

# New Europe College Yearbook

## *Pontica Magna* Program

2015-2016

2016-2017



---

NADIIA BUREIKO  
SEVIL HUSEYNOVA  
ANDRIY LYUBKA  
ANNA MAZANIK  
SERGEI MUDROV  
PETRU NEGURĂ

KIRILL CHUNIKHIN  
DARYA MALYUTINA  
SANDRO NIKOLAISHVILI  
ARARAT OSIPIAN  
OLEKSANDR POLIANICHEV  
ALEKSANDR VORONOVICI

---

Editor: Irina Vainovski-Mihai

*Pontica Magna Fellowship Program* is supported by VolkswagenStiftung, Germany.

## **EDITORIAL BOARD**

Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Andrei PLEȘU, President of the New Europe Foundation, Professor of Philosophy of Religion, Bucharest; former Minister of Culture and former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania

Dr. Valentina SANDU-DEDIU, Rector, Professor of Musicology, National University of Music, Bucharest

Dr. Anca OROVEANU, Academic Coordinator, Professor of Art History, National University of Arts, Bucharest

Dr. Irina VAINOVSKI-MIHAI, Publications Coordinator, Professor of Arab Studies, "Dimitrie Cantemir" Christian University, Bucharest

Copyright – New Europe College 2018  
ISSN 1584-0298

New Europe College  
Str. Plantelor 21  
023971 Bucharest  
Romania

[www.nec.ro](http://www.nec.ro); e-mail: [nec@nec.ro](mailto:nec@nec.ro)

Tel. (+4) 021.307.99.10, Fax (+4) 021. 327.07.74



## ALEXANDR VORONOVICI

Born in 1986, in Chisinau, Moldova

Ph.D. in Comparative History, Central European University, 2016

Dissertation: *The Ambiguities of Soviet 'Piedmonts': Soviet Borderland Policies in the Ukrainian SSR and the Moldovan ASSR, 1922-1934*

### Fellowships and Awards:

2015 –2016 – CEU Write-Up Grant

2015 – Deutsches Historisches Institut (DHI) Moskau/German Historical Institute Moscow, Fellowship for Ph.D. students

2014 – Visiting Ph.D. Student at the Russian Studies Program, University of Manchester (with the support of the CEU DRSG)

2013-2014 – CEU Award for Advanced Doctoral Students

2013– Petro Jacyk Visiting Scholarship at the Centre for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies, Munk School of Global Affairs, University of Toronto

2012 –2015 – AFP Fellowship for Returning Scholars (annual, renewed twice), Department of World History, „Ion Creanga” State Pedagogical University, Chisinau, Moldova

2012 – Deutsches Historisches Institut (DHI) Moskau/German Historical Institute Moscow, Fellowship for Ph.D. students

2011-2012 – CEU Academic Achievement Award for First-Year Doctoral Students

2009-2010 – CEU Outstanding Academic Achievement Award  
2010 –2015 – CEU Scholarship for Ph.D. Students  
2009 –2010– International Visegrad Fund In-Coming Scholarship

Participated to international conferences and symposia in Moldova, Ukraine,  
Turkey, Canada, Russia, and Hungary.

Published several articles on Soviet nationality policies and memory politics in  
Eastern Europe.

Participated in international research projects on intellectual history of Central  
and Eastern Europe and history politics in Eastern Europe in comparative  
perspective.

# A SPRINGBOARD FOR REVOLUTION?: THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MOLDOVAN ASSR AND THE COMPETING VISIONS OF ITS INTERNATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY ROLE

## **Abstract**

The paper focuses on the struggle between different understandings of nationality policies and the international revolutionary role of the Moldovan ASSR in 1924, in the process of the establishment of the republic and the struggle for power in the region. The paper will trace how a group with a more modest vision of the revolutionary role of the Moldovan ASSR turned out to be successful. It will argue that the role of the Soviet Ukrainian leadership was crucial in the choice of the leading group and the direction of the nationality policies and its international dimension in the Moldovan ASSR.

**Keywords:** Soviet nationality policies, cross-border ties, struggle over borderlands, Bessarabian question

## **List of Abbreviations**

KP(b)U – Communist Party (Bolshevik) of Ukraine  
KUNMZ – Communist University of the National Minorities of the West  
RKP(b) – Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)  
RSFSR – Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic  
TsK – Central Committee  
VUTsVK – All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee

In the 1920s the Bolsheviks nationality policies not only served internal purposes, but also had international implications. Their nationality policies had the borderland dimension. Making use of the fact that frequently culturally similar population lived on both sides of the Soviet border, Soviet authorities attempted to use their treatment of non-Russian nationalities to shift the loyalties of their cultural brethren in the neighboring countries. The case of the Moldovan ASSR is usually seen as the most prominent example of the instrumentalization of nationality policies for foreign purposes.<sup>1</sup> Yet, a careful analysis of process of the establishment of the republic in 1924 and the struggle for power therein suggests that there was no unanimity on the international purposes of the Moldovan ASSR among the involved actors.

This paper focuses on the struggle between different understandings of nationality policies and the international revolutionary role of the Moldovan ASSR in 1924, in the process of the establishment of the republic and the struggle for power in the region. The paper will trace how a group with a more modest vision of the international revolutionary role of the Moldovan ASSR turned out to be successful. It will argue that the role of the Soviet Ukrainian leadership was crucial in the choice of the leading group and the direction of the nationality policies and its international dimension in the Moldovan ASSR.

As is well-known, the Soviet leaders refused to diplomatically recognize the “loss” of Bessarabia to Romania in 1918. Yet, the Bessarabian issue was discussed not only on the diplomatic level in the Soviet Union. In the first half of the 1920s there were two major groups that were debating the Bessarabian issue in the Soviet Union. One consisted mostly of Bessarabian emigres to the Soviet Union, another – of the Romanian emigres.<sup>2</sup>

In July 1921, the First All-Russian Organizational Meeting of the Communists, Romanians and Bessarabians took place in Moscow. It coincided with the Third Congress of the Comintern. The main goal of the meeting was to unite Bessarabian and Romanian emigres in their common party work on the Bessarabian-Romanian direction. The Meeting itself was mostly the initiative of the Moscow-based Romanian communists led by Ion Dicescu-Dik. Eventually the meeting turned out to be an attempt of the Romanian communists to assert their predominance in the Bessarabian affairs and in the Romanian-Bessarabian Bureau of the Moscow Committee of RKP(b). They succeeded in that attempt, forming the Central Bureau almost exclusively of non-Bessarabians. The minutes of the meeting also suggest that there were a number of conflicts at the proceedings, pointing to the struggle for influence, but also to the differences in understanding of the

Bessarabian-Moldovan issues, which would be exposed later.<sup>3</sup> At the same time such approach alienated Bessarabians, and later in the process of the creation of the Moldovan ASSR the personal grievances reinforced the differences in the political and national outlooks. Thus, in a way ostracized from the high politics in Moscow, the majority of Bessarabians returned either to the South-Eastern regions of the Ukrainian SSR to continue their work in the local party committees or to the Bessarabian underground. As a result, a certain division of labor emerged: Romanians communists, stationed in Moscow, involved in mostly large-scale Comintern issues, while Bessarabians mostly concentrated on local problems on both banks of the Dniester.<sup>4</sup> Later this division would play into the hands of Bessarabians when Ukrainian authorities would prefer to entrust them the political organization of the Moldovan ASSR.

### **The Establishment of the Moldovan ASSR and the Kharkiv Factor**

The “Memorandum on the Necessity of the Creation of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic,” sent to TsK RKP(b) and TsK KP(b)U on 5 February 1924, was largely the product of the Romanian emigre communists,<sup>5</sup> though the idea was in the air. In his recollections Semion Budennyi mentioned that already in 1923 Grigorii Kotovsky and Mihail Frunze discussed with him at his apartment the establishment of the republic on the left bank of the Dniester.<sup>6</sup> After the opening of the archives historians have reconstructed in more detail the events that followed the appearance of the Memorandum to the establishment of the Moldovan ASSR and have drawn some important connections.<sup>7</sup> In the existing historiography the discussion of the Memorandum often confines itself to the statement of its expansionist arbitrary character, embodied in the idea of the spread of the socialist revolution to Europe.<sup>8</sup> At the same time a more careful look on the members of the so-called “initiative group” provides some hints on the possible explanation of the expansionist character of the document.

The list consisted almost exclusively of the Moscow-based Romanian emigres and Romanian Communists actively involved in the Comintern affairs. It is revealing, indeed, that no major future Soviet Moldovan leader, such as Staryi, Badeev, Grinshtein, signed the document. The Memorandum envisaged that the Moldovan SSR would have two crucial goals. The Moldovan republic was expected to serve cultural and economic needs of the local population:

1. The organization of the Moldovan population in a political and administrative unit would contribute to the growth of economic and cultural levels of the population. The consolidation of the latter one, from the viewpoint of the USSR, is the more necessary, the higher is the possibility of military conflicts taking place sooner or later, during which one requires a secured, satisfied rear area on the borders (*pogranichnyi tyl*).<sup>9</sup>

As the cited passage demonstrates, the cultural development of the local population was not the ultimate aim. It was also important for military and defense purposes in the border region. The other purpose of the proposed Moldovan republic was central in the Memorandum:

2. The Moldovan republic can play the same role of the political and propagandist factor, that of Belarusian Republic in relation to Poland, Karelian – to Finland. It would serve to attract attention and sympathies of the Bessarabian population and would reinforce our claims on the reunification of *Zadnestrov'e* with it.

From this point of view, it is imperative to create namely a socialist republic, not an autonomous region within the Ukrainian SSR. United *Pridnestrov'e* and *Zadnestrov'e* would serve as a strategic wedge of the USSR to the Balkans (through Dobrudja) and to Central Europe (through Bukovina and Galicia), which the Soviet Union could use as a springboard for military and political purposes.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, the Moldovan republic was expected to play a key role in the expansion of the Soviet influence to Bessarabia, the Balkans and Central Europe. The authors of the Memorandum apparently hoped that the establishment of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic would bring the prospects of the socialist revolution in these regions closer. The Memorandum suggested the possibility of border revisions and the unification of *Zadnestrov'e* and *Pridnestrov'e*.

The choice of the term *Zadnestrov'e* instead of Bessarabia is noteworthy. Bessarabia by this time<sup>11</sup> was a much more clearly defined region in the symbolic geography with settled geographical borders. *Zadnestrov'e* was a vague and ambiguous concept with unclear boundaries. Some could read it as a synonym of Bessarabia. In most cases, the Memorandum suggests this interpretation to its readers. Yet, one could also understand *Zadnestrov'e* as the territory stretching beyond Bessarabia. Possibly this ambiguity was not accidental. As it became clearer from later discussions,



the Romanian Communist emigres, foremost I. Dik, considered the socialist revolution in Romania, not just Bessarabia, to be the main purpose of the Moldovan SSR. That goal also determined the envisaged strategy of the nationality policies in the republic. Dik believed that an almost total Romanianization should have been carried out on the left bank of the Dniester. In that case the future republic could perform two functions: training of the skilled revolutionaries for the subversive activities all over Romania and propaganda once again targeting Romania as a whole.

Paradoxically, the main authors of the Memorandum, the group of Romanian communists headed by I. Dik, eventually got marginalized from the process of the establishment of the new republic. Their plans for the Romanianizing nationality policies were not introduced, preference being given to the Moldovanization. In my opinion, in many respects it was due to the influence of the Soviet Ukrainian leaders in Kharkiv and their mutually beneficial collaboration with the opponents of the Romanianizers, that is mostly local Transnistrian activists and Bessarabian emigres. Yet, the interference and importance of Kharkiv for the evolution of the Moldovan republic requires at least a short explanation.<sup>12</sup>

Undoubtedly, the Ukrainian SSR occupied a specific position in the Soviet Union. It was a rich by Soviet standards and big republic with a numerous and influential party. Nevertheless, its leaders, while disciplined party officials, had also their own ambitions and aspirations. Therefore, in the mid-1920s, the Moscow officials preferred to not antagonize the Soviet Ukrainian leadership much and on every occasion. They were trying to balance, take into consideration the interests of Kharkiv, and give them certain autonomy in some spheres. Nevertheless, taking into consideration the envisaged international role and importance of the Soviet Moldovan republic the often decisive role of Kharkiv may come as a surprise, since the Soviet foreign policy is usually considered to be the exclusive prerogative of Moscow.

The campaign for the establishment of the Moldovan ASSR coincided with specific period in the Moscow-Kharkiv relations. Exactly at that period Ukrainian SSR and RSFSR articulated mutual border claims. The disputes emerged during the process of *raionirovanie*, the revision of the administrative and territorial divisions which took place in these years. From the early 1920s the territory around Taganrog and Shakhty on the South-Eastern border of the Ukrainian SSR was at the center of mutual claims between Kharkiv and local RSFSR authorities. In February 1924, the positions of the latter were reinforced by the creation of a larger and

more resourceful South-Eastern region of the RSFSR. The leaders of the new region used the opportunity to reiterate their claims on the Shakhty and Taganrog districts, based upon the economic considerations. Starting with April 1924 a special commission was investigating the issue. Kharkiv conceded the possibility of the transfer of the contested districts. Yet, in the same decree Ukrainian leaders requested the annexation of much larger territories of the RSFSR on the Ukrainian North-Eastern border on ethnolinguistic grounds. The issue of the transfer of Shakhty and Taganrog to the South-Eastern region was generally settled in October 1924.<sup>13</sup> A bit later after long-lasting discussions and jockeying for almost a year, the RSFSR also ceded half of the territory, claimed by Kharkiv. The process of the negotiation was long and still left Kharkiv unsatisfied, since they received only a part of the claimed territories.<sup>14</sup>

Exactly in these circumstances of the strong claims on contested Ukrainian territories around Taganrog and Shakhty, the “initiative group” was claiming another part of the Soviet Ukrainian territory for its propaganda and revolutionary project. Not surprisingly it encountered little sympathy in Kharkiv. The perspective of losing one more region even less economically developed could have hardly given rise to enthusiasm. Neither in Kharkiv nor in Moscow there was a uniform perception of the project. Soviet Ukrainian leaders had several reservations about the new Soviet Moldovan republic. In the 1920s, in the Soviet Union the right of any non-Russian nationality for the development of its national culture could hardly be questioned. Yet, Kharkiv was unwilling to delegate significant authority to the new republic in such a sensitive region (especially due to the Bessarabian issue), as the Ukrainian-Romanian border. As the result, even a Soviet historian had to recognize that there was much more centralization in the relations between Ukrainian SSR and Moldovan ASSR than between RSFSR and its respective autonomous republics.<sup>15</sup> The border position of the future republic was another issue of concern. There was a strong fear – Chicherin to some extent also shared it<sup>16</sup> – that in the Moldovan ASSR the Romanian nationalism may prevail and eventually there would be a possibility for the secession of the republic from the Soviet Union.<sup>17</sup> Even in the less radical scenarios, a small and weak Moldovan republic could have been a convenient gate for the foreign influences and infiltrations into the Ukrainian SSR and the Soviet Union.<sup>18</sup> In addition, it was evident from the beginning that the population of the Moldovan ASSR would be ethnically mixed. Therefore, for some of the Soviet Ukrainian

leaders the future fate of the Ukrainian population in the new republic was an issue of concern.

Due to all the above-mentioned considerations among the Ukrainian leadership there was a quite strong group that opposed to the establishment of the Moldovan republic, especially in a full-fledged form. At the same time Moscow was reluctant to press the issue passing the Ukrainian authorities. Already claiming part of the territory of the Ukrainian SSR, they were afraid that another loss of territory would alienate the Soviet Ukrainian leaders, whose loyalty was a priority. That excluded the option of the full-fledged Moldovan republic. Mihail Frunze, who took part in the government both in Moscow and Kharkiv, understood the existing balances of power quite well. Therefore, possibly upon Stalin's request<sup>19</sup> and being the first to react to the initiative, he sent to TsK RKP(b) and TsK KP(b)U his verdict: "I am personally – for [the initiative], so that the Moldovan republic be included in the Ukrainian SSR."<sup>20</sup> The choice in favor of the autonomous republic within the Ukrainian SSR, not a full-fledged one, reinforced Kharkiv's key role in the process of the establishment of the Moldovan ASSR. It was almost a *carte blanche* for the Ukrainian authorities on behalf of Moscow.

After the initial phase of internal party discussions in Kharkiv and Moscow, in which Mihail Frunze played a major role, the Ukrainian authorities took first steps in the creation of the Moldovan ASSR. On 6 March 1924, the Odessan section of the KP(b)U passed the resolution on the creation of the Moldovan section of KP(b)U.<sup>21</sup> Just on the next day already the Politburo of KP(b)U issued a decree that "considered reasonable from the political point of view to delimitate an autonomous Moldovan region as part of the Ukrainian SSR."<sup>22</sup> These two decisions officially launched the organizational process of the Moldovan autonomy. Yet, many issues remained unclear and, first of all, the number of the Moldovan population in the region and, consequently, the borders of the future autonomy.

Already on 18 April 1924, the Ukrainian Politburo considered the decision to establish Moldovan SSR inexpedient due to the lack of ethnographic and territorial data. The Politburo still requested further collection of data for the possible creation of the autonomous unit with the Moldovan population.<sup>23</sup> Eventually there were two groups collecting the necessary data: the commission, established by Kharkiv authorities and Grigorii Kotovsky and his cavalry corps who stationed at that moment in Transnistria and voluntarily started his own inquiry and calculations. In July 1924, the report of the territorial commission reached VUTsVK.

The results differed dramatically. While Kotovsky's commission counted 283 398 Moldovans, the Ukrainian commission reported only the number of 170 451.<sup>24</sup> Even Kotovsky's figures were far from 500.000-800.000, mentioned in the Memorandum from 12 October 1924. These discrepancies and ambiguities gave the pretext and reinforced the convictions of the Ukrainian authorities to postpone the creation of the Moldovan territorial unit.

At this moment, the Moscow authorities intervened. On 25 July 1924, Mihail Frunze sent to I. Stalin a note, in which he criticized the decision of the Ukrainian authorities:

I consider the last decision of TsK KP(b)U erroneous. I have been to Thansnistria personally numerous times and I can ascertain that to the North of Tiraspol there is a continuous stripe with the predominantly Moldovan population... Finally, one should take into account the international dimension. The establishment of even a small Moldovan republic or region will become a weapon of influence in our hands on the peasant and working masses of Bessarabia in the sense of the strengthening of hopes for the deliverance from the Romanian yoke. I recommend revisiting the issue.<sup>25</sup>

Four days later the Politburo of RKP(b) decided that it was necessary to create a Moldovan autonomous republic and suggested TsK of KP(b)U to issue the necessary directives.<sup>26</sup> There can be several considerations that would explain the insistence of the Moscow authorities. The Ukrainian authorities were discussing the Moldovan issue in several opposing voices. The Moldovan ASSR was crucial for the pressure on Romania, especially after the recently failed negotiations in Vienna. Due to the borderland position of the future republic and significant international attention the Soviet authorities could not simply give up the intent to create a Moldovan republic, when it was already officially announced and a number of meetings occurred in support of the endeavor. The abandonment of the Moldovan project would make a laughingstock out of the Soviet government in the eyes of foreign officials and play into the hands of Romanian diplomats. The decision from 29 July 1924, looks like the last time, when the Moscow authorities decisively intervened in the process of the establishment of the Moldovan ASSR. Basically, they insisted on the creation of the republic, but let Kharkiv decide, how to do it.

## Forming the Soviet Moldovan Leadership

Along with the creation of the Moldovan ASSR another important process took place – the establishment and the building of the Moldovan section (*obkom*) of KP(b)U and respectively the choice of the ruling elite of the new republic. The documents suggest that the decision was left largely in the hands of Kharkiv. The Soviet Ukrainian leadership had two options: either to rely on the “initiative group” of the Romanian Communists who by their memorandum triggered the whole affair, or to choose the Bessarabian emigres and Transnistrian party members, who were already for some time working in Ukraine in the local party committees. Kharkiv found common ground with the latter. By extension this choice also favored the Moldovanization policies to the Romanianizing ones and in some respects less ambitious international role of the Moldovan ASSR.

The Ukrainian authorities rejected and even isolated the Romanian “initiative group” for several reasons, even though it could have possibly had more potential and influence to carry out a successful state-building project.<sup>27</sup> Yet, its plan for the total Romanianization of the region was an unattractive perspective for Kharkiv, since it was already in spring 1924 clear that future republic would contain sizable Ukrainian population. More importantly, Soviet Ukrainian leaders were afraid to lose control over the politics in the region. The Ukrainian authorities did not have leverage over the Romanian emigres. The latter worked mostly through the channels of the Comintern and appealed directly to Moscow, neglecting Kharkiv. Moreover, their ambitions and projects to create in the region a kind of semi-military training camp demonstrated that the Romanian Communists would hardly accept the strict control of the Ukrainian authorities. Finally, the Romanian communists made a tactical mistake, not understanding the above-described Moscow-Kharkiv balance of power in relation to the Moldovan issue. Dissatisfied with the course of events and preference for the Bessarabian and Transnistrian activists in 1924, the Romanian Communists, particularly Dik, sent their critical notes foremost to Moscow. At the same time, the Moscow authorities preferred not to intervene in Kharkiv’s work on the Moldovan ASSR, unless some vital issues were touched upon. Therefore, the Moscow authorities tended to rely on Kharkiv’s replies on Dik’s notes and memorandums. Not surprisingly, the Ukrainian authorities rejected Dik’s criticism, since one of the main objects of critique were the Ukrainian authorities themselves.<sup>28</sup>

In light of these considerations local Transnistrians and Bessarabians seemed to suit much better. They were themselves quite suspicious of the Romanian influence. Therefore, the Ukrainian authorities felt more secure for their border areas than in the case of the Romanian emigres. The Bessarabian-Transnistrian group already worked for some time in the local committees of KP(b)U. Hence, they were more familiar to the Soviet Ukrainian authorities, since they made part of the Ukrainian party system. In turn, knowing the Ukrainian party from the inside they knew whom and how to address, when the issue of the Moldovan ASSR emerged. At the same time, the Bessarabians and Transnistrians had few connections in the Soviet top party management. Hence, they could hardly make use of these connections to press some issue directly in Moscow without Kharkiv's consent. On the contrary, the Moldovan group had to rely on Kharkiv in their debate with the Romanian communists, since the Ukrainian authorities had enough political weight, which Bessarabians and Transnistrians lacked, to struggle with Dik's group.

Thus, the choice in favor of the Bessarabian-Transnistrians group was likely some kind of a deal between them and the Ukrainian authorities. Local Bessarabians and Transnistrians assumed the republican party leadership and got the support of the Ukrainian authorities in their struggle with the Romanian group. Kharkiv, in turn, got the guarantees that the future developments in the Moldovan ASSR would be under its control. This control acquired legal status in the Moldovan Constitution which made even such usually autonomous local Commissariats as the Commissariat of Enlightenment subject to strict control by the Ukrainian authorities.<sup>29</sup>

On 8 August 1924, after the discussion of Moscow's directive on the Moldovan republic, the Politburo of the KP(b)U resolved that Abram Grinshtein would carry out the practical implementation of the establishment of the republic.<sup>30</sup> Several days later TsK KP(b)U clarified several central issues, formulated by Grinshtein: "To approve Grinshtein's proposals... To consider it necessary to form the party and Soviet leadership of the MSSR out of reliable Comrades-Moldovans... To recognize that the MSSR should be incorporated into the Ukrainian SSR and should have the federative connection with Ukraine, similar to the relations between autonomous republics with the RSFSR."<sup>31</sup>

This was a key decision. Grinshtein was one of the leaders of the Bessarabian Communist underground after 1917. From the early 1920s he was responsible in the KP(b)U for the Bessarabian and Bukovinian

directions. Grinshtein formed the organizational group from Bessarabian Communists, who were well familiar to him. The committee was established to carry out the preparatory works for the creation of the Moldovan ASSR. The committee consisted of three party officials, Grigorii Staryi, Iosif Badeev and Grinshtein himself. None of them were members of the "initiative group" that signed the Memorandum on 4 February 1924. All three came out originally of the Bessarabian Communist underground and would play major roles in the political and cultural life of the Moldovan ASSR in the 1920s. Yet, as it turned out, they had conflicting views on the directions of Soviet nationality policies in the region. On 22 August 1924, at the second meeting of the committee the views of Staryi concerning language issues clashed with the respective views of Badeev and Grinshtein. The conflict was not solved during the meeting and the participants decided to submit the description of both views in written form to TsK KP(b)U.<sup>32</sup> These reports contain the views and argumentation of both sides.

Staryi, who would later be considered one of the leading figures of the "Romanianizers" (*rumynizatory*), stated from the beginning that the scientific linguistic connection between Romanian and Moldovan was not his concern and he was much more interested in practical issues. From the practical point of view, he believed that a peasant from Transnistria or Bessarabia understood quite well his counterpart from Iasi, historical capital of the Moldavian Principality. At the same time, a peasant from Transnistria or Bessarabia would not understand 75-90% of literary Romanian. In his opinion, the "language of the Bessarabian and Transnistrian Moldovans" was "so poor that in pure Moldovan, without the borrowing from other languages, one can hardly give even the most primitive political speech."<sup>33</sup> Therefore, unwilling to spend excessive resources on the creation of almost completely new language, he proposed basing language policies on the Romanian canon and Latin script, which were the closest to and most suitable for the Transnistrian peasants. To his argument, Staryi added that the establishment of the Moldovan republic made sense only in light of the "extension of the republic beyond the Dniester." From this point of view of the future unification of Transnistria and Bessarabia, in which the latter was already being Romanianized by Bucharest, and the problem of the re-education of one of the regions could emerge in the nearby future.<sup>34</sup>

In turn, Iosif Badeev used the same 75-90% of the literary Romanian, not understood by the "Moldovans from Bessarabia and Transnistria,"

to underscore the distinction between Romanian and Moldovan. He summarized the debate the following way:

Why is the Romanian literary language not understood by Moldovans? Is it only because it is literary and differs from the spoken popular language? Or the Moldovan and Romanian languages are two separate languages, which have common Romance roots, but differ from one another like Russian from Ukrainian and Belarusian.<sup>35</sup>

Badeev made clear that Staryi and Romanianizers advocated the first option, while he himself stood for the latter one. The parallel with the Russian-Ukrainian-Belarusian case was a strong argument for the Bolsheviks in Kharkiv and Moscow who made the choice in favor of the separate Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Russian languages, and nationalities despite their similarities. Introducing this parallel in the Moldovan-Romanian case, Badeev suggested a similar resolution of the issue. The language policy should have been based upon the local dialect which due to its poor vocabulary had also incorporated many Slavic words. Badeev argued that there was no need to artificially impose Romanian, in turn filled with borrowings from French. Badeev had also tied the question of language to the question of the existence of the Moldovan nationality: "we can only choose Romanianization of Moldovan, if we adopt the point of view, according to which Moldovans do not exist as a separate nationality, but only a single Romanian people exists, which is passing through the stage of national unification."<sup>36</sup> Badeev repudiated this assertion, arguing that "Moldovans, with the exception of a small group of politicians, bought by Romanians, do not consider themselves Romanians and do not manifest any love towards Romanian homeland. A Moldovan considers himself a Moldovan and no more."<sup>37</sup> The emphasis on the suspicious or even militant attitude of the Bessarabian and Transnistrian population to everything Romanian would be a recurring argument in favor of the existence of the separate Moldovan nationality and culture. Whatever the scholarly arguments, the advocates of Moldovanization would insist that the resistance to Romanian rule in Bessarabia and to Romanian culture on both sides of the Dniester was a fact that borderland and nationality policies should rely on and exploit.

On 19 September, the Ukrainian Politburo discussed the materials presented by the organizational committee. In the resolution, the Politburo endorsed the views of Grinshtein and Badeev on nationality policies



in the Moldovan republic. The decision stated that the linguistic work should aim at the development of the "Moldovan popular (*narodnyi*) language... making an effort to bring [the language in the republic] as close as possible to the language of the Moldovan population of Bessarabia." The resolution also indicated the necessity of the introduction of "Russian (Cyrillic) script."<sup>38</sup>

### **Competing Visions of the International Role of the Moldovan ASSR**

Kharkiv's decisions outlined the main contours of the new republic. Moscow's final approval was pending. Dik and his associates attempted to use this break between two decisions in order to influence Moscow's positions. On 22 September 1924, they issued a memorandum. The Romanian Communists reminded that the initiative for the establishment of the republic came from them and restated the goals thereof from their point of view. They found the course taken by the KP(b)U erroneous, "harmful for the national organism in the process of formation." The source of the error Dik and his associates saw the source of the error in the lack of knowledge among the KP(b)U leaders on the situation in Bessarabia and Romania and the influence of the "incompetent Comrades," who prepared the ground for the declaration of the republic.<sup>39</sup> More importantly, they highlighted the differences, which they had with the KP(b)U leadership on the international role of the Moldovan republic:

The Moldovan Republic, in our opinion, should not only have the goal of discrediting of the dominance of the Romanian bourgeoisie in Bessarabia, but to follow this goal also in the rest of Romania... We propose and agree that the Moldovan Republic, as a federative state, should in this case be part of the Ukrainian SSR. Nevertheless, if the international situation of the Soviet Union does not allow this, that is the inclusion of Bessarabia in the Moldovan SSR, we consider it necessary that the Moldovan Republic joins the Soviet Union directly with equal rights, in order to acquire a more considerable international weight. This motivation is also underscored by the necessity of considerable financial support for future republic, which the Ukrainian SSR cannot grant by itself... The mistake of the Ukrainian Comrades is that establishing the Moldovan SSR, they attempt to resolve only the Bessarabian question, leaving aside the possibility of the Sovietization of the entire Romania... Our key idea is the agitation among the working-peasant masses of entire contemporary Romania.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, for the Romanian Communists the aim was the socialist revolution in entire Romania, not just in Bessarabia. In that respect, their position differed from Staryi, who also supported the introduction of the Romanian literary norms, but only, since they were also introduced by the Romanian authorities in Bessarabia. Staryi focused on Bessarabia, not on Romania.

The views on the nationality issues, outlined in the memorandum of the Romanian Communists intertwined with the proclaimed goals of the future republic. The document stated that the attempts of the Ukrainian Communists to create a barrier against the influence of the "Romanian bourgeoisie" via the creation of a new language were misdirected. "In our opinion, the struggle will be not between two languages, but between two political systems: Soviet and bourgeois-oligarchic. From the dialectic point of view, the best system will be victorious, that is the Soviet system."<sup>41</sup> The memorandum stated that there was no difference between the languages. According to the authors, the Romanian language was more developed. At the same time "the Russian autocracy strongly denationalized Moldovans from Ukraine, and now in the interests of the revolution, it is necessary to give the Romanian language the possibility to develop, that is to renationalize it."<sup>42</sup> Similar logic justified the introduction of the Latin script instead of the Cyrillic one. Basically, in this memorandum the Romanian Communist emigres advocated radical and total Romanianization and Latinization of the future republic in order to promote the Soviet system in the entire Romania.

The memorandum is of interest, since it demonstrated explicitly different understandings of the goals of Soviet borderland policies among the Soviet activists. Were the cross-border cultural ties for the Bolsheviks a tool to instigate the unification of the contested borderlands and their population in the neighboring states with their kin Soviet republics? Or was it a window to advance the socialist revolution countrywide? In theory, this did not necessarily and always contradict each other. Some Soviet leaders believed that the secession of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus would destabilize the Polish political regime and open the opportunity for the success of the revolutionary forces in Warsaw. In practice, though, this dilemma necessitated many tough choices. The slogan of the self-determination of national minorities was not popular in the neighboring states and, when proclaimed, undermined the support for the Communist parties in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania. In the Bessarabian-Moldovan-Romanian issue, where the borders between

nationalities were more vague and ambiguous than in the Ukrainian-Polish or Polish-Belarusian questions, different interpretations of Soviet borderland policies gave birth, among others, to the conflict between the Romanian Communists and Moldovan party activists, backed by the KP(b) U. Besides the conflicting understandings of the goals of the Moldovan republic and the struggle for key administrative positions, there was a divergence of opinions on the most suitable nationality policies.

Eventually the Ukrainian authorities made the choice in favor of the Moldovanizers' point of view. There were several considerations behind this. In the eyes of Kharkiv, Staryi's point of view was compromised by the position of the Romanian Communist emigres. The Ukrainian authorities were quite suspicious of the radical projects of the Romanian Communist emigres. In this case we can argue that the radical emigres' Romanianizing project created a negative attitude among Ukrainian authorities towards Staryi's more balanced and moderate views. It can also be argued that the radical and uncompromising stance of the Romanian "initiative group" had, in turn, radicalized the position of the Soviet Ukrainian authorities and local Moldovan party officials in favor of the comprehensive Moldovanizing project.

In addition, the choice in favor of Moldovanization can be explained in the all-Union context, specifically in the context of *korenizatsiia*. The project of Moldovanization fit the logic of *korenizatsiia* much better, while the Romanianizing arguments were mostly less convincing in the context of Soviet nationality policies. The orientation towards the needs and culture of local Transnistrian population was much more in line with the purposes of *korenizatsiia*. The arguments of the backwardness of the Moldovan culture and of the necessity to borrow the more advanced Romanian one was hardly convincing at the time when the Soviet authorities were creating and developing the languages and cultures of the peoples of the Russian Far North, who were even more backward by Soviet standards.<sup>43</sup> In the circumstances, when the identity of the Transnistrian and Bessarabian population was not clear and strong claims in favor of Moldovanization were voiced, the Soviet authorities preferred not to impose the Romanian culture. In this respect, it should be mentioned that Soviet authorities and the Comintern perceived Greater Romania as a "multinational imperialist state."<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the idea of the imposition of "imperial" and, moreover, "feudal-bourgeois" culture could have hardly been convincing for the Soviet, especially Ukrainian authorities. For the Bolshevik leaders, the discourse of the Romanian Communist emigres could be reminiscent of

the “Great-state chauvinist” rhetoric, which neglected the interests of small backward nationalities, up to denial of their existence.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, it looks that some of the Ukrainian leaders saw in the Moldovanizing project the possibility to realize their own geopolitical ambitions. Bessarabia was one of the regions, along with Western Ukraine, Transcarpathia, Bukovina and to some extent Ukrainian-inhabited regions of the Soviet Union, which Soviet Ukrainian leaders considered to be within the sphere of their interests. While the majority population in Bessarabia was not Ukrainian, there was a large Ukrainian minority. In the Moldovanizing project, targeted only on Bessarabia and closely controlled by Ukrainian activists, some of them saw the potential to claim additional influence in the territory between the Dniester and the Prut. All the above-mentioned considerations contributed to the eventual choice in favor of the Moldovanization project.

On 25 September 1924, the Moscow Politburo in the presence of Zatonsky, Staryi, Grinshtein, and Dik discussed the issue of the Moldovan Soviet republic. The Politburo endorsed Kharkiv’s decisions. Still, the opponents to the establishment of the republic in Moscow attempted to postpone the final decision till the next Plenum of TsK RKP(b).<sup>46</sup> There are no records on the outcome of this attempt. Apparently, it failed. As it became to a significant extent a Soviet Ukrainian issue, it was up to Kharkiv’s governing bodies to inaugurate the new administrative unit. On 12 October 1924, the Third Session of VUTsVK officially established the Moldovan ASSR, as an autonomy within the Ukrainian SSR. The leadership of the new republic consisted primarily of the Bessarabian and Transnistrian party activists.

Several days before the establishment of the Moldovan ASSR, on 27 September 1924, on the Fourth Session of the Odessan Gubkom, as the representative of TsK KP(b)U and the Ukrainian government, Zatonsky voiced Kharkiv’s official position in the debate on the nationality of the Moldovan population in Transnistria. In his speech, he named the process of the establishment of the republic as the “movement for the revival of the Moldovan nation,” which, among other nations, lived under the “oppression of Royal Romania.”<sup>47</sup> In this talk Zatonsky clearly sided with the Moldovanizers, rejecting almost any possible equation of “Moldovan” and “Romanian.” Staryi complied with the decision. Though, his disagreements with Badeev would resurface a number of times during the next several years.

More importantly, the opponents of the establishment of the Moldovan ASSR still attempted to reverse or to alter the decision. In Moscow, there were still internal discussions taking place.<sup>48</sup> At the same time, the letter of the head of the Odessan gubkom Korniushev from 21 October 1924, highlights the dissatisfaction with the Moldovan ASSR within the KP(b) U ranks. He advocated the subordination of the Moldovan ASSR to the Odessan Gubkom. Korniushev envisaged the Moldovan ASSR as an *okrug* with certain “external autonomy,” which would allow the “elder” (*starosta*) to travel around the republic and agitate among the Moldovan peasantry.<sup>49</sup> Korniushev was displeased with the “Republican scale (*razmah*)” of the leaders of the Moldovan ASSR and considered the administrative apparatus too cumbersome for such a small republic. Korniushev’s criticism, though, should be interpreted from the point of view of his administrative position. As the head of the Odessan gubkom, he was among those party activists, who had the most to lose with the establishment of the Moldovan ASSR. A significant part of the new republic was carved out of his Odessan gubernia. The organizational commission prepared the groundwork for the new autonomous republic under his supervision. Likely, Korniushev hoped that, despite the loss of the territory to the Moldovan ASSR, he would still preserve some influence on the Moldovan republican leaders. He was quick to notice that this was not the case, even though the Odessan gubkom maintained initially some involvement in the Moldovan ASSR.

The Romanian Communists refused to give up. On 28 October 1924, they sent to TsK RKP(b) and TsK KP(b)U a proposal on a new composition of the governing bodies of the Moldovan ASSR.<sup>50</sup> They even incorporated the current Soviet Moldovan leaders into the suggested list. Still, the attempt to overtake the leadership was evident. The list suggested Ion Dik, as the secretary of the Moldovan obkom. The list eventually reached the leadership of the Moldovan ASSR. Badeev replied to the list in a letter to TsK KP(b)U. He reiterated that Moldovans were a separate nationality, which developed in close contact with the Slavic culture, while the Romanian one evolved under the French influence. Badeev also added that the Bessarabian economy was linked with Ukraine. In contrast – Badeev claimed – the Romanian Communists considered that Moldovans were a part of the Romanian people and the Bessarabian economy was closely connected to Romania.<sup>51</sup> TsK KP(b)U recognized the existence of two groups and supported the current leadership of the republic.<sup>52</sup>

The Romanian Communists continued their offensive on other fronts. On 6 December 1924, the article of a student of the Romanian

section of KUNMZ G.Al. Florian, which was most likely written under Dik's supervision, who was a Professor at the University, appeared in the newspaper of the Romanian section of the KUNMZ. The article, developing on the September memorandum of the Romanian communists, claimed that with the establishment of the Moldovan ASSR "we must understand the organization of an outpost for the offensive against Romania. One should restore the more or less Romanian character of the Moldovan republic, so that we can this way juxtapose two regimes of the same people. The peasantry of Bessarabia and Romania will have the opportunity to judge, how their brothers on the other bank of the Dniester live."<sup>53</sup> Thus, in both documents the authors (possibly the same one) emphasized that the main purpose of the Moldovan ASSR should be the export of the revolution and from this point of view the orientation towards Romania, as a whole, was needed. Florian's article laid the blame on the Soviet Moldovan and Soviet Ukrainian leadership for the distortion of this intent and undermining the revolutionary potential of the Moldovan ASSR. At the same time, the local Moldovan and Ukrainian Communists led a quite different discourse. In the process of the creation of the Moldovan ASSR one of the founding myths and constant references was the subjugated position of Bessarabia within the Greater Romania. This was common discourse for various local demonstrations<sup>54</sup> and the Third session (October 8-12, 1924) of the VUTsVK, where the Moldovan ASSR was officially established.<sup>55</sup> The references to the revolutionary situation in the all-Romanian context were lacking and that represented striking contrast to the projects of the Romanian Communist emigres.

On January 8 1925 I. Dicescu-Dik launched his last attack, sending a memorandum (in 40 copies) to all major Soviet political figures entitled, "On Culture-Building in Soviet Moldova. Against Russifying Deviation under the Soviet Flag." This was also Dik's most comprehensive document in the "Moldovanization vs. Romanianization debate." It could hardly change the established balance. Its main argument centered on the foreign dimension of the Moldovan ASSR. He stated that the Moldovan ASSR had "huge international importance or, to be modest, more international than internal."<sup>56</sup> He proceeded to the argument that Moldovans and Romanians were the same people. Based on these two points Dik criticized the Moldovan authorities of the newly established Republic for focusing too much on the internal issues and limiting themselves only to Bessarabia on the international level, neglecting the considerations of worldwide revolutionary movement. Therefore, he proposed abandoning the

separation of Moldovans from Romanians and Bessarabia from the rest of Romania. Hence Dik's recipe for nationality policies in the Moldovan ASSR: "We have to take the Romanian culture and Sovietize it."<sup>57</sup> In many respects the new memorandum was the reiteration of the previous statements of the Romanian "initiative group" in a more detailed form. The innovation was the emphasis on the "Russifying" character of the chosen nationality policies. Thus, Dik evaluated the decision to refute the Romanian language and focus on the local dialects with Slavic influences as the "Russifying" strategy.<sup>58</sup> He summarized the main problem and dilemma:

Almost every Moldovan village has its own "language," that is their own slang. In fact, only several hundreds of pure Moldovan words remained in use, others are Russian, Ukrainian, or even Jewish.

It is evident, that such language is not appropriate for the development and dissemination of the Moldovan culture. In this situation, we have a single dilemma: further impoverishment of the language, that is its complete Russification or Romanianization of the Moldovan language; its further impoverishment with barbarisms or the elimination of these barbarisms.<sup>59</sup>

Dik likely attempted to make his arguments stronger, stigmatizing his opponents as "Russifiers." In the 1920s in the Soviet Union this was a powerful accusation. Nevertheless, Dik's opponents presented his views as the case of the "Romanian imperialism." The main representative of the "Russifying deviation," in Dik's view was Mykola Skrypnyk. The basis for this assessment was the discussion, which Dik and Skrypnyk had at one of the meetings of the Ukrainian Politburo. According to Dik, Skrypnyk claimed that those who advocate the identity of Romanians and Moldovans were "basically the agents of the Romanian bourgeois ideology... the Romanian Communists are specific imperialists, which aim to exploit the Moldovan people and even anticipate the possibility of the annexation of Soviet Moldova to future Soviet Romania."<sup>60</sup> Dik's presentation of Skrypnyk as the main "Russifier" is somewhat ironic. Skrypnyk was one of the leaders of Ukrainianization. It is possible that Skrypnyk found the parallels between Dik's pronouncements on Moldovans and "Great-Russian chauvinists" attitudes towards Ukrainians, which prompted the Soviet Ukrainian activist to adopt such a critical stance on the views of the Romanian Communist.

Moldovan Communists had to respond to Dik's accusations. In his response I. Badeev, then the secretary of the Moldovan obkom of the KP(b)U, reiterated his views on the distinctions between the Moldovans and Romanians. He argued:

Since a national movement among Bessarabian and Ukrainian Moldovans exists, then the discussion on whether Moldovans of Bessarabia and Ukraine are the same nation or tribe with the Romanian people is scholasticism, needed and appropriate only to a Romanian professor and not a revolutionary politician, who aspires to get control over the national movement of the nationalities for the organization of the struggle against imperialism.<sup>61</sup>

Badeev found in Dik's views the attitude, "impregnated by Great-Russian chauvinism and smacking of sick vestiges of the Romanian social-democracy."<sup>62</sup> Evidently, the attempt to find in each other the manifestation of the "Great-Russian chauvinism" demonstrated the power of this accusation in the mid-1920s. Badeev alluded several times during the letter to the similarities between Dik's views and the visions of Romanian "imperialism." At the end of the response Badeev asked TsK KP(b)U to pronounce decisively in favor of one of the points of view, in order to stop the constant debates that undermined the government of the Republic. KP(b)U reaffirmed its support for the ruling group and the policies of Moldovanization.<sup>63</sup> This decision was more important from another point of view: it clearly targeted the external dimension of the *korenizatsiia* in the Moldovan ASSR exclusively toward Bessarabia and not Romania.<sup>64</sup> TsK KP(b)U also asked Moscow to intervene and to put an end to the campaign against the leadership of the Moldovan ASSR, carried out in the Romanian section of the KUNMZ. Even after this decision I. Dicescu-Dik continued to press his views in the party circles, but officially the party orientation towards distinct Moldovan language and culture was not questioned until 1931-1932, when the Latinization campaign was launched. Still, even in the period of Latinization the idea of a separate Moldovan nationality persisted.

The vision of the Romanian Communists of the Moldovan Republic presupposed the explicit predominance of the external over the internal dimension in nationality policies. Claiming that the population of the republic was nationally the same as the majority population in the neighboring state Dik's group advocated the necessity of the primarily



political and ideological struggle but not the national one. At the same time within the Moldovanization project of Badeev and Grinstein Moldovans were a separate nationality, different from the Romanian one, and, thus, became a minority within Greater Romania. In certain respects, one may notice similarities with the Ukrainian question. It is possible that the Soviet Moldovan leaders modeled their borderland and nationality policies on the Soviet Ukrainian case. The Bolsheviks expected the Ukrainian SSR to be the point of attraction and reference for the Ukrainian minorities in the neighboring states, first of all in Poland. The Moldovan ASSR was also expected to play similar role for the Moldovan minority in Romania, though the distinction between Moldovans and Romanians was not so evident. Moreover, in the Moldovan case, unlike in the Ukrainian one, the majority of the nationality lived outside the territory of the republic in the neighboring state.

### **Concluding remarks**

Rather than presenting the establishment of the Moldovan ASSR and the choice of the direction of the nationality policies as a top-down, arbitrary process, this paper demonstrated a story of the competition and negotiation between different actors with their own agenda.<sup>65</sup> Due to the specificities of the Soviet administrative structure and the Moscow-Kharkiv relations at the moment of the establishment of the Moldovan republic, Soviet Ukrainian authorities in many respects acquired a decisive voice in the choice of the governing group of the new autonomy and the direction of nationality policies in the region. The choice of the Bessarabian-Transnistrian group was to mutual advantage of both Kharkiv and the group itself. The struggle for power in the region exposed different understandings of the international revolutionary potential of cross-border cultural ties and the role of the national factor in the revolutionary process in neighboring states. The choices made in the process had significant consequences, since they also favored Moldovanization policies<sup>66</sup> and more moderate international role of the Moldovan ASSR, than the Romanian emigres envisaged. No less importantly, as the outcome Kharkiv extended its influence in Moldovan and Bessarabian affairs, which would be at display in the following years and have long-lasting consequences.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 36.
- <sup>2</sup> This division was not strict and did not have an ethnic dimension. Rather it pointed to the geographical origin of the communist activists. It also followed their denomination and self-denomination in many documents which discussed the division between Romanians and Bessarabians and Transnistrian or Moldovans (presupposed the latter two).
- <sup>3</sup> RGASPI (Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History), f. 17, op. 60, d. 981, l. 7-11.
- <sup>4</sup> Oleg Galushchenko, *Bor'ba meĭdu Rumynizatorami i Samobytnikami v Moldavskoi ASSR (20-e gody)* // <http://archive.li/FLrmY> (accessed on July 6, 2017).
- <sup>5</sup> The text of the Memorandum can be found in Argentina Gribincea, Mihai Gribincea and Ion Șișcanu (ed), *Politica de Moldovenizare in R.A.S.S. Moldoveneasca: Culegere de Documente si Materiale* (Chișinău: Civitas, 2004), 28-32.
- <sup>6</sup> *Obrazovanie Moldavskoi SSR i Sozdanie Kommunisticheskoi Partii Moldavii: Sbornik Dokumentov i Materialov* (Chișinău: 1984), 44-45. This recollection is, though, questionable, since it conveniently was first published in 1964 on the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Moldovan ASSR.
- <sup>7</sup> Oleg Galușchenko, "Crearea Republicii Sovietice Socialiste Moldovenești (R.A.S.S.M.)" *Revista de Istorie a Moldovei*, no. 3-4 (1997); Gheorghe E. Cojocaru, "Studiul," in Gheorghe E. Cojocaru (ed), *Cominternul și Originele "Moldovenismului"* (Chișinău: Civitas, 2009).
- <sup>8</sup> For example, Anton Moraru, "Destinul unui Document," *Cugetul*, no 5-6 (1992): 53-54; Ioan Popa, Luiza Popa, *Românii, Basarabia și Transnistria* (București: Editura Fundația Europeană Titulescu, 2009), 53.
- <sup>9</sup> *Politica de Moldovenizare*, 30.
- <sup>10</sup> *Politica de Moldovenizare*, 30.
- <sup>11</sup> The situation was different a century before. On the evolution of the symbolic perception of Bessarabia in the Romanov Empire, see Andrei Cusco and Victor Taki (with the participation of Oleg Grom), *Bessarabia v Sostave Rossiiskoi Imperii (1812-1917)* (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2012).
- <sup>12</sup> Recently some scholars have pointed to the significant role of Kharkiv in the process of the establishment of the Moldovan ASSR, yet without giving any interpretation on the decisive role of the Ukrainian leaders, Oleg Galushchenko, "Obrazovanie Moldavskoi ASSR: Sovremennyyi Vzgliaĭd Istorika," *Problemy Natsional'noi Strategii*, no. 5 (2014); Cojocaru, *Studiul*.

- 13 lu. Galkin, *Sbornik Dokumentov o Pogranichnom Spore mezhdu Rossiei i Ukrainoi v 1920-1925 gg. za Taganrogsko-Shakhtinskuiu Territoriiu Donskoi Oblasti* (Moscow: Shcherbinskaia Tipografiia, 2007).
- 14 On the Ukrainian-RSFSR border disputes see Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*, 274-282; Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 155-160.
- 15 A.V. Surilov, ed., *Gosudarstvenno-Pravovye Akty Moldavskoi SSR (1924-1941 gg.)* (Kishinev: Cartea Moldovenească, 1963), 9.
- 16 Cited in Galuschenko, *Crearea Republicii Sovietice Socialiste Moldovenești*, 67.
- 17 On October 11, 1924, a day before the MASSR was officially established, the Chairman of the Ukrainian Sovnarkom V. Ya. Chubar' was giving the speech in which he was explaining the reasons for the establishment of the republic. In the speech, he clearly made a reference to the discontent on the issue among the Ukrainian authorities asserting that MASSR was not a secessionist project. Thus, he was trying to weaken the position of the anti-Moldovan groups, *Alcatuirea Republicii Autonome Sovietice Socialiste Moldovenești: Darea de Seama Stenografica a Sessiei a 3-a a VUTIK-ului, 8-12 Octombrie 1924* (Harkiv: 1924), 9-12.
- 18 For instance, Voroshilov had such concerns, Galushchenko, *Obrazovanie Moldavskoi ASSR*, 210.
- 19 A. Repida, *Obrazovanie Moldavskoi ASSR* (Chisinau: Stiinta, 1974), 91.
- 20 *Obrazovanie Moldavskoi SSR*, 45.
- 21 *Nachalo Bol'shogo Puti. Sbornik Dokumentov i Materialov k 40-letiiu Obrazovaniia Moldavskoi SSR i Sozdaniia Kompartii Moldavii* (Kishinev: 1964), 33.
- 22 TsDAGO (Central State Archive of Public Organisations of Ukraine), f. 1, op. 6, d. 50, l. 59.
- 23 Cited in Oleg Galushchenko, *Naselenie Moldavskoi ASSR (1924-1940 gg.)* (Kishinev: Tipografiia Akademii Nauk, 2001), 7-8.
- 24 *Kul'tura Moldavii za Gody Sovetskoi Vlasti. Sbornik Dokumentov v 4-h Tomah. Tom 2* (Chisinau: 1975-1976), 71-75.
- 25 Cited in *Istoria Partidului Comunist al Moldovei: Studii* (Chișinău: Cartea Moldovenească, 1982), 144-146.
- 26 *Nachalo Bol'shogo Puti*, 33.
- 27 In addition, it could have solved the constant interwar problem of the lack of Moldovan-speaking specialists, turning to a richer Romanian resource base.
- 28 TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, d. 2144, l. 128-137.
- 29 "Konstituciia AMSSR," in *Gosudarstvenno-pravovye Akty Moldavskoi SSR*, 38.

- 30 TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 16, d. 2, l. 75.
- 31 TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 16, d. 2, l. 77.
- 32 AOSPRM (Archive of Socio-Political Organization of the Republic of Moldova), f. 49, inv. 5, d. 5, f. 2.
- 33 AOSPRM, f. 49, inv. 5, d. 5, f. 6.
- 34 AOSPRM, f. 49, inv. 5, d. 5, f. 6-7.
- 35 AOSPRM, f. 49, inv. 5, d. 5, f. 5.
- 36 AOSPRM, f. 49, inv. 5, d. 5, f. 5.
- 37 AOSPRM, f. 49, inv. 5, d. 5, f. 5. On 27 August 1924, in an article in a local newspaper Grinshtein has also publicly stated that Moldovan and Romanian were separate languages, as were the two nationalities, Cojocaru, *Cominternul și Originele "Moldovenismului,"* 155.
- 38 TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 16, d. 2, l. 103-104.
- 39 TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, d. 1821, l. 7.
- 40 TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, d. 1821, l. 7.
- 41 TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, d. 1821, l. 8.
- 42 TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, d. 1821, l. 8.
- 43 Yuri Slezkine, *Arctic Mirror: Russian and the Small Peoples of the North* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 131-302.
- 44 Already in 1921 the Balkan Communist Conference defined Romania as a multinational, oppressive state, *Natsional'nyi Vopros na Balkanah cherez Prizmu Mirovoi Revoliucii, chast' 1* (Moscow: URSS, 2000), 15. In 1923 the Romanian Communists themselves accepted the Comintern's "multinational, imperialist" definition of the country. Nevertheless, this definition remained a recurring issue in the party debates. Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2003), 53.
- 45 For more on korenizatsiia and its logic, see Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, 1-27.
- 46 RGASPI, f. 17, op. 3, d. 465, l. 1.
- 47 *Nachalo Bol'shogo Puti*, 44-45.
- 48 TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, d. 1821, l. 15.
- 49 TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, d. 1821, l. 11-12.
- 50 TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, d. 1821, l. 17-19.
- 51 RGASPI, f. 495, op. 289, d. 1, l. 20-21.
- 52 TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, d. 2144, l. 2.
- 53 AOSPRM, f. 49, inv. 1, d. 177, f. 2.
- 54 *Obrazovanie Moldavskoi SSR*, 58-64.
- 55 *Alcătuirea Republicii Autonome Sovietice Socialiste Moldovenești*.
- 56 TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, d. 2144, l. 129.
- 57 TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, d. 2144, l. 137.

- 58 Dik's views in some respects have similarities with some of the existing  
interpretations in historiography, Cojocaru, *Studiul*; Elena Negru, *Politica*  
59 *Etnoculturala in R.A.S.S. Moldoveneasca* (Chisinau: Prut International, 2003).  
TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, d. 2144, l. 135-136.  
60 TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 20, d. 2144, l. 132.  
61 *TsK RKP(b)-VKP(b) i Natsional'nyi Vopros. Kniga 1. 1918-1933 gg* (Moscow:  
ROSSPEN, 2005), 264.  
62 Ibid, 262.  
63 TsDAGO, f. 1, op. 6, d. 58, l. 16-17.  
64 Roughly at the same time major figure in the Romanian and Ukrainian  
affairs Christian Rakovsky, at this moment the Deputy of the People's  
Commissar of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, reinforced this position: "The  
new Moldovan Republic should serve exclusively as the springboard for  
the work in Bessarabia." *TsK RKP(b)-VKP(b) i Natsional'nyi Vopros*, 267.  
65 For some similar motives of the interplay between groups with competing  
views in nationality policies, see Andreas Frings, "Playing Moscow off  
Against Kazan: Azerbaijan Maneuvering to Latinization in the Soviet Union,"  
*Ab Imperio*, no. 4 (2009): 249-266.  
66 For more on Moldovanization, see Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania,*  
*Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press,  
2000), 64-81; Charles King, "The Ambivalence of Authenticity, or How the  
Moldovan Language Was Made," *Slavic Review* 58, no. 1 (1999): 117-142.

## Bibliography

- Alcatuirea Republicii Autonome Sovietice Socialiste Moldovenesti: Darea de Seama Stenografica a Sessiei a 3-a a VUTIK-ului, 8-12 Octombrie 1924*, Kharkiv, 1924.
- Cojocaru G. E., "Studiul", in *Cominternul și Originele "Moldovenismului"*, Cojocaru G. E., ed., Civitas, Chișinău, 2009.
- Cusco A., Taki V., (with the participation of Oleg Grom), *Bessarabia v Sostave Rossijskoi Imperii (1812-1917)*, Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, Moscow, 2012.
- Frings A., "Playing Moscow off Against Kazan: Azerbaijan Maneuvering to Latinization in the Soviet Union," in *Ab Imperio*, 4, 2009.
- Galkin Iu., *Sbornik Dokumentov o Pogranichnom Spore mezhdu Rossiei i Ukrainoi v 1920-1925 gg. za Taganrogsko-Shakhtinskuiu Territoriiu Donskoi Oblasti*, Shcherbinskaia Tipografiia, Moscow, 2007.
- Galușcenko O., "Crearea Republicii Sovietice Socialiste Moldovenești (R.A.S.S.M.)", in *Revista de Istorie a Moldovei*, 3-4, 1997
- Galushchenko O., "Obrazovanie Moldavskoi ASSR: Sovremennyi Vzgliaid Istorika", in *Problemy Natsional'noi Strategii*, 5, 2014.
- Galushchenko O., *Bor'ba mezhdu Rumynizatorami i Samobytnikami v Moldavskoi ASSR (20-e gody)*, <http://archive.li/FLrmY> (accessed on July 6, 2017).
- Galushchenko O., *Naselenie Moldavskoi ASSR (1924-1940 gg.)*, Tipografiia Akademii Nauk, Chișinău, 2001.
- Gribincea A., Gribincea M., Șișcanu I., ed., *Politica de Moldovenizare in R.A.S.S. Moldoveneasca: Culegere de Documente si Materiale*, Civitas, Chișinău, 2004.
- Hirsch F., *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2005.
- Istoria Partidului Comunist al Moldovei: Studii*, Cartea Moldovenească, Chișinău, 1982.
- King C., "The Ambivalence of Authenticity, or How the Moldovan Language Was Made," in *Slavic Review*, 58, 1, 1999).
- King C., *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, CA, 2000.
- Kul'tura Moldavii za Gody Sovetskoi Vlasti. Sbornik Dokumentov v 4-h Tomah. Tom 2*, Chișinău, 1975-1976.
- Martin T., *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2001.
- Moraru A., "Destinul unui Document", in *Cugetul*, 5-6, 1992.
- Nachalo Bol'shogo Puti. Sbornik Dokumentov i Materialov k 40-letii Obrazovaniia Moldavskoi SSR i Sozdaniia Kompartii Moldavii*, Chișinău, 1964.
- Natsional'nyi Vopros na Balkanah cherez Prizmu Mirovoi Revoliucii, chast' 1*, URSS, Moscow, 2000.

- Negru E., *Politica Etnoculturală în R.A.S.S. Moldovenească*, Prut International, Chișinău, 2003.
- Obrazovanie Moldavskoi SSR i Sozdanie Kommunisticheskoi Partii Moldavii: Sbornik Dokumentov i Materialov*, Chișinău, 1984.
- Popa I., Popa L., *Românii, Basarabia și Transnistria*, Editura Fundația Europeană Titulescu, București, 2009.
- Repida A., *Obrazovanie Moldavskoi ASSR*, Știința, Chișinău, 1974.
- Slezkine Y., *Arctic Mirror: Russian and the Small Peoples of the North*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1994.
- Surilov A.V., ed., *Gosudarstvenno-Pravovye Akty Moldavskoi SSR (1924-1941 gg.)*, Cartea Moldovenească, Chisinau, 1963.
- Tismaneanu V., *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism*, University of California Press, Berkeley, Calif., 2003.
- TsK RKP(b)-VKP(b) i Natsional'nyi Vopros. Kniga 1. 1918-1933 gg.*, ROSSPEN, Moscow, 2005.