

ROMANIA, "MOLDOVIAN STATEHOOD" AND TRANSNISTRIAN SEPARATISM

SUMMARY

The topic of the Romanian state's reporting to the question of the "Moldovian statehood" has been addressed mainly in historical studies related to the more complex issue of the *Basarabian question*. On the other hand, political studies were concerned with the relationship between the two countries, Romania and the Republic Moldova. The declassification of a significant material of Moscow, Bucharest and Chişinău archives enriched the historiography on the developments in the Romanian territories situated on the left bank of the river Prut. Press material from the period between 1989 and 1992, memories of political and military leaders in Bucharest, Moscow and Chişinău (especially those who have occupied leading positions between 1985 and 1992), publication of documents, both formal and of internal character, of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania contributed to the completion of the documentation. Recent published works in conjunction with dedicated volumes of the historians of the issue and political studies have allowed us to capture, within a unitary processing, the representative aspects of the Romanian state's reporting metamorphoses, regardless of the political regime (monarchical, communist, democratic), to the transformations in the Moldovian regions on the East of the Prut river and to the evolutions in the Transnistrian region (Moldavian A.S.S.R., the Transnistrian separatism and armed conflict).

The historical perspective of this study imposed a chronological but also thematical approach, depending on the political regime and the factors influencing the foreign policy decisions of the Romanian state's reporting to the „Moldovian statehood” (external entity) and Transnistrian conflict (external development). We paid close attention to the establishment in 1924, on the left bank of the Nistru river, of the Moldovian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, then of the soviet annexation of Romanian territories in 1940, and the reannexation in 1944 that brought to the creation of the Moldovian Soviet Socialist Republic as essential points of reference of the “Moldavian” soviet statehood. Closely related to this issue, the main forms and mechanisms for imposing soviet propaganda concepts of „moldovan” people and nation were presented. Thus, regarding the chronological segment, if the inferior marker is 1924 (the creation of the Moldovian A.S.S.R.), the superior chronological marker at which we stopped is represented by the period of the war in Transnistria (March 2nd – July 21st 1992), for which we

sought to know the positioning of the post communist Romanian state. For the purpose of a thorough understanding of both the given historical fact – the intrastate conflict in the Republic of Moldova-, and the Romanian state's leadership positioning, the research premise was that according to which such an analysis must be built primarily from a historical perspective, whilst using the conceptual patrimony of political sciences and that of international relations, as tools for the methodological construction and the fundamentation of the conclusions. Considering the traditions of a state's foreign policy as fundamental in the decisions and actions of that state's diplomacy, we also approached the essential marks of the P.R.R/R.S.R.'s reporting to the Soviet Union internal entity – the Moldovian S.S.R. From a methodological point of view, we therefore opted for the presentation in chronological sequence of the main Romanian state reporting changes related to the „Moldovian statehood” and Transnistrian separatism. The theory of ethno-political conflicts and foreign policy analysis provided this study with useful guidelines regarding the structure of the paper and the amount of information.

As regards the sources used, the fundamental works of Romanian historians Ion Agrigoroaiei, Ion Constantin, Ion Scurtu, Ion Șișcanu etc. on the developments in the Romanian territories on the left of the Prut river and Romanian state policy on the subject of Bessarabia, along with those of historians in the Republic of Moldova (Gheorghe E. Cojocaru, Igor Cașu, Elena Negru etc.) have enabled us to have a deeper knowledge of the transformations for the period between 1924 and 1956. For the next period, until 1989, some of the volumes which were published as a result of the declassification of archives in Romania, Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation were used, especially those which addressed the issue of the appearance of the *Bessarabian question* on the Romanian-Soviet agenda. If in terms of establishing the Romanian state's interest for the internal situation in the Moldovian S.S.R. during 1985-1989, access to unique sources of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archive has substantially contributed to this proves, for the post-communist Romanian policy towards the phenomenon of the Transnistrian separatism, the ten volumes edited by Adrian Năstase, along with published memoirs of leaders published by the press in those days, documents and materials published by Anatol Țăranu and Mihai Gribincea in the first volume of the collection of documents and materials, *The Transnistrian conflict*, were established as bibliographic sources which were less explored in Romanian historiography. For the presentation and analysis of the main stages of the

national movement in the Moldovian S.S.R. driven by *perestroika* and *glasnost* (1987-27 august 1991), but also of the separatist reactions on the left bank of the Nistru river, we exploited studies regarding the recent history of the Moldovian S.S.R./ Republic of Moldova, but also the press in Chişinău (*Moldova Suverană, Literatura și Arta, Sfatul Țării* etc.).

The methodological option and sourced we used allowed us in achieving our fundamental purpose, namely a deep knowledge of the subject of *Romania, „Moldovan statehood” and Transnistrian separatism*, with contributions especially in terms of the Romanian state’s policy towards the transformations in the Moldovian S.S.R./ Republic of Moldova (1985-1992), and towards the emergence and evolution of the Transnistrian separatism and the armed conflict from March to July 1992.

From 1940/1944 until today, developments in the Romanian territories left of the Prut river, organized by the Soviet power in the Moldovian S.S.R., were represented, depending on the regime, in a more visible or less official concern for foreign policy manifested by the leaders in Bucharest. If the *Bessarabian issue* is intrinsic to the concept of *romanian statehood*, the evolutions in the territories left of the Nistru river (Transnistria) proved to be during 1924-1940 a threath to the territorial integrity of Romania. Since 1989, the Transnistrian separatism has turned into one of the obstacles for reunification and a powerful force opposing the national movement, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova.

The national movement in 1987-1991 in the Moldovian S.S.R., boosted by Gorbachev’s policies which led to the disintegration of the U.S.S.R., may suggest a parallel with the developments in Bessarabia during 1917-1918, in the context of the weakening and replacement of the tsarist power, which led to the union with Romania. But unlike the result in 1918, the Republic of Moldova remained a state entity of its own. The complex causality of this reality is linked to the position of Western states, Moscow’s reactions, the position and policy of the Romanian state, to the decisional behaviour of the leadership from the left bank of the Prut river, the consequences of the soviet methods and policies of denationalization and those of territorial changes made to Bessarabia, and, last but not least, to the Transnistrian separatism manifestations which culminated with the conflict from March to July 1992.

The soviet state construction in 1924, the Moldovian A.S.S.R. under the Ukrainian S.S.R. proved to be the nucleus of an anti-Romanian phenomenon with profound implications

regarding Bessarabia, and then to the evolutions in Moldovian S.S.R./ Republic of Moldova. The Soviet experiment of creating a state of „Moldovans” will be expanded starting with 1940/1944, also on the right bank of the Nistru river. The same will happen with the imposing in the space between Nistru and Prut rivers of Soviet concepts of „Moldovian” nation and language. The annexation of what was left of the Romanian territories to the Moldovian A.S.S.R., after the occupation of Bessarabia and the disposal of a part to the Ukrainian S.S.R., essentially constituted the Soviet plan of ensuring domination in the newly created Moldovian union republic. Starting with 1940/1944 and until the death of Stalin in 1953, the population of the Moldovan S.S.R. (except for the period 1941-1944) will get to know the terror of mass deportations (1940-1941, 1949, 1951) and will be subject to a continuous process of Russification which involved removing the Romanian identity.

For the Romanian People’s Republic/ Socialist Republic of Romania, the *Bessarabian question* will become, beginning with 1959, a topic of dispute on the Romanian-Soviet agenda. Three decades later, Nicolae Ceaușescu will make the first public and official statement through which he directed Romania’s foreign policy towards the elimination of the consequences of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the secret protocol. The reasons for this surprising declaration in November 1989 are related to changes in the foreign policy of the Romanian state in relationship with the Soviet Union led by Mikhail Gorbachev and also to the course of events in the Moldovian S.S.R. since 1987. The relationship between the two communist parties and in particular that of the two General Secretaries in office, on the one hand Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej and Nicolae Ceaușescu, on the other hand, in chronological order Nikita Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev and Mikhail Gorbachev, outlined directions for the development of Romanian-Soviet relations. Communist Party in Moldova (P.C.M.) actions resulted in the complication of the relations on the Bucharest-Moscow axis. The information, initiatives and actions of the P.C.M. in addition to the ones of the P.C.U.S. concerning Romania indicate as clearly as possible the tensions in the Soviet-Romanian relations regarding the *Bessarabian* subject and the nervousness of the leadership of the C.C. of the P.C.M. concerned by the possibility of the spreading of the independent course promoted by Bucharest on the left bank of the Prut river. The archival record used by historians left of the Prut river outline the image of the “anti-Romanian propaganda war” of the P.C.M. coordinated by the P.C.U.S.

If in terms of the R.S.R. foreign policy in general there has never been a moment similar in tension in the Romanian-Soviet relations as the one in 1968 (the Czechoslovak crisis), for the period between 1971 and 1985 we need to stress out the fact that the « Bessarabian question» further constituted it's self in one of the main topics on the Romanian-Soviet disagreement agenda, but without an interruption of communication between Ceaușescu and Brezhnev.

The policies pomoted by the new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, since 1985 created dissatisfaction among the leaders in Bucharest, while on the left bank of the Prut river, in the territory of the Moldovian S.S.R., starting with 1987, *perestroika* and *glasnost* will create the necessary framework for the rebirth of the Romanian spirituality and will lead to a gradual intensification of the national movement promoted by the Moldovan Popular Front, by cultural figures in the country who fought for the Romanian cause, such as Mircea Druc, Ion Hadârcă, Grigore Vieru, Dumitru Matcovschi or Leonida Lari. Romania's M.F.A. archive documentation concerning the impressive materials on "Bessarabia", showed that these evolutions in the Moldovian S.S.R. (including those related to the appearance of the Transnistrian separatism through the creation of the *Edinstvo* Internationalist Front and of the O.S.T.K.s) in the period between 1985 and 1989 were monitored carefully and in detail at this ministry and were submitted to the governing body. The reviewed documents were an important source of information, a fundamental stage in the decision making process and decisions on "the problem of Bessarabia", whose climax for the period 1947-1989 is the surprising Nicolae Ceausescu's official statement of November 1989 on the cancellation of the consequences of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and the secret protocol. Therefore, the legacy of foreign policy in regard to the *Bessarabian* issue of the post-communist regime in Bucharest had taken a consistent, unequivocal size. Moreover, after the Romanian Revolution of December 1989, left of the Prut river, the national movement, which in the meantime had taken institutional framework, will lead to the declaration of sovereignty (22 July 1990) and to the promotion of a closeness policy towards Bucharest, which created the illusion of reunification on both sides of the Prut river. Since 1990, the Romanian state was not only facing a particularly difficult internal policy, economic and social conjuncture, but also the situation of isolation inherited from the Ceausescu regime and the uncertainty in what concerns the international developments, particularly in the geographical proximity (U.S.S.R.). Western powers have shown inflexibility regarding the

principle of inviolability of borders for the Moldovian S.S.R./ Republic of Moldova – Romania. These international environment circumstances, together with the national plan of identity, were the pillars of Romania's foreign policy in the evolutions towards independence left of the Prut river, but also to the Transnistrian separatism, which since 1990 has constituted the main threat to the integrity of sovereign and independent, since 1991, the Republic of Moldova.

Since 1990, developments on the left of the Prut river were the second major concern of foreign policy of the Romanian state, following that of the clear definition of the objectives for foreign policy. In this respect, the Romanian state was faced with the three key issues: the Romanian - Soviet Union / Russian Federation relationship, the center-periphery relationship (Soviet Union-Moldovan S.S.R.) and the identity issue (renification as a national goal). Based on these guidelines, using the basic concepts of the *analysis of foreign policy* (the sequence and actions of foreign policy), we managed to chronologically and thematically delimit the main sequences of foreign policy decision of the Romanian state on the internal developments left of the Prut river in general, and of the reporting to the developments of Transnistrian separatism up until the conflict in particular, as follows: 1. considering the evolutions in the Moldovian S.S.R. as an internal affair of the U.S.S.R. (1990-August 1991); 2. support for the independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova (August 27 1991- March 1992); 3. direct involvement in the Transnistrian peaceful conflict resolution (March 2nd to July 21st, 1992) and 4. *de facto* disengagement from the process of conflict resolution, after the Snegur-Yeltsin meeting on the 21st of July 1992.

The conflict in Transnistria (March-July) was the only one in the series of intrastate conflicts that erupted after the collapse of the U.S.S.R. towards which there was a deep interest and involvement from Romania in order to support the integrity and territorial sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova. Participation, along with the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation and Ukraine, to the quadripartite Commission for the peaceful settlement of the Transnistrian conflict constituted one of the most important foreign policy actions of the Romanian state concerning the territories left of the Prut river between 1990 and 1992. The Snegur-Yeltsin deal from July 21st 1992 demonstrated the limits of Romanian policy regarding the Republic of Moldova.