

Metin OMER
“Ovidius” University of Constanța, Romania

**TURKS AND TATARS IN ROMANIA
IN THE BILINGUAL EDITION
OF THE DOBRUJA / DOBROGEA NEWSPAPER (1919–1921)**

This article analyzes the content of the bilingual edition of the Dobruja newspaper, which was published between 1919 and 1924 in Bazargic (present-day Dobrich). Until 1921, it was published in Romanian and Ottoman Turkish, and later only in the latter. Dobruja is important because it was the first bilingual newspaper of the Muslim community in interwar Romania that existed for a long time. Also, the main authors of the articles published in this newspaper were important figures of the community, such as Halil Fehim (the mufti of Caliacra County), Mehmet Niyazi (the national poet of the Tatars and a Turkish language teacher at the Muslim Seminary in Medgidia), and Ibrahim Themo who had an Albanian background and was an important leader of the Young Turks.

After presenting the context in which the Dobruja newspaper came out, the article analyzes the content of bilingual editions from three perspectives: the demands that the Turks and Tatars made before the Romanian authorities, the organization of the community, and international developments. The author points out that the main idea encountered in the articles published in the newspaper is that the Turkish and Tatar minority was a safe one for the Romanian state because it had no territorial claims. This message was important, given that Southern Dobruja had an ethnic composition in which the Romanian ethnicity was a minority, and that the territory was claimed by Bulgaria. Thus, the reiteration of this by the elites of the Turks and Tatars was necessary for the attempts to obtain the satisfaction of some demands and support in the initiatives to improve the situation of the community. The Dobruja newspaper was the means by which this message was conveyed.

Keywords: Dobruja; Southern Dobruja; Bulgaria; Romania; Turks; Tatars.

1. The Context in which the Newspaper Appeared and its Objectives

In the interwar period, the press of the Turks and Tatars from Dobrudja experienced the strongest development. Between 1918 and 1940, about twenty newspapers and magazines were published by the leaders of this community (Ağuiçenoğlu 2004; Bedir 2018: 63–66; Omer 2014: 247–272; Omer 2013: 171–186; Popovic 1992: 221–249; Ülküsal 1987: 169–177). We could identify two main reasons for the development of the Turkish-Tatar press during this period. First of all, the Turkish and Tatar community in North Dobrudja was already integrated into Romanian society. Forty years had already passed since they were within the borders of the Romanian state, already knowing the Romanian laws and, especially, the Romanian language. Secondly, after the annexation of South Dobrogea as a result of the Second Balkan War and the First World War, the number of Turks and Tartars increased, thus increasing the number of Turkish and Tatar press readers. Thus, in a 1928 statistic made by Romanian prefects, the demographic situation in South Dobrogea was

as follows: Romanians 49,983 representing 14.75%, Bulgarians 133,077 representing 39.26%, Turkish-Tatars 137,439 representing 40.56% out of the total population of 338,897. In addition to Turks, Tatars, Bulgarians, and Romanians, other nationalities were totaled 18,398, i.e. 5.43% of the total population of South Dobrudja (Brătescu 1938: 198). According to the official census of 1930, in Durostor county there were 90,595 Turks and 2,085 Tatars out of a total of 211,433 inhabitants; in Caliacra county there were 38,430 Turks and 4,461 Tatars out of a total of 166,911 inhabitants, in Constanța county there were 17,114 Turks and 15,174 Tatars from a total of 253,093 inhabitants, while in Tulcea county there were 4,634 Turks and 372 Tatars out of a total of 184,038 inhabitants (Manuilă 1938: 186-191). In the analysis of these data, it should be taken into account that, according to some estimates, in the interwar period, approximately 115,000 Turks and Tatars emigrated to Turkey (Omer 2020: 104).

Newspapers and magazines were the space where community developments were presented and ideas for community orientation and development were discussed. They were also a means of communication between the authorities and the community. This last role was played mainly by bilingual newspapers and magazines – in Romanian and Turkish/Ottoman Turkish. The first newspaper of the Turks and Tatars in Romania to appear in Romanian was “Cuvântul Dobrogei”, which was published in Constanța. However, it was short-lived, with only two issues published on July 13 and 25, 1919 (Apostoleanu, Stelian, Dobre 2020: 130).

The first bilingual newspaper to have a long existence was “Dobruca”. It appeared between 1919 and 1924 in Bazargic (nowadays Dobrich, Bulgaria), first weekly, then twice a week. The newspaper appeared bilingual in every issue as long as it was published weekly. Later, starting with the ninth issue, it also appeared in Romanian once in two issues. It was published bilingually until April 26, 1921.

This article aims to analyze the content of the newspaper “Dobruca” during the period in which it appeared bilingually. This is necessary because I consider that the appearance of the newspaper immediately after the conclusion of the peace treaties at the end of the First World War was not accidental at all. The Muslim community, composed of Turks and Tatars, was present in a territory that was claimed by Bulgaria, with officials in Bucharest being quite cautious about it. Therefore, the community leaders had to calculate their decisions or claims very well so as not to arouse the suspicions of the authorities. The role of a bilingual newspaper was to explain each initiative and try to gain support. At the same time, it was a means of connecting with the community. A letter signed “Ch.” addressed to the management of the newspaper in which, somehow, its role was drawn, was published in one of the first issues:

“The fate of the Muslim people is closely linked to that of the Romanian people, which is why its motto should be to trust this country and its leaders. Greater Romania with a large homogeneous people has all the demand for the cohabiting ethnic minorities, provided, however, that they do not have other separate aspira-

tions and desires but those of the entire Romanian people. I am convinced that those who lead the Dobrogea newspaper have assumed a responsibility towards this loyal people, they will seek in every way to enlighten them and show them the way of salvation, and this only if they are attached to the Romanian people, the most tolerant people from all the peoples of the Balkan Peninsula” (Ch. 1920a: 1).

Also, the content of the Romanian version, different from the Ottoman Turkish one, shows that the messages, ideas, and requirements are different depending on the receiver.

A peculiarity that shows that the “Dobruca” newspaper occupied an important place in the community is given by its main authors. These were the representative elite of the community. Among those who published in the newspaper were Halil Fehim, Caliacra County mufti, Mehmet Niyazi, national Tatar poet and Turkish language teacher at the Muslim Seminary in Medgidia, Ibrahim Themo, of Albanian origin, an important leader of the young Turkish refugee in Romania, active in the local and national political life.

Regarding the newspaper distribution, it was based on a distribution network consisting of volunteers located in the most important localities in Dobrudja. Most of the people who distributed the newspaper were teachers, imams, or barbers, i.e., people who came into contact with a large part of the population (Îlânât 1919: 3). Those who published the “Dobruca” newspaper wanted to expand to Bulgaria as well. They mentioned in several issues of the newspaper that they were looking for a distributor in each of the main Muslim-populated localities in Bulgaria to help “our Islamic co-religionists in Bulgaria to read our “Dobruca”, the only newspaper of Romanian Muslims, and thus to be aware of the Islamic life in” Romania (Bulgaristan’da Müvezzi Arıyoruz 1920: 2). This attempt seems to have been unsuccessful. No issue of the newspaper was sent to any country other than Romania. The attempt to expand into Bulgaria may have been motivated by the fact that the Turks and Tatars from South Dobrudja had been part of Bulgaria and still had connections with Muslims from other Bulgarian regions. The distribution of the newspaper beyond Romania’s borders can be interpreted as an attempt to keep in touch with the Muslim community abroad.

The purpose of the newspaper was stated in the first issues. Thus, in one of the first published articles, a short history of the Turkish press in Romania was first presented, showing that:

“After the war of 1913 when the whole of Dobrudja was united in a single body, the Turkish newspaper IŞIK (light) appeared in Medgidia which purpose was to enlighten and guide the Muslim compatriots in the Cadrilater by showing them the benefits that flow from this union in a body of Muslims from all over Dobrudja under the glorious Romanian flag” (Scopul ziarului „DOBROGEA” 1919: 1).

The article stated that the First World War interrupted this approach, which was resumed at the end of the war by the publication of the newspaper “Dobruca“. The article highlights two main ideas, which are recurring in all issues of the newspaper. First of all, the fact that the Turks and Tartars were “an inseparable part of this country” and that their role was to “defend the interests of Muslims throughout Dobrudja, as well as the interests of the motherland”, referring to Romania (Scopul ziarului „DOBROGEA” 1919: 1).

Pointing out that the purpose of the newspaper was none other than that of “enlightening the Muslim people and defending their true interests”, the newspaper’s editors also stated their neutral position towards Romania’s domestic policy: “The newspaper will not deal with any party policy but will always be in the service of the true Romanian interests” (Scopul ziarului „DOBROGEA” 1919: 1). This clear stance against political involvement was an attempt not to raise suspicions about the newspaper’s intentions. The idea of not getting involved in politics was repeated in other newspaper issues. For example, another edition of the newspaper was stated that it aimed to be an apolitical one, “away from internal political struggles” with the purpose of “enlightening our compatriots of the Muslim religion, inspiring their love for the country and trust in the Romanian people” (Ch. 1920b: 1). The newspaper’s non-involvement in politics must, however, be viewed critically. No pro-party texts were published in any issue of the newspaper. There were only a few vague non-nominal grievances that were expressed, but they were not political either. However, one of the newspaper’s main contributors, Ibrahim Themo, was involved in politics. He was elected senator from Caliacra in 1920, running on the People’s Party lists (Omer 2020: 112). He ran in South Dobrudja, although he lived in Medgidia, a town in North Dobrudja.

The target audience of the editors was represented both by the Muslim community and by the Romanian authorities and public opinion. This was also the reason why the newspaper appeared bilingually. In fact, depending on the language in which they were written, Turkish-Ottoman or Romanian, the articles had a clear recipient. The Romanian version of the newspaper was not a translation of Turkish-Ottoman articles. In the articles in Romanian, the editors expressed their hope that “the Romanian brothers will give us all the support for the success of the newspaper” (Scopul ziarului „DOBROGEA” 1919: 1). Instead, the message to Turkish readers was more complex. First of all, it was shown that the newspaper “Dobruca“ was the only newspaper of Muslims in Romania and because of this reason, it must be supported by all Muslims. To emphasize this idea, the importance of the press was also shown: “It is known that a nation without a newspaper is like a life without a language. The existence of a nation can be accepted with the voice of that nation and its word being spoken: the means that can do these things is the newspaper, everyone who loves their nation and homeland must also love the Dobruca newspaper” (Îlânât 1919: 3). “Dobruca” was a channel of communication between the Romanian authorities and the Muslim community in South Dobrudja. The main topics addressed in the pages of the newspaper were, on the one hand, the concerns of the

Turks and Tatars, and on the other hand, they were an attempt to win the goodwill of the Romanian authorities.

2. Topics Covered in the Pages of the Newspaper

2.1. Demands from the Romanian Authorities

One of the main goals of the “Dobruca” newspaper was to create a favorable image of the Muslim community for the Romanian authorities and the Romanian public opinion. This was, in fact, a means by which the leaders of the Turks and Tatars in South Dobrudja tried to obtain certain facilities for the community they represented. The strategy of gaining the sympathy of the Romanian authorities and public opinion was based on several elements. First, almost all the articles that tried to create a positive image of Muslims were published in Romanian. This clearly shows that they were not addressed to community members, but to Romanian language readers. Moreover, most of these articles were signed by the Romanian editor of the newspaper, Gheorghe Ceara, or by other local Romanian personalities. Thus, the message gained even more legitimacy.

Secondly, to create a good image of Turks and Tatars, articles praising Muslim civilization were published. For example, such an article stated that “no nation has been more unscrupulously robbed of its historical rights than the Muslim people.” The rest of the article listed the main achievements of the various Islamic empires; however, the author does not forget to point out that the Islamic civilization not only consisted of military power but also developed a special culture (G. C. 1920a: 1). In another article, after it was shown that the idea that “Muslim peoples” were refractory to culture and civilization was wrong, a series of statements were made, without a well-developed argument, to prove otherwise, leading to say that a cultural center created by Muslims, Cordoba, was “the Jordan in which the elite spirits of Western Christians were baptized” (G. C. 1920b: 1). In some cases, claims about the degree of civilization of Muslims were categorical and stated that Muslims were not the barbarians, unlike “neighboring peoples” (Gh. C 1920: 1). It is not hard to guess that the neighbors referred to in the article were the Bulgarians.

This antithesis between Muslims, i.e., Turks and Tatars, and Bulgarians was the third element of the strategy to gain the sympathy of the Romanian authorities and public opinion. In the pages of the newspaper “Dobruca”, it was repeated in several articles that, unlike Bulgarians, Turks and Tatars were a secure minority without territorial claims. Thus, the rapprochement between Romanians and Muslims was considered a “natural” one, even necessary “for the consolidation of the Romanian state”. The reason was very clearly stated: “...the Turks in this locality have no aspirations of conquest, autonomy or separation and are satisfied under the Romanian authority and are welcome in our common marriage...” (“Legaturile firești Româno-Turci în Dobrogea” 1920: 1). This option to support the affinity towards Turks and Tatars had its springs in the demographic reality of the region, unfavorable to the Romanians. It was preferable to legitimize the claims of a population without territorial interests: “Therefore, from both a historical and an ethnic point of

view, the Cadrilater is Muslim territory, that is, a population” that, very importantly, did not have the “intention of creation of an independent state” (G. C. 1920c: 1).

The claims of the Muslim population were always presented in articles comparing the situation of Bulgaria and the Bulgarian minority in South Dobrudja. In these articles, the Bulgarian period was presented as a period of decline for both the region and the Muslim community. For example, in an article presenting the festivities dedicated to the anniversary of the entry of the Romanian authorities into South Dobrudja, on December 14/27 1918, the period in which the region was controlled by the Bulgarians is presented as a bad one for the city of Bazargic: “muddy streets, full of dirt, potholes at every turn, darkness, in other words, the city changed and almost unrecognizable”. The welcoming of the Romanian administration was not a warm one either: “some of the inhabitants of the city were so hostile that, leaving aside that they had conspired not to give anyone shelter in their houses, but also the hoteliers and innkeepers alike”. The article stated that only the Muslims had received the Romanian administration well because “whatever it is said, this element is emotionally attached to the fate and interests of Greater Romania and [...] will always be with the thought and feeling of the Romanian interests (“Aniversarea restabilirei administrației Române” 1919: 1).

The support of the Romanian administration was presented as being in the interest of the Muslim community. The demonstration was made by criticizing Bulgarian policies on the Muslim community. Thus, it was shown that “the existence of a foreign element on the northern border of Bulgaria bothered the politicians in Sofia”, and therefore, they promoted a process of colonization. Moreover, the article stated that most of the settlers were from “the ranks of those that had problems with the law” (G. C. 1920d: 1). At the same time, it was shown that the Bulgarian period was “an ordeal” for the Muslims in which they suffered “without justice and a complete lack of care and encouragement from the Bulgarian state” (Șerbănescu 1920: 1). Promoting the idea that the Romanian civilization was superior to the Bulgarian one, the urge was made for the Muslim population to be “treated humanely” (“Aniversarea restabilirei administrației Române” 1919: 1). It was stated that this population can be “polished like marble” (Șerbănescu 1920: 1), its interests coinciding with those of Romania: the development “both in the economic and in the cultural field” (G. C. 1920d: 1). At the same time, it was shown that this community must be supported in realizing the ideals it had because “the more enlightened it is, the more it will contribute to the prosperity and glory of the whole Romania” (Ceara 1920a: 1).

In other cases, the demands of the Turks and Tartars towards the authorities were formulated more specifically. The most frequently cited issues in this regard were those related to the relationship with local authorities and the situation of the Muslim clergy. With regard to the local authorities, the abuses of local officials were criticized, with some saying that some people felt that Muslims were backward and unable to defend their rights (Ceara 1920a: 1). Articles on the situation of the Muslim clergy were much more numerous. The clergy was presented as “the shepherd,

in the sacred sense of the word, of the masses”, the hodjas of the Muslim community were described as devoted to the Romanian state “doing their duty abundantly to the Romanian state” (G. C. 1920e: 1). Pointing out the importance of the imams of the community and their benevolent attitude towards the Romanian administration, an appeal was made to the authorities to improve their financial situation in order to “snatch them from the borders of misery” (G. C. 1920e: 1).

There were, however, cases in which the criticisms addressed to the Romanian administration were very clear and direct. An example of this is an article criticizing the discrepancy between the neighborhoods in the city of Bazargic where Muslims lived, which the author calls “the Bazargic of the disinherited” and which he says had “the appearance of a lamentable heap of huts, crossed by narrow alleys and twisted, who never got acquainted with the broom of the City Hall”, and the Bazargic “of the firstborn, of the favorites of fate and the people of the day, with the wide and aligned streets, with well-maintained sidewalks”. Starting from this image, Bazargic is compared to a woman who, “although endowed with an impeccable natural beauty”, takes care only “of the toilet of the head and the cleavage of the arms without noticing the dust that lay on the legs and the disheveled dress” (G. C. 1920f: 1).

The articles in Turkish have a different construction, although they address the same topics. The articles addressed to the Romanian authorities in which a series of requirements are formulated first include the idea that South Dobrudja belongs to Romania, then the confidence is expressed that the Romanian state is benevolent towards minorities, and only at the end certain demands are listed or made. For example, in such an article, it is first shown that after the war, South Dobrudja “threw herself into the lap of her beloved motherland beyond the Danube”. Then it is shown that the type of administration in a region must “be based on the voices of the people living there and change according to that voice”. As soon as this observation is made, the hope is expressed that “Great Romania [...] declared that it would keep the widest degree of law and freedom alive.” Only at the end the article mentions the cancellation of the censorship in Dobrudja, the very poor condition of the roads, the fact that the streets could not be walked because of the mud, that the streets were not lit at night, except for city centers, and the lack of safety and security were mentioned (“Dobrucayı da düşünelim” 1920: 1).

2.2. The Community Organization and Development

The “Dobruca” newspaper was also a space where the main ideas regarding the evolution of the Muslim community in Romania were debated. There were two main themes of these debates: the search for solutions for the organization of the Muslim community and the finding of solutions for its modernization.

Regarding the community organization, it was first proposed to hold a congress of the Muslims. The idea was not new. The first Congress of the Dobrudjan Muslims was organized in Constanța, between November 21–23, 1913, immediately after the signing of the Peace Treaty of Bucharest in 1913. At this congress, the

main decisions were taken regarding the organization of the Muslim community, especially in South Dobrudja (“Congresul Musulmanilor din Dobrogea la Constanța” 1913: 2). After the end of the First World War, solutions were sought again to solve the difficulties faced by the Turks and Tatars in Romania, most of them for a very short time part of the Romanian state. The main method promoted in this regard was the organization of a congress of the Muslims. Starting with the question “Does progress breed wealth, or does education bring wealth?”, the national poet of the Tatars in Romania, Mehmet Niyazi, showed that “as we are, we look like a poor person who needs everything, to be dressed from head to toe, just a fez and underwear are not enough to meet his needs, as schooling and trade without organization”. In his article, Niyazi pointed out the need for organization of the Muslim community and, in this regard, was a promoter of holding a congress of the Muslims (Niyazi 1920: 1).

Beyond convincing the Muslim people to hold a congress, efforts were also made to gain the approval of local authorities. Therefore, in an unsigned article presenting the idea of organizing a Muslim congress in which to discuss their main issues, it is stressed several times that the intentions of Muslims were not to separate from the Romanian state, but to contribute to its unification. The purpose of the Congress is shown to be the preparation of Muslims “for a more conscious civic life, in a word, to form an enlightened mind able to understand its purpose in consolidating Romanian life in these lands - thus contributing to the very development of the Muslim element” (Congresul Musulman 1920: 1). It is further emphasized that Muslims have no territorial claims: “The presence of Muslims in Dobrudja cannot be a danger; on the contrary, it is more of a guarantee of counterbalancing any foreign desires that would lean toward gravitation to exterior” (Congresul Musulman 1920: 1). To reinforce this idea, it is also stated that “the fatal and ruthless fate has separated us, Muslims, forever from the national body, and we can no longer hope for any reincorporation into the homeland that once formed the powerful Muslim empire; we cannot be something else and do want to be just faithful citizens living under the protection of Greater Romania” (“Congresul Musulman” 1920: 1).

The congress was held in Bazargic on April 14, 1920. Following the proceedings of the congress, a statute of the Muslim community, which contained 71 articles, was prepared. The statute regulated the functioning of the main institutions of the Turks and Tatars. The statute was sent to the Ministry of Cults but was not adopted (Ülküsal 1987: 145–146). However, the main wishes were repeated in several issues of the newspaper. One of these was the organization of the Muftiate, the institutions under which the imams, the mosques, the Muslim communities, and the cadiates were subordinated, and especially the establishment of a Baş-Muftiate, that is, an institution to coordinate the activity of the other four Muftiates. Until February 23 1937, there was no post of Baş-Mufti. This was created by decision no. 39818/1937 taken by the Minister of Culture and Arts, Victor Iamandi (ANR, fund MCA, file 100/1938, f. 152.). With the signing of the Treaty of Craiova in 1940, by which South Dobrudja returned to Bulgaria, and with Romania’s entry into the

Second World War, the institutional organization of the Muslim community was rethought, leaving only one Muftiate based in Constanța.

A constant concern of the editors of the “Dobruca” newspaper was to persuade the Turks and Tatars to accept some changes that would contribute to the modernization of the Muslim community. In this regard, articles stating that Islam was not incompatible with progress, that in its beginnings Islam supported the sciences were published, and the current state of the Muslims was criticized. These articles also showed that the original precepts of Islam encouraged education and science and urged Muslims to value them (Cevdet 1920a: 1). In the modernization process, the emphasis was on improving the material situation of the community members, showing that funds were needed to maintain the schools, the mosques, and the activities of the community (Cevdet 1920b: 1); the development of Muslim associations based on a program and a set of principles that should follow the “national and local needs” was underlined (Cevdet 1920c: 1).

A recurring theme regarding the modernization of the community was the situation of women. Giving women rights was seen as a sign of progress (Niyazi 1920: 1). The most important issue in this regard was giving women the right to vote and to be elected. The articles on this topic presented the current trend in the entire “democratic world” and called on Muslims in Romania to prepare for this moment by encouraging women’s participation in the vote. Religious arguments were used to persuade readers to show that women occupy an important place in Islam. In some cases, even hadiths, a set of traditions concerning the deeds and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad, were cited. One of the most widely used was that according to which “Paradise is under the feet of mothers” (Kadınlarn hak intihabları münasebetiyle 1920: 1).

2.3. International Relations from the Perspective of the Dobrudjan Muslims

Articles on international relations were published in the pages of the “Dobruca” newspaper. However, the most important place was occupied by the presentation of the situation in Anatolia. This affinity is understandable given that the Turks and Tatars from Dobrudja had been part of the Ottoman Empire until 1878. In the context of the nationalist policies promoted by the governments of the countries of which they were part at that time, it was understandable that they wished success to the country with which they had close relations. Moreover, many of those who signed the articles in this newspaper had studied in the Ottoman Empire.

The articles in the “Dobruca” newspaper had an attitude of defending Turkish interests. The writings published on this subject promoted three main ideas: the importance of signing a peace treaty in terms that suited the Ottoman Empire, the legitimacy of its demands, and even the presentation of the serious consequences of continuing the war with it. The arguments that were developed to defend these ideas evolved according to the situation of the relations between the Ottoman Empire and the Great Powers.

During the analyzed period, the main positions were related to the negotiations on the signing of a peace treaty with the Ottoman Empire. In this regard, the leaders of the Muslim community in Romania tried to bring arguments in favor of provisions acceptable to the Ottoman Empire. Some of the proposed solutions were inspired by the Romanian case. Thus, Ibrahim Themo showed that the Western powers motivated their intervention by seeking to protect the Christian communities in Anatolia. In his opinion, the solution was simpler and he gave the example of Romania, which had signed a Minority Treaty, saying that the Ottomans could do the same (Temo 1920: 2).

In order to show the importance of signing a peace treaty in favor of the Ottoman Empire, arguments were made to try to prove Ottoman superiority. In this regard, reference was made to the glorious history of the Ottoman Empire, stating that it was larger than the Roman Empire or that “until yesterday”, the Genoese and the Venetian were its tributary states (H. 1920: 1). In the same vein, the surrender of Izmir and Western Thrace was considered “a mistake” on the grounds that they were “the most beautiful provinces”, the “soul” of the Ottoman Empire, and Greece was “a third-class state” (G. C. 1920g: 1), while the Greeks were presented as “false heirs of Byzantium” (M. N. 1921: 1).

Another argument that was made in favor of the Ottoman Empire was that having the title of caliph, the Ottoman sultan benefited not only from the support of the Ottoman soldiers but also from that of millions of Muslim believers around the world. Because of this, the city of Istanbul, as the capital of the caliphate, was required to remain in the possession of the Ottoman Empire (H. 1920: 1). The importance of the caliphate was underlined in the context in which the colonial empires with which the Ottoman Empire was in negotiations had a large Muslim population. Consequently, it was suggested that the Ottoman sultan, having the title of caliph, could have influenced Muslims around the world. In such an article, which was addressed to Great Britain, a request was made by Muslims in India to urge the sultan to defend “the honor of Islam whatever it may be” (70 Milyon Hind Müslümanlarının Sultan’a Müracaatları 1920: 2). According to the “Dobruca” newspaper, Muslims in India also declared that if the armistice was violated, “the expectation that peace and tranquility will not be undermined in India is in vain” (70 Milyon Hind Müslümanlarının Sultan’a Müracaatları 1920: 2).

Another argument in favor of signing a treaty that would please the Ottoman Empire was its importance for peace in the region. To reinforce this idea, the peace treaties signed at the end of the war were criticized for being ineffective and because they posed a constant danger of a war breaking out, especially in Eastern Europe. Understanding that the Great Powers already perceived Soviet Russia as a threat, Moscow was presented as a destabilizing danger (M. N. 1921: 1). According to the “Dobruca” newspaper, the solution to lasting peace in Eastern Europe was a strong Turkey. It was also stated that Europeans’ confidence in Turkey could “bring great benefits to universal peace” (M. N. 1921: 1).

In addition to these arguments that supported the finding of diplomatic solutions, the editors of the “Dobruca” newspaper supported the opposition movement led by Mustafa Kemal. The resistance in Anatolia against the armies of the Great Powers and especially against Greece was described in the pages of the newspaper as a “national movement” (San Remo Kongresi Münasebetiyle 1920: 1). The successes of the forces led by Mustafa Kemal were viewed with the hope that they could change the situation in Turkey. In some articles, it was shown that some of the demands of the Great Powers could not be accepted, and consequently, they could lead to an increase in the intensity of the actions of *kuva-i milliye* (National Forces) which would be victorious (Sulh Kongresinin Türkiye Hakkındaki Kararları 1920: 1). The fight against the Greeks was viewed with admiration, as a chance to return to the old grandeur of the Ottoman Empire: “The sick man from the Bosphorus is resurrected as the phoenix from his ashes and fights. And although his blood flows from his open wounds, he fights in the heroic struggle for his and his country’s salvation” (G. C. 1921: 1). The importance accorded to the developments in Anatolia also emerged from the group of news items in the column “Anadolu Haberleri” which was published in several issues of the newspaper.

3. Conclusions

In conclusion, we can say that the “Dobruca” newspaper had four main objectives. First of all, it was the means by which the Turks and the Tatars knew the realities of Romania, a state of which, in the case of those in South Dobrudja, they had been part for a very short time. Thus, the articles published in the newspaper presented the political situation and the legislative developments, but at the same time, they also referred to the expectations that Romanian officials had of the Muslim community. This last aspect was also the most significant. In this sense, the most important aspect was that of loyalty to the Romanian state and especially the observance of its borders established at the end of the First World War.

This last aspect was also understood by the community leaders, therefore, the second objective of the newspaper was to present the wishes of the Turks and Tatars to the Romanian authorities. Each time, the demands made by the community leaders in the pages of the “Dobruca” newspaper were accompanied by the expression of devotion to the territorial integrity of Romania. Only later, timidly, a series of measures that the community expected were proposed.

The third objective was to organize the community, especially in the context in which the Turks and Tatars from South Dobrudja were in the process of becoming Romanian citizens. Thus, with a much larger community as a result of the changes in the border, the leaders of the Turks and Tatars sought ways to solve the main problems they faced. The “Dobruca” newspaper was the space where the ideas regarding the religious organization, the development of education and the social situation were debated. The most intense publishing activity in this regard was the organization of a congress of all the Muslims in Dobrudja. During the congress,

important decisions were made regarding the institutional organization, especially the religious one.

The fourth objective of the newspaper was to inform the community about the developments in the Ottoman Empire, a space with which both the Turks and the Tatars had very close ties. Articles on the situation in Anatolia and the peace treaty negotiations clearly show that the “Dobruca” newspaper was a supporter of the Ottoman Empire and later of the resistance movement led by Mustafa Kemal.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

70 Milyon Hind Müslümanlarının Sultan’a Müracaatları 1920: 70 Milyon Hind Müslümanlarının Sultan’a Müracaatları. /