

## Press And Censorship In Bessarabia: 19th And The Beginning Of The 20th Century

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A 19<sup>th</sup> century history of the Bessarabian press is first and foremost a history of censorship. Bessarabia, as part of the Russian Empire (after the territorial takeover in 1812), was gradually pushed towards a forced “integration-assimilation” into the social-political life of Russia. The later development of the province all throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century is characterized by a painful process of adaptation of the Romanian society to the conditions of a (socially, politically, culturally, and linguistically) *foreign* medium, the Empire.

It is only natural thus to ask what this Russian social political *model*, to which the newly attached province was “pushed”, represented; what were the conditions of activity and functioning of the Russian press in the 19<sup>th</sup> century?

It is a well-known fact that the Russian press was initiated under the auspices of the Monarch Peter I (the Great). In the year 1702 the appreciated *Vedomosti* were published. This official newspaper – *Vedomosti* – became a direct, real support of the Russian state policy in matters of information, for almost 130 years. The Decree (Imperial *Ukaz*) from 9 August, 1830 allowed the publication of some further papers of the *Vedomosti* type (Information Bulletin), in six governorships. Bessarabia was not included in the six. By order of General Bekendorf (the chief of the Russian Gendarmerie), beginning with the year 1830, the Third Police Section was created in the framework of the Imperial Chancery, with a special destination, which included the supervision of the censoring of press publications in the Empire.

In 1837, after seven years of experiments, the Tsarist Government allowed the publication of newspapers under the traditional title of *Gubernskie Vedomosti* (Governmental Bulletins) also in the rest of the governorships. In accordance with the *Regulation on Press and Censorship* from 3 June 1837, these *Governmental Bulletins* fulfilled the task of official organs of local administration and the civil governor. These publications were to strictly respect a certain program imposed by official censorship. The regulations about press and censorship in the Russian Empire were revised in 1865. In the time of Tsar Nicolai I a

special *Statute* was elaborated on press censorship in the Empire, which contemporaries called the “iron statute” for its ruthlessness and restrictions. Censoring services in Russia acted on the basis of this statute for nearly four decades, until 1905. Initially, all press problems were subordinated to the Ministry of Public Instruction, but in the year 1865, the Imperial *Ukaz* from April 6 ordered the creation of the Main Directorate for Press and Censorship.<sup>1</sup>

In Bessarabia this type of Russian *Vedomosti* gazette was published later than in other Russian governorships, only in 1854. The reasons were several: the feeble economic state of the province, the absence of urban centers with adequate institutions, as well as the absence of a social-cultural medium capable of gathering intelligent forces and materials which would have caused forceful actions in order to promote national and patriotic interests.

The territory of Bessarabia was permanently threatened with alienation by heavy-handed politics, at the level of a policy specific for the Russian state in this area. This was, first of all, a policy of Bessarabia’s forced isolation from the rest of the Romanians. One must keep in mind, nevertheless, that the things which happened in Bessarabia under Russian domination cannot only be connected to the events which took place in the Eastern Empire; they should be connected – as the Bessarabian historian, A. Boldur remarks – “with the state of mind of the Romanian nation in Bessarabia, as well as with the destiny of the Romanian nation in general.” I will thus try to respect this parallelism in order to obtain a certain balance in exposing the historical facts which took place in Bessarabia under Russian domination.

It is certain though that the intention of founding magazines or newspapers in Bessarabia existed much earlier than in other Russian governorships.<sup>2</sup> The initial goal of such intentions was to fulfill certain needs of the province. The organization project of the Bessarabian Public Library, put together by Prof. Grinevich, Director General of Bessarabian schools (1830), proposed, among others: “In order to easily spread useful knowledge in the field of economy, such as for instance vine-growing and wine making etc., it would be desirable to publish a magazine by the title of *Bessarabsky Vestnic* (Bessarabian Courier), which should be

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<sup>1</sup> Trubetskoy, B. A., *Iz istorii periodicheskoy pechati Bessarabii, 1854-1916*, (From the history of the Bessarabian periodical publications), Chişinău, 1989, 14-15.

<sup>2</sup> Ganenko, P., *Istoria Kishinevskoy Publiknoy Biblioteki* (The history of the Chişinău public library).

printed in the Moldavian and Russian languages.”<sup>1</sup> Prof. Grinevich’s noble intention of publishing a magazine for the needs of the province passed unnoticed by Bessarabian authorities.

Archival documents from Chişinău also prove the existence of other initiatives to publish local journals in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The *Address* from March 8, 1833, signed by the Governor General of the Novorossia region of Odessa, Count Vorontsov, is eloquent in this respect. The Governor asked for a piece of information from the local administration about the possible conditions of publishing a *Vedomosti* type gazette in Chişinău.<sup>2</sup> It should be especially noted that this type of publication was the only acknowledged one by Imperial officials, and thus the only one which had the chance of passing the censorship in Sankt Petersburg.

Count Vorontsov attached the regulations referring to the *Ukaz* of the Imperial Senate from 9 December 1830 to the address sent to Chişinău, concerning the conditions of editing press organs in the governorships. This initiative of the Governor General was interpreted by certain researchers of the history of the press in Bessarabia as the first attempt to create a periodical in the province.<sup>3</sup>

On 17 July 1833, the Governor of Odessa was informed that, in the Supreme Council of the *Oblast* (region) of Bessarabia, the possibility had been discussed to create a periodical in Chişinău. It was also announced that the Council opted for the publication of a bilingual gazette – in the Moldavian language, with a Russian translation.<sup>4</sup> It is not probable that Count Vorontsov sustained this praiseworthy initiative of the Bessarabian nobility. Archival documents prove nothing in this respect.

On 20 August 1833, the Governor of Odessa handed in an *Application* to the Ministry of the Interior in Sankt Petersburg, in which he explained the necessity of creating a publication for the region of

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<sup>1</sup> Levit, Ef., “Primele încercări de editare a unei prese progresiste în Basarabia” (The first attempts for the publication of a progressive paper in Bessarabia), *Limba și literatura moldovenească* (Moldavian language and literature), 4 (1975): 8-12.

<sup>2</sup> Arhiva Națională a Republicii Moldova (The National Archives of the Republic of Moldova, henceforth A.N.R.M.), Stock 2, Inv. 1, folder 1951, p. 1-8.; Levit, Ef. op. cit., 9-13.

<sup>3</sup> Koval, D. *Din istoria jurnalisticii românești* (From the history of Romanian journalism), Chişinău, 1992, 212-214.

<sup>4</sup> A.N.R.M., Stock 2, Inv. 1, folder 1984, p. 13.

Bessarabia. He also underlined that a special project had been prepared, on the basis of which this Bulletin would have appeared. This initiative however also remained under the sign of “silence”, although Count Vorontsov was a privileged person in the Tsar’s Court in Sankt Petersburg.

Russia’s Minister of the Interior, D. Bludev, did not “forget” the request of the Governor of Odessa, and after five years (in 1838), in a special circular, advised him to publish a Bulletin for Bessarabia. However, not before getting informed about the “timeliness of editing a publication in Bessarabia”, expressing his personal opinion that “still, until a proper time such a Bulletin should not be published there”.<sup>1</sup> The Petersburg functionary was very cautious in his intentions and mentioned that “the Imperial Decree from 3 June 1837, about the publication of Bulletins, does not extend over Bessarabia”. As Bessarabia was a frontier region of the Empire, it also had a special “statute” of censorship of the press, regulated by “special instructions”, often not known by local functionaries.

It is interesting to note that the Chişinău administration was strongly concerned with editing a periodical already in 1837. Feodorov, Civil Governor of Bessarabia (1834-1854), in his *Address* sent to Odessa on 14 October 1837, informed his “superior” that “three printing presses and new typographical characters were already acquired”, only qualified workers were lacking for “being able to continuously print”.<sup>2</sup> In Chişinău “continuous printing” had only become possible after 17 July 1844 (seven years later), when the first number of the periodical *Bessarabskie Oblastnie Vedomosti* (Bessarabian Regional Bulletin) left the print.<sup>3</sup>

Just as it had been ordained in the Special Regulations, the Bulletin was a publication of the local administration, which accurately respected the conditions stipulated about press censorship in the Empire. According to the official Regulations, it appeared once a week. It was made up of two parts: the official and the unofficial, having separate editors for each. At the beginning it was printed on 6 to 8 pages, depending on the material which came together.<sup>4</sup> The largest informative

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<sup>1</sup> Levit, Ef., op.cit., 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>3</sup> The title of the gazette *Bessarabskie Oblastnye Vedomosti* (Bessarabian regional bulletin) was changed into *Bessarabskie Gubernskie Vedomosti* (Bessarabian governmental bulletin) after the year 1873. It continued to be published under this title until 1917.

<sup>4</sup> Beginning with 1869, the gazette of the government administration appeared

part of the gazette was obviously “swallowed” by the official part: circulars, *Ukazes*, various decisions of the local administration, etc. The unofficial part was covered with information with no public value or interest. For example: the official part of the gazette for the year 1859 (52 issues) comprised 470 news pages, completed with only 19 unofficial pages. In the 1863-1864 period, the unofficial part of the Bulletin was completely absent. A state of crisis appeared, officials even intended to close down the gazette.<sup>1</sup>

How can this state of affairs be explained at the beginnings of the Bessarabian press? Were the editors of the gazette not concerned with other social problems of the province? I will try to find an answer in the material published in the Bulletin. The editor of the official part wrote an informative note on 1 November 1869 (issue no. 87), probably addressed to the public with further interests in reading, in the administrative gazette of Chişinău. Readers were informed that “the Bulletin, as other provincial gazettes, is conducted by the Law of the Press from 1837, and the activity of the gazette is oriented on its basis.”

Although the editors of the Bulletin tried to most closely respect the program of the censorship, the gazette was repeatedly subjected to administrative restrictions. The Chişinău archives have saved few documents about this part of the periodical’s life. Most documents concerning this period are concentrated in the Russian archives of Sankt Petersburg.<sup>2</sup>

Searching for an exit from the crisis situation in which the gazette found itself in the years 1867-1870, the editors handed several applications to the Department of Press and Censorship in order to get permission to introduce (in the unofficial part) certain sections for external and internal news, as well as for polemical publications, literary criticism, history, etc. Thus Gangardt, Civil Governor of Bessarabia, formulated a request for the Department of Press on 17 December 1869, in which he asked for an agreement to reformulate the Bulletin’s activity program, by introducing a “political section” on the pages of the gazette.

These changes, the governor argued, were highly necessary in order to attract the Bessarabian reading public. On 2 January 1870, the Head of the Department of Press, M. Pokhvishev, informed the Bessarabian Governor: “Include also a political section in the program of the Bessarabian Bulletin, but the news published will have to be taken

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twice a week.

<sup>1</sup> Trubetskoy, op. cit., 16.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 18.

from the official press organs of Sankt Petersburg.” Since the newspapers from the northern capital arrived in Bessarabia with a delay of 8-9 days, the Head of the Department of Press modified his earlier decision, advising the editors from Chişinău that “the news may also be taken over from the *Odessky Vestnic* (Odessa Courier)”.<sup>1</sup> Thus the official part of the Bessarabian Bulletin underwent certain changes, while the unofficial part remained practically unchanged all throughout the existence of the periodical.

Even the most innocent information which appeared in the unofficial part of the Bulletin was immediately noticed by censoring services, and punished according to the law. The editors of the Bulletin were permanently warned by the Department of Press in case they did not respect the publication program. A circular from 12 June 1868 warned that “it is inadmissible that the official press launches critical appeals about governmental institutions or certain state functionaries”.<sup>2</sup>

Only two of the ten editors of the unofficial part, who were active in the period between 1854-1917, were Bessarabians: Ch. Gore (1866-1868) and A. Nacco (1881-1884), the rest were Russian functionaries, sent by the Imperial center for temporary service to the capital of Bessarabia. These functionaries, noblemen, brought with them the “worst traditions of Russian bureaucracy”, being completely indifferent to the social-political problems of the province, and exclusively concerned with their personal interests.<sup>3</sup> They ideally represented the role of executor in the politics promoted by the Tsarist autocracy in Bessarabia.

How did the Romanian society of Bessarabia exist in this medium inhabited by foreign functionaries in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century? Were there, in the Bessarabian society, forces capable of resistance, or was this society completely passive and tolerant?

The Chişinău archives still hold much evidence for answering these questions asked by history.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>3</sup> Grosu, Ia., *Trudy po istorii Moldavii* (Works on the history of Moldova), Chişinău, 1982, 182-183.

<sup>4</sup> A.N.R.M, Stock 2, Inv. 1., folder 5187 “Delo Bessarabskogo Oblastnogo Pravleniya po khododaistvu soderzhatela Kishinevskoy Litografii Popova o uzreshenie izdati gazety “Românul”” (The transcript of the Bessarabian Regional Government about the request of the owner of the Popov typography in Kishinov,

In Chişinău, in 1848, the project of editing a newspaper, entitled *Românul* (The Romanian), was in progress. The archival folder is incomplete (one single page), the end is missing. The text on the remaining page contains a *request* (no. 754) addressed to the Civil Governor of Bessarabia, dated 27 January 1848. The Third Special Section of the Chişinău police department, entrusted with matters of censorship, reported: “The owner of the Chişinău typography, Akim Popov, in October last year (1847, a.n.), asked for permission to publish in Chişinău a gazette entitled *Românul* (The Romanian). The request was discussed at the meeting of the Supreme Council of the *Oblast* of Bessarabia, and a certain decision was also reached in this respect . Council Decision from 9 November 1847 (no. 220). I consider necessary to state that the publication of such a newspaper in the Moldavian language might also include on its pages official news which would be very helpful until a governmental Bulletin was edited here”.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond any possible commentaries on the historical fact, the patriotic intentions of the Bessarabian boyars failed to pass the censorship of time. Far from making any evaluation of the history of the Bessarabian press, I only wish to point out that the publication of a newspaper or gazette in Romanian was a constant preoccupation of the Bessarabian nobility all throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

On account of the lack of Romanian press, Bessarabian nobles, as Nicolae Iorga remarked, read the Romanian newspapers from Romania: “in 1838 a *Balş*, the wealthiest Bessarabian landowner, a *Sturdza*, a *Catinca Chica*, according to the testimony of traveler Kohl, received gazettes from Iaşi, which they read freely as having no tinge of politics in them.”<sup>2</sup> Yet, I should add that reading was never free in Bessarabia, because the Tsarist censorship always looked for, and indeed found in Romanian gazettes “political points unkind or even hostile to Russia”. As the Bessarabian Governor, Antonovici, related in his secret memorial from 8 October 1864, addressed to the Governor General of Novorossia and Bessarabia in Odessa, Romanian newspapers were banned in Bessarabia. Those who subscribed to Romanian newspapers, only received them provided they passed the censorship.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, it

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concerning the decision about the publication of the “*Românul*” [The Romanian magazine]

<sup>1</sup> A.N.R.M., Stock 2, Inv. 1., folder 5187, p. 1v.

<sup>2</sup> Boldur, Al., *Istoria Basarabiei* (The history of Bessarabia), Bucharest, 1992, 454.

<sup>3</sup> Negru, Gh. “Unele aspecte ale politicii țariste de izolare a Basarabiei” (Some

is a different issue that historical reality is often different from the one directed by the *baton* of the Tsarist censorship; and also that the Romanian press from the Principalities managed to enter Bessarabia all throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, regardless of the political or geographical frontiers of the age.

It is important to note that the official Bessarabian administration, via the Civil Governor, regularly received the Romanian press in Chişinău. Valuable documents have been preserved to testify in this respect.<sup>1</sup>

The *Address* from 20 May 1860, sent to the Bessarabian Military Governor of the Russian Consulate in Iaşi announced that “a request has already been addressed to the Asian Department asking for an authorization with the Consulate’s seal for the Valachian gazette *Steaua Dunării* (The Danube Star) to be sent to the Bessarabian Governor. But, taking into account that foreign newspapers are strictly forbidden on the territory of Russia, the Asian Department, in the absence of a decision from a superior authority, cannot allow the Consulate to send the gazette.”<sup>2</sup> On 12 June 1860, an address arrived to Chişinău from the Diplomacy Department of the Governor General in Odessa, which informed that “on July 6, the current Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Tolstoy, allowed that the newspaper *Steaua Dunării* (The Danube Star) be sent to Chişinău, confirmed by the seal of the Consulate in Iaşi.”<sup>3</sup>

In this context another issue gains importance: on 18 July 1860 a special circular was addressed to the Russian Consulate in Iaşi (no. 2006), by the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, which contained special indications (obviously, about abiding the Regulation of censorship) in connection with the dispatch of Romanian press to Chişinău. It also requested information about “what newspaper titles would you like to subscribe to, so that the trusted person may put them at your disposal.”<sup>4</sup> This was followed by an active correspondence between the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Governor of Bessarabia, which contained the titles of the requested newspapers. The list refers to

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aspects of the Tsarist politics for the isolation of Bessarabia), in *Destin Românesc* (Romanian destiny), 1 (1994), 75-86.

<sup>1</sup> A.N.R.M., Stock 2, Inv. 1., folder 7177. “Delo o vypiskie moldavskikh valachskikh gazet” (A transcript about the subscription to Moldavian and Valachian magazines)

<sup>2</sup> A.N.R.M., Stock 2, Inv. 1., folder 6885, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> A.N.R.M., *ibid.*, p. 6v.

<sup>4</sup> A.N.R.M., *ibid.*, p.7.



the following titles: *Reforma* (The Reform); *Monitorul oficial din Iași* (The Official Monitor of Iași); *Conservatorul progresist* (The Progressive Conservative); *Dacia*; *Viitorul* (The Future).

It is interesting to note that that Governor of Bessarabia was permanently informed (the archival documents do not reveal by whom probably a trustworthy person) about everything that happened in Iași or Bucharest, even in editorial offices of different newspapers. For instance: on 12 April 1861 he was informed that the *Reforma* (The Reform) newspaper was banned because the editor “permitted himself to publish a critical article about the government”, and until the re-publication of this gazette the Governor in Chișinău is advised to order a different newspaper: the “*Unirea* (The Union) which appears instead of the *Conservatorul* (The Conservative).”<sup>1</sup>

Evidently, it was one of the Governor’s interests to be acquainted with the social-political situation of the Romanian principalities, in order to neutralize their influence in Bessarabia. It should be noted that all these Romanian periodicals which came to Chișinău to the Governor’s address, were later deposited in the collections of the Chișinău Public Library, as a closed stock “until they will be made available for public access”.<sup>2</sup>

Important data can also be found in two archival folders bearing the Russian seal *po secretnomu stolu* (top-secret), with special destination for the Governor of Bessarabia Fanton de Verrayon (he was of French origin). The correspondence which came from the Governor of Odessa reveals that the Governor of Bessarabia asked the former’s authorization for the free circulation of the *Monitorul din Iași* (The Iași Monitor) in Bessarabia, so that the Bessarabian nobility may have direct access to the information published there, related to the decisions of certain authorities (mostly judicial) about landownership.<sup>3</sup> The Governor of Odessa’s answer was very cautious, considering that “this *Monitor* would replace in this case (i.e., in case of free circulation, a.n.) the information from the Circulars of the Bessarabian administration, and thus would even limit their activity.”<sup>4</sup>

In relation to periodical publications from Iași, there is another interesting piece of information from 3 August 1868. The editor of the *Curierul de Iași* (The Iași Courier), C. Balasan, addressed the Governor

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<sup>1</sup> A.N.R.M., *ibid.*, p. 9-15.

<sup>2</sup> A.N.R.M., *ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> A.N.R.M., Stock 2, Inv. 1., folder 7558, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> A.N.R.M., *ibid.*, p. 5-6v.

of Bessarabia via the Russian Consulate in Iași, asking for permission “to freely transport the publication to Bessarabia”. The Governor General from Odessa (who was to make a decision in this respect) found that “sending the mentioned publication can happen by the same principles as the sending of other publications from abroad, that is, with permission of the censorship, which must prevent the entering of newspapers with a hostile attitude towards us.”<sup>1</sup> All further comments are needless, the document speaks for itself. I only mention that, beginning with 1863, the Public Library of Bessarabia was allowed to subscribe to Romanian publications: *Buciumul* (The Bugle), *Românul* (The Romanian), *Monitorul oficial* (The Official Monitor), *La voix de la Roumanie* (The Voice of Romania). Public access to these collections, as aforementioned, was limited.

There were heavy discussions in Chișinău, in 1858, about the publication of a bilingual (Romanian-Russian) periodical, edited just as much for the Romanians from Bessarabia, as for the Romanians living in the Principalities, and which had as its aim “to fight against the currents hostile towards Russia coming from the Romanian countries.”<sup>2</sup> The initiator of this newspaper was State Secretary Ioan Dabija. In the memorial addressed to the Military Governor of Bessarabia, Fanton de Verrayon, on 12 February 1858, he proposed the organization of a newspaper or a gazette in the Principalities. The correspondence between the Governor of Bessarabia and his superior from Odessa, as well as his requests handed to the Ministry of Public Instruction in Sankt Petersburg, contrived for a long time. For a period of almost six years (1858-1864) the functionaries of the Imperial Chancery kept discussing this problem (the archival documents sealed with the interdiction “top secret” offer a lot of proof in this respect), but without reaching any final decision. I will only refer to some of the documents in order to explain certain intentions and opinions of functionaries devoted to the Russian Empire.

On 17 June 1858, the Governor of Bessarabia was informed in an address sent by the Minister of Public Instruction in Sankt Petersburg that “in February this year, I was informed about the publication, in Chișinău, of a newspaper in the Moldavian and Russian language, meant to fight against the periodicals from Moldavia and Valachia which are subject to the influence of Western European States, and also about the weakening of sympathy towards Russia, which has considerably

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<sup>1</sup> Negru, Gh. op. cit., 76.

<sup>2</sup> A.N.R.M., stock 2, Inv. 1., folder 7575, p. 1-5; folder 7663, p. 1-6.

decreased...”<sup>1</sup> The Governor of Bessarabia was also notified that the curator of the Odessa region, Pirogov, was also consulted about the issue, as was the Governor General. The Minister in Petersburg concluded: “In the case of a successful election of an editor for the gazette and a competent editorial board, the publishing of such a gazette would largely influence not only the Bessarabians, but also the population of the Principalities. But in the absence of these conditions ... a gazette of such proportions, for the time being, and on the basis of the available evidence, is almost impossible. Even more so because a bad gazette would just confuse things more, than be of any use...”<sup>2</sup>

In the meantime, as governors were changing (few of these Russian functionaries were retained longer in the province), opinions were changing as well. An address sent from Odessa on 16 October 1864 is eloquent in this respect: the Governor General in Odessa sustained: “I consider useful the publication of a gazette for the entire population of Bessarabia, the editor of which would have the right to publish articles in answer to Romanian articles which have taken a hostile position towards the Russian State”.<sup>3</sup>

One of the last documents in this collection, dated 30 October 1864, mentioned that an editorial board was about to be chosen “for preparing the publishing of the periodical in the Moldavian and Russian language, and for its publication a sum of 3 thousand Rubles will be allocated.”<sup>4</sup> One is entitled to believe, based on this information, that the publication of a bilingual periodical in Chişinău was officially legalized by the year 1864. However, it is not known whether such a publication was actually published in Bessarabia in 1864. There only were some dubious initiatives (having hidden goals, subject to Imperial interests), which, as can be seen, had no chance to be achieved.

The 1870's also witnessed other initiatives of the Romanian nobility of Bessarabia, which aimed at the foundation of different publications in Romanian. It is known that in 1862, the Bessarabian boyar Constantin Cristi intended to organize a “Moldavian typography” in Chişinău. Precious documents have been preserved in the Chişinău archives which prove this. A part of these documents have been integrally published by researchers in publications from Chişinău.<sup>5</sup> I only wish to

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<sup>1</sup> A.N.R.M., Stock 2, Inv. 1., folder 6885, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> A.N.R.M., *ibid.*, p. 1-19.

<sup>3</sup> Boldur, *Al. op. cit.*, 471.

<sup>4</sup> A.N.R.M., Stock 2, Inv. 1., folder 7731, p1.

<sup>5</sup> Negru, Gh. “O tentativă nereuşită de a înfiinţa în Basarabia o *Tipografie*”

note that the initiative of boyar Cristi was accepted with great caution by the Governor of Bessarabia, who succeeded in persuading his superiors in Odessa and Petersburg about the “uselessness of such a Moldavian typography” in Chişinău. The Governor’s objections were very “solid”, sustaining that “in the absence of printing orders, the three typographies of Chişinău are idle at this moment”, so there was no need for a new typography.

Although archival documents (as many as there are preserved, because some were extracted) give no hint as to what that typography should have produced, indirect sources tell us that *boyar* Cristi intended to publish, among others, a Romanian gazette.

Romanian publications from Bessarabia had a new chance of existence only at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially after the Russian revolution from 1905. During one single decade an impressive number of Romanian periodical publications appeared in Bessarabia: *Basarabia* (Bessarabia, 1906-1907), *Viaţa Basarabiei* (Life of Bessarabia, 1907), *Basarabia renovată* (Renovated Bessarabia, 1907), *Moldovanul* (The Moldavian, 1907-1908), *Lira Basarabiei* (Lyric Bessarabia, 1912), *Făclia Ţării* (The Country’s Torch, 1912), *Glasul Basarabiei* (Voice of Bessarabia, 1913-1914), *Cuvânt moldovenesc* (Moldavian Word, 1913-1914), *Soldatul moldovenesc* (The Moldavian Soldier, 1917), *Pământ şi voie* (Land and Will, 1917), *Sfatul Ţării* (The Country’s Advice, 1917).<sup>1</sup> Even this simple list of periodicals published in Bessarabia at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century evokes an extraordinary historical reality which changed the life of this Romanian province after a century of foreign domination. Although these publications were censored and persecuted with the usual ruthlessness of the Russian autocratic system (as the minor changes and democratic illusions of the Revolution from 1905 did not essentially change Russian autocracy), in Bessarabia they brought about that miracle of re-awakening of the consciousness of a nation, a country, a language, and freedom. It was this moment that launched the movement of the national liberation of the Romanians from Bessarabia, which finally ended with the Act of Union on 27 March 1918.

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*moldovenească*” (An unsuccessful attempt to found a *Moldavian typography* in Bessarabia), in *Revista de Istorie a Moldovei* (The History Journal of Moldova) 1-2 (1997), 91-100.

<sup>1</sup> Varta, I., “Presa din Basarabia la începuturile sale” (The Bessarabian press at its beginnings), *Destin Românesc* (Romanian destiny), 4 (1994), 19-32.