

## **CONFLICTING SECURITY CONCERNS ACROSS THE UKRAINE-MOLDOVA BORDER**

*By Natalya Belitser, Pylyp Orlyk Institute for Democracy, Kyiv, Ukraine*

Moldova and Romania are currently the only neighbouring countries with which Ukraine still have unsettled border problems (not touching an issue of the Ukrainian-Russian border that may prove to be much more difficult to resolve). Notwithstanding the objective difficulties stipulated by the inherited legacy of Russian and Soviet imperialist policies, that had drawn and redrawn those borders proceeding from their own interest, some additional factors of more subjective nature could also be identified as hampering the processes of delimitation and demarcation of the disputed pieces of land (and island). Certain coolness and mutual mistrust are evident in both Ukraine-Moldova and Ukraine-Romania bilateral relations. By all means, such a situation has negatively influenced a process of settlement of the Transdnestrian conflict, which remains a serious threat to regional and European security and stability, and the main security concern of Ukraine. A hope to reach any progress in resolving this painful problem depends much on whether a coordinated strategy and a plan of concerted actions of the three countries most interested in it, would be elaborated. Indeed, the aim of preventing further strengthening of the Transdnestrian separatism, and curbing totalitarian regime established in the self-proclaimed Transdnestrian Moldovan Republic by its leader Igor Smirnov, is in the best national interests of Moldova, as well as of Ukraine and Romania. Whereas such a potent regional power as the RF, in pursuit of its own political and geopolitical interests, might have developed quite different plans and intentions. Taking into account these circumstances, it seems reasonable to identify the factors that negatively affect trilateral Moldovan-Ukrainian-Romanian relations, and to seek jointly possible ways to overcome existing difficulties. One of the promising approaches would be to present each side's perspective concerning the weak points and troubled areas, thus providing a space for free and open discussion to be followed by defusing the tensions and ensuring the increased confidence and partnership relations. Therefore, the issues below will be addressed as seen by some actors from within Ukrainian civil society.

### **Bilateral Ukrainian-Moldovan Relations.**

Recently, these relations by no means can be regarded as dynamically and positively developing. A number of reasons may explain an obvious lack of friendly cooperation between the two neighbouring post-Soviet states. While some of them are objective by nature, subjective perceptions often based on mutual suspicions, distrust and other sentiments contribute to this negative trend. Moreover, whereas subjective causes of coolness in Ukrainian-Moldovan relations may actually be conditioned by the reasons quite different across the border, too often they are also related to a scarcity of objective informational coverage of the developments on the other side of the borderline with the ensuing misinterpretations and misperceptions. The lack of a political will, strong enough for establishing fruitful cooperation, seems to be common to both sides, as well as low level of mutual interest within the respective societies, traditionally concerned with more potent regional players.

The situation was further exacerbated after the Party of Moldovan Communist (PCM) won on 25 February 2001 the parliamentary elections,<sup>1</sup> and on 7 April the head of PCM Vladimir Voronin was officially sworn into office as the new president of Moldovan Republic.<sup>2</sup> Subsequent pro-Russian bend in the Moldovan foreign policy, despite the same tendency (traditional for the pre-election times) in Ukraine, has caused additional complications with regard to bilateral Ukrainian-Moldovan

---

<sup>1</sup> According to the first count, the PCM received 49,9% of the votes, and only after recounting the figure 50,7% was declared thus meaning the victory of the PCM (see "Communists of Moldova and the Future of the Country's Ethno-Political Conflicts" by Priit Jarve, ECMI Brief # 3, March 2001.

<sup>2</sup> See: "Moldova Elects New Communist president" by Angela Sirbu, TOL Week in Review, 2-8 April 2001.

relationship. A kind of stagnation or even deterioration of the long-standing efforts to resolve a number of important issues of bilateral relations can be admitted. Some of these issues should be considered as a priority for the foreign and domestic policy of both countries.

Let us address some of them, taking into account the latest developments.

### **Delimitation and demarcation of the Ukrainian-Moldovan interstate border.**

The agreement on interstate border between Ukraine and Moldova has been signed in 1999, and ratified by Ukraine in spring of 2000. According to this agreement, Chisinau should have transferred to Ukraine a part of a road from Odessa to Reni near the Palanka village, in exchange for Ukraine's commitment to provide for Moldova a part of territory ensuring Moldova's access to the Danube riverbank. Such a decision raised, however, protests from the Palanka residents, supported also by Moldovan intelligentsia and national-radical parties, thus preventing its ratification by the Moldovan parliament. Promises by the president Voronin to promote ratification of the agreement in June 2001 using such a leverage as a "party discipline" has failed, too. As a result, Kyiv switched to a more assertive position, and during the first visit to Ukraine of the Moldovan Premier Vasile Tarlev on 9-10 July 2001, he was told that in case of further delay with ratification, Ukrainian side would take some economic sanctions concerning, inter alia, the rigid parity of cargo transit through the territories of both countries.<sup>3</sup> This threat compelled the Moldovan Prime Minister to make concessions, and indeed, negotiations on the delimitation and demarcation of the interstate border gained some impetus.<sup>4</sup> Recently, the border agreement has been eventually ratified by the Moldovan parliament, and the joint demarcation commission has been formed that completed its first organizational meeting in Chernivtsy by reaching a decision on the beginning of concrete steps on demarcation and establishment of check points.<sup>5</sup>

Though these developments can formally be regarded as positive, without proper informational campaign to justify such kind of decisions and gain for them some public support, they may incite an additional mistrust in the relationship between the two nations. There were indications of certain aggravation of the already existing Moldovans' suspicions of what had been perceived as Ukrainian selfishness and even potential aggressiveness, marring the prospects of further mutual support and friendship at the hard way to democracy and European integration. (For example, during the state visit of Vasile Tarlev to Kyiv, a rally took place in Chisinau under slogan of "Not a Bit of Land to Ukrainians!").

**A problem of customs.** Rather difficult turned out also a question of customs regulations aimed at the effective suppression of large-scale smuggling of arms and drugs across the border of the self-proclaimed Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic (PMR). During the working meeting of the two presidents in Vinnitsa on November 9 2001, they reached only what has been called a "political decision" on the issue.<sup>6</sup> The most problematic matter remained the joint control of the Ukrainian-Moldovan border, because Transdniestrian border guard prevents their Moldovan counterparts from performing their duties at the essential part of the interstate border, located at the territory of the PMR. Since Moldova suffered huge financial and economic losses due to illegal trade and trafficking across Ukraine-PMR border, in the summer of 2001, decisive steps were undertaken consisting of introducing a new custom stamp to be applied at all Moldovan border crossings, including those between Transdniestria and Ukraine. This move has been declared by the PMR president Igor Smirnov as an attempt to establish economic blockade for Transdniestria, and to

<sup>3</sup> See: "Communist Moldova: A Show on the Political Championship of the CIS" by Olesya Yahno, 11.07.2001, at <http://part.orr.org.ua> (in Russian).

<sup>4</sup> "Ukraine and Moldova Agreed on Five Checkpoints in the State Border", 19.11.2001, News at <http://part.orr.org.ua> (in Russian)

<sup>5</sup> "Moldova and Ukraine Reached a Decision on the Beginning of a Border Demarcation". 06.03.2002, News at <http://part.orr.org.ua> (in Russian).

<sup>6</sup> "Ukraine, Moldova Continue Dialogue on Custom Issues", Interfax News Agency, November 9, 2001.

hamper its trade with neighbouring Ukraine. For the effective implementation of this measure aimed at taking control over the “black hole” of the PMR part of Moldova’s border, Moldovan customs officers should have been deployed on the Ukrainian side of the border, at joint Ukrainian-Moldovan crossing points. Ukraine’s hesitation to consent with such a decision or, rather, its repeated refusals to allow Moldovan custom officers on its side of the border<sup>7</sup> fuelled anti-Ukrainian passions in Moldova. These reached its culmination at the end of 2001-beginning of 2002, when the issue was made a subject of international discussion. The Memorandum “On the Situation on the Eastern Border of Moldova” has been submitted by Moldova to the OSCE, Council of Europe, European Union and other European institutions. Kyiv, together with Tiraspol, was charged with promoting smuggling across the Ukraine-PMR border; the reluctance to establish joint Moldovan-Ukrainian customs controls was presumed to be caused by the illegal profits in which some of Ukrainian authorities might have had their share. In the official governmental response the Ukrainian side characterized these steps as “unfriendly”, though introduction of the new custom stamp was recognized as the internal affair of sovereign Moldova. However, in the same document this move was declared as inconsistent with the bilateral agreement signed between Moldova and Ukraine on 8 May 1997, and since this decision had not been agreed upon with the Ukrainian side, it was also said that the old stamps (in the possession of the PMR customs) “remain valid according to international law”.<sup>8</sup>

This critical phase created what can be considered a diplomatic crisis in Moldovan-Ukrainian relations – a situation that both countries, taking into account their actual, rather difficult circumstances and prospects, could by no means benefit from.

At the same time, in all official statements it has usually been emphasized that whatever issue of bilateral relations is addressed, Ukraine always proceeds from the general notion of the state sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Moldova. For example, while tackling the particular issue of border crossings, Ukrainian Prime Minister Anatoliy Kinakh stated in November 2001 that “Ukraine is not going to decide on check points and customs at the Ukrainian-Transdnestrian border separately from the rest of Ukrainian-Moldovan border”.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, recent developments allow to assume that recognizing eventually essential losses following deterioration of bilateral interstate relations, both sides reached mutually acceptable agreement. A clear indication for this are media reports according to which Ukraine, while announcing on the beginning of the demarcation of the Ukrainian-Moldovan border, stated that this step should be supplemented with the establishment of joint customs controls.<sup>10</sup> That signifies the final acceptance of exactly that contested point on which Moldovan side so hotly insisted – for quite a while, without evident success. It remains to be seen whether the another suggestion of Moldova, namely, on deploying at border and customs controls along the troubled area of Transdnestria, in addition to Ukrainian and Moldovan, also international customs officers from European countries such as Germany, Austria, and Portugal, will be also accepted by Ukraine. Positive response to such a proposal would actually mean not only acquiring a practical help for curbing those large-scale smuggling and trafficking illegal activities that alarmed many regional security concerns, but also passing a test for the sincerity of the intention of Ukrainian authorities to achieve this goal, and to confirm its pro-European course of integration.

**The Transdnestrian conflict.** The history of this conflict has been widely covered by numerous research and analytical papers, comments, and media reports. Although Ukraine, together with the

---

<sup>7</sup> “Moldova: Russian Envoy Says Moscow to Keep Troops in Transdnester” by Eugen Tomiuc, RFE/RL, 4 February 2002.

<sup>8</sup> “Answer to Unfriendly Statements” by Anatoliy Martsynovsky, “Holos Ukrainy”, 6 February 2002. (in Ukrainian)

<sup>9</sup> “Ukraine and Moldova Agreed on Five Checkpoints in the State Border”, 19.11.2001, News at <http://part.org.ua>.

<sup>10</sup> “Moldova and Ukraine Reached a Decision on the Beginning of a Border Demarcation”. 06.03.2002, News at <http://part.org.ua>

OSCE and the Russian Federation, is one of the three official intermediaries in the settlement of the conflict between the Republic of Moldova and its break away region – the self-proclaimed Transdnestrian Moldovan Republic - its actual role in the process is much weaker than that played by Russia and therefore, attracts less attention. (For example, although both Ukraine and the RF act as guarantor states facilitating agreements between Moldova and Transdnestria, only Russia's remnants of the 14<sup>th</sup> Army troops are still stationed in the conflict area, whereas Ukraine has 10 military observers). Besides, Ukraine's true intentions and positions in regard to this particular conflict seem raising some doubts in Moldova and beyond.

As one of the reasons stipulating this mistrust, Ukraine's standpoint might have been compromised by the insistence with which Igor Smirnov, the leader of the self-proclaimed PMR, repeatedly call on the Ukraine's military presence in the security area, and makes requests on bringing Ukrainian peace-making troops to the Transdnestrian territory (thus joining the trilateral peace-making forces). It has been implied, probably, that after the withdrawal of Russian militaries stationed in the conflict zone, Ukrainian "Slavic brothers" would serve as a reliable force to protect predominantly Slavic population of the PMR against the possible military aggression from Chisinau. In fact, as has been rightly emphasized by one of the leading Ukrainian think tanks, "Ukraine, however, does not share this approach. On the contrary, its concept consists in reducing the level of military saturation in the security area after a mechanism to ensure the political and military guarantees of security is worked out, reduction in the level of military presence should go hand in hand with increase of the role of military observers".<sup>11</sup>

In retrospect, it could be stated that for Ukraine this particular conflict has presented from its very beginning maybe the most serious security concern of all of the others raging in the territory of the post-USSR. Its immediate vicinity caused, inter alia, a sudden influx of about 40,000 of refugees whom Ukrainian authorities were urged to deal with in 1992. Therefore, in contrast to the well-known geopolitical interests and aspirations of Russia, from the very beginning of this conflict, its successful settlement – in the sense of obligatory preserving the territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova - has been in the best national interests of Ukraine. On 8 December 1991 Ukraine recognized the independence of Moldova within the borders of MSSR, and in the letter of greeting dispatched to the first elected president of Moldova, Mircea Snegur, Ukrainian president Kravchuk stated that Kyiv would like to give a new sense to Moldovan-Ukrainian relations, compatible with the new realities.

Ukraine's interest in settling the Transdnestrian conflict had been evident within the CIS framework, as well as in a wider international context. It was not accidentally that at the Kyiv meeting in March 1992 the heads of CIS countries adopted a Declaration in which it was stated that the territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova is the key element for the entire stability in the region. Further activities of the Ukraine's government that sought to mediate the conflict at its rather early stage, were focused at trying to engage broader international participation. For example, a meeting of specialists to try to defuse the conflict included those from Ukraine, Romania, Hungary, Russia and Moldova; Ukrainian government also called on the CSCE's Chair-in Office, Jiri Dienstbier from Czechoslovakia, to intervene.<sup>12</sup> (Unfortunately, at the time, the CSCE was just beginning to set up its Conflict Prevention Centre in Vienna, and it was overwhelmed with the escalating crisis in the former Yugoslavia. Therefore, the CSCE Mission to Moldova has been established only on 4 February 1993, i.e., after – not before the short but bloody fighting between the Moldovan military and the units of the Transdnestrian Republican guard supported by the Russian 14<sup>th</sup> Army). Therefore, initial attempts to bring an end to the conflict were undertaken by

---

<sup>11</sup> "Problems of Settling the Conflict in Transdnestria" May 2000, in: Monitoring Foreign and Security Policy of Ukraine, CPCFPU, Occasional Paper 23/1998, <http://www.foreignpolicy.org.ua>

<sup>12</sup> "Disintegrating States" by P.Terrence Hopmann (Brown University), p.13-25, at: <http://www.ccpdc.org/pubs/zart/ch6.htm>.

the Moldovan President Snegur, Russian President Yeltsin, Ukrainian President Kravchuk, and Romanian president Iliescu. At a summit in Moscow on July 6-7, 1992, the parties agreed to a cease-fire and to send a trilateral peacekeeping force consisting of Russian, Moldovan, and Transdniestrian troops, thus leaving aside a question of possible Ukrainian involvement in peacekeeping operations.

Later on, Ukraine continued its efforts by such steps as signing with the RF the Agreement on transit through the Ukrainian territory of military units, arms and military equipment provisionally located in Transdniestria (1997), signing, along with the Presidents of Moldova and Russia, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office, and the Transdniestrian leader a "Memorandum on the Basis for Normalization of Relations between the Republic of Moldova and Transdniestria (8 May 1997, Moscow), and initiating a meeting of mediators and conflict parties that was held in Odessa on 19-20 March 1998. At this meeting, two important agreements were signed by both the Moldovan President and Transdniestrian, namely, "Measures of Confidence and the Development of Contacts" and a "Protocol on Several Priority Steps to Activate the Political Settlement of the Transdniestrian Problem". According to those agreements, the peace-making forces of the opposing parties should be reduced, and the mechanism to implement security guarantees to be launched.<sup>13</sup>

It is important to note that at that time, the Transdniestrian side also committed not to oppose to the withdrawal of Russian arms from its territory.<sup>14</sup> However, in defiance to the readiness of Moldova to observe its obligations, to reduce their servicemen presence in the conflict zone, and to complete their withdrawal by 12 October 1998 even in a unilateral way, Transdniestrian side actually blocked the implementation of the Odessa agreement. This has been done through making unrealistic demands as, for example, for the official examination by Chisinau of such document as Declaration on the Transdniestrian Statehood, also by impeding the regular meetings of the Joint Control Commission (the JCC has been established to supervise the activities of the RF peacekeeping contingent stationed on both sides of the Dniester river). In general, it is already evident that the Transdniestrian side of the conflict often disregards its own commitments, and reveals strong resistance to the very idea of demilitarization of the security zone. Despite the PMR resistance, the then Moldovan leadership declared its intention to continue the reduction of the peace-making forces to the level envisaged by the Odessa agreement. The Co-Head of the Joint Control Commission from the Moldovan party also emphasized that the measures taken for the settlement of the conflict, and for promoting the renewed contacts between people, were highly appreciated by the population inhabiting both banks of the Dniester, as well as by international community.

Supporting these initiatives of Moldova, Ukraine tried to re-activate its role in the Transdniestrian conflict settlement. A settlement plan has been proposed consisting of several consecutive steps for the implementation of the Odessa agreements, and suggesting precise terms for each of them. These measures included determination a status of the PTMR, schedule of meetings of the leaders of the sides of conflict, and a control mechanism for observing the guarantees of settlement, including the bringing of military observers' missions to the security zone. Ukraine was the first party-guarantor to send its 10 observers pursuant to the Odessa agreements, and to allocate from the state budget the funds necessary for their activities.

According to these proposals, determination of the PMR's status would be addressed by an expert group consisting of representatives of states-guarantors and the OSCE. On 30 November 1998 a meeting of the expert group at the deputy minister level was held in Kyiv. Representatives of Ukraine, Moldova, Russia and the OSCE participated in the meeting, whereas representatives of the PMR did not arrive. Taking into account that the most difficult problem of the conflict settlement

---

<sup>13</sup> "Ukraine and Settlement of the Transdniestria Conflict", October-December 1998, in: Monitoring Foreign and Security Policy of Ukraine, CPCFP, Occasional Paper 23/1998, <http://www.foreignpolicy.org.ua>.

<sup>14</sup> ITAR-TASS/DINAU, 23 March 1998.

remained that of the PMR's status, Ukraine has then suggested to apply a principle of a "suspended status".<sup>15</sup> These developments were followed by signing on 16 July 1999 of the Kyiv Joint Statement by the President of Moldova and the Leader of Transdniestria, together with the representatives of the guarantor states, the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation and the President of Ukraine. In this text it was agreed that the parties will construct their relations on the following principles: common borders and common economic, legal, defense and social domains.

One more step forward took place on 20-24 March 2000, when the OSCE Mission together with the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized a "Working Table" on the Transdniestrian settlement in Kiev. Participants included the heads of the experts' groups from both the Moldovan and Transdniestrian sides, the three mediators (Russian Federation, Ukraine and OSCE) as well as experts on international law, constitutional systems and conflict resolution. The specialists produced recommendations on the structure, state organs, and division of competencies of the "common state"<sup>16</sup>, and stages and possible guarantees for implementation of the settlement.<sup>17</sup>

From this brief overview of Ukraine's position it follows that at the level of the official policy, public statements of democratically-minded leaders, and practical steps, not a single sign of Kyiv's actual support for separatists was ever visible - in sharp contrast to that of Russia. (At earlier stages, the latter provided such a support not only by military, but by political means as well. It was reported, for example, that on 5 April 1992 Russian Vice President Rutskoi visited Tiraspol to show support for the Russian enclave, and after returning to Moscow, urged the Russian State Duma to recognize the "Dniester Republic"<sup>18</sup>). Despite this undisputed fact, Ukraine's role in the Transdniestrian conflict has often been questioned, and a number of rumours circulated within the breakaway region, as well as in the rest of Moldova. Regrettably, these may to some extent be justified by occasional publications in Ukrainian media, like the one claiming that "Transdniestria is actually for a long time our ally, though some politicians stubbornly try not to see it... Ukraine should change decisively its policy towards Transdniestria... and to turn [this region] into the devoted sworn brother".<sup>19</sup> It should always be kept in mind that in Ukraine, like in any other country, quite different types of media exist, including that known as being anti-Western and Russia- and Slavs-oriented. Therefore, no wonder that rather notorious publications appear targeting not only Moldova but also all other countries, nations and political groupings (including still condemned "Ukrainian nationalists") that do not share such preferences, or do not recognize Ukraine's belonging to "East-Christian, Slavic Brotherhood". Certain indecisiveness in dealing with the sides of conflict, and in particular, direct contacts of Ukrainian president Kuchma with the leader of Transdniestrian separatists Igor Smirnov also contribute to Moldova's mistrust when it comes to Kyiv's true positions and intentions.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> "Political Status Problem of the Transdniestrian Moldovan Republic and Conflict Settlement in Transdniestria", and "Problems of Settling the Conflict in Transdniestria" May 2000, in: Monitoring Foreign and Security Policy of Ukraine, CPCFP, Occasional Paper 23/1998, <http://www.foreignpolicy.org.ua>

<sup>16</sup> The notion of "common state" implies the establishment of the common political space for the parties of conflict. This principle emerged initially in the Memorandum of 8 May 1997 signed in Moscow, and the author of this term was the then Russia's Foreign Minister Yevgeniy Primakov, who later, in 2000, was appointed by the RF President Putin as chairman of the State Commission for Settlement of the Transdniestrian Conflict. (See Occasional Papers 9/2000 and 42/2000 at: <http://www.foreignpolicy.org.ua> ).

<sup>17</sup> See: "OSCE Mission to Moldova – Overview" at <http://www.osce.org/moldova/history>.

<sup>18</sup> "Moldovan Conflict Creates New Dilemmas for Ukraine" by Bohdan Nahaulo, RFE/RL Research report, Vol.1, # 20, 15 May 1992.

<sup>19</sup> "Ukraine Remains Alone" by Gennady Korzh, "Kiyevskiy Telegraph", 13-19.08.2001.

<sup>20</sup> For example, such a meeting that occurred on 22 October 2001 was perceived by one of the Moldovan analysts from the Institute for Public Policy as a "demonstrative meeting with a state criminal that is by itself an evidence that Ukraine, like Russia, do not wish to see Transdniestria within the territorially integral, sovereign Moldova". By all means, such a deduction from the very fact of meeting is too emotional and far-reaching, demonstrating a special sensitivity of Moldova's public to the whole issue rather than anything else.

Surprisingly, assumed Ukrainian plans and ambitions relating to the Transdnestrian region become also a matter of consideration by a number of political analysts and experts engaged in studying regional conflicts. As was noted by one of researchers, “further hardening the attitudes of the Russian population were widespread rumours that Ukraine and Romania were preparing to make a swap of the Transdnestrian region to be returned to Ukraine in exchange for Ukraine’s turning over former Romanian territory now within its borders. Even though the government of Ukraine went to great lengths to deny that such a possibility was being ever considered, it nonetheless gained considerable credibility among major portions of the Russian population of Transdnestria”.<sup>21</sup> What appeared as a further surprise for Ukrainian authorities and society as a whole was that some vicious intentions of Ukraine to avail from this conflict by annexing the disputed territory were also seriously considered by some researchers and analysts. In particular, a quotation from a paper published by such a respectable agency as The Conflict Studies Research Centre (Directorate General Development and Doctrine, Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, England), could be present as a striking illustration. It reads as follows: “Officially Kyiv was definitely coherent in supporting the withdrawal of the Russian Army from Transdnestria and the maintenance of the integrity of the Republic of Moldova, although it could not control the involvement of some paramilitary units (UNO-UNSO) that fought on the side of separatist guards against Moldova. Needless to say, the ethnic dimension persisted in Ukraine, as many diplomats and politicians saw the independence of ex-MSSR as very fragile, and started to prepare themselves for a scenario of fast annexation of PMR territories to Ukraine, a policy strongly opposed by Russia, who strove to maintain this strip of land for whatever reasons and arguments as a region of strategic interest. From Tiraspol's point of view, a scenario of annexation by Kyiv was clearly an option, but not without conditions. They would condition their adherence to Ukraine by a significant regional autonomy, which was viewed as not too appealing to Kyiv. In fact, Ukrainian authorities would fear to keep intact a politically strong autonomy as a link to Novorossia, a chain of Russian speaking oblasts which starts in Tiraspol, and ends in Crimea. Obviously, by taking this step, Ukraine would easily become the target of several neighbouring countries, deprived of their historical provinces by Tsarist and Soviet leaders to the benefit of the current Ukraine, and which given a chance, would claim back their old territories...”<sup>22</sup> This extended quotation and other similar considerations may serve as a clear demonstration of how poorly Ukrainian realities, troubles, and concerns are understood from the outside.

**Recent Developments.** Unfortunately, positive trends in the whole process of Transdnestrian conflict settlement seemed to stagnate in 2000, and later developments can be regarded rather as its deterioration that was stipulated by general destabilization of the Moldovan political situation, and immediate availing from this by the Transdnestrian leadership that took this advantage to strengthen its independence from Moldova. The reasons for this – to be assessed and analyzed by all interested parties - seem to be of particular importance for the future of both Moldova and Ukraine, and should be well learnt as a bitter lesson by populations of both countries.

**Return of communist rule in Moldova – a lesson for Ukraine.** In retrospect, negative trends in Moldova’s general situation and particularly, in the attempts to reach some progress in settling the Transdnestrian crisis seem to be triggered by the events following the decision of the parliament of Moldova to restrict powers of the then President Petru Lucinschi by constitutional amendments in July 2000. A failure to agree on his successor caused a constitutional crisis, the parliament was then dissolved and early elections were called for February 2001. Destabilization of the internal political situation in the Republic of Moldova was immediately availed by the authorities of the Transdnestrian region that in a very provocative move of August 2000, established its own Foreign

---

<sup>21</sup> “Disintegrating States” by P.Terrence Hopmann (Brown University), p.16-17, at: <http://www.ccpdc.org/pubs/zart/ch6.htm>

<sup>22</sup> “Social Multipolarity in Moldova” by Igor Munteanu, CSRC, p. 31, at: <http://www.ppc.pims.org/Projects/csrg/g80moldova.htm>.

Ministry, a representative of which subsequently attended a Russian-sponsored “summit conference” with the invited “foreign ministers” of Abkhazia, Nagorno-Karabkh, and South Ossetia.<sup>23</sup> The self-proclaimed PMR also began to use its own stamps and seals at customs clearance.

Meanwhile, at the noon of the 2001 parliamentary elections in Moldova, one more attempt to push forward the negotiations process at the level of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Russia and Moldova (Kharkiv, February 16, 2001) was undertaken by Ukraine. It looks, however, like a kind of repetition, in a weaker version, of basic principles agreed upon earlier. In the document signed by the three Foreign Ministers it was said that “having discussed the results of the negotiation process on regulation of the conflict consequences in the Transdnistrian region of Moldova, [they] welcome the resumption of dialogue between Chisinau and Tiraspol within the framework of the existing mechanism of negotiation process that has become possible due to combined efforts of both sides and mediators. It was noted that in the course of the last meetings in Budapest and Kyiv, the parties of the negotiation process had worked out a common vision of possible ways of reaching final settlement of the crisis.”<sup>24</sup>

This cautiously optimistic vision, however, has not been confirmed by the events that ensued after the communists came to power as a result of the Moldovan parliamentary elections on 25 February 2001. (The PCRM won just over 50 % of the vote, and gained 77 seats out of 101; since in Moldova, the president is chosen not by popular elections but by parliament, in early April 2001 the PCRM leader Vladimir Voronin was elected as the country’s new president).

For the time being, after communist rule in Moldova has lasted for over a year, it is already possible to compare their pre-election promises and intentions with actual results of the activities in all of the main spheres of public life, domestic and foreign policy. In particular, the inaugural address by the leader of the Moldovan Communist Party (PCRM) Vladimir Voronin should be recalled. Voronin criticised his predecessors saying that they had reduced Moldova to humanitarian catastrophe and dire poverty, and had brought Moldova the unhappy distinction of being the most corrupt country in Europe and the poorest country in the CIS. He declared his wish to create “modern socialism” by forging closer ties with Russia and increasing the role of the state to improve the economy, which has shrunk by two-thirds since 1991. According to his words, Moldova should become a “European Cuba” that must hold out against “imperialist predators” in Europe, as Cuba had in the Americas.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, observers noted conspicuously absent statements about making Moldova a member of the Russian-Belarus Union, and to give Russian language official status – the promises widely used during the PCRM election campaign.<sup>26</sup> With respect to the Transdnistrian conflict, on the very day of his election as a President of Moldova, Voronin told journalists that solving the problem of the breakaway region of Transdnister would be a matter of priority.

**Moldovan Communist government and Transdnistrian conflict.** Indeed, there was a short period following communist victory when a prospect of reconciliation between the central authorities and those of the breakaway region seemed realistic.<sup>27</sup> In particular, it could have been expected that the pre-election Communist declarations on bringing Moldova into the Russia-Belarus Union, and introducing Russian as the official language would promote further approximation of

---

<sup>23</sup> “Moldova/Transdnistrian Conflict” by Robert Cutler, Foreign Policy in Focus, November 6, 2001 (available at [http://www.fpif.org/selfdetermination/conflicts/moldova\\_body.html](http://www.fpif.org/selfdetermination/conflicts/moldova_body.html)).

<sup>24</sup> Joint Statement by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Russia and Moldova, Kharkiv, February 16, 2001.

<sup>25</sup> BBC NEWS. Country profile – Moldova. 8.03.2002.

<sup>26</sup> “Moldova Elects New Communist President” by Angela Sirbu, TOL Week in Review, 2-8 April 2001.

<sup>27</sup> “Communist Party Wins Elections” by Ron Synovitz, RFE/RL Newline, 26 February 2001, at: <http://www.rferl.org/nca/features/2001/02/26022001115222.asp/>



the positions pertaining to both Igor Smirnov and Vladimir Voronin.<sup>28</sup> It was already announced by some political analysts that “after national elections of 2001 in Moldova the contacts between the President of Moldova and the leader of Transdniestria have intensified. A new agreement by them was signed on 16 May 2001 in Tiraspol”.<sup>29</sup>

It should be noted, however, that from the very beginning of this new stage of Moldova-Transdniestria dispute, despite the Voronin’s declared intention to make settlement of the problem of the breakaway region of Transdniestria a priority, actual developments by no means showed that this commitment was also shared by the other side. For example, in defiance of the official invitation sent to Tiraspol, not a single representative of the PMR authorities visited a ceremony to greet the newly elected Moldovan president.<sup>30</sup> On April 9, the first meeting between Voronin and Smirnov did take place, and it was agreed to hold regular monthly meetings to speed up negotiations toward resolving the 11-year-long dispute. However, very soon, on 13 May 2001, those good intentions of the Moldovan government to improve relations with the leadership of the Transdniestria region were subjected to a difficult trial. That day, border guards at a checkpoint between Transdniestria region and the rest of Moldova prevented president Voronin, who was going to visit the monastery Noul Neamt, from crossing the (de facto existing) Moldovan-Transdniestrian border, and told him that the order to bar his entry had been given by what they called “a higher authority” in Tiraspol.<sup>31</sup> And though this (intended?) offence aimed, perhaps, at making impossible the next round of bilateral negotiations scheduled for May 16 in Tiraspol, the meeting did take place. A number of agreements were signed, including those on economic cooperation, the free access of journalists to cover news events on the two sides of Dniester, coordination of tax policies, removing custom points, guaranteeing foreign investments, and recognition of each side’s official documents. Although these agreements have been considered as a tentative first step towards larger autonomy for the breakaway region, this step did not lead to actual improvement of bilateral relations that remained tense, or to the implementation of the above decisions. The same pertains to the previous gesture of the Transdniestrian officials of releasing Ilie Iliascu, who spent nine years in prison on charges of pro-Romanian terrorist acts. According to some analysts, Igor Smirnov’s decision to liberate this political prisoner in fact only strengthened his standing by showing him to be a magnanimous leader with whom one can negotiate. Also, since this move was believed to be stipulated by the intervention of the Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, it was therefore regarded as strengthening the separatist’s position and Russia’s influence in the region.<sup>32</sup>

Indeed, the communists’ victory in parliamentary elections in Moldova did ensure its closer ties with Russia, and more benevolent attitude of the Russian officials towards the two main contested issues – the status of Transdniestria and the presence of Russian troops in the region. These unresolved issues prevented the two countries from signing a basic treaty for 10 years following Moldova’s independence. Frequent visits to Moscow by president Voronin, and his negotiating such a treaty eventuated by a success. Bilateral treaty was finally signed, and Moldova seemed at last gaining official Russian recognition of its independence and territorial integrity. This treaty, having been promptly ratified by the Moldovan parliament, later has also been ratified by the Russian Duma.<sup>33</sup> However, neither this treaty nor further concessions made by the new government of Moldova to Moscow as well as to Tiraspol, promoted any real advancement in settling the frozen conflict. As William Hill, the chief of the OSCE mission to Moldova, told journalists in Chisinau on

---

<sup>28</sup> “Communists of Moldova and the Future of the Country’s Ethno-Political Conflicts” by Priit Jarve, ECMI Brief # 3, March 2001.

<sup>29</sup> See “Transdniestria Table” issued by ECMI, available at [http://www.ecmi.de/cps/documents\\_moldova.html](http://www.ecmi.de/cps/documents_moldova.html).

<sup>30</sup> “Moldova Elects New Communist President” by Angela Sirbu, TOL Week in Review, 2-8 April 2001.

<sup>31</sup> “Moldova: Transdniestria Denies President Access to Monastery” by Eugen Tomiuc, RFE/RL, 15 May 2001.

<sup>32</sup> “Moldova: Release of Transdniestria Prisoner Fails to Ease Tensions with Romania” by Eugen Tomiuc, RFE/RL, Prague, 17 May 2001.

<sup>33</sup> “Moldova: Russian Envoy Says Moscow to Keep Troops in Transdniestria” by Eugen Tomiuc, RFE/RL, 4 February 2002.

13 July 2001, after a fast start the negotiations between Moldova and the separatists have “slowed down”. He also said that the complicated problems of the Transdnier’s “special status” necessitate making “bigger compromises” and that this takes a longer time, though added that “in general, the situation is positive and must be so maintained by proceeding without further delays in implementing solutions already agreed on”. Hill also informed that OSCE member states have begun contributing to a fund that would finance the dismantling of those parts of the Russian arsenal that cannot be evacuated from the Transdnier.<sup>34</sup>

Additional difficulties have also arisen with regard to Russia’s obligations under an agreement signed in 1999 at the Istanbul summit of the OSCE, which called for the removal of the military hardware by the end of 2001, and removal of equipment, light ammunition, and withdrawal of all of its troops by the end of 2002. Despite Voronin’s frequent visits to Moscow, and meetings and discussions with the RF president Putin, those operations have often been halted by the protests coming from the breakaway Transdnierian region, with wide possibilities for Russia to refer to them while pursuing its own interests. Indeed, in 2001 Russia began destroying weapons and ammunition deposited in the region, and taking away military hardware.<sup>35</sup> But the operation was suspended in the end of August “because of protests by Transdnier residents”.<sup>36</sup> (In August, a group of protesters from Transdnieria prevented OSCE observers from entering the area where the Russian military equipment was arranged to be destroyed. Other protests against the removal of the equipment took place in Tiraspol and other cities of Transdnieria). Transdnierian officials often expressed their general discontent with the plan, and called off their protests only after Moscow promised to cancel approximately \$300 million in Tiraspol’s gas debts, which amounts to about one-third of the province’s total debts for gas. Therefore, according to Russian officials cited in the Moldovan media, on 14 November the final trainload of Russian military hardware was shipped out of the breakaway province, though local observers expected that Russian military would have a harder time meeting the deadline for defusing the estimated 40,000 metric tons of ammunition, which has been stored in depots in the Transdnierian city of Colbasna.<sup>37</sup>

Most recent events suggest even more rigid position to be taken by Russia, which is now considering maintaining its forces in the region as peacemakers. According to the RFE/RL, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Trubnikov, Moscow's top mediator in the dispute between Moldova and Transdnier, during his visit to Moldova on 31 January-1 February did not deny reports that Moscow was working on an additional agreement to keep Russian forces (about 2,500 soldiers constituting the so-called Transdnier Operative Group of Russian Troops) in the breakaway region as "peacekeepers." After meeting with separatist leaders in Transdnier Trubnikov said that Moscow will fulfill the 1999 agreement, but that Russian forces may stay in Transdnier to help consolidate a future agreement on the region's status, and admitted that "Russian troops do not intend to leave [Transdnier]. We will fulfill [the 1999 OSCE agreement] even more actively, in the hope that [the] OSCE, too, will be interested in having guarantees for the [future] Transdnier status and for consolidating this status... We will discuss this problem with our colleagues within the OSCE." <sup>38</sup>

Portuguese diplomat Manuel Marcello Curto, the OSCE's representative in the Transdnier dispute, said the organization has not yet received a concrete proposal from Moscow regarding its troops. Curto, during his fact-finding mission to Moldova, said on 1 February 2002 that "If it [the

---

<sup>34</sup> RFE/RL NEWSLINE Vol. 5., # 132, Part II, 16 July 2001.

<sup>35</sup> “Last Trainload of Russian Hardware Leaves Transdnier” by Angela Sirbu, TOL Week in Review, 13-19 November 2001.

<sup>36</sup> “Russia: Moldovan President Meets Putin in Moscow” by Eugen Tomiuc, RFE/RL, Prague, 4 September 2001.

<sup>37</sup> “Last Trainload of Russian Hardware Leaves Transdnier” by Angela Sirbu, TOL Week in Review, 13-19 November 2001.

<sup>38</sup> “Moldova: Russian Envoy Says Moscow to Keep Troops in Transdnier” by Eugen Tomiuc, RFE/RL, 4 February 2002.

proposal] comes to the [OSCE] forum, we will have to have an extremely serious debate with Russians within the OSCE, but I would prefer not to imagine things, not to put [forward] hypotheses. I would like to wait for the evolution of the events. I repeat myself, as far as of today, February 1, 2002, the Russian Federation has not put forward any idea of a peacekeeping operation." <sup>39</sup>

The next turn of further escalated tensions between Moldova's central authorities and those of the separatist Transnistria relates to the internal political crisis in Moldova for which the communist government is fully responsible (addressed in more detail in the Appendix). Exhibiting impotence to manage the widespread crisis caused by certain decisions of parliament and government of Moldova, president Voronin on 4 March 2002 claimed that the large-scale public protests were being paid for out of a fund of \$200 million set up by the leader of the breakaway region of Transnistria. <sup>40</sup> These allegations, ridiculed by the opposition media, have been a striking illustration of the incompetence and inability of the Moldovan communist government to achieve any positive results in settling the Transnistrian conflict, and confirm its eventual and final failure. From the outside of Moldova, this situation presents a kind of paradox, because pro-Russian, anti-Western and anti-Romanian aspirations of the now empowered party seemed quite closely coinciding with those of the Transnistrian leadership. (Let us recall that to justify their separatist "state-building" activities, the PMR's authorities always referred not only to the short but bloody conflict of 1992, but also to the persisting threat of Moldova's unification with Romania, and to the "ethno-nationalist forces" that turned the Moldovan SSR into the independent Republic of Moldova). Therefore, although all other communist promises were obviously doomed to fail, this one might have occurred to be realistic. Whereas in fact, the Transnistrian leadership is now not inclined to accept any kind of compromise lower than a confederation of "two equal states", therefore, a regress rather than progress has been the "achievement" of the policy undertaken by Moldovan communist authorities. In this context, no wonder that the last attempt of Ukraine to push forward the reconciliation process has failed, too. (In the beginning of January 2002, Ukrainian president proposed to both Moldovan and Transnistrian authorities to meet at the territory of Ukraine, but this proposal was blankly rejected by the official diplomatic response from the Moldovan Foreign Ministry <sup>41</sup>).

From these developments it is also evident how little dividend, in the context of the Transnistrian conflict, Moldova's new rulers received from its "closer relations" with Russia, to which all the hopes to settle this conflict had been linked. It seems obvious that over this period, the self-proclaimed PMR only strengthened what it is called its "statehood", and that this turn has had a negative impact on the Ukrainian security situation, and on the regional stability as well.

In terms of bilateral Ukrainian-Moldovan relations, aggravation of the Transnistrian conflict has also contributed to their further deterioration. One can speculate that facing the results of their failed policy, Moldova's authorities resorted to the traditional for communist ideology receipt of looking for the internal and external enemies to make somebody else responsible for their own mistakes and drawbacks. This time, their conventional adversaries consisting, apart from Transnistrian leaders, of West, NATO and, of course, Romania, seemed to be supplemented by Ukraine. This might have rather negative consequences, especially taking into account traditionally tense pre-election situation in Ukraine sensitizing the society to various influences. This time, the election campaign has been accompanied by the intensified pressure on Ukraine of different political forces, concerned not only with the situation in Crimea (where registration of the leader of Crimean communist, and speaker of Crimean parliament Leonid Hrach was cancelled by a court's decision), but also by what

---

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> "Moldova: A Transnistrian Plot?" by Iulian Robu, TOL Week in Review, 5-11 March 2002.

<sup>41</sup> "Epistolary Negotiations" by Vladimir Verbitsky, 29.01.2002, at: <http://www.versii.com>. (in Russian).

was named “the desire of Ukraine to play a role of new regional leader”.<sup>42</sup> In particular, highly provocative statements appeared in Russian media, like, for example, “Ukraine seems to be favouring an idea of taking under its jurisdiction both Transdnistria and Gagauzia” (!!!?) in order to slacken Russian influence in the region”.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, Moldovan media reports referred to signs of “warmer relations” between Kyiv and Tiraspol, and charged Ukraine with the attempts to influence international organizations in order to make them more benevolent towards Transdnistria. In particular, the Moldovan deputy Foreign Minister Ion Stavile has been quoted as saying that “in Memorandum recently provided by Ukraine to international organizations, pro-Tiraspol attitudes are clearly expressed concerning Moldova’s introduction of new customs regulations”<sup>44</sup>. Even more unexpected for Ukrainian politics came speculations on the agreeable perception of the information on certain rapprochement between Ukraine and Transdnistria by... the USA Ambassador to Ukraine, due to which the USA is “more and more inclined to recognize the right of Transdnistrian population to determine their political future”.<sup>45</sup> Such irresponsible speculations would certainly make no good for either Ukraine or Moldova, while rendering bilateral relations more and more tense – for whose benefit? Whereas according to Ukrainian media reports, during the recent informal CIS summit in Kazakhstan, Ukrainian president Kuchma, conferring with the Moldovan president Voronin, confirmed once again Kyiv’s commitment to keep friendly and good neighbourly relations with Moldova, and to settle the Transdnistrian conflict proceeding from the notion of preserving Moldova’s territorial integrity.<sup>46</sup>

It should also be noted that during the recent acute political crisis in Moldova, an official statement by Ukrainian government on the matter was that “while the situation in today’s Moldova raises deep concerns in Ukraine, because Moldova is our friendly neighbouring country and our partner in GUUAM, Ukraine has no intention and is not going to interfere into its internal affairs, as well as into those of any other state” (a statement by Igor Dolgov, official representative of the Ukrainian Ministry for Foreign Affairs).<sup>47</sup> Whereas president Voronin expressed the intention to provide support for Ukrainian communists during the forthcoming parliamentary elections, thus eliciting rather angry reaction in Ukraine followed by addresses delivered to a number of the CoE structures. Such intentions were characterized as violation of international law standards and, inter alia, of the Charter of the CoE of which both countries are member states. According to Vasiliy Kostytsky, the Vice-President of the European People’s Party group of the CoE Parliamentary Assembly, this move is a direct interference into the Ukrainian internal affairs that may also lead to escalation of confrontation in Europe.<sup>48</sup> (Though it should be admitted that much more scandalous interference of Russia into the election campaign in Ukraine, caused by passions around the cancellation of registration of the Crimean communist leader Leonid Hrach, brought about much milder and more restrained protests of the Ukrainian authorities).

The most important lesson to be taken from this story is that working together as a team for reaching progress in Transdnistrian conflict settlement, Ukraine and Moldova would have much better chances to succeed than when giving in to mutual distrust, suspicions and accusations. Whenever the discontent between our two countries has been surfaced, the Transdnistrian side of the conflict is the one to benefit, and to continue strengthening its de facto independence from the Republic of Moldova. One more obvious consequence is that worsening of the Ukrainian-

---

<sup>42</sup> “Russian and American Factors in Ukrainian Elections Begin to Emerge from a Shadow” by Anatoliy Rudyi, 04.03.2002, at: <http://part.org.ua>. (in Russian).

<sup>43</sup> APN, 14.02.2002 (in Russian).

<sup>44</sup> “Nezavisimaya Moldova”, 08.02.2002.

<sup>45</sup> “Crisis in Moldova” by N. Serova, “Zavtra”, 21.02.2002. (in Russian).

<sup>46</sup> “Kuchma and Voronin Discussed Relations between Ukraine and Moldova”. 02.03.2002, at: <http://part.org.us>. (in Russian).

<sup>47</sup> “Ukraine is Concerned with the Unrest in Moldova”, 26.02.2002. at: <http://part.org.ua>. (in Russian).

<sup>48</sup> “Intentions of Moldovan President to Provide Support for the CPU at the Elections Are External Intervention into the Internal policy of Ukraine”, 28.02.2002, at: <http://part.org.us> (in Russian).

Moldovan relations objectively strengthens Russia's grip on its former subjects, and inevitably facilitate its efforts to remain the strongest and most influential regional power.

**Results of a domestic policy of ruling Communist Party of Moldova as a lesson for Ukrainian electorate.** During the early stage of communists governing the country, things might have been perceived as going not so bad – in compliance with the vision that today's communists are already not the same as those in Soviet times, and being closer to the modern European Left. Indeed, the first steps of the Moldova's president Voronin displayed his desire to balance between the country's eastern neighbours and the West, in contrast to the overt condemnation of "imperialist predators" made in his inaugural speech. Moreover, just during the past year, Moldova has managed to join the two international agencies, namely, the Stability Pact for Southern and Eastern Europe and the World Trade Organization, thus proceeding well ahead of Ukraine that is pursuing similar aims. Although the socio-economic situation of Moldova remains difficult, and the country is officially recognized as the poorest in Europe, according to the governmental report, Moldova registered a 4 % growth in GDP and a 3,3 % reduction in the inflation rate during the first half of the 2001.<sup>49</sup> The Prime Minister Vasile Tarlev admitted, however, that the economic growth, to a large extent, resulted from the improving economic situation in neighbouring countries – Russia, Ukraine, and Romania – on which the Moldovan economy relies. At the same time, huge external debt that amounts to 40 % of the budget (in contrast to 10-12 % in previous years), and suspension of relations with international financial institutions create not especially optimistic prospects for further developments. What gave some hopes was the strong criticism of government's activities provided then by president Voronin when 100 days of new government were evaluated. According to a local analyst, while criticizing both the government and the parliament that "had become increasingly dictatorial", Mr. Vladimir Voronin actually opposed orthodox communist doctrine, and this speech contrasted sharply with his inauguration speech.<sup>50</sup>

These steps, together with the initial restraint from implementing the promises to bring Moldova into the Russia-Belarus Union, and to make Russian the second official language, allowed one to expect rather peaceful, evolutionary way of one more shift from communist to more liberal doctrine during the next regular elections, and of Moldova's European integration to be realized in a course of a natural change of generations. Such a forecast seemed to comply with the results of public opinion poll conducted by the Institute of Public Policy, and released on 4 December 2001. According to the survey, 38.9 % (instead of 50 %) would vote for the PCMR if the elections took place on 9 December, whereas the next largest group, 34,8 %, would not vote for anybody or were still undecided. These results have shown slow but sure drop of the communists' popularity, and still considerable confidence in president Voronin who has gained a support of 70 % of respondents (whereas Prime Minister Tarlev has had 43 %).<sup>51</sup>

Unfortunately, old habits of dealing with opponents seemed to prevail, and subsequent evident inability to improve the country's internal situation or achieve any progress in settling Transdnestrian conflict stipulated further moves of Moldova's communist government that destroyed completely all modest achievements, if any, that it might put on a display after the first months of coming to power.

The first signs of the forthcoming crisis appeared as early as in June 2001, when the ruling party and president Voronin decided to "rewrite" the history (of Romania) now taught in schools, and in general, to change Romanian identity for the "Moldovan" one. This was met by rather sharp

---

<sup>49</sup> "Moldova Evaluates 100 days of New Government" by Angela Sirbu, TOL Week in Review, 31 July - 6 August 2001.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> "Survey Confirms the Popularity of Moldovan Communists" by Angela Sirbu, TOL Week in Review, 4-10 December 2001.

reaction of university professors, schoolteachers and students who organized in Chisinau a protest demonstration, then amounting to only over a hundred people. (It should be noted that in Moldova, a growing proportion of population regards Moldovan identity as artificially constructed by Stalin - the “father of Moldovan nation” - who created the Autonomous Republic of Moldova in 1924.)<sup>52</sup> However, instead of recognizing this reaction as an indication of a possibility of stronger protest actions, threatening to bring about a serious political unrest, and to restrain from pedalling the issue, communist authorities made the next unwise step by supplementing “Moldovanization” with the prospect of the reversed “Russification” of the country. According to the governmental decision dated 18 December 2001, from 1 January 2002, Russian should have become mandatory in primary schools, and receive a status of an official language, “to be used by central public authorities, the organs of central and local public administration, the judiciary, and in other walks of the state’s social life”.<sup>53</sup>

The subsequent events developed impetuously, and protest actions gained impetus with each next week. For better understanding of the on-going processes, and in order to identify the main stages of the developing political crisis, the available information has been arranged chronologically, with a prospect of presenting also a clearer picture for Ukrainian readers (see Appendix).

The chronicle of a political crisis brought about by the ruling communist Moldovan government, as well as the following developments, can serve to summarise all the misfortunes that the reverse from democracy to old, Soviet-type policy can impose on the population of a post-Soviet country. And though a brief account on these drastically destabilising events would be no news for either Moldovan or Romanian societies, for Ukraine this information is of outmost importance and topicality.

Because, though hard-line leftists in Ukraine have already had practically no chances to win a decisive majority in the next parliament – as the actual results of the parliamentary elections on 31 March 2002 proved convincingly - the rhetoric used by many political parties claiming to be “centrists” in certain points resembled closely that of Moldovan communists. Also, the attempts of the incumbent power-holders to strengthen their positions by relying on the support from Russia were evident. These turns of Ukraine’s policy increase each time when their actual or alleged crimes, or simply reluctance to push forward democratic reformation of the old structures inherited from the previous regime, compel the West to distance from Ukraine, and to agree with leaving it within the Russian sphere of influence. What an outcome could follow is convincingly illustrated by the Moldova’s recent hard experience. Therefore, this lesson should be learnt in every detail, and the appropriate conclusions drawn. To make this process more effective, trilateral cooperation at all levels – from governmental to various civil society structures - within the Ukraine-Moldova-Romania framework is highly desirable. Establishment of such an axis would contribute greatly to the decisive European integration of all three countries, and would ensure addressing in a coordinated manner a number of crucial problems of regional security – first and foremost, the Transdniestrian conflict.

The future of Moldova after the crisis is overcome would only benefit if traditional close ties with Romania are re-established, are supplemented by turning Ukraine, its another neighbour, into one more genuine ally. Much of hard work has to be done for this, but such an accomplishment would be a real asset for both countries, as well as for strengthening regional and European stability.

---

<sup>52</sup>See “Protesting “Moldovanism” by Angela Sirbu, TOL Week in Review, 12 – 18 June 2001, and. “Making Moldovans More Moldovan” by Octavian Sofranksy, TOL Opinion, 31 August 2001.

<sup>53</sup> See “Moldova: Education Officials Introduce Russian As Mandatory Foreign Language” by Eugen Tomiuc, RFE/RL, Prague, 21 December 2001., and “Moldova: Just Say Nyet” by Angela Sirbu, TOL Week in Review, 8-14 January 2002.

Concrete steps for starting such a rapprochement could be proposed by each side, and be discussed and agreed upon at a joint meeting – the sooner the better.

## APPENDIX

### **Moldova: A Chronicle of a Political Crisis** <sup>54</sup>

**9 January 2002:** the storm of protests over the introduction of mandatory Russian classes in schools and the decision to make Russian the second official language erupted in the capital of Moldova; thousands of young people, members of intelligentsia and representatives of ethnic minorities organized demonstrations in the main square of Chisinau. The banners and posters claimed: “Down with the Communists”, “Stop Russification”, and “We want to Europe”. Demonstrations continuing the next weeks attract more and more participants.

**22 January 2002:** Moldova’s Communist government temporarily suspended the activity of the country’s main opposition party – the Popular Christian Democratic Party (PPCD) – for “inciting public demonstrations” to boost the status of the Russian language. Moldovan Minister of Justice Ion Morei warned that if the antigovernment demonstrations continue, the party might be permanently banned. This move intensified protest actions, and sparked harsh criticism abroad, accusing Moldova’s communist leadership of openly violating democratic principles. Walter Schwimmer, General Secretary of the CoE, called the decision “disproportionate” and “in violation of the principle of freedom of expression”, whereas Adrian Severin, president of the OSCE parliamentary Assembly, acknowledged with great concern “the deterioration of the political dialogue in Moldova, as well as the ever-increasing number of measures taken by the country’s leadership which might decouple the country from European value structures and institutions”.

**31 January 2002:** the PPCD has sent a letter to the CoE, claiming that non-Russian ethnic minorities in Moldova “continue to be the victims of an assimilation policy through the russification promoted by state authorities”. The letter also provides important data on a number of pupils belonging to different ethnic and religious groups. According to current Education Ministry data, 36,601 (6.19 %) of pupils are Ukrainians whereas Russians constitute 31,270 (5.28 %). It follows that “Despite the legislative framework, the actions of the Moldovan authorities prove that the largest group of pupils belonging to national minorities became the target of a rough assimilation policy through russification. These pupils do not study in their mother language, but in the language of another ethnic minority. Thus, out of the 36,601 pupils of Ukrainian origin, 36,297 are studying in the Russian language, and only 374 pupils in the Ukrainian language,” the letter reads.

**3 February 2002:** the Secretary General of the Council of Europe Walter Schimmer demanded explanations from Moldova concerning its political and human rights issues according to Article 52 of the European Convention on Human Rights. (It was only the second time that the Council of Europe had employed the same article of censure, Article 52. The previous instance related to Russia’s record in Chechnya).

**19 February 2002:** the number of protesters growing, this day it surpassed 40,000. Protests also spread to Moldova’s second-large city, Balti, where some 200 students demonstrated in solidarity with the striking students in the capital. The demonstrators' demands, which initially were limited to ending mandatory Russian classes for schoolchildren and pro-Russian history textbooks, were expanding. This day, for the first time, they demanded the government, president, and parliament to resign. PPCD’s leader Iurie Rosca addressed the demonstrators saying, “The time has come for us

---

<sup>54</sup> This Chronicle is based upon the information available at Web portals of the RFE/RL Newsline and Transitions Online (TOL)

to save democracy in Moldova, to do away with communism for good." He invited the parliament that will hold the next day a special session to examine the socio-political situation in Moldova, "to do this together with the Christian Democratic MPs and that the session be broadcast live on television and radio". Later on, when the protesters passed by secret police headquarters and then the Russian Embassy, they chanted, "We don't want a Bolshevik president!" and, "We don't want any more communists or KGB!" as well as, "Down with the occupiers!" The same day, the Russian Foreign Ministry protested against what it termed "anti-Russian actions aimed against the Russian Embassy" in Chisinau, condemned the organizers "from inside the country or outside it", and warned that these protests risk unleashing yet another conflict in Southeastern Europe.

**20 February 2002:** parliamentary session canceled, apparently at the behest of the Communists (who have 71 out of the 101 seats in parliament whereas the opposing PPCD has just 11 seats). The head of another opposition party, Dumitru Braghis of the Braghis Alliance, backed the Christian Democrats' call for the resignations of the government and president, saying Moldova needs a government that can help improve the economic situation.

**21 February 2002:** president Voronin delivered a speech to the nation. He said that the country was being "affected by the virus of nationalism, extremism, and madness". He also strongly condemned the PPCD and its leader Iurie Rosca, calling them "political terrorists".

**24 February 2002:** anti-governmental demonstrations reached a peak; a meeting held on the Chisinau central square attracted 70,000 (according to other sources about 80,000), the highest number since demonstrations began on 9 January. Either national television or national radio has not broadcast any news about the demonstrations. Earlier this day, tens of thousands of anti-protest leaflets were dropped from a plane. Demonstration organizers told the press that the traffic police had received an order on 23 February to conduct technical checks on buses that would eventually take protesters to Chisinau. Moreover, the organizers claimed that in the counties of Sorooca, Balti, and Lapusna, the police abusively withdrew buses' license plates and technical control certificates in order to keep drivers from transporting participants to the capital city.

**26 February 2002:** National Television staff members presented a declaration to the management with demands to counter censorship and interference by the Communist government. The demands were later endorsed by about 500 employees of the national radio service, Teleradio Moldova. "The company has become a brainwashing tool used against the population, and news consumers are deprived of the right to receive accurate and balanced information," the declaration said, referring to national and international legislation guaranteeing such rights. The declaration also stated that "the authorities have reinstated Soviet-style political censorship at the national radio and TV stations."

**1 March 2002:** at a meeting of the heads of CIS countries president Voronin said that he hoped to create a bilingual country. His vision of it consists of: "all Russians and Ukrainians of Moldova would speak "Moldovan", and all Moldovans would also speak Russian, thus creating "a true bilingualism". This intention was highly praised by Russian president Putin, who thanked Voronin for the successful settlement of problems relating to Russian language functioning in Moldova, and assessed the current policy of Moldovan authorities as "politically correct, well balanced, and aimed at satisfying all political forces by democratic means".

**4 March 2002:** the Constitutional Court of Moldova ruled that the bill to make Russian the second language was unlawful. Meanwhile, president Voronin who repeatedly accused Romania of interfering in Moldova's affairs, went further by claiming that the protests – both in the media and in the Chisinau downtown – were paid for from a special fund established for this purpose by the Transdniestrian leader Igor Smirnov.



**5 March 2002:** the management of Moldova state television forbade journalists to broadcast about the ongoing protests in Chisinau. When the news announcer attempted to read the text of the station's report on the protests, audio was cut off and the broadcast was interrupted. After being restored, the announcer attempted to read out the text of a protest by journalists against President Vladimir Voronin, but audio transmission was again cut. Some 4,000 employees at TeleRadio Moldova continue a "Japanese strike", performing their duties but declaring that they are on strike.

**7 March 2002:** the European Popular Party (EPP, holding a majority of seats in the European Parliament and - along with the PPCD - being a member of the Christian Democratic International) expressed "high concern" at developments in Moldova. It adopted a resolution stressing that "the latest events in Chisinau may be regarded as an attempt to demolish a state based on the rule of the law; a failure to respect human and minority rights; a limitation of the judiciary's power; control and censorship of the media; and television in particular." The statement also criticized the "harassment of the opposition and political persecutions, including several members of the Christian Democratic Popular Party (PPCD); the undermining of local autonomy and the excessive politicization of the state administration; the halt in the privatization process and threat of a recollectivization of the national economy; the blockade of foreign investment and relations with international lenders; the violation of international treaties.

**14 March 2002:** the European Parliament passed a resolution on the human rights situation in Moldova. The resolution, forwarded by the European People's Party and European Democrats (EPP-ED), calls on the government and the parliament of Moldova to "refrain from any decision that may endanger the social and political stability of the country" and to "continue the process of economic and social reform as a demonstration of the sincerity of its international commitments established, also in the framework of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Moldova and the European Union and the WTO". At the same time, the European deputies urged the Moldovan government to fully respect basic democratic rules and procedures, to guarantee respect for basic human rights and the rule of law, and to not abuse its political majority to dissolve the democratic opposition. Noting that Europe monitors "with growing concern the persistent conflict on crucial principles and matters of democracy between the Moldovan government and the Christian Democratic Popular Party (PPCD)," the European parliamentarians condemned the government's attempts to curb the opposition by its proposals to dissolve the opposition PPCD and to lift the parliamentary immunity of its leaders. They also noted with concern the recent decisions by the government regarding the introduction of Russian as the second official language of Moldova and the mandatory teaching of the Russian language in the Moldovan educational system, as well as the administrative reorganization of the country aiming at a return to the former Soviet style of local administration. The European Parliament also indicated the lack of success in economic development and reiterated that Moldova is at present the poorest country in Europe. It was also said that the Council of Europe and the European Commission would assist actively within the mandate of the OSCE in the settlement of the conflict with Transdniestria.

**21 March 2002:** an outstanding member of the Moldovan opposition, Vlad Cubreacov, the deputy president of the Christian Democrat Popular Party (PPCD) and a member of both the Moldovan parliament and the parliament of the Council of Europe, went missing, leading the opposition to claim that disappearance is part of a continuing "campaign of political reprisals." A number of possible explanations have been floated, including the possibility that Cubreacov was kidnapped for his political activity.

**22 March 2002:** the Legal Committee of the Moldovan Parliament reviewed an appeal issued by the attorney general for the parliamentary immunity of Cubreacov, Rosca, and Secareanu (the leaders of the PPCD) to be lifted. The committee asked for further evidence of the parliamentarians' guilt and will reconsider the issue on 28 March. PPCD argues that, even if his Moldovan

parliamentary immunity were lifted, "Vlad Cubreacov could not be prosecuted, arrested, or sentenced without consent from the Council of Europe in virtue of his European parliamentary immunity." It has called upon European governments and international organizations, to apply international legal norms "so as to put an end to the terror and dictatorship in the Republic of Moldova".

**23 March 2002:** the PPCD issued a press release claiming that "Vlad Cubreacov went missing at a time when the police and security forces reprimand and intimidate people throughout Moldova who have been participating in the anti-Communist protests since 9 January and who want to take part in the great popular assembly on 31 March." (PPCD Deputy Chairman Vlad Cubreacov disappeared on the night of 21-22 March.) The PPCD believes that either Communist activists or their supporters organized the disappearance of Cubreacov. "This act is part of a dangerous political campaign and was certainly orchestrated by anti-national, anti-democratic, and anti-European circles seeking to baffle the assembly at the end of March," the statement claims.

**25 March 2002:** the PPCD announced resuming daily protests and preparation "The Grand National Coalition of Voters to be held on 31 March. Prosecutor-General Vasil Rusu warned that the planned event has not been authorized and is illegal.

**26 March 2002:** OSCE Chairman in Office Jaime Gama visited Chisinau to discuss with Premier Vasile Tarlev and Foreign Minister Nicolae Dudau the current situation in Moldova, the stalled negotiations with the separatists authorities in Tiraspol, and the process of Russian arms evacuation. He said that the disappearance of Vlad Cubreacov has seriously affected Moldova's international image.

31 March 2002: between 50,000 and 80,000 protesters from all over Moldova attended the Grand National Assembly of Voters in Chisinau. A resolution was approved calling on the parliament to outlaw within 48 hours any fascist or communist party and their symbols. The protesters vowed to continue their actions until the government resigns. A resolution was adopted that also called on President Vladimir Voronin to resign, and early parliamentary elections to be run. Two separate declarations demanded clarifying the disappearance of PPCD Deputy Chairman Vlad Cubreacov, and the unconditional withdrawal of Russian troops from the Transdnister. Other opposition formations, among them the newly established Liberal Party, sent representatives to the demonstration. Several thousand demonstrators remained in Chisinau's main square overnight.

**2 April 2002:** negotiations between protesters and government failed because delegation of the "National Committee for the Defense of Democracy", speaking on behalf of the opposition, was received by second-echelon representatives of the government and the presidential office who blindly rejected all the demands (the cabinet resignation, early elections to be called, and the Party of Moldovan Communists to be outlawed along with fascist parties). The protesters announced that they would continue demonstrations, whereas Dumitru Braghis, leader of the Braghis Alliance, the strongest opposition parliamentary group, declared that his faction will boycott debates until a genuine dialogue is established between the government and the protesters, and that the government must resign and be replaced by one of national unity representing all parliamentary formations. The situation was further aggravated by the Bessarabian Metropolitan Church (under Bucharest jurisdiction) submitting again an application for being officially registered (in full compliance with the decision of the European Court of Human Rights obliging Moldovan authorities to register the church). Since Moldova's appeal against this decision has been rejected, further resistance to observe the European Court's decision may lead to Moldova's expulsion from the Council of Europe.

**3 April 2002:** President Voronin accused the opposition of provoking "internal tension" and of being financed by Romania and the Transdniestre. Former Premier Dumitru Braghis, who recently joined the opposition to demand that the government resign, was also charged with being on foreigners' payrolls.

**4 April 2002:** the parliament approved a recommendation of its Judicial and Immunity Committee to lift the immunity of PPCD Chairman Iurie Rosca and PPCD parliamentary group leader Stefan Secareanu. The decision on lifting PPCD Deputy Chairman Vlad Cubreacov's immunity has been postponed "until his disappearance" is elucidated, whereas Prosecutor-General Vasile Rusu I requested that the immunity of PPCD deputies Eugeniu Garla, Valentin Chilat, and Viorel Prisacaru to be also lifted. The same day, the National Council for the Defense of Democracy called on European and international human rights organizations to immediately act in order to "save democracy in Moldova," The council also appealed to the population to "display solidarity with the democratic opposition in its categorical protest against communist dictatorship."

Meanwhile, the Romanian government rejected all of the Vladimir Voronin's allegations, calling them "false and unrealistic." Romanian Government spokesman Claudiu Lucaciu said that ever since the tensions erupted in Moldova three months ago, the Romanian authorities have refrained from issuing official statements on the issue precisely to avoid creating the impression that they are involved in them in any way.

**5 April 2002:** pressure on protesters and intimidation of other opposition forces intensified. Some of the children of striking journalists at Teleradio Moldova were taken into custody by police for no apparent reason other than wearing badges with the national colours. Justice Minister Ion Morei demanded explanations from the Social-Liberal Party concerning its participation on 31 March in the "illegal" Great National Assembly of Voters. The same day, Russian Duma ratified the basic treaty with Moldova, and president Putin congratulated president Voronin with the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

**6 April 2002:** according to the PPCD leader Iurie Rosca, he came to help PPCD Deputy Valentin Chilat whom police tried to force into a car, and to abduct "just as they had abducted Vlad Cubreacov".

**8 April 2002:** Chisinau city Prosecutor's Office has launched a criminal investigation against PPCD Chairman Iurie Rosca and PPCD deputy Valentin Chilat concerning their involvement in a tussle with police on 6 April. Rosca's claim that police officers treated them brutally and refused to identify themselves was denied by Chiril Motpan, the Head of the Public Relations Directorate of the Interior Ministry. He also stated that the ministry's employees are not obliged to identify themselves to anyone while operating on the street, but have the right to request identification from others at any time. Secretary General of the CoE called on the Moldovan government to refrain from using force, and expressed the CoE concern with the situation in Moldova. Two CoE rapporteurs on Moldova arrived in Chisinau for a fact-finding mission, focused in particular on a disappearance of Vlad Cubreacov (who is also a member of the PACE). A fact-finding mission to Moldova was also undertaken by Polf Ekeus, the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities.

The nonstop, around the clock protests continue, with dozens of tents being erected outside the parliament and presidential buildings. Parent's committees and staff members of various schools and high schools issued a statement that they intend to continue protest actions until the main request of the National Council of the Defense of Democracy (namely, resignation of the Communist government) is fulfilled.

**9 April 2002:** at a press conference, CE rapporteur Josette Durrieu characterized Moldova as a "country lacking democracy and a country whose integrity and sovereignty are not properly

managed by the government." He also said that current political crisis has been caused by the government attitude towards opposition. Both rapporteurs confirmed that Moldovan President Vladimir Voronin will not change his procedures for handling the crisis, but that he might agree to a referendum in order to end it.

**10 April 2002:** the Popular Christian Democratic Party (PPCD) submitted a complaint against Moldova to the ECHR concerning the decision of the Moldovan Supreme Court to stop the anti-governmental protests.

**11 April 2002:** the National Council for the Defense of Democracy initiated a dialogue with all anticommunist, non-corrupted groups sincerely devoted to democratic values and to aspirations of European integration. The aim of such a dialogue would be to identify optimal solutions to the ongoing political crisis in Moldova and to find common actions to fulfill the resolutions of the Grand National Assembly of 31 March. (Resolutions called for the legal ban on fascist, Nazi, and communist parties; the resignation of the Communist government; and for early parliamentary elections.) Meanwhile, the PPCD filed several lawsuits against Communist leaders, namely, two libel suits against President Voronin, a suit against the leader of the Communist parliamentary group Victor Stepaniuc, and against one more communist leader Vadim Misin. These suits followed Voronin's statement that PPCD leader Rosca is a political terrorist and that the PPCD leaders are willingly provoking street violence and making provocations in order to destabilize the political situation in Moldova. Stepaniuc claimed that street protests initiated by the PPCD were fascist and that the PPCD initiated the 1992 war, whereas Misin would face a lawsuit for comments he made in a television interview that Rosca and other protesters were paid millions of dollars for their actions. Meanwhile, Rolf Ekeus, the high commissioner for national minorities of the OSCE, made a statement calling for constructive dialogue between the opposed forces in Moldova, and emphasizing that the importance of studying the official state language by all Moldovan citizens must not minimize the use of minority languages.

**17 April 2002:** Walter Schwimmer, CoE Secretary-General, met in Strasbourg with the three Moldovan Parliamentary group leaders in order to end the political crisis through political dialogue. PPCD Chairman Yurie Rosca presented, during this meeting, a proposal consisted of 12 measures, including new parliamentary elections, the cessation of amendments to the constitution, and President Voronin's resignation as chairman of the Party of Moldovan Communists. Despite the optimistic release issued by Secretary-General, stating, among other things, that the three leaders reached a consensus on Moldova's future in Europe, leader of the PMC parliamentary group Victor Stepaniuc refused to sign a CoE proposal (containing most of PPCD points). Meanwhile, public opinion poll conducted by the Bucharest-based IMAS institute has shown the sharply increased popularity of the PMC: 73 % of respondents would vote for them if the elections were held, whereas the opposition would receive only 6 % of votes. This poll also showed that 55 % of respondents believed that Communist government performed better than the previous one, while only 30 % adhere to the opposite.

**19 April 2002:** confronting sides in Chisinau failed to reach a compromise on a document aimed at diffusing existing tensions. The Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE decided to discuss the situation in Moldova at the PACE session on 24 April. This decision resulted from a report submitted to PACE by Moldova rapporteurs Josette Durrieu and Lauri Vahtre. Meanwhile, the European Court on Human Rights agreed to examine urgently the PPCD's complaint against the Moldovan government.

**24 April 2002:** the PACE adopted a resolution expressing concern over the "continuous deterioration" of the political situation in Moldova. It recommended Moldovan authorities to register the Bessarabian Metropolitan Church by 31 July, to submit for examination by CoE experts

the new Criminal Code and the Administrative Code, and to grant Teleradio Moldova the status of a public organization. The PACE called on the authorities to ensure the independence of the judiciary, and to impose moratorium on actions relating to studying history and compulsory foreign-language education in schools. The assembly also called on protesters in Chisinau to stop demonstrations, whereas authorities, on their side, should stop persecutions and intimidation of the PPCD deputies. The leaders of the three Moldovan parliamentary groups who attended the session all praised the resolution and recommendations, and promised to implement it. Meanwhile, the strikers' committee at Teleradio Moldova said that in the very day of the adoption of the PACE resolution, the management intensified censorship, and forbade the broadcasting of the reports in both Moldovan and Russian on the forthcoming PACE resolution. The committee said that Moldova's population is subjected to an "information blockade".

**29 April 2002:** the PPCD announced that it has ended the protests against the government, in compliance with the PACE resolution and recommendations, and that it expected the government to fulfill its promises to implement those recommendations as well.

**30 April 2002:** the Chisinau municipal tribunal rejected the appeal of three PPCD leaders a verdict of a lower court that fined them for organizing unauthorized demonstrations. The lawyer representing the three leaders said that this decision showed that the Communist authorities did not honor their pledge to respect the PACE recommendations, and that "dialogue with the Communist leadership is impossible".

**3 May 2002:** the same conclusion has been reached by the general Conference of the Union of Moldovan Journalists, that issued a resolution stating that freedom of media is not observed in Moldova, and that the state-owned media "has dangerously slid" into promoting hatred and ethnic segregation, and indulges in "gratuitous slandering, provocation, and instigation" contravening the Code of Professional Ethics.

Subsequent events relating to the developments in both domestic and foreign policy in Moldova have shown that though formally, the acute phase of a political crisis, characterised by non-stop demonstrations and protest actions, has been overcome, the existing tensions and their deeply rooted causes remain practically intact. Continued persecutions of the participants of the protest actions, uncertainty with the registration of the Bessarabian Church, not a sign of progress in changing the status of the Teleradio Moldova, and many other indicators confirm the PPCD chairman opinion that the authorities ignore the PACE recommendations.<sup>55</sup> The main good news of the following period was the re-appearance of Vlad Cubreacov who was found alive on 25 May near the border with Transdnier.<sup>56</sup> And though the enigma of his abduction has not been solved, and even used for further provocative speculations aimed at compromising CCPD and other oppositional bodies,<sup>57</sup> this very fact cannot but be praised by those people in Ukraine who are well aware of similar "disappearances" with much more tragic outcome.

---

<sup>55</sup> RFE/RL Newsline, v. 6 # 100, 30 May 2002.

<sup>56</sup> RFE/RL Newsline, v. 6 # 98, 28 May 2002.

<sup>57</sup> RFE/RL Newsline, v. 6 # 102, 3 June 2002. +-