

**On the Present and Future of Prut Navigation
in Three Reports from 1861***
(Abstract)

Constantin ARDELEANU**

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After several failed attempts made in the 1850s, new initiatives were undertaken in 1861 to open the river Prut for steamship navigation. The interest of entrepreneurs from Galati, along with the support of the authorities, both in Iași and at local level, and the involvement of foreign experts involved in engineering the Danube, contributed to the rapid mobilization of human, financial, material and administrative resources. The objective was to transform the Prut into a navigable river for river steamboats, which would transport the agricultural production of the upstream regions to Galati.

This text provides the context for these initiatives based on three reports drawn up by two foreign engineers, John Stokes and Eduard Süren. Their accounts, dated July and October 1861, outline the challenges that hindered navigation on the Prut, as well as the opportunities created by opening the river to a modern merchant fleet.

In his reports, Stokes estimated that the opening of the Prut would contribute to the prosperity of Moldavia and the Danube region. Navigation on the lower reaches of the river was not technically very difficult, and could be facilitated as far as Iași with relatively simple hydraulic works and modest expenditure. At that time there was political will, both nationally and internationally, for such an initiative. Interested investors, including British capitalists, provided significant guarantees for the project's completion.

Süren's information on the geography of the Prut valley and the riverbed aligns with Stokes' reports, but Süren also provides additional data on the depth, velocity and width of the river based on his preliminary measurements. According to the engineer, to enable navigation on the Prut, three types of technical works needed to be undertaken: "clearing works," "construction of the towpath," and "river correction."

As these reports are of interest for aspects related to the history of economy, international relations or environmental history, as well as for the local history of the communities along the Prut river, the second part of this work includes the reports of the two engineers.

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** Colegiul Noua Europă; Institutul de Studii Sud-Est Europene, București, e-mail: ardcons@gmail.com.