

POLITICAL AND CULTURAL EVOLUTION OF THE ROMANIANS IN THE ROMANIAN ANCESTRAL TERRITORIES OF BESSARABIA AND BUKOVINA OVER THE COURSE OF TIME

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This article deals mainly with the evolution of the consciousness of identity of the Romanians in Bessarabia during the long period of Tsarist domination, as well as the way this identity was perceived by several authors, Russians or of other origins. Moreover, it reviews the main methods and instruments of denationalisation, from the persecution against the Romanian language and its promoters to the colonisation of the territory between the Prut and the Dniester, especially of the towns and strategic areas in the south and north, with all sorts of foreign populations, attracted here with privileges at the expense of the natives. Basically, the Romanian character of the language spoken in Bessarabia in the 19th century is not questioned by the Tsarist officials themselves, but numerous prestigious writers explicitly recognised this situation which was obvious even to the common people.

Keywords: Moldavians; Romanian language; colonisation; Bessarabia; Bukovina; Tsarist administration.

MOTTO:

„Out of love for our Homeland and in memory of our ancestors, we'll always be prepared to sacrifice, anytime and anywhere, an arm that does not hesitate and a faithful heart”. (translator's note)

Simion Mehedinți

Several historical sources, which date back from the medieval times, prove, unquestionably, that the territories between the Prut and the Dniester rivers, southern Bessarabia (Bolgrad, Ismail, Cetatea Albă countries), and northern Bukovina, including Pokuttya, had belonged to the Moldavian state.

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In late 14th century, Prince Roman I was known as the prince "from the mountains to the sea"¹, the political status of north-eastern Moldavia remaining unchanged over the course of the Middle Ages, with the exception of the citadels that had been conquered by the Ottomans and then turned into vilayets.

In the 15th century, during the early reign of Stephen the Great, Bessarabia was under the authority of the prince from Suceava. As a proof of this, Mihai Eminescu, quoting from the work "Sbiór pisarzów polskich" that appeared in 1828, wrote that when the Sultan Mehmed II penetrated into Wallachia, against Vlad the Impaler, there was a Serb in the Ottoman army, namely Konstantin Mihailović of Ostrovica. It is from him that we know that the sultan may have said: "So long as the Romanians control Chilia and Cetatea Albă, and the Hungarians the Serbian Belgrade, we shall not be able to defeat the Christians!"²

By 1812, the history of Bessarabia was one with that of medieval Moldavia. The region between the Prut and the Dniester rivers was an organic part of the Moldavian state, occupying the eastern part. Moreover, the Prut unified; it did not create particularities. Archaeological excavations and ancient and medieval resources confirm that the territory bordered by the Prut, the Danube and the Dniester had been inhabited since very old times³.

The beginning of the 19th century was tragic for the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia. Hardly had the north part, Bukovina, been torn from Moldavia and annexed to the Habsburg Empire (1775) when a new invasion started.

The Habsburg territorial rape of Bukovina

Considered by an Austrian diplomat "the key of Moldavia"⁴, Bukovina, during the 144 years of being a part of the empire, went through the following stages:

1. the military administration period (1774-1786), when it was ruled by a military governor, having the rank of general and duties of imperial counsellor, assisted by a body of officers, with the residence at Chernivtsi;

2. the civil administration period (1786-1848 and 1850-1861), when Bukovina was included into the imperial province of Galicia, as the 19th administrative circle, ruled by a "district captain" as representative appointed by the Lemberg Gubernia;

¹ Nicolae Iorga, *Adevărul asupra trecutului și prezentului Basarabiei*, f.e., Bucharest, 1940, p. 9.

² Mihai Eminescu, *Basarabia – pământ românesc samavolnic răpit*, Saeculum I. O. Press, Bucharest, 1997, p. 23.

³ Nicolae Ciachir, *Basarabia sub stăpânire țaristă (1812-1917)*, Didactic and Pedagogical Press, Bucharest, 1992, p. 8.

⁴ M. Kogălniceanu, *Răpirea Bucovinei după documente austriece*, Domino Press, s.l., f.a., p. 5.

3. the 1862-1918 period, when Bukovina became autonomous and had its own Diet, blazonry and representatives elected in the Parliament of Vienna, the Austrian Delegation (of 1867) and the House of Magnates⁵.

During the Austrian rule, the Romanian population of Northern Bukovina underwent a process of Ruthenization. According to the historian I. Nistor, in 1861 there were 7,707 Romanians in the district Stăneștii, as compared to only 190 in 1910. 2,319 Romanian souls were still living, in 1861, in the district of Coțmani, by 1910 the number had decreased to 120. In the district of Zastavna, 1,917 Romanians were living in 1861, and in 1910 there were only 65. The assimilation of Romanians by Ruthenians can be observed, according to the same historian, "in each and every commune", to such extent that in some villages of northern Bukovina the Romanians had completely disappeared⁶.

In Bukovina, the National Romanian Party played an important role in defending the identity and promoting the national interests of the Romanian population. Founded on 7 March 1892, this political party from Bukovina was led, successively, by the following presidents: Iancu Zota (1893-1896), Varteres Pruncul (1896-1897), Iancu Lupul (1897-1899), George Popovici (1900), Iancu Flondor (1900-1902), Eudoxiu (Doxuță) Hurmuzachi (1902-1904), Iancu Flondor (1908-1910). Among the outstanding members, we should mention: Modest Grigorcea, Constantin Isopescu, Niculae Mustață, Victor Stârcea, Valeriu Braniște, Vasile Bodnărescu, George Tofan, Constantin Morariu⁷.

It should be noted that Bukovina, by 1775, as Bessarabia by 1812, had been part of Moldavia – as it had existed during Stephen the Great – and the population of these territories was mainly Romanian, speaking a common language, in terms of the primary word stock, with the Romanians of Transylvania, Bukovina or Wallachia. Furthermore, we should not overlook the areas inhabited by Romanians in the Subcarpathian Maramureș, Pokuttya, which today belong to Ukraine, as well as the former Romanian counties of Southern Bessarabia: Cahul, Bolgrad, Cetatea Albă. In addition, we can also mention the territory between the Dniester and the Bug rivers, which once belonged to Moldavia, where more than 280,000 Romanian-speaking Moldavians, as they call themselves, live today.

The 18th and 19th centuries were to find the Russian Empire in full territorial expansion, aiming to fulfil the testament of Peter the Great, who

⁵ *Istoria românilor*, Vol. VI, *România între Europa Clasică și Europa Luminilor (1711-1821)*, Enciclopedic Press, Bucharest, 2002, p. 685.

⁶ I. Nistor, *România și rutenii din Bucovina*, Do-MinoR Press, Iași, 2001, p. 159.

⁷ Ioan Scurtu, *Anul 1918 în istoria românilor*, in *Studii istorice*, Bucharest, 2002, p. 2,

wanted Russia to control, just like Byzantium, Constantinople, the straits of Bosphorus and Dardanelles, and, implicitly, the Balkan Peninsula, thus creating the dream of founding "the third Rome"⁸.

This was a stage which found the Ottoman Empire in full political, economic and military crisis, incapable of stopping the Tsarist expansion, trying to mobilize of internal forces in order to preserve the old conquests. To counter Russian influences in the Moldavian area, the sultan banished the prince of Moldavia, Alexandru Moruzi, in 1806. He was replaced by Scarlat Vodă Callimachi, a sympathizer of the interests of the Porte, and, later on, Turkey closed the straits of Bosphorus and Dardanelles to Russian military ships which were preparing for a new conflict with the Ottomans⁹.

Therefore, the Russo-Turkish war broke out, running during 1806-1812 and ending with the undeniable victory of Tsarist Russia¹⁰. The Peace of Bucharest of 1812¹¹ brought about the foul annexation of Bessarabia by Russia which took it from a Christian people not by sword or in chivalrous battle, but following the betrayal of D. Moruzi, a Russian spy in the official service of the Turks (who very soon cut his head off). The Russians had promised him the throne of one of the Romanian Principalities in exchange for facilitating the occupation of future Bessarabia or, if that had failed and he had been exposed, a pension for life in the Tsarist Empire. This aspect is described in detail by the British consul in the Principalities, W. Wilkinson, who was very-well informed¹², like any English diplomat¹³.

However, the Christians, whom some boyars had expected as Orthodox "liberators", turned out to be even worse than the pagans¹⁴.

A contemporary confessed: "One cannot express in words how the troops behave towards the inhabitants of the country, plundering so that no one feels sure of his property. The country is forced to give them the necessary supplies, but the commanders sell them and the inhabitants have to provide food or money in exchange". Whoever opposed was declared "a seller of the country" and was executed. Russian soldiers treated the peasants with cruelty as well, forcing them, instead of their horses, to draw the carts

⁸ Anton Moraru, *Istoria românilor. Basarabia și Transnistria 1812-1993*, f.e., Chișinău, 1995, p. 6.

⁹ *Ibidem*.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 7-8.

¹¹ *Istoria românilor*, Corint Press, Bucharest, 2003, p. 338.

¹² See the entire text of the consul in M. Eminescu's work *Basarabia*, Mileniul trei Press, s. 1., f.a., p. 42 and following. For English consular reports in the Danubian Principalities, see *Rapoartele consulare și diplomatice engleze privind Principatele Dunărene 1820-1812*, editor Paul Cernovodeanu, Istros Press, Brăila, 2007.

¹³ Iftene Pop, *Basarabia din nou la răscruce*, Demiurg Press, Cluj-Napoca, 1995, pp. 193-194.

¹⁴ V. Mischevca, D. Jarkuțchi, *Pacea de la București*, Chișinău, 1993.

with food supplies taken also from peasants and intended for the army. When Mikhail Kutuzov was warned that the peasants had been robbed of everything, being left with practically nothing of their own, the Russian general replied, cynically, that Russians had been indulgent towards Moldavians for they had left them their eyes "so they could cry"¹⁵.

A report from Count Pavel Dmitrievich Kiselyov, his envoy in the southern gubernias of the empire, read: "Governor Harting plunders the properties and sucks the blood of the miserable inhabitants of Bessarabia. Any rank is sold and bought, everything has a price and the prefects are compelled to be bigger thieves than others, for they pay, for their positions, between 20 and 20,000 roubles. To prove how harmful the administration of Bessarabia is, I should like, Your Majesty, that you command me to present a note on how many inhabitants were in Bessarabia in 1812, when peace was concluded, how many Bulgarian settlers came here and how many inhabitants have emigrated, preferring the Turkish yoke, so heavy on them, to our government"¹⁶.

A revolt of the people of Orhei against the "liberators" broke out during this time. A part of the Moldavian and Wallachian boyars sided with the Austrian or the Turks.

Imperial authorities started a savage process of Russification of the province, facing the fierce opposition of the Romanian population. It was the peasants not boyars that were fighting to preserve the rights of the Romanian people: "Ce de ar da Maica Precista năstav ,să ni rădăce greutățile aceste și să ni lase în obiceiurile noastre cele moldovenești, care am apucat de la bătrânii noștri și să venim în floare precum am fost... și să petrecem totdeauna supt dregătorii Moldovei, pământeni de-ai noștri precum suntem deprinși și ne înțelegem în vorbă (That Our Virgin Mother would lead us to get rid of these hardships and keep our Moldavian customs our forefathers have left us... and live the way we always have and get along with one another – translator's note)"¹⁷. This is what the peasants of Rachitna – the county of Khotyn asked, in 1816, from those sent to suppress their old ancestral language and rights.

The official language of institutions had been, until 1828, Romanian. Since that year, Bessarabia became a region controlled by the general government of Podolia, then of Novorossiia, and, in 1873, became a Russian gubernia.

Russian was introduced in the administration, governors, metropolitans, most of the officials being sent from Sankt-Petersburg. Pavel Kiselyov was to say that the Russian officials of Bessarabia were "the scum

¹⁵ Nicolae Dabija, *În căutarea identității*, Litera Press, Chișinău, 2002, p. 376.

¹⁶ *Istoria românilor*, vol. VI, *op. cit.*, p. 711.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 387-388.

of Russia”, while Pavel Svinin would call them “unwanted Russians, picked up with great haste according to the requirements of the times”¹⁸.

In 1875, the Russian inspector for Bessarabia wrote in a report: “... at Târnova school, Soroca county, although the teacher Dubina has been teaching for 5 years, children do not understand Russian. Thus, a pupil who has been regularly attending school for 5 years, does not understand the most simple words: horns, legs, etc., without a doubt teaching has been done in Moldavian”¹⁹.

A method that Tsarist authorities frequently used to change the ethnic composition of the province was its colonisation with foreign populations brought from all over the empire. Bessarabia’s colonisation was very fast because most of the land had been given to settlers of other nationalities. On 23 July 1812, tsarism adopted a special Status for the colonists arriving in Bessarabia. Bulgarians, Gagauz, Jews from various countries (Bulgaria, Poland, the Baltic Countries) would receive Russian citizenship and certain privileges as compared to the native population, being exempted from military service, personal and agricultural taxes etc.

Colonisation of Bessarabia relied on a policy, very well elaborated by the Tsar’s advisors. There was another reason for promoting this policy: the Tsar did not trust the Moldavians whom he despised. In 1813, cultural and economic relations with the Moldavia from across the Prut were forbidden. The inhabitants on the left bank of the Prut were forbidden to talk with their brothers on the right bank, that is, with those from the Country of Moldavia²⁰.

The policy of Russification conducted by Tsarist authorities on the Bessarabian population also aimed at the native nobility. Thus, dominated by the instinct of self-defence, the local noblemen made efforts to preserve their national character. This was done several ways. The historian L. Boga observed this phenomenon: “All these boyars of Bessarabia continue the tradition of life in the countryside; *spătar* V. Roset of Râmâncăuți, *sărdar* Iordache Milu of Păhărnicești, *spătar* Panaite Cazimir of Lohănești, *sluger* Irimia Ciugureanu of Cobășești, I. Balș of Dănuțeni, Ioan Cazimir of Văscăuți, *pitar* Sandu Feodosiu of Vadul Lecăi, Vasile Cristi of Teleșcu, Dinu Rusu of Țigănești, Iamandi of Mircești, Ioan Hașdeu of Vorniceni, A. Donici of Camenca, Iordache Ruso of Răduleni etc. Here, in this Romanian rural environment, the Bessarabian nobility found its spiritual support for the increasing pressure which was coming from the town and solace for the bitterness brought by the new foreign adverse rule”²¹.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ *The National Archives of the Republic of Moldavia* (hereinafter quoted N.A.R.M.), *Official Gazette of the Province of Bessarabia*, no. 10, part I of 1 October 1942, p. 81.

²⁰ Anton Moraru, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

²¹ Veronica Văcăraș, *Nobilimea Basarabiei în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea*, in “Destin românesc”, no. 4/2000, Year VIII, no. 29, pp. 3-4.

Further on, the same author says: "When the duties of their class or other needs forced them to spend part of the year in towns, the boyars continued there to live their lives isolated from the Russian aristocracy and thus to preserve their old Romanian customs: with gypsies and at the court, with luxurious coaches, wedding parties which lasted the entire week, oriental clothes, chibouks about four-palm long. Many of the boyars had connections with the civilised West where they purchased rich ornaments and where they found the calm needed for their health"²².

A form of protest was evident ever since 1812, when the migration of the Bessarabians to the Principality of Moldavia began. A Russian eyewitness, protopope KuniŃki, left a description of the elemental, uncontrollable movement of the peasants: "It was especially the peasants who left their sedentary lives: they would hastily load their possessions in carriages and headed for the Prut to cross over to the right bank which was still under the suzerainty of the Porte". In order to stop this phenomenon, Tsarist authorities claimed that Moldavia was contaminated by plague and crossing the Prut was forbidden under the threat of death²³.

Romanian historical rights over Bessarabia were supported by the records of several historians, literates and Russian statesmen who came into contact with the ethnic, social and economic realities of Bessarabia after 1812, during some journeys or as members of the Tsarist administrative body from the province.

P. P. Semenoff Tian Chansky, vice-president of the Russian Imperial Society of geography, wrote on page 148 of his voluminous and savant work on Russia, titled "Complete Geographical Description of our Homeland"; New, (southern) Russia and Crimea, Vol. XIV, Petersburg, 1910: "At the end of the 14th century, Wallachia became a vassal of Turkey and in 1511, after a long resistance, Moldavia also falls under the Turkish rule. But the two principalities managed to keep their political organisation, national voivodes and religion. Their dependence on Turkey was only in terms of paying a tribute"²⁴.

In his study on "The Romanian Provinces, Wallachia, Moldavia, Bukovina, Transylvania, Bessarabia", the great historian Ubcini wrote on page 4: "Russian Romania comprises the province of Bessarabia, which was also part of Moldavia and which was given to the Russians in 1812, following the betrayal of Dumitru Moruzii"²⁵.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 4.

²³ *Adevărul istoric în cheștiunea Basarabiei*, Evenimentul Press, Bucharest, 1998, p. 21.

²⁴ Cesar Stoika, Titus Stoika, *Basarabia, Pământ Românesc*, Collection of historical data and documents, (brochure issued on the 6th anniversary of Bessarabia's reunification with the Motherland 27 March 1918-27 March 1924), State Printing, Chișinău, 1924, pp. 13-14.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

Further evidence that Bessarabia was never a Russian province but, on the contrary, a clean Romanian region comes from the undeniable fact that the Russian government, by annexing this province, was forced to preserve the old Moldavian administrative and juridical organisation as well as the old Moldavian statutes: Donici, Armenopol and Alexandru Mavrocordat.

The imperial ukase of 23 July 1812 also refers to these statutes in chapter III, page 1, mentioned by L. A. Casso, A. N. Egunoff, O. I. Pergament and so on²⁶.

With regard to the *ethnic right*, nobody can deny that Bessarabia, at the moment of its annexation to Russia (1812), was almost entirely inhabited by Romanians. In order to let no shadow of a doubt lurk over the *clean* Romanian character of Bessarabia in early 19th century, we shall quote the following:

The Russian writer Pavel Svinin, in a study written four years after annexation, mentions that Bessarabia "was torn off from Moldavia", that "its history is closely connected with the latter", that "its population descends from Roman colonists" having "the same past as the entire Romanian people". "The native dwellers of the region", he continues, "are Moldavian or Romanian (Wallachian), who, as I have said, descend from the Roman colonists. They speak the Moldavian language which has Latin origins and, just like the Italian, it preserves numerous features of the Neo-Latin languages"²⁷.

Xavier Hommaire de Hell, a mining engineer, member of several cultural societies and Knight of the Order of St. Vladimir, wrote in his work "Les steppes de la mer Caspienne, le Caucase, la Crimée et la Russie méridionale" (Paris, 1845), awarded with the great prize of the Royal society of geography of France, in vol. II on page 588: "When Russia took possession of Bessarabia, the Nogais gave up completely on their old possessions, *and it was only the Christian Moldavian population of Eastern Greek religion that remained, in Bessarabia*".

The famous French historian Alfred Rambaud wrote on page 562 of his "History of Russia", 6th edition, Paris, 1914: "A congress reunited in Bucharest in 1812. Russia renounced *Moldavia* and *Wallachia*, but kept *Bessarabia; Romanian country*".

In 1827, in Bessarabia there were already a few foreign colonies and the instable character of these populations is clearly revealed by the official report of the Russian governor Timkovsky who wrote, in 1827, to his superior Count Pahlen – the general governor of Odessa, the following: "The province of Bessarabia comprises two categories of inhabitants: the native

²⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 14-15.

²⁷ Igor Şarov, Andrei Cuşco, *Identitatea naţională a basarabenilor în istoriografia rusă din secolul XIX, Basarabia: dilemele identităţii*, Iaşi, 2002, p. 22.

Moldavians and the vagrants who were introduced on several occasions by our (Russian) government and whose morality has not changed". This information is confirmed by the Russian historian A. Nacco in his study "Civil organisation of the province of Bessarabia" 1812-1928 published in Odessa in 1900²⁸.

In 1837, we find in "The journey of Marshal Duke of Ragusa in Southern Russia", vol. I, Paris, 1837, the following data: "Bessarabia, which neighbours Moldavia with only the Prut river separating them, is almost entirely inhabited by Wallachians of Romanian origin. It should be noted that Wallachia, Moldavia and Bessarabia have remained a Latin oasis in the middle of a number of Slavic peoples that, for centuries, have never ceased to invade Eastern Europe".

Russian writers: A. Zasciuk, P.P. Soroca, P. Cruşevan, P. Batuşcoff, N. Lascov, A. Afanasieff – Echiujbinsky, confirm, in their works, that "the Moldavians make up the main part of the people which accounts for more than three quarters of the population".

The great Russian publicist L. Tikhomiroff wrote, in his work "Political and social Russia", issued in Paris in 1886: "Going southward, we find a small territory which is bordered by Romania and which has nothing Russian in itself, for it *had been raped by the Tsar out of ambition*".

The Russian General and Minister of War Kuropatkin would mention, in his study "The Red Army Issues", published at Petersburg in 1910, the following: "The Romanian people of the annexed Bessarabia lives, even today (1910), a different life than the Russian population. Without a doubt, if the principalities (Moldavia and Wallachia) were annexed by Russia in early 19th century, their population has become not only foreign but also hostile to the Russian people, and then, instead of a single Poland, we shall have two Polands to weaken Russia. In future, either by peaceful agreements or as a consequence of a war, the unification of the Romanian people is unavoidable. In fact, they have their own rich literature in which they show this bitterness"²⁹.

Vice-governor of Bessarabia Filip Vighel did not write a special work on the history of the Pruto-Dniestrian space, but he notes in his "memoirs": "I have had the chance to study the Moldavian soul. These Wallachians or Romanians, as they call themselves, descend from the Roman colonists and the Slavo-Dacians beaten by Traian. The Latin element prevails in the language they speak"³⁰.

²⁸ Cesar Stoika, Titus Stoika, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 16-17.

³⁰ Igor Şarov, Andrei Cuşco, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

In the official Russian statistics, reproduced by A. ZASCIUK, in his work "Materials for the geography and statistics of Russia" (Petersburg, 1862), the Romanian element is considered to represent 75%. The same thing appears in the work of L.A. Casso, a minister of internal affairs, titled "Russia at the Danube" (Moscow, 1913), stating that: "It is surprising that the Yearbook of Russia of 1910 does not mention the Moldavian nationality, although it represents more than half of the total population of Bessarabia"³¹.

In 1868, the Russian jurisconsult A. N. Egunov said, in "Zapiski Bessarabskogo oblastnogo statisticescogo Komitéta", that "Until its annexation to Russia in 1812, Bessarabia was subject to the same governing regime as Moldavia of which it was an integrant part. Therefore, neither history nor the historical documents regarding Bessarabia can avoid speaking about the administration of Bessarabia up to annexation without speaking about the Divan of Moldavia to which Moldavia was subjected. There is no property in Bessarabia which does not have documents issued by the Divan of Moldavia. Up to these days (until 1868), during lawsuits, in Bessarabia numerous barristers invoke the decisions of the Divan which, having been confirmed by Moldavian princes as diplomas (chrysobulles), according to article 1606 of vol. X of Russian Civil Laws, cannot be annulled by our courts and thus preserve their entire value and power"³².

In 1862, a cultivated Russian traveller, Afanasiev-Ciujbinski, visited Bessarabia. He would mention that, except the district of Khotyn, Bessarabia was inhabited only by Moldavians, who completely ignored the Russian language. Their language was very close to Italian and was derived from Latin. The Moldavian had a typical beauty, broad mind and sensitive heart, but lived in difficult conditions because of the oppression he was subjected to. Afanasiev- Ciujbinski would therefore revolt against "the self-titled patriots of the police who, in the regions (of Russia) with minority populations, propagated Russian as a means of knout and fist"³³.

In 1918, in "Bessarabia", the Russian geographer professor L.S. Berg, later elected member of Russian Academy and president of the Russian Society of Geography, stated: "During the Russian occupation of 1806-1812, present-day Bessarabia was called Moldavia, lying on the left side of the Prut. But soon after annexation it was officially given the name Bessarabia, which designated only its southern part or Budjak"³⁴. What were the reasons for

³¹ Cesar Stoika, Titus Stoika, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

³² *Ibidem*, pp. 13-14.

³³ Mircea Muşat, Ion Ardeleanu, *De la statul geto-dac la statul român unitar*, Scientific and Enciclopedic Press, Bucharest, 1983, p. 405.

³⁴ Anton Crihan, *Drepturile românilor asupra Basarabiei după unele surse ruseşti*, Eminescu Press, Bucharest, 1995, pp. 9-10.

changing the name? Professor Berg explains further on: "The reason why the name of the southern part was extended to the entire province was diplomatic, for the Russian officials interpreted the notion of Bessarabia in a broader sense, i.e. with reference not only to Budjak but also to the entire region Between the Prut and the Dniester"³⁵.

Beside Russian and French considerations, there are also other scholars coming from the European space who confirmed the Romanian character of the territory between the Prut and the Dniester.

The German naturalist and ethnographer, Rudolf Kulemann, in an article published in 1867, in "Revue historique du Sud-Est européen", would make significant considerations on ethnic composition, language and history of Bessarabia: "In school, the priest is the teacher and the parish clerk assists him -, but very few children attend it. Teaching is done in Russian, although the population of Bessarabia speaks Romanian and only in the north, towards Podolia, do Russian and Ruthenian elements mix"³⁶. Moreover, the German traveller would observe the exodus of a part of the Bessarabian population to western Moldavia, following the annexation to the Russian Empire. Many of them went to Moldavia, to which they had once belonged and still did in terms of language, customs, land organisation. To fill the country, which was scarcely inhabited, Russia set up there a sort of colony as was once Romulus in Rome. It really took no notice of passports and other documents. Jewish merchants, retiring captains, colonels, post office clerks and God knows what other people ran there to become landlords without knowing or wanting to know anything about agriculture"³⁷.

Despite the opposition of the Romanian element, the Romanian nature of the province was constantly eroded. The population became more and more mixed, especially in towns, as immigration from the neighbouring provinces increased. While, in 1817, the Moldavian had represented 86% of the population, at the end of the century, according to the Russian census of 1897, they only accounted for 56%. Most of the boyars who could have led the Moldavian community were gradually assimilated by the Russian nobility. The Orthodox Church underwent an inexorable process of centralisation and Russification, starting with the moment when its activities and clergy passed under the control of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church of Sankt-Petersburg. The intellectual and cultural life stagnated as Russian became the official language of teaching in state schools and Romanian

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

³⁶ Nicolae Iorga, *Informațiuni germane despre România și Basarabia pe la 1860-1870*, National Culture Press, Bucharest, 1927, pp. 11-12.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 12.

stopped being an object of study, Romanian publications lessened to a great extent and literary creations practically ceased³⁸. However, maternal language and traditions survived in villages, where the Moldavian population was overwhelming, and in parishes where priests and believers resisted or simply ignored the instructions from Sankt-Petersburg.

As for the socio-economic situation of Bessarabia under the Tsarist domination, "Russian travellers, - says L. Casso – who had travelled through Bessarabia in late 19th century and known it before, found no changes for the better. They even confirmed that Bessarabia had been in a better situation under the reign of the Romanian princes than it was after 15 years spent under the Russian sceptre".

Thus, the Russian general and writer Mihailovschi-Danilevschi, who accompanied the Tsar in his voyage through southern Russia and Bessarabia, wrote in 1929: "11 years ago I came to Bessarabia and I have found no improvements since then".

The Russian writer Storojenco also wrote in 1829: "I cannot see the situation of the inhabitants has progressed, on the contrary, when our armies occupied Bessarabia in 1806, it was in a much more flourishing condition"³⁹.

Russo-Turkish wars led to profound economic and territorial changes. Therefore, in 1856, after a new Russo-Turkish war, the counties of Cahul, Ismail and Bolgrad (in southern Bessarabia) were given back to the Principality of Moldavia, but in 1878, following another Russo-Turkish war in which Romania was also involved, these territories were incorporated again in the Russian Empire⁴⁰.

Transnistria, an integral part of Moldavia and a territory inhabited mostly by Romanians, had the same sad destiny as Bessarabia, being subject to an intense process of denationalisation and Russification.

By virtue of the *principle of self-determination*, proclaimed by Lenin, by the great Russian revolution and by the American president Wilson, the Bessarabian population, expressed, through administrative, political, professional, etc. bodies, in several times, their unshaken desire to unite with the Motherland.

However, proclamation of Union with Romania could only happen by vote of the national assembly, which represented the entire Bessarabia, all social classes and all nationalities living here.

The "Council of the Country" – the supreme body in Bessarabia – did it. It proclaimed the union first under some conditions, then under none.

³⁸ *Istoria românilor*, Corint Press, Bucharest, 2003, p. 338.

³⁹ Pan Halippa, *Publicistică*, Museum Press and Romanian Cultural Foundation, Chişinău, 2001, p. 133.

⁴⁰ Nicolae Dabija, *op. cit.*, p. 388.

Here is the first decision of the *Council of the Country*, made on 27 March 1918: "In the name of the people of Bessarabia, the Council of the Country declares: that the Moldavian Democratic Republic (Bessarabia), bordered by the Prut, the Dniester, the Danube, the Black Sea and the old boundaries with Austria, torn off by Russia more than a hundred years ago from the body of the old Moldavia, by the power of the historical right and the right of kinship, based on the principle that peoples nowadays should decide their fate from now on and forever, unites with its Mother Romania".

After solving the agrarian issue, which was the main condition of the Union of 27 March 1918, the Council of the Country renounced all the conditions stipulated by the above-mentioned document.

Here is the motion adopted by the Council of the Country on 27 November (old style) 1918:

Following the reunification with the Motherland of Bukovina, Transylvania, Banat and the Hungarian counties, inhabited by Romanians, between the Danube and the Tisa – the *Council of the Country* declares: that Bessarabia renounces the conditions of union stipulated by the act of 27 March 1918, with the conviction that in the Romania of all Romanians – the purely democratic regime is ensured in the future.

The Council of the Country, in the eve of the formation of the Romanian Constituent, whose members have been elected by universal vote, having solved the agrarian issue, in order to meet the needs of the population, declares that it annuls all the conditions present in the act of Union of 27 March and accepts, without further conditions, the Union with Motherland: Romania".

Finally, the will of the people of Bessarabia, of reunification with Romania, was expressed for the last time during the elections of November 1919, within the Constituent Assembly of Great Romania. The elections were free, which was solemnly acknowledged by the representatives of the minorities in the Chamber and the Senate, based on the universal equal, direct and secret vote.

72, 8% of the total number of registered electors turned up at ballot boxes, which represented a crushing majority of the population of Bessarabia.

These elections represent more than the best plebiscite and proved that the annexation of the Bessarabian population to Romania was done out of their unshakable will. Of the 90 deputies elected in the Chamber, 78 were Romanians and 12 were representatives of the national minorities".

Most of the Soviet historiography labelled the union of Bessarabia with the Motherland, over the course of 1918, as a territorial rape committed by Romania, for Romanian troops led by General Ernest Broșteanu crossed into the territory of Bessarabia in January 1918. But what was the historical reality?

On 28 July 1917, the first delegation of the Moldavian central military committee of Kishinev arrived in Iași, demanding, in the name of the inhabitants of Bessarabia, that General Scherbachev should organise several Moldavian national units in the capital of Bessarabia. The Russian general agreed to it, but stated that he had no right to authorise the establishment of a unit, recommending the delegation to address the Ministry of War⁴¹. Against the confusing political and military background of the Tsarist Empire, the delegation of the Central committee could not get a meeting with Kerenski, instead it convoked in Kishinev on 20 October the Moldavian military congress that 600 Moldavian soldiers and 500 representatives of all professional categories attended⁴². Consequently, we may observe that this body had a representative character, for it represented the will of the Moldavian population.

The Congress ran during 20-22 October 1917 and it proclaimed the autonomy of Bessarabia, election of an office to organise the Parliament, called the Council of the Country, and of 44 soldiers of the Congress as deputies in the Council of the Country⁴³.

Under the conditions of Bolshevisation, the Tsarist army disintegrated towards the end of 1917 and some of the troops that had returned from the front set up between the Prut and the Dniester, causing a state of anarchy, characterised by plundering and killing of the population in the province. In such circumstances, the government of the Moldavian Republic, by the act of 22 December 1917 and following the efforts made by the delegation composed of Ioan Pelivan și Vladimir Cristi, demanded military support from the Kingdom of Romania in order to disarm the Bolshevik gangs that were threatening the stability of Bessarabia. Consequently, considering this request, the Great Romanian Headquarters sent Division XI under the command of General Ernest Broșteanu who, on 8 January 1918, crossed the Prut, followed, shortly after, by other Romanian troops⁴⁴.

On 27 March 1918, during the session of the Council of the Country, the representative body of Bessarabia, presided by Ion Inculeț, 86 deputies voted for the Union with Romania. Of all the deputies, only three were against, the remaining 36 abstained and 13 were absent⁴⁵. By the Declaration of Union of the Country Council decided: "In the name of the people of Bessarabia, the Council of the Country declares: <<The Moldavian Democratic Republic

⁴¹ *Albumul Basarabiei în jurul marelui eveniment al Unirii*, Official Gazette and the State Printery, Printery of Kishinev, 1933, material taken from N.A.R.M., fond 36 7704, file 36, f. 124-125.

⁴² *Ibidem*, f. 127-128.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, f. 129.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 192-193.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 221-222.

(Bessarabia), bordered by the Prut, the Dniester, the Danube, the Black Sea and the old boundaries with Austria, torn off by Russia more than a hundred years ago from the body of the old Moldavia, by the power of the historical right and the right of kinship, based on the principle that peoples nowadays should decide their fate from now on and forever, unites with its Mother Romania>>”⁴⁶.

By the very provisions of the document, the act of union had a profoundly democratic character, the new Romanian state guaranteed “the respect of all rights of the minorities in Bessarabia”, whereas “personal freedom, freedom of printing, speech, faith, assemblies and all public liberties” were to be guaranteed by Constitution (Appendix)⁴⁷.

Therefore, the union with the Kingdom of Romania was an act of mutual will of the Romanians living on both banks of the Prut and not an act of violence imposed by the Romanian troops present on the territory of the old region of historical Moldavia.

The incorporation of the province between the Prut and the Dniester with the Romanian historical space was furthermore recognised by the ideological parents of Communism, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. That is what the two state in certain manuscripts published in Moscow: “Never has Russia reached such a large border-territory. At the same time, it made a step forward beyond its natural borders. If Catherine’s occupation was excusable with the chauvinistic Russians, Alexander’s had no excuses. Finland – is the country of the Finns and Swedes, Bessarabia – of the Romanians, the congress of Poles – belonged to the Poles. There can be no question here of annexing scattered relatives and kinsfolk, bearing Russian names. Here we have an uncovered violation of other territories, occupied by mere (plain) theft”⁴⁸.

Out of a desire to criticise the “Tsarist imperialism”, the issue of Bessarabia was approached by Karl Marx in other manuscripts as well. Thus, speaking about the Erfurt Conference, stating that Napoleon gave his consent to Russia, in relation to the annexation of the two Romanian Principalities, Marx would say: “Soon after that, the war broke out between France and Russia. Alexander needed his troops stationed on the Danube. He proposes peace to the Turks who, having been expelled from the Principalities 10 years before, felt happy to regain the two provinces, even losing half of Moldavia. The treaty of 28 May 1812. The Porte renounces Bessarabia. Turkey could

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 220.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁸ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Manuscripts*, volume XVI, part II – Friedrich Engels, Publication and correspondence, Editorial Office of the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, editor V. Adorăţki, Printing House of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1936, p. 21.

not cede what did not belong to it because the Ottoman Porte had never been suzerain over the Romanian countries. The Porte itself had admitted that when, at Karlowitz, forced by the Poles to cede Moldo-Wallachia to them, it replied that it had no right to make any territorial cession for the capitulations gave it only a right of suzerainty”⁴⁹.

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, the founder of the Soviet state, launched the principle of self-determination of nations within the Tsarist Empire, recognising the right of the population of Bessarabia to decide their political destiny, namely to unite with the Kingdom of Romania. The Romania officer from Bessarabia Sachelarie Vladimir, speaking about this issue before the judicial authorities of investigation after he had been arrested by the communist regime established in Romania after 1945, stated: “The undersigned Sachelarie Vladimir, born on 26 May 1896 in Kishinev, the Soviet Moldavian Socialist Republic (the name given to this territory after the Soviet invasion of 1944 in World War II), the son of Neculae and Maria, having Romanian citizenship and nationality, divorced, formerly married to Valentina born Sumovscaia, studies: theoretical baccalaureate and Military School of Infantry of Gori-Caucasus-USSR, familiar with the Russian language, no properties, investigated by the People’s Court in 1945-1946 after having been suspected of crimes of war but the case was filed for I was found not guilty, former active colonel in command of the C.F.R. Gendarmerie Legion, last domicile in Bucharest, Șos. Olteniței, no. 68, presently held...”.

To the question “When were you employed in the army and what positions did you have?”, he answered: “After graduating from the military school in Caucasus, I was promoted sub-lieutenant in 1915 and assigned to Regiment 2 Vânători of Turkestan. In 1917, according to (Lenin’s) Slogan “Self-Determination of the Peoples of Former Russia”, I came to Kishinev as I had Moldavian descent. I was captain. In 1918, after the Union of Bessarabia with the Kingdom of Romania, being an active officer, I was transferred to the Romania army, being assigned with the rank of captain as a translator of Russian with the Ministry of Army”⁵⁰.

More than 200 years after the abusive annexation of Bessarabia to the empire of the Romanovs, the Russian writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, in his work “The Russian Question at the end of the 20th century”, condemned the policy of expansion carried out by the Tsarist Empire in Europe, stating indirectly the illegitimacy of the Russian authority in the territory inhabited by Romanians: “By renouncing these fevered seizures of territories wouldn’t it have been better to comply with the Peace of Tilsit, so favourable to Russia,

⁴⁹ K. Marx, *Însemnări despre români (manuscrite inedite)*, published by acad. A. Oțetea and S. Schwann, Romanian Academy Press, Bucharest, 1964, p. 106.

⁵⁰ *Archives of C.N.S.A.S.*, file P 013076, Vol. 1, f. 30.

and stay away from the European brawl, to consolidate ourselves and mend our country from the inside?"⁵¹.

Furthermore, in a more direct manner did the Russian author voice his opinions in an issue of of the "Literaturnaia Gazeta" magazine in 1990: "What is Russia: real Russia means Russia, Ukraine and Byelorussia and this should remain so at all costs [...] I see things this way: It should be stated loud, clearly and urgently: Three Transcaucasian Republics, four from Central Asia and also Moldavia, if it is so drawn towards Romania as a nation...

The 11 Republics shall separate and this is inevitable and irreversible". To these Solzhenitsyn adds Kazakhstan, which, he says, has superficial borders⁵².

"Having proved historically our rights over Bessarabia since very ancient times, having showed the opinions of the greatest Russian intellectuals regarding the ethnographic issue, having recalled the latest events still fresh in everybody's minds, how Bessarabia, being given over to the devastations of Tsarist-Bolshevik armies in disarray, chose to make his own destiny out of its own will, as have done other provinces, such as: Ukraine, Finland, Poland, etc., we still have to see what the love of the Bessarabian people for Russia could rest on, as the Pan-Russians of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina claim, that if, in an absurd way, a Romanian government should accept a plebiscite, they would prefer the latter."

But these Pan-Russian patriots forget to clarify one question: who would they unite with? The Tsarist or the Bolshevik Russia? Is the regime of the soviets the legal heir of Tsarism? Or is it some political adventurers, who usurped the throne of the Romanovs in order to introduce, instead of the old autocracy, supported by oligarchy, the tyranny of ignorance and in consequence.

Why would Bessarabia, which has groaned under the Tsarist knout for 106 years, yearn for Russia???

Is it because Russia has closed all Moldavian schools, making the cultural progress of the entire Bessarabian people virtually impossible?

⁵¹ Alexandr Soljenițin, *The Russian Question at the end of the 20th century*, Anastasia Press, s.l., 1995, p. 63; the Russian author condemned in his work Russia's military and political intervention in the Romanian space in other historical moments as well: for example, in relation to the 1848 Revolution, he said that "Nicolae sent troops in Moldo-Wallachia to repress the agitations there, doing that in collusion with Turkey and against a Christian people... So strange was or cause (*Ibidem*, p. 67); in the context of the fall of the Soviet Union (1991), Al. Solzhenitsyn recognised indirectly that the territory between the Prut and the Dniester belonged to the Romanian cultural and political space: "We finally must understand: Transcaucasia should pursue its own destiny. So should Moldavia, the Baltic Countries as well, Central Asia all the more." (*Ibidem*, p. 142).

⁵² Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *How should we rebuild Russia?*, in "Literaturnaia Gazeta", No. 38 (5312) of 1990, pp. 1-2.

Is it because it Russified its churches and thus prevented the Romania people from preying to God in their native language? (Archbishop Paul Lebedev, Serafim, Ciciogov etc.)

Is it because they removed the language of the natives from all positions in the Country (administration, justice etc.)?

Is it because they closed the Moldavian national printery, founded in 1813 by Metropolitan Gabriel Bănulescu, for the only reason that Romanian books were printed here?

Is it because the Moldavian intellectuals were forbidden to fill public positions in Bessarabia and were sent to Poland, Caucasus and other places?

Is it because they expatriated the Moldavian peasants to Manchuria and the Caucasus, deceived by the agents of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and prompted to leave Bessarabia, where they died because of poverty and climate, by order of the Tsar?

Is it because Russia brought to Bessarabia, amid wretched peasants, all kinds of nationalities, foreign scum for colonisation, granting them various privileges?

Is it because they exiled here, in Bessarabia, all the evil-doers of the old Russian empire and former Soviet Union?

As for Russia, what would be the reason for Bessarabia to need to be annexed by it or remain under its control or sphere of influence?

Who in Bessarabia would like a constitutional regime to be led by these people deprived of scruples and ideals, who mocked at religion, family and all the other social establishments which aim at attaining anarchy all over the world?

What honest hard-working affluent citizen of Bessarabia would want to give up the love of his family, human dignity, properties and praising his Country and to unite with Russia for the sake of these comrades that remind the people of Bessarabia of the Turks and the Tartars?

Who can stand against the return of Bessarabia under the wing of the Motherland Romania but a few boyars such as KRUPENSKY, PURIȘCHIEVICI, CRISTI, ȚIGANCO etc., so that later the Communist scum introduced in Bessarabia after 1990 and then given the Power, as the agents of Moscow VLADIMIR VORONIN, PETRU LUCINSKY, DEACOV, IURIE ROȘCA, ..., who, not knowing the language and losing their privileges, and others selling themselves for money and high positions, pursue only their personal interests???

⁵³ I. Pelivan, *Drepturile românilor asupra Basarabiei*, Paris, 1920.

In the 20th century, the writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a victim of the Soviet repressive system, condemned the Tsarist expansionist policy and categorically admitted that Bessarabia belonged to the Romanian space.

In conclusion, in light of all the testimonies given by several Russian and European scholars and statesmen, the historical and ethnic rights of Romanians (Romania) to Bessarabia are incontestable and entail the nullity of the theories which affirm the existence of a "Moldavian" language and history.

The return of Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia to the motherland

After World War I, given the dissolution of the Tsarist Empire and of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the two provinces, Bessarabia and Bukovina, returned to the motherland. The Union of Bessarabia and Bukovina with Romania in 1918 led to the consolidation of stability of the political life, democratisation of social relations, revival of the Romanian language in our territory, suppression of anarchy and plundering. After 1918 until 1940, Bessarabia witnessed the establishment of public order, end of social conflicts and of Russian occupation⁵⁴. Unfortunately, the rounded unified Romania, resulted from the centuries of aspirations and having the legal consent of the Romanians living in the ancestral territories, dismembered after 22 years of existence in the summer of 1940, because of the blows received from the revisionist states the USSR, Hungary and Bulgaria.

On 26 June 1940, after conducting special consultations with the Nazi Germany, the leadership from Kremlin handed in to the government of Romania an ultimatum full of fakes, cynicism, desire to humiliate a neighbouring people who were weaker militarily speaking. Moscow insisted on being given northern Bukovina as "...compensation of that great loss brought on the USSR and the population of Bessarabia (*sic!*) by the 22 years of Romania's domination in Bessarabia"⁵⁵.

What happened on 27-28 June 1940, the Soviet ultimatums, the invasion and tearing off territories from Romania after the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, was, in fact, an aggression against the Romanian State, an open declaration of war if Romania had made a different decision, other than that to evacuate the population, a part of which managed to withdraw.

As a result of this criminal act of aggression, Romania could not remain immune against the terror and seizure of Romanian territories by the Soviet Union. Thus, the act of 22 June 1941, by which Romania started the war of liberation of the Romanian ancestral territories taken abusively by the Soviet Union, was a legitimate act of initiating the liberation of its territories

⁵⁴ Anton Moraru, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

⁵⁵ *N.A.R.M.* Fond 691, file 39, tom 1.

from the Soviet assaulting state and a consequence of the latter's invasion in the Romanian territories of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina.

We must ask ourselves and the present-day Russians and Ukrainians should too, why on 27-28 June 1940 Russia invaded Romanian territories in order to attach them to it if those lands had never been lawfully theirs, which Stalin himself admitted and so did the Communist central institutions, which published in Russian, at Moscow in 1936 the volume of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels *Manuscripts, volume XVI, part II – Friedrich Engels, Publication and correspondence*, Editorial Office of the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, editor V. Adorațki, Printing House of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 1936, p. 21, in which they argued that Bessarabia belonged to the Romanians. So, by publishing this volume in 1936, Stalin, the Central Committee of the Soviet Union through their political propagandistic Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute of the Central Committee of the Communist Party admitted, in fact, that Bessarabia, which they would invade later on 27-28 June 1940, was Romanian. So, what are we talking about???, who are they, how would they be considered yesterday and today, except as invaders, imperialists who aggressively acted against Romania, tearing its territories over the course of the centuries.

In light of all those above mentioned historically, scientifically documented, we can argue that Romanians and Romania can never give or give up on their fellow countrymen and the territories they live in, territories which once belonged to them and are still lawfully theirs for centuries. Romania can wait for the proper moment but cannot renounce this national ideal.

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