



STUDIES AND PROPOSALS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF THE ROMANIAN MERCHANT FLEET DURING PEACETIME AND WARTIME (1938-1940)

Colonel (ret) Professor Ion GIURCĂ, PhD

“Hyperion” University, București

DOI: 10.55535/RMT.2022.2.11

After becoming an independent state, which was followed by the return of Dobruja to the Romanian state, Romania became a littoral country. Therefore, the need arose to create, along with the Danube merchant fleet, a maritime one, with state and private capital, to contribute to the country's budget, by transporting goods not only for domestic needs but also for the needs of other countries or companies. At the same time, it was considered necessary to build a military naval and river fleet to defend the Danube and the Black Sea, which proved useful during the National Reunification War (1916-1920), as well as to provide support for the collective security system existing in the 1930s (Romanian-Polish, Little Entente and Balkan Pact).

The development of the state merchant navy in Romania dates back to 1895, when Grigore Manu¹ was given the task of organising a maritime navigation service, an action that got materialised in a law adopted on 7/19 June 1888. The first voyage of a ship operated by the Romanian Maritime Service took place on 14/26 August 1895, when “Medeea” left Brăila for Istanbul, carrying 25 passengers and 600 tons of cargo. A few days later, on 26 August/8 September, “Meteor”² made the first voyage with the same destination. Starting on 14/26 September it was to operate regular passenger transport services between Constanța and Istanbul (Ghica, 1939, pp. 149-150; Samba, Historia).

Keywords: Romanian Maritime Service; merchant navy; “Sulina” vessel, Ministry of the Air and the Navy; international regulations;

¹ General Director of the State Monopolies Administration (1886-1896). He played an important role in the establishment of the merchant river and maritime fleet in Romania. He initiated and developed the River Navigation Society and the Romanian Maritime Service.

² A 560-t mixed ship, bought by the Romanian Maritime Service from Great Britain, to ensure transport from Constanța to Istanbul. It was operational until 1897.



ROMANIAN
MILITARY
THINKING

In 1897, following the acquisition of “București”, “Iași” and “Dobrogea” vessels, within the Romanian Maritime Service it was established a special shipping directorate, the first maritime route being Brăila, Istanbul, Gibraltar, Rotterdam, served by the cargo ship “București”. Under the circumstances of the development of the country and the trade with European countries, in 1908 it was established the Ports and Waterways General Directorate, an institution that brought together all port and navigation services: Hydraulic Service, Maritime Ports Service, Romanian River Navigation and Romanian Maritime Service, which were part of the mentioned structure until 1930.

Starting in July 1929, the Ports and Waterways General Directorate was transformed into the Ports and Waterways Autonomous Administration, which retained the previous Directorate structure and services. In compliance with the Autonomous Administrations Law on 4 May 1934, the Ports and Waterways Autonomous Administration was transformed into the Ports and Waterways Commercial Administration, having the same organisational structure and operating on the basis of the Regulation for the operation and financial management of the Ports and Waterways Commercial Administration, sanctioned by the “High Royal Decree no. 2358” on 8 August 1934.

The year 1936 marked a major change in the concept of merchant navy organisation, following the establishment of the Ministry of the Air and the Navy. In compliance with the new legislative framework, the Romanian River Navy and the Romanian Maritime Service were transferred from the Ports Commercial Administration to the newly-established ministry, which was successively led by Nicolae Caranfil (13 March 1936-1 January 1937), Radu Irimescu (7 January 1937-10 February 1938) and Paul Teodorescu (31 March 1938-10 May 1940), being responsible for the coordination of all air and maritime activities and services.

After the end of the National Reunification War and the achievement of national unification, in the context of the country’s economic recovery, in 1924 it was established the sea line the Danube-the Western Mediterranean, served by 4 “Ardeal”-type ships (“Alba Iulia”,

Under the circumstances of the development of the country and the trade with European countries, in 1908 it was established the Ports and Waterways General Directorate, an institution that brought together all port and navigation services: Hydraulic Service, Maritime Ports Service, Romanian River Navigation and Romanian Maritime Service, which were part of the mentioned structure until 1930.



“Ardeal”, “Peleş”, “Suceava”), operating transportation between Constanța and Haifa and, after “Transilvania” and “Basarabia” ships entered into service, up to Egypt, in Alexandria.

Arriving in Constanța on 26 June 1938, “Transilvania” ship, after two test sails and the crew training along the Black Sea, officially started its first Constanța-Alexandria voyage, on 12 September 1938. “Basarabia”, which arrived in Constanța on 26 September 1939, started its first voyage to Alexandria on 13 October 1939. Those ships, both modern and luxurious, replaced “Dacia” and “România” ships, which had sailed from Constanța to Alexandria, being earmarked, after only a month, for the newly-established sea line Constanța-Cyprus. In the autumn of 1938, the Romanian Maritime Service had 5 passenger ships, 7 mixed ships (passengers and cargo) and 2 cargo ships, serving the existing sea lines. As for the revenues achieved from the operation of the available ships, they constantly increased: from 141,531,709 lei, in the fiscal year 1934/1935, to 214,639,303 lei in 1938/1939 (AMNR, *Microfilme collection*, roll P 3. 1161, c. 109).

The obtained results were the consequences of the constant increase in the number of vessels and in their tonnage, the opening of new lines of maritime communications in the Black Sea and in the Mediterranean basin. In the year 1938/1939, the vessels belonging to the Romanian Maritime Service made 125 voyages, covered 381,957 miles, operating in 46 ports located in 17 states, the transports being executed not only from and to Romanian ports but also between ports in states other than Romania, depending on the received requests. In 1939, there were regular voyages operated by the six existing sea lines (Ib., roll P 3.1164, c. 729-730), as follows (*table no. 1*):

Table no. 1: Operating vessels and sea lines in 1939

Line	Operating vessels	Ports
I and II	“Transilvania”, “Basarabia”, “Dacia”, “România”, “Regele Carol I”	Alexandria, Port Said, Tripoli, Istanbul, Izmir
III – Cyprus	“Dacia”, “România”	Larnaca
IV – the Aegean	„Durostor”	Piraeus, Salonika, Styliis, Katakolo



Line	Operating vessels	Ports
V – the Western Mediterranean	“Alba Iulia”, “Ardeal”, “Suceava”, “Peleş”	Malta, Genoa, Marseille
VI – the Levant	“Ardeal”, “Bucureşti”, “Oituz”, “Peleş”, “Suceava”	Beirut, Haifa, Jafa, Tel Aviv
VII – the West	“Bucegi”, “Carpaţi”, “Suceava”	

THE GEOPOLITICAL AND GEOSTRATEGIC CONTEXT OF THE NEW PROGRAMME FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROMANIAN MERCHANT FLEET

The international situation in Europe, worrying starting in 1938, as the Nazi Germany occupied Austria (12 March 1938) and Czechoslovakia was dismembered (15 March 1939), unfolded unfavourably up to the state of war, starting on 1 September 1939, when Poland was successively attacked by the German and Soviet armed forces (17 September), in accordance with the provisions of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 23 August 1939. Although neutral in relation to the ongoing conflict on its northern border, Romania, through its political and military leadership, was aware of its insecurity, especially as the two aggressor states, Germany and the USSR, had an unfriendly attitude towards the Romanian authorities that, in compliance with the international rules of neutrality, allowed not only civilian and military Polish authorities but also a large number of troops and civilians from the occupied and divided country to enter Romania. On 30 August 1939, two days before the outbreak of the Second World War, the ships of the Romanian Maritime Service were in various situations in the ports in which they operated (Ib., roll P 3. 1164, c. 693), as it can be seen in *table no. 2*.

The international situation in Europe, worrying starting in 1938, as the Nazi Germany occupied Austria (12 March 1938) and Czechoslovakia was dismembered (15 March 1939), unfolded unfavourably up to the state of war, starting on 1 September 1939, when Poland was successively attacked by the German and Soviet armed forces (17 September), in accordance with the provisions of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 23 August 1939.



Table no. 2: State of ships on 30 August 1939

Vessel name	Tonnage	Where they were, their state	Out of the country	Destination	Expected to come back to the country
POSTAL SHIPS					
“Transilvania”	6672	Beirut			3 September
“Basarabia”	6672	Constanța – stationing	31 august	Alexandria	10 September
“Dacia”	3419	Haifa		Beirut	2 September
“România”	3151	Constanța	3 September	Beirut	16 September
“Regele Carol I”	2369	Galați	-	-	-
MIXED SHIPS					
“Alba Iulia”	5695	Constanța – unloading	21 September	Marseille	26 October
“Peleş”	5695	Towards Piraeus		Marseille	27 September
“Suceava”	5695	Constanța – maintenance work	-	-	-
“Ardeal”	5695	Constanța – unloading	19 September	Port-Said	15 October
“București”	2499	Galați – loading	6 September	Port Said	6 October
“Oituz”	2525	Beirut	-	Port Said	18 September
“Durostor”	1309	Salonika	-	Piraeus	5 September
CARGO SHIPS					
“Carpați”	4336	Brăila –unloading	20 September	Hamburg	20 November
“Bucegi”	4330	Haifa – unloading	-	-	2 September
“Sulina”	5700	Under construction at the Shipyard in Palermo	-	-	-
“Mangalia”	5700				
„Cavarna”	5700				
“Balcic”	5700				



At the same time, the privately owned seagoing vessels, sailing under the Romanian flag, were in the following situation: “*Carmen Sylva*”, owned by the “*Capato & Macri*” Company, in the Orient; “*Danubius*”, owners, the Lowensohn Brothers, abroad; “*Siretul*”, “*Prahova*” and “*Oltul*”, owned by “*Ing. Vlasov*” Company, on voyage, America-Poland and America-Italy; “*Câmpina*”, “*Steaua Română*” and “*Oltenia*” oil tankers, owned by the “*Steaua Română*” oil company, on voyage: Italy-America, Italy-Genoa, London (Ib., p. 692).

In 1939, the ships of the Romanian Maritime Service operated three sea lines, as follows:

Line I: Constanța-Istanbul-Piraeus-Alexandria-Beirut, with “*Transilvania*” and “*Basarabia*” vessels, which were considered insufficient. It was estimated that a third vessel was needed so that two of them could be used constantly, one having to undertake maintenance, repair and cleaning procedures. Thus, the main and auxiliary engines of the ships could be preserved for a longer period of time.

Line I:
Constanța-Istanbul-Piraeus-Alexandria-Beirut, with “*Transilvania*” and “*Basarabia*” vessels, which were considered insufficient.

Line II: Constanța-Haifa-Tel Aviv was served by old ships, “*Regele Carol I*”, “*România*” and “*Dacia*”, which, although they met the requirements, still had low profitability.

Line II:
Constanța-Haifa-Tel Aviv was served by old ships, “*Regele Carol I*”, “*România*” and “*Dacia*”, which, although they met the requirements, still had low profitability.

Line III: the Danube-the Western Mediterranean, Brăila-Sulina-Istanbul-Malta-Napoli-Genoa-Marseille-Barcelona, temporarily interrupted because of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), was served by two “*Ardeal*”-type vessels, considered obsolete and high fuel consumers. For the navigation on the Danube between Sulina and Brăila, it was desired for the vessels to have a smaller tonnage so that they could benefit from 40-60% lower taxation, in compliance with the norms established by the European Commission of the Danube. In order to develop the merchant maritime fleet, it was considered to establish the fourth sea line, the Danube-the Levant, served by three new “*Sulina*”-type vessels, and on the fifth line, the Danube-Archipelago (the Aegean Sea), “*Durostor*” ship to be replaced with a new “*Sulina*”-type one. Finally, Line VI, the Danube-the West, irregular in 1939, served by “*Carpați*” and “*Bucegi*” ships, needed two more 7-8,000-ton vessels to operate regularly, both equipped with refrigeration systems and built with a draft of at least 25 feet to provide safety of navigation in the Atlantic Ocean.



The first Romanian ship to operate on the Constanța-New York line was “Sulina”, which arrived in the great North American port on 25 September 1939 to load materials ordered by the Romanian state, intended for the Ministry of the Armed Forces and the Ministry of the Air and the Navy.

It was estimated that 7 new vessels were needed, with a tonnage between 3,500 and 6,500 tons. They had to be joined by 3 oil tankers and 2 small-draft vessels in order to annihilate the competition of the Hungarian line “Detert”. Although there were several offers for the construction of the ships needed for the Romanian Maritime Service, it was considered that an association of Galati Shipyards with the German company “Otto-Wolf” was appropriate, given that the necessary components were made in the country and the costs were paid in lei. On the other hand, it was considered appropriate to build “Sulina”-type ships, which were manufactured at Italian shipyards (Genoa and Palermo), considering their profitability, determined by consumption and shipping charges.

The need for vessels on the Danube-the West line was filled with “Mangalia” cargo ship, but the first Romanian ship to operate on the Constanța-New York line was “Sulina”, which arrived in the great North American port on 25 September 1939 to load materials ordered by the Romanian state, intended for the Ministry of the Armed Forces and the Ministry of the Air and the Navy.

STUDIES AND PROPOSALS TO DEVELOP THE MARITIME MERCHANT FLEET

The problem of the shipbuilding programme for the Romanian maritime merchant fleet was brought to the attention of specialists in the field, so that in the 1930s, with the economic recovery, after the crisis of 1929-1933, several studies were developed which were subjected to decision-making and taken into account in 1937, when the order was launched at the “Cantieri Navali Riuniti”, based in Genoa. The programme was well appreciated in 1938 by Rear Admiral Cesar Boerescu (Păvăloiu, 2005, pp. 33-34), then Chairman of the Romanian Maritime Service Steering Committee, who considered that: “The four <Sulina>-type vessels, under construction in Palermo, are mixed ships, having a small net tonnage, low consumption and high economical speed, as well as large cargo capacity. This is how the above-mentioned cargo ships should be built”. (AMNR, Microfilme collection, roll P 3. 1173, c. 719).

Even in the context of the outbreak of the Second World War, of the uncertain situation of Romania, determined by the revisionism that got manifest in some neighbouring states, supported by Germany

and Italy, the Romanian Maritime Service conducted studies regarding the development of the merchant fleet of the Romanian state. Thus, on 27 October 1939, Rear Admiral (r.) C. Boerescu, Chairman of the Romanian Maritime Service Steering Committee, and Commander (r.) Gh. Constantinescu, Director of the Service, sent General Paul Teodorescu the study: *“Preliminary Considerations for the Preparation of an Investment Programme Meant to Develop Our Maritime Merchant Fleet”* (Ib., c. 704-714) (Annex no. 1), which included a history of the institution established in 1886 and preliminary considerations for the preparation of an investment programme meant to develop Romania’s maritime merchant fleet. It was a comprehensive and ambitious document, with arguments that were considered viable, but also debatable, in the context of the unpredictability of the geopolitical and geostrategic situation in the short term.

Given that the document was extensive, the Ministry of the Air and the Navy requested the two authors to summarise the content, so Director Gheorghe Constantinescu prepared another document, entitled *“Considerations on the General State of the RMS Fleet and the New Constructions Programme”* (Ib., roll PII 3. 1170, c. 353-365), in which he showed that, at the date of drawing up the document, the structure he led had 4 passenger ships, 5 mixed (passengers, cargo) ships, 4 cargo ships and 4 ships under construction in Italy, of which 8 were over 25 years of operation, 4 – 13 years, and 2 – a year. The author of the study estimated that, with regard to the displacement of 110,000 tons, most ships were old, with steam engines, developed a low speed, generated high operating costs and therefore a low profitability, entailing subsidies from the state.

It is worth noting the signing of the contract for the construction in Italy of 4 mixed vessels, considered modern and profitable, in a well-planned operation. However, it was estimated that the construction programme was partially completed, considering that another fast ship, *“Transylvania”*-type, would be needed, as well as special ships for the transport of cattle and refrigerated food. The proposal of the author of the study was to build another *“Transylvania”*-type passenger ship, 5 cargo ships of 8,000 tons, 3 oil tankers of 5,000 tons and 2 of 10,000 tons, the costs of the programme being estimated at 1,696 billion lei, and the duration of execution at 2-3 years.



ROMANIAN
MILITARY
THINKING

The study: “Preliminary Considerations for the Preparation of an Investment Programme Meant to Develop Our Maritime Merchant Fleet” included a history of the institution established in 1886 and preliminary considerations for the preparation of an investment programme meant to develop Romania’s maritime merchant fleet. It was a comprehensive and ambitious document, with arguments that were considered viable, but also debatable, in the context of the unpredictability of the geopolitical and geostrategic situation in the short term.



According to the author of the study, *“The aim of the service, in addition to the transport of passengers and cargo by sea, is to contribute to the development of the entire national economy by ensuring the indigene goods outflow. It cannot be achieved if one of the main factors of economy – transport – cannot be influenced at will. In the case of maritime transport, the fright – or the cost of transport – depends on the market and the tonnage supply at that moment. Consequently, we need a sufficient number of ships to be able to meet, to a large extent on our own, the needs of our market. Currently, we transport only 10% of the country total export by sea. The influence will not be felt unless we acquire 50% of it”*. (Ib., c. 3540355).

“In the case of maritime transport, the fright – or the cost of transport – depends on the market and the tonnage supply at that moment. Consequently, we need a sufficient number of ships to be able to meet, to a large extent on our own, the needs of our market. Currently, we transport only 10% of the country total export by sea. The influence will not be felt unless we acquire 50% of it”.

Moreover, it was considered that the failure in achieving the fleet renewal programme could generate the risk of losing the transport market, as much as it was, its regaining being possible with high costs. The proposed programme did not aim to immediately develop a transport market, but rather to maintain the existing one, under the conditions of the new international regulations related to navigation in high seas and in harbour berths. A necessary aspect to be approached was the one regarding the activity of the Romanian Maritime Service fleet in the event of war, being nominated the ships that will be requisitioned according to the mobilisation plan and presenting the hypotheses in which they were to be used:

- a) Closed Bosphorus and the fleet of the Romanian Maritime Service located in territorial waters (military transport of troops and materials, aircraft carriers, hospitals, auxiliary cruisers);
- b) Closed Bosphorus, and the fleet of the Romanian Maritime Service left outside in the high seas or in friendly ports (military transports for allies);
- c) Free Bosphorus (transports from Romanian ports to Allied ports).

The author of the study was aware that other hypotheses of action were possible, which required other solutions, which were to be examined so that appropriate measures could be established. The document was studied by Rear Admiral Nicolae Păiș, who, on 8 August 1940, in the context of the events of that tragic summer for Romania, put the following resolution: *“The issue of developing our merchant fleet will be examined after Europe, so troubled today, becomes calm again”*. (Ib., C. 70).

Political and military developments both in 1939-1940 and in the years that followed disproved the hypotheses of action predicted by Gheorghe Constantinescu, and the proposed programme could no longer be implemented in the context of the ongoing war, when most resources were intended for military production and support for the costs generated by the participation in military operations.



CONSTRUCTION OF “SULINA”-TYPE VESSELS – PART OF THE PROJECT MEANT TO DEVELOP THE MERCHANT FLEET OF ROMANIA

On 4 September 1937, during a meeting of the government led by Gheorghe Tătărescu, at the proposal of Radu Irimescu, then the Air and Navy Minister, it was approved the “Government Journal no. 2631” regarding the construction of four mixed vessels at “*Cantieri Navali Riuniti*” in Genoa, armed and completed in Palermo, for the Romanian Maritime Service, costing 67,787,506 Italian lire, a sum of money that was to be paid by the Italian-Romanian clearing (AMNR, *Ministerul Aerului și Marinei, Direcția construcții navale* collection, file no. 3734, p. 10). The four vessels were to be named “*Sulina*”, “*Mangalia*”, “*Cavarna*” and “*Balcic*”, this being the order in which they were to be delivered by the constructor. In compliance with the government decision, the Ministry of the Air and the Navy had to advance the instalments from its budget, and their repayment was to be made through the budget credits provided in the budgets of the Romanian Maritime Service for the years 1938/1939 and 1939/1940, with a delay of one year. The government’s decision was strengthened by the “*High Royal Decree no. 3591*” on 30 October 1937. On the same day, 4 September 1937, between the Romanian Maritime Service and “*Cantieri Navali Riuniti*” was concluded “*Contract no. 806*” for the construction of the four vessels, the price being paid in 17 instalments, starting with the year 1937/1938 and ending with the year 1942.

The payment for the construction of the four ships ordered in Italy was a complex and complicated activity, which generated discussions and disputes between the Ministry of Finance, the National Bank of Romania, the Ministry of the Air and the Navy – Shipbuilding Directorate and the Romanian Maritime Service. To resolve the issues, on 5 October 1939, the head of the Shipbuilding Directorate proposed a solution for the source of funding – from the National Defence Fund

On 4 September 1937, during a meeting of the government led by Gheorghe Tătărescu, at the proposal of Radu Irimescu, then the Air and Navy Minister, it was approved the “Government Journal no. 2631” regarding the construction of four mixed vessels at “Cantieri Navali Riuniti” in Genoa, armed and completed in Palermo, for the Romanian Maritime Service, costing 67,787,506 Italian lire, a sum of money that was to be paid by the Italian-Romanian clearing.



Under the political and military circumstances of the summer of 1940, the Romanian Maritime Service considered it necessary to pay in advance the amount of 22 million Italian lire (114,325,200 lei), thus saving significant sums resulting from the avoidance of interest and insurance payments, which generated some contradictory discussions with the Ministry of the Air and the Navy, the dispute being resolved by paying the amount of 114,176,063 lei to the account of the Romanian Maritime Service, together with all the documents that were transmitted in such situations.

and the National Navy Fund, which was approved the next day, during a meeting of the Interministerial Delegation for the armed forces equipment, which included the following ministers: national defence – General Ioan Ilcuș, the armed forces equipment – Ion Stănescu, the air and the navy – General Paul Teodorescu, finance – M. Constantinescu – and the Chief of Staff – General Florea Țenescu.

As it results from the minutes of the meeting on 6 October 1939, those present decided that the Ministry of the Air and the Navy should pay in the form of a subsidy to the Romanian Maritime Service the sum of 367,286,995 lei, the equivalent of 67,787,506 Italian lire, the price set for the four vessels ordered at the “*Cantieri Navali Riuniti*” in Genoa (ib., p. 11).

During the same meeting of 6 October 1939, it was approved that, by the spring of 1942, the payment schedule should be as follows (table no. 3) (ib., p. 10):

Table no. 3: Payment schedule for the four vessels built in Italy

Budgetary year	Number of instalments	Date of payment	Sum (lei)
1937/1938	1	—	79,007,035
1938/1939	5	15.06.1938, 15.09.1938, 15.12.1938, 15.03.1939	78,604,060
1939/1940	4	15.06.1939, 05.09.1939, 15.12.1939, 15.03.1940	75,350,700
1940/1941	4	15.06.1940, 15.09.1940, 15.12.1940, 15.03.1941	57,162,600
1941/1942	4	15.06.1941, 15.09.1941, 15.12.1941, 15.03.1942	57,162,600

Under the political and military circumstances of the summer of 1940, the Romanian Maritime Service considered it necessary to pay in advance the amount of 22 million Italian lire (114,325,200 lei), thus saving significant sums resulting from the avoidance of interest and insurance payments, which generated some contradictory discussions with the Ministry of the Air and the Navy, the dispute being resolved by paying the amount of 114,176,063 lei to the account of the Romanian Maritime Service, together with all the documents that were transmitted in such situations. It was a correct decision, given the existing available finances, which could not be invested in the construction of ships abroad, according to the naval procurement plan.



ROMANIAN
MILITARY
THINKING

“*Sulina*”, the first vessel in the series of four ordered in Genoa, was placed under the command of Captain Mihu, with Apostoia as chief mechanic, who assisted in its completion at the shipyard in Palermo, and along with the representatives of the Romanian Maritime Service, signed the documents for taking the ship. After completing the receiving procedures, “*Sulina*” was launched to Constanța, where it arrived in the port on 25 September 1939, at 10.30.

The official reception of the vessel took place on 26 September 1939, in the presence of General Paul Teodorescu³, Minister of the Air and the Navy, Admiral Cezar Boerescu, Chairman of the Steering Committee, and Commander Gheorghe Constantinescu, Director General of the Romanian Maritime Service.

After a voyage to the United States of America in 1940, when it transported materials for the Ministry of the Armed Forces Equipment, in 1941, the ship was leased by the German Black Sea Naval Command, executing war transport. On the morning of 20 May 1942, it was torpedoed and sunk. By receiving the other ships in the spring of 1940 (“*Mangalia*”, “*Cavarna*” and “*Balcic*”), the Romanian Maritime Service made a significant leap in the naval transport capacity, which was short-lived, as all of them were lost in the following years.

The construction of the mixed ship “*Mangalia*” was achieved, as in the case of the other three, based on the request formulated by the Romanian Maritime Service, following the discussions and negotiations with the constructor stipulated in the initial contract. The construction was supervised by engineer A. Teodoru, starting in November 1938, when he was sent to Palermo by the Romanian Maritime Service, in compliance with the provisions of article 12 in the contract (AMNR, *Ministerul Aerului și Marinei collection*, file no. 2467, p. 329). Arriving in the country and received in Constanța in April 1940, without the pomp accompanying the arrival of “*Sulina*”, “*Mangalia*” received the Certificate of Nationality, signed by King Carol II, and then it started the first and only transport between Constanța and New York, where materials necessary for the equipment of the Romanian Air and Naval Forces were loaded (Annex no. 2). In case of mobilisation, each of the four “*Sulina*”-type vessels could be transformed and adapted to

“Sulina”, the first vessel in the series of four ordered in Genoa, was placed under the command of Captain Mihu, with Apostoia as chief mechanic, who assisted in its completion at the shipyard in Palermo, and along with the representatives of the Romanian Maritime Service, signed the documents for taking the ship. After completing the receiving procedures, “Sulina” was launched to Constanța, where it arrived in the port on 25 September 1939, at 10.30.

³ Details about the personality of the Minister of the Air and the Navy in Valentin Ciorbea (2013). *Generalul adjutant Paul (Pavel) Teodorescu (1888-1891). Vocația creativității. 125 de ani de la naștere*. Constanța: Editura Ex Ponto.



The German War Navy assumed the responsibility to keep the Romanian crews and the national flag, to pay the crews, the insurance, the taxes and the maintenance work. In the event of partial or total loss of any vessel, the German state undertook to restore the vessel to its original condition or to replace it, at the latest one year after the conclusion of the peace, with a similar vessel of equal value, age, tonnage, type, class etc.

meet the war requirements and transport 1,500 people, 2,000 horses, 150 carriages, 50 trucks, 120 caissons. Moreover, 2 cannons x 120 mm and 4 anti-aircraft cannons could be installed on it.

LOSS OF ROMANIAN MERCHANT SHIPS DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Initially stranded in New York in the summer of 1940, later requisitioned in the summer of 1941 by the US authorities, “*Mangalia*” ship was permanently lost, and the cargo was partially sold, under the bureaucratic procedures of the Romanian state and the immoral actions of foreign traders and bankers involved in the recovery of the ship and the cargo.

The other merchant ships were mobilised, some of them transformed and adapted to the war at sea, being used in missions to transport troops and materials in the Black Sea, according to the concept of the German Command installed in Constanța, based on the “*Lease Contract no. 11.011*”, signed by the Romanian Maritime Service as shipowner, through the agency of the Navy Undersecretariat of State, on 20 October 1941, with the German War Navy, represented by the “*German Admiral Black Sea*” Command as beneficiary. Through the mentioned document, the Romanian state leased, only for the ports accessible to the vessels in the Black Sea, Istanbul included, the following ships: “*Ardeal*”, “*Peleş*”, “*Suceava*”, “*Carpați*”, “*Oituz*”, “*Sulina*”, “*Cavarna*” and “*Danubius*”, valid during the period of hostilities in Russia, each of the party having the obligation to denounce it separately, with a 10-day notification. The German War Navy assumed the responsibility to keep the Romanian crews and the national flag, to pay the crews, the insurance, the taxes and the maintenance work. In the event of partial or total loss of any vessel, the German state undertook to restore the vessel to its original condition or to replace it, at the latest one year after the conclusion of the peace, with a similar vessel of equal value, age, tonnage, type, class etc. Most of the vessels, namely: “*Cavarna*”, “*Sulina*”, “*Balcic*”, “*Câmpina*”, “*Carol I*”, “*Oituz*”, “*Peleş*”, “*Suceava*”, “*Danubius*”, “*România*”, “*Durostor*”, were sunk by the Soviet Naval and Air Forces, and “*Alba Iulia*”, which was miraculously saved, was requisitioned by the “*liberators*” in 1944, after Romania got along with the Entente. The only ship that remained under the Romanian flag after 23 August 1944 was “*Ardeal*”.

In the context of Romania's political orientation towards Germany in the summer of 1940, with the installation of the government led by Ion Gigurtu, as well as that of the measures taken by the Romanian state against the British ships on the Danube and the expulsion of some British oil workers from the country, the authorities from London decided to detain at Port Said, Alexandria and Haifa the ship "Bucegi", the oil tankers "Oltenia", "Steaua Română" and "Câmpina", which were later requisitioned and used by the British, while the ships "Siretul", "Prahova" and "Olt", belonging to the Al. Vlasov Company, were sold. Each of the mentioned ships had a glorious and tragic history, their crews doing their duty, most of them making the ultimate sacrifice.

The years 1940-1941 were marked by the loss of some ships, as they were requisitioned by the US and British authorities, and 1942-1944 by the loss of those engaged in operations in the Black Sea. Basically, the period 1940-1944 marked the first major loss of the Romanian merchant fleet, which was meant to meet the security and defence needs of Romania, confirming, in this case too, that the studies and plans for the use of forces and assets, developed in peacetime, become useless under the circumstances of the inherent changes in the geopolitical and geostrategic field, in the relations between states and in the structure of political and military alliances.



ROMANIAN
MILITARY
THINKING

The period 1940-1944 marked the first major loss of the Romanian merchant fleet, which was meant to meet the security and defence needs of Romania, confirming, in this case too, that the studies and plans for the use of forces and assets, developed in peacetime, become useless under the circumstances of the inherent changes in the geopolitical and geostrategic field, in the relations between states and in the structure of political and military alliances.



Preliminary Considerations for the Preparation of an Investment Programme Meant to Develop Our Maritime Merchant Fleet (Excerpt)

The Romanian Maritime Service (RMS) commercial programme requires:

- a) The establishment of the directions for action;
- b) capital.

RMS at present:

Directions for action and the state of the ships:

Line I: Constanța-Istanbul-Piraeus-Alexandria-Beirut, served by 2 vessels: "Transilvania" and "Basarabia". Another vessel is necessary for the following reasons: the other two can be cleaned and repaired; the main and auxiliary engines can be maintained.

Line II: Constanța-Haifa-Tel Aviv, served by the old ships "Regele Carol I", "România" and "Dacia", being temporary, no new vessel is necessary.

Line III: the Danube-the Western Mediterranean, Brăila-Istanbul-Malta-Naples-Genoa-Marseille, served by 2 "Ardeal"-type mixed vessels.

Considering its military importance, it is necessary to restore the route that ended in Barcelona, which was previous to the Spanish Civil War, served by 3 ships.

New ships to replace the existing ones should become operational for the following reasons: high consumption; large tonnage; therefore, they cannot enjoy the 60% discount.

The general specifications for the construction of the new units are established.

Line IV: the Danube-the Levant, served by 3 old ships that are to be replaced, in 1939-1940, with 3 new "Sulina"-type vessels.

Line V: the Danube-Archipelago. As "Durostor", which serves it, will be returned to the Royal Navy, in 1939-1940, it will be replaced with a new "Sulina"-type vessel.

Line VI: the Danube-the Occident, an irregular line, should be transformed into a regular one, given the development of the Romanian food industry. It is served by "Carpați" and "Bucegi" ships. For the regular operation, there are necessary minimum four 7,000-8,000-ton ships, equipped with refrigerators and having a maximum draft of 25 feet. The mentioned tonnage is appropriate, benefitting from the reduction of the EDC taxes. Moreover, it is sufficient to ensure its profitability in free operation.

In summary, the following are necessary: for the Western Mediterranean line: three new 3,500-6,500-ton vessels; for the Danube-the West line, four 7,000-8,000-ton vessels.

In addition to the modifications and new motor vessels, for the development of the RMS, it is necessary to procure the necessary naval

equipment as follows: construction of 3 oil tankers: 5,000 t., 1,000 t., 1,000 t., for the state royalty export; purchase of 2 small vessels, in order to eliminate the competition in the East with the Hungarian line "Detert", especially in terms of DOV traffic. By establishing this line, "Cetatea Albă" ship, being built in Severin could be used. As early as 1937, the RMS was asked by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to set up the Danube-Constanța-Trabzon line, it being postponed because of lack of tonnage. The line is to be established, being served by the ships withdrawn from the Levant and Archipelago line. Regarding the capital needed for these investments, offers were made by: Runciman-London Company, Burmeister Company, Mr. Wernersson and Galați Shipyards in association with Otto-Wolf Company, which is also the most advantageous, because: ships are built in the country; are payable in lei. The proposed cargo ships must be built in the "Sulina" type, because they are more profitable and economical in terms of taxes and consumption.

Preliminary Considerations for the Preparation of an Investment Programme Meant to Develop Our Maritime Merchant Fleet.

In order to prepare an investment programme, the directions for action and the capital must be established. In 1920, the Danube-Archipelago (Aegean) line was opened, estimated since 1896, as shown in the above statement of reasons, and in 1934, after the acquisition of the four old "Transilvania"-type mixed vessels, the Danube-the Western Mediterranean line was opened, with stops in Istanbul, Piraeus, Izmir, Malta, Naples or Genoa, Marseille, Barcelona, Algiers. After the entry into service of "Transilvania" and "Basarabia" vessels, they were both reserved exclusively for the service of Line I Constanța-Alexandria, and the old passenger ships for Line II – Constanța-Haifa, established for the emigrants from Poland and Central Europe. Currently, the RMS serves, through its ships and vessels, the following lines:

Line Constanța-Istanbul-Piraeus-Alexandria-Beirut, with the 2 vessels "Transilvania" and "Basarabia". For this line that links Central Europe with Egypt and Syria, another "Transilvania"-type vessel is absolutely necessary, because the continuous tear and wear of the two passenger ships, without time for cleaning and repairing them, results in their main and auxiliary engines fatigue, not to mention the possibility of an accident that could make one of them unavailable for a period of time. The third "Transilvania"-type vessel should be ordered in advance, at the same shipyard, if possible, to have appropriate engines and spare parts. If it is not possible, the construction of the third vessel should be contracted to a first-class shipyard that uses the same type of engines and auxiliary equipment.

Line Constanța-Haifa-Tel Aviv for the emigrants from Poland and Central Europe, served by old "Regele Carol I", "România" and "Dacia" ships. This line is temporary and there is no need to be supplied with special ships as, once the third passenger ship is operational, Line I will be also used to transport emigrants, and the old ships that currently serve it will be withdrawn, having 40 years of service.



3. Line the Danube-the Western Mediterranean, Brăila-Istanbul-Malta-Naples-Genoa-Marseille, served by 2 “Ardeal”-type ships. Before the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, the end point of this line was Barcelona, reaching Algiers, and being served by 2 “Ardeal”-type ships. The stopovers will have to be resumed and, consequently, 3 vessels are necessary for this line, to replace the old “Ardeal”-type ships, which have high tonnage and consumption. This line has not only commercial but also military importance, and must be maintained and equipped with vessels having the appropriate tonnage for this line. “Ardeal”-type ships, which serve this line, can load 6,500 tons, but they have high consumption and a net tonnage of 5,660 EDC, for which port taxes are paid. The new vessels that would be built should have 6-6,500 deadweight tonnage (dwt) and a maximum net 2,100 tonnage. “Sulina” has 5,700 dwt. The net tonnage is 2,021. In order to enjoy the 60% discount for the ships that regularly operate on the Danube, they must have at least 6 passenger cabins. The general specifications for the 3 units to be built have already been established.

4. Line the Danube-the Levant with a stopover in Istanbul-Piraeus-Tripoli-Beirut-Haifa-Port Said and Alexandria, served by 3 mixed vessels with a high loading capacity for timber, the main export item on this line. To serve Line IV and Line V, 4 “Sulina”-type vessels have been built, which will become operational during 1939/1940, replacing the 3 old ships that currently serve Line IV, and “Durostor” ship that serves Line V.

5. Line the Danube-Archipelago (Aegean) was served by “Durostor”, which was returned to the Royal Navy and will be replaced with “Sulina” when it comes back from America.

6. Line the Danube-the West, irregular, served by “Carpați” and “Bucegi” ships, having 7,150 dwt, should be optimised, transforming it into a regular line. The RMS regularly operated, for a number of years, the Danube-Rotterdam line, but, when less quantities of coal were imported from the West, this line changed. Instead of loading coal while returning, general goods were loaded, in Antwerp and Liverpool, based on the convention with Johnston Line, with direct bill of lading and 45% discount on CFR (the Romanian Railways). However, the discount on CFR is also enjoyed by the British goods brought by the Johnston line ships and, following the Italian Legation in Bucharest request to grant the same CFR treatment to Italian goods, based on the “most favoured nation” convention, it was put an end to the convention with Johnston Line and to the transport of general goods from Liverpool.

However, the development of the Romanian food industry requires a regular line the Danube-the West, although the export of cereals and timber to England and the West is sporadic and irregular, therefore it cannot be counted on, although the return freights are not found continuously and at regular times. For the regular operation of the Danube-the West line, a minimum of four 7,000-8,000-ton vessels, equipped with refrigerators and having a maximum draft of 23 feet, would be needed in order to be able to cross

the Sulina Bar without hauling. We count 8,000 dwt as a maximum tonnage for a regular Danube-West line, for the following reasons:

1. The higher the capacity, the more difficult it is to complete the cargo, the loss of time can give rise to irregular departures and arrivals and the ships would no longer benefit from the reduction of EDC fees on the Danube.

2. Even if full cargo is found, the overcapacity of ships prolongs the loading and unloading time and the line would require more ships to be operated regularly, so more capital to invest.

3. During the summer, it is not much cargo in the Danube for the West. For high-capacity cargo ships, over 8,000 dwt, shipowners are obliged to look for cargo in other directions, Argentina, Australia, India. However, the Romanian state is not qualified to invest capital in order to facilitate the export of other countries.

4. Return cargo is harder to find if the ship's capacity is too large. Coal consumption in the Mediterranean countries has been reduced by the use, both at sea and on land, of fuel oil, engines, electrification of railways and the use of waterfall energy etc. A too low tonnage would be not enough to ensure a return on normal freight, if the ships were to be used freely, which is the case. Of course, both passengers and freight prefer regular and fast lines, but if a regular line could not be maintained because it would be deficient, ships should have sufficient tonnage to ensure their profitability, in free operation, where the freight is located. Large cargo ships are cost effective, even with low freight, which is why 10,000 dwt cargo ships are being built.

In summary, for the Western Mediterranean line, three 5,500-6,500-ton vessels are needed to replace the old "Transylvania"-type ones, and for the Danube-the West line, four 7,000-8,000-ton vessels to replace "Carpați" and "Bucegi" ships, and to establish a regular line in order to favour the export of Romanian industrialised products.

But replacing old ships with modern vessels while maintaining the current line scheme is not enough. It is necessary to provide the naval equipment for the development of the Romanian Maritime Service. Firstly, 3 oil tankers must be built, as a starting point, through which at least the state royalty can be exported. Currently, the contract with "Pertofina" prevents the state from exporting its royalty with its tankers, but this contract will end in a few years and the construction of at least 3 tankers must be foreseen, of which one of 5,000 tons for the Mediterranean and two of 10,000 for the West. Finally, we must also take into account the competition we face in the East from the Hungarian Detert shipping line. In this respect, despite the DOV agreement concluded with the Danube shipping companies and the Adriatic Company, the Hungarian Shipping Company is a serious competitor.

In issue no. 2414 on 20 September current year, "The Shipping World" magazine published an interesting article regarding the vessels under Hungarian flag that transport goods between Budapest and the ports in the Levant. The small vessels were built following the model of German coast vessels in the North Sea and then Baltic Sea, which transport goods



between the ports on the Rhine and those in Eastern Prussia. Following this model, in 1934, it was built at Ganz Co. Budapest, by the Hungarian River Navigation Society, the vessel “Budapest” having a capacity of 480 dwt, and 2 Diesel-electric engines, 350 HP together, with 10 knots speed and 2.3 m draft, namely 7.5 feet.

The results being satisfactory, the freight no longer being reloaded in Galați from barges into sea vessels and vice versa, the above-mentioned Hungarian company built in 1936 the second vessel “Szeged” of 527 dwt, with the same draft and speed. In 1937, the third “Tisza”-type vessel with a 1,000-ton capacity and 800 horsepower was built. It now serves the Budapest-Sulina-Istanbul-Alexandria line. In the current year, 2 Hungarian companies, “Orient Line” and “Hungarian Breight Shipping Co”, contracted a 1,100-ton “Tisza”-type vessel to Ganz, which shows that the operation of this type of ship is profitable, avoiding the transshipment of goods, which involves expenses, loss of time and damage to packages. The Hungarian vessels associated under DETERT Company are serious competitors for us in the Levant, in terms of DOV traffic. It is, however, necessary to purchase 2 small vessels in order to be able to sail up to the Danube at least as far as Budapest. By creating this line, “Cetatea Albă” ship, being built in Severin, could be used.

In addition to the mentioned lines, the RMS was requested by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, since 1937, to open the line the Danube-Constanța-Trabzon. However, because of the lack of tonnage, the RMS postponed the opening of the mentioned line until the 4 vessels ordered in Italy and earmarked for the lines the Levant and Archipelago arrived in the country, thus the old ships that are to be withdrawn from this line being used on the line the Danube-Constanța-Trabzon. Moreover, the road connecting Trabzon and Bazergan, on the Turkish border, and Tebriz in Iran was not completed. During the meeting with the Turkish delegates at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the autumn of 1937, they did not agree with the Turkish Black Sea Shipping Company to operate the line the Danube-Trabzon together with the RMS, arguing that the mentioned line could deprive the port and city of Istanbul of a considerable part of shipping. Currently, the goods that come from Iran via Trabzon are transported to Istanbul using the vessels of the Turkish shipping company. From Turkey, they are transported on the road to Central Europe and by sea in Greece, Italy and the West. In 1938, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs notified the RMS, asking if the decision to establish a passenger and cargo line between Brăila-Constanța-Trabzon was maintained. It was answered that it was maintained in principle, but the RMS could not establish the line until the four vessels ordered in Italy arrive in the country, when the vessels that operate the Danube-the Levant line remain available to serve the Danube-Trabzon line. Finally, the Galați Shipyard, in association with Otto Wolf Company, suggests building vessels in the country, payable in lei, which has the advantage of developing the shipbuilding industry and of the RMS using lei-paid vessels, which can generate forte currency through the freight. The vessels under construction in Palermo are to be paid in 5 years in Italian-Romanian clearing,



which helps circulating the sums of Italian lire blocked in Italy. We have considered the directions for the RMS development and the procurement of the necessary capital for the needed investment in this regard. Moreover, the competition the RMS faces in its directions of activity has to be taken into account. Our competitors in the ports of the Maritime Danube, in the ports of Greece, Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Italy are the Greeks, Italians and, to a lesser extent, the French and the Russians. Considering the existence of the 2 passenger ships, "Transilvania" and "Basarabia", built at Burmeister&Wain Copenhagen, and the ongoing construction of the 4 cargo ships at Cantieri Navali Reuniti, Palermo, the Italians have decided to modernise their old naval equipment that is currently used to serve the ports at the Danube and in the Levant. It happened the same in 1905-1906, when the passenger ships "România", "Împăratul Traian" and "Dacia", 18-mile speed, were built for the line Constanța-Alexandria, which connects Paris, Vienna and Berlin with Cairo. This passenger line used to compete the Austro-Hungarian Lloyd line Trieste-Alexandria. This company, subsidised, built 2 large passenger ships, Wien and Heluan, 18-mile speed, using fuel oil as combustible. Currently, the grandiose programme to renew the Italian merchant fleet, set by the Duke, as it is written in the maritime journal "Mercati d'oltremare" in the August issue this year, has determined the 4 large Italian navigation companies: Italia, Lloyd Triestino, Adriatica and Tirrenia to associate under the name of "Finmar" and order the construction of 44 modern vessels, amounting to 250,000 gross tonnage. For the line Italy-Piraeus-Rhodes-Alexandria, "Calitea" and "Calino" passenger ships were launched.

From the comparison of the characteristics of these 2 vessels with those of the vessels "Transilvania" and "Basarabia", it results that they have higher tonnage and speed, but have fewer passenger cabins and load less cargo. Consequently, the Italian vessels are more economical in terms of port and consumption taxes and more profitable in terms of passenger and freight income. The 4 "Sulina"-type vessels under construction in Palermo are mixed ships, with a low net tonnage, low consumption and economical speed, but with a large cargo capacity. This is how the above-mentioned cargo ships should be built. The "Sulina" vessel was sent to New York to bring materials to the Ministry of the Armed Forces Equipment and to the one of the Air and the Navy.

The results of this serious attempt will be seen when it returns.

CHAIRMAN

RMS STEERING COMMITTEE

Commander Gh. Constantinescu

RMS Director

Rear Admiral C. Boerescu

(AMNR, *Microfilme collection*,
roll P 3.1173, c. 704-714)



MATERIALS ON BOARD OF "MANGALIA" SHIP IN JULY 1940

Consignee, commodity value (lei)	Materials (unit)	Quantity
Ministry of the Armed Forces Equipment (106,076 million)	Zinc	672,015
	Copper	896,178
	Barbed wire	6,370,389
	Toluene	249,550
Ministry of the Air and the Navy	Oil	1,748,820
	Pump parts	8
	Electrodes	1,186
	Aircraft parts	1,099
	Oil	1,454
	Machines and tools	1,196
	Tools and grinders	624
	Vice jaws and lathes	45
	Lathes equipment	1,572
	Ball bearings	98
	On-board devices for aircraft control	4
	Ball bearings	791
	Aircraft engine parts	1,211
	Ethyl glycol	4,950
	Nichoilseal	4
	Engine parts and metal plates	4,646
	Nickel and chrome plating equipment	2,826
	Copper pipes	4,163
	A small package of diamonds	-
	Steel bars	31
	Cyclohexanol	4,750
Kitchen electrical equipment	1,172	
Refrigerator electrical equipment	1,412	
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2,0 million)	Typewriters	427
	Ribbons	80
R.M.S. (2,840 million)	Marine oil	156,690

Consignee, commodity value (lei)	Materials (unit)	Quantity
Ministry of National Economy (17,2 million)	Nut processors	145,085
Arta Film	Films	300
Astra Armament București (8,418 million)	Copper wires and bars	330,690
International Hovatur Corp. București	Agricultural machinery spare parts	788
TOTAL (136,534 million minus the value of the goods destined to M.A.N.)		10,604,254= 4,403. 8 T

(AMNR, *Ministerul Aerului și Marinei (Ministry of the Air and the Navy – M.A.N.) collection*, file no. 5530//1940-1941, p. 91)

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL RESOURCES:

1. Ciorbea, V. (2013). *Generalul adjutant Paul (Pavel) Teodorescu (1888-1891). Vocația creativității. 125 de ani de la naștere*. Constanța: Editura Ex Ponto.
2. Ing. Insp. Gl. Ghica, I.D. (1939). *Istoricul și dezvoltarea Serviciului Maritim Român (SMR)*. in *Cele trei Crișuri*. Oradea: Anale Culturale. Year XX, July-August 1939, pp. 149-150.
3. Păvăloiu, M. (2005). *Viceamiralul Cesar Boerescu în slujba Marinei Militare și a Serviciului Maritim Român*. In *Marina Română*, no. 3 (106), pp. 33-34.
4. Ing. Sambra, D.E., *Înființarea Serviciului de Navigație Maritim (I)*. In *Historia*, <https://www.historia.ro/sectiune/general/articol/infiintarea-serviciului-navigatie-maritim-pasagerul-regele-carol-partea-i>, retrieved on 12 September 2021.
5. Romanian National Military Archives (Arhivele Militare Naționale Române – AMNR), *Microfilme collection*, roll P 3. 1161, c. 109.
6. ANMR, *Microfilme collection*, roll P 3.1164, c. 729-730.
7. AMNR, *Microfilme collection*, roll PII 3. 1170, c. 353-365.
8. AMNR, *Microfilme collection*, roll P 3. 1173, c. 719.