attestations or certificates issued by rabbis". This gave them the right to penetrate "all branches of activity and competing with the native element". For example, "this invasion [...] penetrated to the very heart of the villages, taking over trade and other branches of production", "the whole tragedy of our rural population" being that "the taverns in the middle of the villages are Jewish", and that "these new smugglers [...] have also become moneylenders"⁹⁶. All in all, "the vast majority of these citizens have fraud and

⁹⁴ ***, "Dumnezeu prin M. S. Regele Carol II ușurează respirația neamului. Declarația program a guvernului Partidului Național-Creștin prezidat de d. Octavian Goga", *Porunca vremii*, no. 963, 4 January 1938, p. 4.

⁹⁵ ***, "Revizuirea încetățenirilor", *Universul*, no. 5, 6 1 January 1938, p. 1.

⁹⁶ A few days earlier, talking about the measures already taken by the government, *Universul* praised in an editorial the "de-Judaization of the press", but believed, however, that the withdrawal of patents for spirits

corruption at their origin”. The only culprits seem to be the Jews as beneficiaries, as the newspaper expresses a certain leniency towards the authorities who have been “not very vigilant” and “too tolerant”. Under these conditions, “the work of social justice for the poor Romanian, deprived of his natural rights, must be done without delay”, and “the conscience of the nation” and “social justice” do not seem to demand the punishment of officials, but “that all the intruders after the war be sent to the rear”.

A week later, the press starts to discuss the first rumors about how the revisions will be carried out. In the editions of the same day, *Universul* and *Curentul* publish the first rumors. According to *Universul*, “[...] the government intends to carry out this operation on the basis of the laws in force”, i.e. “on the basis of the Mârzescu law for the acquisition and loss of Romanian citizenship”⁹⁷. Given that the law of 1924 stipulated that “citizenship is granted to those who found themselves with membership in 1918 on the territory of Romania”, and that “a Hungarian law specifies that membership means a continuity of settlement 5 years earlier”, it follows that the zero moment for the revisions will be the period 1913-1914 (i.e. even lower than the initial estimate, of January 1, according to which the revision would begin with 1920). The conclusion? “All those who obtained citizenship certificates outside these legal provisions will be considered to possess them by fraud”. According to the newspaper *Curentul*, the revisions “will have a strictly legal basis, which, according to studies recently undertaken by the government, will be carried out in compliance with the provisions of the peace treaties and the provisions of the Mârzescu law”⁹⁸. What is striking in this wording is the almost identical content of the negative criticism that the Legislative Council leveled against the bill on the revision of citizenship initiated in 1936 by P. Șeicaru⁹⁹, as if to show not only that it is a failure whose echoes still linger a year later, but also that it is a lesson learned both by *Curentul* and the Ministry of Justice. According to the government’s legal reasoning, from which *Universul* quotes (!) and which interprets the notion of membership enunciated by the Mârzescu Law in the context of the definition in the Hungarian law applicable at the time, it follows that the reference year for the start of the revisions is 1913. Anyone who could not “prove in advance by deeds that he had belonged for 5 years to the former territories under foreign rule” was liable to revision and to receive “the necessary sanctions”. In terms of the competent authority, the current opinion is that the review will fall within the jurisdiction of the “ordinary courts”.

owned by Jews and “the prohibition of their settlement in villages” were things that “deserve to be particularly noted” because “the main reservoir that fed the national danger of Jews in Romania was thus removed”; “saving the villages from the presence of the Jewish tavern keeper” is something that “no government has dared to decide since Kogălniceanu and Ion Brătianu until today” and “what our cowardly and corrupt politicianism has not been able to accomplish”; see ***, “Deparazitarea țării”, *Universul*, no. 2, 2 January 1938, p. 1.

⁹⁷ The law had been in force since 1924 and covered the acquisition and loss of Romanian citizenship, making it the first unitary citizenship law. ***, “Cum se va face revizuirea cetățenilor”, *Universul*, no. 12, 13 January 1938, p. 11.

⁹⁸ ***, “Cum se va face revizuirea cetățenilor”, *Curentul*, no. 3573, 13 January 1938, p. 5.

⁹⁹ Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale, fond Consiliul Legislativ, dossier 126/1936, ff. 6-7.

While these comments touch on technical issues, other articles deal with related matters. One of these is reheating the old discussion of systematic fraud as a justification for revision. *Universul*, for example, takes up the case of Elias Blumenfeld, a figure alleged to have been in W. Filderman's circle of collaborators, who allegedly obtained "more than 30,000, THIRTY-THREE HUNDRED THOUSAND [citizenship] certificates"¹⁰⁰. Here we note only two points. The first is continuity: an article intended to provide further evidence of collective citizenship fraud during the Tătărescu government (November 1936)¹⁰¹ that gave rise to the first discussions and initiatives on the revision is taken up again during the Goga government (January-February 1938)¹⁰² when the revision was already officially on the government's agenda. The second aspect is the contrast between the current Goga government and the previous Tătărescu government, expressed in the title and subtitle: "Revision of the 1919 Constitution. The previous government did not want to do it". The article also expresses an imperative demand to the Minister of Justice: "we ask Mr. V. Rădulescu-Mehedinți to take cognizance of the facts"; "to order an immediate investigation – and to communicate the results to the press" and „to order, at least now, the revision that has been planned for so long"¹⁰³. This explicitly proves the causal link between the particular cases of fraud and the general revision of citizenship, as well as the setting up of the press as an investigative body and a means of pressure. And here the contemporary researcher can find yet another reason to consider the press as a historical source in the political analysis of the Goga Government and in the study of the citizenship issue.

However, it is not only the press that is a partner in the review operation, as an investigative body or a means of pressure, but also citizens. *Universul* reproduces various appeals published in *Țara noastră*, the official press organ of the PNC, in which citizens are also called upon to participate in this governmental measure which not only reflects a work of governance but also "a work of profound nationalism". And how could this participation be achieved if not through the institution of denunciation? "Every Romanian has the right to denounce those who have obtained Romanian citizenship by fraud" writes *Țara noastră*, quoted by *Universul*. The "Romanian purification action" thus accomplished has a twofold component: "private initiative" through denunciation and "public initiative" through state measures. There are also some procedural details, in addition to those mentioned above: "[...] all those reviewed are obliged to appear before the courts to defend their thesis. Failure to appear in court by those whose citizenship is being reviewed constitutes a forfeiture of the right of citizenship". Here again, the link between citizenship and the right to work is clear, in the sense that the review of citizenship is a complementary

¹⁰⁰ I. Nedelescu, "Revizuirea încetățenirilor din 1919", *Universul*, no. 16, 17 January 1938, p. 17.

¹⁰¹ See ***, "Fabrică de cetățeni români", *Universul*, no. 312, 11 November 1936, p. 6.

¹⁰² See ***, "Treizeci de mii de evrei s-au înscris prin fraudă în registrele de naționalitate? S-a ordonat o anchetă judiciară", *Universul*, no. 35, 5 februarie 1938, p. 11. Although the author promised that the case would continue, this never happened.

¹⁰³ I. Nedelescu, "Revizuirea încetățenirilor din 1919", p. 17.

measure, perhaps of secondary importance, to that relating to the protection of national employment. Here, too, citizenship is not seen in its specific sense as a source of the right to belong to the political nation and participate in its life.

A related issue concerns the reactions abroad that the announcement of this measure had begun to generate. Of course, an exhaustive analysis of the echoes abroad can only be made on the basis of archival sources, a useful source being the Ministry of Foreign Affairs itself. This discussion is concerned only with what the press reports. A first case is the article “Romania and the Jews” by I. Delbecque, published in *L’Action Française*¹⁰⁴. In *Universul*, R. Seișanu notes that the revision measure has provoked “some protests across the border which, if they do not excite us and do not merit attention, prove the links that exist between these suspected undesirable elements and their defenders abroad”¹⁰⁵. In addition to the fact that “no treaty deals with the protection of foreign individuals who have crossed the border fraudulently and have obtained citizenship by fraud”, the author states that “we will not waste time in demonstrating Romania’s rights as a sovereign state to carry out this operation of cleansing and internal order, within the framework of its own laws and without touching the won and recognized rights of other citizens”. Instead, it welcomes these “protests abroad [...] on the breathless theme of intolerance and chauvinism pushed to the point of... ‘xenophobia’” by reporting the situation created in France as a result of the “invasion of undesirable foreigners” and, at the same time, it shows “the point of view of the exponents of democracy”, namely Ed. Herriot in a parliamentary speech. Seișanu understood Herriot’s speech, from which he quoted some excerpts, as a call for “the country to be cleansed of the millions of undesirable foreigners who abuse traditional French hospitality”, a “cleansing” that must be carried out on the basis of “the interests of social order, as well as of national security and defense”. We note here that in addition to the argument of sovereignty often invoked in the debate on the justification of the revision of citizenship and even legally argued, *Universul*, through the voice of contributor R. Seișanu, introduces the argument that France, Romania’s ally and guarantor of the Versailles architecture, has also faced the same problem and put its solution in the same terms.

How should the revision of citizenship as a political project undertaken by the Prime Minister be treated in relation to the previous experience during the third Tătărescu government? We have already seen that some articles have praised the determination of the Goga government in comparison with the hesitations of the Tătărescu government¹⁰⁶. But who better to answer this question than P. Șeicaru, the initiator of the parliamentary project to revise citizenship? Since December 1936, he had never abandoned this thought, returning to it from time to time, even if his own political project remained lost in the drawers of parliament. And he did so through two articles. In the first of

¹⁰⁴ *** [I. Delbecque], “România și evreii”, *Curentul*, no. 3574, 14 January, 1938, p. 8.

¹⁰⁵ R. Seișanu, “Revizuirea frauduloșilor. În Franța, ca și în România”, *Universul*, no. 20, 21 January 1938, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ I. Nedelescu, “Revizuirea încetățenirilor din 1919”, *Universul*, no. 16, 17 January 1938, p. 17.

them, the owner of *Curentul* recommends “Prudence when revising the citizenships”¹⁰⁷. What does prudence mean in this case? Essentially, that “the verification should be entrusted exclusively to the judicial courts” because if “the verification of citizenship documents” ends up in the hands of “mixed commissions [or] administrative bodies” then the whole revision project will be a failure and, even more, the revision risks “becoming a means of multiplying the number of scoundrels disguised as citizens”. Why? Because “the morals [of the people] are too well known, and the most determined will of a government is not enough” to change “from one day to the next the moral physiognomy of a society”. Contrary to the lenient position expressed by *Universul* with regard to civil servants¹⁰⁸, Șeicaru in *Curentul* seems to point precisely to civil servants as the main culprits of “the invasion that threatens to change the very ethnic content of the State”: “the invasion [...] represents nothing but the serious failings of our administration”. Under these circumstances, how can you entrust “the revision [that] the instinct of ethnic preservation of the Romanian State demands” to the administration and not to justice? However, it is not only a question of the institutions designed to verify the legality of citizenship, but also of the precise formulation of criteria that leave no “possibility of controversy”.

The second article appears the day before the revision is approved. This decree-law is characterized in a highly laudatory way as an “act of decisive political importance”, a “confession of nationalist faith” and a “pledge of sincerity to the country”¹⁰⁹. If the “revision of *all* (my emphasis-N.D.) citizenships” represents “the will of the Nation”, and the “today’s political climate” has its origin in the “Nation’s rebellious trembling”, the obstacle in the way is no longer the “sinful administration” (which made the “foreigners’ invasion” possible), but foreigners. Now Șeicaru seems to consider, even if not explicitly as Seișanu did, the problem of protests abroad. The question from which he starts is the following: “if the foreigners snuck in by forgery, how can the Romanian state not have the right to apply all sanctions?” The discussion raised by this fundamental question is too interesting not to provoke a few comments. First of all, it draws attention to the verification of citizenship documents with the possibility of reviewing those that are not in order as a sanctioning act. The fact that we are talking about all citizenship documents and not just those after 1918 from the annexed territories, as was the case in the debate under the previous government, shows that this sanction is based on the premise of bad faith and that the sanction is applied collectively. Remedies already existed in the judicial procedure, based on common law, but the premise was good faith until proven otherwise. He also points out that forgery is a hypothetical situation to justify the exceptional measure of revision. To his question, Șeicaru replies: “on the basis of existing laws and within the framework of international treaties on minorities [...] we can put our house in order”. Șeicaru accuses that until now “everyone invoked the

¹⁰⁷ Pamfil Șeicaru, “Prudență la revizuirea încetățenirilor”, *Curentul*, no. 3577, 17 January 1938, p. 12.

¹⁰⁸ ***, “Revizuirea încetățenirilor”, *Universul*, no. 5, 6 1 January 1938, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ Pamfil Șeicaru, “O cheazășie a sincerității”, *Curentul*, no. 3580, 20 January 1938, p. 1.

treaties”, but “no one bothered to read the treaties, to interpret the commitments made, accepting the ban as a dogma of international law”. This statement should be seen in the context in which *Curentul*, less than a year earlier, had hosted in its pages an extensive legal argument by the former judge of the Court of Brasov, Ilie V. Purdilă, who advocated the application of ethnic proportionality measures and the reconsideration of citizenship in the context of the treaties to which Romania was a party¹¹⁰. In a very tense summer in terms of anti-Semitic discourse, *Curentul* gave voice to an attempt to counter-argument to the main defense of the Jewish community in the face of anti-Semitic legislation. In these circumstances, the revision announced and prepared by the Goga government represented “a proud determination to assert our rights without reneging on our obligations”.

Once again *Curentul* newspaper does its duty to recall the draft law for the revision of citizenship that P. Șeicaru had initiated a year earlier. Only two articles serve this objective of refreshing public memory: an unsigned one, supposed to be assumed by *Curentul*, although contrary to the custom of putting the name of the publication in the signature, and another signed by Isaia Tolan. Although their subject matter is markedly different – the first is a reminder, while the second puts forward proposals – they should be read and understood together. The first article begins as follows: “if we return with this [article], when the decision [to revise the citizenship law] has just been taken, it is to remind that the problem of foreigners is not a recent one and the solution indicated is not new”¹¹¹. Specifying that “we do not know precisely how the revision decided by the current government will be carried out”, the anonymous author goes on to evoke the content of the bill. Why this reminder? “To demonstrate how short-sighted are the people who have governed the country until now”. The author of the article does not hesitate to say that the draft law, with all the urgency and applause [he omits to add the criticisms of the Legislative Council – my note N.D.], “got bogged down in the Ministry of Justice”, which was theoretically concerned to make the draft law “as complete as possible”, but in reality “the leaders [in the ministry] were more concerned with the problem of transfers for the placement of relatives” and less with “the acute problem of unemployment among Romanian youth, which Mr. Pamfil Șeicaru sought to solve through the draft law”. It should be noted here that the usefulness of the revision of citizenship is also seen in the context of the protection of national labor, although “our director” in the article in the same issue of the newspaper, speaks of the revision of fraudulent citizenship as “the elimination of political rights”¹¹². In

¹¹⁰ Ilie V. Purdilă, “Proportionalitatea etnică”, *Curentul*, year 10, no. 3346, 27 May 1937, pp. 1-2; *Idem*, “Proportionalitatea etnică. Dreptul de egalitate”, *Curentul*, no. 3374, 24 June 1937, pp. 1-2; *Idem*, “Chestiunea proportionalității etnice. Dobândirea cetățeniei române prin naturalizare”, *Curentul*, no. 3398, 18 July 1937, p. 2; *Idem*, “Proportionalitatea etnică. Drepturile statului V”, *Curentul*, no. 3451, 9 September 1937, pp. 1-2; *Idem*, “Proportionalitatea etnică. Tratatul din 9 Decembrie 1919”, *Curentul*, no. 3453, 11 September 1937, p. 2; *Idem*, “Proportionalitatea etnică. Tratatul din 19 decembrie 1919”, *Curentul*, no. 3464, 22 September 1937, p. 2; *Idem*, “Proportionalitatea etnică. Tratatul dela Berlin și chestiunea evreească VII”, *Curentul*, no. 3481, 9 October 1937, pp. 1-2; *Idem*, “Proportionalitate etnică. Concluziuni”, *Curentul*, no. 3495, 23 October 1937, pp. 1-2.

¹¹¹ ***, “Revizuirea străinilor încetățeniți”, *Curentul*, no. 3580, 20 January 1938, p. 12.

¹¹² Pamfil Șeicaru, “O chezășie a sincerității”, *Curentul*, no. 3580, 20 January 1938, p. 1.

this way, Șeicaru presents himself as one of the very few authors (the only one?) who sees citizenship as a way of belonging to the political community and participating in its life. There is another reason why “the liberal party discarded the draft provision submitted at the time by Mr. Pamfil Șeicaru”: “[...] the conviction of the liberal party that such a revision cannot be made”. The new political context created by the Goga Government confirms “not only the legitimacy of the reasons invoked by our director, but also the effectiveness of the indicated solution” because “in their spirit, the measures put forward by the current government correspond in their entirety to the provisions contained in the draft law submitted at that time”.

The decree-law on the revision of citizenship was submitted to the Council of Ministers on January 20, 1938, by the Minister of Justice’s report of January 19, 1938, in which the reasons are stated. The Decree-Law was approved under No. 169 of January 21, 1938 and published No. 18 of the Official Gazette. However, the report drawn up by the Minister of Justice was not published until the January 28, 1938 edition of the Official Gazette. The press recorded new statements by the Minister of Justice at the government meeting of January 19¹¹³ in which he announced the drafting of the decree-law and assured that “there is no cause for fear for the Jews who were still settled before the war in the Old Kingdom and the annexed provinces” who are “protected by international treaties and by our laws”. So who would be targeted? Only “those who have slipped into Romanian citizenship by fraud”, and the enforcement of the decree falls to “the courts” as “the greatest guarantee that abuses will not be committed” (this explains the optimistic tone of Șeicaru’s article of January 20, as opposed to the reservation and the exhortations to caution in the article of January 17). In other words, “citizenship will not be withdrawn unless it is judicially established that the person who has been revised did not fulfill the conditions laid down by law, conditions laid down in Article 7 of the Paris Treaty on the protection of minorities”. Depending on the method of acquisition, there are differences between courts. For those on the nationality lists who have not benefited from a court judgment, the “district courts, with right of appeal to the court of appeal” will decide. However, for those who have been naturalized by a court decision, the decision will be taken by the court of appeal to the Court of Appeal. While the former can be reviewed *ex officio*, those in the second category can only be reviewed at the request of the public prosecutor. Therefore, said the minister, “no native Jew need fear the rigors of the law”.

The story had come to an end on 1939, November 17 when Victor Iamandi, the minister of justice within Constantin Argetoianu’s government announced through a ministerial resolution the official results of the decree-law on the revision of citizenship. According to the governmental figures, the citizenship was reviewed for a total of 617.396 Jews with the following results: for 392.174 (63.50% of the reviewed population) the Romanian citizenship was maintained

113 ***, “D. Rădulescu-Mehedinți despre: decretul lege pentru revizuirea cetățeniilor; situația avocaților evrei; modificarea legii electorale”, *Curentul*, no. 3580, 20 January 1938, p. 12.

wheres for 225.222 (36.50% of the reviewed population) the citizenship was withdrawn. Considering that the 1930 official census of population in Romania recorded a total of 728.115 Jews, the minister concludes that “the aim of the 1938 legislator [Rădulescu-Mehedinți-my note N.D.] was fully achieved”¹¹⁴. Without digging to much into the issue of decree-law’s enforcement that needs a particular attention, there is a detail in the official document produced by the Minsitry of Justice which entirely contradicts the argument used the enact the law on revision: only a minority were revised because of fraud or error, while the rest for not fulfilling the conditions to be citizen which means that they were unable to produce in due time the very documents that were used after 1918 to become citizens (short deadlines, precarious status of public archives, documents lost).

Conclusions

The paper showed that the Goga Government lacked any electoral legitimacy. King’s unconstitutional political play was not only to appoint an electorally illegitimate government, but also to postpone the gathering of the new Parliament and eventually to dissolve it. The Goga Government lacked any ideological homogeneity and the personal cleavage between the two wings of the National Christian Party (Goga’s and Cuza’s) was also noteworthy. Despite all these, the anti-Semitic measures taken by the government are apt to show that anti-Semitism was the drive behind any governmental action and the uniting factor. The 44 days government would be mostly forgotten today if it had not enacted the decree-law no. 169 of January 21, 1938 on the revision of Romanian citizenship. It had long lasting effects beginning with the summer of 1940. Despite the later positive ruling of the Court of Cassation on the constitutionality of this decree-law there are numerous arguments to claim that this legal instrument did not comply with the 1923 Constitution. The revision of the Romanian citizenship since mid 1936 represented the ideal of the nationalist legiferation. After three failed attempts, the radical nationalist camp believed that the now the time had come to revise the citizenship. If the Goga Government assumed the creation of the law, the subsequent governments up to November 1939 carried it out with the effect of depriving about one third of the Jewish population in Romania of Romanian citizenship. In the constitutional and political context of the time, the decree-law on the revision of the citizenship represented the common work of the government and the King Carol II as head of state. If during the previous governments (1936-1937) ultimately it is the King that blocked all three attempts to review the citizenship in 1938 the King agreed to make this important concession to the nationalist camp. Was this a new political game in the field of anti-Semitic discourse?

¹¹⁴ *Monitorul Oficial. Partea I-a*, no. 273, 24 November 1939, pp. 6864-6865. On what actually the reviewing mechanism meant see, note 3, in Lya Benjamin (ed.) and Sergiu Stanciu (scientific coordinator), *Evreii din România între anii 1940-1944*, vol. I (“Legislația antievreiască”), Hasefer, Bucharest, 1993, p. 36.

A third actor in this radically nationalistic legislative endeavour was the mainstream press. Since the democratic press, politically oriented towards center and center-left, publicly known as “Sărindar press” was suppressed and the Parliament not convened, there was virtually no public opposition to the revision of citizenship. The remaining of the mainstream press which was oriented toward center- and radical-right (*Universul*, *Curentul*, *Porunca vremii*) backed the government legal measure to revise the citizenship. This paper focused on a content analysis of such mainstream press with regard to Goga’s governing program and precisely on the revision of citizenship. Since there are not many works to deal with Goga Government and the ruling National Christian Party, even few are to deal extensively with the revision of citizenship and almost none to include the press as main source of historical knowledge. A study of the way in which the large-circulation press commented on Goga’s announcement on the revision of citizenship proves, once again, that newspapers were a means of pressure on political decision-makers, sometimes even setting themselves up as journalistic investigative bodies. As for P. Șeicaru, the owner of the newspaper *Curentul*, he never abandoned his own project to revise citizenship, initiated in December 1936, which he is keen to recall in the new context created by the Goga government’s initiative. This proves that the revision of Romanian citizenship was an important objective of the radical right in Romania after 1936 and ultimately became a topic of public interest.

This paper aimed to fill in this gap and to open a new front for scholar research: the juridical analysis of the decree-law on the revision of Romanian citizenship. It is the piece that still misses from the puzzle, since the application of the decree-law cannot be properly made in the context in which the archival sources of the judicial system are not available for research.

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