



DOBROGEA DEFENCE SYSTEM ORGANISATION AND ACTION IN THE YEARS 1939-1941

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The European political events of the fourth decade of the twentieth century had bad repercussions on Romania's security system, which led to the intensification of measures to prepare the economy, population and territory for defence so that the Romanian army was able to counter possible aggression on the national territory. Dobrogea was to know, in its turn, the transformations of the Romanian territory defence system: the 9th Infantry Division was located on the southern border of Dobrogea, and the 10th Infantry Division was located in the Delta and Tulcea County area. In those circumstances, the then-mayor of Constanța, General (r.) Teodor Nicolau, took measures to protect the population in case of possible bombing, building high-capacity underground shelters.

Keywords: World War II; Dobrogea; 9th Infantry Division; 10th Infantry Division; anti-Soviet front;

The political events in Europe in 1938 had bad consequences on Romania's security system (Petrache, 2009, p. 6)¹, so military decision-making structures had to intensify measures to prepare the economy, population and territory for defence so that the Romanian army should be able to repel possible aggression against the national territory.

The rapid destructuring of the entire security system created by Romania in the interwar period made the situation critical. Dobrogea would know, in its turn, the transformations of the defence system of the Romanian territory. On 10 February 1938, by Decree no. 828, a new organisation of the Land Army was established for peace, as follows: seven army corps, 21 infantry divisions and nine motorised brigades. Of the 21 infantry divisions, nine were intended to cover the border: four on the western frontiers (1, 16, 17, 19), four on the eastern frontier (8, 12, 14, 15) and one (D. 9) on the southern border of Dobrogea. The other 12 infantry divisions, the 1st and 2nd Motorcycle Brigades were scheduled to be stationed inside the country (AMR, collection 333, file no. 1757, pp. 5-35).

On 3 March 1939, the *Law for the active and passive anti-aircraft defence of the territory no. 938* was passed. The General Surveillance and Alarm Service of the Territory was also reorganised, subordinated to the defence groups against operational aircraft. As a result, it was requested the organisation of the underground shelters and the increase in the passive defence works at the school institutions based on the orders of the Ministry of National Education no. 1700 of 1938. The measures requested and applied by the mayor of Constanța, General (r.) Teodor Nicolau (1878-1952), consisted of:

- a) setting up underground reinforced concrete shelters in the vacant place next to the school, used for the market, or in another more suitable place;

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¹ General (ret.) Ion Tutoveanu, former Chief of the General Staff, remembered that the 1935-1938 class from the Military Infantry School was called "the disarmament promotion".



The mayor of the city took measures to protect the population in case of possible bombings, building high-capacity underground shelters (for 500 people). Also, on his initiative, a defence dam was built in the north of the city.

- b) placing sandboxes in the corners of bridges, provided with shovels;
- c) installing fire extinguishers to put out or locate fires until the arrival of communal firefighters;
- d) constructing a fixed staircase for climbing the attic;
- e) manufacturing fire hydrants and water vessels;
- f) creating stretchers with sanitary stretchers;
- g) making kits equipped with everything needed for health care;
- h) applying – in due time – fireproof materials on the woodwork of the roof of this building and purchasing such material;
 - i) laying a layer of sand in the attic, about 2-3 cm;
 - j) installing a telephone in case of alarm to get help immediately.

The coordinating role was played by the Communal Committee for Passive Defence of Constanța (DJAN, Report to the Mayor of Constanța, 1939). The mayor of the city took measures to protect the population in case of possible bombings, building high-capacity underground shelters (for 500 people). Also, on his initiative, a defence dam was built in the north of the city².

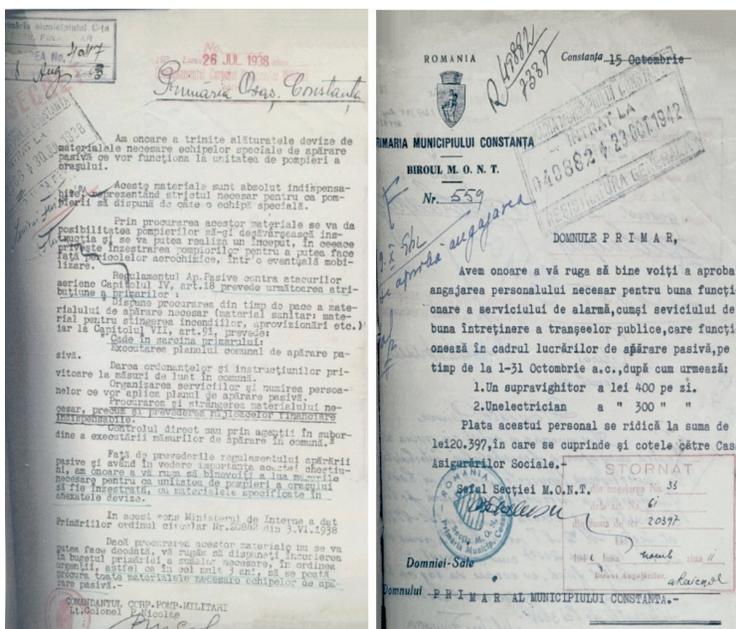
By Ordinance no. 16253 of 20 June 1039, the conditions for bathing on the beaches of Constanța were established. It was stipulated that, in Mamaia, it was forbidden to bathe (military) troops, horses or wash any kind of vehicle. The reference was made concerning the hydro-aviation military structures, which were based in Siutghiol, in the vicinity of Mamaia resort. However, they were allocated a separate bathing place, north of Hotel Rex, near the village of Mamaia.

² General (r.) Teodor Nicolau was the commander of the 36th Infantry Regiment “Vasile Lupu” between 1 July 1914-10 May 1915. He was decorated in the First World War. At the age of 59, on 19 September 1938, by Royal Decree no. 3237, he was appointed as mayor of Constanța. On the day Armand Călinescu was shot (1940), to prevent a riot and acts of vandalism in the city, mayor Teodor Nicolau went to all the regiments in the city, sounded the alarm, formed guards and sent them at the Prefecture, City Hall and Post Office. No special events took place in the city. He was dismissed from the position of mayor of Constanța in 1940, when the legionnaires came to power. At the time he left from office, Constanța City Hall had in the accounts of the National Bank the amount of 18 million lei, and in its own warehouses 100 wagons of wheat, stored for possible periods of crisis. (Bota, 2016).

Another ordinance, no. 349 of 14 September 1939, stipulated the theoretical and practical training of passive defence of the population every Sunday³.



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Documents on applying the measures for organising Constanța's passive defence⁴.

On 31 March 1939, by Law no. 1493, the technical facilities of the Ministry of the Army Procurement and the Ministry of National Defence were organised in the form of autonomous public administrations. Among many other issues of military organisation, the project of the military port of Tașaul, near Constanța was discussed.

The Minister of Procurement, Victor Slăvescu, would get to know the problems of the Army after he became Minister, on 1 February 1939,

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³ Passive defence training courses were to be held in the “Tranulis” cinema, Tăbăcăriei neighbourhood, School no. 4, the Workers’ neighbourhood, the I.Gh. Duca School, Anadolchioi and M. Koiciu neighbourhoods, the Mixed School no. 13, Viile Vechi, DPM and SPM, School no. 6, Viile Noi neighbourhood, the Mixed School no. 17, Km. 5 neighbourhood, the Mixed School no. 18, Medeea neighbourhood, the Mixed School no. 15, Brătianu neighbourhood, the Mixed School no. 14, Movilița neighbourhood, the Mixed School no. 19. The courses began on 17 September 1939, for two hours a month, between 11:00 and 13:00. Those who skipped classes were liable to a fine of 500 to 2,000 lei or imprisonment from one day to one month. SJANC, Constanța City Hall Collection (1878-1950), file 16/1938; 61/1938, 85/1939, 95/1942.

⁴ Report to the mayor of Constanța, 1939. Source SJANC, Constanța City Hall Collection (1878-1950).



In 1932, the Romanian military aviation resembled “a museum worthy of competing with a perfectly organised exhibition, with no less than 25 types of cells and more than 15 types of engines”.

concluding that the situation was about eight years old⁵, due to the participation of some decision-makers from the royal camarilla⁶. On the eve of his appointment as minister, there was a “*state of slackness and lack of coordination*” in the ministry (Slăvescu, p. 316), so Victor Slăvescu began conducting inspections at large units and units to personally check the condition of the weapons, the training and commanders. The first destination was Dobrogea (10 July 1939), where he was greeted by General Nicolae Macici, commander of the 9th Infantry Division (“*mediocre impression as intelligence and understanding*”) (Ib., p. 407; Spănu, 2017, p. 31), alongside whom he travelled to the Quadrilateral. In Bazargic he inspected: a division of the 18th Artillery Regiment (“*savage officers, calm and confident colonel*”) (Ib.), 12th Roșiori Regiment, commanded by Colonel Bossie (“*mediocre impression*”) (Ib.), 40th Infantry Regiment (Colonel Pârnu – “*good impression*”) (Ib.), and in Silistra, the 36th Infantry Regiment (Colonel Basta – “*poorly settled*”) (Ib.). He returned in a week and, together with General Macici and engineer Chiriac, visited the stage of the works at the port of Tașaul, then the 13th Artillery, 18th Artillery and 34th Infantry Regiments, which gave him a “*good impression*”. (Spănu, pp. 28-35).

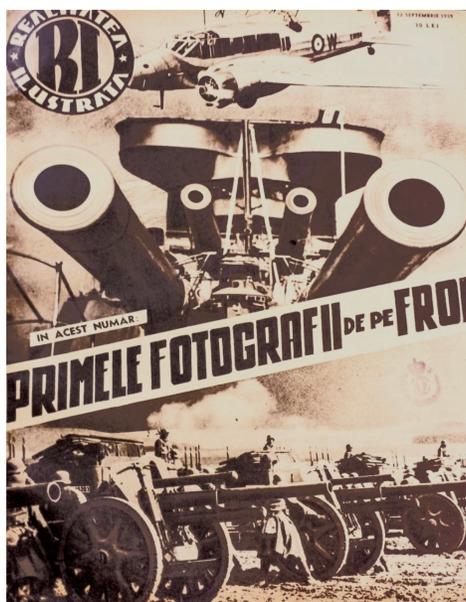
As a result of the mobilisation of the Romanian Armed Forces, decreed by the Romanian General Staff on 1 September 1939⁷, “*starting with 23 September this year, the 2nd Army was established, according to the order of the General Staff no. 11251/39*” (Neagoe, p. 15), as stated in a report by its commander, Major General Nicolae Ciupercă⁸.

⁵ In 1932, the Romanian military aviation resembled “*a museum worthy of competing with a perfectly organised exhibition, with no less than 25 types of cells and more than 15 types of engines*” (cf. Zaharia, Botoran, 1981, pp. 141). For some aspects of the arms business, see also Nicolescu, 2005, pp. 591-596. In fact, Victor Slăvescu writes that Ionel and Vintilă Brătianu greatly neglected the issue of armaments (Slăvescu, 1996, p. 344), a statement all the more important as the two were his party colleagues.

⁶ The fall in disgrace, in 1934, of future Marshal Ion Antonescu, military attaché in London, was, to a large extent, the consequence of the protests against such royal arms business. Of course, at that time, there was no ministry of military procurement.

⁷ The Polish treasure that transited Romania, after the country was occupied by the Germans and the Soviets, was loaded on an army-guarded train, transported to the port of Constanța, loaded by bank employees aboard the small armed tanker “*Eocene*”, which arrived at Istanbul and then to Beirut, under French rule. From there, after France agreed to host it, it was loaded on three cruisers and arrived in Toulon in early October, then at the branches of the Bank of France in Nevers and Angers.

⁸ Major General Nicolae Ciupercă was the head of the Operations Department during while General Alexandru Averescu was in command of the 2nd Army during the First World War.



Realitatea ilustrată, 12 September 1939 (Pogăciș, Historia).



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Victor Slăvescu undertook a new inspection at the 2nd Army, in southern Dobrogea (4-5 November 1939), at: 12th Roșiori Regiment, 10th Infantry Division, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 20th Artillery Regiment (*“excellent impression”*) (Slăvescu, pp 446; Spânu, p. 32), 9th Infantry Division, 40th Infantry Regiment and 18th Artillery Regiment (*“very good impression”*) (Ib.), and other military units would be checked.

In 1939, the 132nd Signal Company was founded, which operated under the 9th Dobrogea Infantry Division. It had a staff of 6 officers, 30 non-commissioned officers and 229 soldiers. At the beginning of World War II, the company had 4 officers, 7 non-commissioned officers, and 203 soldiers. The commander of the company was Ion Eremia, during the whole war, with a short interruption, in the period January-April 1943, when Captain Stelian Șerbănescu was in command (then called the 132nd Signal Detachment). During the war, the broadcasting company gradually changed its structure and name, depending on the unfolding of events.



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According to the Germans, the Soviet action of 1940 against the borders of Romania had to be initiated after the negotiation of peace in the West. The circumstance surprised several European governments, which expected such an outcome, but did not believe it would occur so quickly. Brugger, the French representative in Belgrade, informed (on 29 June 1940) that the Germans had only been notified a few hours before the ultimatum was sent to Romania, and the same happened with the Italian government.

The Yugoslav General Staff had the information that, to avoid more claims on Romania, it *"would have gotten certain promises from Germany and, thus, the setting up of Russian bases in Galați and Constanța was avoided. It is hoped that this attitude of Berlin will calm the Hungarians and Bulgarians"* (Faur, 2010, p. 404). After the border was moved on the Prut River in June, other territorial divisions followed on 30 August 1940, and in September Romania also lost northwestern Transylvania and southern Dobrogea. It should be noted that, after the Soviet ultimatums of 26 and 28 June 1940, Snake Island was not taken over by the USSR, and during the war, between 1 August 1941 and 25 August 1944, Snake Island was in the subordination of the German commander, Admiral Schwerzes Mer (Bușe, 2005, p. 152).

By the decrees of 5, 6 and 8 September 1940, the form of leadership of the Romanian state went through essential changes. The king, namely the new king, Mihai I, formally remained the *"Head of the Army"*, but his possibilities of intervention to command the Armed Forces were insignificant. The entire responsibility for the military as well fell under General Ion Antonescu, who was also minister of national defence between September 1940 and January 1941 and September 1941 and January 1942⁹.

⁹ General Ion Antonescu also took on the function of *"Commander-in-Chief"* of the army, a body that had been foreseen since the interwar period, but it was stipulated that it would be fulfilled by a general appointed by the king. Such a delegation could be made by the leader, but he preferred to leave the Vice President of the Council of Ministers, Mihai Antonescu, in charge of the leadership of the government, while he, the military man, would devote himself exclusively, at least in the first part of government, to leading military operations.

The Treaty of Craiova was signed on 7 September 1940, by His Majesty the King of Romania's envoys – Alexandru Cretzianu and Henri-Georges Meitani, respectively by His Majesty the King of Bulgaria's envoys – Svetoslav Pomenov and Teokhar Papazoff. The signatory parties agreed that, within three months of the delivery of the instruments of ratification, they should proceed to the compulsory exchange of population in Durostor and Caliacra counties. The document was ratified on 13 September 1940, by General Ion Antonescu, as President of the Council of Ministers, and not by the King of Romania, Mihai I, a contracting party to the treaty. The two countries carried out bilateral population exchanges. The Bulgarian side stated that, with the incorporation of southern Dobrogea, Bulgaria "will never again make any claim against Romania, considering the Dobrogea issue settled forever" (MAE, p. 354)¹⁰. The entire evacuation operation had to be carried out with the help of the army.

The evacuation of South Dobrogea by the Romanian authorities and the setting up of the Bulgarian ones were to take place between 20 September and 1 October 1940, with the date and time for each stage being specified to prevent any direct contact between the troops of the two countries. The territory taken over by Bulgaria was about 7,700 km².

After the territorial seizures against Romania, the large operational and tactical units that had been deployed in the temporarily occupied territories withdrew to the inside and changed their structure. An important issue was establishing the relationship between the General Staff and the Ministry of National Defence. After General Ion Antonescu came to power, the command of the Armed Forces was taken over exclusively by the General Staff (AMR, General Staff Collection, p. 298). Thus, on 12 September 1940, the 2nd Army subordinated the 2nd Army Corps, with its headquarters in Bucharest (for a while in the Constanța garrison as well), and the 3rd Army Corps, with its Buzău garrison headquarters (Neagoe, 2011, pp. 11-14).

In the religious life of Romania, there was also the first sign of change, with the decision of the Ministry of Cults and Arts of 9 September 1940, entitled "Historical cults protected and authorised to function", which stated: "Seeing the new order that was given



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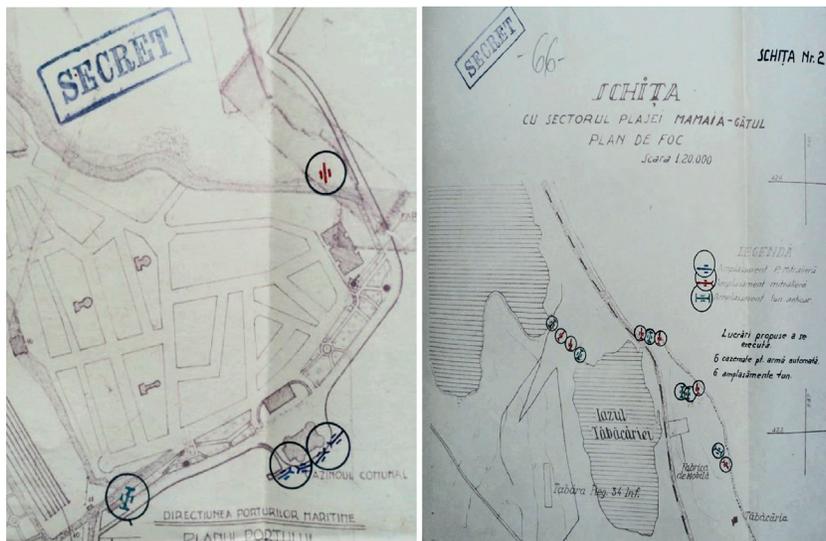
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¹⁰ At that time, there were 58,000 and 59,000 Romanians in Caliacra and Durostor counties, respectively, and in Tulcea and Constanța counties – 23,000 and 26,200 Bulgarians, respectively.



to the Romanian State, which became fascist, Christian and totalitarian [...], the Romanian State also protects the authority and functioning on its territory of the following historical cults: a) the Romanian Christian-Orthodox cult, which is the dominant religion in the State [...]”. The decision was signed by Minister Radu Budişteanu (*Culte istorice*, 1940).

On 22 September 1940, based on the “Armed Forces Reorganisation Project”, initiated by the head of state, Ion Antonescu, and applied by the Romanian General Staff, the command of the 2nd Army was disbanded, the 2nd Army Corps being made available to the General Staff, and the 3rd Army Corps became subordinate to the 4th Army.



The secret plan of defence organisation in the Port of Constanța. Blueprint of Mamaia beach with the mouths of fire (SIANC, 1938).

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¹¹ According to the convention made at the level of the defence ministries of the forces of the member states of the Warsaw Pact, the 2nd Army participated with operational groups in several exercises of command and front staff, on the map, in the garrisons of Mangalia, Constanța and Neptun, as well as on the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria – “Shield – 82”, “Balkans – 86”, “Balkans – 88”, being, each time, appraised for cohesion, way of working and just decisions adopted (Ib., p. 14).

organisation, mobilisation and training of troops and commanders, as well as drafting the operation plans (AMR, collection 332, pp. 21-23).

On 5 November 1940, the 53rd Squadron moved operationally to Pipera airfield, with Romanian pilots training with German instructors from the Military Air Mission. On 24 January 1941, the 53rd Fighter Squadron moved to Constanța, on Mamaia airfield, with the mission of defending Dobrogea and southern Basarabia. With this deployment, the 53rd Squadron pilots were placed on the front line in the event of a Soviet Union attack on Romania.

By applying the anti-Jewish legislation, the Jewish population was separated from the other Romanian citizens from a legal, political and social point of view. Banning the Jews from the Romanian society also meant banning them from the Armed Forces. Under *the Decree-Law on the Military Status of Jews*, adopted in December 1940, all Jews were excluded from military service and pre-military service, forcing them to pay military taxes and perform public service¹². Jewish physicians, pharmacists, veterinarians, engineers, and architects requisitioned in the Armed Forces during prolonged periods of recruitment or war were required to wear speciality uniforms, but with distinctive signs to mark their ethnicity (*Regulamentul asupra Decretului-lege relativ la Statutul Militar al Evreilor/Regulation on the Decree-Law on the Military Status of Jews*).

The Eastern war (1941-1944) was, from one end to the other, a national and anti-communist one. In the real conditions of that time, Romania struggled to restore its historical borders in the East, on the Nistru River, lost in 1940. In the name of *the "holy war"*, after the liberation of Basarabia, the Romanian soldiers (and Dobrogeans from November 1942) reached Stalingrad.

In June 1941, Romania renounced neutrality and went to war alongside Germany. On 22 June 1941, the Barbarossa Plan defined



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¹² For the military status of the Jews, see Legislația Antievreiască (ed. Lya Benjamin), Editura Hasefer, București, 1993, doc. 25: Decretul lege relativ la statutul militar al evreilor/Decree-Law on the Military Status of Jews (4 December 1940); doc. 29: Decizia Ministerului Apărării Naționale nr. 23325 din 27 ianuarie 1941 privitoare la medicii, farmaciștii, veterinarii, inginerii și arhitecții evrei folosiți eventual în serviciile Armatei/Decision of the Ministry of National Defence no. 23325 of 27 January 1941, concerning Jewish physicians, pharmacists, veterinarians, engineers, and architects who may be employed in the Army; doc. 43, Regulamentul Ministerului Apărării Naționale nr. 2030 din 12 iulie 1942 asupra Decretului-lege nr. 3984 din 4 decembrie 1940/Regulation of the Ministry of National Defence no. 2030 of 12 July 1941 on the Decree-Law no. 3984 of 4 December 1940, p. 159.



During the German anti-Soviet campaign in the East (1941-1944), the Romanian General Staff was formed in two echelons, out of which the 1st Echelon operated intermittently under the name of General Headquarters and had operational duties, leading the forces on the front.

the beginning of German-Romanian-Soviet hostilities. Until 26 July 1941, it was carried out the plan of operations of the “General Antonescu” army group, within the “South” Army Group (Field Marshal Gerd von Rundstedt), for the liberation of Basarabia and northern Bucovina (*Report No. 59,240 of 9 August 1941*), Romanian territories which had been occupied by the USSR in the summer of 1940¹³.

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The plan was the use of the Romanian Royal Navy, based on the Order of Operations no. 44 of 21 June 1941, issued by the Military Navy Command. Given the superiority of Soviet forces, the plan was to adopt a defensive attitude with the main purpose of defending the sea and river coast, gravitating with most forces and means in the areas of Galați, Tulcea and Constanța. Offensive actions during this period were limited to the Danube Delta, to fix or destroy Soviet forces acting on the Chilia branch. On 28 June 1941, the 2nd Army consisted of the 2nd Army Corps, the 1st Border Guard Division, the 4th, 9th, 10th Infantry Divisions, the 7th Cavalry Brigade and the “Danube” Detachment.

Regarding the organisation of Dobrogea’s defence, the following forces were deployed in the region:

- Land Forces – the 2nd Army Corps, commanded by Major General Nicolae Macici, consisted of the 9th and 10th Infantry Divisions. The 10th Infantry Division was directly subordinated to the General Headquarters.
- Forces subordinated to the Romanian Royal Navy Command, commanded by Rear Admiral Eugen Roșca, were composed of the Sea Division, the Danube Division, the Sulina Maritime

¹³ A. Hitler’s message to I. Antonescu – appreciations regarding the goal accomplished by the Romanian troops, for which the head of state received “*the most sincere thanks for the brave attitude and activity carried out both on the Prut and in Northern Bucovina. In this first phase of the war, it successfully contributed to restraining the enemy forces before them*”. Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale/Central National Historical Archives (hereinafter, ANIC), PCM-CM collection, file 24/1941, pp. 3-6, the original text of the document, with the handwritten signature of the Führer; Arimia, V., Ardeleanu, I., Lache, Șt., *Antonescu-Hitler*, I, doc. no. 18, pp. 110-112.

Detachment, the Marine Engineering Regiment, the Marines Regiment, the Marine Artillery Regiment.

- Air Force – 101st and 102nd Squadrons from the Seaplanes Fleet, 16th Fighter Surveillance Squadron and 53rd Fighter Squadron.
- Troops of border guards and gendarmerie in the area, which were mobilised and consolidated.

In the Royal Navy, in 1941, there were two education institutions: the Naval School (naval officer school) and the Specialty School (petty officer school).

The commander of the 10th Infantry Division, Brigadier General Ionel Glogojanu (1888-1941)¹⁴, ordered the setting up of the following defence disposition: West Tactical Group – 1st Battalion/23rd Infantry Regiment; Centre Tactical Group – 38th Infantry Regiment; Eastern Tactical Group – 33rd Infantry Regiment; 1st Tactical Detachment Sulina – Marines Regiment; The artillery of the division – 3rd and 10th Artillery Regiments – was stationed at Garvăn and Isaccea.

After August 1941, the General Secretariat of the Ministry of National Defence was in charge of turning the decisions of the Minister of National Defence into orders and guidelines, signing documents for the Minister of National Defence, and coordinating, according to the guidelines and on behalf of the Minister, the common work of all state under secretaries established in the autumn of 1940: of the Army, of the Air and Navy and of the Armed Forces Procurement and Administration (General Secretariat of the Ministry of National Defence, p. 15).

However, the Basarabia campaign brought to light a painful fact: the poor training and procurement of the armed forces. The Romanian propaganda on the Eastern Front demanded that some of the Church's litanies and prayers were adapted to the requirements of the war, namely that those words like Agarians (Turks, invading enemies)



Brigadier General
Ionel Glogojanu



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¹⁴ During World War II, Brigadier General Ionel Glogojanu took part in the fighting in Odessa, and after the division entered the city, he was appointed military commander of the city. He died on 22 October 1941, following an explosion in the Odessa military command building, which was mined by Soviets who were withdrawing. http://enciclopediaromaniei.ro/w/images/4/47/Ion_Glogojanu.jpg, retrieved on 28 September 2021.



The general action plan at the beginning of the war stipulated that the Dobrogea forces would carry out defensive actions to defend the maritime and fluvial coast. The command of the combat actions belonged to the Romanian Royal Navy until the completion of the bridgeheads by the enemy, in case of sea landing or in case of forcing the Danube.

were replaced by Bolsheviks, a sign that showed the important shift in the collective mind of a country engaged in an exhausting war (Bănică, 2007, p. 118)¹⁵.

Colonel Dumitru Arăpașu wrote: *“The 10th Infantry Division, in which I served, was deployed [...] in the north of Dobrogea, on the Danube, including on the northernmost arm of the Delta, in front of the Moldavian SSR. Since I had just taken a specialisation course for surveillance unit commanders, I was at the head of such a unit in front of the division. This allowed me to carry out broader and more in-depth surveillance and to better understand the conduct of military operations.*

[...] On a cloudy, low-visibility morning, in the spring of 1941, a camouflaged Soviet military ship attempted to enter the Delta under the pretext of hydrological research in Romanian territorial waters. The commander of the division, Infantry General G. Avramescu (later commander of the 4th Army, between 1944 and 1945 – A/N), asked General Costin Ionașcu, the commander of the artillery (future chief of staff between 1945 and 1947 – A/N), to open fire if the ship did not obey the order to withdraw.

*[...] I gave this order and the shot was fired. The projectile fired from the nearest gun, an old Debange cannon, a veteran of the fortifications of the First World War, transported with difficulty with an ox cart, unfortunately took the whole cannon with it. It had not been operated for a long time. The ballistic effect was zero, but the noise was impressive. The result: the spy ship withdrew, convinced of the effectiveness of our artillery’s fire plan. The experience could have been useful for us if we had had the opportunity to replace this long-gone asset” (Arapu, 1990; Hentea, *Historia*).*

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¹⁵ Dudu Velicu was the personal secretary of Patriarch Miron Cristea and the chief of staff of the director of the Special Intelligence Service, Eugen Cristescu.



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Here are some of the measures taken to strengthen the morale of those who joined the military, but also of those who remained behind the front (AMR, collection 332, file 62, pp. 109-110): *the Decree-Law to help the needy families of the enlisted personnel, of 21 February 1941*¹⁶: “Art. 1. *The families of those enlisted as part of troops (soldier, private, corporal, sergeant), deprived of their means of subsistence, have the right to receive the family allowances provided in the present decree-law*” (*Monitorul oficial al României*, 1941). Considering the severe lack of workforce in agriculture (Firoiu, Marcu, 1984, p. 431)¹⁷, through the provisions of art. 5 of the mentioned decree, the families of the beneficiaries of financial aid were also granted the right to receive aid for “*carrying out agricultural work during the absence of the enlisted person and for aid in kind, as possible*” (AMR, 5475 collection, file 2878, p. 4.), a series of norms regarding the application of the framework available in the armed forces, on 30 May 1941 (Seserman, Moşneagu, Tase & Mureşan, 2012, p. 92)¹⁸.

By the decree of 25 June 1941, among the 52 militarised enterprises there were the Maritime Ports Directorate, the Romanian Maritime Service and the Constanţa Shipyard. With the outbreak of fighting, the entire region of the Danube Delta was declared an area of operations, and German troops were stationed in the ports of Sulina, Constanţa and Tulcea.

On 21 June 1941, the Sea Division included: The naval maritime force, consisting of destroyers, torpedoes, gunboats, a submarine, and torpedo boats; the defence of the port and the Constanţa area; coastal artillery groups Constanţa (then Mangalia); the seaplane fleet with 20 seaplanes. They were supported by monitors and river ships squad and the Tulcea tactical group from the Danube Division,

By Decree no. 2741 of 1 October 1941, for the wartime work regime, the leave and the Sunday rest were suspended. In May 1941, Decree Law no. 1403 for the organisation of national work was drawn up, and in November 1941, the establishment and organisation of the General Inspectorate of Camps and Colonies of Compulsory Public Work (Decree No. 3205) was legislated, with mandatory forms for each inhabitant of the country.

¹⁶ The Decree-Law established two types of quotas: the main quota, which was intended to cover the general expenses of the household of the concentrated person; Additional quota, intended to cover the maintenance expenses of all family members in charge of the concentrated one. These quotas were paid through the military units in which the beneficiaries were employed, who, at the request of the authorities, were meant “to give an account of the use of the aid received”. (AMR, 5475 collection, file 2878, pp. 4-5).

¹⁷ By Decree no. 2741 of 1 October 1941, for the wartime work regime, the leave and the Sunday rest were suspended. In May 1941, Decree Law no. 1403 for the organisation of national work was drawn up, and in November 1941, the establishment and organisation of the General Inspectorate of Camps and Colonies of Compulsory Public Work (Decree No. 3205) was legislated, with mandatory forms for each inhabitant of the country.

¹⁸ According to them, the transition to the available framework could be done “at any time of the year, when there is a surplus of officers, non-commissioned officers and petty officers, compared to the necessary staff”.



The occupation of the islands near the northern branch of the Danube, in front of the Basarabia shore, had no tactical value, “[...] one could not dig shelters nor trenches in those islands because after more than twenty centimetres water would come out and they could not be protected by our artillery, located south of the Delta, twenty kilometres away and outside its battlefield”.

as well as the Sulina maritime detachment, having the mission of defending the Danube Delta (Rădulescu, Bitoleanu, 1998, pp. 446-447). One of the first missions carried out was the operation of mining the offshore area of the port of Constanța.

“At the beginning of the war, on 22 June 1941, at 4 a.m., wrote Colonel Dumitru Arăpașu, A/N [...], when the first shot was fired, I saw Soviet soldiers jumping through the windows of their barracks in Reni and other localities, when normally these should have been evacuated a long time ago.

[...] The Danube forces could not adopt other position but the defensive one, given their lack of troops and the importance of the obstacle (the Danube was very wide there). This did not mean that there was no attempt to make this attitude more active, especially on the part of the commanders, who sought to be noticed even at the cost of big and unjustified sacrifices” (Hentea, lb.).

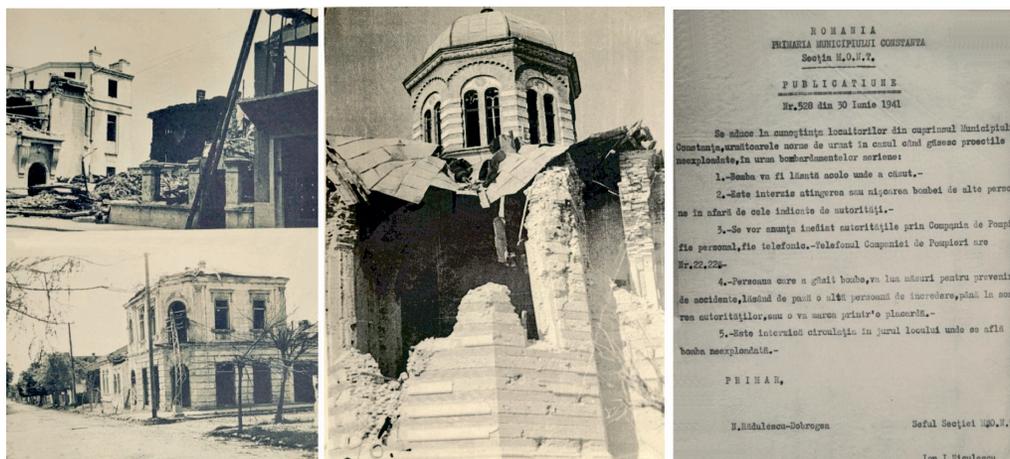
The occupation of the islands near the northern branch of the Danube, in front of the Basarabia shore, had no tactical value, *“[...] one could not dig shelters nor trenches in those islands because after more than twenty centimetres water would come out and they could not be protected by our artillery, located south of the Delta, twenty kilometres away and outside its battlefield”¹⁹.*

The day before the start of the campaign, the 53rd Squadron received the order to deploy at the Buzău airfield, from where it was to accompany the Romanian bombers. This decision proved to be a mistake because the city and port of Constanța were the priority targets of Soviet bombing aircraft.

The General Prosecutor of Constanța was informed of the destructions following the eight Soviet bombings on the night of 22-23 June 1941 and the public order measures taken on 1 July 1941.

¹⁹ *“... Such an island, whose occupation had no tactical reason, was invaded by order of the division commander by a company of the infantry regiment that had the garrison at Tulcea. The Soviets, who knew the order of battle of the Romanian regiments at the border, sent a message with propagandistic intentions through a megaphone: «Captain Palon, withdraw from the island before the evening, or we will bomb you in the morning and you and all your company will die like idiots». This was reported to the division commander, Brigadier General Ionel Glogojanu. As expected, he replied that he would not give up any meter of land. If this first operation could be justified, the repetition of similar orders for other companies, after it was reported that there were no survivors left in the first company, cannot have another explanation for me ...”. lb.*

There were 15 casualties among the German army and several killed and wounded civilians, 20 buildings were damaged. On the morning of 24 June 1941, air strikes continued, launching bombs and damaging 3-4 buildings, including the local Police Headquarters, which moved to the suburb of Anadalchioi, and the legion of gendarmes moved to Basarabi village after the building was destroyed and 25 gendarmes died. An empty oil tank in the harbour was hit. Also, the Romanian military vessels outside the port were attacked (DJAN, Report to the General Attorney, no. 15351 of 1 July 1941).



The effects of the bombings on Constanța in the summer of 1941 (SIANC, 1941).

“Especially at the beginning, Colonel Dumitru Arăpașu (A/N) remembered, RATA fighter jets were cumbersome, not flexible and ineffective. They had to leave the airspace when the Messerschmitts appeared, even though these were smaller in number. When these planes appeared, we did not feel nervous anymore; I had named them ‘bumblebees’” (Hentea, lb.).

Dobrogea was further attacked by a large number of Soviet Union bombers. The 53rd Squadron had 20 alarms, carrying out combat actions throughout the day. The fighting was exhausting, with some pilots having five or six sorties. On the morning of 25 June, between 03.00 and 05.30, several locations were bombed in Constanța. The damaged buildings were guarded by teams of gendarmes (DJAN, Raportul către Procurorul general, no. 15351, ib.).



The Hawker Hurricane, flown by Lieutenant Horia Agarici on the morning of 23 June 1941 (Rador, 2016).

On 4 July 1941, the pilots of the 53rd Squadron covered the Chilia Nouă – Lacul Central sector with six aircraft. The battle was fought with 14 Soviet aircraft of which two were shot down: one by Captain Emil Georgescu and the other considered as probably shot down by Lieutenant Horia Agarici. Between 16 and 20 July 1941, 15 missions took place in northern Dobrogea and southern Basarabia, with no Soviet aviation being encountered. It was clear evidence that the main objective of the Romanian-German fighter aviation fighting in Basarabia – namely to gain air supremacy – had been achieved.

Between 16 and 20 July 1941, 15 missions took place in northern Dobrogea and southern Basarabia, with no Soviet aviation being encountered. It was clear evidence that the main objective of the Romanian-German fighter aviation fighting in Basarabia – namely to gain air supremacy – had been achieved.



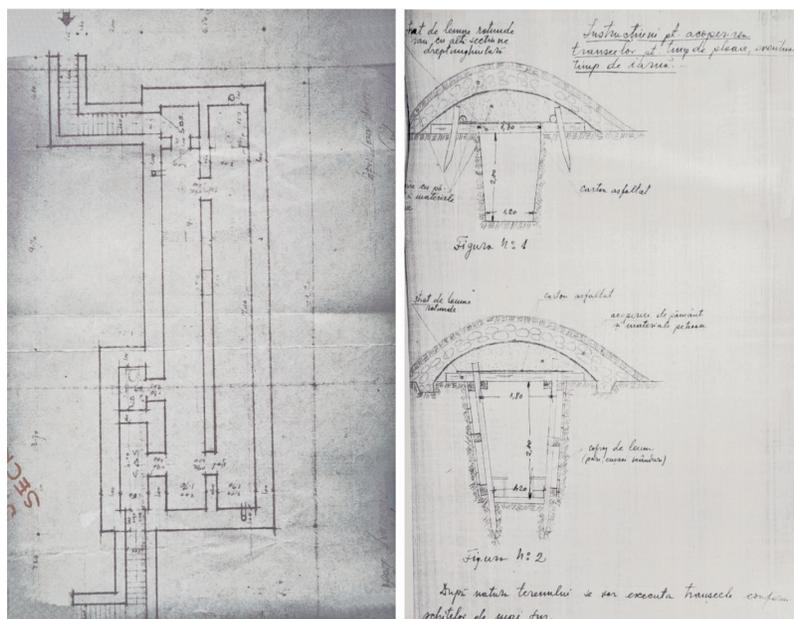
The rescue of a child by a German soldier in the summer of 1941 (SIJANC, 1941).

On 14 August 1941, the 53rd Squadron returned to Constanța from Tecuci and between 15 and 27 August 1941, it carried out daily patrol missions in the region of Constanța – Cernavodă Bridge. The mayor of Constanța was informed by the prefect, on 19 August 1941, that the air defence school train had arrived at Constanța train station on 17 August 1941 and that the public had not been notified about it. Also, on 20 August 1941, at 4 pm, it was scheduled to make a demonstration of passive defence in the port of Constanța (DJAN, Report no. 1589, 19 August 1941).



The effects of the bombings on Constanța in the summer of 1941 (SJANC, 1941-2).

These measures were aimed at reintegrating various citizens into the country's general war effort. On 9 November 1941, the Romanians were summoned to the *"plebiscite public assembly"* (referendum), *"so that each could speak in keeping with their thoughts on the acts of government committed by Marshal Antonescu"*. On this occasion, the Patriarch's remarks were broadcast on the radio, urging people to support the *"zeal and assiduity of the Marshal"* (Moisescu, 1941, pp. 601-603).



The blueprint of an underground shelter in Constanța.
Instructions for covering trenches in rainy or winter weather (SJANC, 1939-2).



On the night of 17 to 18 August 1941, the alarm was sounded in Cernavodă, where the enemy planes dropped two bombs in the pond on the territory of Ialomița County. Other air alarms followed in Dobrogea.

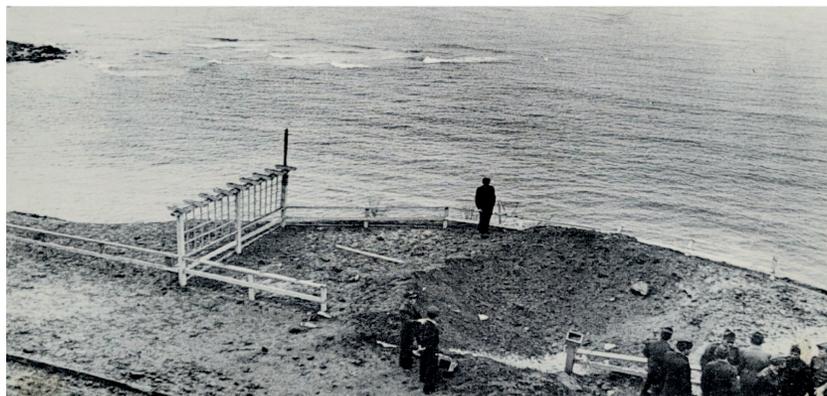
The vast majority of inhabitants from Dobrogea, but also from Ialomița and Călărași counties were to be concentrated and mobilised in the large land unit, to fulfil military obligations. On 21 June 21, it had the following organisational structure:

- Division Command – deployed in Constanța;
- 34th Infantry Regiment – deployed in Constanța;
- 36th Infantry Regiment – deployed in Cernavodă;
- 40th Infantry Regiment – deployed in Medgidia;
- 13th and 18th Artillery Regiments – deployed in Constanța;
- Division subunits (9th Field Artillery Company, 9th Air Defence Company, 9th Motorised Company, 9th Transportation Company, 9th Trucks Company, 9th Antitank Company, 9th Ambulance Vehicles Company and 246th, 247th, 248th, 249th Position Artillery Sections) – deployed in Constanța;
- 9th Pioneer Battalion – deployed in Constanța;
- 9th Cavalry Squadron – deployed in Cuza Vodă.

The strength of the division was 11,718 soldiers, of which 376 officers, 430 non-commissioned officers, 8 civilians, 10,904 enlisted personnel and soldiers.

On 16 August 1941, the air alarm was sounded at 4.10 am, enemy aircraft dropped 10 bombs, one fell in the port, on the CFR “*Salvamar*” line, destroying it on a length of 15 m, the second on the ground next to the border guards’ barracks, with no damage, others fell on Ferdinand Avenue, penetrating all the tree stories of a building, but without exploding, and the other in a yard, over a German kitchen, which was destroyed, but there were no casualties. Two bombs fell on the same boulevard, damaging a house and destroying a German car, injuring two German soldiers, one bomb fell on Eternității Street, damaging a house and injuring four people, and another bomb fell on Egalității Street, without exploding.

On the night of 17 to 18 August 1941, the alarm was sounded in Cernavodă, where the enemy planes dropped two bombs in the pond on the territory of Ialomița County. Other air alarms followed in Dobrogea. Impressive ceremonies were organised to welcome the units coming back from the front: the train station and the streets were decorated; local authorities and the population came out to greet the troops; small gifts (cigarettes, food, flowers) were handed at the train station.



The place where an enemy projectile exploded on the beach, 1941
(SJANC, Constanța City Hall Fund).



ROMANIAN
MILITARY
THINKING

Thus, on 26 October 1941, when the 2nd Border Guard Regiment returned to the Cernavodă garrison, the town hall of this locality informed the Constanța prefecture that all the public authorities in the city and the population made special arrangements to welcome the soldiers of this unit. The local patronage council of social works collected money from the rich to buy small gifts for 2,500 soldiers. On 30 October, at the initiative of Colonel Măzăreanu, the commander of the unit, a memorial service was held in front of the Heroes' Monument, mentioning all the fallen soldiers. The activity was attended by civilian and military authorities, widows of those killed in the war, schools and the population.

It was insisted on rapidly adapting the human factor to the actual situations in the theatre of operations, by moving from defensive to offensive. Coastal batteries were fixed on concrete sites, mobile artillery was used, and the defensive system was enhanced by the organisation of a minefield.

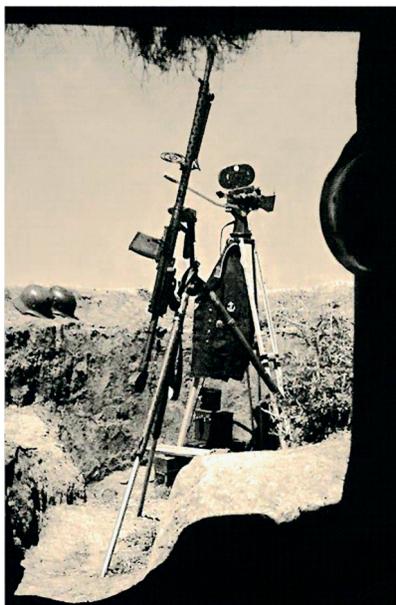
Romanian military and merchant ships cooperated with the German Naval Command "Admiral Schwarzes Meer" in escort missions of convoys in the western Black Sea basin and in transports to supply the front towards the Crimean coast (Rădulescu, Bitoleanu, 1998, p. 448).

In the Second World War, the Dobrogea division reached the area of the Don River Bend in the autumn of 1942. Troops subordinated to the 3rd Army moved to a defensive position between Kletskaia and Sukhoi Doniek, the defence strip having a frontal development of 148 Kilometres.

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The involvement of military forces and structures and the interest in organising and defending Dobrogea indicate that this part of the country is a strategic geopolitical region with an opening to the Black Sea.



Air defence machine gun of the Port of Constanța (photo Horst Grund)

In short, the involvement of military forces and structures and the interest shown in organising and defending Dobrogea indicate that this part of the country is a strategic geopolitical region with an opening to the Black Sea. We must also mention the strategic actions planned by the senior officers of the Romanian armed forces, as well as the courage of the Romanian military who fought in the air, naval and land conflicts. The international consequences of the Second World War also included the movement of Romanian troops in the areas of conflict, which led to their heroism being appreciated and recognised. The period between 1939 and 1941 has remained in our history as a page that must be remembered, and not at all forgotten!

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