

SOME NOTES ON THE ROUMANIAN MARITIME SERVICES

by Lars Alund (ESC 105)

There is a wealth of information about the maritime services to and from Egypt concerning the British, French and Italian lines, also to some extent concerning the Austrian and Greek connections. Very little though is written about the ROUMANIAN MARITIME SERVICES as far as I have found. As a matter of fact I have only seen three short notes on this subject.

Thus Gabriel Boulad has illustrated in *L'OP* No. 78, page 347, two covers with the postmark BIR. AMB / MARITIN / (date) ./ ALESSANDRIA - / CONSTANTA. Both covers are obviously philatelic. In the *Q.C.* Vol. VI, page 129, Mr Stanley Horesh has reported the existence of the same postmark and on page 145 of the same volume are some other notes about the Roumanian service.

*** In order to inquire amongst other members of the ESC about further ***
*** facts and more material I want to make the following summing up of ***
*** what is known to me. ***

Evidently the "Royal Roumanian Steamship line" operated already before the first World War. It is said to have worked under the auspices of the North German Lloyd Company ("Nord-Deutscher Lloyd") and sailed between Constanza and Alexandria, and vice-versa. I guess (but am not sure) that the service was interrupted during the War 1914 - 1918. It was evidently re-established after the war as the special postmarks are known from the 1920's and 1930's. I have not been able to check if this line still operates after World War II.

So far I have only seen two types of the mailships' postmarks. The earliest type, used before WW I consists of a double-circle c.d.s. (diameters 29 and 18.5 mms.), containing at the top ALEXANDRIA - CONSTANTA and at the bottom a star or, rather, a St. John's Cross (see figure 1). The later type, used between the two world wars, is of the type described by M. Boulad (see fig. 2). Furthermore there is a special ship's cachet, in my case from the s/s "Dacia", reading in the top of the circle "SERVICIUL MARITIN RUMAN" and in the bottom "VAPORUL / DACIA". In the centre there is the Roumanian coat of arms (see figure 3).

I cannot tell when these postmarks were first taken into use. My copy of type I has its date somewhat blurred, but I think it reads "... MAR 98". From the inscription one is inclined to believe that this postcard was carried from Alexandria to Constanta. Could there be a similar postmark with the reversed inscription, viz. CONSTANTA - ALEXANDRIA ?

Of type 2 I have three copies, dated between 1927 and 1932.

(a) The earliest postmark appears on a cover from Roumania, franked with a blue 10 Lei stamp of the 1924/26 issue (King Ferdinand) and showing the date of 7. VI. 927. It is addressed to a company in Galata (Turkey) and is backstamped there on arrival on June 10, i.e. after a journey of three days.

(b) The next item is an Egyptian postal stationery card with the 10 mills, red, pictorial issue printed thereon. The short text is dated "Alex. 4/10/29" and the ship's postmark shows the same date. On the address-side is also written "S/s Roumania".

(c) The latest postmark is applied on a cover from Roumania to a company in Istanbul. The maritime postmark shows the date of 1-VI-932 and it is backstamped in Galata on 4 June and in Istanbul on the following day, June 5. The stamps are of the 1930 issue, showing King Carol on the values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 Lei, i.e. altogether 10 Lei.

All three items show the inscription in the postmark as ALESANDRIA - CONST. also the two items posted from Roumania southwards. Perhaps one might guess that there is no postmark with the reversed inscription, CONSTANTA - ALESANDRIA?

It should be noted that the use of the Egyptian post-card (item b) is very late. The pictorial issue of 1914 became obsolete in 1922/23, when the Crown overprints were issued. In the *Q.C.* Volume VI, page 145, can be seen the existence of two more strikes, one of 1908 and one of 1911. They are not illustrated, but I think they must be of type 1.

The covers, illustrated by M. Boulad in *L'OP* No. 78, page 347, both bear strikes of type 2. They are both dated 26 APR 939 and they are franked with stamps from France, Lebanon and Egypt (!). The French and Lebanese stamps are cancelled with the ship's postmark but the Egyptian stamps are just 'killed', on one cover with a "retta" and on the other with the framed '0' invalidation mark.

I hope that these notes will inspire other members to further investigation.

