

## THE ROMANIAN PRESS BETWEEN DEMOCRACY AND TOTALITARIANISM (1927–1930)

Mihnea – Nicolaie Botezatu  
Universitatea „Ștefan cel Mare” Suceava

**Abstract:** *There were significant socio-political changes that took place in Romania between 1927 and 1930, and the press played a crucial role in defining public discourse during that period. Specifically, the reign of King Ferdinand I was followed by the short reign of King Michael I, who was replaced by the ascension of Carol II in 1930. In essence, we are talking about times marked by enormous volatility. Given this particular context, the press was severely divided between more democratic and more nationalist approaches. Society was characterized by a complex environment defined by liberal/peasant or authoritarian/totalitarian ideas. To elaborate on this topic, we should be aware of newspapers such as *Universul* (The Universe), *Cuvântul* (The Word) or *Adevărul* (The Truth). As some of the most prominent, the Romanian press of the time represented a veritable arena of ideological (and sometimes even physical) battles. Each camp sought to defend its agenda as much as possible. Whether we are talking about the democratic or undemocratic sphere, the discourse associated with them was propagated through the press. To summarize everything that has been said so far, the Romanian press between 1927 and 1930 reflected the general and specific differences between democracy, authoritarianism, and totalitarianism that would characterize the country's political trajectory in the following years.*

**Keywords:** *democracy; totalitarianism; society; politics; interwar period.*

### I. Overview

Romania went through a period of instability between 1927 and 1930. The kingdom found itself at a crossroads with the death of King Ferdinand in 1927. The succession to the throne by his son and then his grandson, Carol II and Mihai I respectively, marked the beginning of a gradual transition from a constitutional monarchy to an increasingly authoritarian administration. In fact, this change began with the imposition of the Regency Council in 1927, given Carol's exile in 1925 (exile due to a damaged public image). Both liberal democratic forces and other radical nationalist groups became more influential, each competing with the other for control of the political landscape. The Romanian press played a crucial role in this context, serving not only as a mirror of public opinion, but also as an active player in shaping political discourse (Boia 102–105). During those years, there was a strong link between the Romanian press and the political groups in power. For example, a newspaper such as *Universul* played an important role, generally serving as a platform for liberal values and emphasizing the importance of constitutional government and socio-economic change. At the same time, however, a

magazine with initially conservative, even nationalist, and, after 1933, fascist leanings (*Cuvântul*) began to gain popularity by promoting a more authoritarian and exclusivist notion of Romanian identity. This made it more difficult for the media to uphold democratic norms while responding to the tensions of a rapidly expanding authoritarianism that would define Romania's future under King Carol II. Basically, the dilemma arose as the political atmosphere became increasingly polarized. Focusing on how Romanian newspapers negotiated the tensions between democratic ideals and authoritarian forces, this study investigates the role played by the Romanian press between 1927 and 1930. The research highlights the complex relationship between the media and politics by highlighting important publications, political movements, and periods of crisis.

## **II. The political climate in Romania (1927 – 1930)**

### **A. The Royal Succession**

The death of King Ferdinand in 1927 brought about profound changes in Romania's leadership. With the political system in disarray, the question arose as to how to resolve the situation as efficiently as possible. In this context, the idea of a regency was considered desirable. This was all due to the renunciation of royal prerogatives by the heir, Carol II, as early as 1925. At that time, the damage to the image of the monarchy (due to the many scandals in the heir's private life, especially the case of Elena Lupescu) made such a measure necessary (Manole 368–384). Looking back, during his reign, Ferdinand presided over a period of relative stability, in which he supported a constitutional monarchy that maintained a balance between political and social forces (Suciu 299–304). On the other hand, his death created a power vacuum, which led to a rapid intensification of political instability. Thus, the Regency Council, created to govern on behalf of Mihai I, who was then a minor, entered the scene. It was generally believed that this three-member council (Prince Nicolae –| “Ferdinand's other son”, Patriarch Miron Cristea, and Gheorghe Buzdugan) was a weak and indecisive governing body (Sebe 7, 31). As a result, the Council became the focal point of a fierce dispute. Paradoxically, the operation took place under the shadow of Carol II, who was in exile and whose supporters campaigned vigorously for his return. Hence, all of this demonstrates the contrast between the apparent power of the Prince and the declining authority of the Regent. We are not just talking about a power struggle between political parties, but a struggle between the constitutional legitimacy of the Regency and the public's desire for a strong and influential leader, a person who was not legally recognized. This dynamic, exacerbated even further by the spread of economic turmoil, laid the groundwork for the

return of Carol II in 1930.

Ultimately, the Regency's fragile control over power came to an end, and Carol II's succession to the throne was deemed legal in the second half of 1930. However, it was not unanimously welcomed by all parties involved. His political connections, scandals, and questionable personal relationships led a substantial part of the political class to consider him untrustworthy. Although the royalists welcomed his restoration, it took place at a time when tensions had already developed between the liberal factions that supported democratic change and the nationalist/extremist parties that wanted more authoritarian measures. Against this backdrop, Carol II's first plan was to maintain the appearance of a democratic government while consolidating power in a way that would allow him to suppress political opposition in the long term. The media had ample opportunity to criticize or promote the legitimacy of the monarchy amid all that uncertainty, which provided fertile ground for both.

With regard to Carol II's regime specifically, the opinions of various newspapers will now be examined, opinions that differed depending on the political affiliations of the journalists (Stelian Popescu – *Universul* / Nae Ionescu – *Cuvântul* or Aristide Blank and Constantin Graur – *Adevărul*).

I overview the context: *Universul*, January 6, 1926, p. 1, 5 – „Actul de renunțare la tron: Prințipele Carol renunță în mod irevocabil la tron” / „Statutul Casei Regale: În acest caz, puterea părintească, tutela, administrațiunea și folosința averii trec direct asupra Regelui sau Regenței” (“Act of abdication: Prince Carol irrevocably renounces the throne” / “Status of the Royal House: In this case, parental authority, guardianship, administration, and use of property pass directly to the King or Regency”) I discuss the impact of the king's legacy (*Universul* – *Special Edition*, July 22, 1927, p. 1 – „Testamentul Regelui Ferdinand I: (...) să consacru munca poporului român” (“The Will of King Ferdinand I: (...) to devote myself to the work of the Romanian people”) through a liberal filter.

On the other hand, the media with more nationalist leanings (*Cuvântul*) emphasized the need for change through the stability that Carol II could bring to Romania after the turmoil caused by Ferdinand's death and the Regency (*Cuvântul*, June 8, 1930, p. 1 – „Prințipele Carol a sosit, Trăiască Salvatorul României Mari! Bine ai venit!” (“Prince Carol has arrived, Long live the Savior of Greater Romania! Welcome!”).

At the same time, the publication *Adevărul* (somewhat independent to a certain extent, as no one could be completely impartial) attempted to maintain a middle ground by offering comments on the monarchy (*Adevărul*, November 10, 1927, p. 5 – „Un articol dintr'un ziar polonez: Regalitatea în această țară nu este considerată ca o funcțiune onorifică” (“An article from a Polish newspaper: Royalty in this country is not considered an honorary function”), politicians (*Adevărul*, December 31, 1927, p. 5 – „Declarațiile d-

lui Maniu: Partidul național – țărănesc nu este un partid carlist” (“Mr. Maniu’s statements: The National Peasant Party is not a Carlist party”) or colleagues from other editorial offices (*Adevărul*, June 10, 1930, p. 1 – „*Universul* spune: Sunt atacuri care onorează. De pildă, atacurile *Universului*!” (“*Universul* says: There are attacks that honor. For instance, the attacks from *Unversul*!”)).

## **B. Political parties**

Romania's political landscape was colorful, with many shades and nuances. This coincided with changes in the royal family. In terms of constitutional democracy, progressive reforms, and relations with Western Europe, the National Liberal Party, led by influential figures such as Ion I.C. Brătianu (later, after his death in 1927, by his brother Vintilă Brătianu) had a substantial influence (Scurt istoric al Partidului Național Liberal, “A Brief History of the National Liberal Party”). On the other hand, conservatives were becoming increasingly vocal in their demand for a stronger and more centralized type of administration. In particular, the Legion of the Archangel Michael, a political organization created by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, also in 1927, and identified as far-right, began to gain momentum (Schmitt 102–104). The support of an anti-Semitic agenda found an influential voice in the press. Thus, growing political tensions were often presented as a war between decadent liberalism and a pure, conservative, and powerful Romania by *Cuvântul* (*Cuvântul*, September 5, 1928, p. 1 – „Ce pasc domnii agronomi: Dar știm, o spunem și o strigăm că agricultura românească e pe ducă” (“What the agronomists are grazing on: But we know, we say it and we shout it that Romanian agriculture is dying”) and *Cuvântul*, May 15, 1929, p. 5 – „Mari neregulii la Băncile Populare: SA INCETEZE ABUZURILE” (“Major irregularities at the People’s Banks: STOP THE ABUSES”). Regarding the media landscape, a battle emerged over concepts of national identity. The liberal mentality (*Universul*) also attempted to encourage a political platform for the conflicting forces, focusing on detailing the liberals’ insistence (*Universul*, July 14, 1927, p. 1 – „Presa străină despre alegerile din România: Liberalii și-au găsit sprijin în clasa mijlocie a țării în creștere pe atunci” (“International press on the elections in Romania: Liberals found support in the country’s growing middle class at the time”, author’s translation). The third party also responded to the call, getting equally involved by detailing the entire struggle between the parties (*Adevărul*, November 18, 1928, p. 3 – „Pregătiri pentru campania electorală: Noi liste de candidaturi depuse: Argeș / Caliacra / Roman / Cahul / Fălciu / Ialomița / Bacău / Vlașca” (“Preparations for the election campaign: New lists of candidates submitted: Argeș / Caliacra / Roman / Cahul / Fălciu / Ialomița / Bacău / Vlașca”). The Romanian press found itself reflecting and creating these conflicting narratives as political

polarization deepened. Political ties often influenced how key events, such as agrarian reform measures and elections, were reported by the media, making it very clear that all these newspapers could not maintain an impartial position. Every day, as already noted, debates took place in the pages of different news agencies about the path Romania should follow.

### III. The role of the press – Political forum and public opinion

At the end of the 1920s, Romania had a Constitution (since 1923) that guaranteed freedom of the press (Romanian Constitution of 1923, Articles 5, 25, and 26), and the country was considered a democracy in theory. During those years, the Romanian press enjoyed a certain degree of independence. Despite this fact, various political groups exerted a certain influence over it: the National Liberal Party through *Viitorul* (“*The Future*”), the National Peasant Party through *Dreptatea* (“*The Justice*”), or the National Christian Defense League and the Legion of the Archangel Michael through *Pământul Strămoșesc* (“*The Ancestral Land*”). In practice, we are talking about the growing importance of government actors who were trying to dominate public discourse by promoting their own set of ideas. The media often faced numerous constraints in the form of censorship (Petcu, 135–153), political pressure, and even occasional government involvement, despite the fact that the official document laying the foundation of the nation (the Constitution) guaranteed freedom of the press. Providing a forum for political participation and facilitating public discourse were two of the most important roles played by the media.

However, as the decade drew to a close, particularly with the return to power of King Carol II, the situation began to change. This was evident after 1930 (it was gradually noticed when power began to be systematically concentrated in the hands of the King, democracy being extremely fragile and violent) and especially after 1938 (when the royal dictatorship was officially imposed). After his return to the country in 1930, it did not take long before institutions began to be manipulated for personal political gain, ignoring the idea of democratic governance... but the major change came later (Ilie 206–215).

As a general idea, the press became the scene of conflicting ideas about Romania's future, and these issues were fundamentally political in nature. The rule of law, responsibility and social equity were among the democratic ideas emphasized especially by the liberal press (such as *Universul*). Before 1930, it was believed that a possible centralization of power by a controversial figure such as Carol II would be a threat to the constitutional monarchy and the democratic structure of the nation, which was another way of drawing attention to the risks of authoritarianism. After 1930, the newspaper showed

double standards and aligned itself with the Carlist approach. Perceiving the growing popularity of nationalist and fascist parties as a risk to Romania's democratic future, editorials often and vocally opposed these groups. In contrast, the media that sympathized with opposing ideas (*Cuvântul*) did not present the same image of the Romanian political environment as the others. They blamed the liberal elite for the country's economic difficulties and social divisions. They also criticized it for its inefficiency and weakness. In any case, the essential point is that there was a more extreme vision of Romania's future, associated with fascist ideas and national purity, and these periodicals used specific language behind this vision to mobilize the population. Therefore, both sides used the media to try to win the hearts and minds of the population, with the press becoming present in most social spheres (Ornea 53–55).

#### **IV. Case studies – Romanian newspapers 1927 – 1930**

##### **A. The liberal side**

Publications linked to liberal factions in Romania continued to play a key role in the country's political discourse during the four years in question. One of the most important and largest newspapers in Romania at the time was *Universul*, affiliated with the National Liberal Party. *Universul* remained steadfast in its dedication to the founding ideas of constitutional monarchy, democratic administration, and reforms to improve social and economic conditions. To illustrate the idea in the previous paragraph, we note *Universul*, December 3, 1927, p. 4 – „Economie – Financiare: Exploatarea rezervelor din terenurile expropriate pe anul 1928” (“Economic – Financial: Exploitation of reserves from expropriated land in 1928”) and *Universul*, October 25, 1930, p. 6 – „Producția noastră de țiței / Cum ajută ministerul agriculturii însămânțările de grâu / Manevrele regale au început – Sosirea la Sighișoara” (“Our crude oil production / How the Ministry of Agriculture is helping wheat sowing / The royal maneuvers have begun – Arrival in Sighișoara”). With regard to these, we observe that in a period of political turmoil, the liberal press was a particularly important force in promoting democratic principles and values. Moreover, it tried to promote the rule of law and democracy by supporting the Regency Council, cautiously considering it an honorable option in those years (although not everyone agreed). It was also reluctant to accept authoritarianism (even totalitarianism, which is harsher) and criticized the image of Carol II in exile (we will see the references below).

Ironically or not, interest prevailed and the editorial staff changed its approach after the imposition of a new leadership through the Restoration of 1930, supporting it. The anxieties of the Romanian elite, who perceived the constant degradation of democratic institutions as a threat to the nation's survival, were expressed in a temperate manner in the editions of *Universul*.

Through patronage and force, Carol II attempted to maintain his dominance over the political class and to influence public opinion. Meanwhile, the publication served as an important vehicle for national discussions on a variety of topics, including agrarian reform, the position of ethnic minorities, and Romania's foreign policy. The liberal press persistently called for reformist measures that, in its view, would modernize Romania, and these discussions were presented within a broader framework of governance. Moreover, the liberal press found itself increasingly marginalized as nationalist and fascist parties began to assert themselves. Not only did it have to cope with political pressure, but it also had to contend with strong rivalry from the more radical nationalist press.

## **B. The nationalist side**

Newspapers linked to nationalist (and later fascist) beliefs played an increasingly significant and more influential role during this period, alongside the liberal press. The unstoppable wave of nationalism (later fascism) did not look kindly on democratic (liberal) norms, and this publication did nothing but give free rein to these sentiments. Another example can be considered *Cuvântul*, July 8, 1927, p. 2 – „Ultima zi de ingerințe electorale: Terorismul din Putna: Arestarea candidaților opoziției” (“The last day of electoral interference: Terrorism in Putna: Arrest of opposition candidates”) and *Cuvântul*, December 7, 1928, p. 3 „Campania electorală: Nu votați pe liberali! / Cum își fac propaganda candidații maghiari / Oficiosul liberal ațâță lupte regionaliste” (“Election campaign: Don’t vote for the liberals! / How Hungarian candidates campaign / The liberal newspaper stirs up regionalist strife”). The aim was to replace them with more authoritarian and ethnocentric ones.

The Legion's ideology, characterized by virulent anti-Semitism, nationalism, and the vision of a strong and authoritarian Romania, was brought to the fore, alongside other newspapers (*Buna-Vestire* (“*The Annunciation*”), *Sfarmă-Piatră* (“*Stone-Breaker*”), *Axa* (“*The Axis*”). *Cuvântul* followed this course as well after 1930 in the context of closer relations with Italy and Germany, through which subsidies were received (Hogaș). The publication became a forum for promoting ideas compatible with those of the Legion (ultranationalism, criticism of parliamentary democracy, appeal to Orthodox mysticism or martyrdom). Thus, it reached the point where the image of the Legion was considered to be truly historical, one of heroes (comments can be found below). Fundamentally, there was a desire to finalize a change that would start from the top. At that time, there was a fascination with the “courageous experiments in fascist Italy or even the Soviet Union”.

In other words, in order to reject the liberal and democratic ideals that prevailed in the interwar period, *Cuvântul* advocated a national revolution that would bring Romania back to its traditional system of values. What is interesting here is how the editor deliberately chose to use the word “rumân” instead of “roman” in the 1930s to captivate the public by emphasizing the cultural and historical importance of Romanian identity since ancient times (“the ancestral experience of the peasant in this space”) (Livezeanu 310–311). The emergence of these nationalist magazines led to a substantial change in Romania's political culture. People disillusioned by the inability of democratic institutions to address the nation's socio-economic problems and alienated from the liberal elites were the target audience of their appeal.

## **V. Case studies – The link between the event and the press (1927 – 1930)**

### **A. The Regency Council**

Based on the same framework, the Romanian press was the main arena in which decisions were made regarding the public image of the Regency. The duel was between a pro-Regency press (rather scattered) and a coalition of anti-Regency activists, which was much more vibrant and cohesive (Academia Română, 262–264, 271–280). Overall, the pro-Regency camp, which generally agreed with the constitutional vision of the National Liberal Party, campaigned admirably but ultimately ineffectively. In the early years of the Regency, the publication *Universul* promoted constitutional orthodoxy and urged the general public to recognize the three-person Council as the legal custodian of the Crown until the child Mihai reached maturity (*Universul*, July 27, 1927, p. 5 – „Proclamația Regenței: Vom veghea în aplicarea credincioasă a Constituției și a legilor Țării” (“Proclamation of the Regency: We will watch over the faithful application of the Constitution and the laws of the country”, author’s translation) and *Universul*, November 24, 1927, p. 1 – „Elogiul Regenței pentru Ion Brătianu: S’a hotărât să se facă funeralii naționale” (“Eulogy of the Regency for Ion Brătianu: It has been decided to hold a state funeral”). In an attempt to counter this, this story did not have the same level of drama and emotional impact as the alternative. The pro argument involved defending the legal process at a time when people were looking for charismatic leaders and decisive action.

In contrast, the anti-Regency press, led mainly by nationalist magazines such as *Cuvântul*, engaged in a continuous battle of caricature and mockery (*Cuvântul*, August 13, 1927, p. 1 – „Mai avem Patriarh? Formal, Patriarhul României este astăzi depus” (“Do we still have a Patriarch? Formally, the Patriarch of Romania is today deposed”) and *Cuvântul*, February



23, 1930, p. 1 – „„Vina Regenței”: (...) trăind în litera constituției nu poate face nimic (...) coroana să fie arbitrul absolut al situației”) (“The fault of the Regency”: (...) living within the letter of the constitution, nothing can be done (...) the crown is the absolute arbiter of the situation”). They methodically ridiculed the members of the Council. Prince Nicolae was portrayed as an inexperienced dilettante, a symbol of royal frivolity, more interested in fast cars than in matters of state. Patriarch Miron Cristea was described as a clerical anachronism, a man from a bygone era, unqualified to deal with the political and economic problems of the contemporary world. In addition to these two, the Council lacked a strong and unified voice, symbolized by the fact that the third Regent, Gheorghe Buzdugan, was often simply ignored. The Regency, therefore, was described as a ridiculous and cumbersome three-headed monster, incapable of controlling the country as a result of this constant torrent of frustrations and ironies.

## **B. The rise of Carol II**

Both structurally and substantively, a crisis of legitimacy had occurred. In practice, the reason why the media campaign was so successful is clear. It highlighted the shortcomings and fears that already existed in the real world. The inefficiency of the Regency was not just a media illusion, but rather a political reality. In terms of politics, the three Regents were sometimes at odds with each other, which further complicated matters, leading to a lack of coherence and a reluctance to take decisive action in the face of growing economic turmoil and political instability. As a result, a visible power vacuum formed, which political groups (especially the National Peasant Party) took advantage of to take over and maintain positions of authority (Prince Paul of Hohenzollern 127–130, 139–142, 148–153).

What is more, the very existence of Prince Carol II, who was living in exile at the time, further complicated the evolution of the entire era. His shadow and, implicitly, his image, however, continued to be quite present in Romanian society. Carol was not a Prince who had fallen into disgrace, but rather an idealized savior, a charismatic person, unaffected by the daily political quarrels that took place in Bucharest. Rumors of his return, as well as the interest of political actors in having Carol II on their side, prepared the people for his rule (of course, the press being left out of the equation) (Scurtu 50–70, 70–113, 142–174). Through constant criticism of the Regency, the return was presented as a vital act of saving the nation, rather than as a violation of the Constitution. We can see here how the presentation of a weak and ineffective image was important for legitimizing the rise of the one who claimed to be the antithesis of the Regency: a strong and solitary leader (Costian 27–56, 75, 165–166, 180).

### C. The regime of Carol II

Even though Romania was still a constitutional monarchy in theory, the country's press had already begun to experience the first stages of censorship by the end of 1930. Notable here is the example provided by the sending of an encrypted telegram to Romanian press attachés at the behest of Grigore Gafencu on September 12, 1930. The document aimed to promote an image of the king that was as favorable as possible, one that would counter the sentimental and critical versions of the international press, which highlighted dictatorial tendencies (Arhivele Naționale ale României – A.N.R. “National Archives of Romania”), formerly known as Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale – A.N.I.C “Central National Historical Archives” (f.1–2). In the following years, Carol II's government implemented more systematic censorship everywhere. Even in his words, “new times call for new people” (Iorga 431), words that were originally used by Kogălniceanu, we see his commitment and devotion to change. In the country, the administration began to use the press as a weapon to maintain power and stifle dissent when it gained complete control over the political framework. Without hesitation, the pressure exerted on Romanian newspapers, regardless of their orientation (liberal or nationalist), increased. Simultaneously, publications that became affiliated with the leadership (we will see this immediately in the two existing cases) benefited from increased attention and funding (Grecu 107–126).

The liberal press, which had reported and criticized the Carlist scandals (*Universul*, January 9, 1926, p. 1 – „După renunțarea la tron a ex-prințului Carol: (...) numai motive de ordin sentimental (...) au determinat actul de renunțare” (“After the abdication of former Prince Carol: (...) only sentimental reasons (...) determined the act of abdication”); *Universul*, May 11, 1928, p. 11 – „Uneltirile ex-prințului Carol: Anglia nu-l poate adăposti / (...) indezirabil în Anglia” (“The machinations of ex-Prince Carol: England cannot shelter him / (...) undesirable in England”), and *Universul*, May 13, 1928, p. 9 – „După complotul ex-prințului Carol: (...) caută ajutorul lui Rothermere (...) a pactizat cu inamicii patriei sale” (“After the plot of former Prince Carol: (...) he seeks the help of Rothermere (...) he has made a pact with the enemies of his homeland”), it attempted and even succeeded to a certain extent in adapting to the new geopolitical context.

Thus, *Universul* transformed itself from a critic into a supporter of the King (*Universul*, December 21, 1930, p. 5 – „Către credincioșii din eparhia Aradului: prăznuim acest Crăciun având domnitor al Țării pe (...) Regele nostru Carol al II – lea” (“To the faithful of the Eparchy of Arad: we celebrate this Christmas with (...) Our King Carol II”) ; *Universul*, March 27, 1931, p. 4 – „Depunerea jurământului recruților din contingentul 1931: Cuvântarea M. S. Regelui Carol al II – lea” (“Swearing-in of recruits from the 1931 contingent:

Speech by His Majesty King Carol II”) and *Universul*, June 11, 1934, p. 3 – „Patru ani de la Restaurație: La Arenele Romane (...) Cuvântarea M. S. Regelui” (“Four years since the Restoration: At the Roman Arenas (...) Speech by His Majesty the King”). As political authority grew stronger, any kind of criticism in the press was considered a direct threat to the newly established state structure. Criticism began to be toned down, while others chose to remain silent on matters of national importance (the reign was for the time being a so-called “constitutional” one, and after 1938, authoritarian).

The nationalist press, on the other hand, tried to play both sides, being cautious. Articles critical of the liberal parties were published, promoting the Legionnaires' views. Equally, it did not oppose the monarchy of Carol II (*Cuvântul*, June 12, 1928, p. 1 – „Problema politice românești: (...) regele a exercitat anumite prerogative nescrise, de natură a-I asigura o incontestabilă prioritate (...)”) (“The problem of Romanian politics: (...) the king exercised certain unwritten prerogatives, such as to ensure him unquestionable priority (...)”) ; *Cuvântul*, June 12, 1930, p. 3 – „Presa engleză (...) citează declarațiile Suveranului în relațiile cu vecinii (...) Presa greacă (...) exprimă urări de progres prietenei dunărene” (“The English press (...) quotes the Sovereign's statements on relations with neighbors (...) The Greek press (...) expresses wishes for progress to its Danube friend”) and *Cuvântul*, June 8, 1932, p. 3 – „Inaugurarea cazărmei „Regele Carol II”: O importantă realizare. Discursul Prefectului Poliției. Cuvintele M. S. Regelui” (“Inauguration of the “King Carol II” barracks: An important achievement. Speech by the Prefect of Police. The words of His Majesty the King”, author's translation). As a result, it initially managed to maintain access to the public. In reality, the publication adapted pragmatically, offering ideological support to the Legion and officially collaborating with the royal authorities.

Tensions arose after 1933–1934 when *Cuvântul* became an appendage of the Legion, began to criticize the system, and Carol II initiated the persecution of the organization in view of the assassination of Prime Minister I. G. Duca in 1933 (*Cuvântul*, December 21, 1933, p. 7 – „Schingiuirea legionarilor continuă: Protestele deținuților dela Jilava. Doi legionari în agonie în spitalul din Piatra – Neamț” (“The torture of the legionnaires continues: Protests by prisoners in Jilava. Two Legionnaires in agony at the Piatra-Neamț hospital”); *Cuvântul*, December 31, 1933, p. 8 – „D. I. G. Duca a fost ucis cu patru focuri de revolver pe peronul gării din Sinaia: Arestarea atentatorului principal, dispariția complicilor” (“D. I. G. Duca was killed with four revolver shots on the platform of the train station in Sinaia: Arrest of the main attacker, disappearance of accomplices”), and *Cuvântul*, February 8, 1938, p. 1 – „Incidente sângeroase în jud. Ilfov: Jandarmii au tras asupra unui camion care transporta propagandiști legionari / Pentru ce? Dumnezeu să-i ierte!” (“Bloody incidents in Ilfov County: Gendarmes fired on a truck carrying Legionary

propagandists / Why? May God forgive them!”). In other words, the beginning of the end of the democratic press system in Romania became evident when the media was completely subordinated to the government and its interests. Since there were heated discussions between journalists and authorities, the collaboration was not without problems, but *Universul* resisted the pressure from above longer and better than *Cuvântul*.

## **VI. The aftermath of the years 1927 – 1930**

The fully democratic press in Romania disappeared in the 1930s, essentially marking the end of an era. Chronologically speaking, this transformation of the media from a lively forum for discussion and criticism into an instrument of political control took place at the beginning of the decade, when the administration of King Carol II gradually imposed authoritarian rule. Self-censorship, official control, and forced closure were the main means by which the press was suppressed. Neither the liberal side (which, paradoxically, had previously held the monarchy accountable) nor the nationalist one (which had seen an opportunity in Carol) were spared from control.

In the context of Romania's final decline towards a different system of values (the future authoritarian and totalitarian regimes of the 1930s and 1940s), the role that the press and the regimes played together both in defending the monarchy (in one form or another) and in promoting radical nationalist discourse laid the foundations for this eventual downfall (Grecu 107–126). Both the liberal and nationalist media were responsible for creating the political atmosphere that ultimately allowed totalitarian authority to take root. Whether through actively shaping political opinions, supporting a centralized monarchy, or promoting a radical, fascist political culture... all were equally vocal.

## **VII. Conclusion**

Between 1927 and 1930, Romania experienced a series of severe political upheavals. The press played a significant role in both reflecting and defining the country's political destiny. In the conflict that engaged democratic and authoritarian forces, the media served not only as a platform for political discourse, but also as a primary weapon in the conflict. In fact, the newspapers underwent a complete metamorphosis, becoming more politicized and regulated as the country transitioned from a constitutional monarchy to a more centralized and authoritarian state under the watchful eye of King Carol II.

The spreading of nationalist (gradually, many fascist) notions and concepts, and the King's consolidation of his authority, led to the repression of dissenting voices. Initially, liberal news agencies were vital in preserving

democratic ideals and maintaining the accountability of the monarchy. The media, once a lively meeting place for criticism and discussion, increasingly became a tool for disseminating political propaganda and exercising official control. Later, in the 1930s, Romania witnessed the full emergence of authoritarianism (through the dictatorship of Carol II) and totalitarianism (the National Legionary State and the arrival of the communists), both of which were direct results of the preceding times. Thus, throughout Romanian history, the press, despite never being completely free from control, has been crucial in shaping public opinion and political action.

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