

BULGARIAN PRESS ON THE PROCLAMATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY



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Notwithstanding the inevitable bias and emotional subjectiveness, the press is a valuable source of information in reconstructing the past because it offers multidirectional and often unique historical information about mentality, morals, and cultural horizons. Research interest in old news can also revive community memory which later became embarrassing to subsequent politics or propaganda and was therefore banned or censored.¹ The present text is an attempt to trace how Bulgarian newspapers presented the proclamation of the Turkish Republic and what image this deposited in the Bulgarian collective memory of the 1920s.

In the early 1920s the press was Bulgarian society's main source of information². In 1921 there were 250 newspapers and 162 magazines in the country. Two years later their number had almost doubled to 468 newspapers and 237 magazines.³ Press distribution was done by a special agency which made a turnover of 25 copies in 1923.⁴ Of course analysing this huge body of information is beyond the scope of our research. We will rely on newspapers, whether independent or party mouthpieces, which exercised a dominant influence on the majority of the readers in country and were in this sense representative enough of Bulgarian press of the times.

The *Utro* newspaper was Bulgaria's first long-standing daily morning newspaper and Bulgaria's most popular newspaper (50 000-160 000 copies).⁵ *Zora* was another morning newspaper. Not only did it sell many copies (10 000-130 000),⁶ it was one of the leading newspapers, much liked and influential, professionally written and

¹ Стоянова, Л. *Вестникът и националната културна памет*. Варна, 2012, 7-16.

² Ibid., p. 52; The beginning of radio broadcasting in Bulgaria was in the autumn of 1929. – www.predavatel.com/bg/radio/bnr. (02.09.2013).

³ Панайотов, Ф. *Вестници и вестникари*. С., 2008, 167.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Константинова, Здр. Из географията на българската преса (1878-1944). – <http://media-journal.info/index.php?p=item&aid=66> (4.08.2013); *Български периодичен печат 1844-1944. Анотиран библиографски указател.*, С., 1966, Vol. II, 443.

⁶ *Български периодичен печат 1844-1944. Анотиран библиографски указател.*, С., 1962, Vol.I, 341.

informative⁷. Another independent daily which will be subject to our analysis is *Dnevnik* which also sold a considerable number of copies (11 000-45 000).⁸

Among party mouthpieces I've selected *Slovo*, *Mir* and *Pryaporets*. *Slovo*, albeit not proclaiming any links to party politics⁹, had as its main goal to promote the Narodni Sgovor [Popular Accord] coalition which was founded in March 1922. Be that as it may, the newspaper maintained a good intellectual level which was due to hiring university professors, a fact that won it the nickname of "the professors' newspaper".¹⁰ The *Mir* newspaper was "the Bulgarian Times". For many years it was the official mouthpiece for the Narodna [Popular] and later for the Obedinena Narodno-Progressivna [Unified Popular-Progressive] Parties (selling 20 000 copies), yet it was perceived, especially after 1923 when it was declared independent, as a trustworthy daily. It was recognised as the most authoritative and best written newspaper in the Third Bulgarian Tsardom. Its publishers, editors and contributors were among Bulgaria's most renowned politicians, businessmen and intellectuals. Some of the country's best journalists also worked for that newspaper.¹¹ As for *Pryaporets*, it was a classic example of a party mouthpiece, that of the Democratic Party (selling 4 000-24 000 copies).¹² We'll also have a look at a newspaper from outside the capital, *Pravda*, from the town of Plovdiv, since it was especially sensitive to the "Turkish issue". Of course, to get a more complete picture, we'll also quote some other newspapers and magazines.

On 29 October 1923 at 20:30 Turkey's Grand National Assembly proclaimed the republic. The news immediately spread through the country and after midnight it was saluted with ceremonial canon bursts.¹³ In Istanbul this was witnessed by the head of Bulgaria's diplomatic mission, general Todor Markov, who on 30 October sent a short encrypted telegram to the minister of foreign affairs, informing him of the Turkish Parliament's decision¹⁴.

Information about this crucial event quickly made its way into Bulgarian newspapers. One of the first to report on the event was the *Rabotnicheska*

⁷ Панайотов, Ф. *Op. cit.*, 171; Я. Бориславов, *Българската журналистика – възходи и падения (1844-1944)*. - [http://media-journal.info/index.php?p=item&aid=84\(4.08.1923\)](http://media-journal.info/index.php?p=item&aid=84(4.08.1923)); Т. Панайотов, Христо Бръзицов превърна „Мир“ в българския „Таймс“. - http://paper.standartnews.com/archive/2001/06/11/history/s3034_4.htm (17.09.2013)

⁸ *Български периодичен печат 1844-1944. Анотиран библиографски указател*. Т. I, 245-246.

⁹ *Български периодичен печат 1844-1944. Анотиран библиографски указател*. Т. II, 316-317.

¹⁰ Панайотов, Ф. *Пос. съч.*, 170; Я. Бориславов, *Op. cit.*

¹¹ *Български периодичен печат 1844-1944. Анотиран библиографски указател*. Т. I, с.477-478; Т. Панайотов, *Всекидневният вестник „Мир“ за политиката на Великите сили, балканските страни и други държави през периода 1923-1944*. –

http://ebox.nbu.bg/mk10/index2.php?id=ne2/a/z12.%20Todor_Panayotov_red.htm (5.08.2013); Т. Панайотов, *Банкери и застрахователи издават българския „Таймс“*. – <http://www.monitor.bg/article?id=28782> (17.09.2013)

¹² *Български периодичен печат 1844-1944. Анотиран библиографски указател*. Т. I, 198-199.

¹³ Люис, Б. *Възникване на съвременна Турция*. С., 2003, 311; Kocatürk, U. *Atatürk ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi Kronolojisi 1918 1938*. 2. Baskı, Ankara, 1988, s. 399.

¹⁴ *Официалната и тайната българо-турска дипломация (1903-1925 г.)*. Документален сборник. С., 2009, 613, Док. № 376.

Socialdemokraticheska Partiya [Workers' Social-Democrat Party] daily *Narod*, which, in its issue of 31 October very briefly reported: "According to information from Tsarigrad [Istanbul], the pro-government party has proclaimed Turkey a republic and elected Mustafa Kemal Pasha for its first president"¹⁵. *Slovo* was also very quick to react with an editorial on the same day, entitled "The Newest Republic".¹⁶ In the following days the news spread quickly to other newspapers¹⁷, even to the reserve officers' newspaper.¹⁸

Bulgarian society was obviously not surprised by the news from Ankara. As *Zora* put it, capturing the zeitgeist, "the rumours of the past three months have finally been confirmed".¹⁹ The Turkish Parliament's vote was not a surprise for the press either. It reflected the evolution of the political situation in Turkey and regularly offered information about its dynamics²⁰ (sometimes quite detailed).²¹

Yet, in order to clearly show the depth and intensity of the interest Bulgarian press and politicians showed in the events in the neighbouring country, we will have to broaden our survey's time span.

We'll go back to the time of the First World War when relations between the former enemies in the First and Second Balkan Wars gradually began to normalise and in 1915 they became allies in the Central Powers. The first step was taken with the signing of the Treaty of Alliance and Friendship between the Bulgarian Tsardom and the Ottoman Empire on 6 August 1914. A year later – on 6 September 1915 the agreement on border rectification along the lower part of the Maritsa River was signed.²² In this spirit of reconciliation, a Turkish-Bulgarian association was established in Sofia. According to the report by the Bulgarian ambassador in Istanbul to the Prime Minister from 12 September 1917, this association's purpose was to promote "among the broad popular masses the idea of the proper understanding of the interests of the two nations" and be in "indelible accord" with state policies.²³ The ruling elite in Istanbul as well as the Turkish press had a positive attitude towards

¹⁵ *Народ*, 31 октомври 1923.

¹⁶ *Слово*, 31 октомври 1923, бр. 438.

¹⁷ *Утро*, 1 ноември 1923, бр. 4277; *Зора*, 1 ноември 1923, бр.1317; 2 ноември 1923, бр.1318; *Пряпорец*, 2 ноември, бр.248; *Независимост*, 2 ноември 1923, 761; *Правда*, 2 ноември 1923, бр.320; *Дневник*, 3 ноември 1923, бр. 7189; *Радикал*, 5 ноември 1923, 7179.

¹⁸ *Отечество*, 3 ноември, 1923, бр. 145.

¹⁹ *Зора*, 4 ноември 1923, бр. 1320.

²⁰ *Утро*, 1 октомври 1923, бр. 4252; *Дневник*, 2 октомври 1923, бр.7163; *Пряпорец* 2 октомври 1923, бр.223; *Независимост*, 2 октомври 1923, бр.736; 5 октомври 1923, бр.738; 6 октомври 1923, бр.739; 10 октомври 1923, бр. 742; *Мир*, 29 октомври 1923, бр. 7016; *Правда*, 30 септември 1923, бр. 293.

²¹ *Пряпорец*, 4 октомври 1923, бр. 224.

²² Добрев, А. Ректификация на българо-турската граница през 1915 г. – In: *Българо-турските военнополитически отношения през първата половина на XX век*. С., 2005, 47.

²³ *Мустафа Кемал Ататюрк и турско-българските отношения в документи (1913-1938)*. Анкара, 2002, с. 190-192, Док. № 22.

this organisation established in Bulgaria, and declared their wish to establish a similar Turkish-Bulgarian organisation in Turkey.²⁴

The development of this process was halted by the negative outcome of World War I for both Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire. The Entente forbade Sofia and Istanbul to have military and diplomatic relations.²⁵ But the two countries' similar post-war fate, common enemies and common interests laid the foundations of future coordinated actions²⁶.

And this future turned out to be very near. In the spring of 1920 The Entente handed Eastern and Western Thrace over to Greece. This decision caused serious discontent in both Bulgarian and Turkish society and became the driving force for a rapprochement between the two countries and coordinated action.²⁷ Bulgarians and Turks living in Western Thrace were especially quick to react. Even before the actual occupation of the region in late May the Bulgarian and Turkish population organised joint armed militias, formed a common government and, two years later, the Bulgarian-Turkish Internal Revolutionary Organisation which commanded well-armed and equipped militias. After the defeat of colonel Cafer Tayyarin's forces in June 1920, more than 3500 Turkish soldiers and some 22 000 civilians found refuge in Bulgaria.²⁸ The government of Alexander Stamboliyski gave refugees financial aid for their most urgent needs. Land, equipment and seeds were also distributed. The Turkish Red Crescent was allowed to buy food from Bulgaria. Ignoring protests by the Entente, Bulgarian authorities tolerated the presence of Turkish military and political representatives on Bulgarian territory, allowing them to organise and send economic and military aid to the national armed forces in Anatolia.²⁹ Bulgaria's Parliament also voted to give Muslim refugees wishing to permanently settle in the country free land and building materials.³⁰ The good will demonstrated by Bulgarian authorities towards Turkish refugees was reciprocated by the Turkish side.³¹

Bulgarian society also regarded Turkish national resistance with deep respect. "The entire Bulgarian press, *Dnevnik* wrote, followed with sympathy the efforts of the Turks to take back their territories usurped by the Greeks in Asia Minor ".³² *Slovo* expressed the real public opinion in the country: "...they [the Turks] knew how sympathetic the Bulgarian public opinion was of their struggle and success".³³

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Саръкоюнджу, А. Увод. – В: *Мустафа Кемал Ататюрк и турско-българските...*, XIX-XX.

²⁶ *Мустафа Кемал Ататюрк и турско-българските...*, 230, Док. № 29; Великов, Ст. *Кемалистката революция и българската общественост (1918-1922)*. С., 1966, 79.

²⁷ Tuğlacı, P. *Bulgaristan ve Türk-Bulgar İlişkileri*. İstanbul, 1984, s. 119.

²⁸ Трифонов, Ст. *Българското национално-освободително движение в Тракия 1919-1934*. С., 1988, 54-70, 102-108.

²⁹ Tuğlacı, P., а. г. е., s. 124; А.Саръкоюнджу, Ор. cit., XXI-XXIII.

³⁰ Токер, Х. Българо-турските отношения през периода на националната съпротива и укриването на 1-ви корпус в България. – In: *Българо-турските военнополитически...*, 106.

³¹ Токер, Х. Ор. cit., 110; Tuğlacı, P. а. г. е., s. 121.

³² *Дневник*, 26 ноември 1922, бр. 6911; Великов, Ст. Ор. cit., 70.

³³ *Слово*, 21 ноември 1922, бр. 183.

In August-September 1921 the Turks deployed a large-scale offensive. The Turkish army's victory led to the stabilisation of Ankara's international standing.³⁴ *Dnevnik* was the media that offered perhaps the most relevant information on the "Turkish issue"³⁵, and anticipated that this success opened up new avenues for the victors: "Ever since the truce, the Turkish people has entered a new stage in the development its social and cultural life".³⁶

The trends in question seem to have been of no interest at all to the Bulgarian government because the Great War had opened a deep gap between the past and the present, and the future seemed unclear and insecure. Alarm and tension were felt everywhere³⁷. Bulgaria was in deep international isolation. Alexander Stamboliyski described the country's situation in the first years after the war in his characteristic figurative style: "We were squeezed by two rings – the big ring of the Great Powers and the small ring of our neighbours".³⁸ This was why the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union [BANU] government's diplomatic activity was very limited, mostly to the effort of achieving a revision of treaty provisions on reparations, military limitations, and the securing of access, territorial or at least economic, to the Aegean³⁹. The country's disadvantageous and weak position did not allow it to openly support the Turkish resistance which did not accept Europe's post-war status quo. Led by a realistic evaluation of its situation, at the very outset of the war between Greece and Turkey, Bulgaria announced it would remain neutral.⁴⁰ This declaration of course was only for official political use. In reality the ruling BANU followed closely "the political situation in Turkey", including the development of relations between Istanbul and Ankara.⁴¹ In May 1921 BANU government even sent a secret diplomatic mission to the capital of the resistance,⁴² although they had not yet chosen Ankara as the representative power centre of Turkey⁴³. When this became public, Bulgaria's Prime Minister was quick to deny this was an official visit.⁴⁴ In the next few months the government put much effort into proving they had no contacts with Ankara,⁴⁵ because, as Alexander Stamboliyski admitted, "the most serious suspicions were that we had ties to Angora and Bolshevik Russia..."⁴⁶. Professional

³⁴ Хаков, Дж. *История на Турция през XX век*. С., 2000, 67

³⁵ In 1922 there were 248 items in this newspaper covering the theme.

³⁶ *Дневник*, 3 март 1922, бр. 6695.

³⁷ Стателова, Е., Ст. Грънчаров. *История на България в три тома*. Т. III – *История на Нова България 1878-1944*. С., 2006, 346-356.

³⁸ *Земеделско знаме*, 28 октомври 1922, бр. 22.

³⁹ *История на България*. Т. IV – *Българската дипломатия от древността до наши дни*. С., 2010, с. 348.

⁴⁰ *Дневник*, 14 септември 1922, бр. 6852.

⁴¹ See „Доклад върху политическото положение в Турция“ от 1 април 1921 г. на Т. Павлов, управляващ българската легация в Истанбул. – In: *Мустафа Кемал Ататюрк и турско-българските...*, 200- 221, Док. № 26.

⁴² Великов, Ст. Op. cit., 66.

⁴³ *Мустафа Кемал Ататюрк и турско-българските...*, 211-216, Док. № 26.

⁴⁴ *Външната политика на правителството на БЗНС – ноември 1919 – юни 1923*. Александър Стамболийски. *Документално наследство*. Съст. Панайотов, П. и Т. Добриянов. С., 1989, 159-160.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 163, 165-166, 276.

⁴⁶ *Земеделско знаме*, 28 октомври 1922, бр. 22.

diplomat Simeon Radev explained the cautious Bulgarian foreign policy in *Slovo*: “...in the situation we’re in, we need to keep quiet and wait for our strongest ally – time, to work in our favour.”⁴⁷ Several months later this was confirmed by the Bulgarian Prime Minister: “We did not attack them [the rings] brutally,... we let time break them, we let them rust.”⁴⁸ In other words, Bulgarian diplomacy followed a general policy of waiting, which also extended to the military conflict in Anatolia. This would continue until the objective preconditions for diplomatic activity came about which could amend the peace treaty the Bulgarian nation found unjust.

And these conditions did soon come about – in the summer of 1922 the military and political situation in Asia Minor shifted dramatically. After nearly one year of hostilities, on 26 August Turkish forces began a decisive offensive and totally defeated the Greek army. By 18 September Asian territories were completely retaken. On 23 September representatives of the Entente handed Mustafa Kemal Pasha a note with a ceasefire proposal. On 3 October in Mudanya the warring sides sat around the negotiation table and signed a truce on 11 October which came into effect four days later.⁴⁹ The drafting and signing of the final peace treaty was planned for a conference one month later in Lausanne.⁵⁰

The upcoming international forum gave Alexander Stamboliyski grounds to be braver in asking for a revision of the Treaty of Neuilly. The Bulgarian Prime Minister was also realistic in his evaluation of Ankara’s growing significance: “Angora is now the Mecca of the oppressed Muslim world and the Jerusalem of the Christian one.” This new international situation had a visible impact on the way Sofia viewed the existing duality of political power in the Ottoman Empire. Alexander Stamboliyski’s speech to Parliament on 28 October 1922 made this view perfectly clear and the government now perceived the “New Turkey in the face of Kemal” as the legitimate political government of the country.⁵¹ BANU leader declared that “our relations with Turkey which has now become our neighbour can only be good, friendly.”⁵² The normalisation of Turkish-Bulgarian relations was very important for Sofia because, given the hostile relations with almost all neighbours, this was the only direction that promised “big and bright prospects” for Bulgaria’s development.⁵³ BANU government hoped Turkish representatives would back some of Bulgaria’s demands during the upcoming peace conference (of the autonomy of Western Thrace, and respectively, access to the Aegean).⁵⁴ For this reason on 27 December 1922 Bulgaria’s consul general in Edirne was charged with meeting Mustafa Kemal Pasha in order to test “his attitude towards a neighbourly accord with the Turks...”.⁵⁵ In the next few

⁴⁷ *Слово*, 10 май 1922, бр. 24.

⁴⁸ *Земеделско знаме*, 28 октомври 1922, бр. 22.

⁴⁹ Kocatürk, U. a. g. e., s. 335-357.

⁵⁰ Хаков, Дж. Op. cit., 68.

⁵¹ *Земеделско знаме*, 28 октомври 1922, бр. 22.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ *Слово*, 23 октомври 1922, бр. 160.

⁵⁴ *Земеделско знаме*, 28 октомври 1922, бр. 22.

⁵⁵ *Мустафа Кемал Ататюрк и турско-българските...*, 227, Док. № 29.

months Sofia followed events in Ankara closely and encouraged active contacts between Bulgarian diplomats and Kemalist representatives.⁵⁶

How did Bulgarian press react and present the events in Asia Minor after the start of the major Turkish offensive in the summer of 1922? The new Turkish military campaign quickly drew the attention of Bulgarian media to the Anatolian front. *Dnevnik* explained the reason for this interest: the course of events may put “important political issues of interest to Bulgaria” back on the discussion table.⁵⁷ A month later they were more specific: “...Turkish successes give us hope that they might lead to a revision of the treaties of Sevres and Neuilly which have predetermined Bulgaria’s fate and our dream of access to the South through Aegean Bulgaria.”⁵⁸ And since the nation took a keen interest in these issues, Bulgarian press followed hostilities closely and sympathised with Turkish success in the course of the offensive.⁵⁹ As for the Turkish forces’ final victory, the prestigious *Slovo* was very precise in expressing Bulgarian society’s emotional attitude: “... this victory was glorious, crushing. The Turks are back in Smyrna, Istanbul and Edirne. They return proud, self-assured, in patriotic exaltation. We understand and highly respect this feeling.”⁶⁰

Bulgarian newspapers also followed closely the negotiations in Mudanya and once the truce became a fact, they commented on its essence and informed the public.⁶¹ Under the Mudanya provisions the Turks regained Eastern Thrace and once again became a neighbouring country with Bulgaria. During the truce which lasted almost a year, the issue of the future Bulgarian-Turkish border came up in some Bulgarian daily newspapers,⁶² but it only became a central issue in the press when Turkey’s success in the war was certain. Articles about the future of Bulgarian-Turkish relations were almost always optimistic.⁶³ For example, some ten days after the signing of the Mudanya Truce, *Slovo* wrote in an editorial: “With this Turkey we will be neighbours and friends. Economically we are almost organically bound and nothing divides us politically. Time will perhaps impose upon the two countries close ties. But this is a question for the future. What is immediately obvious is that not only does Turkey’s recovery break the ring that was squeezing Bulgaria, it opens up vast and bright perspectives to our development.”⁶⁴ *Dnevnik* was even more unambiguous: “Neither can Turkey exist without Bulgaria, nor Bulgaria without

⁵⁶ *Външната политика на правителството на БЗНС...*, 317, 323, 332.

⁵⁷ *Дневник*, 3 септември 1922, бр. 6842; 8 септември 1922, бр. 6846.

⁵⁸ *Дневник*, 8 октомври 1922, бр.6871.

⁵⁹ *Утро*, 31 август, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 септември 1922, бр. 3927, 3930, 3931, 3932, 3933, 3934, 3935, 3936, 3937, 3938; *Зора*, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13 септември 1922, бр. 978, 981, 982, 983, 984, 986; *Дневник*, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 септември 1922, бр. 6841, 6842, 6843, 6844, 6846.

⁶⁰ *Слово*, 23 октомври 1922, бр. 160.

⁶¹ *Зора*, 11, 12, 14, 15 октомври, бр. 1009, 1010, 1012, 1013; *Пряпорец*, 17 октомври 1922, бр. 233; *Правда*, 14 октомври 1922, бр.6; *Правда*, 11, 14, 15 октомври, бр.4, 6, 7.

⁶² *Дневник*, 2 април 1922, бр. 6720; 7 април 1922, бр. 6723.

⁶³ *Утро*, 28 септември 1922, бр.3952; *Слово*, 6, 23 октомври, 20, 21, 28 ноември 1922, бр.154, 160, 182, 183, 188; *Дневник*, 29 октомври, 26 ноември 1922, бр.6889, 6911; *Пряпорец*, 19 октомври 1922, бр.235; *Зора*, 17 декември 1922, бр.1063; *Правда*, 6 януари 1923, бр. 75.

⁶⁴ *Слово*, 23 октомври 1922, бр. 160.

Turkey. This is a historical axiom. This is a political truth which only a mad and blind man may doubt.”⁶⁵ *Utro* spoke in the public space on behalf of the new Turkish neighbours: “We value and respect you, Bulgarians, for your stamina and resilience and we hope for your friendship. You must never fear anything on our side but always see in us a true friend.”⁶⁶ *Zora* also has news, the Parliament in Ankara has voted on re-establishing diplomatic relations with Balkan countries which implied to the reader that Sofia had a “special” place in Turkish foreign policy.⁶⁷ Of course the atmosphere of Bulgarian-Turkish accord as represented by newspapers was not completely unproblematic. Quite on the contrary, it was charged with a lot of tension because the press also published many articles on the Thrace issue which was a very sensitive one for the Bulgarian public.⁶⁸ Yet in the aim of not testing fragile neighbourly relations, some newspapers openly called for, and others demonstrated flexibility and tact in raising Bulgarian demands to the Turkish side.⁶⁹

During the lengthy Lausanne conference, BANU leaders kept looking for “proof of friendship, of *dostluk* [friendship in Turkish]” and this line was continued until the coup on 9 June 1923 when Alexander Stamboliyski’s government was ousted.⁷⁰ The press also continued with the predominantly positive representation of the state and the future of Turkish-Bulgarian relations. Bulgarian diplomacy’s main task in Lausanne was to plead for access to the Aegean.⁷¹ Immediately after Mudanya Bulgarian press realised that “the issue of Eastern Thrace has already been solved.”⁷² This was also understood by the government. This is why the Bulgarian delegation to the conference was instructed to plead for the autonomy not of all of Thrace but only of Western Thrace.⁷³ This evolution in Bulgaria’s position on the Thrace issue and the pressing need of Turkish diplomatic support at the Lausanne conference made the oppositional *Pryaporets* warn: “The first condition to taking advantage of this situation is not hurting friendship with the Turks.”⁷⁴

The constant attention of Bulgarian politicians and public on the future status of Western Thrace quickly drove the press to action. They began publishing vast material on the violence of Greek authorities over civilian Bulgarian and Turkish population in the region⁷⁵ and on the activity of joint Bulgarian-Turkish guerrilla

⁶⁵ *Дневник*, 29 октомври 1922, бр. 6889.

⁶⁶ *Утро*, 16 ноември 1922, бр. 3991.

⁶⁷ *Зора*, 17 декември 1922, бр. 1063.

⁶⁸ *Дневник*, 10 септември, 8 октомври 1922, бр. 6848, 6871; 8 октомври 1922, бр. 6871; *Слово*, 16 септември, 6, 7, 12, 26 октомври, 28 ноември 1922, бр. 130, 146, 147, 151, 163, 188; *Утро*, 28, 30 септември, 16, 20, 25 ноември, 27, 28 декември 1922, бр. 3952, 3954, 3991, 3995, 3999, 4025; *Пряпорец*, 19 октомври 1922, бр. 235.

⁶⁹ *Дневник*, 8 октомври 1922, бр. 6871; *Пряпорец*, 19 октомври 1922, бр.235; *Мир*, 24 март 1923, бр. 6838.

⁷⁰ *Зора*, 3 юни 1923, бр. 1190.

⁷¹ Петрова, Д. *Самостоятелното управление на БЗНС, 1920-1923*. С., 1988, 323.

⁷² *Зора*, 14 октомври 1922, бр. 1012; *Дневник*, 19 декември 1922, бр. 6929.

⁷³ Петрова, Д. *Op. cit.*, 322.

⁷⁴ *Пряпорец*, 19 октомври 1922, бр. 235.

⁷⁵ *Зора*, 14 октомври, бр. 1012, *Мир*, 7 февруари 1923, бр.6799, 30 април 1923, бр.6867, 25 май 1923, бр.6886; *Утро*, 25 декември 1922, бр.4024, 25 февруари 1923, бр.4073; *Пряпорец*, 22 декември 1922, бр.285; *Правда*, 1, 11, 24 декември 1922, бр.45, 54, 65, 4 януари 1923, бр. 73.

groups (*cheta*) there.⁷⁶ *Mir* even published a protest by the Internal Thracian Bulgarian-Turkish Revolutionary Organisation against the terror of Greek authorities over Bulgarian and Turkish population in Western Thrace.⁷⁷ In the spirit of aspired common action, some newspapers reported on the establishing of a new association for Turkish-Bulgarian rapprochement in Istanbul and of the upcoming publication of a bilingual newspaper by its founders.⁷⁸ This positive media environment allowed for the publication of declarations by Turkish diplomats travelling to Switzerland through Bulgaria who reaffirmed to the Bulgarian public the good state of Bulgarian-Turkish relations and assured they would only get better in the future.⁷⁹ *Utro* even made a special interview with Ismet Pasha in Lausanne which implied that the Turkish delegation would support the Bulgarian claim of access to the Aegean Sea.⁸⁰ In these circumstances “pending issues” between the two countries were pushed aside: “...their solution ... cannot encounter insurmountable obstacles...,” as *Slovo* wrote in its editorial.⁸¹

On 1 November 1922 the Grand National Assembly in Ankara ousted the Sultan. The next day they changed the name of the country – from Ottoman to Turkish.⁸² News from Ankara and from Istanbul was object of “the keenest attention” by the government in Sofia.⁸³ They were followed with strong interest by all political circles in the country,⁸⁴ because “Bulgaria will be neighbour with new Turkey, so it will not be indifferent to us what new events will take place [there]”, *Dnevnik* explained.⁸⁵ It’s then understandable that the dethronement of Sultan Mehmet VI (Vahdettin) became one of the central topics in the Bulgarian press in November.⁸⁶ Yet for the Bulgarian public this was no news because they were well informed of dual power in the neighbouring country, they also knew all too well about the conflicting potential between Ankara and Istanbul.⁸⁷ After the events of the end of the summer of 1922 Bulgarian press was almost certain this power struggle would soon be settled and has very much managed to channel the expectations of the public about its outcome.⁸⁸

⁷⁶ *Utro*, 27 ноември 1922, бр. 4001; *Mir*, 7 февруари 1923, бр.6799; *Зора*, 8, 21 април 1923, бр.1148, 1157; *Слово*, 14 април 1923, бр. 304.

⁷⁷ *Mir*, 4 май 1923, бр. 6870.

⁷⁸ *Правда*, 6 март 1923, бр.122; *Слово*, 28 март 1923, бр. 287.

⁷⁹ *Слово*, 10 ноември 1922, бр. 174; *Зора*, 12 ноември 1922, бр.1035; *Utro*, 12 ноември 1922, бр. 3988.

⁸⁰ *Utro*, 18 декември 1922, бр. 4018.

⁸¹ *Слово*, 19 март 1923, бр. 279.

⁸² Kocatürk, U. a. g. e., s. 361-362.

⁸³ *Дневник*, 11 ноември 1922, бр. 6898.

⁸⁴ *Слово*, 13 ноември 1922, бр. 176.

⁸⁵ *Дневник*, 14 ноември 1922, бр. 6990.

⁸⁶ *Пряпорец*, 4 ноември 1922, бр.248; *Зора*, 6, 8, 9 ноември, 1922, бр.1031, 1032, 1033; *Дневник*, 7 ноември 1922, бр.6895; *Слово*, 7, 9, 16, 21 ноември 1922, бр.172, 173, 179, 183; *Utro*, 9, 11, 18, 22, 23 ноември 1922, бр.3986, 3987, 3993, 3996, 3997.

⁸⁷ *Слово*, 5 ноември 1922, бр. 171. See *Дневник*, 3 януари 1922, бр.6647; 10 март 1922, бр.6700; 24 юни 1922, бр.6783; 5 ноември 1922, бр.6894; *Слово*, 16 октомври 1922, бр.154; 3 ноември 1922, бр.169; *Зора*, 14 септември 1922, бр. 987.

⁸⁸ *Зора*, 14 септември, 11 октомври 1922, бр. 987, 1002; 2, 15, 16 октомври, бр. 1003, 1013, 1014; *Дневник*, 2, 9, 17, 30 септември 1922, 11, 15 октомври 1922, бр.6841, 6847, 6854, 6865, 68736877; *Слово*, 23 октомври, 3, 9, ноември 1922, бр. 160, 169, 173; *Utro*, 2 ноември 1922, бр.3981;

This bias was already visible in the initial reports on the event. Newspapers informed that the decision to oust the Sultan was voted by the Parliament in Ankara with an “absolute majority”, with “exalted” and “noisy acclamation” and celebrated with cannon salutes, marches and torch processions.⁸⁹ *Slovo* called upon the Bulgarian public to follow “Turkish issues” with “lively interest and unremitting attention.”⁹⁰ In an effort to provide the readership with “a correct idea of the new constitution of Turkey”, the newspaper even published the main articles of the constitution which came into force in Anatolia as of 20 January 1921 and which “is now spreading to the entire country”.⁹¹ *Dnevnik* informed the public of the course of political events, publishing a photograph of “Turkey’s new Sultan” (which was not common in the newspapers of the time), with the following text: “According to the new regime in Turkey, the Sultan’s political power has been transferred to the Angora government. The Sultan now has only spiritual powers.”⁹² The removal of the Sultanate and the renaming of the country – without specifying its constitution – made for various hypotheses as well as different expectations about Turkey’s future.⁹³ In Bulgaria “the professors’ newspaper”, *Slovo*, was quick to capture this vagueness: “What the constitution of Turkey will be is not yet clear”, the newspaper wrote only some 10 days after the abolishment of the Sultan institution.⁹⁴ In any case diverging hypothesis about the future constitution of Turkey quickly gained ground in Bulgarian public space,⁹⁵ some newspapers even claimed a republic would soon be proclaimed.⁹⁶ This viewpoint did not in any way influence Bulgarian sympathy for the new Turkish state. Quite on the contrary – sympathy for Ankara expressed in positive interpretations were very common in Bulgarian newspapers. The reason for this was Bulgarian journalists’ view on the events of 1 November as an act of change in the spirit of the “European model”, an example to follow or a norm to apply to Europe itself.⁹⁷ That is why *Ppnyaporets* saw the abolishment of the Sultan institution as having “great, almost crucial importance..., a brave step towards the democratisation of the Turkish state.”⁹⁸ *Slovo* held a similar position, it too approved of the secularisation of power as one of “the most radical revolutions that have occurred in modern times.”⁹⁹ *Dnevnik* joined the same camp stating that this

Пряпорец, 10 ноември 1922, бр. 252; See also the earlier items in *Дневник*, 3 януари, 31 март 1922, бр.6647, 6718.

⁸⁹ *Правда*, 5 ноември 1922, бр. 25; *Пряпорец*, 7 ноември 1922, бр.250; *Слово*, 7 ноември 1922, бр. 172; *Зора*, 8, 9 ноември 1922, бр. 1032, 1033.

⁹⁰ *Слово*, 14 ноември 1922, бр. 177.

⁹¹ *Слово*, 11 ноември 1922, бр. 175,178. About the Constitution of 20 January 1921 and its validity, see Yalçın. D. ve diyer., *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi*. C. I, Ankara, 2006, ss. 196-197; <http://atam.gov.tr/1924-anayasasi> (25.09. 2013).

⁹² *Дневник*, 8 декември 1922, бр. 6920.

⁹³ Yalçın. D. ve diyer., a. g. e. , s. 362.

⁹⁴ *Слово*, 11 ноември 1922, бр. 175.

⁹⁵ *Слово*, 11 ноември 1922, бр. 175; See also *Мир*, 15 май 1923, бр. 6879.

⁹⁶ *Утро*, 2 ноември 1922, бр.3981; *Дневник*, 7 ноември 1922, бр.6895; *Правда*, 24 октомври 1922, бр. 14.

⁹⁷ Todorova, M. *Imagining the Balkans*. Oxford University Press, 1997, 28-30; Даскалов, Р. *Между Изтока и Запада. Български културни дилеми*. С., 1998, 57.

⁹⁸ *Пряпорец*, 10 ноември 1922, бр. 252.

⁹⁹ *Слово*, 16 ноември 1922, бр. 179.

dethronement “will have great importance for the future of the Turks.”¹⁰⁰ All these positive evaluations went hand in hand with the hypothesis that the secularisation of the state would have a negative impact on the country’s prestige among Muslims around the world.¹⁰¹ Half a year later “the Bulgarian Times” – *Mir* presented the following perspective: “there is no doubt a difficult road lies ahead for New Turkey. But given the voluntary discipline of the Turkish people and the fact that this people were able to find excellent generals and statesmen in the most critical period of its history, it may be said that this country will overcome difficulties in the future.”¹⁰²

The transformation of the form of government had a strong impact on the Bulgarian press and the “radical change in Turkey” was closely followed¹⁰³. National and regional newspapers reported on the political changes there and informed their readers that the Ottoman Empire has passed into “the domain of historical past” and its place was taken by “the new Turkish state.”¹⁰⁴ With time, the press began using the expression “New Turkey” which very clearly differentiated the present constitution from the “old regime”, from “Old Turkey”, i.e. the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰⁵

One of the reasons for this fast disambiguation of the representation of Ottoman and Turkish was of course the high authority Ankara and its leader Mustafa Kemal enjoyed in Bulgarian press.¹⁰⁶

The negative perceptions precipitated in collective memory in the course of history also had a considerable impact on this resetting. It is well known that the image of Ottoman heritage holds a key position in Bulgarian national narrative¹⁰⁷ as a construction of the past in historiography, fiction, the press, politics and everyday discourse.¹⁰⁸ It labels the Ottomans as by definition the bearers of a substantially different and foreign civilisation in which violence, crime and cruelty, as well as the aggressive advance of Islam are its immutable manifestations.¹⁰⁹ This cognitive matrix produced a specific image of the Ottoman Empire, an image instrumental both for Bulgarian national identity and state politics¹¹⁰. For example, many 19th

¹⁰⁰ *Дневник*, 11 ноември 1922, бр. 6898.

¹⁰¹ *Пряпорец*, 10 ноември 1922, бр. 252; *Слово*, 16 ноември 1922, бр. 179; *Дневник*, 11 ноември 1922, бр. 6898.

¹⁰² *Мир*, 30 юли 1923, бр. 6940.

¹⁰³ *Слово*, 7 ноември 1922, бр. 172.

¹⁰⁴ *Зора*, 6 ноември 1922, бр.1031; *Слово*, 7 ноември 1922, бр.172; *Правда*, 5 ноември 1922, бр. 25; See also *Мир*, 14 февруари 1923, бр. 6805.

¹⁰⁵ See, for instance, *Утро*, 2 ноември 1922, бр.3981; *Слово*, 23 октомври, 16, 21 ноември 1922, 19 март 1923, бр. 160, 179, 279, 183; *Дневник*, 29 октомври, 14,25 ноември 1922, бр. 6889, 6900, 6910; *Пряпорец*, 10 ноември 1922, бр. 252; *Зора*, 26 януари 1923, бр. 1093; *Демократически преглед*, 1923, № VII-VIII, 493; *Мир*, 1 февруари, 5, 7 март, 30 юли, 9, 30 август 1923, бр.6794, 6821, 6823,6940, 6949, 6968.

¹⁰⁶ *Пряпорец*, 10 ноември 1922, бр.252; *Слово*, 19 март 1923, бр.279; *Мир*, 30 юли 1923, бр.6940; *Демократически преглед*, 1923, № VII-VIII, 493; *Дневник*, 15, 21 юли 1923, бр.7102, 7097; *Правда*, 30 септември 1923, бр. 293.

¹⁰⁷ Todorova, M. *Imagining the Balkans*, 183.

¹⁰⁸ Тодорова, М. *Imagining the Balkans* или Балкани-Балканизъм: послепис. – *Балкани*, 2012, № 1, 15.

¹⁰⁹ Todorova, M. *Imagining the Balkans*, 176-183.

¹¹⁰ Todorova, M. *Imagining the Balkans*, 12-13.

century representatives of Bulgarian elite viewed the late Ottoman regime as an “Empire of Evil” that doomed the Bulgarian nation to economic underdevelopment, cultural repression and political dependence. Around the turn of the century the Ottoman state was still the “primordial enemy” not only because the reasons for serious problems the new Bulgarian state faced were sought for in the Ottoman past, but also because Bulgarian nationalist irredentism was sharply focused beyond Ottoman borders, in Macedonia and Thrace.¹¹¹ That is how the image of “backward” and “Asiatic” imperial Ottoman circulated in opposition to “modern” national Bulgarian.¹¹² Of course, after the Balkan wars and especially after the end of the First World War, the Ottoman Empire was no longer the main irritant of Bulgarian nationalism. Yet it would be naïve to suppose that the significance of this negative image in the Bulgarian cultural environment would quickly drop. This could not happen because the anti-Ottoman narrative was deeply rooted in the discourse of Bulgarian nationalism. Pending issues, especially the fate of the refugees from Eastern Thrace, charged this predominant attitude with new energy. As part of the Bulgarian cultural environment, the daily press’ opposition to the Ottoman Empire was also high. To *Slovo* “Old Turkey” was “a dried-up fruit of bellicose feudalism”¹¹³, and to *Dnevnik* it was a symbol not only of an “aggressive” but also a “treacherous and bureaucratic policy.”¹¹⁴ Strong condemning of the Ottoman past was visible not only in the press. It was widespread also among Bulgarian intellectuals and can therefore be assumed as generally characteristic of the Bulgarian cultural environment in the 1920s.¹¹⁵

Meanwhile the end of World War I and the new geopolitical and regional realities brought to the fore the need for an update of Bulgarian nationalism¹¹⁶ or, as a contemporary put it, the nation had to define its “new attitude towards the outside world.”¹¹⁷ Since Christian neighbours wanted “to keep Bulgaria constantly in check, humiliating it by force”¹¹⁸, in this re-evaluation process Bulgarian nationalism didn’t have much of a choice and could only rely on “Turkish-Bulgarian friendship.”¹¹⁹ Yet the supporters of this position needed to take into account not only the current political landscape surrounding Bulgaria but also the predominant public attitude. This produced strong tensions on the issue of close relations with the new/old

¹¹¹ Георгиева, Цв. Историята на Османската империя през погледа на френските османисти. – In: *История на Османската империя*. Под ред. на Робер Мантран. С., 1999, 71.

¹¹² Даскалов, Р. Национално-културната ни идентичност: начин на изграждане. – In: *Защо сме такива? В търсене на българската културна идентичност*. Състав. И. Еленков, Р. Даскалов, С., 1994, 45.

¹¹³ *Слово*, 23 октомври 1922, бр. 160.

¹¹⁴ *Дневник*, 29 октомври 1922, 6889.

¹¹⁵ Алтънов, И. *Източният въпрос и Нова Турция. С особен оглед към интересите на България*. С., 1926, 489-490.

¹¹⁶ Тодорова, М. *България, Балканите, светът: идеи, процеси, събития*. С., 2010, 140.

¹¹⁷ Алтънов, И. Op. cit., XV.

¹¹⁸ *Слово*, 10 май 1922, бр. 24.

¹¹⁹ *Слово*, 28 ноември 1922, бр. 188. See also *Слово*, 10 май 1922, бр. 24; *Пряпорец*, 19 октомври 1922, с. 235.

neighbour.¹²⁰ Clearly sensing these passions and emotions,¹²¹ many authors in the press, whether prominent intellectuals or ordinary journalists, were faced with the necessity of finding a formula that would reduce them. They had perhaps not a profound but at least a basic knowledge of the principles of influencing mass consciousness.¹²² It was hardly a coincidence that *Pryaporets* declared that after all that had happened Bulgaria and Turkey had “forgotten their past enmities and learned to know and respect each-other.”¹²³ As this acknowledgment shows, the formula suited to the needs of the present was found in the process of a more flexible representation of the neighbour, i.e. making his image dependent on the dynamics of the present. “As young saplings grow from the deep roots of centuries-old dried up oaks, thus new, national Turkey emerges from the ruins of old Turkey “ – *Slovo* drew the dividing line through the pen of history professor Nikola Milev.¹²⁴ *Dnevnik* also applied a similar distinction in its portrayal, confirming on paper, albeit unpleasantly, the influence of the present conjuncture on images presented: “From the ancient battlefields of the Seljuks and the descendants of Osman arose... a new Turkey; a Turkey of peaceful labour and culture, which is what present-day Bulgaria strives for too.”¹²⁵ If the readers of this newspaper had a chance to have a quick parallel glance at the most popular newspaper – *Utro*, they would know that the sympathies of Bulgarian society were not unshared. Quite on the contrary, they would be informed that they were met with adequate reaction by the neighbours because “the feelings Kemalists have for Bulgaria are also positive. They have a positive attitude towards Bulgarians...”¹²⁶

This vision was expected to calm public emotions, thereby clearing the way for the new “Turkish-Bulgarian friendship”. This was the aim of all the items about abolishing the Sultanate which suggested that “the new Turkish state” takes “Europe” as a “model” for its political and cultural development and in this sense, is part of the same civilisation as “us”, Bulgarians.¹²⁷

The “rosy perspectives” for Bulgarian-Turkish relations soon encountered an unexpected obstacle – in the first hours of 9 June 1923 Alexander Stamboliyski’s government was deposed¹²⁸. The military coup made Bulgaria’s international position even worse.¹²⁹ The new government of Alexander Tsankov understood that

¹²⁰ See note № 67.

¹²¹ *Слово*, 28 ноември 1922, бр. 188.

¹²² Илчев, И. *Родината ми – права или не! Външнополитическата пропаганда на балканските страни (1821-1923)*. С., 1995, 46, 208-209.

¹²³ *Пряпорец*, 27 август 1923, 193.

¹²⁴ *Слово*, 23 октомври 1922, бр. 160.

¹²⁵ *Дневник*, 29 октомври 1922, 6889.

¹²⁶ *Utro*, 16 ноември 1922, бр. 3991; See also *Правда*, 1 април 1923, бр. 145.

¹²⁷ *Пряпорец*, 10 ноември 1922, бр.252; *Слово*, 16 ноември 1922, бр. 179; See also И. Алтънов, *Op. cit.*, 490.

¹²⁸ Марков, Г. Третото българско царство – изпитания и сътресения. – In: *История на българите*. Т. III : *От Освобождението (1878) до края на Студената война (1989)*. С., 2009, 212.

¹²⁹ Грънчаров, Ст. България 1919-1944. – In: Е. Стателова, Ст. Грънчаров, *История на България в три тома*. Т. III: *История на Нова България. 1878-1944*. С., 2006, 424.

First World War victors would put effort in protecting the post-war status quo.¹³⁰ Immediately after the coup a “sincere and loyal cooperation” was declared as a foreign policy platform.¹³¹ In the next few days the new cabinet promised to show proof of being “an element of peace and tranquillity”.¹³² From the point of view of Bulgarian-Turkish relations, the new rulers in Sofia stated they had no issues of contestation with Turkey but stressed they were only interested in commercial ties with that country.¹³³ They did not exclude political ties but postponed them to the foreseeable future.¹³⁴ This foreign policy was obviously intended as proof of loyalty to the Versailles system, especially since Turkey’s place in it was not yet clearly defined so the new government, given its unstable international position, chose not to risk unnecessary trouble.¹³⁵ On the other hand, the new government was brave enough to express that they would strive for a share of the Turkish market since this would stimulate Bulgaria’s failing economy. Before the wars the Turkish market accounted for around 1/3 of Bulgarian exports.¹³⁶ After the wars its significance grew tremendously because many of the country’s international commercial ties had been severed – compared to 1911, in 1919 the physical volume of import had decrease sevenfold and that of export over 52 times.¹³⁷ In 1923 Bulgaria was the seventh biggest exporter to Turkey and the leader in some goods such as wheat.¹³⁸

Inside the country the 9 June coup divided society and led to bloody confrontation which the Alexander Tsankov’s government had to deal with.¹³⁹ Although Greece recognised it on 18 June and Romania was glad to see Stamboliyski ousted,¹⁴⁰ the new government had quite a lot on their hands because of new tensions with the Soviet Union and with Yugoslavia.¹⁴¹ The second month after the coup coincided with the end of negotiations in Lausanne. The decisions made there dashed Bulgarian hopes for a revision of the Treaty of Neuilly.¹⁴² Yet prospects were not all bleak. According to one diplomatic note, legitimating Turkey’s international status¹⁴³, the Lausanne conference did create “an opening to the East” which would, thanks to the

¹³⁰ Марков, Г. *Op. cit.*, 220.

¹³¹ *Слово*, 12 юни 1923, бр.330.

¹³² *Независимост*, 9 юли 1923, бр.665; М. Влайков, Платформата на Демократическия сговор. – *Демократически преглед*, № VII-VIII, 1923, 493.

¹³³ *Независимост*, 9 юли 1923, бр. 665.

¹³⁴ *Независимост*, 9 юли 1923, бр. 665.

¹³⁵ Димитров, Г. Бежанският въпрос във външната политика на България (1919-1931 г.). – *Ип: България 1300. Институции и държавна традиция. Доклади на Третия конгрес на Българското историческо дружество, 3-5 октомври 1981*. Т. III., С., 1983, 308.

¹³⁶ *Икономика на България*. Т.1: *Икономика на България до социалистическата революция*. С., 1969, 497; В. Кацаркова, *Икономическите отношения на България с балканските държави в периода между двете световни войни (1919-1941)*. С., 1989, 218.

¹³⁷ *Икономиката на България...*, 495.

¹³⁸ Яранов, А. *Стопанска Турция в днешните ѝ предели*. С., 1924, 31-32.

¹³⁹ Марков, Г. *Пос. съч.*, с. 217.

¹⁴⁰ Спасов, Л. *Дипломатия на сговористките кабинети (1923-1931)*. – В: *История на българите в осем тома*. Т. IV: *Българската дипломатия от древността до наши дни*. С., 2010, с. 372.

¹⁴¹ Пак там, с. 372-376.

¹⁴² Божинов, В. *България на конференциите в Генуа и Лозана (1922-1923)*. – *Ип: В чест на академик Христо Христов. Изследвания по случай 60 години от рождението му*. С., 1976, 336.

¹⁴³ Хаков, Дж. *Op. cit.*, 74.

benevolence of the Turks, give Bulgaria “a breath of air”¹⁴⁴. Yet this could not happen so quickly, firstly because the new government in Sofia had to show loyalty to the keepers of international status quo in order to gain recognition. Therefore they did not wish to openly engage in political contact with the country which tested the Versailles system.¹⁴⁵ What’s more, Turkey had until recently been the enemy of Greece which was the first country to recognise the coup government and began warming relations with Bulgaria after the Lausanne conference¹⁴⁶. Secondly, the government in Sofia knew it had to go a long and hard way to overcome mutual mistrust with Ankara. It was only in May 1924 when the two countries started to negotiate the restoring of their official diplomatic relations.¹⁴⁷

Things did not look so hard according to the press. On 23 June 1923 *Nezavisimost* which had close ties with the new Sgovor government already assured its readers in a report from Istanbul that Turkey “strongly wishes” to re-establish “sincere friendly relations” with Bulgaria.¹⁴⁸ Suggestions of such positive attitude on the other side of the border were also made later on by other pro-government newspapers.¹⁴⁹ In their efforts to create and sustain a suitable media environment for the idea of neighbourly amity, some newspapers¹⁵⁰ even drew on the “authority”¹⁵¹ of former MP from Varna region Zümri Zade Şakir Bey (whom *Slovo* called Şakir Zümriev). And because his statement reflected very well the pulse of the media environment, we will quote it, only from *Dnevnik* which was more independent at the time: “Bulgarian public opinion is following the progress of New Turkey with the greatest sympathy and Bulgarians are convinced that there can be true rapprochement between Bulgaria and Turkey. This rapprochement is desired by all”.¹⁵² The positive attitude which Bulgarian newspapers offered to the public could also be felt in the days following 24 June 1923. Although the Lausanne Peace Treaty was a disappointment from the point of view of Bulgaria’s own cause, including its clauses related to Turkey¹⁵³, the final outcome for the neighbouring country was an inspiring example for the Bulgarian nation.¹⁵⁴ The Bulgarian press reported accordingly in an exalted key: “the most glorious page”, “Turkish triumph”, “a wonderful success”, “an important event in the political history of the Middle East” etc.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁴ *Мустафа Кемал Ататюрк и турско-българските...*, LIV.

¹⁴⁵ See, for example: Спомени на генерал Тодор Марков за българо-турските отношения (11 януари 1939 г.). – In: *Мустафа Кемал Ататюрк и турско-българските...*, 379-380, Док. № 51.

¹⁴⁶ Спасов, Л. Op. cit., 382.

¹⁴⁷ Куманов, М. Възстановяване на дипломатическите отношения между България и Турция (1923-1926 г.). – *Исторически преглед*, 1971, № 2, 72.

¹⁴⁸ *Независимост*, 23 юни 1923, бр. 652.

¹⁴⁹ *Слово*, 22 август 1923, бр. 380; *Зора*, 22 август 1923, бр. 1258.

¹⁵⁰ *Слово*, 6 юли 1923, бр.341; *Дневник*, 8 юли 1923, бр. 7092.

¹⁵¹ Илчев, И. Op. cit., 403-407.

¹⁵² *Слово*, 6 юли 1923, бр.341; *Дневник*, 8 юли 1923, бр. 7092.

¹⁵³ See Изявления на Александър Стамболийски пред Народното събрание.- *Зора*, 3 юни 1923, бр. 1190; *Мир*, 4 юни 1923, бр. 6893; *Правда*, 5 юни 1923, бр. 194;

¹⁵⁴ Садулов, А. *Агонията на Източният въпрос и раждането на нова Турция*. В. Търново, 2000, 339.

¹⁵⁵ *Зора*, 6 август 1923, бр.1245; *Дневник*, 7 август 1923, бр.7146; *Пряпорец*, 27 август 1923, бр.193; *Утро*, 29 август 1923, бр. 4224.

Of course, except for the public's sympathy for the Turks, there was also another reason for the continuing positive press campaign in favour of "the most different neighbour". This was openly admitted even by the pro-government *Pryaporets*: "this cordiality is not just a sentimental outbreak."¹⁵⁶ The positive media environment Turkey generally enjoyed was determined much more by the government's pragmatic goal of intensifying business and trade with Ankara, than by the editors' purely emotional sympathy for the successes of the neighbours. It was no coincidence that the newspapers informed their readers of the current government's policy – "we have nothing to fight for" with Turkey.¹⁵⁷ They also communicated the government's evaluation of its significance both in the past and in the present: "it was, and remains the closest and best market for our goods."¹⁵⁸ Based on these arguments, newspapers defined the need for re-establishing relations with Turkey as "an important goal", so as to produce a "space of active economic relations and technical exchange."¹⁵⁹ Until the end of October 1923 Bulgarian press kept emitting optimistic signals about Bulgarian-Turkish relations. During the second half of August the *Sgovor* newspaper *Slovo* already claimed that if "there is one certain fact" in the system of Balkan politics, it is the Turkish-Bulgarian friendship¹⁶⁰. In early September *Dnevnik* hinted at the same.¹⁶¹ Towards the middle of the month *Utro* raised the issue of the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Turkey and Bulgaria. It reported that in the context of "great interests" the two governments want this to happen as soon as possible and claimed that the future ambassadors were already selected.¹⁶² A month later the same newspaper brought the issue of re-establishing the relations between Turkey and Bulgaria back into circulation giving the impression that this could happen in the nearest future.¹⁶³

News of the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey came precisely in this context. But as *Mir* accurately predicted, as prepared as the public might have been for such an event, "it will still be met with varying attitudes."¹⁶⁴ And indeed this was the case. We will begin the overview of press reactions with the mouthpiece of the new government, *Demokraticheski Sgovor*.¹⁶⁵ The selection of material and their axiology in newspapers of this status followed very strictly the official political position and in the case of Bulgaria it was very clearly formulated: a return "to order and tradition."¹⁶⁶ From this point of view it is easy to suppose that the mouthpiece for the *Demokraticheski Sgovor* coalition, established on 10 August, would defend the

¹⁵⁶ *Пряпорец*, 27 август 1923, бр. 193.

¹⁵⁷ *Независимост*, 9 юли 1923, бр. 665; *Пряпорец* 27 август 1923, бр. 193.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Мир*, 30 юли 1923, бр.6940; *Слово*, 6 юли 1923, бр.341; *Дневник*, 7 август 1923, бр.7146; *Пряпорец*, 27 август 1923, бр. 193.

¹⁶⁰ *Слово*, 22 август 1923, бр. 380.

¹⁶¹ *Дневник*, 2 септември 1923, бр. 7138.

¹⁶² *Утро*, 13 септември 1923, бр. 4236.

¹⁶³ *Утро*, 24 октомври 1923, бр. 4270.

¹⁶⁴ *Мир*, 2 ноември 1923, бр. 7019.

¹⁶⁵ Първанова, Р. Демократическият сговор и неговото управление (1923-1931). – *Исторически преглед*, 1994-1995, № 3, 22.

¹⁶⁶ *Слово*, 22 август 1923, бр. 380.

monarchy as an ideological value. Yet it must be immediately specified that this was not a precedent in Bulgarian political life, quite on the contrary – after the First World War the republican idea was not very popular in Bulgaria.¹⁶⁷ If we look specifically at the text about the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey in the newspaper in question, our hypothesis would be confirmed because of the writing's pessimistic nature. The new form of Turkish government may turn out to be “a somewhat obscure façade”, whereas the removal of the old one would have innumerable consequences, the mouthpiece claimed on its front page.¹⁶⁸

What was the position of pro-government *Slovo* and *Prjaporetz*? The former, contrary to expectations, reacted positively to the 29 October event which it considered a change of “extraordinary importance” in Turkey's new history. The main question *Slovo* raised was that of the compatibility of the republican form of government with the teachings of religion. Their positive attitude towards the change was obvious also by their unambiguous answer: “it is not contrary to the spirit of Islam.”¹⁶⁹ The response to the proclamation of the republic in *Prjaporetz* was also positive, although this newspaper did not have a special item on the event but only informed about it in a piece on the first republican cabinet. One way or the other they drew an optimistic picture suggesting to the public that all necessary reforms which aim at “the radical transformation” of Turkey would be carried out “soon” and that the country will “quickly” start on “the way to progress”.¹⁷⁰

Regardless of its claims to “greater integration of forces”¹⁷¹, the Demokraticheski Sgovor never became a unified political party.¹⁷² This makes the discrepancies in analyses offered in different newspapers supporting the Sgovor understandable to some extent, because it allowed the Tsankov government to show loyalty to the Entente powers, who were at the time the main supporters of the monarchy in Bulgaria.¹⁷³ Of course, this is not a mere assumption. The foreign policy of the new cabinet was in the firm grip of Colonel Hristo Kalfov, who closely followed the western public opinion. At the same time, he was in good relations with the Allied Control Commission in Bulgaria, and with the leading western diplomats in Sofia. This resulted in the support Bulgarian foreign minister enjoyed during the annual meeting of the League of Nations in Geneva in the autumn of 1925, where he asked for financing the settlement of the refugees and the national economy.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁷ Георгиев, В. Развитие на политическата система на България (1918-1944 г.). – *Ип: България 1300. Институции и държавни традиции. Доклади на III конгрес на Българското историческо дружество 3-5 октомври 1981*. Т. I., С., 1981, с. 298; Георгиев, В. Из историята на републиканското движение в България. – *Векове*, 1980, № 6, 31- 47.

¹⁶⁸ *Демократически сговор*, 7 ноември 1923, бр. 31.

¹⁶⁹ *Слово*, 31 октомври 1923, бр. 438.

¹⁷⁰ *Пряпорец*, 7 ноември 1923, бр. 252.

¹⁷¹ *Пряпорец*, 11 август 1923, бр. 180.

¹⁷² Първанова, Р. Ор. cit., 48; Георгиев, В. Ор. cit., 298

¹⁷³ Георгиев, В. В лагера на деветоюнците в навечерието и по време на Септемврийското въстание 1923 г. – *Векове*, 1973, № 4, с. 64-65; Скутунов, К. *Бурни времена. Цар Борис III отблизо*. С., 2004, 529.

¹⁷⁴ Задгорска, В. Спомените на Христо Калфов. – *Минало*, 2014, № 4, 51.

The position of the two other pro-government newspapers doesn't seem to be grounded because their ideological premises are also monarchic. Some light could be shed on the discrepancies which are at first glance difficult to explain if we once again reverse to the logic the "European" stance which was very strong in Bulgarian culture. Accordingly, both newspapers were quick to present republican Turkey as wishing to "transform itself following the European model" (*Slovo*)¹⁷⁵. *Pryaporets* confirmed this, saying it wanted to take advantage of "all the benefits of European civilisation."¹⁷⁶ Constructing the "new" image of Turkey through the cultural category of "the West" was probably a compromise with the ideological norm and a way to handle the complicated situation after 9 June. Since the newspapers in question did reflect the political will of the Sgovor to a greater or lesser extent, it wouldn't be appropriate for them to directly express approval for the republican form of government in Turkey because this would contradict the government's calls to preserving "peace and tranquillity." This would in turn send a negative message to the forces of the Entente thus further worsening the Bulgarian government's international situation. On the other hand they could not take an unfavourable position towards Ankara because friendship with the new Turkish government was exceptionally important for Sofia and a different evaluation of the 19 October even could have cast a shadow on it.¹⁷⁷

The proclamation of the republic did not go unnoticed by *Zora*, either. The important question to that daily newspaper was how long republican government would hold in Turkey. In this respect they expressed "a certain alarm", because, as they remarked, "it is not so easy to erase centuries of tradition, especially since they are connected to religion." Still, this newspaper did not follow any ideological norm along the "monarchy" – "republic" axis. This is somewhat understandable if we keep in mind the author of the article – Danail Kraptchev. He was not only the editor of *Zora*, but also an insightful and far-seeing political analyser who understood Bulgaria's national priorities. The minister of foreign affairs, Hristo Kalfov, formulated them once again in the country's dynamic political atmosphere in early November. Here is what he said: "For now we are trying to re-establish economic ties with Turkey which existed before the war and which have a fundamental importance for the proper development of our national economy."¹⁷⁸ Through Danail Kraptchev, *Zora* supported the Sgovor although they were not closely aligned with its politics. They were therefore able to "reconcile" tradition with "the new situation" and to express their wish "to have at our border a stable regime which would allow republican Turkey to develop and be successful."¹⁷⁹

Mir also reported on the proclamation of the Republic, their item being the longest. This is to some extent understandable since in late October this newspaper already

¹⁷⁵ *Слово*, 23 ноември 1923, бр. 546.

¹⁷⁶ *Пряпорец*, 23 ноември 1923, бр. 265.

¹⁷⁷ *Dnevnik* noticed the sensitivity of the Turkish press about events and issues in Bulgaria concerning Turkey. – *Дневник*, 8 октомври 1922, бр. 6871.

¹⁷⁸ *Пряпорец*, 12 ноември 1923, бр.255; *Дневник*, 13 ноември 1923, бр. 7196.

¹⁷⁹ *Зора*, 5 ноември 1923, бр. 1321.

gave signs of distancing itself from the policy it followed during the first weeks and months after the coup.¹⁸⁰ This course of politicisation gave *Mir* journalists the liberty of offering more liberal interpretations of events. Their new status allowed them to say about this specific event that: “We, Bulgarians, have nothing to fear of the creation of a neighbouring republic.” This of course did not mean that “the Bulgarian Times” had distanced itself from the strong pull of monarchism. No, this was rather display of flexibility in their attitude towards Ankara’s political decision: “in any case the Turkish people is the most competent to decide which form of government best suit them, whether the monarchy or the republic.” Why did this serious newspaper stray from the rigorous monarchic ideological paradigm? This, as expected, had its quite pragmatic reason expressed by the newspaper itself: “For us it is important that peace and order reign in Turkey because only under such circumstances will our commercial relations flourish...” The significance of the Turkish market to Bulgarian economy was no secret to *Mir* either. Quite on the contrary, this is the newspaper where this argument was perhaps best developed because their professional expertise was the highest. From this point of view their message was not the product of hasty improvisation. It was rather determined by a conscious concept of the significance of understanding in the context of change on both sides of the border: “in their success in internal affairs Turkish politicians will find in us nothing but sympathy and benevolence.”¹⁸¹ The first sign of a positive attitude towards the neighbouring country came some 20 days later. This was when a phrase modelled on the already familiar matrix found its place in the newspaper: “new Turkey, its eyes wide open to the West... is inspired by the ideas and the example of Western Europe and is working with energy worthy of envy for the creation of a modern state in the heart of Asia.”¹⁸²

As seen from this overview, evaluations of the 29 October event demonstrated a positive attitude towards neighbouring Turkey. On the other hand its construction and translation in the media space involved overcoming certain ideological and political inconveniences for which Bulgarian press was obviously prepared¹⁸³. It must also be noted that the ideological flexibility mentioned above was demonstrated not only with regard to Turkey. The same was true of coverage of events in Greece. With reference to this in late November *Dnevnik* wrote: “... we cannot peg our good neighbourly relations to a specific political institution but we would like to see internal peace in Greece so we could develop our numerous common economic interests.”¹⁸⁴ This comparison gives us reason to claim that in discussing pressing issues of foreign relations, Bulgarian press gradually became more flexible, sober, careful and, in the end, more professional, which by the way was also the case of Bulgarian diplomacy of that period¹⁸⁵.

¹⁸⁰ *Мир*, 9 юни 1923, бр. 6898; *Мир*, 29 октомври 1923, бр. 7016.

¹⁸¹ *Мир*, 2 ноември 1923, бр. 7019.

¹⁸² *Мир*, 23 ноември 1923, бр. 7036.

¹⁸³ *Външната политика на правителството на БЗНС...*, 227.

¹⁸⁴ *Дневник*, 29 ноември, 1923, бр.7208; *Дневник*, 3 ноември 1923, бр. 7189.

¹⁸⁵ Динков, Д. Външната политика. – In: *България през XX век. Алманах*. С., 1991 681.

After having sketched the axiology of the press' reaction to the proclamation of the Turkish Republic, let us turn to the intensity of its media coverage. In preceding months and years "the Turkish issue" had enjoyed great public interest. It could therefore be expected that this event would also find broad coverage in the press. In reality this was not the case or, as *Dnevnik* remarked, "a major phenomenon in neighbouring Turkey went almost unnoticed."¹⁸⁶ This assessment was made immediately after the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey, but holds true for the remaining days and weeks till the end of 1923 because Turkey was rarely the focus of media attention. The main reason for this was the exceptionally tense political situation in Bulgaria. Newspapers were filled with information about the bloody clashes throughout the country in September and preparation for general elections in November. Others were filled with information from Western Europe. It was only logical that they would leave little room for the issue of Turkey. Till the end of the year it was very rarely presented in central newspapers. This does not mean that the Bulgarian public took no interest in events in the neighbouring country. Quite the opposite, at least as much as the political and cultural elite was concerned¹⁸⁷. This was why, once political and social tensions in Bulgaria began to ease, the interest quickly rose to the surface once again. The Plovdiv newspaper *Pravda*, for example, published a news item informing its readers about a meeting of Turkish and Bulgarian diplomats and suggesting it aimed at establishing "Turkish-Bulgarian friendship."¹⁸⁸ *Utro* published an announcement by Bulgaria's diplomatic representative to Turkey according to whom: "the Bulgarian element in Turkey is very well treated by Turkish authorities and in friendly relations with the Turkish population."¹⁸⁹ Such a flattering assessment by a Bulgarian diplomat is hardly a coincidence. Could it have been a sign of good will on the part of Sofia and a demonstration of willingness to normalise relations with Ankara? This question was answered on the pages of *Demokraticheski Sgovor* in early December when, with a certain delay, the newspaper reported that Bulgaria's new ambassador to Turkey was Simeon Radev.¹⁹⁰ By appointing this experienced diplomat who was also very well acquainted with Turkey, the Bulgarian government gave a clear sign of its wish to speed up the process of re-establishing trust between the two countries¹⁹¹. Conscious of Turkey's significance¹⁹², the Bulgarian government was quick in dealing with some on-going misunderstandings¹⁹³ so its representative could be at the negotiations table in the Turkish capital in early June 1924.¹⁹⁴ Coming to an agreement was not so quick because of some "pending issues". In the end the two countries did manage to

¹⁸⁶ *Дневник*, 8 ноември 1923, бр. 7193.

¹⁸⁷ *Слово*, 23 ноември 1923, бр. 456.

¹⁸⁸ *Правда*, 8 ноември 1923, бр. 325.

¹⁸⁹ *Утро*, 28 ноември 1923, бр. 4299.

¹⁹⁰ *Демократически сговор*, 6 декември 1923, бр. 54.

¹⁹¹ Хаков, Дж. Българо-турските отношения и турското население в България. – In: *Изследвания в чест на чл.- кор. професор Страшимир Димитров*, Ч. 2, С., 2001, 694.

¹⁹² *Официалната и тайната българо-турска дипломация (1903-1925)*. С., 2009, с. 655, Док. № 403.

¹⁹³ Куманов, М. *Op. cit.*, 76.

¹⁹⁴ Куманов, М., *Op. cit.*, 76. *Официалната и тайната....*, 654-655, Док. № 401, 402.

come to an agreement¹⁹⁵, after which on 18 October 1925 the Republic of Turkey and the Tsardom of Bulgaria concluded a treaty of friendship.¹⁹⁶

“I told him that the Bulgarian people met Turkey’s successes with sincere joy... we’ve been following the efforts and progress of Turkish democracy with the greatest sympathy”, Simeon Radev wrote to his superior, Minister of Foreign Affairs Hristo Kalfov, about a conversation with Turkish Prime Minister Ismet Pasha.¹⁹⁷ Such declarations are usually nothing but diplomatic etiquette. This was not the case here, since they reflected Bulgarian society’s real attitude to a great extent and especially that of the intelligentsia. For example, the Union of Bulgarian scientists, writers and artists expressed the decisive importance of building strong bridges of cooperation with Turkey “unconditionally”.¹⁹⁸ According to some intellectuals there was even more: “... it is our imperative duty to get to know New Turkey well in its fundamental social transformation as well as its future international position.”¹⁹⁹ This duty was quickly fulfilled by economist Atanas Yaranov who in 1924 published an “*Economic History of Turkey in its Present Borders*”.²⁰⁰ The Ministry of War was also interested in changes in Turkey. In May 1925 the Army Headquarters circulated a short text about Turkey and its Army. It was an analysis of reforms undertaken in the country and the perspectives before them. The tone was very positive; there was no hint of any danger in Turkey’s present or future intentions towards Bulgaria. And since this brochure was classified and not intended as propaganda for the general public, it could be seen to realistically reflect the attitude of Bulgarian military experts. It could even be read as an exact measure of Bulgarian nationalism’s attitude towards the Turkish neighbours at the time.²⁰¹

The founder and director of the Free University of Political and Economic Science, Stefan Bobchev, also believed that Bulgarians should know Turkey: “We should especially study the Turkish political constitution”, he wrote, “being the country’s direct neighbours.” Bobchev translated into Bulgarian the full text of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey and published it in the *Juridical Review* magazine so this “remarkable document in the newest history of nations” could be studied and analysed in detail at least by Bulgarian lawyers²⁰². In the same magazine’s next issue Stefan Bobchev informed its audience of the many implications of the reforms undertaken in the Turkish state.²⁰³

¹⁹⁵ *Официалната и тайната...*, 717, Док. № 439.

¹⁹⁶ The full text of the treaty: *Мустафа Кемал Ататюрк и турско-българските...*, 51-67, Док. № 4.

¹⁹⁷ *Официалната и тайната...*, 655, Док. № 403.

¹⁹⁸ Алтънов, И. *Op. cit.*, XI.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, XV.

²⁰⁰ Яранов, А. *Стопанска Турция в днешните ѝ предели*. С., 1924.

²⁰¹ *Турция и нейната армия*. Министерство на войната, Издание на Щаба на армията. С., 1925.

²⁰² Бобчев, С. С. За Нова Турция и нейната конституция. – *Юридически преглед*, 1925, № 7-8, 281-300.

²⁰³ Бобчев, С. С., Държавно-правни и обществени реформи в Нова Турция. – *Юридически преглед*, 1925, № 9, 361-368.

Over the next few years interest in Turkey never ebbed. A significant number of studies were published on a broad spectrum of issues pertaining to the dynamics of life in Turkey.²⁰⁴ Scientific and cultural exchange developed between the two countries. Activists, journalists, scientists and writers exchanged visits. Bulgarian theatre and folklore groups performed in Istanbul and Ankara.²⁰⁵ Bulgarian-Turkish societies were once again established with the aim of “the two nations getting to know each other and becoming close and establishing peaceful neighbourly relations.”²⁰⁶

Thus, in the early 1920s a relatively powerful process began of softening the negative image of the Turkish people as being aggressive, underdeveloped and lagging behind European peoples in culture and education.²⁰⁷ This was very much thanks to Bulgarian intellectuals. By actively informing Bulgarian society about changes in Turkey, they had a positive impact on attitudes in Bulgarian society which during this short historical period were perhaps the least hostile and the most well-intentioned respectively. The Balkans have often been called “a common market of hostility.” The subject we’ve selected has precisely the opposite semantics – it offers an insight into how a society can resort to ideological conformism, tame its historical tensions for the sake of the present, and start building bridges of understanding and cooperation with another, neighbouring society.

BULGARIAN PRESS ON THE PROCLAMATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

Mümin İsov

This subject gives us an opportunity to look at the initial stage of the relations between the two nations after the end of the Ottoman Empire, a topic which was neglected in the specific Bulgarian historiographic conjuncture after 1944. The situation in the neighbouring country during and after WW I, and the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey in October 1923 has been covered extensively in Bulgarian press. For a decade, Bulgarian newspapers offered a number of different interpretations and expectations about the historical changes in Turkey, together with some old and new ideological and political issues. Here the main topics, analytical texts and commentaries in the most influential Bulgarian media of the

²⁰⁴ Алтѣнов, И. *Източният въпрос и Нова Турция. С особен поглед към интересите на България*, С., 1926; Ж. Мелиа, *Мустафа Кемал или Нова Турция*, С., 1929; Б. Шивачев, *Стара и Нова Турция (Историко-сравнителен преглед)*, С., 1930; Бобчев, С.С. Важни политически, социални и културни реформи в Нова Турция. – *Научен преглед*, 1934, № 1-3;

²⁰⁵ Хаков, Дж. Увод. – In: *Мустафа Кемал Ататюрк и турско-българските...*, LX; *Българо-балкански културни взаимоотношения 1878-1944*. Състав. А. Алексиева и др., С., 1986; Мевсим, Х. *Пътуването на Чудомир в Турция (1932)*. Жанет 45, 2012.

²⁰⁶ *Коджа Балкан*, 23 февруари 1925, бр.3; *Мустафа Кемал Ататюрк и турско-българските...*, 223.

²⁰⁷ Василева, Д. Представата за нова Турция в междувоенния период. – In: *Представата за „другия“ на Балканите*. С., 1995, 207.

time are reviewed, outlining predominantly sympathetic attitudes and a positive image of the emerging modern Turkey.