

ION G. PELIVAN

THE UNION OF BESSARABIA
WITH HER MOTHER-COUNTRY
ROUMANIA

THE RIGHT OF THE ROUMANIANS
TO BESSARABIA

IN THE LIGHT OF HISTORY AND
ETHNOGRAPHY AND ON THE BASIS OF
SELF-DETERMINATION

Le pourcentage de la population
de la Bessarabie en 1918

DÉPARTEMENT	ROUMAINE	UKRAÏENNE	JUIFS	AUTRES
Hotin	58,5	4,0	11	0,5
Braila	89	3	10	1
Isaccea	89	3	10	1
Chiriac	86	3	11	-
Orhei	70	9	16	2
Ungheni	68	7	7	10
Stiriac	47	12	4	37
Chisinau	66,5	19	5,5	10
Moyenne	70,25	10,75	8,30	9,70

Légende

- Frontière de district
- Voies ferrées
- o Residence de district
- o Bourgs

Surface de la Bessarabie
44.000 km²

Voies ferrées 875 km
Chaussées 163 km

Production de 1913 en

Blé 300.000 wagons
Vins 3.000.000 Hectolitres
Tabacs 3.500.000 Kgr.

Importation annuelle 128.000.000 lei
Exportation 250.000.000 lei

15,6% habitants sachant lire et
écrire



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BASIS OF SELF-DETERMINATION

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ION G. PELIVAN

Former Member of the *Sfatul Tsarei* (Council of Bessarabia)

THE UNION OF BESSARABIA
WITH HER
MOTHER - COUNTRY
ROUMANIA



P A R I S

—
IMPRIMERIE DES ARTS ET DES SPORTS
—

1920

PREFACE

Where the Russian Revolution had proclaimed the great principle that oppressed nationalities should decide their own fate, — a principle admitted also by allied powers, — Bessarabia, after more than a century's trial of the Russian form of Government, decided that the only natural way to follow was to unite with Roumania, the mother-country from which she was torn away 106 years ago.

The idea of union had never been given up during that long period of oppression. It had always guided the hope of the Moldavian patriots. In spite of the efforts of the Russian Government, the movement tending to a disjunction of Bessarabia could not be checked. It was especially after the Russian Revolution in 1905 that the separating current swelled and took large proportions. The union, or rather reunion of Bessarabia with her Mother-country, was the express wish of the great majority of the Bessarabian population. The evidence given in the present pamphlet shows abundantly that Moldavians compose the large majority of this population; we wish it to be noticed that the evidence mentioned is of purely Russian origin, and consequently cannot be accused of partiality.

THE AUTHOR

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROUMANIAN NATIONAL SENTIMENT IN BESSARABIA

The Part played by the Revolution in 1905

CHAPTER I

THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

The rôle of the Revolution in 1905. The Group of the Boyars. The Democratic Party. The persecution of Roumanian Publications and the Failure of Russian Publications. Prelate Sérafim and the Kroupenski Dynasty.

*

Until 1905, all manifestations of feelings, all expressions of the Moldavian (Roumanian) national thought were strictly forbidden in Bessarabia.

It was rather the Moldavian students of the Russian Universities who kept an interest in the national question and took up the study of the Roumanian language, history and literature. And, curiously enough, while no one could get in Bessarabia any book from Roumania, or any Roumanian newspaper, the Russian censure of Odessa let them, on the contrary, pass easily enough, if they were addressed to subscribers or booksellers in Russian centres. Thus, in the libraries of Moldavian students in Dorpat, Kieff, Odessa, etc., there was a large number of Roumanian books. And it was only in that way that the Roumanian Literature could penetrate into Bessarabia.

In 1905, after the disastrous war against Japan, when the Russian Army, as well as the bureaucracy of the State, were completely compromised, the Revolution broke out in Russia, Czar-

ism lost its grip over the nation and its power was threatened for some time. All the oppressed elements of the Empire revolted and asked for their national and political rights. The Czar, Nicholas II, "yielded" and accorded the Constitution nicknamed "without a tail", convoking at the same time the Douma of the Empire. On that occasion, the question was raised in Bessarabia, as to what were the Rights of the Moldavian Nation, various meetings were held, a large number of Moldavian Societies were organised, in the Churches divine service began to be performed in Moldavian, professorships of the Romance language were founded in the theological seminary and in the girls' parish school of Kichinev, the Moldavian parish printing-house was set working again, it had been closed by the Russianizer archpriest Pavel, etc. The national movement took two directions: one aristocratic, under the direction of the Marshal of the Nobility, Paul Dicescu; and the other, a democratic one, having at its head a barrister of Kichinev, Emmanuel Gavrilitz.

A. The Group of the Boyars

Dicescu, after having founded the Society of Moldavian culture (Societatea Moldoveneasca Culturala) sent to the Government of Petrograd a detailed report on the behind-hand state in which Bessarabia was from the intellectual and economical point of view, because of the politics of Russianism, that she had been obliged to submit to; it proved that the majority of the Bessarabian population is Roumanian and that it cannot receive the benefits of civilisation in any but its own language: Dicescu concluded in asking for the *creation of Roumanian Schools*.

But it was in vain.

The Russian Government remained faithful to its policy of Russianism until the last minute.

All the other nationalities had for a very long time already had primary schools in Bessarabia (Jewish, German, Polish and Armenian Schools), whilst the Roumanian Schools alone were strictly and mercilessly forbidden.

B. The Democratic Party

The attitude of the democratic party was more realistic and firm. Gavrilitz and his confidants did not give in, did not bend, did not solicit. They proceeded like revolutionists; by "order of declaration" they began to publish a Roumanian newspaper, entitled *Basarabia* (1905-1906).

Around this newspaper nearly all the intellectual, democratic Moldavians were grouped. In it they inaugurated an energetic propaganda in favour of the Roumanian language, school and church. A powerful current set in against Russianism, the Russianists and the Renegades. Roumanian pamphlets and books, for example: "Pilde si povete" (Examples and Advice), by P. Halippa; "Carte Moldoveneasca" (Moldavian Book) by C. Popesco, etc., all kinds of tracts and sheets treating historical, national and agrarian matters were printed, and distributed to the peasants, who hastened to read them by thousands. Moreover, from the other side of the Pruth, Roumanian books began to arrive, smuggled into the country by hundreds of bundles.

From the midst of an autochthonous people sprang up, as by enchantment, a pleiade of national poets, such as Julie Friptu, Tudos Roman, Mihai Minciuna, Iorgu Tudor, Alexei Matievici, Ion Buzdugan, and others.

The works of old Moldavian writers, as the Fables of Donici, the poems of C. Stamati: *la Cântarea Romaniei* of Alecu Russo, the short stories of V. Crassescu; the *Pribege in tara rapita* (Wanderings in Wrested Land) of Moruzi; the works of B. Hasdeu, etc., were pulled out from the thick dust under which they had been hidden by the old admirers of Moldavian books, who hid them with fear and great care.

The works were read with piety as a sort of Apocalypse. They were passed from hand to hand and thus disclosed to the following generation the thoughts, sufferings and ideals of their predecessors who had fought for the nation and the language of their ancestors.

Students, priests, tutors, notable peasants, all joined this powerful movement. In them all was burning a very fever of national activity. It seemed as though each one wanted to revenge himself for the past when their feelings and energy had been stifled. Even the Russianists had noticed that the Russian gloss in Bessarabia was but a thin layer of ashes which covered the flame of the national feeling and which, under the Revolution, were to be scattered to the winds to let the sparks shoot out into a powerful flame.

The Persecution of Roumanian Publications and the Failure of Russian Publications

But the Russianists had to do "their duty". For that reason, the newspaper *Basarabia* was suppressed and its collaborators dismissed. As a compensation, another Moldavian newspaper *Moldovanul* (the Moldavian) appeared, and after its suppression, others appeared successively: *Viata Basarabiei* and *Glasul Basarabiei*, the magazine *Luminatorul* and *Cuvant Moldovenesc*, which was both a newspaper and a magazine. At the same time, a few Russian newspapers like *Unirea Noastra* and *Besarabia* of Cekan [?] came out with corresponding text in Roumanian to fight against the increasing influence of Roumanian newspapers. *In 6 or 7 years (1906-1913) the Moldavian publications had more success in Bessarabia than the Russian newspapers had had a 106 years.*

The Russian scholar Zasciuc confessed that in 1858 the sole Russian newspaper of Kichinev, *the News of the province of Bessarabia*, had only 24 subscribers in Bessarabia¹.

Cultured Roumanians of that time only read foreign periodicals, which came by way of the Post Office of the Russian-Roumanian frontier of Sculeni².

The success and influence of Russian literature in Bessarabia during the first half of the XIX century, are very well shown by the fact that in 1838-1839, when the Home Secretary distribut-

¹ The province of Bessarabia. Vol. I, p: 431.

² Zasciuc, p. 432.

ed in the country, through the Governor of Bessarabia Feodorof, subscription lists for a set of the complete works of the greatest of Russian poets A. Puchkin, 18 Bessarabians only were found to subscribe, two of whom were Roumanians, Valeria Hasdeu and Gheorghe Rascan¹.

It must be said on this subject that the Roumanians of Bessarabia did not show more enthusiasm for the Russians in 1861-1862, when the monument of Puchkin was inaugurated at Tzarskoe-Selo. In spite of the insistence of the Russian Governor, Fonton de Verraion and his officials, the Bessarabians only sacrificed for these monuments the moderate sum of 34 roubles and 56 1/2 kopecks². This proves that everything Russian was considered foreign in Bessarabia.

The first serious Russian newspaper in Bessarabia "*Bessarabski Vestnik*" appeared on the 1st of October 1889. But, having begun under a management which could not appeal to the sympathies of the native population, that newspaper had not enough subscribers and soon came to an end.

Then a series of Russianised newspapers began to appear in Bessarabia, such as the *Bessarabetz* (1897) of Cruchevan, *Drug* in 1904 under the same editor, and after the death of Iacoubovitch, the *Besarabia* of Cekan and still others, all subsidized by the Russian Home Office out of its secret funds.

Prelate Serafim and the Kroupenski Dynasty

In 1908 a new prelate, Serafim, a worthy rival of the Russianized Bishop Pavel (1871-1882) appeared in Bessarabia.

A former Colonel, discharged from the army for dishonourable actions, desirous of occupying an important position, Serafim embraced the monastic career, pretended to take orders and managed to get into the famous "Cabinet of the Countess Ignatiewa", in Petrograd, through whose interest he was promoted to be a Bishop and was sent to the diocese of Bessarabia.

¹ Works of the Bessarabian archival Society. Vol. I, p. 168.

² Ibid., p. 170.

There he looked for an opportunity of making his way and attaining his own ends. From the beginning he discovered that the *Moldavian Spirit of Separatism* had penetrated also into the clergy. Revolted to the core of his ambitious and servile soul, he tried to set the educated classes against the Moldavian nationalist current and to win over to his views the autochthonous nobility. But he only brought over to his cause "the Kroupenski Dynasty", a large ultra-reactionary organisation composed solely of the members of a family which had property in nearly all the districts of Bessarabia as well as connections in Petrograd. These people took advantage of the *Moldavian Separatism of Bessarabia* to set up a monopoly of "Russian Patriotism" in Bessarabia and become the relentless defenders of Czarism; very soon they were the real masters of Bessarabia.

Lately Russian Publicists used to call the Province of Bessarabia: "Crupenskaia gubernia", that is to say, the Province of the Kroupenskis.

That family, moreover, was of Polish origin and had left its country in the Seventeenth Century to settle in Moldavia, and had become Moldavian.

When Bessarabia was annexed to Russia they at once betrayed the interests of the Moldavian nation¹; as they were bent on getting into power, they changed into fervent "Russian patriots". There was little to choose between the numerous members of that doubly apostate family, beginning with the vice-governor of Bessarabia, Mathieu G. Kroupenski, who in 1823 squandered four million lei², belonging to the State; then, Nicholas Kroupenski who accepted to be appointed by the central power marshal of the Polish nobility in Podolia³, in order to Russianize it, and ending with Paul Kroupenski, a member of the Imperial Douma, who, it appears, was appointed by the Russian Government to

¹ Nacco, Studies, p. 87-90; Zozulinof, A short historical Sketch of Bessarabia, p. 131.

² Nacco. A Study on the Civil organisation of the Province of Bessarabia, pp. 89-90.

³ "Roumania", a newspaper published in Paris, no 69 of May 8 1919.

be a kind of go-between amongst the different parties of the Imperial Douma during its stormy debates¹.

Prelate Serafim put himself into close contact with the leader of this family, Alexandre Nicolas Kroupenski, and began in every direction a desperate struggle against Moldavian Separatism.

He dismissed from the ministry several well-known priests (Baltean, Partenie and others); he expelled from Bessarabia several teachers connected with the spiritual school of Kichinev (Florof, Radulescu, Grossu, etc.); he did away with the professorships of the Roumanian language in the theological seminary and in the girls' parish school, where they had been founded in 1905-6; he closed the parish printing office where a series of Roumanian ecclesiastical books had begun to be published; he re-established the Slavic languages in the Moldavian Churches and convents; he exercised his control over all the churches and convents in Bessarabia, to ascertain by his own eyes if the measures taken to Russianize the country gave the desired results; he surrounded himself by a band of spies and blackmailers, etc., etc.

But the struggle carried on by Bishop Serafim became difficult, the circle of his collaborators being too limited. The Bessarabian priests complained to the Saint-Synod of Petersburg that owing to Prelate Serafim and to the prohibition of the Roumanian language, they were no longer listened to by their parishioners, and that the dangerous sect of the "Inockentianism" threatened to bring about a scission in the orthodox church.

But national sentiment, when it is once awakened, cannot be stifled easily.

In 1913, "the Colonel in ecclesiastical garb", Serafim Ciciagof, as a consequence of a false denunciation, addressed by him to the Synod and to the Home Secretary, found himself compromised and was sent away from Bessarabia.

In 1914 began the World War.

¹ Ibid; Charles Rivet. *The last of the Romanofs*, p. 181.

The Roumanian peasants of Bessarabia, mobilised and forced to shed their blood for a foreign cause, came in contact in Bukovina and Galicia with Roumanian, Bukovinian and Transylvanian prisoners.

Afterwards, from 1916 on, they met constantly on the Roumanian front with the Roumanians of the kingdom. They were in a position to notice that their brothers were better educated, all knowing how to read and write; that Roumania and Bukovina were more civilised than Bessarabia; that those countries had roadways, railroads, Roumanian schools, Roumanian Government and judges; that their lands were better tilled, etc.

These facts have deeply impressed the Roumanian peasant in Bessarabia.

No school, no propaganda could have prepared him more, nor better, for his union with Roumania, his Mother-country, than the war of 1914-1918.

CHAPTER II

BESSARABIA HAS REMAINED ROUMANIAN

The testimonies of high dignitaries and Russian scholars: (a) of Governor Timcovsky; (b) of the scholars Zasciuk, Afanasief-Ciujbinsky, P. P. Sorocca; (c) of the historian P. Batiuscoff; (d) of the publicist Cruchevan; (e) of the historian Lascof (f) of the professor and former Russian Minister, Casso. Russian political men ask the Russian Government to give Bessarabia back to Roumania.

*

In spite of all their efforts, followed up for more than a century, to denationalize the Roumanians of Bessarabia, the Russians have not succeeded, and Bessarabia has remained Roumanian all the same.

This results clearly from the following evidence recorded at different epochs of the Moscovian rule in Bessarabia.

It would be ignorance or dishonesty which could contest that Bessarabia was Moldavian at the time of its annexation in 1812. Thus, among Russian scholars, there is one who continues until the present day to call Bessarabia "Russian Moldavia". This proves that Bessarabia was Moldavian right up to the minute of its annexation, that is to say, that it formed a part of the principality of Moldavia.¹

¹ Miliacoff (and others).

The Ukrainian peasants beyond the Dniester, and especially those of Podolia, continue also to call Bessarabia, Moldavia.

For the first half of the Nineteenth Century, we do not think it is necessary to prove that a very large majority of the population in Bessarabia was Roumanian, for even Russian statistics do not contest it.

Nevertheless, to prove that, in the first quarter of the XIXth Century, the Moldavians alone were considered as the autochthonous and stable element, in spite of many attempts at colonizing with foreigners, we cannot forbear to quote two lines from the report of the Russian Governor of Bessarabia in 1827, Timcovsky, addressed to the Governor General of Odessa, Palen:

"The Province of Bessarabia", said Timcovsky, "consists of two categories of inhabitants; the native Moldavians and the vagabonds who have intruded there of different times, and whose morality has not changed."¹

This proves that the non-Roumanian elements were not stable.

It is known that after the "cession" of South Bessarabia (the Cahul, Bolgrad and Ismail districts) to the principality of Moldavia after the Treaty of Paris (1856), the Russian administration showed extraordinary energy for the denationalization of the Roumanian element of "old Bessarabia". But that had no effect, for the Roumanian population, in spite of all the methods used for Russianizing it remained Roumanian almost to a man. Staff Captain A. Zasciuk proves it in his book: *The province of Bessarabia* (1862), which remains until the present day, with regard to the geography and statistics of Bessarabia, one of the most reliable works of all those which have appeared in the Russian language.

In spite of his Russian sentiments, Zasciuk says that *the Moldavians are the autochthonous elements of Bessarabia and form three-quarters of the population*².

¹ Nacco, studies, p. 110.

² Nacco, Studies, pp. 151, 450.

In 1862, the Russian writer, A. Afanasieff-Ciujbinsky, after a journey to Bessarabia, noted in his book entitled *Sketches of the Dniester* (1863) the heartless exploitation of the Roumanian peasant by a motley band of foreigners¹, who *absorbed all the powerful vitality of the Province*²; he said further that: "the prosperity of Bessarabia is only found on paper, in the statements of the Administration³, and he asserted that the Moldavians cannot learn to read and write, *because the use of the Roumanian language is forbidden and there are very few among them who care for the Russian language*⁴, and that in Bessarabia, which is considered "a mine of gold"⁵, Russians find it very advantageous to have official positions⁶.

Afan. Ciujbinsky went on to say:

"I confess frankly that before having seen Bessarabia, I was not aware that the local population, outside of the little Northern angle *where the Ruthenians live...., outside of a few colonies and of 70.000 Russians, who are scattered about in the Province — was composed of Moldavians who do not know Russian at all, and on whom the Russian language is imposed by patriots who have turned policemen, by the nagaika (knout) and the breaking of their teeth.*"⁷

In 1871 began in Bessarabia the most terrible period of Russianism, known under the name of "*the epoch of Bishop Pavel*" (1871-1872). It is worth noting that at that time the Roumanian population still constituted 75 % of the total as in 1862⁸.

In that very year 1871, *the Geography of the Province of Bessarabia* by P. Soroca, appeared and it was approved by the Minister of Public Instruction for the use of Secondary and Elementary Schools in Russia.

¹ Afan. Ciujbinsky, p. 14.

² Afan. Ciujbinsky, p. 22.

³ Afan. Ciujbinsky, p. 20.

⁴ Afan. Ciujbinsky, p. 19.

⁵ Afan. Ciujbinsky, p. 35.

⁶ Afan. Ciujbinsky, p. 27.

⁷ Afan. Ciujbinsky, p. 266 and 283.

⁸ Zasciuk, op. cit., pp. 151, 450.

In the chapter on the population of Bessarabia, Soroca said: *the Moldavians form the principal mass, approximately 3/4, of the population*¹.

In 1892 came out, under the auspices of the Czar Alexander III, the well-known historical work, *Bessarabia*, written by one of the most fanatical panslavists, P. N. Batiuscoff.

Well, this Batiuscoff, who sacrificed fifty-five years of his life to the Russianizing of Poland, of Lithuania and of White Russia, destroying and confiscating all that which recalled Catholicism and the Kingdom of Poland, he who has so highly praised the most worthless Russianiser of Bessarabia, Bishop Pavel², was forced to admit:

That under the administration of this bishop (1871-1882), *"Bessarabia was far from being Russian, either in language or in its way of living"*, and that in Bessarabia there were "many men who looked towards the Pruth with sighs"³.

That in 1892, when he finished his work, *Bessarabia*, "the predominant element in Bessarabia was the Moldavian⁴, which formed more than half of the total of the Bessarabian population"⁵.

Thirteen years later, i. e. in 1905, the year of the Russian Revolution, the celebrated Russian scholar, P. A. Nestorovsky, in his historical and ethnographical work, *The Ruthenians of Bessarabia*, which received a prize from the Imperial Russian Society of Geography, complained that "the increase of the neighbouring Roumanian nationality at the expense of the Russian nationality, had not ceased up to the day of writing"⁶.

This scholar renewed his complaint in 1910 in another book: *In the North of Bessarabia*⁷.

¹ Soroca, op. cit., p. 50.

² Bessarabia IId part., p. 53.

³ ibid p. 55.

⁴ ibid p. XXXIV.

⁵ Bessarabia frst part., p. 171.

⁶ Nestorovsky, p. 35.

⁷ Nestorovsky, pp. 117-118.

Other Russian writers and scholars, like Grot, Vasilewsky, etc., notice also the same thing.

We might quote some other Russian writers, P. Cruchevan (*The Almanac of Bessarabia*) and N. Lascof (*The Centenary of Bessarabia*, 1912); the former vouches for 75 % Moldavians out of the whole population (page 175), and the latter for 70 % (page 53).

We prefer to stop a little longer on the scholarly work called *Russia on the Danube*, by the learned professor L. Casso, former minister of Public Instruction under the reign of Nicholas II, written in 1913 on the occasion of the centenary of the annexation of Bessarabia.

After having said how little the Russians knew Bessarabia, from a historical and geographical point of view, Casso added.

"Still to-day, the information received about this distant province by the central departments is not always exact:

For example, *the Russian Year-book*, which is edited by the central Committee on statistics of the Home Office for the year 1910; enumerating the nationalities which inhabit Bessarabia, does not mention the Moldavian nation, *although it forms more than half of the whole population of the province of Bessarabia*"¹.

Then Casso shows that the Roumanian peasant, in spite of hard times, has remained what he was before the annexation of Bessarabia. "However, says he, the rural population "of that neighbouring province has changed very little in the course of the last century (XIXth) and it has lived in Bessarabia under the same economical conditions as the Moldavians beyond the frontiers of our Empire.

"Still to-day one can find in Bessarabia the same traits of national character which have been noticed by the Russians and foreigners (Cunitzki, Zucher and others), who have known Bessarabia immediately after its annexation; they admired the agreeable simplicity of the Moldavians, their attachment to the

¹ Casso, p. 228.

traditions of their ancestors, their courage in the face of death, and their submission to their superiors.

Any manifestation of authority on the part of the State is received *by the Roumanian peasants* with suspicion. It is because, since the epoch when their ancestors, the Roumanian Dacians, occupied the territory between the Carpathians and the Dniester, which was called in olden times "*Solitudo Getarum*", they have seen and known many administrators. They have suffered very much quite lately from the incursions of the "*bachibousouks*", from the oppression of the *ispraynick* of the prince (prefect), of the Greek farmer, and the Jewish publican."¹

That tenacity of the Roumanian people has astonished all the scholars who have known them intimately and have remained convinced that "*the Roumanian cannot perish*".

If 1,000 years under the Hungarian yoke (Transylvania), 450 years of Turkish rule (Moldavia and Wallachia), and 144 years of Austrian domination (Boukovina) have not been able to force the Roumanian to change his national character, the Roumanian of Bessarabia had still less to fear from any influence of the Muscovite yoke, which lasted 106 years.

The Russians themselves had finally been obliged to admit this truth. And some among them, the most loyal and honest, were obliged to recognise that Bessarabia ought to be given back first to Moldavia and then to Roumania. As early as 1812, Admiral Paul Tchitchiagof held that opinion and he even expressed it to the Czar Alexander the First².

This same opinion was shared in the second half of the XIXth century by a few panslavists like Danilevsky, who, being convinced that the Roumanians were not of Slavonic origin, as believed other Slavophiles, such as Batiushkof and others, preferred to keep strictly to the principle of nationality, and "*advised the Russian Government to give Bessarabia to Roumania*"³.

¹ Casso, pp. 226-227.

² Casso, pp. 149-160.

³ Casso, p. 229. Danilevsky, *Russia and Europe* 1886, p. 442.

P. Durnovo, the well-known Russian writer and publicist, gave the same advice to the Russian Government in 1912¹.

The celebrated Russian military writer, A. P. Kuropatkin, was of the same opinion².

We hope that at present this opinion will be shared by the whole civilized world.

¹ The Necos of Petrograd (in Russian) 1912.

² The Problems of the Russian army I p. 492 and 494; II p. 502; Casso, p. 229.

CHAPTER III

THE IDEA OF UNITING BESSARABIA TO ROUMANIA

Meetings and congresses ask for the autonomy of Bessarabia. Protestations against the tendencies of Ukraine to annex Bessarabia. The Congress of the peasants of October 1-2nd 1917. The military Congress of October 20th 1917. The Parliament of Bessarabia. The "Sfatul Tzareî". Proclamation of the Moldavian Federative Republic, December 2nd 1917. Proclamation of the Independent Moldavian Republic, January 24th 1918. Proclamation of a qualified Union of Bessarabia with Roumania. Membership of the "Sfatul Tzareî". Proclamation of the unconditional Union and Vote of agrarian reform.

The Organisation of the Roumanian National Party

When the Czar Nicolas II was dethroned, a new era began for Bessarabia, as well as for the other oppressed provinces. All the conscious Roumanian elements which until then had worked secretly, showed themselves frankly in broad daylight.

From the beginning, one felt the need of displaying a more systematic, more disciplined and more productive activity to arrive at a firmer political organisation.

This problem was resolved very satisfactorily by the elements grouped round the editors of the Roumanian newspaper "Cuvant Moldovenesc" (The Moldavian Voice).

Thus in March 1917, a Moldavian democratic national party was formed at Kichinev, whose watchword was *autonomy for Bessarabia*, and it has become afterwards the most powerful and largest political organisation of the country.

Directly after the formation of the Central Committee of this party in Kichinev, the foundation of branches was begun in the country towns; in their turn they continued the organisation of the party in the "volostes" (districts) and in the villages.

The most Roumanian, most intelligent and most honest element of the country joined this party: teachers, priests, co-operators, proprietors, professors, wholesale merchants, officials, students, older schoolboys, peasants, etc.

There was no village, no hut, where the gazette "Cuvânt Moldovenesc", which had become the organ of the party, had not penetrated, as well as various pamphlets and proclamations about Moldavian autonomy, the school, the church, justice and the administration, the land question, etc.

Along with the formation of this party began the organisation of different social and professional classes: the peasants, teachers, great landholders, priests, co-operators, officials, etc.

There were several preparatory meetings and then various congresses were held to which came representatives of the different social and professional classes.

At all these meetings and congresses social and professional reforms were spoken of as being as necessary as those of a political order.

No "resolutions" were passed by either meetings or congresses, in which, among other *desiderata*, there was not also a mention of the *autonomy of Bessarabia*.

It is not possible for us to speak here of each congress separately, we shall limit ourselves to recalling only the most important.

The first great congress was held by the Bessarabian cooperators at Kichinev, on the 6th and 7th of April, 1917.

In the resolution sent by this Congress to the provisional Government of Petrograd, besides asking for different liberties and reforms, the following requests were made:

"Continuation of the war against the Central Empires until the final victory".

"*Autonomy of Bessarabia* from an administrative, ecclesiastical, intellectual and economical point of view, and use of the Roumanian language in all the institutions of the country."

"Creation in Bessarabia "of a legislative organ, Council or Duma, for the voting of laws regarding the home life of the country"¹.

The second congress of the Bessarabian cooperators of the 27th of September 1917 asked for the same thing.

The second important congress, in chronological order, was the *Meeting of the Priests and Parishioners* of the whole diocese of Bessarabia (April 19-25, 1917), 250 priests and laymen, representing the 34 ecclesiastical districts into which the diocese of Bessarabia is divided, took part in this Congress.

The object of this Congress was the proclamation of the autonomy of the Bessarabian Church. But as the ecclesiastical autonomy is closely linked to the political autonomy, the congress could not help but voting also for the political autonomy.

For this reason, the congress, specifying the necessary reforms in Bessarabia, asked among other things for:

The autonomy of Bessarabia "according to the principle of self-determination", proclaimed by the Russian provisional Government.

The Formation of a Supreme Council (Divan), which would be the head of the Bessarabian Administration as an administrative and executive organ.

The Election of this Council by the Assembly of the Representatives of the People ("Sfatul Tzareî"), the legislative organ on which H will depend².

¹ Minutes of the Congress of the 6th and 7th of April 1917.

² Minutes of the 19-25th of April 1917.

The same principles were upheld by the second Congress of the clergy and parishioners which took place from the 3rd to the 26th of August, 1917¹.

On the day before the first meeting of the Congress which sat from the 19th to the 25th of April 1917 at Kichinev, a large gathering of Bessarabians met at Odessa, on the 18th of April, 1917. More than ten thousand Bessarabians, who were in Odessa, participated in this meeting; army men, students, doctors, professors, proprietors, priests, etc., perhaps it was the most imposing and grandest manifestation that had ever taken place in Odessa.

Among the other important points which this great meeting asked for, were:

The organisation of Bessarabia on the broadest basis of *political autonomy*.

The concentration of Moldavian military units in Bessarabia, in order, on the one hand, to protect the Roumanian front better with disciplined forces, and on the other hand to prevent the "Marcheviea roti" (Russian military units), which crossed Bessarabia, to indulge in plunder and theft².

Then a series of less important congresses and meetings began in the towns, districts and "volostes" (districts) of Bessarabia. Thus, in April, May and June, 1917, meetings were held at Kichinev, Baltzi, Soroca, Bolgrad, Orhei, Bender, etc.

In the month of May the conditions in the towns and villages of Bessarabia became very alarming. The Russian military units who, even under the control of a severe discipline, gave themselves up to plundering, became at that time insupportable. Bessarabia, because of its geographical situation, formed the back of the Roumanian Front. All the Russian armies had to cross it to go or return to the front to rest or to regroup.

Military discipline had weakened, *bands of deserters and robbers began to plunder the villages of Bessarabia and to violate the women who were defenceless.*

¹ Minutes of the 3-26th of August 1917.

² Minutes of the 18th of April 1917.

These atrocities have had a very great influence on the state of mind of the Bessarabian soldiers who were at the front.

Things came to such a pass that in May 1917, General Tscherbacief in order to stop these atrocities, had to authorise, by the "prikase" N° 156370, the formation in Bessarabia of 16 detachments (troops), each composed of a hundred native soldiers, which were assigned by groups of two detachments to each district. These detachments were intrusted with the care of maintaining order in the country and of struggling against anarchy. A very important event happened afterwards which hastened still more the separation of Bessarabia.

The autonomy of Ukraine With its Parliament, "Ukrainian Rada", and its government "the general secretary's office" was an accomplished fact in June 1917. Now this office showed a tendency to include Bessarabia also in the circle of its activity.

This fact gave rise in Bessarabia, as everywhere along the Russian fronts, to the most energetic protestations on the part of all Bessarabians.

On that occasion, a series of meetings took place at Kichinev, in which took part representatives of national, political and social organisations; the most important were those held on the 20th, 24th, and 28th of July, and on the 7th of August, 1917.

The first meeting was organised and presided over by the provincial executive agent of the provisional government.

At these meetings were represented, with the exception of smaller groups, the municipal council of the town of Kichenev, the provincial Zemstva (or general council of the province), the Zemstva of the region of Kichenev, the national Jewish, Roumanian, Polish, Ukrainian and German associations, the military organisations and finally the following parties: Socialists of different shades, Sionites, Cadets, Peasants, etc.

At the first meeting, the following resolutions, among others, were passed:

"The annexation of Bessarabia to Ukraine against Bessarabia's wish cannot be allowed."

"The provincial executive agent shall make it known to the Ukrainian Rada that the numerous meetings which have taken place in Bessarabia either of peasants, teachers, cooperators or priests, have unanimously expressed the wish of the people that *Bessarabia should be a self-governing land.*"

"If Ukraine took such an attitude on the initiative of the provisional Government, *then the provincial executive agent must protest to that government.*"

"Creation of a Commission of the representatives of all the national, political and social groups "to devise the means of organising the *sovereign Council of the Province* on the basis of a just and equitable representation of nationalities."

The Commission was formed and started work.

Similar protests came also from military Bessarabian groups on the front and in the rear.

The Military Moldavian Committee of Odessa, which already represented 190.000 organised Bessarabian soldiers, sent, on the 20th of July 1917, by the "Rumcerod", a protestation to the provisional Russian Government by which: *it rejected in the most categorical manner all and any claims of Ukrania to Bessarabia*, pointing out that the raising of such claims showed imperialist and anti-democratic tendencies. They also asked that the provisional Government, by a separate official act, *should recognize the right of autonomy of the Roumanian nationality within its historical and ethnographical frontiers.*

A few days before, on the 16th of July, the Council of the Bessarabian Military men of the Roumanian front (Jassy), appealing by a declaration to all the political, national and social groups of Bessarabia, asked for *the organisation at Kichenev of a provincial Council*, which must attend, among other things, to the elaboration of a project of *national territorial autonomy*, and assure completely the rights of the minorities.

*

During that time the bands of Russian deserters and robbers became larger and larger and more and more dangerous. Plun-

dering, rapes and murders were committed in broad daylight. The local foot detachments were inadequate in number and strength to fight against these bands.

Such a point of anarchy was reached that in the month of August there were assassinated several proprietors, priests, and two chiefs of the national Roumanian movement: the barrister Mourafa, and the engineer Hodorogea. It was certainly the beginning of the most terrible bolschevist anarchy.

Bessarabia, which had been scoured over by the armies in 1914, 1915, 1916, 1917, was threatened with utter ruin. For this reason, the Military Bessarabian Committee, which was on the Roumanian front, asked, on the 28th of August 1917, General Tserbacief, the Supreme Chief of the Armies on the Roumanian Front, to order out of Bessarabia the military units of the reserve which had come from Bukovine and Galicia; and to increase the number of the infantry detachments up to 50, as well as to form 20 cavalry detachments. For this same reason the Peasant Congress of October 1-2 1917, noticing the disorganisation and terrible anarchy which was reigning in the country, as well as the incapacity of the central government to guarantee the life and property of the population, decided among other things, with a view to improve the conditions, to form at once a Provincial Council composed of 100 members of which 70 % should be Moldavians and 30 % representatives of other nationalities. A special Commission was appointed to take the matter in hand. But owing to the anarchy which was spreading more and more, the Commissions entrusted with the organization of the Supreme Council of the Province met with many difficulties.

On the other hand, a few Russian Political parties, such as the centralist party of the "Cadets" and even certain fractions of the Russian Socialists opposed the National Moldavian movement.

These Russian and Russianized opponents, seeing very well that autonomy of Bessarabia would, in a very logical way, lead this country to unite itself to Roumania, began at every oppor-

tunity to put obstacles in the way of the Roumanian Nationalist Movement. For instance, when the nationalisation of the Schools began in Bessarabia (in the Summer of 1917), they made a great stir *against the Latin alphabet* and the Roumanian pedagogical books, endeavouring to show that by these books, "the wild culture of Roumania" could penetrate into Bessarabia.

As regards the autonomy and the Supreme Council of the Province, the members of the Russian Opposition objected that the Supreme council could not be organised on a democratic basis until the complete demobilisation and the return of the peasants to their homes, and that the autonomy and Supreme Council would be useless, for, in the Autumn of 1917 would be convoked the Constituent of all Russia, which would take in hand the organization of Bessarabia. But, in reality, part of the opposition was composed of incorrigible centralists and imperialists, and others joined the opposition because they had been sent to Bessarabia by the former Imperial Government to russianize the province¹, and being ignorant of the Roumanian language, they would have been dismissed from their offices in a Bessarabia autonomous or united to Roumania.

In this state of things the Moldavian organizations of Bessarabia found themselves obliged to fall back upon the help of mobilised brethren, who were on the different fronts and in various garrisons in the interior of the Empire.

The Military Moldavian Committee of Kichinev took the initiative of convoking a military Congress of the representatives of all the military unities *which mustered altogether more than 300.000 mobilized Bessarabians*, i. e. nearly all the valid men between 19 and 48.

This Congress assembled at Kichenev, on the 20th of October 1917, its sittings lasted until the 27th of October, and 989 delegates attended them. At the first meeting they were greeted by the representative of the provisional Government — the Provincial execu-

¹ Different officials, judges professors, agents, etc.

tive agent — as well as by the representatives of different social, political and national parties and groups. All pointed out the state of things in the country "wishing that the Congress should set to work in a manner profitable to the organization and welfare of the country".

The Congress began its work and chose among its members *the different sections and commissions*.

The programme of the Congress comprised 10 principal points concerning the different needs of the country. The most important were the *autonomy* of Bessarabia and the *Council of the country*.

The decision of the Congress concerning the autonomy was adopted on the 21st of October by all the delegates of the Congress and was to the following effect:

"Considering the national culture of the Roumanian people as well as its historical past; taking a firm stand on the principle of the revolution whereby every nation has the right to decide its own fate itself, WISHING MOREOVER TO UNITE THE WHOLE ROUMANIAN NATION, to secure for it all its sovereign national rights and finally to insure its economical and intellectual progress, the congress HEREBY PROCLAIMS THE TERRITORIAL AND POLITICAL AUTONOMY OF BESSARABIA."

The Proclamation of the autonomy of Bessarabia — as is mentioned in the minutes of the Sitting — provoked an indescribable enthusiasm. "The Hall resounded with endless ovations and acclamations. Everybody shouted "Long live Bessarabia, free and autonomous. Long live the Roumanian Nation". Round the desk tricolored flags had been hung. Everybody joined in the singing of national songs and they embraced one another for joy.

At the Meeting of the 23rd October 1917, the decision concerning the "*Sfatul Tzareî*" (Supreme Council) of Bessarabia was passed.

The contents of the decision were as follows:

"To take charge of the administration of Bessarabia a Supreme Council (Sfatul Tzareî) to consist of 120 members shall be constituted

in the shortest delay. The Moldavians shall have 84 seats (70 %) and the other nationalities of Bessarabia 36 seats (30 %)".

All the Bessarabian institutions of an administrative order shall be under direct control of the "Sfatul Tzareï".

As soon as the Sfatul Tzareï is constituted, all the Committees of Bessarabia will retain but a professional character, and will have no longer the right of interfering in political affairs.

At the meeting of the 25th of October the representative of the Provisional Government, the Provincial executive agent, came before the Congress and stated "that alarming news concerning the Bolshevik Revolution had been received at Petrograd", and he asked the Congress to wait until the situation should have become clearer.

To carry out all decisions and resolutions, the Congress appointed a Special Committee and, for the Convocation and organization of the "Sfatul Tzareï", a bureau of organization was created, which received the necessary instructions. The men in charge began to work, studied statistics and various technical questions, and finally set the 21st of November, 1917, as the date of the first meeting of the "Sfatul Tzareï".

The "Sfatul Tzareï" (Council of the Country)

The 21st of November 1917, on which the "Sfatul Tzareï" met for the first time, was for Bessarabia, which for 106 years had been under the yoke of an Imperial Autocracy, a real day of resurrection.

Words cannot express the feelings which animated the large audience which attended the solemn opening of the "Sfatul Tzareï".

Nobody will ever forget the grand moments when, after the *Te Deum*, the Moldavian Flag was fixed on the Palace of the State Council and when during the defile of the Moldavian troops, the military band, accompanied by thousands of enthusiastic voices,

played the National Roumanian Hymn, "Desteapta-te romane" (Awake, Roumania).

Everybody, old and young, men and women, wept for joy. At the opening of the sitting 105 deputies of the "Sfatul Tzareï" were present. Ion Inculetz, an associate Professor at the University of Petrograd, was elected President by a secret and unanimous vote.

After a speech of the President, in which he exposed the great problems to be solved by the State Council, there followed a series of congratulations and salutations.

The delegates of the different social, political and national groups, came one after the other to the Tribune of the new Parliament. And there were 44 orators.

Among these delegates was the Mayor of the town of Kichenev, A. C. Schmidt, who saluted the "Sfatul Tzareï" as *the supreme organ of Bessarabia*, and, recalling the faith he had sworn to the Russian Revolution, declared that "he was convinced that the "Sfatul Tzareï" would never forget the great postulants of the Revolution"¹.

There were also S.-Luzghin, the President of the Russian Provincial Tribunal of Bessarabia, Dr. Lutzenko, delegate of the Ukrainian Rada; the representatives of the Jewish Nationalist Societies (Stern and Fischer), of the Polish Society (Pomorski), Ukrainian (Mitkevitch), Greek (P. Sinadinos), Bulgarian (Storanol), etc., the delegates of the Hebrew Revolutionary Socialists (Cohen), the Hebrew democratic Socialists (Grünfeld), the Bundists (Covarski), etc., the delegates of the Bar (Kircorof), of the Bessarabian Press (German), of the Zemstva (Mujicicof and Podlesuy), etc., besides all the numerous delegations of Moldavian Associations.

All the delegates expressed their intense joy on hearing of the creation of the *Sfatul Tzareï*, "the Supreme Organ of Bessarabia"². All unanimously expressed the hope that the "Sfatul Tza-

¹ Minutes of the Meeting of the National Assembly 21-11-7, p. 7.

² The orators Mitchevici, Nichelzon, Grünfeld, etc.

rei» would establish order and save the country from Bolshevik anarchy "which threatened to drown all the intellectual and material things of value created by the work of the people during so many centuries (Covarsky).

Indeed the circumstances in which the "Sfatul Tzareï" began to act were extremely difficult. The problems to be solved needed the attention and all the strength of the Council of the Country.

Its first thought was naturally for the organization of the country and the determination of the form of the Government.

The Proclamation of the Moldavian Federative Republic

It was for this reason that the "Sfatul Tzareï" declared on the 2nd of December 1917, Bessarabia, "by virtue of its historical past", to be a *democratic Moldavian Republic* which would have the same rights as the Federal Democratic Republic of Russia.

The "Sfatul Tzareï" became the supreme power of the Moldavian Republic and the executive power belonged to the *Council of General Directors*.

After the "Sfatul Tzareï" had set forth the programme of its future activity in the declaration of the 2nd of December, it set to work for the salvation of Bessarabia, labouring day and night without stopping. It passed a series of laws and instructions concerning the agrarian question, the supply of provisions to the country, the sowing of fallow ground, the democratisation of the "Zemstvos", the organization of the national and territorial army, the organization of canteens for the needs of the Russian armies in case of their demobilization or retreat, etc.

But in spite of these measures taken by the Council of Directors, the anarchy increased more and more. Every day delegates from different parts of Bessarabia presented themselves before the "Sfatul Tzareï" with complaints against the bands of Russian soldiers.

The "Russian comrades", fraternizing at the front with the Germans, selling them ammunition in exchange for brandy or

cognac, deserted by hundreds and thousands from the front and scattered terror in the Roumanian villages and in those of Bessarabia, by giving themselves over to stealing, pillaging, assaulting and by burning all they came across on their way.

Thus, in the month of December, 1917, a large number of landowners¹ and farmers were assassinated: nearly all the houses, farms and buildings belonging to the boyars were burnt in the districts of Hottin, Baltzi, Ismail, etc., the different depots of cereals were pillaged, as well as the wine-cellars, the flocks of sheep, oxen, etc.

The conflagration swept on to the centre of Bessarabia.

In the district of Baltzi two regiments of Cossacks, by means of their committees, "proclaimed their resolution not to cease pillaging as long as they were not allowed to return to their homes".²

To the question, "Who will defend Bessarabia?", the Russian soldiers answered, "There are no Russians in Bessarabia, and it will take the Germans some little time before they reach our Russian provinces of Orlof, Tambov, Saratov, Samara."

The Moldavian Regiments were mostly reconstituting themselves and recovering their strength. The local detachments were too small to maintain order against the hundreds of bolshevist bands. The Council of the Directors applied several times to the Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army on the Roumanian Front, General Tscherbacief, as well as to the French General Berthelot, asking them to send to Bessarabia some disciplined troops, which could be counted on to safeguard the life and property of the population, as well as to watch over the depots of the allied army, which were in Bessarabia. But these troops existed no longer. General Tscherbacief himself with his staff was guarded by Roumanian soldiers against the bolshevist attempts.

All the allies who were at Jassy at that time witnessed the fact. The Roumanian Government was daily overwhelmed with

¹ Razu, Bontasch, Anusch, and others.

² Report of the Meeting of "Sfatul Tzareî", 31-11-1917 p. 31.

telegrams from different Associations of the Bessarabian population, as well as from various delegates of Bessarabian asking for military help.

The Bessarabian towns of Cahul, Leova, Ismail and others did not communicate any more with Kichinev, but they asked for help direct from the Roumanian Government.

Towards the end of December, the middle classes (*burjui*), landowners, farmers, priests, merchants, and even rich peasants, left the villages and their farms by hundreds and crossed over the Pruth to Roumania to shield their lives from the bolshevist savagery.

Under such circumstances, Bessarabia would have been happy if the brave Roumanian army had saved the situation, and the Council of the General Directors, conscious of the responsibility it had towards the country, sent several requests of that kind to the Roumanian Government. But the Roumanian Army was too busy elsewhere. On one hand, it had to defend alone against the enemy the front which had been abandoned by our "allied chiefs", the Russians, and, on the other hand, it was forced to attend to the Russian Bolshevik Army, which was acting in Roumania as other bands had done in Bessarabia. It was not till the 13th of January 1918 that, thanks to the insistence and renewed intervention of the allied representatives, the Roumanian Government decided to send an army to Bessarabia.

The assertion made by certain people, who cannot forget the prerogatives which they enjoyed under the Imperial Government, to the effect that the Roumanian Army had entered Bessarabia with the consent of the Central Empires¹, is pure calumny, because, on the 13th of January 1918, the Liberal Government was still in power and it had no intercourse with the Central Powers.

The French Minister in Roumania, Count de Saint-Aulaire, and General Berthelot could testify to the fact.

¹ Bessarabia and Roumania, Paris, 1919.

The struggle of the Roumanian Army against Russian Bolshevik forces required many sacrifices. The districts of Ackerman and Ismail, where the sixth Russian army was doing its mad work, that of Hottin, until its occupation by the Austrians, as well as some parts of the districts of Soioaca, Baltzi, Orhei and Bender, were in a complete state of anarchy, and an easy prey to the organized bands of Bolsheviks. Four years of military requisition have not laid waste Bessarabia to such an extent as a few months of Bolshevik pillaging.

The hatred and terror that the bolshevist troops inspired in the mass of the Bessarabian people will not disappear for centuries.

The cry "The Bolsheviks are coming" has remained even now that they have been thrown out of the country, a scarecrow which mothers use to make naughty children keep quiet.

It was only after the Bolsheviks had been driven out of the country that order could be re-established in Bessarabia. And then, thanks to the work of the Roumanian soldiers, the "Sfatul Tzareï" and the Council of the "General Directors" could turn their attention to the real problems of the day.

During that time the Federal Republic of Ukraine had been proclaimed an independent Republic.

The Moldavian Republic thus remained separated and estranged from the other Federal Republics, which had been formed on the territory of the ancient Russian Empire. That is why in Bessarabia, as in the "Sfatul Tzareï", while there were, some time before, advocates of an orientation "towards the Dniester" and "towards Moscow", as well as men who stood for the preservation of the Federal Moldavian Republic, at present their number is so small as to be of no account.

The few senseless Imperialists who still dreamt of the unity of the Russian Federal Republics, and for that reason "preferred bolshevism to the division of Russia into different independent republics", were not taken seriously by anyone.

The Proclamation of the Independence of Bessarabia

For these motives, the "Sfatul Tzareî" (Council of the Country) proclaimed on the 24th of January 1918, *the independence of the Moldavian Republic by the unanimity of votes*. The Council of Directors was transformed into a Council of Ministers.

This great event was justified in the declaration of the 24th of January 1918, of the "Sfatul Tzaiei" in the following manner:

"Under the present historical circumstances and in true accord with the wishes of people, we cannot but declare Bessarabia to be a free Moldavian Republic, self-governing and independent, which henceforward will have the right of deciding its own fate."

Thus historical circumstances, against which the will of nations is most often powerless showed Bessarabia the way of truth, the predestined way, the way which was to lead to the union with the Roumanian nation.

The existence of the independent Moldavian Republic only lasted two months and three days. For the existence of an independent state, money is necessary; an army cannot be kept up without money, just as it is impossible to set up a strong State organisation without material support.

Bessarabia, after four years' war and the terrible ravages of the bolshevists, could not have any money left. A great many years must pass before the finances of the State can provide for all its needs. It was not even worth while to speak of a loan, for who would have willingly lent hundreds of millions to a State which had scarcely come out of anarchy ? Then the "Sfatul Tzareî" of the Moldavian Independent Republic perfectly realised that Bessarabia being independent would soon become a bone of contention between the neighbouring powers, and might be once more a territory of military occupation and even the seat of a new war.

Such fate was all the more to be feared that the Ukrainian Rada had already made known its intentions about Bessarabia,

which it wanted to include "within the sphere of Ukraine's influence" and that Austria, as the miserable peace attempts of Bucarest proved, wished "to rectify its frontier by wresting from Bessarabia a good part of the district of Hottin".

Outside of all these considerations, the national Moldavian sentiment pointed imperiously to the land beyond the Pruth.

That is why the Union of Bessarabia with Roumania was fatal and inevitable.

The Evolution of the Idea of Union of Bessarabia with Roumania

The idea of the Union with Roumania was not that of one person or of simply one social class, or again of the "Sfatul Tza-rei", as some of our enemies pretended. It had been the wish of very many generations during the whole of the XIXth century, from the annexation (1812) to the fall of the Russian Empire. That idea had never been given up by the Moldavian Patriots of Bessarabia. The great historical events which took place in Moldavia and Wallachia between 1812 and the present day did not pass unnoticed in Bessarabia, in spite of the Chinese wall into which Russia had made the River Pruth, which separated the brothers on the right from those on the left.

The Revolution of Tudor Vladimirescu in 1821 against the Greek phanariots, and consequently against Turkey, who sold them the right of ruling over the Danubian Principalities, the National and Social Revolution of 1848 in Moldavia and Wallachia, the adding to Moldavia of the three Bessarabian districts of Ismail, Kahul and Bolgrad, according to the treaty of Paris (1856); the Union of the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia in 1859 under Prince Cuza; the great reforms accomplished by this Prince, especially the agrarian reform and settling of the question of peasant property, the emancipation of the gypsies, the secularization of the goods of the Church, the organisation of the army, the foundation of the University of Jassy, the returning to Russia of the districts of Ismail, Kahul and Bolgrad according

to the Treaty of Berlin (1878); the Independence of 1877; the Proclamation of the Kingdom of Roumania (1881); the Peasant Revolution of 1907; all these great events could not fail to awaken an echo in Bessarabia and to further there the cause of solidarity and national union.

Even the Russian writers like Zozulinoff¹, Batiuscof² and others complained of the Roumanizing influence of contemporary events.

Those who were in favour of the Union became more numerous after the Russian Revolution of 1905.

Thanks to some Russianizers like Kroupenski, Purichkievitch Bishop Serafim and others, a large number of secessionists were expelled from Bessarabia, for instance the archimandrite Gurie Grossu, the school-inspector Ion Halippa, the Professors Vasile Florof, Radulescu, etc. etc.

We do not speak of the persecutions against those who were only suspected of having a liking for secession, any more than of the measures taken to prevent young Moldavian licentiates from holding any positions in Bessarabia. This persecution only increased the numbers of the enemies of Czarism, as well as those of the friends of secession. In the autumn of 1917 and the spring of 1918, the Union of Bessarabia with Roumania was already under discussion. The necessity of the Union was spoken of openly in fashionable circles, as well as in peasant's huts.

As early as on the 3rd of March 1918, the Assembly of the Zemstva³ of the Baltzi district elected by universal suffrage, had passed the following resolution:

"Conscious that we were torn away 106 years ago from the sweet bosom of our mother-country, with which we formed one body and one soul; conscious that during these hard times, after God has delivered us from the Russian Tyranny which had oppressed, outraged and blinded us for so long, we were threatened to perish in

¹ A short historical sketch of Bessarabia, pp. 136-139.

² "Bessarabia" I, p. XL, XLI; II, p. 55-56.

³ The assembly of the District.

*the fire of bolshevik anarchy, had not Roumania given us material help at the most critical moment, thus freeing the country from its enemies, giving us protection, tranquillity, and peace which had disappeared conscious that we are too small in number and too weak to govern and defend ourselves, if we would not fall again under another foreign yoke and become slaves once more; we decide, in the name of our region of Baltzi, to join again our dear mother-country, Roumania; desiring to share with her the fortune or misfortune of our future life as in the time of "Moldavia under Stephen the Great"*¹.

The league of great landholders of the district of Baltzi voted at the same time for the motion of union with Roumania. This is what they said:

Taking its stand on the principles proclaimed by the revolution..., *the Moldavian people, established here twenty centuries ago by its ancestors, the Romans, has declared on the 2nd of December 1917, that Bessarabia shall be a Moldavian Republic.*

"Taking into account the saying: 'Union is strength', and the other, 'two are stronger than one'; considering that for nineteen centuries Bessarabia has always been an integral part of Moldavia, on the right bank of the Pruth, and that its destiny has always been closely linked to that of the Danubian Principalities with which she has shared the same sorrows and joys:

"Considering that, in 1812, Bessarabia was torn away without her consent from her ethnographical trunk; we declare to-day, solemnly before God and the whole world, that we ask for the Union of Bessarabia with the Kingdom of Roumania, in the constitutional government of which we see the security of our national existence as well as that of our economical and intellectual progress;

"We call upon all the Zemstviial Assemblies of Bessarabia to associate themselves to our motion so as to ask the "Sfatul Tza-rei" of Kichinev to send a delegation to Jassy to lay down, at

¹ Report of the meeting of March 3rd, 1918.

the foot of the throne of Roumania, our homage of devotion and faith to King Ferdinand I, sovereign of all the Roumanians."

The signatures follow, headed by that of President Ciolak¹.

A few days later, March 13th, an analogous motion was passed by the *Assembly of the "Zemstva" of the district of Soroca*.

The Zemstva of Orhei made preparations also to proclaim the Union.

We do not mention decisions of this kind taken by the Assemblies of the "volostes" (districts), of the villages and other smaller organisations and groups.

The Vote of a Conditional Union by the "Sfatul Tzareï"

On the 27th of March, 1918, the fate of Bessarabia was decided. The dreams and hopes of so many generations were finally realised:

"In the name of the people of Bessarabia" — says the Declaration of the 27th of March 1918 — *"the 'Sfatul Tzareï' declares that the Moldavian democratic republic (Bessarabia) — such as it is constituted by the land extending between the Pruth, the Dniester, the Danube, the Black Sea and the old boundary common with Austria — torn away by Russia more than a hundred years ago from old Moldavia, now in virtue of its historical and national rights, on the basis of the principle that alone the peoples can decide their fate, will be from this day on and for ever united with her mother-country, Roumania."*

This Union was to take effect under certain conditions. The following are the most important:

The "Sfatul Tzareï" continues to exist to work out and realize the agrarian reforms according to the needs and the requirements of the people.

Bessarabia keeps her provincial autonomy; she will have a "Sfatul Tzareï" (Diet) to be elected in the future by universal,

¹ Declaration of the great landholders of the District of Baltzi, March 3rd, 1918.

equal, direct and secret suffrage, together with an executive administration of her own.

The laws now in force and the local organisation (Zemstvas and towns) continue to exist.

The rights of minorities will be respected in Bessarabia.

Two of the representatives of Bessarabia will enter the Council of the Roumanian Ministers.

Bessarabia will send to the Roumanian Parliament a number of representatives in proportion to its population; these representatives will be elected by universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage¹.

The other conditions relate to the competence of the "Sfatul Tzareï", to the recruiting of the army, to the elections for the districts, villages, towns, Zemstvas and Parliament, to the freedom of speech, of the press, of religions, etc. and to amnesty in the matter of political offences.

This motion for union was carried by a large majority in Parliament; 86 deputies voted for the union, 3 against and 36 abstained from voting. The three deputies who voted against the Union as well as 26 out of the 36 who abstained from voting belong to the foreign element of Bessarabia. A few among them as, for instance, Ponomariof, Osmolovsky, Curdinovsky, Misircof and others were recently sent to Bessarabia by the former Czar's Government as professors in secondary schools, or rather as Russianizers.

Thus the resolution in favour of Union was carried by more than two-thirds of the "Sfatul Tzareï".

The 36 deputies explained their abstention: some had no mandates from their electors to discuss the Union; others said that the vote on that question ought to have been taken by "referendum" and that the only possible form of union between the Moldavian people was a "*close federative union*".

¹ Declaration of the "Sfatul Tzareï", 27th of March 1918.

The Composition of the "Sfatul Tzareï"

If we look for the different elements, either social or national, that made up the membership of the "Sfatul Tzareï" at the time of the Union, we find the following facts.

The "Sfatul Tzareï" had 138 deputies. The Board of Organisation, according to the instructions received from the military Congress in October 1917, after having studied different technical and statistical questions, thought it advisable to increase the number of deputies, while keeping the same proportion between the nationalities; this was approved by the "Sfatul Tzareï".

These 138 deputies were elected in the following manner:

44 (forty-four) deputies were elected by different military organisations *which represented more than three hundred thousand mobilised Bessarabian peasants between the age of 19 and 48 on the different Russian fronts, i. e. the majority of the peasants, except the old men and children.*

36 (thirty-six) deputies elected by the 3rd Congress of the peasant delegates, elected in their turn by the parishes of all the districts of Bessarabia.

6 (six) deputies elected as representatives of the Zemstvas of the Province and Districts, who in their turn were elected by universal suffrage.

5 (five) deputies sent by the Mayors of the towns who, in their turn, were elected by universal suffrage.

5 (five) deputies sent by the co-operative organisations.

3 (three) deputies of the Moldavian national party.

1 (one) of the Labour party.

3 (three) of the educational Societies.

1 (one) of the Union of the Clergy.

1 (one) of the Juridical Society.

1 (one) of the Bar of Bessarabia.

1 (one) of the Railways employees.

3 (three) of the Associations of State Officials.

3 (three) of the Associations of Professors and Teachers.

1 (one) of the Bessarabian Press.

- 1 (one) of the Professional Union of Workers.
- 7 (seven) of the Ukrainian national Organisations.
- 5 (five) of the Jewish national organisations.
- 2 (two) of the Bulgaro-Gagaoutzi national Organisations.
- 1 (one) of the Polish national Organisations.
- 2 (two) of the German national Organisations.
- 1 (one) of the Armenian national Organisations.
- 1 (one) of the Russian educational League.
- 3 (three) of the Association of Bessarabian Students.
- 1 (one) selected by the "Sfatul Tzareï" itself.
- Total: 138 deputies.

In this number there were eleven landholders, 44 titled men, 48 with a secondary education, 19 jurists, 3 doctors, 3 engineers, and 9 teachers of secondary schools.

According to their nationality the deputies were divided into: 103 Moldavians; 13 Ukrainians; 7 Russians; 6 Jews; 5 Bulgarian-Gagaoutzi; 2 Germans; 1 Pole and 1 Armenian.

With regard to social distinctions, out of 138 deputies, 88 belonged to the peasantry. Five seats in Parliament were offered to the organised class of the great landholders. At the beginning they accepted, but afterwards they withdrew from the "Sfatul Tzareï".

Among the parties, the largest one was the Moldavian block ("Blocul Moldovenesc") composed of 75 to 80 deputies who although belonging to various minor groups, revolutionary socialists, agrarian socialists, democratic nationalists, etc., represented in general the democratic interests of the whole of Bessarabia.

After having voted the Union, the "Sfatul Tzareï" continued its meetings, taking in hand different questions concerning especially the agrarian reform. To settle these questions, the Sfatul Tzareï elected a Commission formed of the representatives of all the Parliamentary parties with full power to enlist the services of outside specialists.

In June, the "Sfatul Tzareï" adjourned.

The Vote of the Agrarian Reform and the Proclamation of the Unconditional Union with Roumania

According to the conditions of the Union, the "Sfatul Tzareî" had reserved the right of settling the most important question of domestic policy, the agrarian reform, which interested the largest class of the Bessarabian population, the peasant class.

For this purpose Parliament was convoked again for the 26th of November 1918.

The way in which that great question was settled proves that the "Sfatul Tzareî" never was reactionary, as some people pretend, nor bolshevist, as some others say.

The property of private people was expropriated from a hundred hectares up, excepting, however, the vineyards, gardens and nurseries.

The expropriated property was to be duly paid for according to its value.

The forests belonging to private owners, with a few slight exceptions, were to go to the State, but this was not to take place until the transfer had been made possible.

The sub-soil of expropriated land, the waters and fallow-lands were to go to the State. The agrarian reform was carried by unanimous vote.

After having voted the agrarian reform, the following resolution was passed:

"After the re-union with Roumania, the Mother-country, of Bukovina, Transylvania, the Banat and the Hungarian territories inhabited by Roumanians, between the Danube and the Theiss, the "Sfatul Tzareî," declares that Bessarabia withdraws the conditions of union, as stipulated in the Ad of the 27th of March 1918, being sure that, in the Roumania of all Roumanians, the purely democratic regime is assured for the future.

"On the eve of the meeting of the Roumanian Constituent Assembly, whose members will be elected by universal suffrage and will solve the agrarian question according to the needs and requirements of the people, the "Sfatul Tzareî" declares hereby

cancelled the other conditions contained in the ad of union of the 27th March and proclaims the unconditional Union of Bessarabia with Roumania, her Mother-country.

This resolution was equally carried by a unanimous vote.

After that, the "Sfatul Tzareî" was dissolved on the 7th of November, 1918.

Thus Bessarabia torn 106 years ago from the Moldavia of Stephen the Great by Moscovite cupidity and violence has returned to the home of her race.

Thus a people of nearly three million men is freed from Muscovite slavery and goes along the natural path of a new and free life, in accordance with its historical and national destiny.



ION G. PELIVAN

Formerly Member of the Sfatul Tzareî
(National Council of Bessarabia)



. VI .

The Right of the Roumanians

to

Bessarabia



SEAL OF ALEXANDER THE GOOD
Sovereign Prince
of Moldavia, Bessarabia and Bukovina
1401 - 1433.

IN THE LIGHT OF
HISTORY AND
ETHNOGRAPHY
AND ON THE BASIS OF
SELF-DÉTERMINATION



WITH FOUR CUTS
AND A MAP



PARIS

—
IMPRIMERIE DES ARTS ET DES SPORTS
24, rue Milton, 24

—
1920

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Bessarabian peasant

THE RIGHTS OF THE ROUMANIANS TO BESSARABIA

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL RIGHTS

Bessarabia, as is well known, was part of the old principality of Moldavia until 1812, when according to a clause of the Bucarest treaty (May 16 1812 old style) which terminated the six year war with Turkey (1806-1812), Russia annexed that province to its empire.

Some Russians, however, claim that Bessarabia was taken from the Turks and not from Roumania which started into existence only on January 24 1859, when the two principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia were united into a single State.

They forget that in the XXth century, after the right of peoples to decide their own fate has been proclaimed to the world, domination over foreign territories and nations cannot possibly be founded on the right of conquest. They seem to forget also that Moldavia, of which Bessarabia was a part, while it acknowledged the suzerainty of Turkey, retained nevertheless its autonomous political and religious organisation, as well as the right to choose its princes from among its own sons. Turkish suzerainty, which proved incomparably more humane than Russian rule, implied only for Moldavia the obligation of paying a yearly tribute to Turkey. But these same Russians refuse to believe that such were the facts.

We will demonstrate the truth of our own statements without relying in any way on Roumanian testimonies. Only Russian and French testimonies will be adduced. Here are some:

1) M. P.-P. SEMENOFF-TIAN-CHANSKY, vice-president of the Russian Imperial Geographical Society, in his big and scholarly work "A complete geographical description of our country: New (Southern) Russia and The Crimea", vol. XIV, Petrograd 1910, published by A.-F. Dewrien, writes this on page 148:

At the end of the XIVth century, Wallachia became a vassal State under Turkish suzerainty and in 1511, after a long struggle, Moldavia met the same fate. But the two principalities succeeded in retaining their political structure, their national chiefs and their religion. The only sign that they were under Turkish suzerainty was that they had to pay a tribute.

2) In his book on "The Roumanian provinces, Wallachia, Moldavia, Bukovina, Transylvania, Bessarabia", the great historian UBICINI writes on page 4:

Russian Roumania is composed of the province of Bessarabia, which was also a part of Roumania and was delivered over to the Russians in 1812, through the treasonable act of Demetrius Mursi.

3) In the "Reports of the statistical committee of Bessarabia" written by the well known Russian lawyer, A.-N. ECOUNOFF (vol. III, Kichinev, 1868), we find, on page 34, the following assertion of the historical rights of Roumania to Bessarabia:

Up to its annexation to the Russian Empire in 1812, Bessarabia was under the same regime as Moldavia of which it was but a part. Consequently neither history nor historical documents can afford to leave Moldavia out of consideration. So, it is impossible to discuss the administration of Bessarabia up to the time of its annexation to Russia without referring to the Divan of Moldavia to which Bessarabia was submitted. There is not a single estate in Bessarabia that cannot show documents emanating from the Divan of Moldavia.

To our days, in the actions brought before the Bessarabian courts, suitors are wont to cite decisions of the Divan, which being approved by the Moldavian princes and being issued by them in the form of diplomas (chrysobulls), according to clause 1606 of the Xth volume of the Russian civil laws cannot be set aside by our courts and thus retain their full force and value.

4) The best proof that Bessarabia never was a Turkish country but on the contrary a purely Roumanian country lies in the undoubted fact that the Russian government, when it annexed that province, was obliged to maintain its old Moldavian administrative and judiciary organisation, as well as the ancient Donici, Armenopol and Alexander Mavrocordat laws:

a) The imperial ukase (decree) of July 23 1812 (chapter III, § 1) on the organisation of the provisional Bessarabian government, rules:

*The inhabitants of Bessarabia shall retain their legislative organisation.*¹

b) Another imperial ukase of February 2 1813 adds:

*Suits in the law courts must be conducted according to the laws and customs of the country.*²

c) A subsequent imperial ukase of May 13 1813, directed to the Governor of Bessarabia, prescribes among other things:

*Not to make any change in the administration of Bessarabia.*³

¹ See L. A. CASSO, professor at the University of Moscow, "Byzantine law in Bessarabia", Moscow, 1907, University Press, page 5.

² Ibid., page 3, and "Reports of the statistical committee of Bessarabia" written by A.-N. EGOUNOFF, page 114.

³ "On the working of the local Donici and Armenopoulo laws", by the great lawyer O.-J. PERGAMENT, Petrograd, 1905, page 5.

d) That tendency to maintain in Bessarabia the *statu quo ante* is seen also in the decree of August 21 1813 on the organisation of the diocese of Kichinev and Hotin, which states:

Local customs must be respected, in so far as they do not contradict the fundamental principles of the Russian civil and ecclesiastical law, *since the Bessarabian people were allowed to retain their old Moldavian laws.*¹

e) Finally, on April 29 1818, the Emperor Alexander 1st put his name to a legislative act which was to prove most important for Bessarabia, *the Administrative Statute of the province of Bessarabia* (in Roumanian: *Asezemintul*).

By virtue of this fundamental act, Bessarabia received a *special organisation*, a *national constitution*, based on what professor CASSO ("Byzantine law", page 8) calls "the national character" of that province. At the head of affairs was to be a *Supreme Council* (little parliament) mostly composed of the chosen representatives of the Moldavian nation (CASSO, "Byzantine law", pp. 8-10).

According to that statute:

The use of its local rights, privileges and laws is granted to Bessarabia by the imperial clemency, *for ever.*²

¹ Ibid., page 5.

² Statute for the organisation of the province of Bessarabia, page 10.

CHAPTER II

ETHNIC RIGHTS

Nobody disputes the fact that Bessarabia, at the time of its annexation to Russia (1812), was mostly inhabited by Roumanians.

But we do not want that the shadow of a doubt should remain as to the purely *Roumanian* character of the province of Bessarabia at the beginning of the XIXth century. We will therefore give the following proofs:

1) XAVIER HOMMAIRE DE HELL, a mining engineer, member of several learned bodies and knight of the order of Saint Vladimir of Russia, in his well known work on "The steppes of the Caspian Sea, the Caucasus, the Crimea and Southern Russia" (Paris, 1845, Bernard publisher), which was awarded in 1844 the highest prize of the Royal Geographical Society of France, writes to the following effect, vol. II, page 568:

When Russia seized Bessarabia, the Nogais... gave up their former possessions and withdrew beyond the Danube; *there remained in Bessarabia only the Moldavian population*, which belonged as well as the Russians to Greek orthodoxy.

2) The well known French historian, ALFRED RAMBAUD, in his "History of Russia", 6th edition, Paris, 1914, writes on page 562:

A congress met at Bucarest in 1812: Russia renounced her *claims to Moldavia and Wallachia*, but kept *Bessarabia, a Roumanian land*.

3) In 1827 there were already in Bessarabia a few foreign settlements. But how little they formed a steady element of the population is clearly shown by the official report of the *Russian Governor Timkovsky*, who wrote in 1827 to his superior the count of PAHLEN, governor general of Odessa:

The province of Bessarabia is composed of two categories of inhabitants: *native Moldavians* and some *vagabonds* who managed to get into the country at different times and whose morals have not improved.¹

4) For the year 1837, "A journey of field-marshal duke of Raguse over Hungary, Transylvania and Southern Russia" (Paris, 1837, vol. I, page 142) states the following undoubted facts:

Bessarabia, which is a neighbour of Moldavia from which it is separated only by the Pruth river, is *inhabited also by Wallachians of Roumanian origin*.

It is strange that Wallachia, Moldavia and *Bessarabia* should have remained intact with their population isolated like an oasis in the middle of that multitude of nations² which for centuries came pouring over Southern Europe.

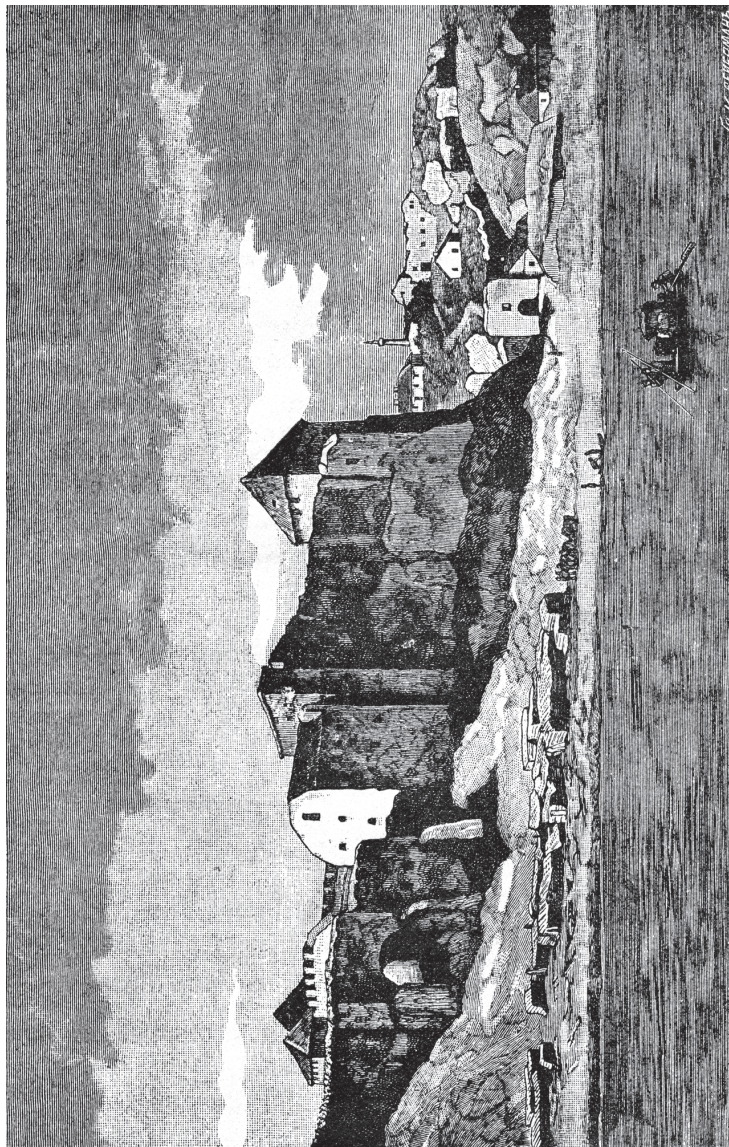
5) For the year 1862, we have the testimony of the Russian staff captain A. ZASCIUK.

In his official work, which remains one of the most reliable studies on Bessarabia, "Materials for the geography and statistics of Russia" (Petrograd, 1862), A. Zasciuk states on page 151:

The Moldavians (Roumanians) form the chief part of the population, about three fourths of the total number.

¹ A. NACCO, a Russian historian, in his "Study on the civil organisation of the province of Bessarabia from 1812", Odessa, 1900, page 110.

² Moscovites, Bulgarians, Serbs, etc.



The fortress of Hotin was built by Alexander the Good, Prince of Moldavia (1400-1435) and restored by Stephen the Great (1457-1503) to protect the country against the Tatars and the Poles. The ruins that can be seen to-day are what is left of that fortress which had been rebuilt and occupied by the Turks.

6) His statement is confirmed:

a) By the Russian geographer P.-P. SOROCA, for the year 1878, in his work on "The Geography of Bessarabia", which was approved by the minister of Public Education for the use of primary and secondary schools in Russia (Kichinev, 1878, page 80).

b) By the Russian publicist P. CRUCHEVAN, in his almanac "Bessarabia" (Moscow, 1903, page 175).

c) By the Russian writer N. LASCOFF in "Bessarabia at the time of the centenary of its annexation to Russia, 1812-1812" (Kichinev, 1912, page 53), — and by others.

7) The fact that the Roumanian element, whatever may be the accurate percentage, forms the majority of the Bessarabian population is confirmed even by Russian scholars as for instance:

a) A. Afanasieff-Tchiujbinsky ("A journey over Southern Russia, 2nd part, *Sketches on the Dniester*", Petrograd, 1863, pp. 266 and 283);

b) P. Batiuchkoff ("Bessarabia", Petrograd, 1892, first part, p. 171; this work was written under the auspices of the Tzar Alexander III);

c) L.-A. CASSO, a professor at the University of Moscow and formerly Minister of Public Education under the Tzar Nicolas II, (in his book on "Russia on the Danube and the organisation of the province of Bessarabia", Moscow, 1913, p. 228), etc.

8) The great Russian publicist L. TIKHOMIROFF in his work on "Political and social Russia", 2nd edition, Paris, 1886, page 41, cannot but note obvious facts:

As we advance towards the South, we come across a *small territory bordering upon Roumania and not Russian in the slightest degree*. The ambition of the Tzar has created there for Russia a source of international complications. The Danube at the mouth of which these districts lie flows through Slav and Austrian territory, but it *has nothing in common with Russia*.

Nevertheless at the time of the last war (1877-1878), Alexander II thought it advisable to take that land from his own allies,

the Roumanians, who protested bitterly against that act of injustice. *If Russia should become a free country*, there is very little doubt that it would at once return to the Roumanians that territory as well as a part of Bessarabia (p. 41).

9) Finally, we will conclude that review of Russian and French testimonies by a most significant quotation from a great Russian military writer, the famous general A. N. Kouropatkine, formerly Russian minister of war.

In his scholarly book on "The Problems of the Russian army" (Petrograd, 1910) he writes:

The Roumanian population of Bessarabia, that province annexed to the Russian Empire one hundred years ago, lives still (1910) apart from the mass of the Russian population. There can be no doubt whatever that, if at the beginning of the XIXth century the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia had been annexed to Russia, not only would their population have remained foreign to us, but it would have become an enemy of the Russian people and, instead of one Poland, we should have had two, to the greater detriment of Russia. (p. 338)

In the future, whether it is brought about by peaceful means or as a consequence of a war, the unity of the whole Roumanian nation will be accomplished once more. (p. 338)

CHAPTER III

**RUSSIAN OFFICIAL STATISTICS
AND WHAT THEY ARE WORTH**

We said above that one of the most reliable official books on the statistics of Bessarabia was that of the Russian staff captain A. ZASCIUK, *Materials for the geography and statistics of Russia, COLLECTED by officers of the Russian Staff: the province of Bessarabia* (Petrograd, 1862, first and second parts).

Now; this book estimates the Roumanian element at 75 % of the total population (pp. 151 and 450).

In 1897, the Russian official census sets down the total Bessarabian population as being 1.935.000 souls (N.-K. Moghilevsky, *Materials for the geography and statistics of Bessarabia*, page 77) but brings down the percentage of the Roumanian element to 47,6 % and states the number of Roumanians in Bessarabia to be 920.919.

Here is the official table of national elements in Roumania according to that 1897 census on which our opponents in the Russian camp like to base their claims:

1. Great Russian	8,2%
2. Ukrainians and Ruthenians.....	19,6%
3. Poles	0,3%
4. Bulgarians	5,3%
5. Roumanians	47,6%
6. Germans	3,1%

7. Jews	11,8%
8. Turks (Gagautzi)	2,9%
9. Others (Greeks, Armenians, Tziganes)	1,2%

The Great Russians — and especially those holding official positions — are apt to look upon all Ukrainians and Ruthenians as Russians and therefore they claim that the total of the "Russian" population in Bessarabia reaches 27,8 %.

Unfortunately those poor Ukrainians and Ruthenians will have none of this, they resent the "great honour" that is thus forced upon them. Moreover the Russian Academy of Sciences admitted that their tongue as well as their literature placed them in a situation of their own, quite apart from the Moscovite nation.

And it is significant that even the official census of 1897 did not venture to include both Ukrainians and Ruthenians on the one hand, Russians on the other under the same appellation.

Now the question arises: How can Russia with its bare 8,2 % of Russian (Moscovite) population claim Bessarabia as its own?

Even granting that the Ukrainians and Ruthenians are Russians — which ethnographically is a rank absurdity — a percentage of 27,8 % would constitute but a negligible minority, if we compare it to the 47,6 % of Roumanians. Consequently *Russia cannot possibly have any ethnic right to Bessarabia.*

But, as a matter of fact, the figures given by the census for the Great Russians (Moscovites) who form a steady and permanent element of the Bessarabian population are far superior to what the facts warrant, as we are going to show.

a) P. P. Semenov-Tian-Chansky in his big work on "New Russia and the Crimea", vol. XIV, quoted above, says on page 189-190:

In Bessarabia, aside from WANDERING PEDLARS who gather round the towns and big villages, the Moscovite (Velico-Russian) rural population, being in the minority when compared to the other Slav tribes, is to be found exclusively in separate settle-

ments. For instance in Vilcov village live *staroobriadtzi* (Moscovites of the older rite)...

At the present day, the Moscovites —*staroobriadtzi*— have settled on the frontiers of Bessarabia, chiefly towards the South in the Ismail district, but also towards the North in the Hotin district¹. *Nevertheless the permanent Velico-Russian population belonging to the older rite does not form more than 1 1/2 % of the total population of Bessarabia.*

M. Semenov-Tian-Chansky has nothing to say about the percentage of orthodox Velico-Russians actually settled in the country as a permanent element of its population. The reason is that such Velico-Russians are not to be found in Bessarabia.

b) The historian Lascoff in its work on "Bessarabia at the time of the centenary of its annexation to Russia, 1812-1912, a historical and statistical study on Bessarabia", Kichinev, 1912, writes on page 57:

Among the Velico-Russians (Muscovites) of the province of Bessarabia, *a very large number hold government positions or are officers in the army.* The others live in settlements of their own in villages and towns. The rural Velico-Russian population of Bessarabia is mostly formed by *raskonics* (Velico-Russians of the older rite), whose ancestors fled from Russia to escape persecution against the *Staroobriadtzi*, and by people who broke away from the bondage in which they were held by the lords or finally men who escaped from military service.

c) In the book of M. N.-K. MOGHILEANSKY, "Materials for the geography and statistics of Bessarabia" (Kichinev, 1913) we find on page 79 the following statement:

Velico-Russians live chiefly in the districts of Kichinev (33,339), Ismail (30,235) and Ackerman (25,523).

This makes a total of 89,097 souls.

¹ M. K. Ermolinsky, in Statistical information about the district of Hotin, edited by the Hotin Zemstvo, Moscow, 1880, page 121, says that, in the Hotin district, there are only two Velico-Russian villages, Grubna and Belousovca, with 242 families.

Supposing that in the other districts another 10 to 11,000 Velico- Russians might be found, we should obtain for the whole of Bessarabia a total of 100,000 Velico-Russians for the year 1897, that is *about* 5 % of the total population.

If we put together the statements above quoted from Semenoff-Tian-Chansky, Lascoff and Moghileansky, we arrive at the following conclusions:

a) All the Velico-Russians who have definitively settled in the country or who have not, orthodox or followers of the older rite (*staroobriadtzi*), when taken together *did not exceed* in 1897 5 % of the total Bessarabian population.

b) In 1897, the Velico-Russian element actually settled in the country did not surpass 1 1/2 %.

c) The Velico-Russians who did not constitute a permanent element, officers and soldiers, Government officials, pedlars, etc., constitute 3 1/2 % of the total population.

*

With regards the reliability of official statistics in Bessarabia, it will be enough to note the remark of professor L.-A. Casso, formerly minister of Public Education in Russia, in his scholarly work on "Russia along the Danube" (Moscow, 1913), written on the occasion of the centenary of the annexation of Bessarabia to Russia:

Even to-day, in 1913, the informations which we receive from the central administration about that far away border province are not always accurate. *The Russian Year-Book for 1910*, for instance, which is published by the central committee on statistics at the ministry of the Interior, while mentioning the different nationalities of Bessarabia finds no room for the Moldavian nationality, although it constitutes more than half of the total population of Bessarabia.

That astounding *inaccuracy* of the official statistical data sent by Russian officials in Bessarabia to the ministry of the Interior at Petrograd, where the very existence of the Moldavian element of

Bessarabia passed unmentioned, shows clearly what little faith can be placed in the information given by Russian official sources.

CHAPTER IV

THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION

On the basis of the principle of self-determination proclaimed by the great Russian revolution as well as by President Wilson, the Bessarabian population through the various administrative, judiciary, professional bodies of the province expressed on repeated occasions the resolute wish of the country to unite with Roumania, its mother-country.

But the union with Roumania could be proclaimed only by a *national assembly*, truly representative of all Bessarabia with its various nationalities. The *Sfatul Tsarei* was that assembly, and it spoke in the name of all Bessarabians when it proclaimed first the conditional union, then the unconditional union with Roumania.

A. This is the first decision passed by the Sfatul Tsarei on March 27 (9 IV 1898):

In the name of the people of Bessarabia, the Sfatul Tsarei declares: The Moldavian Democratic Republic (Bessarabia)—such as it is constituted by the land extending between the Pruth, the Dniester, the Danube, the Black Sea and the frontiers which were formerly common with Austria— torn by Russia, a hundred years ago, from old Moldavia— now by virtue of its historical rights and of its national rights, on the basis of the principle that the people alone can decide their own fate, unites from this day on *and* for ever with its mother-country, Roumania.

The chief conditions which were inserted in the Act of Union were these:

- 1) The Sfatul Tsarei to solve in its own way the question of the agrarian reform in Bessarabia.
- 2) Bessarabia to retain its provincial autonomy, its own laws and local organisations.

When a solution had been found for the agrarian question, which constituted the most important reservation embodied in the Act of March 27 1918, the Sfatul Tsarei withdrew all the other conditions stipulated in that act.

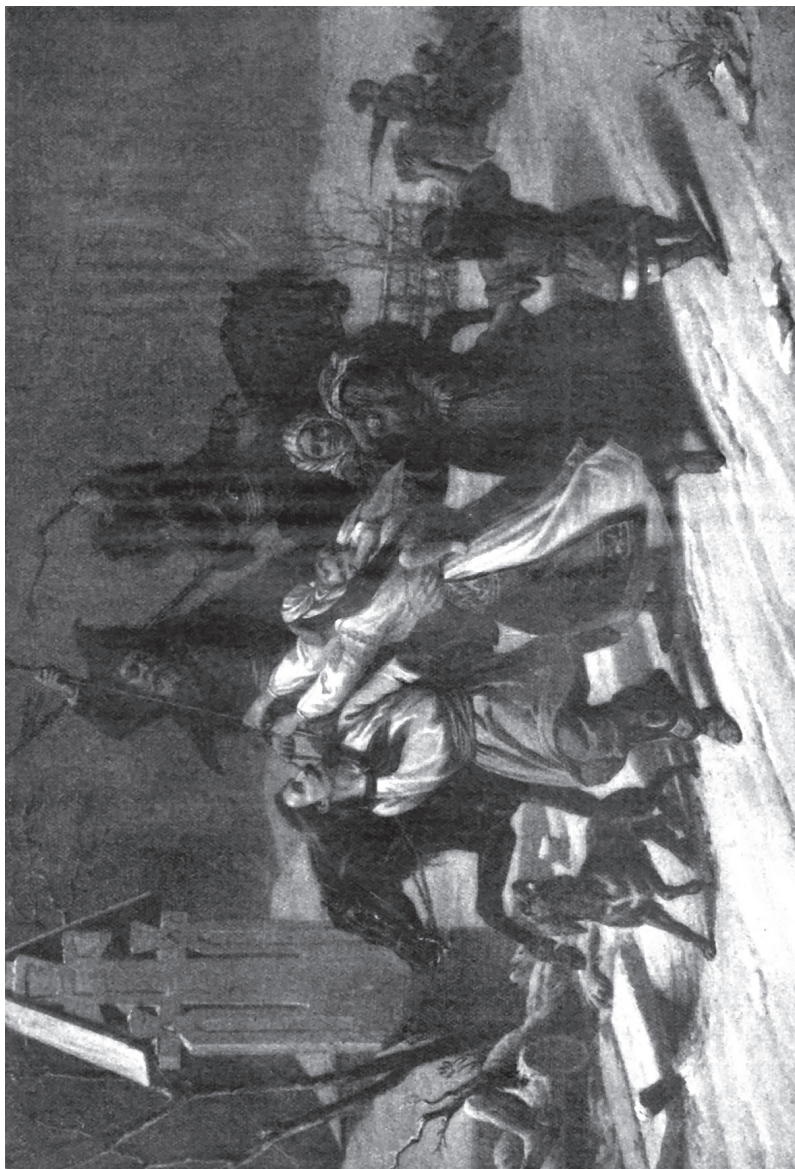
B. Here is the decision passed by the Sfatul Tsarei, on November 27 1918 (old style):

Following on the union with Roumania, their mother-country of Bukovina, Transylvania, the Banat and the territories of Hungary inhabited by Roumanians, between the Danube and the Tissa rivers, the Sfatul Tsarei declares that Bessarabia withdraws the conditions of union, as stipulated in the Act of March 27 1918, being certain that, in the Roumania of all Roumanians, the purely democratic regime is ensured for ever.

On the eve of the meeting of the Roumanian Constituent Assembly, which will be elected by universal suffrage and will solve the agrarian question according to the needs and the requirements of the people, the Sfatul Tsarei declares null and void the other conditions mentioned in the Act of Union of March 27 1917, and proclaims the unconditional union of Bessarabia with Roumania, its mother-country.

C. Finally, the Bessarabian people showed its determination to be united with Roumania once more at the polls of November 2-5 1919 when it voted for members of the future Constituent Assembly of Greater Roumania.

The elections were held under a regime of full liberty — as was solemnly acknowledged by the representatives of national minorities in the Chamber of Deputies as well as in the Senate — on the basis of universal, equal, direct and secret suffrage.



Lashing Moldavians (Roumanians) with the Russian knout *after an old etching by Jazet)

The following table, given by the *Official Gazette*, n° 164, of November 8 1919 clearly shows the result of the elections held in Bessarabia on that occasion.

We see by that table that 72,8 % of the total number of registered electors took part in the vote, that is to say an overwhelming majority of the Bessarabian population.

Those elections, which proved to be *the best of plebiscites*, made it as clear as daylight to everybody that Bessarabia is absolutely determined to be united with Roumania.

*

Out of the 90 deputies returned to the House of representatives, 78 are Roumanians and 12 belong to the national minorities.

RESULTS OF THE ELECTIONS HELD IN BESSARABIA ON NOVEMBER 2-5 1920 FOR MEMBERS OF THE FUTURE ROUMANIAN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

CONSTITUENCIES	Number of members	Number of party tickets	Registered electors	Electors who took part in the vote	Votes annulled	Electors who stayed away from the polls	% of electors who did not vote	% of votes cast
BALTZI	12	3	59 190	44 791	8 832	14 399	24,3	74,0
CAHUL	7	2	25 561	20 979	1 303	4 582	17,9	82,2
HOTIN	10	1	70 600	49 175	5 367	21 425	33,4	68,7
ORHEI	11	2	52 914	34 238	5 220	18 676	35,8	64,2
SOROCA	12	5	57 774	41 591	2 378	16 175	27,9	71,9
TIGHINA (Bender)	9	2	54 329	39 920	2 278	14 409	26,5	73,2
ISMAIL	5	1	46 209	31 764	2 412	14 445	31,2	68,7
CETATEA ALBA (Akerman)	12	3	71 844	58 915	3 628	12 929	17,4	82,3
KICHINEW	12	5	62 458	40 215	2 153	22 243	35,5	64,2
TOTAL	90	24	509 879	361 588	32 571	139 291	27,8	72,2

**LIST OF MEMBERS OF THE ROUMANIAN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY
WHO REPRESENT THE NATIONAL MINORITIES OF BESSARABIA**

CONSTITUENCIES	NAMES OF MEMBERS	NATIONALITY	Registered electors	Electors who took part in the vote	Obtained votes
BALTZI	Arseni KARASEVICI	Russian	59 190	44 791	5 159
CAHUL	Haralamb VIZANTI	Greek	25 561	20 979	10 661
-/-	Théodore DONCIU	Bulgarian	-/-	-/-	10 665
HOTIN	Paul KITAIGORODSKI	Ukrainian	70 600	49 175	38 843
-/-	Jankel Meilic MELICSOHN	Hebrew	-/-	-/-	39 307
ORHEI	Vasile MOUSCINSKI	Ukrainian	52 914	34 238	16 869
TIGHINA (Bender)	Nicolas STOIANOGLOU	Bulgarian	54 329	39 920	32 104
ISMAIL	Jean FOMOV	Bulgarian	46 209	31 764	28 402
CETATEA ALBA (Ackerman)	Daniel BITTAÛ	German	71 844	58 915	28 564
-/-	Théodore DIMOV	Bulgarian	-/-	-/-	28 427
-/-	Daniel ERDMANN	German	-/-	-/-	28 357
-/-	Johanes GHERSTENBERGER	-/-	-/-	-/-	14 611

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The facts above stated lead to but one conclusion, and this conclusion cannot be favourable to Russia.

1° *Historically*, Bessarabia was up to 1812 a part of Moldavia, which, while it acknowledged Turkish suzerainty, retained its full political and religious autonomy.

The right of conquest cannot be invoked in the XIXth century justifying possession, especially as Bessarabia has in common with the conquerors neither its historical traditions, nor its language nor its culture.

2° *Ethnographically*, even should we accept the data given by official statistics at their face value, and we have seen what mistake it would be, Bessarabia is a Roumanian land.

For the percentage of 8,2 % including all the Velico-Russians — those who settled in the country for good in the XIXth century (1,50%) as well as those who form an unsteady element, Government officials, military men, wandering pedlars and labourers — will never constitute but a negligible minority, when we compare them to the 47,6 % of autochthonous Roumanians.

As a matter of fact, the number of Roumanians in Bessarabia reaches at least 70 % of the total population.

3° If we look for an expression of the *national will*, we know on three different occasions (27 III 1918, 27 XI 1918 and 2-5 XI

1919), Bessarabia made known in an unmistakable manner its determination to be united for ever with its mother-country, Roumania. Consequently, from whatever point of view one approaches the question, Bessarabia is a Roumanian province and can belong to no other country but Roumania.

CHAPTER VI

OTHER STATEMENTS MADE BY THE PANRUSSIAN PATRIOTS

In spite of what we have said above, it is still possible to meet Panrussian patriots, especially when they are of German, Polish, Jewish or Moldavian-Tatar descent, who would have us believe that *Russia is loved in Bessarabia*.

They claim in the same breath that this province which was for 106 years an object of "the most tender care" on the part of its Tzarist guardians and protectors *has turned Russian* and wants to remain *united with Russia*.

But these gentlemen forget to enlighten us on just a small point: to which Russia do they refer? Do they mean Tzarist Russia, or Bolshevist Russia, — the Russia of Denikine or the Russia of Lenine? *There is no other choice*.

a) Love for Russia?

With regard to a supposed love of Bessarabia for Russia, we beg leave to ask just a few questions:

What could be the motives which should induce Bessarabia to love Russia, under whose tyrannical rule it suffered for 106 years (1812-1918)?

Could it be because Russia closed all the *Moldavian schools* thus preventing any future educational development among the masses of the autochthonous people?



In 1856, at Akermann, while digging for the foundations of a house, the workmen found a large marble slab which had fallen from the fortress. It bore an inscription which was successfully deciphered:

"In the year 1438 after Christ, the great gates were set up by the great Christian Stephen Voevod, Prince of Moldavia, and the boyar Lutzian Herman." Above the inscription, in the midst of foliage, appears a bull's head with a star over its forehead: such are still the arms of Moldavia.

This stone is to be seen to-day in the museum of the Odessa historical and antiquarian society. Russian historians agree that the Akermann fortress was built by the Moldavian princes.

Or because the churches were Russianised with the consequence that the Roumanian people could no longer pray to God in its native tongue (work of archbishop Paul Lebedeff, Serafim Tchitchagof, etc.)?

Or because the use of the people's tongue was prohibited in every Government office?

Or because they closed the *national printing house* founded in 1813 by metropolitan Gabriel Banulesco, where Roumanian books were printed, with the consequence that not a single line of Roumanian could be printed any more?

Or because the *Moldavian intellectuals*, who were allowed to serve the Tzar in Poland, the Ukraine, the Caucasus, etc., were debarred from holding any Government position in Bessarabia?

Or because thousands of families of *Russian peasants*, deceived by the agents of the Minister of the Interior, were induced to leave Bessarabia to settle in the wildernesses of far-away Siberia, where on the account of the climate and other unfortunate circumstances they died like flies?

Or finally because the refuse and sweeps of Russia were brought to Bessarabia as settlers to take the place of those wretched peasants, with the hope that Bessarabia would thereby be denationalised?

On the other hand, if we turn to *Bolshevist Russia*, there is not even room for any discussion.

When the Bolshevist *tovarichtchi* (comrades) betrayed the allied cause and deserted from the Roumanian front, Bessarabia suffered too much at their hands to be able to speak of them without a feeling of horror and hatred. Those Moscovite barbarians will never be forgotten by the Bessarabian people, no more than the Huns, the Tatars or the Turks have been.

Bessarabia cannot feel towards Russia – any Russia – differently from what is felt by Poland, Finland, Esthonia, Latvia, etc.

b) Has Bessarabia been Russianised?

The statements of Russian writers and scholars themselves, like Zasciuk, Casso, Tikhomirof, Kouropatkine (see chapter II),

show clearly that such an assertion is absolutely contrary to facts.

True enough, part of the Boyar families of Bessarabia (as, for instance, the Kroupensky, Purichkievitch, Kristi, Cantacuzene families) were Russianised.

But what country *in* the world has not had its renegades and traitors? It is a well known fact that at all times and in all countries the upper classes, on the promise of some privileges, have always gone over to the conqueror.

But the masses, and especially the peasants of Bessarabia have religiously kept the tongue, the faith, the customs and the traditions of their ancestors.

Moreover, everybody knows that never in the course of centuries has Russia been capable of russianising any foreign people, however backward and uncivilised it might be.

This is what the school-inspector of the Ufa district, M. Troitsky, has to say on the subject:

We had been hoping to convert the Mahommedans (Kirguizes) by sending Russians to them. On the contrary, the Russians hardly settled there were assimilated by the others to such a degree that they forgot all about fasting and ate horse meat during the great Russian Lent.¹

¹ *Russia and the alien nations*, by Inorodetz, page 7.

EDITION NOTICE

Born in Bessarabia on April 1st, 1876, in Răzeni, Lăpușna county, Ion Pelivan graduated the Theological Seminary of Chișinău and then the Faculty of Law from Tartu (Estonia). As founder of a student organization and accused of Romanian separatist tendencies by the tsarist authorities, he was exiled in the northern parts of Russia. In the context of the First World War, he is mobilized and, in the wake of the Russian Revolution, he reaches Chișinău, where he becomes a fervent supporter of the national movements in Bessarabia. The Congress of the Moldovan Soldiers (October 20-27, 1917, in Chișinău) elected him as representative in the Country Council (Sfatul Țării), the body that took charge of the territory between Rivers Prut and Dniester and which became Bessarabia's first parliament. In the first government of the Moldavian Democratic Republic, proclaimed on December 2, 1917, he was appointed General Director (minister) of Foreign Affairs. On January 24, 1918, the Country Council voted for the independence of the Moldavian Republic and, on March 27, 1918, having absolute freedom of decision, voted for the union of Bessarabia with Romania. Following the resolutions adopted by the Country Council in Chișinău on March 27 / April 9, 1918, by the General Congress of Bukovina in Cernăuți on November 30, 1918, and by the National Assembly in Alba Iulia on December 1, 1918, the Romanian national state became a reality. Pelivan was included in the Romanian delegation to the Peace Conference, as a "technical delegate on behalf of Bessarabia". In Paris, he publishes a series of studies in French about Bessarabia, based on historical facts, ethnicity and the principle of self-determination. He was member of the Romanian Parliament in the interwar period and energetically protested against the occupation of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina by the Soviet forces in the summer of 1940. He died on January 25, 1954, in the prison in Sighet, where he was jailed by the Romanian communist regime.

*

This edition reproduces two studies published by Ion Pelivan in 1920 in France, both in English, together with photographs from the life and activity of the author. We tacitly corrected small errors found in the original text. We added a number of maps that illustrate the geopolitical mutations in the area inhabited by Romanians, mutations whose victims were the Romanian provinces of Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia. The maps were reproduced from the work published in 1920 by professor D. Șt. Constantinescu and colonel Victor Șiaicariu – *Atlas istoric geografic al neamului românesc* (Geographic Historical Atlas of the Romanian people). Most of the images were taken from the photo library of the National Military Museum and from the volume "Ioan Pelivan, părinte al mișcării naționale din Basarabia" ("Ioan Pelivan, the Father of the National Movement in Bessarabia") published by historians Ion Constantin, Ion Negrei and Gheorghe Negru, who, for their extraordinary work, deserve all our gratitude.

GHEORGHE VARTIC

ILLUSTRATIONS

Ion Gh. Pelivan, student at the
University of Tartu (Estonia)



Judge Ion Gh. Pelivan
with two of his nephews



The members of the Country Council (Sfatul Țării) who voted for the unification of Bessarabia with Romania



Ion Gh. Pelivan, founder of the unionist movement from Bessarabia





The Romanian Prime Minister Alexandru Marghiloman received the act proclaiming the unification of Bessarabia with Romania and militated for its recognition



General Ernest Broșteanu, the commander of the 11th Infantry Division, was given the mission to take action against Bolsheviks in Bessarabia



Prime Minister Alexandru Marghiloman visiting Chișinău



Ștefan Ciobanu, general director
(minister) of education



Ion C. Inculeț, the president of the
Country Council (Sfatul Țării)



Vladimir Cristi, general director
(minister) of internal affairs



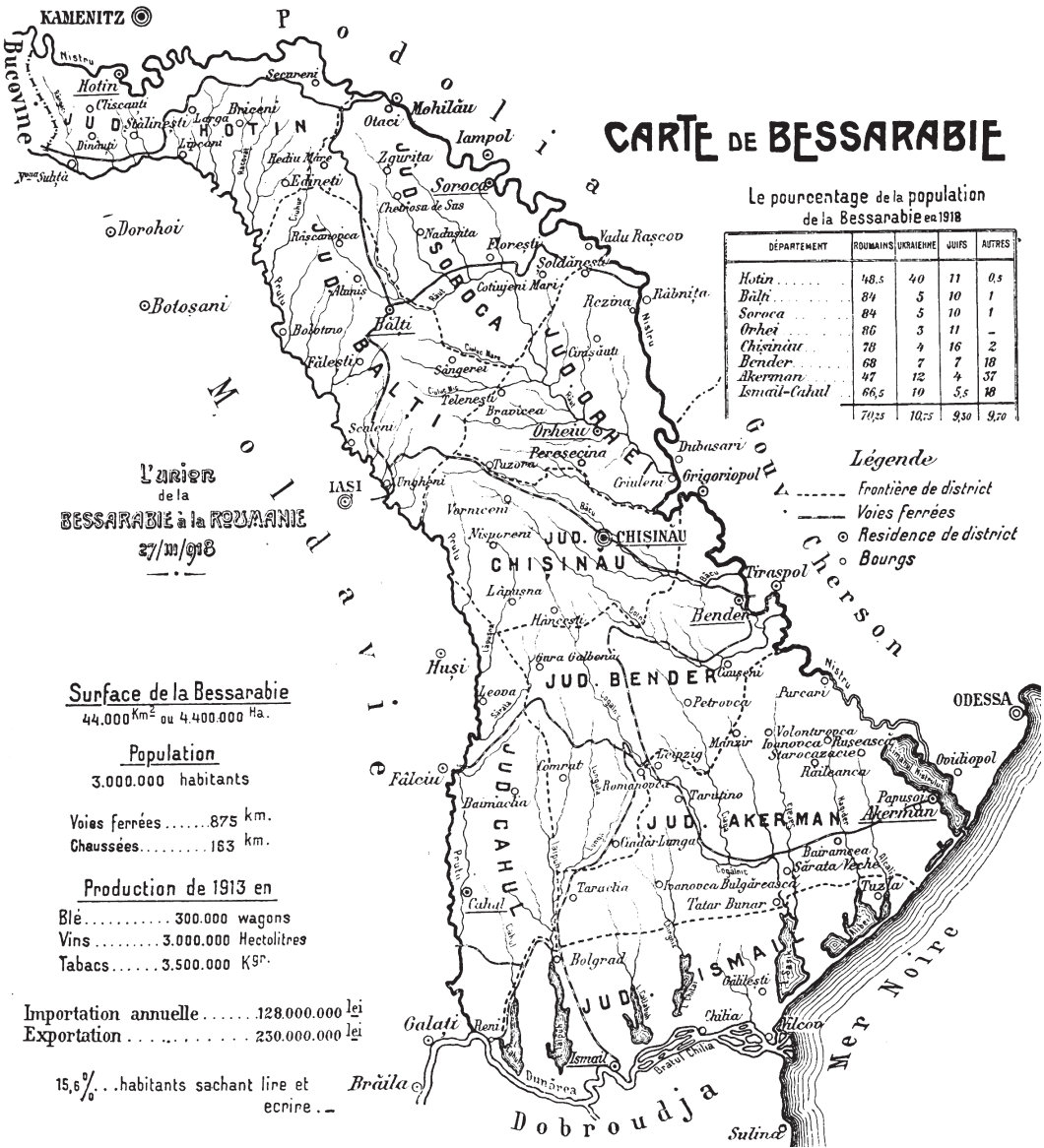
Pantelimon Erhan, general director
(minister) of agriculture



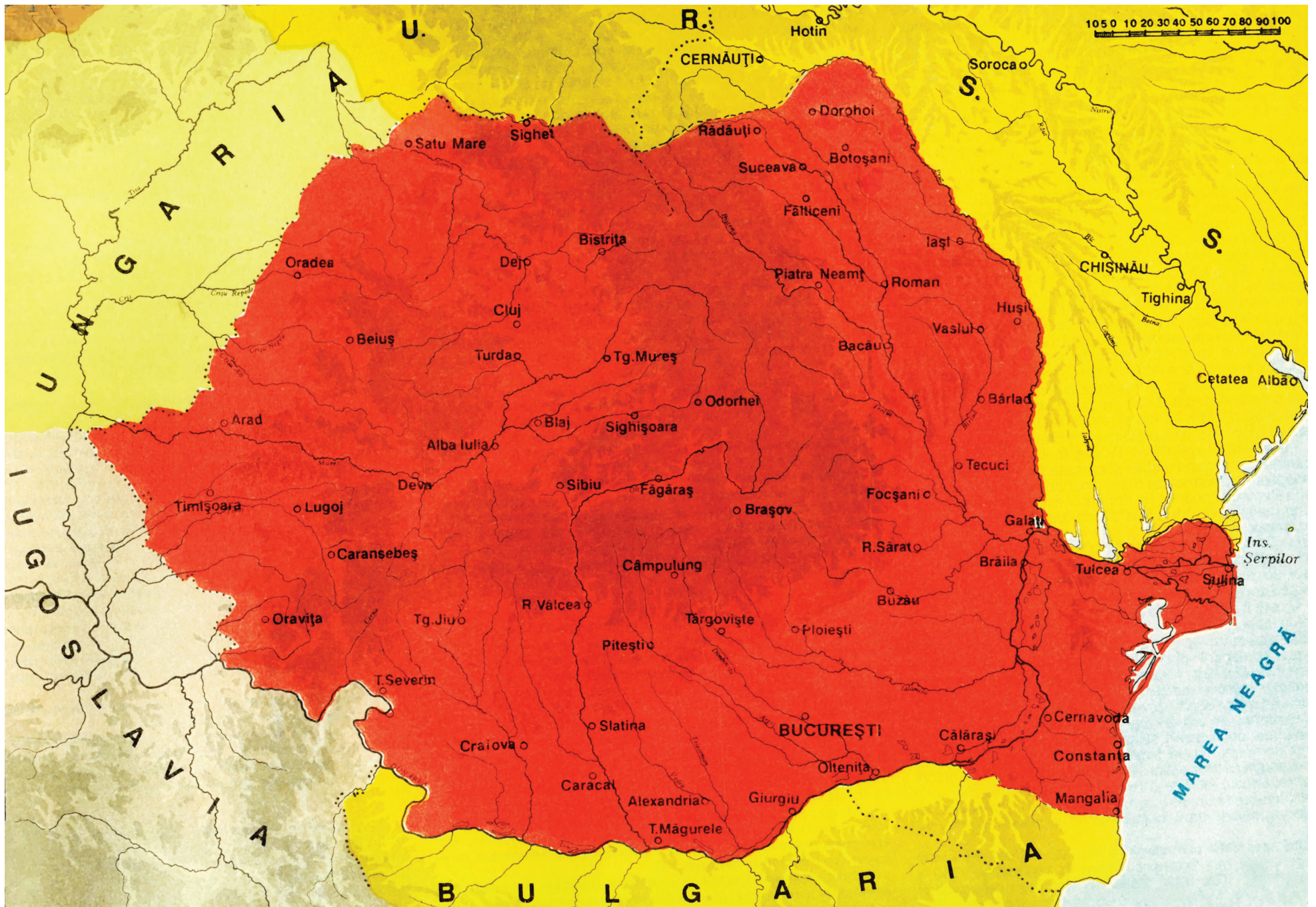
Ion Gh. Pelivan contemplating the fate of Bessarabia in 1942, in Bucharest



Evoking the events from Bessarabia at the anniversary of a quarter of a century since the union with the motherland



Map of Bessarabia



14. Romania after the 1947 Peace Treaty

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14. Romania after the 1947 Peace Treaty

**From whatever point of view one approaches
the question, Bessarabia is a Roumanian
province and can belong to no other country
but Roumania.**

Iacob Pelican



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