



THE FIXED MARITIME DEFENCE WITHIN THE ROMANIAN SECTOR OF THE BLACK SEA DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD AND AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Ion RÎȘNOVEANU, PhD

Scientific Researcher 3rd Degree

“King Ferdinand I” National Military Museum

During the interwar period, the political and military decision-making factors in Bucharest made a series of decisions in order to enhance the combative strength of the Romanian Armed Forces, in general, and especially of the War Navy or, since 1931, the Royal Navy.

The economic, political and geostrategic context generated by the end of the Great War and the signing of the peace arrangements within the Paris Conference, which took place between 1919 and 1920, were not meant to ensure Romania with the necessary peace needed for consolidating the National Unitary State.

The revisionist diplomacies of Hungary, Bulgaria and, especially, the Soviet Union led the Romanian political and military decision-makers to adopt a cautious attitude in the relations with neighbouring states that continuously emitted territorial claims over Romania.

Regarding the Romanian maritime coastline defence, although the sums allocated were insufficient, the taken actions temporarily covered the needs of the Maritime Fixed Defence in order to organise a series of coastal batteries which had the role of both protecting the mine fields in front of the Constanța Port and repelling any attempt of enemy troops landing.

Keywords: interwar period, naval doctrine, coastal artillery, Fixed Maritime Defence, Military Navy Command, Royal Navy Command.



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INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Once the 1918 national unification became a fact, the Kingdom of Romania did not have any more legitimate territorial demands. Given the newly created conditions, in line with the national tradition and in the context of the post-war situation, the concept regarding the dimension of the maritime and river defence of Romania claimed, at least in the beginning, the usage of its armed forces limited to border defence¹.

Given mainly the mentioned context, within the interwar period, Romania had a coherent, yet not extended, naval and coast-line defence policy. Everything was conditioned by the new length of the shoreline, of approximately 250 km, by the direct contact with the open sea or the ocean and by the transport capabilities and long-term battle generating economic power.

Romania was part of the countries lesser preoccupied with the open seas access, having an inferior commercial and military fleet and, implicitly, a smaller degree of tangency to the resources enjoyed by the countries that controlled the world ocean effectively.

THE FIRST MEASURES TAKEN BY THE MILITARY NAVY COMMAND TO ORGANISE THE COASTLINE DEFENCE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE INTERWAR PERIOD

The role of artillery in Romanian maritime and river coastline defence and the importance of naval officers' preparation in the field of artillery was a concern of the military analysts even after the end of the Great War. Thus, Captain of the Navy Ioan Bălănescu² underlined,

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¹ Nicolae Koslinski, Raymond Stănescu, *Marina română în al Doilea Război Mondial*, vol. I., Editura Făt-Frumos, București, 1998, p. 19.

² Ministerul de Război (War Ministry), *Anuarul Armatei Române pe anul 1920 (temporary edition)*, SOCEC & Comp., București, 1921, p. 407. Ioan Bălănescu, Captain of the Navy in 1920, was born on 3 July 1878. He graduated the Superior Naval School in 1899, being commissioned as Midshipman on 1 July. Ranks obtained within the service: Sub-Lieutenant (18 May 1906), Lieutenant (10 April 1908), Lieutenant Commander (10 April 1915), Commander (1 September 1917), commissioned as Captain in 1920. Promoted to Vice Admiral, he became Commander of the War Navy between 1934 and 1937.



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in an analysis paper on the connections between maritime power and national defence, the importance of defending the coastline by fixed means, mentioning, among others, coastal batteries³.

Also, Commander Ioan Izbășescu⁴ and Lieutenant Commander Alexandru Gheorghiu⁵ drew attention, in 1920, on the role and place of artillery within the Military Navy and on the naval officers' training in this field. The two officers stated that *the artillery has a special importance in the navy and it is necessary for every officer, even if not proficient in artillery, to know how to use this branch of service (...), other than any other speciality, he must pass through an elementary firing directions' course*⁶.

By order of the War Minister No. 15029 from 24 March 1921, the new organisation of the Military Navy comprised, among other structures, the Fixed River Defence and the Fixed Maritime Defence which, next to the Mines Service, torpedoes, wireless stations, as well as the *coastal cannons* or the coastal batteries of the Navy⁷.

The Fixed River Defence had also the Armed Barges Group in its composition, which constituted the River Artillery Regiment on 17 November 1920⁸.

Within the Fixed River Defence, other than the Armed Barges Group or the floating coastal batteries, as they were sometimes referred to in the period documents, there were also floating batteries for the defence of Galați, Brăila and Sulina Ports. Those subunits had 14 barges in use, each of them armed with a cannon. On 8 barges,

³ Captain of the Navy Ioan Bălănescu, *Puterea maritimă și apărarea națională*, București, n/a, p. 18.

⁴ Ministerul de Război (War Ministry), *op. cit.*, 1920, p. 407. Commander Ioan Izbășescu was born on 3 March 1881 and graduated the Superior Naval School in 1903, being commissioned as Midshipman on 1 June. Ranks obtained within the service: Sub-Lieutenant (1 June 1906), Lieutenant (1 April 1911), Lieutenant Commander (15 August 1916), Commander (1 September 1917).

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 410. Lieutenant Commander Alexandru Gheorghiu was born on 21 September 1890 and graduated the Naval Academy in Fiume on 6 June 1909 as Midshipman. Ranks obtained within the service: Sub-Lieutenant (3 October 1912), Lieutenant (1 November 1916), Lieutenant Commander (1 September 1916).

⁶ Commander I. Izbășescu, Lieutenant Commander Al. A. Gheorghiu, *Dare de seamă asupra stagiului de stat major în escadra franceză în Mediterana occidentală cu concluziuni și preocupări pentru marina noastră (An Account on the Staff Trial in the French Squadron in the Western Mediterranean with Conclusions and Proposals for our Navy)*, București. 1940, p. 62.

⁷ Arhivele Militare Române (Romanian Military Archives, A.M.R. for short), *Comandamentul Marinei Militare (Military Navy Command)* Collection, folder 388, files 20-21.

⁸ *Idem*, folder 290/1920-1921, f. 26.

a 152.4 mm cannon was installed on board, on 4 of them a 120 mm cannon and on 2 barges a 101.6 mm one⁹. Most of those ships were destined for the defence of the Sulina Port.

The floating batteries, as they were sometimes called, had, on 21 December 1920, the following order of battle: 8 barges each with a 152.4 mm cannon on board, four barges with four 120/50 mm cannons and 2 barges with two 101.6 mm cannons each¹⁰. The *Obukov* 152.4 mm large calibre cannons were captured in 1918 from the Russian fleet dislocated in the Danube Delta area during the Great War together with the barges on board they were placed¹¹.

Those armed ships were anchored in Galați and Brăila ports, but also in Sulina which, in the interwar period as well as before, represented a strategic point reinforced by Navy artillery and naval units.

For the inland defence of the maritime coastline, limited South in the Balcic area and on the Dniester Firth in the North, the Fixed Maritime Defence was constituted, where the coastal batteries were also found.

EQUIPMENT AND REORGANISATION OF THE FIXED MARITIME DEFENCE DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD

The Fixed Maritime Defence dedicated sector was situated between the Dniester Firth in the North and the Balcic-Ecrene area in the South with its headquarters in the Constanța garrison. In its new organisation the No. 1 Maritime Sector South which had its area of responsibility the Balcic – Gura Portiței zone also had in its structure the coastal batteries which began to be deployed on the new line in 1926.

Also, in 1926, the 152.4 mm *Armstrong* cannons belonging to the N.M.S. MĂRĂȘEȘTI and N.M.S. MĂRĂȘTI destroyers were dismantled and sent ashore, to be replaced by more modern ones and placed on the *Tataia* point on the concrete platform and pillboxes built by the Germans during the Great War. In this first shoreline coastal battery four 152.4 mm L/45 *Armstrong* and 76.2 mm L/50 *Armstrong* cannons



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⁹ *Idem*, folder 308/1916, f.160.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 160.

¹¹ Master Sergeant Marin Tănase testimony, serving on this battery from 1926 up until 1946.



were installed in 1926. The 152.4 mm cannons were manned by 8 sailors and the 76.2 mm ones by 6 sailors.

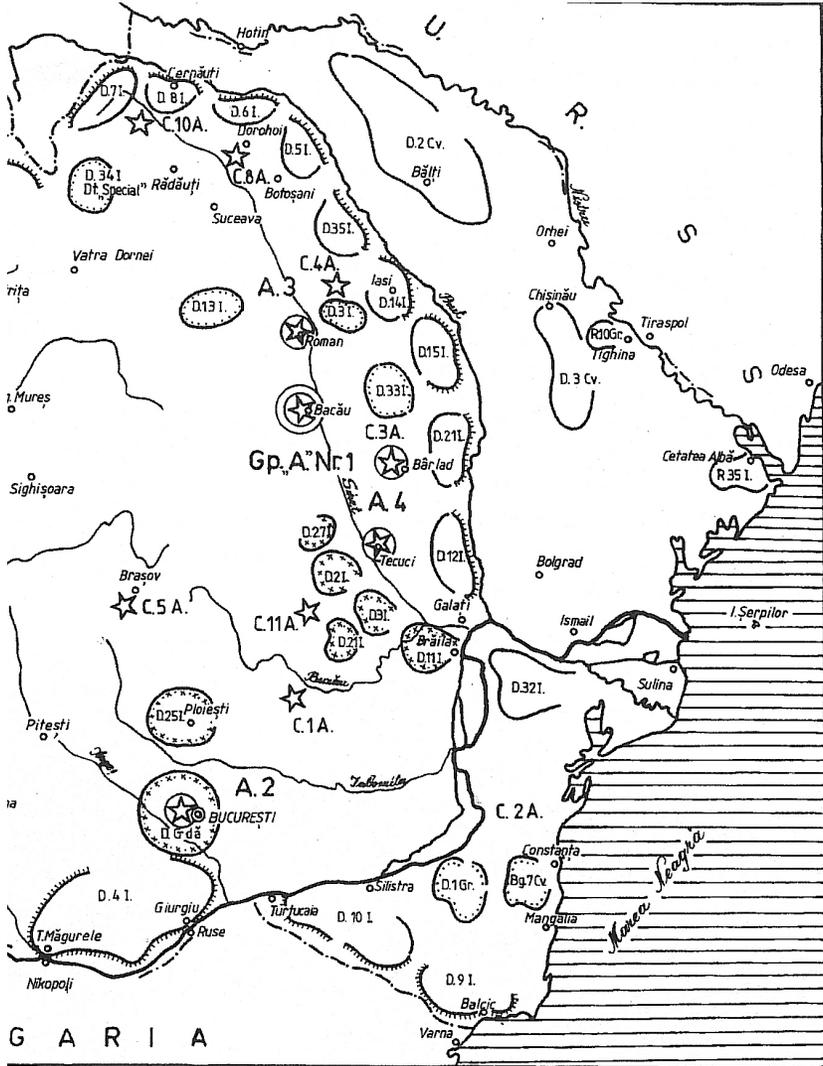


Photo 1: The disposition of the Romanian Armed Forces large units in order to defend Dobruja and the Romanian Black Sea shoreline in the interwar period¹²

¹² A.M.R., Apărarea Fixă Maritimă/Fixed Maritime Defence Collection, folder 51/1933-1938, f. 270.



During the same period, along the maritime shoreline, land studies were carried out in order to establish what were the best positions to place the new batteries so that they would assure a good crossfire for the defence of Constanța and the shorelines North and South of the port.

Following the centralised information's study, specialist officers concluded that the best points were Midia, Viile Noi Constanța and Agigea. The land surfaces, where the batteries were going to be deployed, got declared of *public utility* in order to be expropriated¹³.

In the *Tataia* Battery, which later became known as *Tudor*, within the armoured pillboxes, the Sea Division's munitions depots were placed. They were supplied by the central depots from Hinog, later moved to Tândărei, which, in turn, supplied the entire Navy.

New emplacements and equipment were provided for that battery within the following years. Thus, in 1933 and 1934, the shore was consolidated, where those guns were placed, electric lighting was mounted, telephone lines with the Fixed Maritime Defence Command were established and two anti-aircraft machine gun posts were placed. In 1935, by their own means, a firing and signals dispatch was made active along with bells on each of the four 142.4 mm cannons, thus making it possible for on command firing.

In order to save the 152.4 mm cannon munitions, 37 mm barrels were mounted in the battery, then 6.5 mm weapons for reduced calibre target practice¹⁴.

The first commander of the *Tataia* Battery was Sub-Lieutenant Dumitru Constantinescu, being followed, among others, by Sub-Lieutenant Gheorghe Chiriac, Sub-Lieutenant Ioan Tocineanu, Sub-Lieutenant Haralambie Stănescu, Lieutenant Nicolae Mihalcea, and Lieutenant Marin Tache.

The chief gunner of this battery, from its foundation until 1946, was Sergeant-Major Marin Tănase, who was also the chief of the munitions depot¹⁵.

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¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ Romanian Navy National Museum's Archives (A.M.N.M.R. for short), *Registrul istoric al Apărării Fixe Maritime/ Fixed Maritime Defence Historical Record*.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*.



An important moment in the reorganisation of the War Navy was represented by the year 1931. Following the United Kingdom example, by Royal Decree no. 4063 on 15 December 1931, the name War Navy was changed to the Royal Navy and the Military Navy Command was renamed the Royal Navy Command, with command and branch of service inspectorate functions, within the National Defence Ministry.

Along the seashore, several actions were taken in order to mount other coastal batteries in various points, depending on how the artillery fire crossed in order to have the entire Romanian shoreline in range as well as depending on the defended objectives.

Thus, in 1929, at Capul Midia Point, by Royal Decree, a 76 052 square meters land surface within the Gargalić (Corbu) rural area, Constanța District, was declared of public utility¹⁶. Here, the concrete emplacements building for two 152.4 mm *Obukov* batteries began to be built. The four *Obukov* cannons, from the armed barges, stayed stored for many years in the *Tataia* Battery until 1939, when they were mounted in their concrete emplacements.

The battery was organised like a stronghold with ditches and barbed wire around it. It was camouflaged as a small farm with vegetable gardens. For the anti-aircraft defence it had a 20 mm cannon section. Among the *Mircea* Battery commanders, as it became known, we can name Lieutenant Gheorghe Gabroveanu, Lieutenant Anton Petriman, and Lieutenant Marin Trache.

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Within the forth decade's coastal defence plans, the coastal batteries were involved as well. Thus, a 77 mm battery took part in a training exercise in the Mamaia-Năvodari sector, in September 1932. Its presence was more of a symbolic nature since it had not any munitions, therefore not being able to execute any live fire missions. In the training exercise debriefing, an important conclusion was drawn and that was that small calibre coastal batteries had to be equipped

¹⁶ A.M.R., *Apărarea Fixă Maritimă/Fixed Maritime Defence* Collection, folder 16, f. 193.

¹⁷ Olimpiu-Manuel Glodarenco, Andreea Atanasiu-Croitoru, Florin Stan, Tanța Măndilă, Andrei Vochițu, Ion Rișnoveanu, *Istoria Statului Major al Forțelor Navale Române. 1860-2010. Monografie*, Editura Centrului Tehnic Editorial al Armatei, București, 2010, p. 235. See also Captain of the Navy (ret.) (coord.) Anton Bejan, *Dicționar enciclopedic de marină*, Editura Societății Scriitorilor Militari, București, 2006, p. 322.

with fast moving means of propulsion in order to become *the mobile element within the firing capability of the coastal defence*¹⁸.

Another coastal battery deployed on the shoreline was the one at Agigea. Work began in 1932 for placing a 120 mm *St. Chamond* battery, but much later, in 1939, three 120 mm *Armstrong* cannons were installed, which were taken from the Cruiser *N.M.S. Elisabeta* and which were also used in the Turtucaia fortifications of 1916. The *Elisabeta* Battery, as it became known, was organised like a stronghold, with ditches, mantles and concrete depots. Among this battery's commanders, best known are Lieutenants Gheorghe Costăchescu and Alexandru Chiriac.

In the 7 September 1932 session, the Royal Navy Committee made an analysis of both the technical situation of the coastal batteries and the necessary number of units to be deployed in the coastal regions. In setting the batteries' needs and placing, the anti-enemy aircraft missions were also taken into account. From the military specialists' studies came out the fact that four 250 mm, four 155 mm, four 120 mm, eight 100 mm and 26 40 mm cannons were needed in the Sulina region. In the Taşaul - Constanţa - Tuzla region four 250 mm, eight 155 mm, eight 100 mm as well as 16 40 mm cannons were needed. Also, in the South Tuzla-Ecrene region eight 100 mm and eight 40 mm cannons had to be deployed.

The high cost of the batteries as well as the emplacements works determined the Navy Department within the War Ministry asked for the removal of the 240 mm batteries, which had to be mounted on railway carriages, within the equipment programme. The Royal Navy Committee did not like the requested modifications to be made on the coastal batteries' equipping and organising plan. That is why, in the 27 April 1936 session, the specialists from the Royal Navy Command expressed themselves accordingly, more than that, stating *the wish to have them completed as soon as possible*¹⁹.

¹⁸ A.M.R., *Apărarea Fixă Maritimă/Fixed Maritime Defence* Collection, folder 51/1933-1938, ff. 156-157.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, ff. 156-157.



The committee that analysed the Constanța-Midia strip of shoreline suggested, in a report for the Sea Division, moving the “Tataia” Battery some 500-1000 metres south in order to have better firing coverage of the South Cap Midia sector. The other committee, which analysed the Viile Noi-Mangalia zone, suggested placing the Vii Battery on the high terrace of the Zosima Villa, were, during the 1916-1918 occupation, the Germans had an anti-aircraft battery. It was also proposed that a smaller calibre battery would be placed on a lower position.

From a June-October 1932 report on the Fixed Maritime Defence activity, we can learn that, other than the well-placed *Tataia* Battery, all the coastal batteries had an *inefficient deployment on a quantity and quality level in regards to the sensible areas that are to be defended*²⁰. Thus, the Midia Battery could not offer full fire coverage to the sector south of Midia Point, which was regarded as the *most sensible point of the coastline*²¹.

Under those circumstances, following minute studies, the Royal Navy Command specialists proposed the battery’s relocation by 500-1000 metres to the south, point in which *the 152 mm materiel would fulfil its essential mission*²².

The *Viile Noi* Battery was not too well placed in the best point for the defence of the Constanța Port either. Its replacement was proposed to be done on the lower terrace of the shoreline from where both better firing and better camouflage were achievable. The movement of the *Agigea* Battery some 600 metres to the Northeast was also proposed in the document.

Other than the batteries’ relocating measures, in the *Committee’s Report* it was suggested the reorganisation of the coastal units. They had to be reunited into two groups. One group was supposed to coordinate the batteries north of Constanța, and the other one south of the port, each having its own command structure. At the same time, the report demanded the higher echelons to take definitive actions with regard to the points of deployment for the new coastal batteries and the works themselves.

In the second half of August 1933, two committees conducted new studies on the shoreline for the deployment of coastal batteries. The committee that analysed the Constanța-Midia strip of shoreline suggested, in a report for the Sea Division, moving the *Tataia* Battery some 500-1000 metres south in order to have better firing coverage of the South Cap Midia sector. The other committee, which analysed the *Viile Noi-Mangalia* zone, suggested placing the *Vii* Battery on the high terrace of the *Zosima Villa*, were, during the 1916-1918 occupation,

²⁰ *Ibidem*, folder 33 /1932, f. 101.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

²² *Ibidem*, f. 23.



the Germans had an anti-aircraft battery. It was also proposed that a smaller calibre battery would be placed on a lower position. Studying the Mangalia beaches, the committee postulated that *it would be special for landings* and proposed a special analysis in order to establish the infantry and artillery means needed for the defence of the area²³.

Adding to this, from a report of the Fixed Maritime Command, we can see very clearly that *the tactical possibilities of the Maritime Fixed Defence artillery materiel are very reduced* compared to the length of the strip of shoreline that had to be defended inland.

Out of the 18 cannons assigned to the coastal batteries, only eight were mounted in the field. The other ten were stored in the *Tataia* Battery, their maintenance being very difficult due to lack of funds²⁴.

Concentrating all the artillery pieces at *Tataia*, whose inventory rose by a few 152 mm cannons delivered in 1933, worried the Fixed Maritime Defence Command, as, in case of an enemy bombardment, they could all have been lost.

Another problem flagged by the Fixed Maritime Defence was that of moving the cannons in bad weather from one position to another as there was not any linking stone road between the Constanța-Mamaia road and the battery²⁵. After several requests, 555 tonnes of stone were obtained for the access road building.

The shoreline erosion phenomenon near the *Tataia* point caused justified concern within the Fixed Maritime Defence Command. Taking into account the pieces of information comprised in the presented reports, the Sea Division Commander ordered a land survey. Observing the fact that the danger was real, the battery's relocation was proposed, a request that was approved by the Royal Navy Command.

During the interwar period, the *Tataia* Battery had to face other problems too. It needed bonnets for the 75 mm cannons, target mechanisms for the anti-aircraft 76 mm battery as well as munitions for the 77 mm battery.

In regards to training and battle readiness, the *Tataia* Battery results were positively appreciated. For example, on 11 September 1933,

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²³ *Ibidem*, f. 23. See also A.M.N.M.R., *Registrul istoric al Apărării Fixe Maritime/ Fixed Maritime Defence Historical Record*, p. 9.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 35.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, f. 37.



A constant concern for the leaders of the Royal Navy up until entering WW2 was to raise the firing capacity of the coastal batteries. On 22 January 1937, the Naval Committee restarted the debate on the possibility of acquiring and installing a 240 mm battery. The offers forwarded by the "Bofors" and "Solothurn" companies were analysed. The matter was analysed in the Navy Committee meeting on 13 October 1937 in which it was stated that the Navy could not give up the 240 mm battery purchase.

Vice Admiral Vasile Scodrea, Commander of the Royal Navy, mentioned that the special readiness was *more than satisfying*²⁶.

Read Admiral Petre Bărbuneanu, the Sea Division's Commander, made the same appreciations, on 16 March 1934. While inspecting the battery, *he was pleased by the obtained results and brought praises*²⁷, as we can see noted in the *Fixed Maritime Defence Historical Record*²⁸.

The two commanders' inspections also resulted in carrying out logistical works. Between April and June 1934, the installation of the electrical and telephone network was completed, the cannon sheltering depot was built and the emplacements for the anti-aircraft machine guns were completed on the *Tataia* Battery²⁹.

Because the necessary munitions for the 152.4 mm cannons could not be provided, during July 1934, 37 mm cannons were fitted and the first day and night target practice-training shots were carried out. On the 3 October 1934 night training shots, Rear Admiral Petre Bărbuneanu was also present. He congratulated the entire battery staff for the manner in which the mission was carried out.

In order to improve the training frame, on 20 October 1934, the Fixed Maritime Defence order of battle was modified. Three training companies were established, one for the 152.4 mm battery, one for the 77 mm section and one for the spotlight section. Attached to the *Tataia* Battery, a telephone, distance and observer training centre was established in order to prepare the necessary personnel for the Royal Navy coastal batteries.

Ensuring the needed munitions allowed for several firing drills to take place in the second half of 1935, with very good results, as well as in earlier years³⁰. Along with preparing the gunner and the direct and indirect shots carried out at *Tataia* Battery, by using the firing dispatch and signalling means, the shooting sessions allowed for a constant verification of the respective technique.

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²⁶ A.M.N.M.R., *loc. cit.*, p. 9.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 15.

²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 19.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 29-30.



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With all the efforts put in, made up by reports sent to the National Defence Ministry, the lack of funds did not permit the purchase and deployment of such a battery. It remained only as something to be desired, the matter being retaken into consideration by the Royal Navy Command on 18 January 1940, when it was decided to place it in the 3rd emergency equipment plan³².

At the same time, new studies along the shoreline were carried out, having in mind both the cannons positions and the equipment with new batteries. It was believed that, in order to defend the Constanța Port, 7-8 batteries were necessary, out of which four were supposed to be quick firing, two in Constanța and one in Agigea. In the Jibrieni area, five batteries were needed, pointing out that *current works mention only one battery*³³. Studies showed that a four-piece battery was needed in Sulina and in Vâlcov, at least a battery with the same capabilities, each needing an anti-aircraft machine gun as well. The study also mentioned that repelling a potential adversary would need 22 artillery pieces, which meant about six batteries of 120-150 mm cannons with a range of 18-20 km. The document stated that if the fleet had two destroyers with 10 artillery pieces, the number of coastal batteries could be reduced to three³⁴.

The calculations of the specialist officers from the Royal Navy Command proved that the 22 pieces of artillery equipment plan rose only to 2,361,084,000 lei³⁵.

Aware of the fact that the budget could not ensure such a sum, the authors of the 1938 study proposed the reinforcement of the coastal battery system by four 150 mm batteries from the Artillery Reserve, six 152 mm cannons from the N.M.S MĂRĂȘTI and N.M.S. MĂRĂȘEȘTI

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³¹ A.M.R., *Comandamentul Marinei Militare/Military Navy Command* Collection, folder 1221/1940, f. 764.

³² *Ibidem*, f. 766.

³³ *Idem*, folder 801 /1938, f. 12.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 12.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, f. 17.



The outbreak of the Second World War, on 1 September 1939, with the invasion of Poland by Germany and, especially, Romania's entry into this war on 22 June 1941 against the Soviet Union, imposed on the political and military decision makers from Bucharest the impetuous need to take ample measures to strengthen the capacity to repel a possible enemy landing attempt on the Romanian Black Sea coastline.

Destroyers, four cannons from the N.M.S. ELISABETA Cruiser as well as a 75 mm battery³⁶.

Another commission led by Rear Admiral Izbășescu analysed the defence of the Constanța Port in the field. The idea that the 75 mm St. *Chammond* battery would not be moved to the *Vii* point in the south of the city and that a 47 mm battery, which *would have been placed on the south wall of the oil basin*³⁷, would take this mission was proposed to the Royal Navy commander.

THE ORGANISATION OF THE COASTAL AREA ARTILLERY OF ROMANIA AT THE END OF THE INTERWAR PERIOD AND THE BEGINNING OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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A primary measure taken by the Romanian military authorities was linked to the reorganisation of the units that formed the coastal defence. Thus, by the no. 663 Royal Navy Command Order on 12 March 1941, the Coastal Artillery Command was established, a unit whose mission was to organise and lead the Romanian Black Sea coastal defence system.

At the beginning of the 1940s, the Romanian coastal artillery had a morally and physically outdated materiel, which could only partially ensure the protection of the Constanța Port surrounding minefields, let alone repel Soviet naval forces landing in the area.

That is why the German Navy War Mission in Romania, part of the German Military Mission in Bucharest, together with specialist officers from the Romanian Royal Navy Command, conceived a plan to consolidate the Romanian Black Sea coastline defensive system.

To that purpose, the alliance with Germany brought along the deployment of a German coastal battery south of Constanța,

³⁶ *Ibidem*, f. 22.

³⁷ *Ibidem*.



in the Lazu village area, called the *Tirpitz* Battery, as well as a mobile railcar mounted battery, known as *Lange Bruno*, in the Mamaia-Sat area.

Thus, in the winter of 1940, six 280 mm SK L/45 cannons were brought to Constanța, sent from the reserves of the *Nassau* class World War One German destroyers.

Three such pieces of artillery entered the *Tirpitz* Battery, deployed in the Lazu area, the remaining three being deployed in the mobile railcar battery north of Constanța³⁸.

The special deployment works for the battery in the south area of Constanța were completed in the spring of 1941, being also equipped with 88 mm anti-aircraft cannons, 75 mm anti-tank cannons, as well as a motorised unit with the mission of repelling enemy tracked vehicle assaults. Barbed wire fences surrounded the entire base. All was being manned by 600 troops.

The *Lange Bruno* mobile battery, deployed on the railroad north of Constanța, in the Mamaia-Sat area, had the mission of stopping a possible landing on the Mamaia Beach, an easy to assault perimeter due to its large beaches.

Entering active duty in March 1941, the two batteries had the protection of minefield around Constanța Port as a main mission, but also striking the Soviet attacking ships from the distance, ships that might have attacked to produce damage on the city and port or to force a landing.

Each of the six cannons had a weight of 40 t, with a barrel length of 12 m, with a firing speed of three shells per minute. The munition used was in the form of 300 kg heavy 90 cm long shells.

The *Tirpitz* Battery went into battle only once, on 26 June 1941, during an attack by a naval formation belonging to the Soviet Black Sea Fleet led by the HARKOV and MOSKVA Command Destroyers³⁹.

During the action, at 04.22 o'clock, the battery started firing with all three cannons managing, together with the Romanian forces, to repel the Soviet attack.

The special deployment works for the battery in the south area of Constanța were completed in the spring of 1941, being also equipped with 88 mm anti-aircraft cannons, 75 mm anti-tank cannons, as well as a motorised unit with the mission of repelling enemy tracked vehicle assaults. Barbed wire fences surrounded the entire base. All was being manned by 600 troops.

³⁸ Ioan Damaschin, *Lupta aero-navală de la Constanța din 26 iunie 1941. Cine a scufundat distrugătorul lider MOSKVA?*, Editura Militară, București, 2014, p. 10 and the following.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 22 and the following. See also Ioan Damaschin, *Război submarin la Marea Neagră*, Editura Militară, București, 2016, p. 21 and the following, and Jürgen Rohwer, *Chronology of the War at Sea. 1939-1945: The Naval History of World War 2*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 2005, p. 83.



The revisionist diplomacies of Hungary, Bulgaria but, especially, the Soviet Union, made both political and military decision-makers in Romania adopt a careful attitude towards neighbouring states which, continuously, launch territorial claims towards Romania.

CONCLUSIONS

During the interwar period, the Bucharest political and military decision-makers took a series of decisions aimed at strengthening the Romanian Armed Forces combat power, in general, and the War Navy, named the Royal Navy since 1931, especially.

The economic, political and geostrategic context, generated by the end of the Great War and the signing of the Paris Peace Conference arrangements, which took place between 1919 and 1920, was not meant to ensure the necessary peace for Romania to consolidate its National Unified State.

The revisionist diplomacies of Hungary, Bulgaria but, especially, the Soviet Union, made both political and military decision-makers in Romania adopt a careful attitude towards neighbouring states which, continuously, launch territorial claims towards Romania.

With regard to the Romanian maritime shoreline defence, all those who held, in the analysed period, the position of commander of the War Navy, the Royal Navy since 1931, were majorly concerned with organising a defensive system in the coastal area meant to discourage a possible armed aggression coming, especially, from the Soviet Union⁴⁰.

Although the allocated sums were, on most occasions, insufficient, the taken measures covered, for a while, the needs of the War Navy with regard to preparing some coastal batteries, which had the role of both protecting the minefields in front of Constanța Port and repelling a possible landing of enemy troops.

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⁴⁰ Olimpiu-Manuel Glodarencu, Andreea Atanasiu-Croitoru, Florin Stan, Tanța Mândilă, Andrei Vochițu, Ion Rișnoveanu, *op. cit.*, p. 250 and the following. The six admirals who lead the Military Navy, the Royal Navy since 1931, were Vice Admiral Constantin Bălescu (1917-1920), Rear Admiral Constantin Niculescu-Rizea (acting 1920-1921 and full 1921-1925), Vice Admiral Vasile Scodrea (1925-1934), Vice Admiral Ioan Bălănescu (1934-1937), Admiral Petre Bărbuneanu (1937-1940) and Vice Admiral BEng Eugeniu Roșca (1940-1941).

4. Comandor Ioan Bălănescu, *Puterea maritimă și apărarea națională*, București, f.a.
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