

MINORITIES FROM DRĂGĂȘANI. SOLE-PARTNERSHIP COMPANIES AND EMPLOYEES, IN THE INTER-WAR PERIOD*

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Abstract: In our endeavour, we have tried to shed a new light on the history of commerce from Drăgășani, accentuating the activity of “the foreign entrepreneurs”, who functioned in the locality. The information gathered until the present moment, indicates the living within the community, besides the Romanians of majority, of some families of Jews, Italians, Serbians, Macedonians, Bulgarians, Germans, not very numerous, but well-organised, who enjoyed financial stability, and who became renowned as a significant presence in the economic dynamic of the locality. The reconstruction of the most important moments was realised owing to the documents kept in the archives, and few written confessions, and we have the firm conviction that the lists that we have drawn-up can be made complete in the future, with relevant names and facts, in certain periods of time.

Keywords: Drăgășani, minorities, entrepreneur, trader, merchant.

Based on the authenticity of the information gathered from the archive documents, along with some published sources, there emerged the possibility to edify the material that contains few representative moments of the commerce practiced in the locality of Drăgășani. The information found in the published sources confirmed the fact that, in the first half of the 20th century, the locality of Drăgășani preserved its configuration of patriarchal borough that, besides the fame given by the wine, had few nicer houses, few paved sidewalks, enough banks and a lot of small shops¹. After World War I, the locality was known as an active centre involved in the goods trade, which were sold both in the shops of the local

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¹ Mișu Mihăilescu, *Bilanț și reculegere*, in “Gazeta Drăgășanilor”, no. 2nd/6th of July 1914, p. 1; Prof. Ionel Mirescu, Liviu Mirescu, Livia Mirescu, *Municipiul Drăgășani. Monografie geografică*, Verguleasa, KITCOM Publishing, 2008, p. 234.

merchants, and the central market, the mixture of shopkeepers and the variety of goods making an original and picturesque image. Near the moment when the economic crisis emerged (1929–1933/1934), Drăgășani was part of the category of the small cities of the country, the specific of the local economy being represented by the development of farming and, within it, viticulture. An important role in the formation and consolidation of the borough, and later the city of Drăgășani, and its evolution within the entire inter-war period, was played by both the local people, and the communities of foreigners: Italians, Greeks, Serbians, Bulgarians, Macedonians, whose names are to be further mentioned. Well-known entrepreneurs, craftsmen, traders and farmers, “the foreigners” that lived² in the locality, since the end of the 19th century, became quickly famous and appreciated, leaving a mark on the spirit and the charm of the town.

For the start, there is to be approached the Italian community from the locality. According to their training, the representatives of this community were entrepreneurs, masons, carpenters, craftsmen, painters, sculptors or traders. One of the first entrepreneurs, established in Drăgășani was Giuseppe-Iosif Bogardo, who came from the south of Italy, from Loco Rotondo. Carpenter, mason, sculptor, he opened the first timber storehouse from the locality³. He had three sons, whose activity ought to be mentioned. Thus, his elder son, Horonzo (Orenze) Giuseppe Bogardo, graduate of the faculty of Law from Timișoara, would begin his activity as a lawyer, and later judge in Drăgășani. After 1939, he successively filled the positions of judge and juridical counsellor within the Financial Court from Bucharest⁴. Alfredo Bogardo (b. 1908, Drăgășani-d. 1969), the second son of Giuseppe lived with his family, until 1920, when his father decided to send him in Italy, to continue his studies. Graduate of the Commercial Academy and Faculty of Law from Milano, he was remarked, in 1930s, as editor of the weekly supplement of the “Corriere de la Serra” newspaper, and as author of sport novels, among which we further mention: *The Sport in year 2000*, *The National Team has been stolen*, *The Charmed Ball*, or *The Fatal Classification*⁵. The youngest of the brothers, Armando Bogardo, attended the courses of the confessional catholic school from Rm. Vâlcea, between 1918-1920, finalising his studies in Italy. Between 1929 and 1934, he lived in Drăgășani, administrating, along with his

² Since the census from 1891, in Drăgășani there was registered other ethnicities too, the most numerous one being that of the gypsies (35), followed by: Germans (10), Jews (6), Bulgarians (7), Greek (2). The most numerous people of other nationality were registered in Drăgășani, by the census from 1930. Thus, at that time, there were: 227 de Romani people, 56 Germans, 50 Hungarians, 69 Jews, 20 Serbians, 18 Bulgarians, 12 Slovaks, 7 Armenians, 6 Greeks, 5 Turks, 3 Albanians, 2 Lippovan Russians, 33 other ethnicities, in Prof. Ionel Mirescu, Liviu Mirescu, Livia Mirescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 187–188.

³ Teodor Barbu, *Drăgășani între legendă și adevăr. Pagini de istorie culturală*, Verguleasa, KITCOM Publishing, 2014, p. 52.

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 54.

father, the timber storehouse business. In 1934, Armando left the locality, lived for a short period of time in his father's house from Bucharest, and, around 1940, he left the country, settling in Italy for the rest of his existence⁶.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Rossi Bolfardo (b. 30th of August 1896) settled in this part of Romania. Shortly after, he became the owner of the 35 Carol Street building, where he opened, on the 18th of February 1928, the social company called Rossi Bolfardo, a warehouse of "building scaffolding and materials, bricks, rubble, lime and tiles"⁷. In 1943 he received an authorisation for "building reduced-size constructions"⁸. In the locality, the house of the merchant Pişleag was being recognised as the work of entrepreneur Rossi Bolfardo. He had a permit to stay in the country until the 13th of March 1946⁹.

De Simon family was among the immigrants that arrived from Italy. Angelo De Simon (b. 12th of September 1896, Osoppo, Udina), was inaugurating, on the 1st of January 1932, at 121 Tudor Vladimirescu Street, with an initial social capital of 40,000 de lei¹⁰, a "mechanical workshop for carpentry, furniture and building scaffolding"¹¹. In 1949, he was requesting the prolongation of "the attestation for his firm, for 6 more months"¹². Arrived at Drăgăşani in 1912, Giucomo De Simon (b. 3rd of November 1889, Osoppo, Udina), was opening on the 1st of January 1932, with an invested social capital of 45,000 de lei, a company whose object of activity was: "constructor of building scaffolding and different works with concrete and artificial stone"¹³. In 1948, he was requesting an attestation for the prolonging of his firm's activity¹⁴.

Many of the Italians that settled in Drăgăşani, arrived as simple workers, but they soon caught the attention of the local authorities, not only for their tenacity, but also for their honesty and professional quality. Employees or small building companies, the members of this community had great influence on the public and private works from the centre of the city. From the archive documents, there has been drawn-up a list, presenting the members of this community, who "halted" in this locality¹⁵.

⁶ Serviciul Judeţean al Arhivelor Naţionale (Vâlcea County Department of National Archives), fund of Drăgăşani Police Commissariat, file 22/1942–1943, f. 35 (further quoted as S.J.A.N. Vâlcea).

⁷ Idem, Vâlcea, fund of The Chamber of Commerce and Industry from Vâlcea, file 492/1931, f. 1.

⁸ Official Gazette, Year CXI, no. 117/21st of May 1943, p. 4.512.

⁹ S.J.A.N. Vâlcea, fund of The Chamber of Commerce and Industry from Vâlcea, file 492/1931, f. 14.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, file 81/1932, f. 1

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² *Ibidem*, f. 37.

¹³ *Ibidem*, file 93/1932, ff. 15–21.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ Idem, fund of Drăgăşani Police Commissariat, file 5/1938–1939, ff. 10, 26, 49; *Ibidem*, file 22/1942–1943, ff. 35, 39.

Table 1
The situation of the Italians from Drăgășani.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Surname and name</i>	<i>Profession / Position</i>	<i>Date when arriving in Romania</i>	Observations
1.	Rossi Bolfardo	constructor/ employer	1887	married, 2 children
2.	Rossi Batista	constructor/ employer	-	married
3.	De Simon Angelo	carpenter/factory /employer	1908	married
4.	De Simon Geacomo	constructor/ employer	1912	married, 1 child
5.	Colonna Angelo	mason/employee	1912	married with Rădulescu Matilda, 3 children. After 1930, they settled in Bucharest
6.	Dalsemo Antonio	employer / merchant	1892	married, 1 children
7.	Dalsemo A. Vittorio	owner	born in Romania	married, 2 children
8.	De Simon Pietro	carpenter	1914	unmarried
9.	Pascotti Giovanni	mosaic layer	1922	unmarried
10.	Zamolo Luigi	iron reinforce worker	1921	unmarried
11.	Giusseppe Mastromarino	mason/employee	-	-
12.	Giovani De Simon	mason/employee	-	-
13.	Cumini Angelo	mason/employee	-	-
14.	Cumini Ramildo	mason/employee	-	-
15.	Cumini Giovanni	mason/employee	-	-
16.	Luigi Rupil	mason/employee	-	married cu Maria Rupil, housekeeper in Drăgășani
17.	Antonio Crose	worker in the champagne factory from Drăgășani	born in Romania	married, 2 children. In 1940 he left the country, establishing in Italy
18.	Giusppe Iosif Bogardo	entrepreneur/ merchant	beginning of the 20 th century	married, 3 children
19.	Paleskini Ferucia	mason/employee	-	-
20.	Mattinza Celeste	mason/employee	-	-
21.	Ermenegildo Trometto	carpenter/employee	-	-
22.	Biasony Francisco	mason/employee	-	left the country in 1923
23.	De Ceco Francisco	mason, sculptor/employee	-	in 1930 he was living in Târgoviște, and later in Bucharest

The Greeks also played an important part in the locality of Drăgășani. Their names are registered on the lists with payees of taxes designated for the budget of the town, or among the merchants, the bakers and the coopers from the locality. The ones identified in the archive information are mentioned further: Dumitru

Lavaris, cooper; Constantin Vrabua, Nicola L. Ghinopol, Athanasoiu Torula Gheorghe¹⁶, merchants; Hristea Zistatopol¹⁷, owner; Constantin Leonidas, farmer; Cristos D. Crassis, baker. A very well-known Greek from the locality was C. Adamiade (b. 1883). Graduate of the Faculty of Law, he was a lawyer at the Country Court from Drăgășani, teacher at “Frații Niculescu” School (in the 1920s), and, in 1929, lawyer at The Bank of Commerce from Craiova, Drăgășani Branch¹⁸. In the locality, he was known as “a tall distinguished man, smartly dressed”, who would originate from “an old Greek family, having the reputation of an honest man”¹⁹. Most of the sales and purchase documents for houses, vineyards and lands, from the inter-war period, had his signature on them. He enjoyed the “appreciation and respect of all the worthy people of the borough”²⁰.

On the commercial route of the town, there crossed, along the years, **German** minorities too. For the period in discussion, the archive documents, mention, at no. 68 Traian Street, starting with 1916, the sausage factory of Petre Erdeli²¹. On the same commercial route, at no. 110, under the logo “Mecanica”, there was registered, at the Chamber of Commerce from Vâlcea, “the mechanic workshop and the threshing machines” of Petre Havel²². For the activity that he carried out, Havel enjoyed the acknowledgement of the craftsmen from the locality, who appointed him the president of the General League of the craftsmen from Romania, Drăgășani Branch²³. Since 1921, Gustav Lerch personally administrated “La Gustav” hotel and the restaurant²⁴, from the centre of the locality, and, in 1928, at no. 56 Tudor Vladimirescu Street, there appeared Iosef Velk bakery²⁵. In the collective memory there also remained Iosef Richter, known as “the electrician of the town”, Lufi R. Ion, Martin Hell or Bespaletz Adolf, clerks²⁶.

As considering the **Macedonians** who settled in the locality, we begin by mentioning the name of Dumitru Neciu, who arrived in 1918 and personally administrated two pharmacies. One of them was leased from Ema Bălășoiu, and the second he built, on a plot bought from the merchant Nae Petcu Ioan²⁷. He managed

¹⁶ Athanasoiu Torula Gheorghe died at Rm. Vâlcea, in 1928, in S.J.A.N. Vâlcea, fund of Drăgășani Police Commissariat, file 5/1938–1939, f. 10.

¹⁷ Hristea Zistatopol arrived in Drăgășani in 1899, he was married and had 3 children, in S.J.A.N. Vâlcea, fund of Drăgășani Police Commissariat, file 5/1938–1939, f. 10.

¹⁸ Georgeta Ghionea, *Istoria băncilor urbane din Oltenia în date, statistici și corespondență (1880–1948)*, Târgoviște, Cetatea de Scaun Publishing, 2015, p. 416.

¹⁹ Nicu Alexie, *Am răs mult și am plâns puțin. Memoriile unui oltean*, Bucharest, Garamond Publishing, 2005, p. 156.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ S.J.A.N. Vâlcea, fund of The Chamber of Commerce and Industry from Vâlcea, file 358/1931, f. 1.

²² *Ibidem*, file 1.231/1931, f. 1.

²³ *Idem*, fund of Drăgășani Police Commissariat, file 2/1935, f. 57.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, file 355/1931, f. 1.

²⁵ *Idem*, fund of The Chamber of Commerce and Industry from Vâlcea, file 418/1931, f. 2.

²⁶ *Idem*, fund of Drăgășani Police Commissariat, file 10/1943–1944, f. 97.

²⁷ Emil Istocescu, Teodor Barbu, Constantin Șerban, *Monografia Municipiului Drăgășani*, Constanța, Ex Ponto Publishing, 2004, p. 188.

the built pharmacy between 1919 and 1934. After the mentioned time interval, he leased it to the pharmacist Gheorghe Stoian, called Gogu. Since 1931, Dumitru Neciu dedicated to political activity. Thus, between 1931 and 1938, he filled the “post of mayor”²⁸ four times, a position that allowed him to decide on the erection of the water-tower from the central market of the city, and the construction of the meat and fish hall of the locality²⁹. Under the significant “La Salvador” logo, at no. 9 King Michael Street, there functioned the pharmacy of the Macedonian Teodor Nanci. His pharmacy functioned from the 18th of October 1928, to 1949, when it was nationalised³⁰. Due to the nature of his work – baker – Simion Stoica became well-known, for the majority of the local population, beginning his activity in 1909³¹. At the beginning of the 1930s, he was the owner of “the most refined shop that the town had, in the first half of the last century”³². Traian Ristici, called Hristea, also a Macedonian, with the same object of activity, bakery, would start his business on the 3rd of April 1913, at no. 23, I. C. Brătianu Street³³.

Owing to the fact that the town was being perceived as a commercial centre, the **Serbians** and the **Bulgarians** also showed their interest for the area. Traders, merchants or bakers, the Serbians from the locality did not remain unnoticed. For the inter-war period, the archive documents mention: the pie-shop of Atanasie Naidovici and Beget Z. Mustafovici³⁴, the bakeries of Traian Ristici, Stoian Silianovici, Naum R. Calovici or Smeico. Moreover, the Serbians from the locality became noticeable as good masons, as for example: Mitre Pasici, Țerpu Marcovici, Huseinovici Issa, Anghel Velcovici. Arrived in 1902 in Drăgășani, the Serbian Ischinder Veli is registered as vineyard worker, until 1940. The main occupations of the Bulgarians were those related to the land cultivation, then the viticulture and fruit growing. Seemingly, the Bulgarians were also good craftsmen. Among the representatives of this ethnicity, we managed to identify: Stoiciu Petcof (arrived in Drăgășani, in 1913³⁵), Pacicov Paraschiv Hristo, Lefterof D. Penni³⁶, all workers; Tudor I. Hadjief, Mihail I. Mintehel, Ivan I. Pușcarof, Marin D. Colef, gardeners – employees³⁷; Dumitru I. Dumitru, Dumitru Velicof, tailors. In 1943, in the locality

²⁸ Dumitru Neciu was the mayor of Drăgășani during the following time intervals: January-May 1931, June-August 1932, October 1932-December 1933, January 1938.

²⁹ S.J.A.N. Vâlcea, fund of Vâlcea County Prefect's Office, file31/1931, ff. 7–24.

³⁰ Idem, fund of The Chamber of Commerce and Industry from Vâlcea, file 368/1931, f. 1.

³¹ *Ibidem*, file 396/1931, f. 1.

³² Nicu Alexie, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

³³ S.J.A.N. Vâlcea, fund of The Chamber of Commerce and Industry from Vâlcea, file 347/1931, ff. 1–5; Georgeta Ghionea, *Comerțul drăgășenean în perioada primei jumătăți a secolului al XX-lea*, in the volume *Istoricul Dinică Ciobotea la 70 de ani*, Craiova, Universitaria Publishing, 2017, p. 432.

³⁴ Beghet Z. Mustafovici left the country in 1941, in S.J.A.N. Vâlcea, fund of Drăgășani Police Commissariat, file 22/1942–1943, f. 66.

³⁵ S.J.A.N. Vâlcea, fund of Drăgășani Police Commissariat, file 5/1938–1939, f. 10.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, file 22/1942–1943, f. 35.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, file 5/1938–1939, f. 101.

there were registered two families of Bulgarians, made of five members, the supporting members of the family being: Ivan Cosoff and Decu Peneff.

The archive information mentions the fact that, during the inter-war period, there was, in Drăgășani, a community of **Jews**, its members carrying out commercial transactions in the areas of: women and men ready-made clothes, haberdashery, manufacture commerce and knitting, greengrocery, colonial goods and tinsmithing. Thus, in 1931, Ion Iacob, called Iacobescu (b. 1869), was registering, at the Register of Commerce, a business, having the object of activity “selling of different haberdashery products and all kinds of aliments”, in the Central Market. His business functioned until 1941, when he was requesting the radiation of the firm, motivating that “he does not carry out any activity”³⁸. At no. 3 Regele Mihai Street, in the evidence of Commerce and Industry Chamber, under the logo “La hora țărănească” and with the object of activity “manufacture”, there functions the company of Benedict Cogan (married with Elias Margartea from Bucharest). His firm functioned between 1921 and the 1st of June 1942³⁹, when it is officially radiated. In 1945, Benedict Cogan was soliciting the registering of the firm at the Chamber of Commerce from Craiova⁴⁰. Also on Regele Mihai Street, at no. 22, Maier Marcovici (b. 14th of February 1882, Neamț) administrated a tinsmith workshop, starting with the 1st of July 1920. In 1930, he added the activity of commerce with old metal, undressed leather, wines and grain, under the logo “Cocoșul de aur”⁴¹. On the ground floor of no. 64 building, on the same commercial road, for more than a decade, there functioned a store, from where there could be bought “timber and building materials”⁴², managed by Manase, called Max Lazarovici.

An integrant part of the borough, and later the town of Drăgășani, Traian St. became, in the inter-war period, the main commercial route for the tailor shops. At no. 42, between the 24th of February 1931 and 1942, there functioned the tailor shop of the Jew Herșcu Calman⁴³. His wife, Rebeca H. Calman, is registered, for the same time interval, as owner of a manufacture shop, at no. 1, Voievodul Mihai St.⁴⁴. On the same road of the locality, there were, along the years, other Jewish craftsmen and merchants, the following being remembered: Avram Haim, called Haim Lindeștein⁴⁵ (b. 2nd of September 1872, Tg. Neamț), wine commissioner; Isac Liberman, watchmaker; Lazăr Lazarovici, Carolina Kanner, Iosef Zilberman, Iosef Leib Goldemberg, Samuel B. Predinger, Avram Schwartz, all merchants⁴⁶; Moise and Herman Klaimberg, middlemen; Lazăr Avram, photographer; Ioan

³⁸ Idem, fund of The Chamber of Commerce and Industry from Vâlcea, file 825/1931, f. 1.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, file 494/1931, f. 1.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 12.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, file 836/1931, f.n.

⁴² *Ibidem*, file 360/1931, f. 1.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, file 985/1931, f. 1.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, file 56/1931, ff. 3–5.

⁴⁵ Avram Haim, called Haim Lindeștein, wine seller, with the domicile at no. 19, Sf. Ilie Street, in S.J.A.N. Vâlcea, fund of Drăgășani Police Commissariat, file 18/1943–1944, f. 1.

⁴⁶ S.J.A.N. Vâlcea, fund of Drăgășani Police Commissariat, file 1/1940, f. 4.

Wessel, tailor⁴⁷; Moritz Avram, merchant, considered “the most Jewish of all the Jews that arrived in Drăgășani”⁴⁸.

In 1942, a part of the Jews from the locality were sent to “reside in Rm. Vâlcea Ghetto”⁴⁹, in Drăgășani remaining: Maia-Clara and Estera Marcovici, due to illness, and their mother, Maria M. Marcovici, who needed to provide them nursing; Oscar Scherman, dentist, commandeered by the Garrison of Drăgășani and his wife, Dina Oscar Sherman, nurse; Haim Lindenștein, Benedict Cogan, Moritz Avram, called Moise Beneș, recruited for “working to obtain the Union Loan”; Herman A. Hirsch, called Nicu, and Maer Marcovici, ill; Marcel and Rașela Benedict Cogan, who had come to see their parents, from the Jewish School from Bucharest; Lupu Aizic, the only skilled worker from Nicu Constantinescu Soda Factory; Pincu Rintzler, commandeered for working at the Town Hall from Drăgășani. Besides the above mentioned Jews, “the other cannot be of any use for the community”⁵⁰. Along 1943, the Jews that remained in the locality received the permission to settle in other cities.

Table no. 2

With the Jews from the town of Drăgășani, who, in case of eviction, chose their residence⁵¹.

No.	Surname and name of the underwriter	Chosen residence
1.	Cogan Benedict	City of Craiova
2.	Cogan B. Margareta	City of Craiova
3.	Cogan B. Marcel	City of Craiova
4.	Cogan B. Raschela	City of Craiova
5.	Hirschy A. Herman, called Nicu	City of Rm. Vâlcea
6.	Aizic Wolf, called Lupu	City of Rm. Vâlcea
7.	Avram M. Sara	City of Rm. Vâlcea
8.	Moritz Avram, called Moise Beneș	City of Rm. Vâlcea
9.	Maier Marcovici	City of Rm. Vâlcea
10.	Marcovici Maria	City of Rm. Vâlcea
11.	Marcovici Haia	City of Rm. Vâlcea
12.	Marcovici Estera	City of Rm. Vâlcea
13.	Pincu Rintzler	City of Craiova
14.	Rintzler P. Rachela	City of Craiova
15.	Croitoru Hascal, called Oscar Scherman	City of Rm. Vâlcea
16.	Dina Reznic Scherman	City of Rm. Vâlcea
17.	Zamfir Scherman-Croitoru	City of Rm. Vâlcea
18.	Sofia Z. Scherman-Croitoru	City of Rm. Vâlcea
19.	Haim Lindenștein	City of Rm. Vâlcea
20.	Cecilia Haim Lindeștein	City of Rm. Vâlcea

⁴⁷ Idem, fund of The Chamber of Commerce and Industry from Vâlcea, file 12/1936, ff. 3–7.

⁴⁸ Nicu Alexie, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

⁴⁹ Idem, fund of Drăgășani Police Commissariat, file 18/1943–1944, f. 24.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, f. 25.

In certain historic periods, and due to different reasons, there arrived in Drăgășani, the representatives of certain ethnicities. They were either simple workers, or successful entrepreneurs, but the manner in which the Italians, the Greeks, the Macedonians, the Jews, the Bulgarians manifested, brought new value to the job that they were practicing. Thus, the Italians proved to be good masons, stone-workers, carpenters or entrepreneurs, the Jews owned groceries or were skilful tailors, the Serbians, the Bulgarians and the Macedonians were able merchants and farmers, the Germans were reliable clerks. There was also brought forward, on this opportunity, to the public attention, few commercial units, administrated by the foreigners that settled in the locality, and to make, according to the information offered by the primary sources, a short presentation of them. We are convinced that, regardless the tables we draw-up, they can permanently be filled in with new names and facts that had specific relevance during specific periods of time.