

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND LANDMARKS OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE "SOCIETY FOR THE RESCUE OF SHIPWRECKERS FROM ROMANIAN TERRITORIAL WATERS" - SALVAMAR - 1933

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Abstract

The study aims to point out some landmarks of the efforts of the Romanian authorities to institutionalize during the interwar period the activities of rescue and limitation of the negative effects of shipwrecks in Romanian territorial waters. The interwar period assumed a new configuration of power poles in the field of navigation, as well as an increase and diversification of the volume of activities in this segment. In this context, in order to align with some international wishes in the matter of navigation, in 1933, the leading factors from Bucharest decided to establish "Salvamar" - the Society for the Rescue of Shipwrecked in Romanian Territorial Waters, which came to give new values to the measures of navigation safety in Romanian territorial waters and to increase the visibility of our country on the international level by developing collaborations with similar institutions from other states.

Keywords: navigation, rescue, salvage, Romanian harbors

General landmarks regarding navigation on the Danube in the interwar period

The international context regarding river and maritime Danube navigation, after the First World War, was characterized by a redefinition of the spheres of influence in this field as well. The end of the First World War produced significant changes in the situation of the commercial fleets involved in navigation on the Danube, an important moment in this transformation process being the Paris Conference (1921) regarding the transfer of ships and other infrastructure and navigation assets by the defeated states (Germany, Austria, Hungary and Bulgaria) to countries from the victorious coalition (Czechoslovakia, Romania, Greece and the Kingdom of Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian [1]).

The conference was held under the arbitration of the USA, represented by Walker D. Hines, the negotiations having as reference various articles of the peace treaties concluded with the defeated powers. [2]

All these treaties stipulated that the defeated states were to cede to the allied powers certain properties related to navigation on the Danube, with the mention that the ceasings were made under American arbitration. Interested states sent delegates who argued their point of view before Hines and his assistants.

The discussions involved addressing issues related to vessels or navigational aids in separate disputes, as follows: between Germany, Austria and Hungary, on the one hand, and France, Romania and the Kingdom of Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian on the other; between Hungary and

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Czechoslovakia, on the one hand, and France and the Kingdom of Serbo-Croatian-Slovene and Bulgaria respectively, on the other. Italy also intervened in these disputes, which claimed possession of certain vessels. To highlight the factual situation, the American arbitrator and his assistants made numerous trips on the Danube, from Passau (Germany) to Giurgiu and Ruse (Bulgaria). [3]

The 1921 conference envisaged the discussion of several issues, namely: the confiscation of private property in wartime conditions; the status and allocation of disputed vessels by ownership and nationality; the legal regime of private property engaged by belligerent states for military purposes; the effect of military actions after the armistice between some of the belligerent states; the necessity that the concessions made by Germany, Austria, and Hungary correspond to the legitimate needs of the Allied Powers; the legitimate needs of the states regarding the transport of goods related to the situation of the traffic of goods since 1911; cessions to Czechoslovakia, Romania and the Kingdom of Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian; fleet sizes and theoretical freight needs for Germany, Austria and Hungary, etc. [4]

After the war, the changes were far-reaching: Austria and Hungary lost important navigation facilities to Romania, the Kingdom of Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian, France and Czechoslovakia. Romania's shipping interests grew substantially, and the Yugoslav syndicate came to own the largest tonnage on the river. At the same time, an important Czechoslovak concern, new French and Dutch companies appeared in the navigation landscape, and Lloyd Bavarez had a substantial rise. [5]

An important element captured in Hines' material regarding the streamlining of Danube traffic and navigation activities referred to the difficulties faced by shipping companies in certain ports, generated by: excessive bureaucracy imposed by certain riparian states, non-compliant attitudes of state officials in some ports, the lack of legal regulations necessary to streamline Danube traffic, etc. The elimination of some of these shortcomings could have been done faster, to the extent that the decision-makers of the European state actors would have realized the need to increase the volume of Danube products in as many markets as possible and to include Danube traffic in as many international trade routes as possible. Hines expressed his belief that the question regarding the potential of profile companies to improve navigation on the Danube, by strengthening their own capacities, but also by streamlining and expanding operations, needed to be clarified. [6]

Comparing the pre-war situation with that of 1925, Hines described in detail the Danube traffic situation on all levels of interest (actors involved, infrastructure, economic conditions and developments, political context, etc.), in an attempt to offer solutions for its reconstruction, starting from the new premises after the war. In context, it is highlighted that the key elements in this reconstruction, namely the shipping companies directly involved in this far-reaching process, were the only ones who had to identify the best ways to increase their own efficiency and collaboration, aimed at avoiding capital waste and workforce. [7]

In the interwar period, we witness the same increased interest of the great powers but also of other economic actors for navigation on the Maritime Danube, as well as an increase in the presence in Romanian ports of the pavilions of the victorious powers (English and French), simultaneously with the decrease in the representation of the defeated (Austrian, German and Hungarian). A plus for Romanian ports is the development of the interest of US shipping companies for their presence in this area. Taking advantage of the changes in the post-war organization of the world as a result of the treaties after the First World War, in the historical context of the disappearance of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the international isolation of the political regime in the USSR, the Romanian state gradually managed to impose its sovereignty and to exercise a certain political and economic control over the international

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navigation policies on the course of the Romanian Danube. Foreign shipping companies recognize the administrative authority of the Romanian Government, in this case, our right of sovereignty over the navigable channel at the Maritime Danube.

Institutional developments of navigation in Romania during the interwar period

In the interwar period, the Romanian state continued its massive investments both in the development of port infrastructure and facilities, especially in Constanța, Brăila and Galați, as well as in the administrative-institutional area, on all levels related to navigation. The measures adopted at the institutional level have resulted in several milestones, which will be highlighted below.

On September 16, 1919, the Central Ports Commission (CCP) was established, subordinated to the Ministry of Public Works (MLP). [8] The duties of the CCP aimed to study all matters and submit proposals to the MLP regarding the regime, development and use of the sea and river ports of Romania, as well as the examination of all decisions that would be subject to their approval by the MLP. The structures of the CCP included: an honorary president, an executive president (in the person of the general director of the PCA), engineers, lawyers and experts appointed by the MLP, one delegate each from the ministries of the Interior, of Foreign Affairs, of Finance, and of Industry and Commerce, of Agriculture and Domains, the presidents of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry from Bucharest, Galați, Brăila and Constanța, a delegate of the General Directorate of Romanian Railways, a delegate of the Superior Technical Council, a delegate of the Union of Romanian Industrialists and a delegate of Union of Romanian Shipowners. At the same time, the position of secretary of the Commission was held by an engineer, appointed by MLP from the PCA.

For the ports of Galati, Brăila and Constanța, local commissions composed of engineers and other experts were established. Commissions studied matters related to the development and use of these ports, and the results of the studies were sent to the CCP for consideration. For the other ports, the studies were done by the Hydraulic Service Directorate, which consulted with the local structures in the respective port, after which the studies were also sent to the same CCP. [9]

Also, after years of efforts, on March 8, 1928, the Romanian Naval League (LNR) was established, whose goals were: the development of the Romanian maritime power, the war and commercial navy, the river and sea ports, the access routes on the coast of the sea and navigable rivers. The institution had to fight for the realization of the naval program of the national navy and naval aviation, to create a maritime life on the Romanian coast, to contribute to the establishment of nautical institutions and schools for the training of officers, mechanics, sailors and pilots necessary for the national commercial navy, to support the establishment of associations or civil societies or of any kind whose purpose was the organization of water transport routes, the establishment of installations in ports, canals, lighthouses, radio beacons, traffic lights, posts and rescue stations as well as any other necessary works in view of the necessity and safety of navigation. Last but not least, the LNR was to support the establishment of shipyards, naval arsenals, shipbuilding, to establish an Academy of Marine Sciences and an institute for the study of hydrography and oceanography in the Black Sea, etc. [10]

The General Directorate of Ports and Waterways, subordinate to the Ministry of Communications, came under the authority of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce on July 29, 1929, being renamed the Autonomous Ports and Waterways Directorate (RAPCA). Regia was organized as a legal entity, with headquarters in Bucharest, and brought together all

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services related to ports and navigation under a unitary coordination. The institution was exempt from taxes to the state budget and local authorities. The inventory at its disposal in 1930 was worth approximately 3.5 billion lei and consisted of all the goods of the respective services, with the exception of those of the Romanian River Navigation (NFR), the Romanian Maritime Service (SMR) and the Turnu Severin Naval Shipyard.

On May 4, 1934, RAPCA was reorganized again, becoming the Commercial Ports and Waterways Administration. The directions and services of the former king were inherited by the new administrative structure.

In 1936, the Ministry of Air and Navy (MAM) came into being, a ministry that aimed to coordinate all Romanian air and maritime activities and services. In this context, MAM took over the SMR and NFR from the Commercial Administration of Ports and Waterways. [11]

On July 15, 1939, the Regulation of Romanian River Transports was developed, the last legal act dedicated to this matter before the outbreak of the Second World War. According to this Regulation, transports on barges, vessels and tanks were carried out on the basis of a transport contract concluded according to the Commercial Code in force. The transport of goods was done on the basis of a "letter", completed in duplicate, using the form issued by the NFR. The one who handed over the "letter" became responsible for the data entered in it and bore the consequences in the event of a forgery in the documents. The NFR could order the inspection of the goods at any time during the transport. The contract of carriage becomes final when the "delivered" stamp is applied to the "letter" and upon receipt of the duplicate by the sender. [12]

The steps taken by the Romanian authorities in the line of institutionalizing some segments of real importance for navigation also considered the establishment of a rescue society for shipwrecked people in Romanian territorial waters, an aspect that we will highlight in the following lines.

The establishment of the "Society for the rescue of shipwrecked in Romanian Territorial Waters" - Salvamar

At the beginning of the 20th century, assistance in saving human lives and managing crisis situations in territorial and international waters was considered a high aspiration for all civilized states. Great Britain was the one that had the first initiative to create a "society for saving the shipwrecked", materialized in the appearance of the "Royal National Lifeboat Institution" founded on March 4, 1824, under the high patronage of King George IV.

In most cases, these rescue organizations were the subject of private initiative and private contributions, being led by prominent personalities. [13]

As an example, we recall the fact that the "Société centrale de sauvetage des naufragés" established in France in 1865, was chaired by the head of state. [14]

Participants at the Geneva International Conference in 1928 noted with satisfaction that almost all maritime nations had already fulfilled this humanitarian obligation. Romania, as a signatory of the Geneva protocol, had not yet fulfilled this duty, a context in which, in 1933, King Carol II decided to get personally involved in the establishment of a Romanian organization to rescue the shipwrecked. However, until this moment it cannot be said that the Romanian coast has been completely deprived of such a service. Salvage at sea was provided by the specialized company The Ocean Salvage and Towage Co Ltd., based in London, owned by the British citizen J. Wilson Potter, a company whose history in the Black Sea dates back to the Ottoman Empire. At the beginning of the 1930s, the British company The Ocean Salvage and Towage Co Ltd. still had three ships in our territorial waters: "Cleopatra III", "La

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Nina" and "King Lear", on the last one even a Romanian racing captain was employed long, Mihai Căciuleanu. [15]

In addition to the table of institutional development described in point II, we will further point out elements regarding the establishment on June 14, 1933 of the "Rescue Society of Shipwrecked in Romanian Territorial Waters" (SALVAMAR) as an institution competent in ensuring the good functionality of navigation in the event of disasters in Romanian territorial waters.

The legal status of the establishment of the company was made by sentence no. 66/July 7, 1933 of the Notary Section of the Ilfov Court. The company will notify its presence and purpose to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in February 1934, by sending an extract of the statute of operation. One of the legal foundations of SALVAMAR's operation was found in the provisions of the Law for "the establishment of a fee for the rescue of shipwrecked persons in Romanian waters, published in the Official Gazette No. 97 of April 28, 1933, ID No. 1246".

The nucleus of the society was a group formed by 24 founding members, among them: Angelescu Constantin, the governor of the National Bank of Romania; Bălănescu Ioan, commander of the Royal Romanian Navy; Bianu Eugen, deputy director general of Romanian Safety; Buchholzer Corneliu, Director of the Merchant Navy; Coandă Ioan, vice-president of the Romanian Naval League; Urdăreanu Ernest, royal adjutant. Along with the founding members, the society's statute provided for four other categories of members, respectively "active, donors, honorary and adherents".

The operation of the Romanian rescue society was ensured on the basis of a statute that included 58 articles, structured in 8 chapters, which referred to the name, seat, duration, purpose and means of operation, members, contributions and dues, etc. [16].

Among other things, the company's goals were to mobilize all the necessary means to save people in danger of death in Romanian territorial waters, "by drowning or in any other way, as a result of a shipwreck or other accidents on the water".

The society had "moral" means, such as the support and involvement of all members and partner societies, but especially material funds, constituted by members' contributions, contributions and donations, by organizing conferences and publications, by chats, regattas, celebrations, etc.

The operation of Salvamar was ensured by a management and control structure, ensured by four bodies:

- General Assembly of members;
- Central Action Committee;
- Steering Committee;
- The Committee of Censors.

The most important functional role was played by the Central Action Committee and the Steering Committee. The ex officio members of the Central Action Committee, numbering a maximum of 25, were as follows: a permanent delegate of His Royal Majesty, who had the title of Royal Adjutant and he came from among naval officers; three members appointed by the president of the Society, from among those who "through their hearty contest and their persistent activity have particularly contributed to the realization of the generous idea of establishing this Society"; and no more than 21 persons interested in participating in the Society's activity, from among those interested institutions. Among the "21" were: the Romanian delegate in the CED; the mayor of Bucharest; commander of the Royal Navy; a senior officer, representative of the Great General Staff; the general director of the Sanitary Service, as a representative of the Ministry of Labor and Health; the general director of the

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Autonomous Authority of Ports and Waterways (P.C.A.), as a representative of the Ministry of Communications; and others.

Salvamar's Steering Committee was also composed of 10 members, among them a permanent delegate of His Royal Majesty; the governor of the National Bank of Romania; commander of the Royal Navy; a representative of the Ministry of Communications; the general inspector of Ports; commander of the Group of Border Guard Ships; the permanent delegate of the Romanian Naval League. This structure was responsible for the appointment of the Salvamar Director, who had permanent administrative duties, under the direction and control of the Delegate Administrator.

The appointment of the director was made for a period of three years, at the end of which the person who held the position could be reconfirmed or released in/from the position, the amount of the salary being analyzed at the same time. According to the provisions of art. 48 of the Salvamar statute, the Central Action Committee could establish branches or representative offices in any other locality in the country, ports, if this step was necessary. From an administrative and technical point of view, these branches were under the exclusive authority of the Steering Committee, but under the "patronage" of a Regional Action Committee which had the following attributions:

- a) approving matters subject to the attention of the Company's central management;
- b) approval of issues related to collaboration with other entities in the respective region;
- c) delegating members to promote the company and carry out studies;
- d) providing support to the local representatives of the Company and seconding the Head Office in the adopted measures.

Art. 49 of the same statute highlighted the composition of Salvamar's Regional Action Committees, respectively sixteen members by right and four elected members, respectively:

1. The Bishop of the Region;
2. Garrison Commander;
3. The active naval officer with the greatest seniority in the garrison;
4. County Prefect;
5. The mayor of the locality;
6. Captain of the Port;
7. The president of the local branch of L.N.R.
8. The commander of the local unit of Border Guards;
9. Head of local Customs;
10. President of the local Chamber of Commerce;
11. Director of the local branch of the National Bank;
12. The active naval engineer officer with the longest tenure in the garrison;
13. The engineer with the highest rank from one of the PCA services. from the locality;
14. Chief of Police in the locality;
15. The Doctor of the Port;
16. The commander of the air unit of the respective region.

According to art. 50. the legal members listed above met in a first meeting of the Regional Action Committee, chaired by the oldest of the participants, at the same time proceeding with the election of a President and two vice-presidents.

The Salvamar Company could not be dissolved as long as in the cases provided by the Law, and if it could still pursue the proposed goal, it would go into liquidation, the modalities of which were decided by the General Assembly. In the event of a possible dissolution, the assets of the Company were to be transferred to that of the Romanian Naval League, with the indication of the destination of the respective revenues. [17] Since its establishment, Salvamar

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has proposed to initiate collaborations both with similar institutions in other countries, for the purpose of mutual information, and with the International Rescue Commission under the Secretariat of the League of Nations, for the general coordination of the activity and means of rescue [18].

Highlights of Salvamar's activity in the first years of operation

In the period 1934 - 1938, we witnessed the establishment of the first Rescue Stations on the Black Sea coast, in the Salvamar portfolio. From the very beginning, the company was designed to ensure both the rescue of boats in danger and the crews that served them, but also of people visiting the beaches of the Black Sea coast in Romanian territorial waters. In this context, several lifeguard stations with fixed stations appeared, the first in 1934 in Mamaia (next to the REX hotel), and one each on the Modern beach in Constanța, in Eforie and Mangalia. The development continued in 1935 with three more rescue stations inaugurated in Balcic, Carmen-Sylva and Siutghiol, and in 1938, a rescue station was also inaugurated in Budachi (now Odessa Region, Ukraine). [19]

The first nautical base in Romania was the expression of the need to increase Salvamar's income and came into being in 1935. This base was organized on a 40,000-meter plot of land, made available by Constanța City Hall, on the shores of Lake Siutghiol.

In October 1936, the Salvamar equipment included the first rescue boat, the "PESCĂRUȘ" sloop, built by the "Friedrich Lürssen" shipyards in the suburbs of Bremen. The body was made of wood, had a length of 10.2 m, a 50 hp engine and could reach a speed of 8 knots. The logistics equipment of the company is completed a year later with the sloop "ALBATROS", built in the "August Pohl" shipyards in Hamburg, but with a steel hull, 15 m long and two engines of 90 HP each that developed a speed of 10 knots. In September 1938, the Salvamar heritage also includes an Austrian "STEYR" 8-wheeled rough-terrain pick-up truck used for land rescue operations and for the transport of rescuers. The year 1937 involved investments in the amount of 60 million lei for Salvamar and the allocation of an annual budget of 10 million lei. In the same year, new lifeboat stations were organized in the following strategic points: Balcic or Cavarna (today in Bulgaria), Șabla (today Dobrici region, Bulgaria), Mangalia, Tuzla, Constanța, Gura Portiței, Sf. Gheorghe, Sulina, Vâlcov and Gura Dniester (today in Ukraine). At that time, Romania's coastline was much longer compared to the current one, having 412 km between Bugaz (at the outlet of the Dniester estuary, today in Ukraine) and Ecrina (today Kranevo, Bulgaria, north of Varna), including the coast Bugeacului and that of Quadrilateru, as well as Serpilor Island. [20]

CONCLUSIONS

In its essence, the SALVAMAR company constituted an institutional expression of the Romanian state's interest in ensuring a suitable climate for navigation in Romanian territorial waters. The Salvamar activity gave new values to navigation safety measures in Romanian territorial waters and increased the visibility of our country on the international level by carrying out collaborations both with similar institutions from other states and with the International Salvage Commission under the Secretariat of the League of Nations. We note the common interest of a diverse range of socio-professional categories and representatives of several institutions, who were involved in the establishment and operation of Salvamar.

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