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# Romanian Riverine Transports in the Twentieth Century

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**Abstract.** This article analyses, in the unitary conception, the whole evolution of the *Romanian Riverine Transports* in the 20th century, following the next issues:

- Development of the river transport capacity;
- Evolution of the commodities and passenger traffic;
- Productivity of the *Romanian Riverine Fleet*;
- Also, this article, aims to establish the position of *Romanian Riverine Fleet* in the hierarchy of the European Continent.

We mention that our analysis is based on statistical data that was published in different sources, archives data and own calculation of the main economic and technical indicators.

**Keywords:** Riverine fleet, transport capacity, propulsion power, naval transport.

## 1. Introduction

After the formation of the modern national state (1859) and the acquisition of Romania's state independence (1877), we obtain the mouths of the Danube and direct access to the Black Sea and the preconditions for the formation of a national transport fleet are realized.

The economic, social and political development of modern Romania implied the development of infrastructure - the means and means of transport and communication - in order to stimulate and promote the economic, social and cultural processes.

The creation of the River Transport Fleet has its roots in 1890, when the State Monopoly Registry, which needed ships to export salt to Serbia, intervened with the government to set up a transport service on the Danube.

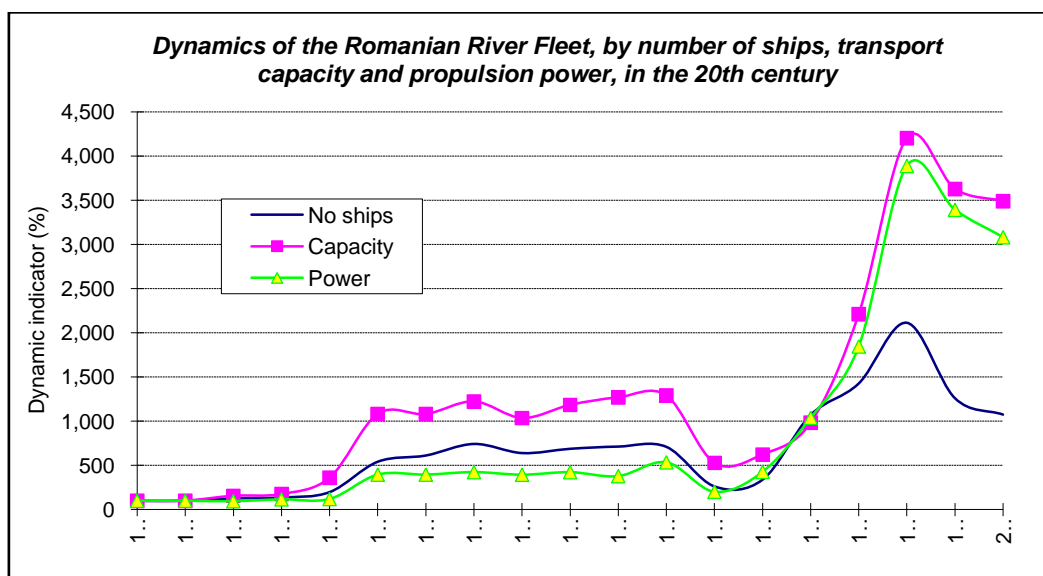
From this date until the end of the 20th century, Romania has invested important financial, material and human resources for the development and modernization of a Fleet Transport Fleet, whose evolution we will follow in the next chapter.

## 2. The evolution of Romanian Riverine Transports in the Twentieth Century.

In the first half of the 20th century, the *Riverine Transportation Fleet* was managed mainly by two shipping companies: one with state capital - *Romanian Riverine Navigation (RRN)* - established in 1890 and the other with private capital - *Romanian Danube Company* - set up in 1914 and which functioned until 1949, when based on the *Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 1,157* it dissolves, the patrimony of the company being handed over as a capital contribution to the *Soviet-Romanian Naval Company Sovromtransport*.

Until the end of the period we have referred to, for the regular carriage of goods and passengers on the Danube and inland waterways of an international character, the two shipping companies have developed a network of 46 operating agencies in the Romanian riverine ports, 11 representations and 12 accredited agencies in the states bordering the Danube, and have concluded cooperation agreements with the main riverine shipping companies.

In the second half of the century, the Riverine Transportation Fleet will be managed by the Navrom Riverine Shipping Company, which in the last decade of the 20th century will be divided into four state-owned shipping companies: Navrom Riverine Shipping Company - Galati, Romanian Shipping Company Romnav - Braila, Riverine Shipping Company Giurgiunav and Riverine Shipping Company - RRN Drobeta, which until the end of the 20th century will be privatized, except for RSC Giurgiunav.



**Fig. 1. Source:** Dumitru Corduneanu, *Naval Transport System from Romania in the XX Century*, CTEA Publishing House, Bucharest 2010, p. 240.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Riverine Transportation Fleet consisted of a total of 104 vessels of which: 24 propelled propulsion ships with an installed power of 8.7 thousand HP and 80 unpropelled propulsion ships with a capacity of 41.53 thousand tons, structured as follows:

- 13 passenger ships with a power of 3.35 thousand C.P;
- 11 tugs totalizing 5.34 thousand C.P;
- 57 barges with a total capacity of 35.53 thousand tons;
- 12 tanks with a capacity of 6 thousand tons;
- 11 pontoons.

Until the outbreak of First World War, the increases in propulsion power and transport capacity are not significant, the dynamic indicators being around 1.2 times and 3.6 times respectively, with visible differences emerging in the interwar period when the two indicators show an increase of approx. 3.9 times in the propulsion power and almost 11 times in the transmission capacity. In the second half of the century, the two indicators are evolving after strong dynamics laws, especially since the 1970s, reaching the end of the nineteenth decade of the 20th century to an increase of nearly 39 times in propulsion power and approx. 42 times in the transport capacity, the riverine fleet for transport of good totalling 2,197 vessels out of which 559 propelled ships with an installed power of 338,17 thousand HP and 1,640 unpropelled ships with a transport capacity of 1,745.86 thousand tons , structured as follows:

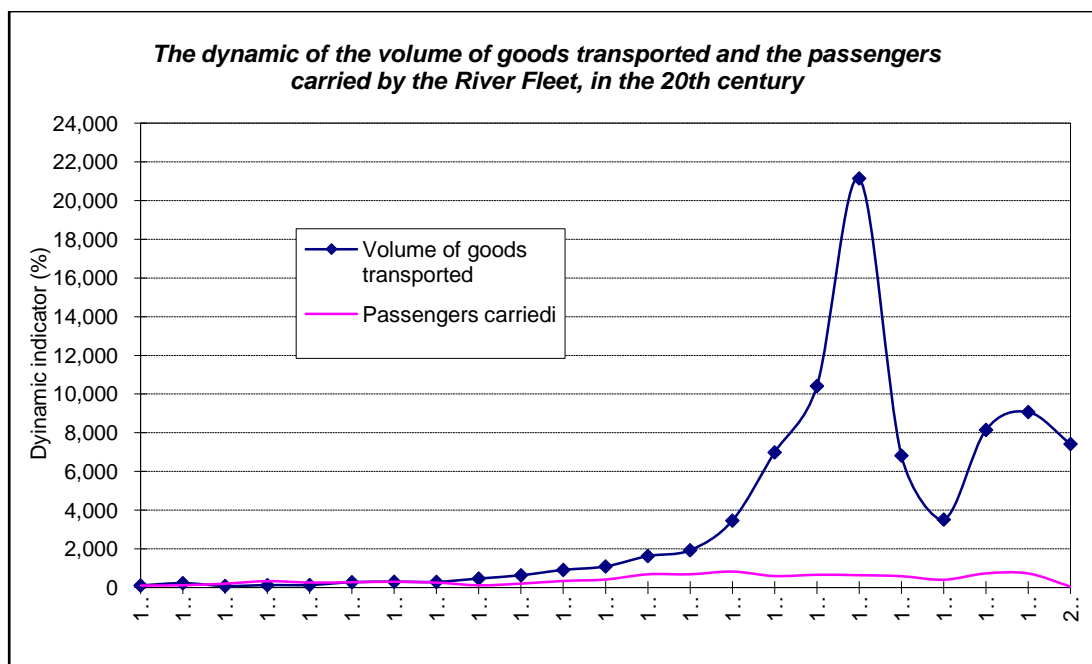
- 293 tugs totalling 108.28 thousand C.P;
- 130 pushers with approx. 191.15 thousand CP;
- 136 self-propelled barges and barges with a total power of 38.73 thousand hp and a transport capacity of 42.18 thousand tons;
- 958 barges with a capacity of 525.58 thousand tons;
- 682 barges without propulsion, totalling approx. 1,178.11 thousand tons.

Towards the end of the 20th century, the Riverine Transportation Fleet consisted of 1,118 vessels, of which 186 propelled ships with a total power of 268,000 hp and 932 unpropelled ships with a transport capacity of 1,449.17 thousand tons.

In parallel with the cargo transport fleet, the riverine passenger fleet was developed, which reached its maximum transport capacity at the beginning of the 8th decade of the 20th century, when it held 40 ships that could carry about 5,042 passengers, reaching at the end of 90s to 12 ships with 1,900 seats, respectively 9 ships with 1,120 seats at the end of the 20th century.

In terms of property structure, before the outbreak of the First World War, the state sector (RRN) held about 69.57% of all national flag vessels, 96.70% of the propulsion power and about 48.90% of the transport capacity in the interwar period reached 26.6% of the number of vessels, 72.87% of the propulsion power and 19.49% respectively of the transport capacity. In the second half of the 20th century, due to the establishment of the new economic conditions, the private property is abolished being reintroduced in the last decade, when at the end of the analyzed period in the private sector, 30 companies owning 54.8% of the propulsion power and approx. 53.5% of transport capacity.

Analyzing the evolution of the Goods and Passenger Traffic conducted by the Riverine Shipping Fleet, we note the following:



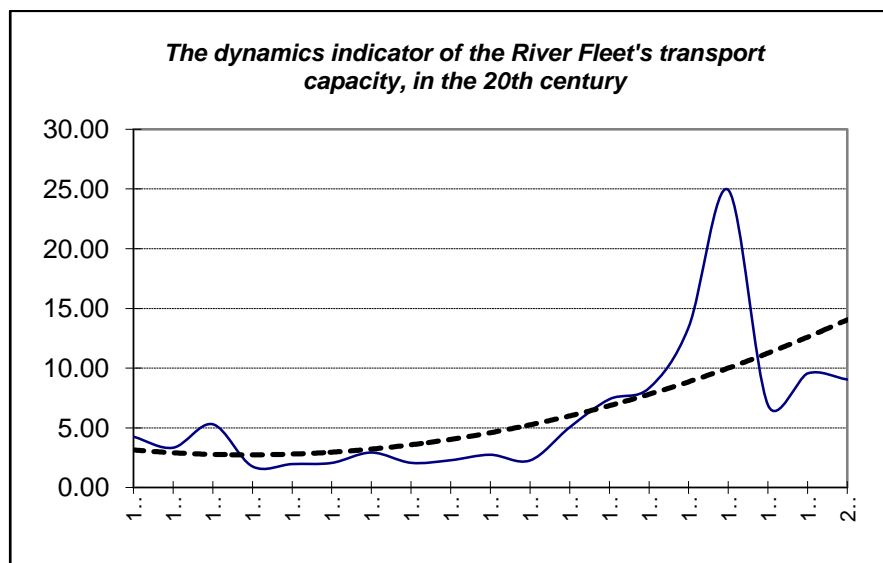
**Fig. 2. Source:**Dumitru Corduneanu, *Naval Transport System from Romania in the XX Century*, CTEA Publishing House, Bucharest 2010, p. 242.

- except for the syncope caused by the two world conflagrations, the general trend in the goods traffic is an increasing trend, except for the last decade of the 20th century, when in the first two years there is a fall of approx. 80%, compared to the peak value recorded in 1989 when the River Fleet transported 37,370 thousand tons of freight. For reference

periods, compared to the beginning of the 20th century, the **dynamics indices** recorded the following values: 0.73 times in 1914; 2.85 times in 1938, 211.4 times in 1989 and 74.13 times at the end of the century;

- in passenger transport, the traffic variations are not spectacular, our passenger ships generally serve domestic passenger lines - which have led to relatively constant traffic, which shows that the touristic potential of our country has been poorly capitalized, due to the poor management of this sector and the quality of services, which are well below the European standards.

From the point of view of Riverine Fleet Productivity, the indicator of transport capacity utilization evolved following the below dynamics law:



**Fig. 3. Source:**Dumitru Corduneanu, *Naval Transport System from Romania in the XX Century*, CTEA Publishing House, Bucharest 2010, p. 243.

- In the first half of the century, the maximum value of this indicator is reached in 1911, when the existing transport capacities have the highest utilization - about 5.89; in the second half of the century this performance goes to 1989, when the transport capacity indexes are 24.91, reaching 9.04 at the end of the 20th century.
- Towards the end of the 10th decade of the 20th century after passing the critical threshold triggered by the shock of decentralization, the fall of the internal market, the embargo imposed on Yugoslavia and the bombing of the North Atlantic Alliance, which led to the blocking of traffic on the Danube River - Romanian River Shipping Companies are undergoing a process of economic and financial recovery, which led to the end of the 20th century to the achievement of a total profit of 27,161.7 million RON.

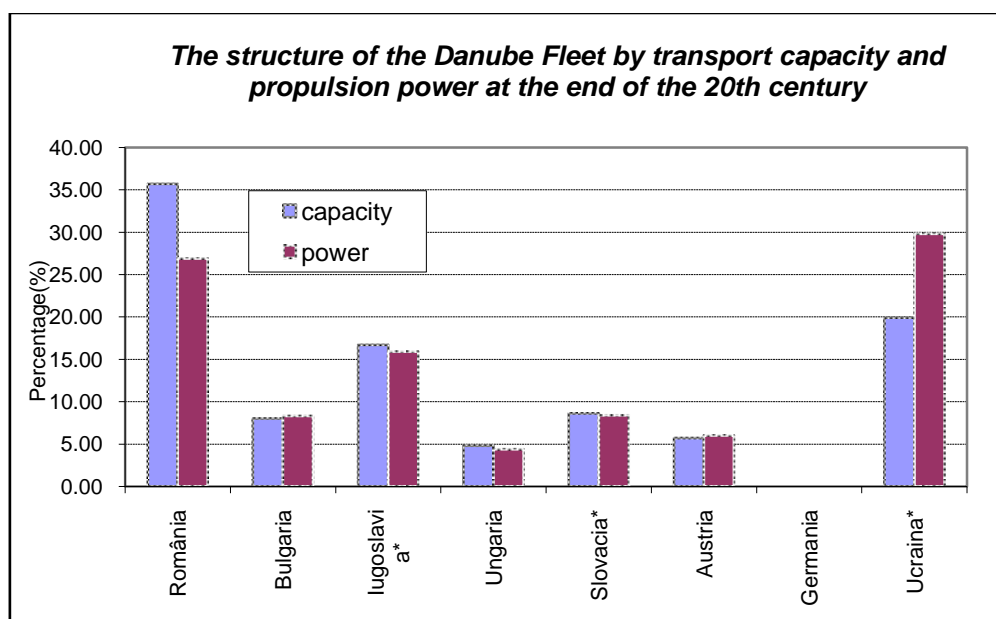
From the point of view of the Romanian River Fleet Position among the countries bordering the Danube river, ever since the interwar period our country had an important share in the capacity of the Danube Fleet. After the First World War and the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, followed by the return of Transylvania to the motherland, the merchant fleet increased substantially, so that, before the Second World War, the fleet river had the highest transport capacity among the fleets of the states bordering the Danube.

**Table 1. The share of states bordering the Danube, total Danube Fleet, in 20<sup>th</sup> century - percent -**

Country	1914		1930		1960		1970		1980		1990		2000	
	tons	KW	tons	KW	tons	KW	tons	KW	tons	KW	tons	KW	tons	KW
<b>România</b>	9,6	10,2	<b>31,8</b>	19,2	14,3	11,8	14,6	14,7	24,8	17,6	<b>33,9</b>	28,1	<b>35,7</b>	<b>26,9</b>
Bulgaria			0,6	0,7	3,8	3,1	8,2	4,3	8,8	4,6	5,6	3,1	8,0	8,3
Yugoslavia*			28,0	23,7	<b>23,8</b>	21,4	22,6	17,0	20,6	15,0	14,4	13,3	16,7	15,9
Hungary	18,1	19,0	10,1	15,8	11,4	13,1	9,5	9,9	8,1	7,0	6,4	6,5	4,8	4,4
Czechoslovakia*			5,3	5,6	7,0	8,3	7,0	7,0	5,9	6,3	7,5	6,8	8,6	8,4
Austria	<b>62,1</b>	<b>63,9</b>	18,5	<b>25,0</b>	12,4	9,0	8,0	8,1	5,3	6,8	5,0	5,0	5,7	6,0
Germany	10,2	6,9	5,6	10,1	5,9	6,9	2,7	4,4	1,3	2,1	0,9	1,6		
USSR*					21,4	<b>26,4</b>	<b>27,4</b>	<b>34,6</b>	<b>25,2</b>	<b>40,6</b>	26,3	<b>35,6</b>	19,9	29,8
<b>Maximum values</b>	<b>62,1</b>	<b>63,9</b>	<b>31,8</b>	<b>25,0</b>	<b>23,8</b>	<b>26,4</b>	<b>27,4</b>	<b>34,6</b>	<b>25,2</b>	<b>40,6</b>	<b>33,9</b>	<b>35,6</b>	<b>35,7</b>	<b>29,8</b>

*Table 1. Calculated based on the data from Sources*

In the second half of the 20th century, the transport capacity of the Romanian Riverine Fleet recorded high growth rates, exceeding Yugoslavia in the 8th decade of the 20th century, surpassing the Soviet Union in the 9th decade, remaining a leader of the rankings and at the end of the 20th century, when after the 1990s geopolitical changes, the Danube Fleet had the following structure:

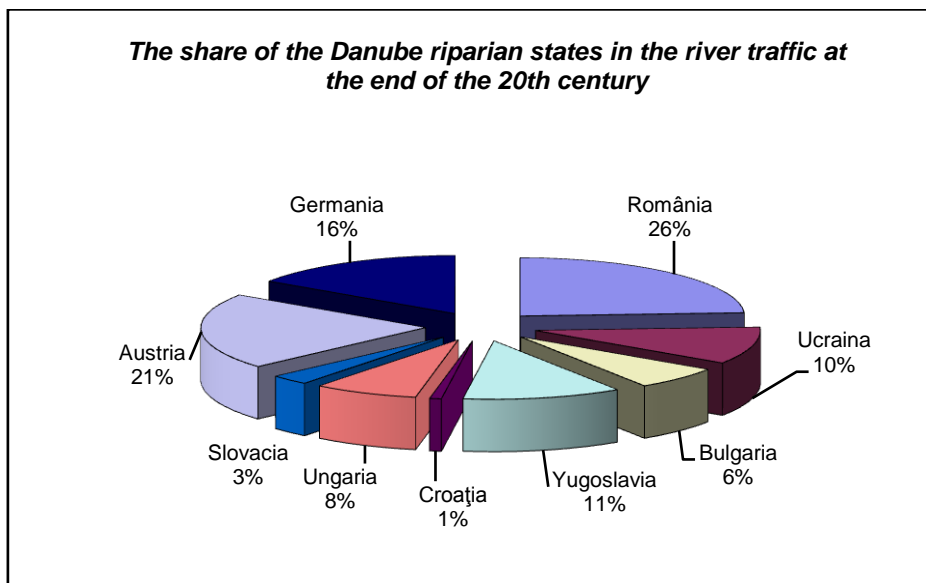


*Fig . 4. Based on the data from Sources*

From the presented data we can see that in the first half of the century, the transport of goods with our own river fleet conducted through the Romanian river ports was at a quite low level, due to the competition of the foreign shipping companies that were strongly supported by the state, cheap capital and sufficient propelled ships that enabled a commercial exploitation under economically advantageous conditions. In the middle of the interwar period, the cartel between the Austrian shipping company (DDSG), the South German (SDDG) and the Hungarian (MFTR) - had about 51% of the propulsion power, our fluvial fleet, although it held approx. 31% of the tank's capacity, was mostly made up of simple barges, with few propelled vessels, with the lack of tugboats required for

navigation on the Upper Danube, and tanks that in 1938 could transport only 6% of the export of petroleum products.

The situation will change in the second half of the century, when due to the development of the Romanian Naval Industry, in parallel with the diversification of the types of ships and the increase of the transport capacity, the propulsion power increases by approx. 40 times, our country having an important share in river transport, and at the end of the 20th century, when the river traffic of goods by the riparian states of the Danube had the following structure.



**Fig. 5. Based on data published in the *Ouvrage de statistique de la Commission reference Berthe pour la 1950-2000 term*, Budapest, 2003 p. 30,31.**

### 3. Conclusions

- In the 20th century, the development of the transporting capacity of the Romanian riverine fleet was determined by the needs of the national economy, being substantially accelerated in the second half of the century, with the general development of the Romanian Naval Industry;
- Romania, because of the Danube and the Black Sea, is at the crossing of commercial routes that bring together the countries of Eastern Europe and the markets of Central Europe with the raw material providers from C.S.I. (*Community of Independent States*), Central Asia and Trans Caucasian countries;
- It has an important river port infrastructure that includes: 32 ports on the river Danube, 4 ports on the Danube- Black Sea Channel and at Poarta Alba and MidiaNavodari;
- Our country owns a third of the sailing way of the Danube (37,58%), which makes a great transport infrastructure, with multiple possibilities of connecting with the railway, road and air routes.

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