

## THE SITUATION OF THE TULCEA MARKET IN 1942 IN REPORTS OF THE NATIONAL BANK OF ROMANIA

Daniel Flaut\*

### Abstract

This paper presents some unpublished confidential reports sent by the staff of the Tulcea Branch of the National Bank of Romania to the Governor of the National Bank of Romania in Bucharest, between the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 1942 and 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1942, regarding to the situation of the Tulcea market. These are unique and precious historical sources to reconstruct not only the economic situation of Tulcea City and Tulcea County (in Dobrudja, southeastern Romania), but also to reveal other interesting aspects of life of the inhabitants from here in that difficult year of the WWII. The documents, unknown till now, come from the *Copierul Special Rapoarte B.N.R. no. 962/1934* (*Special Copying Bulletin of R.N.B. no. 962/1934*), kept till today in a private archive.

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\* Associate Professor, Ph.D, Faculty of History and Political Sciences, “Ovidius” University of Constanța, Romania

## Introduction

The World War II, the largest and most destructive conflagration in the human history, began in Europe on September 1<sup>th</sup> of 1939 with the invasion of Poland by Nazi Germany. In October 1940, after more than a year of neutrality, in which lost over a third of its territory and over a quarter of its population, by the Hitler-Stalin treaty, the Vienna Dictate and the Treaty of Craiova, in the benefit of Germany's allies (USSR, Hungary and Bulgaria), Romania allied with the Axis powers (Buzatu et alii, 2010). In June 1941 Romania entered into the war on the Axis powers side to recover Basarabia, Bucovina and Tinutul Hertei, territories occupied by Stalin, and for three years and two months fought against the USSR (Anton, 2007). On August 23<sup>rd</sup> of 1944 Romania turned against Nazi Germany and joined the Allies (Buzatu and Cîrstea, 2010). Although has fought on their side until the end of the WWII, Romania signed the Paris Peace Treaty as a defeated enemy state (Buzatu, 2009).

Between 4<sup>th</sup> September of 1940 and 23<sup>rd</sup> August of 1944 Romania was led by Ion Antonescu, as Prime Minister and Head of State with dictatorial powers (Deletant, 2006). The WWII profoundly affected the life of all inhabitants of Romania. Only in 1941 (Gavin and Anton, 2006) Romania had an overall loss of 130,000 soldiers dead, wounded and missing. Also, life was very hard and for those who not participated in military campaigns. All branches of the Romanian economy suffered due of the WWII. The market has suffered, too: the prices of food have continuously increased, many goods were not found on sale and appeared speculation. Therefore, the standard of living of the people continuously decreased.

As in the entire country, the war profoundly affected the everyday life of the inhabitants of the Tulcea County. Located in Dobrudja, in southeastern Romania, this county had before the outbreak of the WWII an area of 8626 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 216.258 inhabitants. 53% of them were Romanians and 46.30% other nationalities (Bulgarians, Russians, Turkish, Jews, Italian, German, Hungarian, Serbian, Polish and Greek). 95% of the county population have Orthodox religion. (Cristofor, 1938: 12). Regarding the occupation of the inhabitants, 75% of them worked in agriculture, 5% in commerce and industry and 20% had other occupations (Cristofor, 1938: 14). Also, during this period, Tulcea, the capital and the largest city of the Tulcea County, had a population of 21.143 inhabitants, only 40% being Romanians (Cristofor, 1938: 13).

In the present study, we publish several original documents relating to the situation of the Tulcea market, between the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 1942 and 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1942.

### Some unpublished documents of the National Bank of Romania regarding to the situation of the Tulcea market in 1942

One of the most important public institution in Tulcea County was the Tulcea Branch of the National Bank of Romania. We came into possession of *Copierul Special Rapoarte B.N.R. no. 962/1934 (Special Copying Bulletin of R.N.B. no. 962/1934)* of this institution, kept till today in a private archive. Among the 755 pages, there are, as copies, 350 reports send by the R.N.B. Tulcea to different state institutions, even local (City Hall, Prefecture, Courthouse, Police, Financial Administration, Fishing Administration, Customs, Commerce and Industry Hall, Recruitment center, etc.) and central ( National Bank of Romania in Bucharest, Economy Ministry, Finance Ministry, etc.), between 15<sup>th</sup> of February 1934 -18<sup>th</sup> of January 1949.) (Flaut, 2012: 116).

Within these documents are found 8 confidential reports sent by the staff of the Tulcea Branch of National Bank of Romania to the Governor of the National Bank of Romania in Bucharest regarding to the situation of the Tulcea market (March-November 1942).

These documents are unique and precious historical sources to reconstruct not only the economic situation of Tulcea City and Tulcea County (in Dobrudja, southeastern Romania), but also to reveal other interesting aspects of life of the inhabitants from here in the year 1942.

Being unpublished, we present below the entire contents of these documents:

The first document is the *Report No. 463 of RNB Tulcea*, sent from Tulcea City on the 16<sup>th</sup> of March 1942 (Copierul, 1934-1949: 642):

“We have the honor of informing you about the situation of the Tulcea market during the week 10<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> of March 1942.

*Market:* The food products of the peasant households are sufficient. The fish is found in abundance for sale on our market. The stores do not have many goods, it is a more pronounced lack of textile and manufactured goods.

*The weather* is cooler. The soil is frozen and does not allow the sowing works.

*Road transport* is good, but the navigation on the Danube is blocked to Galați and are expected floods. The state authorities intervened to evacuate the grain deposits that are threatened by floods. This week, were sent from Tulcea county in other counties significant quantities of corn and barley to feed people and sowing works.”

The second document is the *Report No. 569 of RNB Tulcea*, sent from Tulcea City on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 1942 (Copierul, 1934-1949: 643):

“We have the honor of informing you about the situation of the Tulcea market:

*The food market* is somewhat more active in peasant products (cheese, eggs, poultry). The fish is sufficient, but its production is lower due to the high level of the Danube water.

*The credit market.* This week, were convened representatives of the ten selected banks for their regrouping. But, there were present only delegates of five banks. The heads of these institutions prove a complete disinterestedness. With no means of coercion against them, any attempt regarding to the credit distribution is futile.

*Industries and the handicraft workshops* are stagnating due to lack of raw materials.

*The roads* located near the Danube are partially flooded (the road Tulcea-Măcin Ghecet). The Danube has been unblocked and was resumed the navigation on the river.

*The weather* is mostly cool; soil cannot be plowed.”

The third document is the *Report No. 638 of RNB Tulcea*, sent from Tulcea City on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 1942 (Copierul, 1934-1949: 644):

“We have the honor of informing you about the situation of the Tulcea market, during the last week.

*Trade situation.* The manufactured goods are increasingly more rare and expensive. The food products of the peasant households are sufficient. The fish market is less compared with the same period of the previous year due to flooding. But the fish is enough to feed the population.

The industry is inactive due to lack of raw materials. Also, handicraft workshops are few and most of the craftsmen are enrolled in the army.

*Cereals:* This week, from our county were sent 68 wagons with corn and 12 wagons with barley (some wagons are being charged) in counties that needing.

*The credit market:* Credits have not been granted, although these are required for seeding soil. The lack of officials (mobilized in the army) and the disinterest of those that remained in the management of the county credit institutions are major obstacles in the credit dissemination. “Banca Românească” (“Romanian Bank”) execute only payment orders, especially for fishy trade finance. Regarding of credits this bank demonstrates a reprehensible lack of understanding. Governor, please approve organizational measures regarding to the situation of credit on the Tulcea market.

The mood of the population is relatively good.

The weather was cold and rainy until now. Today the weather is slightly better.

The roads are in good condition.

During the visit of Mareşal Ion Antonescu in Tulcea, he ordered: a) establishment a consumption of the civil servants; b) improving of roads, especially the road from Tulcea to Hârşova; c) the planting of forests near communes (2-5 hectares). At the initiative of the Tulcea Prefecture will be made 2-3 nurseries for trees and some communal orchards.”

The fourth document is the *Report No. 767 of RNB Tulcea*, sent from Tulcea on 27<sup>th</sup> of April 1942 (Copierul, 1934-1949: 645):

“We have the honor of informing you about the situation of the Tulcea market during 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of April 1942:

In general, the situation of this market remains unchanged. In the last days the weather is warmer.

*Agriculture:* It works hard on spring sowing. I tried to give you ample information about the areas which was sown, compared to previous years, but the Tulcea Agricultural Chamber refuses to communicate this information. It received instructions from the Ministry of Agriculture that such information may be communicated only to this Ministry.

*How the authorities do their job.* I want to tell you about suspicions of a judicial process of economic sabotage crime filed against the Lichiardopol company (mill and oil mill). On the occasion of the judicial process it talks about an alleged bias of offenders by the court. People say that offenders paid a false witness with 100.000 lei. The same court dismissed the lawsuit against the Chamber of Commerce Tulcea for the cancellation of their company, although there is a jurisprudence of the Court of Cassation in a similar case. It would be desirable an investigation by the Ministry of Justice or at least the appointment of a commissioner for Romanianization at this company (minority, Greeks).”

The fifth document is the *Report No. 854* sent from Tulcea City on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May of 1942 (Copierul, 1934-1949: 652):

“We have the honor of informing you about the situation of the Tulcea market:

*The credit market* is stationary. No credits.

*The trade market.* Increase the crisis of the manufactured products. The products of peasant households are enough, but at prices of speculation.

*The fish market.* No fish for sale, being monopolized by the Bucharest market.

*The food market.* The meat, cheese and vegetables are enormously expensive compared to the markets of Brăila and Galați.

*Industry.* It stagnates because the raw materials missing or are very expensive.

*Handicraft workshops.* Many craftsmen are enrolled in the army and those who remained at home working at high prices because they don't have competition.

*Agriculture.* The weather is good and now the peasants plowing and sowing.

*Transports.* The river transport, that for us is a real boon, has improved. The transport with the carts is enormously expensive due to the lack of animals and the controls of the state authorities.

*How the authorities do their job.* Civil servants are demoralized. Most of them see more than their own interests. The state authorities do not intervene in controlling of prices on the Tulcea market. The merchants grow prices from day to day without any justification. In all branches of trade and especially in the area of food, the prices on the Tulcea market are higher than those in the Bucharest market. Collecting of grain is unsatisfactory due to agricultural work and the lack of transport vehicles. The delegates of I.N.C.O.P. cannot fulfill their mission to collect grain because they are not helped by gendarmerie.”

The next document is the *Report No. 908 of RNB Tulcea*, sent from Tulcea City on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 1942 (Copierul, 1934-1949: 653-654):

“We have the honor of informing you about the situation of the Tulcea market:

In general, its situation remains unchanged, except the food market in which exist some improvement.

Sowings were made approximately 100%, compared to the plan established by the Tulcea Prefecture, and currently continue the sowing of corn. Is a strong need of rain. The collection of grain has difficulties due to the military authorities. We are informed that exist abuses committed by the retired Lieutenant Lichiardopol, who together with some Jews do business on their own although he has a cereal company in our town.

Next we present the situation of seeded areas, provided by the Tulcea Prefecture:

The area which was plowing and sowing in Tulcea county until 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 1942”

Type of crop	Area determined by the	Were made	Were made
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	agricultural plan for spring 1942 (in hectares)	plowing (in hectares)	sowing (in hectares)
spring wheat	20.000	6.822	6.822
rye	10		
barley	102.000	91.998	91.998
oat	12.000	11.639	11.639
millet	1.800	5.653	5.653
corn	62.074	63.837	63.837
brooms	50		
beans	3.500	4.123	4.123
pease	4.000	4.068	4.068
lentil	500	111	111
chickpeas	70	79	79
spring rape	7,880	9.385	9.385
sunflower	10.750	3.603	3.603
ricin	6	21	21
mustard	30		
hemp	600	226	226
hemp for seed	400		
flax	150		
flax for seed	3.500	481	481
cotton	65	21	21
alfalfa	100		
borceag	700	1.024	1.024
corn for fodder	100		
foxtail millet	1.200	7.105	7.105
forage plants	1.600	42	42
potatoes	800	1.151	1.151
beet for fodder	50	6	6
root crops	70		
vegetable gardens	1.250	120	120
onion	190	66	66
cabbage	60		
melons	1.200	1.443	1.443
different vegetables	1.300	140	140
tobacco	220		

different plants	20		
Total	238.145	213.154	213.154

Autumn crops (in hectares):

grain	9.732
rye	6.986
rape	1.056
Total	17.830

The seventh document is the *Report No. 1824 of RNB Tulcea*, sent from Tulcea City on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 1942 (Copierul, 1934-1949: 657):

“We have the honor of informing you about the situation of the Tulcea market in July 1942:

*The banks' situation* remains unchanged.

*Trade:* Speculation is increasing and inspection authorities do not fulfill their duty. In different disguised ways, the Jews enter again in the trade activity.

*Credits:* There are no credit institutions. Despite our insistence, institutions do not grant credit. They say there is no such requirement.

*Romanianization:* In our county is a lack of skilled people in commerce and industry. We have 11 graduates of the Academy of Commerce, but all are civil servants and cling to their positions, pending pension. They do not want to work in the trade.

*How the authorities do their job:* The majority of public servants are locals. They see more than their own interests and neglect their job. They leased and exploit the lands intended the settlers in their benefit (the Chamber of Agriculture and the Prefecture). In trade, due to lack of vigilance and negligence of the Chamber of Commerce, is allowed the functioning of firms belonging to the minority population without authorization.

*Weather Conditions:* drought.

*Sowings:* The harvest of cereal plants is compromised due to drought and production of beans and peas is lower than expected. The vineyards and the vegetables are good, but is required rain for corn.

*Situation of transports:* lack of transportation means. Traction animals are few and tired and the peasants' carts are damaged. We have shortcomings with wood supply because the



forests are at 30-40 miles from Tulcea city and the carts were taken by the army or authorities for harvesting.

The last document is the *Report No. 2311 of RNB Tulcea*, sent from Tulcea City on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1942 (Copierul, 1934-1949: 658):

“We have the honor of informing you about the situation of the Tulcea market in October 1942:

*The banks' situation* remains unchanged.

*Trade situation.* Prices of goods are increasing by 10-15%. The merchants complain of difficulty in supply of their stores because suppliers invoices goods under the real selling price. The food market is speculated by merchants who belong to the minority population. The sellers take goods from peasants at the city barrier and then they sold on the market with a high price. The majority of sellers belong to the minority population because Romanians are enrolled in the army.

*Industries and the handicraft workshops:* The situation remains unchanged; lacking workforce.

*The credit market:* Requests are few, but these are not satisfied due to lack of banks. Besides the Tulcea branch of the “Banca Românească” (“Romanian Bank”), there are no other banks which operate on the Tulcea market. This bank abstains to grant credit.

*Romanianization:* We notice abuses of the Recruiting Circle in the exemption of Jews from the community work. Therefore, the Jews evacuated from our county invaded the Tulcea City market. They were grouped in the existing Jewish companies and compete with the Romanian merchants.

*Weather Conditions:* in the last days it rained.

*Sowings:* The weather was favorable for agricultural works. Is an intensive work to plowing and sowing and the grape harvesting is over. It is an exceptional production, both qualitatively and quantitatively.

*Situation of transports:* Because of the measures taken by the Army General Staff regarding to the autumn sowing, the vehicles with animal traction are stopped from transport. There is a lack of carts for wood supply. The river transport is hampered by the lack of boats.”

## Conclusion

In this paper, we presented some unpublished documents of the Tulcea Branch of the National Bank of Romania, kept till today in a private archive, regarding the situation of the Tulcea market between the 26<sup>th</sup> of March 1942 and 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1942. These confidential reports offer important information about the situation of banks, trade, industries, handicraft workshops, market, credit, state authorities, the mood of the population, weather, sowing and harvest, transport, and other events. From the content of these reports of the National Bank of Romania we find that the evolution of the international events, from that difficult year of the WWII, had a negative impact for the economic situation of the Tulcea City and Tulcea County (in Dobrudja, southeastern Romania) and for its inhabitants: crisis of all economic branches, the continuous increase of prices, the decline of the banking activity, the crisis of the state authority and the impoverishment of the population. The situation of the Tulcea market will continue to worsen in coming years. The WWII was far from its end.

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