



THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE DANUBE IN ATTENTION TO THE ROMANIAN GENERAL STAFF AT THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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“King Ferdinand I” National Military Museum
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By presenting a document from the “Manuscripts” Collection of “King Ferdinand I” National Military Museum, drawn up in the context of the end of the Second World War and the beginning of negotiations for the peace treaty, which was to be signed by Romania in Paris, on 10 February 1947, this article brings to the fore the issue of the Danube and the interests of our country in the area. Prepared by the Historical Service, a structure subordinate to the Romanian General Staff, the mentioned document, which is typewritten, is structured in two distinct parts.

The first part, using several historical, economic, statistical and legal data, addresses topics such as: the works carried out by the European Danube Commission and the Danube Maritime Directorate, as well as the history of the works carried out at the Iron Gates, the future projects for the promotion of the Danube, the economic importance of the river, the history of navigation on it and its political and legal regime during the time.

The second part, which has the coat of arms of Romania embossed on the cover, includes the appendices. They consist of sketches and maps, some of them hand-made, as well as provisions of the treaties and conventions relating to the Danube regime among which we mention: the Treaty of Paris (1856), the Treaty of London (1871), the Treaty of Berlin (1878), the Treaties of Saint-Germain and Neuilly (1919), the Treaty of Trianon (1920), as well as the Conference in Barcelona (1921), the Montreux Convention (1936), and the Sinaia Agreement (1938).

Keywords: Danube; navigation; Romanian General Staff; Second World War; “King Ferdinand I” National Military Museum;

INTRODUCTION

Knowing all the details related to a certain subject important to Romania’s interests, regardless of the historical period, has been a constant for the Romanian authorities, this fact being necessary for the decisions taken to be in accordance with the requirements and objectives of the Romanian society, both in the short and in the long term.

At the end of the Second World War, in the context of the negotiations for the signing of the peace treaty that officially put an end to that conflict, the issue of the Danube came to the attention of the Romanian General Staff/M.St.M. Thus, the Historical Service, a structure under its authority, developed a document entitled “The Danube. Documentary Study”, which contained information, analyses and recommendations for the Romanian negotiators.

Preserved in the “Manuscripts” collection of “King Ferdinand I” National Military Museum, the mentioned document comprises two parts: one typed, which summarizes a multitude of historical, geographical, economic, statistical and legal information, as well as a presentation of the position of the various states, at the end of the war, in terms of navigation on the Danube and also in the straits of the Black Sea; the second part, presents a series of maps and sketches, many of them hand made, which illustrate and complete certain aspects on the topic of the Danube importance.

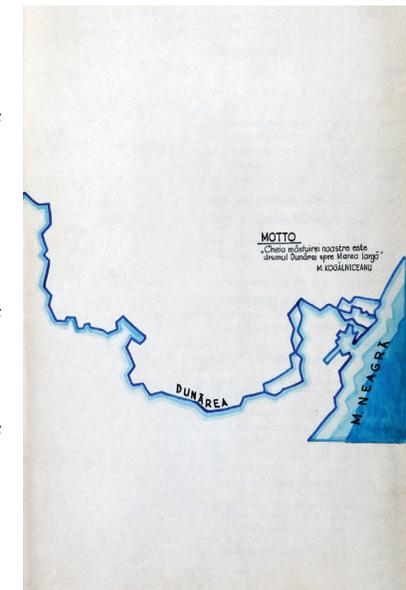


Photo 1: Front page – the first part of the document (M.St.M., Mss. 618)



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Although it is not dated, from the analysis of the contents of this document, it can be seen that it was drawn up towards the middle of 1946, before the beginning of the proceedings of the Paris Peace Conference, on 29 July 1946. In addition, throughout the document, several suggestions regarding certain aspects that Romania should necessarily introduce as clauses in the treaty are underlined as “*only in this way will the Danube be able to have the value to which it is entitled in the existence of Europe*” (M.St.M., Mss. 618, tab 24).

On 29 July 1946, Georges Bidault, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in France, as the representative of the host country, opened the proceedings of the Peace Conference. During those works, held between 29 July and 15 October 1946 in Paris, in the Luxembourg Palace, the draft peace treaties with Italy, Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria and Finland were debated. 32 states participated in the Conference, in the first place the five great powers – USSR, USA, Great Britain, France and China, which played a decisive role in decision-making.



Photo 2: Cover page – the second part of the document (lb.)

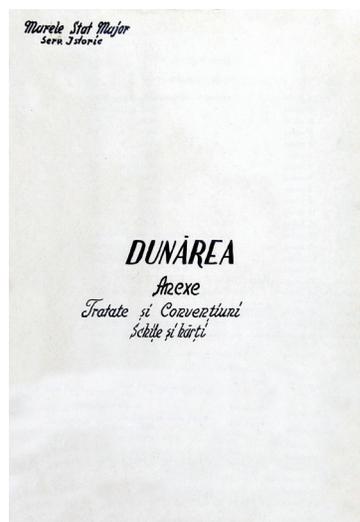


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The official delegation of Romania that went to Paris consisted of “*the head of the delegation, 13 main delegates, 2 general secretaries, secretarial staff, journalists and other people*”¹. Among its members

¹ For more details regarding the context of this historical event, see: Hitchins, K. (1994), *Romania 1866-1947*, București, Editura Humanitas, pp. 525-526.

we mention: Gheorghe Tătărescu, Vice Chair of the Government and Minister of Foreign Affairs and head of the delegation, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, Minister of Communications and Public Works, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, Minister of Justice, Ștefan Voitec, Minister of National Education, Ion Gheorghe Maurer, Minister undersecretary of state, Dr Florica Bagdasar, the Minister of Health, Elena Văcărescu, Șerban Voinea, General Dumitru Dămăceanu², Mihai Ralea, the Minister of Romania in the USA, Richard Franasovici, the Minister of Romania in Great Britain, Simion Stoilov, the Minister of Romania in France, Horia Grigorescu, the Minister of Romania in The Hague and other people.

On 9 August 1946, the Romanian government published a statement entitled “*Romania’s Attitude at the Peace Conference*”, a document that reiterated the main objectives of our country: recognition of co-belligerent status, resolution of territorial issues, improvement of military provisions, especially the conditions regarding the limitation of armaments and its armed forces, full freedom in economic policy, requests for reparations and restitution not to be greater than those established by the Armistice Convention on 12 September 1944 etc. Regarding the Danube regime, the declaration stated that the peace treaty could not solve this issue, and the riverain countries had to find a later solution.

² General Dumitru Dămăceanu (1896-1978) was the only military within the delegation sent to Paris in 1946 and in February 1947, the government delegation that signed for Romania the Treaty of Peace with Allied Powers. He had been active in the Mounted Guards Regiment, had been the attaché to Italy and Albania between 1936 and 1938, had fought in the Second World War and had played an important role in the events of 23 August 1944. After the establishment of the communist regime, he was expelled from the armed forces, demoted, a lawsuit was brought against him, and after his detention, in the 60s, he was rehabilitated, his reserve ranks being restored, and on 19 August 1974, he was promoted to the rank of army general. In his Qualification Sheet for the period 1 November 1946-31 October 1947, signed by Army General Mihail Lascăr, the Minister of National Defence, it is stated that Major General Dumitru Dămăceanu, who was undersecretary of state at the Ministry of National Defence “*was part of the Romanian Delegation for the conclusion of the Paris Peace Treaty, supporting the interests of our Armed Forces before the Military Commission, through written memoranda and oral presentation*”; for the previous period, 1 November 1945-31 October 1946, also in the Qualification Sheet of this officer, General C.Vasilie Rășcanu said: “*He was sent as a delegate of the Armed Forces with the delegation that was in Paris for the conclusion of the peace treaty. Quite a difficult mission, through which he distinguished himself as a man of great value and a good defender of the cause of our country. He advocated before the Peace Conference with great prestige and very well the cause of the Armed Forces. Praise was given for the way he supported the Armed Forces cause both in the Council of Ministers and in the Assembly of Commanders of Armed Forces Large Units*”, National Military Archives of Romania (ANMR), M.Ap.N. Personnel Department, File no. 32 Dămăceanu Ion, pp. 76-77, p. 74.



Indeed, no consensus was reached on the Danube issue, but the Council of Foreign Ministers established, on 6 December 1946, that, within six months of the entry into force of the peace treaties with Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary, a new conference must be convened to discuss a new convention on the navigation regime on the Danube. The conference format must include the representatives of the seven Danube states, as well as France, Great Britain and the United States of America.

On 10 February 1947, the Romanian delegation, consisted of Gheorghe Tătărescu, the head of the delegation, Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, Ștefan Voitec and General Dumitru Dămăceanu, signed the text of the Peace Treaty with the Allied and Associated Powers at the Quai d'Orsay, in the Hall of the Clock, and, on 23 August 1947, the Romanian Parliament unanimously ratified the treaty, although, as declared on that occasion Gheorghe Tătărescu, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, it contained *“many heavy clauses and many unfair clauses”*³. From the point of view of international law, by signing the Peace Treaty, Romania came out of the armistice regime with the Allied Powers and became an independent and sovereign state. Indeed, the Allied Control Commission ceased to exist, and the activity of the Romanian government was no longer *“monitored”* and penalized by the representatives of the USA, the Soviet Union and Great Britain. In reality, Romania's international status did not improve, as the country remained practically under Soviet occupation.

The Paris Peace Treaties of 1947 did not refer to the conference that was to establish the regime of the Danube, but contained an article that emphasized that *“navigation on the Danube must be free and open to all nation-states, commercial ships and goods of all states on equal terms regarding ports, navigation fees and trade conditions”* (M.St.M., Mss. 618, tab 24, ib.).

³ In the issue of war reparations, the great material and human destruction suffered by the Romanian space during the battles to expel the German-Hungarian forces from the country was ignored; at the same time, it was established the payment to the USSR of the huge sum of 300 million dollars, payable in eight years, starting on 12/13 September 1944, in oil products, cereals, wood, sea and river ships, various machines. The basis of calculation was to be the US dollar, at the level of 1938, which, due to inflation, represented an obvious injustice, which greatly increased the imposed amount. Romania, thanks to the military contribution from the Allies after 23 August 1944, received back Northern Transylvania, but lost Bessarabia, Northern Bucovina and Herța Land to the Soviet Union and Southern Dobrogea to Bulgaria.

On 4 August 1948, the representative of the USSR, Andrei Vishinski, proposed a draft of the future Danube Convention, which stipulated, among other aspects, the free navigation on the Danube, the ban on the navigation of warships of all non-river states on the Danube, and the existence of a single commission, which would exercise its authority from Ulm to the discharge into the Black Sea. The commission was to deal with the supervision of the provisions contained in the future convention, to prepare the budget, the general plan of works etc. The members of the commission were to be representatives of the riverain states, without them being precisely defined. Each state was to establish, on its own section of the river, the taxes and sanitary and river police regulations. Trans-shipment facilities in the ports could only be used with the prior consent of the owner. Two separate administrations were established, one Romanian-Yugoslav and the other Romanian-Soviet, for the Iron Gates and the mouths of the Danube, respectively. The establishment of a body to settle disputes between non-signatory countries of the future convention was omitted. Austria was to join the commission after the signing of the state treaty, all previous provisions that legally regulated navigation on the Danube were to become obsolete, and the assets of the former commissions were to become the property of the new Danube Commission (the two annexes of the draft). Although the draft gave more authority to the riverain states, it was only an appearance, because in reality they were controlled by Moscow. The convention regarding the Danube regime was to be signed on 18 August 1948, in Belgrade. The accepted draft convention had many points of view common to both the Western and the Soviet vision: the creation, in principle, of a unitary Danube regime for the entire international course of the Danube within a single Commission; both proposals advanced the freedom of navigation of the Danube; both sides wanted the new Commission to act with less jurisdiction compared to the powers of the European Commission of the Danube/ECD. The American proposal required that, in accordance with the provisions of Article 25, the Danube Commission be in association with the United Nations, that the meetings of the Commission be open to representatives of the United Nations as observers, and that disputes be subject to settlement in accordance with Article 42 of the UN Charter. However, the Convention did not refer to the United Nations



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According to the Convention, the 11 riverain states ensured that they carried out the necessary activities to maintain and improve navigation conditions and undertook not to obstruct or hinder navigation on the navigable channels of the Danube. The Danube Delta would come under the control of a Soviet-Romanian sub-commission, and the Iron Gates under the authority of a Romanian-Yugoslav sub-commission.

and advanced an ad hoc Conciliation Commission as a way to resolve disputes, according to the provisions of Article 45. According to Article 47, the convention entered into force as soon as the instruments of ratification of the six states were deposited. The additional protocol of the convention cancelled all the obligations of the International Danube Commission and those of the European Danube Commission regarding the credits granted by Great Britain, France, Russia and other states without compensation. The same protocol stated that the provisions of the Paris Convention of 23 July 1921 as well as the former documents that laid the foundations of the Danube regime were null and void.

The conference in Belgrade represented a new chapter in the history of the river, as the idea of free navigation on the Danube was agreed, under the exclusive control of the riverain states. According to the Convention, the 11 riverain states ensured that they carried out the necessary activities to maintain and improve navigation conditions and undertook not to obstruct or hinder navigation on the navigable channels of the Danube. The Danube Delta would come under the control of a Soviet-Romanian sub-commission, and the Iron Gates under the authority of a Romanian-Yugoslav sub-commission. The delegations of the 11 participating countries (Austria in an advisory capacity) were led by: Felix Orsini Rosenberg for Austria, Evghenii Kamenov for Bulgaria, Erik Molnar for Hungary (ambassador of the country in Belgrade), Ana Pauker for Romania (Minister of Foreign Affairs), Charles Peake for Great Britain (representative of the country in Belgrade), Cavendish Cannon for the USA (ambassador in the Yugoslav capital), Andrei Vishinski for the USSR, Adrien Thierry for France (ambassador in Belgrade), Vladimir Clementis for Czechoslovakia (foreign minister), Ales Bebler for Yugoslavia (deputy foreign minister) and Baranovski, the deputy prime minister of Ukraine.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DANUBE ISSUE

Returning to the presentation of the Danube issue within the mentioned document in the heritage of the National Military Museum, we can note a deep and detailed analysis of numerous aspects related to the history of this topic as well as some economic and statistical data related to the economic importance of this waterway for the Romanian state.

In the introductory chapter, a series of geographical data concerning the sources, route, important tributaries and their navigable routes, flow, dikes etc. are presented in great detail. From the point of view of navigability, it is stated that the Danube was divided into 12 sectors, which are also described in detail, with a series of observations made on the 10th sector, between km 1,049 and 930 Moldova Veche-Turnu Severin (119 km), also known as the Iron Gates, about which it is said: *“This sector is the most important, because it controls the entire route Vienna-Black Sea..., is the only remaining great obstacle to the connection between the North Sea and the Black Sea”* (Ib., tab 7). In the argumentation accompanying this comment, the difficult navigation conditions are revealed due to the numerous rocks, close to each other, the shallow depths, the strong currents, 18 km/h and often in the transverse direction to the direction of advance, the insufficient width of the channels that do not allow ships to cross, as well as the time lost by breaking and restoring the convoys that pass there and *“the onerous cost per ton”* that is required for passage. Although it is recalled that numerous efforts were made after the Congress of Berlin, in 1878, to improve the navigation conditions in this sector, the persistence of these difficulties is noted, but it is specified that: *“Grandiose works in project phase nevertheless predict the solution of these difficulties”* (Ib., tab. 8). Moreover, details regarding the history of the works carried out at the Iron Gates represent the topic of chapter III of the first part of the document.

Another special mention is made in relation to the presentation of the 12th sector, from km 171 to km 0, the one entitled *Maritime Danube*, the last sector of the Danube, with the three branches: Chilia, Sulina and Sf. George. Regarding this sector, it is specified: *“The importance of this sector exceeds all others, because here is the problem of maintaining the exit to the sea, a problem with many aspects, which for almost a century was the Gordian knot of the Danube issue and it is certain that it will be again, because not only technical obstacles have to be overcome, but also numerous political problems have their key here”* (Ib.) It is also stated that: *“This region forms the object of the following study and will be looked at in all aspects ..., in order to emphasize once more the vital importance of the Danube for Romania and Europe”* (Ib.)



ROMANIAN
MILITARY
THINKING

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The second chapter, entitled “Out to the Sea”, presents the history of the works carried out under the auspices of the European Commission of the Danube, those accomplished by the Directorate of the Maritime Danube, as well as those performed both at Gura Sulina and on the Sulina River Canal. The activity of the European Commission of the Danube is detailed and appreciated, bringing to attention the fact that, at the basis of those works, there were hydrographic data collected by a series of engineers: “At the time when, following the Paris Treaty, the ECD was established, the Delta and the branches of the Danube were unexplored regions. There were no accurate maps, no hydrographic data. Although, following the studies conducted by the British Government, executed by Commander Spratt⁴, before 1856, there were some hydrographic data, otherwise very important, and the complete elevation of the region was the work of the Chief Engineer of the Commission, Charles Hartley⁵. Of real use in the completion of this work were the preliminary designs for the improvement of the Sulina and Sf. Gheorghe, developed in 1856 by the Austrian engineers G. Wex⁶ and Fl. Passetti⁷, plus the works of M. Nobiling⁸, who,

⁴ T.A.B. Spratt arrived at Sulina on the ship “Medina” of the British Admiralty, as captain, in the summer of 1856, being considered intelligent and well versed in navigational matters; he made, that year, for the first time, a map that revealed the true shape of the delta coast; see Stancu, Șt. (2014). (2014). *România și Comisia europeană a Dunării. Diplomatie. Suveranitate. Cooperare Internațională*. Galați: Editura Muzeului de Istorie Galați, p. 73.

⁵ Charles Hartley (1825-1915), a British civil engineer, known as the “Father of the Danube”, was the one who carried out a series of mapping works of this river. He also worked on the construction of the port of Sutton, the Suez Canal, the Port of Odessa, the Mississippi River Delta etc. During the Crimean War (1853-1856), he was the deputy commander of the Anglo-Turkish gendarmerie corps at Kerch. Between 1856 and 1872, he was appointed chief engineer of the works carried out to improve navigation at the mouths of the Danube by the European Commission of the Danube, established after the Crimean War, following the Paris Peace Treaty of 1856. The representative of Great Britain in that commission was Major John Stokes, who requested that three engineers should be made available to him, including himself. After 1872, he was the consulting engineer of that Commission until 1907; for details of his biography see: Hartley, C.W.S. (1989). *A Biography of Sir Charles Hartley, Civil Engineer (1825-1915), The Father of the Danube*. Edwin Mellen Press, Lempton, 2 vols.

⁶ Austrian engineer Gustav Wex was the one who opposed the idea of developing the Chilia branch as a navigable canal, because, due to the high flow, it carried large amounts of alluvium, which would have caused problems for the mouths of the river; see *Lucrările tehnice efectuate pe Dunărea maritimă (1918-1938)*, p. 139.

⁷ Engineer Fl. Passetti shared the same opinion as Gustav Wex, his option being St. George branch. See *Ib.*, p. 139

⁸ Engineer A. Nobiling, director of hydraulic works on the Rhine, drew up a report on 25 June 1857 for the European Commission of the Danube; see County Directorate of Galați National Archives (D.J.A.N.G), Collection *Comisia Europeană a Dunării. Protocoale*, 1857, pp. 61-62, apud Ștefan Stancu, *op. cit.*, p. 74 (footnote no. 4).

as temporary assistant to the Prussian delegate, explored the mouths of the three branches in the summer of 1857” (M.St.M., Mss. 618, tab 9). Also, some things related to the activity of the commission are mentioned: the choice of the city of Tulcea as the main headquarters, the construction of workshops in Sulina, of a telegraph line of about 200 km between Sulina, Tulcea and Galați.

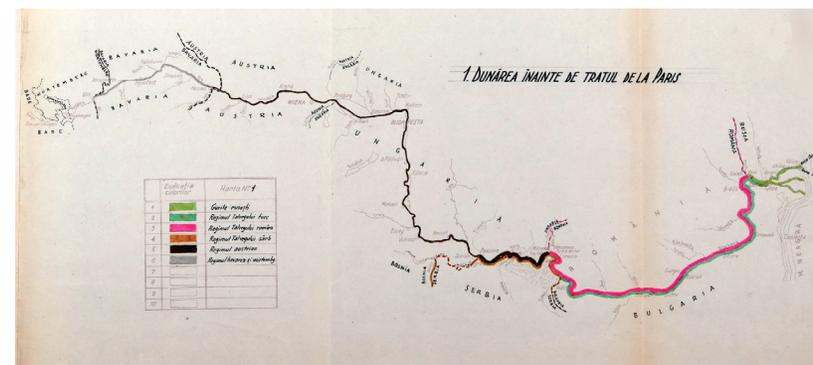


Photo 4: Map of the Danube regime before the Paris Treaty of 1856, presented in the annexed part of the document (Ib.)

After obtaining the necessary data, in 1858, the problem arose of choosing a solution for the exit to the sea, the option being between Sulina and Sf. Gheorghe branches, as the Chilia branch had numerous other branches and a secondary delta. A commission of technicians meeting in Paris, on 25 August 1858, opted for Sf. Gheorghe branch, on the condition that a 16-foot (4.88 m) deep canal lock should be built. In December 1858, the European Commission of the Danube took responsibility for the improvement of Sf. Gheorghe branch, the works being estimated at 17.5 million francs. The large sum of money and the competition with the new English line Cernavodă-Constanța caused the canal to be delayed, but work was undertaken on the Sulina canal. In the continuation of the document, the works from Sulina are presented chronologically, with a lot of technical details. Between 1858 and 1861, the temporary damming works that took place are mentioned, their cost amounting to 2,165,535 francs. Between 1866 and 1871, the execution of temporary works was a success leading to the increase of the depth to 8 feet. The commission decided to complete those works, as well as to build wooden quays, an administrative building and a hospital for sailors, Bara Sulina reaching 19 feet (5.79 m) in 1871.



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Between 1873 and 1894, the works maintained a constant depth of 20.5 feet (6.25 m), with little variation. In the period 1894-1930, alignment works are also mentioned, but also dredging works at the mouth, for which the Commission purchased a bucket dredger, "Percy-Sanderson", whose cost amounted to 1,007,365 francs, a large suction dredger, "Dimitrie Sturza", whose cost was 1,295,000 francs, which kept the bar at 24 feet (7.31 m) as well as the suction dredger "Carol Kuhl" in 1912 for work on the lower canal of Sulina.

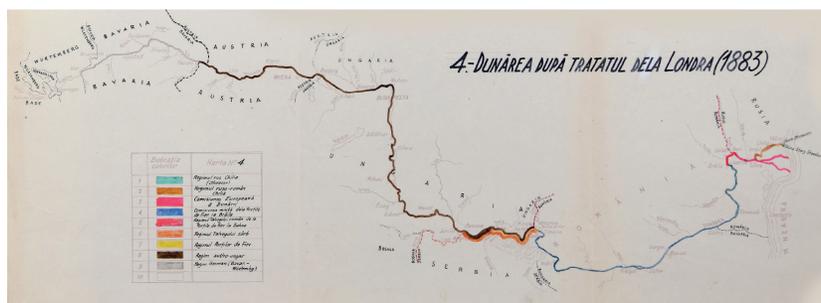


Photo 5: Map with the Danube regime after the London Treaty of 1883, presented in the annexed part of the document (lb.)

During the First World War, it is stated that the works at the mouths of the Danube were "massively" subsidized by the Romanian government, but were interrupted, because the material was used for dredging Chilia and Oceacov, for strategic and political reasons. The takeover of the material of the European Commission of the Danube by Russia was done on the basis of a lease contract, which, however, was not fully respected, and upon the return of the ECD, the new government installed in Moscow handed over the floating material and the taken dredges.

Between 1921-1930, the priority was dredging in order to reach a suitable depth, given the already mentioned interruption of the works during the war, followed by the extension of the existing dikes. Since 1926, the collaboration between the European Commission of the Danube and the specialized technical bodies of Romania is mentioned, which conducted a series of hydrographic studies in stages with a view to the access to the sea. In 1927, the contribution of the works carried out by the Hydrographic Service of the Royal Navy, which measured and studied the regime of sea currents in the Chilia-Gura Portiței area, was added. After the discussions in Sinaia, on 18 August 1938,



the technical attributions at the mouths of the Danube were taken over from the Commission by Romania. Starting on 13 May 1939, the technical service of the ECD was taken over by the Danube Maritime Directorate (DMD), its objectives being: maintaining navigation on the Sulina branch until a new exit to the sea was achieved, choosing an optimal solution in that regard and preparing the works for execution.

- 49 a -

1)
MĂRURILE INTRATE ȘI IȘTITE ÎN CABOTAJ ÎN PORTURILE FLUVIALE ÎN ANII 1931-1943.

ANUL	TOTAL		Sub pavilion român		Sub pavilion străin	
	Intrate tone	Iștite tone	Intrate tone	Iștite tone	Intrate tone	Iștite tone
1931	613.231	1.009.533	611.379	1.008.764	1.852	769
1932	656.775	986.637	633.935	948.162	22.840	38.475
1933	762.613	1.085.701	729.677	1.053.995	32.935	31.706
1934	1.007.518	1.084.306	965.754	1.039.221	41.764	45.085
1935	844.315	919.772	817.649	877.550	26.666	42.222
1936	834.450	1.106.069	805.868	1.032.539	28.582	73.530
1937	781.871	1.029.163	755.961	954.958	25.910	74.205
1938	840.771	1.030.194	824.515	996.825	16.256	33.369
1939	922.957	1.065.272	892.462	1.024.944	30.495	40.328
1940	717.612	719.931	700.605	692.210	17.007	27.721
1941	723.664	721.962	711.737	702.528	11.927	19.434
1942	694.256	643.861	688.143	639.444	6.113	4.417
1943	980.464	921.064	961.668	904.577	18.796	16.487

1). Încărcările și descărcările făcute numai între porturile românești de pe teritoriul din anul respectiv al țării.

Photo 6: The situation of the entry and exit of goods in river ports between 1931 and 1943, presented in the annexed part of the document (lb.)

Between 1942 and 1943, it is stated that, despite the difficulties encountered by the political context, works were carried out that ensured navigation on the Sulina canal. The conclusion of the chapter was that an important issue was imposed in the foreground, namely that, until the achievement of a way of access to the sea on St. Gheorghe branch, the existence of good navigability conditions on Sulina branch depended on the natural phenomena of growth of Stari Stambul branch, with the entire system of works to stop it, and the abandonment with or without intention of that system immediately attracted and compromised navigation on Sulina branch. Therefore, the document states: "The peace agreement with the USSR will definitely have to contain clauses to ensure the maintenance

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The general European component of the river's importance is analysed in the chapter entitled: "Future projects for the value of the Danube within the economic policy of Europe". The advantages that some works (part of which had already started) would bring for Europe, which would connect the large European hydrographic basins: achieving an economic balance between the industrial and agricultural regions, the intensification of traffic on the Danube.

of the works after Stari Stambul, which is a border region between us and the USSR, because only in this way will the Danube be able to have the value to which the existence of Europe has a right" (Ib., tab 24).

The next chapter, "History of the Works at the Iron Gates" delves into the evolution of improvements to navigation at the Iron Gates. The first works that had been carried out since the time of the Romans (a diversion channel and a tow road on the right bank), the cleaning works of the river bed downstream of Orșova carried out in 1834, to facilitate navigation, the works accomplished after the Congress of Berlin, by Austria-Hungary, which, despite some economic difficulties, entrusted them to the Berliner Diskonta Gesellschaft are mentioned; started on 15 September 1890, those works were completed in the fall of 1898. However, in September 1896, the Portile de Fier/Iron Gates channel was traversed by the ship "Franz Joseph", with Emperor Franz Joseph, King Carol I of Romania and the King of Serbia on board, finding that the proposed goal of giving a depth of 2 m at the cataracts and 3 m in the channel had been fulfilled. The document also underlines the enormous economic impact that the construction of dams, with related locks, and hydroelectric plants would have here, including for our country: "This electricity (approx. 450,000 H.P. would return to Romania), which would mean, through the reduced price at which it would come per kw/h (approx. 1 centime gold), the possibility of transforming the entire region into an industrial plant..." (Ib., tab 27).

From a strictly navigational point of view, it was stated that, in the case of the completion of such a project, the time needed to cross the sector would be considerably reduced: "It is enough to compare the 52 hours needed for the crossing by a 3,600-ton convoy, pulled by a 1,500 H.P. tugboat, in the present situation, and the time of 17 hours (including the time lost by passing the locks) which the same convoy, pulled by a tug of only 500 H.P. would take" (Ib.).

The general European component of the river's importance is analysed in the chapter entitled: "Future projects for the value of the Danube within the economic policy of Europe". The advantages that some works (part of which had already started) would bring for Europe, which would connect the large European hydrographic basins: achieving an economic balance between the industrial and agricultural regions, the intensification of traffic on the Danube, the consecration

of important naval communication nodes on the Danube, the shortening of distances etc. The detailed projects were: Rhine-Main-Danube Canal, Danube-Oder-Elbe-Vistula Canal, Polish Canals, Romanian Danube Canals (Bucharest-Danube Canal, Cernavodă-Constanța Canal). Regarding the shortening of distances, it was shown that the completion of the Danube-Oder-Elbe-Vistula Canal works, estimated according to the project at 940 million Austrian gold crowns, would have meant a reduction of 3,656 km between Sulina and Rotterdam, 3,270 km between Sulina and Hamburg, 2,920 km between Sulina and Stettin and 3,290 km between Sulina and Danzing. Regarding the Bucharest-Danube Canal, the document specifies that the work had an estimated cost, in 1930, of about 3 billion lei and would have been granted by the Parliament as early as 1929, but, because of a lack of funds, it had not progressed to the construction phase, remaining in the project stage. At the same time, it is emphasized the economic importance that its construction would have had for Bucharest and its surroundings, the improvement of the entire communication system of the country, the decongestion of the access lines to the capital.

The three projects proposed for this objective are briefly presented, each with their advantages and disadvantages: "Eng. Vasilescu⁹ and Pavel¹⁰ Project – which captures about 23,400 H.P. on the outskirts of Bucharest – variant 1 and 15,400 H.P. option II – The navigable channel is on almost the entire Bucharest-Oltenița distance, parallel to C.F. Project Eng. Al. Davidescu¹¹ – captures 38,000 H.P. – it connects with the Danube but in a wild point and is far from C.F. – It has vast irrigation possibilities – Eng. Leonida¹² and Canella¹³ – capture

⁹ Engineer Gr. Vasilescu. In 1927, it was decided to abandon any projects with reference to the Sulina way out, proposing that, in the future, the studies should focus only on the transformation of the Sulina canal into a sea canal, locked, equipped with a new exit to the sea, south of the then mouth; see David, Al. (2010). *Lucrările tehnice efectuate pe Dunărea maritimă (1918-1938)*, in *Analele Universității "Dunărea de Jos" Galați, Istorie*, vol. IX, p. 139.

¹⁰ Dorin Pavel, renowned hydrologist.

¹¹ Engineer Al. Davidescu proposed to Bucharest City Hall, in 1913, the construction of the Bucharest-Fierbinți (Ialomîța) canal and another one, which would have united Sabarul with Motiștea, and in 1927, he would bring his improved project back to the attention of the city councils, see Popov, M., 1998, *Momente din istoria controversatului Canal Dunăre-București*, in "Muzeul Național", no. 10, p. 89.

¹² Engineer Dimitrie Leonida, after the First World War, was the one who was actively involved in arguing the need for a canal to connect Bucharest with the Danube.

¹³ Ricardo Canella, reputed specialist in hydraulics, collaborated in the interwar period with engineer Dimitrie Leonida, on the same idea; their project was supported by Cincinat Sfințescu.



ROMANIAN
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In 1929, the Romanian Parliament was to approve the draft of a law for the construction of the canal, the explanation of reasons being made by Virgil Madgearu, but the crisis of 1929 prevented its implementation.

approx. 28,000 H.P. – It is only a small part parallel to C.F. Oltenita and neglects the possibility of irrigation” (M.St.M., Mss. 618, tab 31)¹⁴. The purpose of the Cernavodă-București Canal was to ensure a new way of access to the Black Sea, but also to shorten the road to the East by about 400 km. The document says that its length was only 60 km, but it certainly constituted a great advantage for the national economy and reduced the sums added to the price of exported goods, giving the opportunity to compete in foreign markets with a chance of success. The Hungarian ministerial advisor Hajos would have developed a project in this sense during the German occupation from 1916-1918, the cost of which was estimated at about 3.8 billion (114 million gold crowns) in 1916. Another project had been carried out by the engineers Bârglăzan¹⁵ and Smigelschi¹⁶ and included the construction of a canal from Constanța to Cernavodă, with a depth of 8 m and a width of 100 m, the project also meaning the supply of the energy captured from the river’s waters of 80,000 H.P. and over 50,000 ha given to culture, the cost being 14 billion lei (in 1930).

“The last project, which had started before the war entered the constructive phase, provided for the exit of this canal at Tașaul. Lake Tașaul was to be transformed into a large port... for the export of oil and the tactical and strategic needs of the war fleet. The arrangements for the new port, although began at a brisk pace, were interrupted by the events which led to the outbreak of the war” (M.St.M, Mss. 618, tab 32). In 1929, the Romanian Parliament was to approve the draft of a law for the construction of the canal, the explanation of reasons being made by Virgil Madgearu, but the crisis of 1929 prevented its implementation. At the same time, our document draws attention to a certain position of the USSR, which the construction of such a canal would have generated: “As for the political future, we believe that this canal could be the subject of future diplomatic discussions, because, to some extent, it would isolate Russia from the main economic traffic line

¹⁴ For details on the history of projects related to this idea, see Popov, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-95, note no. 11.

¹⁵ Engineer Aurel Bârglăzan, graduate of the Polytechnic, class of 1928, university professor, member of the Romanian Academy, is considered the founder of the Romanian school of hydraulic machines.

¹⁶ Engineer Octavian Smighelschi collaborated with engineer Aurel Bârglăzan to identify technical solutions for better navigability of the Black Sea-Danube Canal.

of the Danube. It would be a situation that would certainly give rise to demands from the USSR, which, taking into account the policy pursued for two centuries, wants the southern border to rely at least on the exit to the sea of the most important economic artery of Europe – the Danube”. (Ib., tab 33).

All the economic aspects related to the economic importance of the river are summarized in a small chapter. It is stated, first, that the average annual traffic in Romanian waters between 1931 and 1943 was 9 million tons of goods and 540,000 passengers, of which 31,000 by sea and 508,000 on the Danube and other navigable waters. After presenting some statistical data regarding imports and exports between different Danube states, the document emphasizes an interesting aspect, namely the need to create an economic union of all the riverain states: “Since an important coefficient of the total value of the import and export of each Danube state is absorbed by the other Danube states, an economic union of all the Danube states, which complement each other so perfectly, would create the ideal climate for the development of all these countries and is safe and secure of eternal peace in this region, which was once characterized as a hotbed of conflict” (Ib., tab 45). After reviewing other past ideas on this topic, two reasons why this idea was not successful are identified, one secondary and one primary. The secondary one referred to the fear that England and France had that such economic union, once achieved, would balance the economic needs of the Danube states through direct exchanges, closing an important market for the two great powers. As for the main reason, it was said that: “Nazi and Fascist expansionist policies saw in this bloc a serious obstacle to the achievement of their goals” (Ib., tab 46).

As for the existing European context at the time when the analysis was conducted within the document we are considering, it was stated: “Today, in 1946, on the eve of peace, the situation has changed. Two great powers have disappeared from Europe: Italy and Germany. What is more, together with them, a good part of the German industry that had a massive outlet in the Danube countries also disappeared... The outlet left vacant by the disappearance of Germany is of great importance” (Ib., tab 47). The problem that is analysed a little more extensively is that of which political entity after the war was to replace the void left



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by the lack of industrial products that had until then been provided by Germany, given that the statistics presented in this material indicated that the volume of commercial transactions with Germany was, for the Danube states, between 20% and 60%. According to the document, the question that arose in the new context was: *“Who will take over this market? Who will be able to completely replace Germany...?”*, under the conditions in which it was shown that: *“The industrial products brought by Germany in the past are imperatively needed especially now, when all these countries are in full reconstruction”* (Ib.).

Very interesting is the answer given in this document, an answer that covered several hypotheses. One of the hypotheses was that Czechoslovakia and Austria would be able to partially take the place of Germany, in the near future, but only partially, most of it being questioned. In this sense, it was stated: *“It is possible that it will be taken over by the Anglo-Americans or that it will still belong to Germany, but to a Germany controlled by the 4 great powers. In the first hypothesis, a dominant position in the economic life of a state also means a political influence. It would not suit the USSR. The second hypothesis, in the same way, strikes at Russian interests, which seem to be contrary to the economic existence of a Germany, even if it is absolutely pacified. As we see, the USSR is in the paradoxical situation of not being able to accept any of these solutions, and also unable to offer any solution. As for a possible substitution of it in Germany’s economic role for the Danube countries, it is out of the question. Russia itself has great needs for industrial products, for which it offers the same agricultural products as the Danube countries. Two possibilities remain: –Russia to be a direct negotiator on foreign markets and the distribution body, then, for all the Danube countries. But it would be equivalent to a total economic enslavement. The current progressive mentality being against political and economic strangulation, we exclude this hypothesis. The second was debated in the previous days. The economic union of the Danube countries”* (Ib., tab 48).

In the end, the conclusion was: *“In the light of these aspects – as seen –, the need to achieve an economic cooperation of the Danube states does not lose any of its importance or topicality, but, on the contrary, appears as the most reliable solution for the consolidation of both peace and economic development in this region”* (Ib.).

In the continuation of the document, after a brief analysis of the difficulties related to the maritime trade of the Danube (both natural and economic), it was said that: *“the pursuit of a naval program of provision and continuous care in order to achieve an exploitation that gives the maximum yield must be the chief concern of the state. In these improvement measures, the protection and encouragement that the State must give to private initiative must not be neglected. Only in this climate of free competition will it be possible to obtain the optimal conditions for the development of Romanian exports”* (Ib., tab 52).

CONCLUSIONS

In the concluding chapter, the importance of this river as well as of the principle of free navigation is reiterated once again, being, at the same time, emphasized the idea that the in-depth study of the clauses in the previous treaties regarding this aspect *“will make the mistakes of the past be used as lessons for the future in this area. Not resolving them fairly will always leave an open door for new misunderstandings and thus for new conflicts that may end with a gun in hand”* (Ib., tab 55).

Another conclusion was that, being a riverain state for a long part of the river and its mouths, the role played by Romania had to be of the first order in the future. It was also stated that the problem of the mouths of the Danube was correlated with that of the Black Sea, because *“the breath of our trade”* depended on the two. At the same time, regarding the mouths of the Danube, it was stated that: *“The past shows us that, whenever we were masters of them, our State was strong, and the trade of the Romanian countries experienced flourishing periods, and conversely, whenever they were not ours, we experienced times of political decay and economic ruin”* (Ib., tab 56). In this sense, the year 1916 was given as an example, after the occupation of 2/3 of the country, when trade completely stagnated, due to the transformation of the Danube into a *“road of the interests of only these countries (Germany, Austria-Hungary) to the Black Sea”*. Another point emphasized was that the closure of the Black Sea Straits or restrictions on the matter would mean *“the cessation of all economic activity and ties between peoples”* (Ib.).



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Talleyrand referring to the importance of the Danube, said that: "Le center de gravité du monde n'est ni sur L'Elbe, ni sur L'Adige; il est la bas, aux frontières de L'Europe, sur le Danube". The document specifies that "these words, uttered by a political figure like Talleyrand in the 19th century, can form an undisputed truth for 1946 as well".

Also as a conclusion, the need to have knowledge on this topic and its importance for Romania was emphasized, because "our current interests and what the future holds for us" depend on "how it will be supported and resolved at the peace conference", along with the support of the other Romanian objectives, resulting in "our future economic and political progress or regression" (Ib.) An example was also given of what the ignorance of our interests in this matter meant, namely an event that happened in 1917, when this part of the country was still under the control of the Central Powers: "Through a telegram sent to a Romanian authority by Gen. Mackensen, it was demanded that the Romanian sanitary installations at the mouth of the Danube should be made available to Germany, with the intention of removing Romania from this right won on the Danube. The communication, being transmitted to a department, was executed immediately on the initiative of the General Secretariat, without asking for the approval of the higher or competent bodies, which could perhaps have removed this new task imposed on Romania... The above would have had quite serious consequences, if the Armistice of 1918 had not solved the problem by defeating those who were grabbing everything for themselves" (Ib., tab 57).

Also here is a quote from Talleyrand¹⁷'s memoirs, which, referring to the importance of the Danube, said that: "Le center de gravité du monde n'est ni sur L'Elbe, ni sur L'Adige; il est la bas, aux frontières de L'Europe, sur le Danube". The document specifies that "these words, uttered by a political figure like Talleyrand in the 19th century, can form an undisputed truth for 1946 as well" (M.St.M., Mss. 618, tab 57).

Regarding the connection between the mouths of the Danube and the Sea as well as its importance, the words of King Carol I of Romania, in the speech he gave on the occasion of the inauguration of the first vessel of the Romanian Maritime Service, are brought to attention as follows: "Our future is on the Sea"¹⁸.

¹⁷ Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord (1754-1839) was a French politician and diplomat who held a number of important positions, such as adviser, ambassador, foreign minister, president of the Council of Ministers. He was the one who represented France at the Congress of Vienna in 1815.

¹⁸ The importance that King Carol I of Romania attached to the regime of this river emerges from his memoirs in different contexts, especially that of the signing of the Treaty of Berlin, in 1878; see: *Memoriile Regelui Carol al României. De un martor ocular*, vol. IV, 1878-1881 (1994). București: Editura Machiavelli, pp. 139-169.



In his speech in the House of Commons, in 1946, Ernest Bevin, the British Foreign Secretary, said: "We hope to sail to Odessa, the Black Sea and Constanta in all freedom, but we do not ask for military bases. Our desire is the free movement of vessels and world trade".

The final chapter continues with several tables presenting a series of statistical data relating to the import and export by water in the period 1931-1943, by various categories: cereals, petroleum products and derivatives, wood, ores, food, coal etc., a table by nationality of the ships loaded in the port of Sulina, in the period 1 January-31 December 1938. Another table attached shows the number of postal and passenger ships leaving the Danube in the same period.

Also in the final part of the first part of the document is presented the subchapter entitled "History of the regulation of navigation on international rivers". Starting from some general considerations regarding this aspect, related to the Egyptians, the Roman and medieval periods, as well as reiterating the principles of the French Revolution, the document lists the most important regulations regarding navigation on the Danube, contained in various international treaties (the Paris Convention of 1856, the London Treaty of 1871, the Berlin Treaty of 1878, the London Conference of 1883, the Bucharest Treaty of 1918, the Peace Treaties of 1918) etc.

Another sub-chapter is dedicated to the situation of navigation on the Danube and in the Black Sea straits in 1946, "in light of the political groping and the meetings of the foreign ministers and their deputies until 29 July 1946, when 21 nations met at the Paris Conference" (M.St.M, Mss. 618, tab 104). It is actually a sort of detailed report of the diplomatic meetings and discussions between the various parties on the subject of Danube navigation in the context of the Paris Conference. According to the mentioned archival document, "The focus on this issue has been especially since June, being discussed by the Deputy Foreign Ministers during the meeting held in Paris on 5 June" (Ib.), the discussions ending without any conclusion. Then, the visit to London of the Austrian foreign minister, Karl Gruber¹⁹, two weeks before the meeting of foreign ministers in Paris, is reminded, who presented the British foreign minister, Ernest Bevin²⁰, with a seven-point

¹⁹ Karl Gruber (1909-1995), an Austrian politician and diplomat. Shortly after the end of the Second World War, he became Minister of Foreign Affairs in Austria, a position he held until 1953. He was also Austria's Ambassador to the United States of America, between 1954-1957 and 1969-1972, to Spain, between 1961-1966, to the Federal Republic of Germany in 1966, and to Switzerland, between 1972-1974.

²⁰ Ernest Bevin (1881-1951) served as Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs from 1945 to 1951, an opponent of communism and a supporter of the creation of NATO.



In the same speech, Ernest Bevin specified that the position adopted by Great Britain in Paris was that of the need to restore commercial freedom and navigation on the Danube and other routes, as well as to protect the commercial rights of states interested in the principle of open ports.

memorandum, which included his country's point of view, at point 4 being provided: *"The reopening of river traffic on the Danube for all the Danube States, from the source to the Danube's discharge into the sea"*, specifying that the Danube was closed to Austrian vessels. It is reminded the speech in the House of Commons of the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, who said: *"We hope to sail to Odessa, the Black Sea and Constanta in all freedom, but we do not ask for military bases. Our desire is the free movement of vessels and world trade"*. (M.St.M., Mss. 618, tab 104). Obviously, the entire speech of the minister is not presented, only certain ideas being selected, among which the fact that, at the time, there was no regular traffic on the Danube, as well as the position of the Danube states in the context of the Paris Conference: *"It was observed, in recent statements, that it could not be considered fair for some non-Danube States to dictate the Danube issue and to impose a regime, because they have no concern for the interests of the Danube States"* (Ib., tab 105). In the same speech, the minister specified that the position adopted by Great Britain in Paris was that of the need to restore commercial freedom and navigation on the Danube and other routes, as well as to protect the commercial rights of states interested in the principle of open ports. The document then continues with Turkey's position, presenting, in this regard, the clarifications made by Radio Ankara, on 6 June 1946, after the speech of the British Foreign Minister in the Chamber: *"opposing, once again, the request of the USSR to be granted naval bases in the Dardanelles, the British Government sides with Turkey in the matter of the Straits..., according to the stipulations of Montreux, any request for revision of this convention must be notified to all the high contracting parties three months before the expiration of the current period. This period ends in November 1946. A decision must therefore be taken before August current year, otherwise the convention will automatically be extended for another five years"* (Ib.). Turkiye considered the Montreux Convention the only legal basis on which the review of the existing regime could be founded. Another state whose position is analysed in the document is Hungary. It is recalled that Ferenc Nagy²¹, the Prime Minister of Hungary, who was in Washington on 14 June 1946, shared

²¹ Ferenc Nagy (1903-1979), Hungarian politician, held the position of Prime Minister of Hungary between 4 February 1946 and 31 May 1947.

the British point of view regarding the international control of the Danube. It was also specified that, on 15 June 1946, during the meeting in Paris, at the Luxembourg Palace, of the four foreign ministers of the Great Powers, a month after another meeting of them, on 16 May 1946, the Danube issue was brought up again, meanwhile occurring the capture of the German fleet on the Danube in the American zone. It is recalled, in this context, the comment from Radio Moscow, on 17 June 1946, which reflected the Soviet point of view: *"Great Britain's claims on this matter are unjustified and this problem can be solved by the Danube states themselves, without any further foreign intervention"* (M.St.M., Mss. 618, tab 106).

Another event presented in the document is the meeting of the four foreign ministers on 25 June 1946, when the question of free navigation on the Danube was brought back into discussion, V. Molotov²²'s position being repeated, namely that the navigation regime on the Danube is a matter that must be regulated between the Danube countries and that there are no reasons for this matter to be included in the peace treaties. The other three foreign ministers maintained their point of view, namely that this clause should be included in the peace treaties and that the Danube countries express their opinion at the conference of the 21 nations.

Also in this chapter it is emphasized that, between 16 May and 16 June, before the beginning of the conference of the four foreign ministers, their deputies met 20 times. The document went on to specify that, in the following meeting, when the discussions on the Danube navigation issue were resumed, the English and American delegates insisted on the introduction of special clauses in the treaties with Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria, obliging them to maintain a different regime regarding the Danube navigation. It was opposed by the delegate of the USSR, who stated that this issue also concerns Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia and not only the states with which peace treaties must be concluded, because, without their inclusion, it is impossible to solve the issue. Czech Minister Jan Garrigue Masaryk²³

²² Veaceslav Molotov (1890-1986), one of the most important Soviet leaders, who, at that time, held the position of Minister of Foreign Affairs in USSR, a position held until 1949, when he was replaced by Andrei Vishinski.

²³ Jan Garrigue Masaryk (1886-1948), Czech diplomat and politician, who, between 1940 and 1948, was the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Czechoslovakia.



V. Molotov's position was that the navigation regime on the Danube is a matter that must be regulated between the Danube countries and that there are no reasons for this matter to be included in the peace treaties.



is also said to have told the press on his return from London that he rallied to the Soviet point of view. The document also briefly presents other proposals made during the discussions, on 27, 28, 29 June 1946, by either one side or the other, all without any result. Then, the meetings of the four foreign ministers since the end of the conference are mentioned, which also did not lead to any results.

In this context, the statement of Ernest Bevin, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, dated 11 July 1946, was also mentioned, in which he emphasized that, if the problem of free navigation on the Danube was not resolved, he would not sign any treaty with any former satellite state. Next, the document that is the subject of this study stated the following: *“This thorny issue remains to be debated in the conference of the 21 nations, which will meet on 29 July current year in Paris, and, during the two months that it will last, a solution will be reached that will satisfy the vital interests of our country”* (M.St.M., Mss. 618, tab 109). It was also shown that the presence of V.A. Alexander²⁴, First Lord of the British Admiralty in Paris, at the Conference of 21 nations *“denotes that the question of navigation on the Danube will be one of the most important problems that the conference will have to deal with”* (ib., tab. 109).

The second part of this document, on the cover of which the royal coat of arms is still in relief, includes the annexes of the document, including several maps: a general map of the Danube, several maps with the mouths of the Danube, maps representing the river after the change of regime following several treaties, a general map of the Black Sea, but also of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles straits. Most of these maps are drawn by hand, and from a chronological point of view, the closest are: a map representing Gura Sulina, from 1943, one of Sf. Gheorghe branch, from 1942, and a general map of the Danube, from 1940. The final appendices refer to specific provisions regarding the Danube regime from certain treaties, protocol conventions etc., the last ones being the Sinaia Convention of 1938 and the Agreement regarding the entry of Germany into the ECD and this country as well as Italy's joining the Sinaia arrangement, in 1939.

²⁴ Albert Victor Alexander (1885-1965), British Labour politician who, between 1945 and 1946, was First Lord of the Admiralty, and between 1946 and 1950 was Minister of Defence.

In conclusion, this document represents a genuine synthesis of the Danube issue, its ways out, but also the Black Sea, reflecting the concerns of the Romanian authorities regarding the detailed knowledge of this subject in the context of the end of the war and the start of peace negotiations. At the same time, it emphasizes, once again, the political, geostrategic and economic importance of this river both for Romania and for the other riverain states.

Another noteworthy aspect is that the document brings to attention some ideas whose topicality surprises us, such as the creation of an economic union of the Danube states or the creation of canals to connect different European points for an easier transit of goods.

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