

THE UNION OF DOBROGEA WITH ROMANIA

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Abstract. *This study presents the internal context in which the province between the Danube and the Black Sea joined Romania in November 1878. This event became possible because the Romanian army participated to the war against the Ottoman Empire from 1877-1878 in alliance with Russia.*

After the war finished, the Peace Treaty signed on 1st /13th July 1878 in Berlin, accepted Romania's independence and also obligated the Ottoman Empire to give Dobrogea to Russia, which had to give this province back to Romania in exchange for Basarabia. On 14th November 1878 there were organized in Tulcea, festivities generated by the entrance of the Romanian in Dobrogea.

This event is also presented in this study.

Keywords: Dobrogea, the Danube Delta, the Black Sea, union, Tulcea.

Dobrogea, the land between the Danube and the Black Sea, is the only land of Romania than lies in the Balcanic Peninsula. Dobrogea was populated, in ancient times, by the Dacians and it was the place where the Greek and Roman civilizations met. This land was also the first territory inhabited by the Dacians and Romans where the Christian religion, preached by Saint Andrew, entered.

At the end of 14th century, for a short time, in the reign of Mircea the Old (1386-1418) was the ruler of Walachia. His reign included "both banks of the Danube until the Black Sea" (COMAN 2008, 3-4).

In Dobrogea existed a fortress system that was created for defense Walachia in case of a Turkish attack. The system included fortress of Silistra and the stone fortress of Enisala. The Turkish attack took place short after Mircea the Old died, during the reign of his son, Michael (1418-1420), which led to four centuries of Turkish occupation.

At the end of 19th century, Dobrogea joined the Romanian national state after the Ottoman Empire was defeated in the Russian-Romanian-Ottoman war between 1877-1878. According to the Peace Treaty signed in Berlin at 1/13 July 1878, Dobrogea, including the Danube Delta and the Snakes' Island, belonged to Romania after the withdrawal of Russian army that was at that time in the region.

Prior to the Russian government official announce on 12 November 1878 concerning the withdrawal of Russian authorities in Dobrogea, since 10th November 1878, Prince Carol has signed decrees appointing the first administrative officials in Dobrogea. Thus, Nicolae Catargi was appointed governor of Dobrogea, while Remus Opreanu and George Mihail Ghica became prefect of Constanța and Tulcea counties (SEIȘANU 1928, 186).

Since the beginning of 1878, the Romanian government has sent in Dobrogea two committees, one civil and one military, for a thorough documentation of: political and legal system, public services, institutions, general condition and immediate needs of the population (RĂDULESCU & BITOLEANU 1998, 278; COLCER & MĂGUREANU 1998, 118).

Civil Commission composed of: G. Cantacuzino, M. Poenaru-Bordea, and Remus Opreanu boards visited: Tulcea, Constanța, Mangalia and Cernavodă, being everywhere received with joy by the locals (STAN 1974, 223).

After signing the peace treaty of Berlin, the military commission composed of: Fălcoianu Colonel, Captain Șerbănescu visited all of Dobrogea for 28 days (COLCER & MĂGUREANU 1998, 118-119). In honor of its members, the director of English society to administer Constanța-Cernavodă railroad gave a great banquet at Cernavodă (COTOVU *et alii* 1928, 21-22).

Lieutenant-Colonel Ioan Murgescu, member of the military commission noted: "All the Romanian, Greek, Turkish and Tatar populations, are looking forward to the conquer of Dobrogea by the Romanians and in all places where they are to be found, I was told that they are happy that the Sea and Dobrogea were given to *Romania*" (MARAVELA 2008, 5).

Commission for the installation of civil administration, led by Nicolae Catargi, meets on 9th November 1878, after becoming established at Pitesti in the summer of that year.

Active Division, commanded by General Gheorghe Anghelescu was responsible for taking over the military administration of Dobrogea. It moves from Pitesti to Braila, which arrives on 14th November 1878.

On the evening of 13th November 1878, Prince Carol of Romania, accompanied by his military suite, with a special train left in Braila, where he arrived on the morning of November 14, at 9am (SEIȘANU 1928, 186).

Prince was received with enthusiasm by the general population with the highest honors by local authorities in Brăila. Thus, the mayor gave a speech in which he said: "*The flag of Romania, was carried triumphantly across the Danube, the battle on the plains of Bulgaria, will now fly over the sea provinces to conquer and morally to the two principles of civilization, which means: freedom and justice! Let fluttering proudly on the banks of the Black Sea but a new era of freedom and prosperity!*" (SEIȘANU 1928, 186)

In this speech, Prince said that "the annexation of Dobrogea country will open a new source of wealth and trade in particular will give new impetus to Braila" (SEIȘANU 1928, 186).

After this time, Carol has reviewed the operations troops, consisting of four regiments, five and seven of infantry, one artillery regiment and 2 red regiment, under command of General Gheorghe Anghelescu, then read a proclamation to the army.

After reading Prince Carol's proclamation, the bishop of the Lower Danube, Melchisedec celebrated a *Te-Deum* on a nearby mound.

Later, Prince Carol placed himself at the forefront of the moving troops to the city center where there was the parade in his honor. Once the parade ended, the troops headed to the port city of Braila, where was erected a triumphal arch in honor of the Solemnity of the union of Dobrogea with Romania.

At 12 a.m., the Prince boarded the yacht princely ruler Stefan cel Mare (Stephen the Great) accompanied by Ion Bratianu, Prime Minister of Romania, Melchisedec bishop of the Lower Danube and the representatives of civil authorities (SEIȘANU 1928, 189). On the shores of Dobrogea, the Ghecet (New Smardan), they were expected by a lot of people with Romanian flags.

In 13 hours, they crossed the Danube: a detachment of red, a company of hunters, a battery of artillery and five infantry regimental line. Upon landing in Dobrogea, both Prince Carol and Romanian troops have been cheering the joy of those present (SEIȘANU 1928, 189). Military Band sings the national anthem, after which the Bishop of Lower Danube Melchisedec blesses the new land of the country (MARAVELA 2008, 5).

In the same evening, Prince returned to Braila and from here he went to Bucharest. In Dobrogea the Romanian authorities had begun preparations for the reception a few weeks before 14th November 1878 (RĂDULESCU & BITOLEANU 1998, 348). The vast majority of the population in Dobrogea harbored feelings of satisfaction with the province's union with Romania.

On 14th November 1878 Prince Carol had read at Braila also a Proclamation to the Dobrogeans. This document has been multiplied on leaflets in languages: Romanian, Turkish, Greek and Bulgarian, and was spread throughout the Dobrogea (RĂDULESCU & BITOLEANU 1998, 348).

Proclamation announced the inhabitants of Dobrogea that "the most sacred and precious goods of humanity - life, honor and property - are placed under the shield of the new constitution". (MONITORUL OFICIAL 1878). However, the proclamation provides that "Religion that you, your family, your doorstep will be protected by our laws and no one can hit them without penalty and receive legitimate." (MONITORUL OFICIAL 1878)

In this atmosphere of celebration there was a great banquet held at Cernavodă in which speeches were delivered in honor of the solemn event. It was organized by the English company which managed Cernavodă-Constanța railway and the representatives of the nationalities in Dobrogea (RĂDULESCU & BITOLEANU 1998, 348).

In Tulcea, Dobrogea's main administrative center in 1878, he formed a committee of notables of the city, taking it as a primary school leader Constantin Andrian (RĂDULESCU & BITOLEANU 1998, 348; MARAVELA 2008, 5). This committee organized the festivities celebrating the union of Dobrogea with Romania, with the support of the Consul of France, Emile Lange, who designed the plan for decorating the city in honor of this event.

Thus, there were erected three triumphal arches decorated by the painter Enache Cardas and the German upholsterer Johan Jung. It is significant that triumphal arches were built even by communities: Greek, Bulgarian and Hebrew in the city (MARAVELA 2008, 349).

On 18th November 1878 it took place in Tulcea festivities celebrating the arrival of the first units of the Romanian army. At times 14 ships arrived in the Romanian military port, and when the soldiers first set foot on land Romanian Dobrogea "*a large population with much enthusiasm*" welcomed them.

In front of the first triumphal arch, Boambă Costache, the oldest of the city notables Romanian gave to the troop commander bread and salt and delivered a welcome speech on behalf of Tulcea residents (RĂDULESCU & BITOLEANU 1998, 350).

Among the leaders of the Romanian community in Tulcea who attended celebrations on 18th November 1878 in honor of the Romanian troops were arriving in town, besides Boambă Costache, and: Nedelcea Gasca, Peter Uzumtoma, Mihalache Petrescu, Vasile and Mihalache Sotirescu (COTOVU 1928, 338).

At the end of the war, as established by the Romanian military and civilian authorities in Dobrogea installed on 14th November 1878, it was a desolate region with vast stretches of uncultivated land, and without any kind of industry. The settlements were few and poorly developed. Roads were almost completely missing (COTOVU 1928, 339).

In these circumstances, the economy and restoring public order have become one of the most important objectives of the Romanian authorities in Dobrogea (RĂDULESCU & BITOLEANU 1998, 352).

Before the union of Dobrogea with Romania on 28th and 30th September 1878, the Romanian government requested and obtained from the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate the right to administer the new province by "ad hoc regulations, until its definitive organization (RĂDULESCU & BITOLEANU 1998, 353; ROMAN 1905, 23).

So, by "The regulation for the administrative division of Dobrogea and its organization" from 13th November 1878, the villages were to be managed by a mayor than was helped by a local council formed by 4 councilors, elected from the inhabitants of that village (RĂDULESCU & BITOLEANU 1998, 353).

The same administrative regulation stipulated the territorial-administrative organizing of Dobrogea in 3 counties: Kustendge, Tulcea and the New Silistra (IONESCU-DOBROGEANU 1904, 357).

Between 14th and 23rd November 1878 arrived in the Romanian army units both in Tulcea and Constantza and Babadag (RĂDULESCU & BITOLEANU 1998, 350).

In this context, all ethnic communities in Romanian Dobrogea government sent telegrams of congratulations, expressing adherence to the historic act of union of Dobrogea with Romania (RĂDULESCU & BITOLEANU 1998, 350).

On 23rd November 1878 ceremonies were held in Constanța in honor of Romanian troops' arrival, which involved over 5000 people. Despite of the fact that the Romanian authorities have officially taken over the administration of Dobrogea, Russian troops remained stationed in the province by early 1879.

Thus, only on 4 April 1879 the Prefect of Constanța, Remus Opreanu, announced Bucharest about the departure of Russian infantry and artillery units in the city of Constanța. Subsequently, on 22 April 1879, Tulcea county prefect, George Mihail Ghica, announced the withdrawal of Russian fleet from the port town of Tulcea (RĂDULESCU & BITOLEANU 1998, 351).

In Dobrogea the population, according to statistics made by the Russian governor Belotzercovici during the Russian occupation, a total of 15,719 families, 5,542 were Romanian families (35%) and only 4750 were Bulgarian families, representing 30% of total population.

Thus, Russian statistics achieved in the years 1877-1878 in the districts: Tulcea, Macin, Hârșova, Babadag Kustendge, Medgidia and Sulina, but that does not include districts: Mangalia, Cernavodă and Silistra (ANGELESCO 1907, 39), states that the Romanians were the most numerous inhabitants of Dobrogea.

All these statistics indicate a Russian population of 79,357 inhabitants, of which 24 167 21 916 Romanian and Bulgarian (ROMAN 1922, 458-459). Although this statistic is not complete, they do not present demographic situation in cazas (counties): Mangalia, Cernavodă and Silistra, she reveals that Romanians outnumbered Bulgarians even cazalele northern Dobrogea, which are referred to 3973 Romanian families (32%) vs. 3 691 Bulgarian families (29.7%) (ROMAN 1922, 458-459).

Shortly after the union of Dobrogea with Romania and the Romanian government installation in the province have been made concerning the population of Constanța and Tulcea counties. Need for the census was expressed as follows by the prefect of Tulcea, George Michael Ghica: "(...) an accurate census of the population in Tulcea not yet has been made. (...) After the Russian government's statistical table, which is found in the prefecture, there are 2575 families (...)" (ANGELESCO 1907, 41)

Thus, the statistics established by the Prefect of Constanța County, Remus Opreanu mention 14,884 Romanian families and 8429 family of Bulgaria, while the statistics for the county of Tulcea, performed by George Michael Ghica prefect, mentioned 4082 and only three Romanian families 347 Bulgarian families.

When the union with Romania, Dobrogea, Danube Delta including Snakes' Island, had an area of 15,776 km², providing Romania inland sector control Galati – Tulcea - Sulina mouth of the Danube river and Black Sea access to the payment Chilia 5 km south of Mangalia.

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