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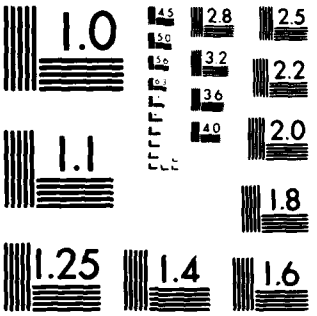

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RUSSIAN COLONIALISM AND BESSARABIA: A CONFRONTATION OF CULTURES*

In the original plan (and original drafts) of this paper the attention was focused quite narrowly on colonial policies and the years 1878-1917. However, in the course of research and writing I became convinced that the period I chose to cover was not quite as felicitous, or convenient, as I believed it would, for unless I had access to archival material and put the primary emphasis on the bureaucratic (and mostly local) decision-making level I would not be able to carve for myself a field of research that could be presented in a comprehensible fashion. At the same time, while delving deeper and deeper into the subject, I confess that my interest shifted away from bureaucracy and its colonial policies to colonialism in the broader sense as an expression of certain cultural and demographic trends. My interest shifted because, first, I found it repeatedly difficult to distinguish between what could legitimately be labeled as policy and what was or may have been (who knows really?) merely an arbitrary decision, a momentary whim, of some guberniia or uezd potentate, or perhaps not even his but of his secretary who prepared the document and just pocketed a bribe of a few rubles in exchange for twisting the legal meaning of the decision one way or another. Second, even if I raised my focus above the local bureaucratic level, there would still not be much to chew intellectually. Poland, the Balkans, Central Asia, the Far East--yes, these were areas which attracted the attention of the more powerful minds in and outside of government and policies toward them were formulated in the context of interesting debates. But Bessarabia? Except for a few individuals who, especially at the time of its annexation, had high hopes for the role it might play in the future expansion of Russia, hardly anyone bothered with it. Why, until the turn of the century the St. Petersburg bureaucrats had a hard time even placing it on a map; they thought it was somewhere north.

Territory

The territory of Bessarabia, as generally referred to and as administered by Russia under the name of Bessarabskaia guberniia (at first it was oblast') between 1812 and 1856 and again between 1878 and 1918, is bounded in the east by the river Dnestr (Nistrul), in the south by the Black Sea and the Danube (its Kilia arm),[1] in the west by the river Prut, and in the northwest by a more variegated boundary, namely, the river Rakitna (an affluent of the Prut),

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some ten miles of dry ("artificial") boundary, a little left affluent of the stream Onut, and finally the Onut itself, which flows into the Dnestr. Thus the territory of Bessarabia differs substantially from that of the present-day Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, which does not include either southern or northern Bessarabia while on the other hand extending over certain lands east of the Dnestr. Geographically, Bessarabia is located 45°14' and 48°38' north latitude and 26°03' and 30°25' east longitude. Its surface is recorded in Russian sources as comprising 39,015 square versts, or 40,097 square versts if the water bodies (lakes) are included; later sources speak of 44,422 square kilometers. Thus, with the equivalent of roughly 17,000 square miles, Bessarabia is comparable in size to one of the smaller European states; for instance, it is considerably larger than Holland and even more so than Belgium, and just a little larger than either Switzerland or Denmark.[2]

If one can assume that the size of a territory has some relation to how important it is to the people who claim it as their patrimony, it may be worth remembering that Bessarabia is three times as large as Alsace and Lorraine and that in 1812 it represented half of the Principality of Moldavia--"the most beautiful half of Moldavia," as a Romanian historian put it.[3] Also worth recalling is that, in fact, this was the second partition of Moldavia, the first having occurred in 1775 when Austria annexed the northern part of the country (including Moldavia's original capital, Suceava).

Origin of the Name Bessarabia

Historically, the term Bessarabia designated only the southern portion of the Russian province of Bessarabia, which is physiographically quite distinct in that it is a flat and dry, almost treeless steppe whereas the landscape immediately to the north is characterized by prairie-like rolling hills and famous oak groves. During Roman times the steppe flatland was part of Trajan's Dacia and remnants of a Roman wall can be seen to this day along its northern frontier running from the upper Sarata, a left affluent of the Prut, to the lower reaches of the river Botna, a right affluent of the Dnestr.[4]

The origin of the name Bessarabia[5] goes back to the second half of the fourteenth century when a member of the south Transylvanian princely (voevod) family of Basarab, Mircea the Old, who was also ruling Wallachia, extended the latter's frontiers into eastern Dobrudjz and southern Moldavia,[6] including that flatland between the Prut and Dnestr which was once part of Roman Dacia. Though the dominion of the Basarabs over Dacia was short-lived--already at the turn of the same century it became part of the Principality of

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

February 6, 1980

Mr. Harry Schrecengost
Defense Technical Information
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Edward N. Lundstrom
Research Documentation Officer
Office of External Research
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Moldavia--it continued to be referred to as the land of the Basarabs, hence as Bessarabia (in Romanian as well as Bulgarian it is Basarabia.).[7] True, when the Tatars and the Turks dominated this area they gave it the name of Budzhak[8] (in Romanian: Buceag), by which it is still often referred to in the sense of a physical geographical area. In the official and diplomatic language of the European powers, however, the name Bessarabia continued to be used to describe the steppe between the lower Prut and the lower Dnestr. Thus early in the eighteenth century Demetrius Cantemir, a Prince of Moldavia, attached to his Description of the Ancient and Present Status of Moldavia[9] a map in which he uses both terms, Budzhak and Bessarabia. A German map of 1789 uses the term Bessarabia but notes that it is the Budzhak Tatars' territory, while on an 1812 French map we see only the term Bessarabia presumably because the Budzhak Tatars were by that time gone from the area.[10]

Extension of the Term Bessarabia

The first attempt to extend the term Bessarabia to cover all of Moldavia between the Prut and the Dnestr dates only from late 1807, and the reason for this extension was political expediency. It was, in fact, a clever diplomatic move on the part of the Russian Foreign Office, which was seeking a way to circumvent Article 23 (22) of the just-concluded Tilsit Treaty which committed Russia to the evacuation of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia[11] it occupied after initiating the previous year (1806) hostilities against France's ally, the Ottoman Empire. In the negotiations with France in the fall of 1807 the Russian diplomats pressed the point that since the above Article 23 (22) did not mention Bessarabia the Russian troops could stay there.[12] At the same time they still reiterated their maximal territorial demands, namely, "Moldavia and Wallachia and that narrow strip of land which, not forming a province, is called Bessarabia."[13] Thus we see here not only the argument that Bessarabia and Moldavia are distinct and apart but also the term Bessarabia used for the first time in its new, broad sense. The minimum territorial gain Tsar Aleksandr I seemed willing to accept did not mention either Moldavia or Wallachia but it was defined in such a way as to correspond rather closely to the area of the "large" Bessarabia.[14] To sum up, having failed in their original design to annex the whole of both Danubian Principalities, the Russians bargained hard to assure themselves nevertheless of at least some gain and ultimately succeeded by arguing first that Bessarabia was something apart from Moldavis[15] and then that Bessarabia included all of Moldavia between the Prut and the Dnestr.

In the drawn-out direct negotiations between the Russians and the Turks before a peace treaty was finally signed (May 16) and the ratification documents exchanged (July 2) in Bucharest in 1812, Russian

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demands functioned as an index of how successful the Russians were on the battlefield at the given moment and varied from Moldavia and Wallachia in toto, to only Moldavia, to Moldavia east of the Seret (Siret), or Moldavia east of the Prut, or only parts of the last.[16] Who knows?--had, for instance, the Seret and not the Prut become the boundary, the term Bessarabia might have come to mean something still different, or another term might have come into use to describe the Moldavian territory annexed by Russia. During the negotiation of the Bucharest Treaty, and even afterwards for a time, in the internal Russian documents and correspondence the newly acquired territory is referred to not as Bessarabia but as Moldavia on the left bank of the Prut, or Moldavia beyond-the-Prut (zaprutskaia Moldaviia) or, alternatively, looking at it from the east, as the province beyond-the-Dnestr (zadnestrovskaia oblast').[17]

Origins of Population

After the collapse of Trajan's Dacia (which included the southern half of Bessarabia), the Romanized Dacians (Daco-Romans) withdrew from Moldavia and part (all?) of Wallachia--it is not known precisely where but presumably partly southward, beyond the Danube (into present-day Bulgaria and Serbia and possibly into other Balkan mountainous regions farther south and west), and partly westward into the Carpathians and Transylvania--and one after another various people came to occupy the deserted areas. In particular the southeast portion--the Budzhak--became a veritable passageway and stopover point for the human waves that swept, or trickled, from the Eurasian steppe into this gateway to the Danubian basin; and in succession the Magyars, the Bulgarians, the Petchenegs, the Cumans, and the Tatars made halt here. In northern Bessarabia (and northern Moldavia in general) scattered Slav agricultural settlements began to appear in the sixth and seventh centuries and later Kiev Rus', and Galich (Red) Rus", frontiers extended into this area.

The Romanians did not reappear here until the middle of the fourteenth century. Their reappearance was a function of a slow process, lasting into the twentieth century, by which they were transformed from a scattered, semi-nomadic tribe of mountain sheepherders into an agricultural nation of the lowlands and in the course of which they expanded quite rapidly from their Carpathian base (that for a thousand years served them well as a refuge from invaders) ever farther into the valleys of the rivers--of the Danube, the Seret, the Prut, the Dnestr, the Bug--and beyond into the steppe.[18] As the migratory waves from the East calmed down, and an emerging native feudal class developed the capability to protect its people from predatory nomadic incursions,[19] the sheepherders ventured down ward with their flocks, at first only in a seasonal, fall and spring,

migratory flux but eventually establishing permanent settlements in the lowlands while at the same time moving their mountainous village bases to lower locations.[20]

Migration and Adaptation

The pull of the lowlands made secure--the lure of a life made easier than on mountaintops--was, however, only half of the story. The other half was the push of the demographic pressure; as the population grew there arose the necessity to find a wider economic (food-producing) base, and for the sheepherder it meant seeking a wider, and better, grazing base than the limited (and half the year snow-covered) pastures available above the timberline. What was sought was not emigration of men but migration of men and sheep: a shift in space of the people and of the basis of their livelihood to a more propitious physiographic environment without being forced to abandon the ancestral ways. Of course, as environment, hence ecology and economy, changed, so did the mode of life, but the adaptation--the working out of a new symbiosis--was very gradual, almost imperceptible within one generation, for the man-nature confrontation was mediated by sheep. Indeed, for the Romanian peasant to be close to the earth meant primarily (until relatively recently) to be close to his sheep, to his stâna (sheepfold), which fed and clothed him, and not to his țărână (tilled land), which played second fiddle in the economy and in the culture of the household, the village, and also the nation at large.

Naturally, even during the times preceding the emergence of Moldavia and Wallachia on the historical scene, the Romanians did practice some agriculture while huddling in the safety of the mountains. The gradual increase in the role of agriculture and decrease in the role of pastoralism, as well as the displacement of the sheep as the essential wealth and economic tool of husbandry and its replacement by the cow, ox, horse, and ultimately the machine, was a development that paralleled the gradual migration from the highlands into the lowlands. But the parallel was not symmetric for there was a cultural lag. Sheepherding remained the major occupation where soil tilling would have been more economical, and there was a preference for staying in, or migrating to, areas where it was possible to continue the old way of life, while the best agricultural lands remained unoccupied.[21] To this day the population of Romania has not quite descended from the hills so that the sub-Carpathian zone tends to be severely overpopulated, whereas the zone of the richest soils, the flatland along the Danube (as well as the one in the Budzhak) is still quite sparsely populated.[22]

Characteristically, the spearhead of the eastward movement of population away from the mountains in Moldavia tended to hew closely to the southern border of the zone of the oak. Thus in Bessarabia the central, the Kishinev region became the heatland of the Moldavian

ecumene (it is still in the Moldavian SSR), as well as the homeland celebrated in folklore and literature; and it is also here that the Romanian ethnic element spilled in compact mass onto the left bank of the Dnestr and, in enisled settlements, farther east to and beyond the Bug. The savannah-like landscape, where the forest and steppe zones merge, was home to the famous codrii (oak forests) and smaller oak groves which dotted excellent pastures and provided the sheep with shade in the summer, food (acorns) in the fall, and in the winter with quite good shelter given the relatively mild climate and usually light snowfalls. Briefly, not only could the Moldavians transfer into this environment their way of life but they could practice it here more successfully, under less harsh conditions, than in their original Carpathian homeland.

Confrontation of Cultures

When Aleksandr I visited Bessarabia shortly after its annexation and gave a ball in Kishinev to acquaint himself with the local social elite, what struck him and his retinue was the sight of the Moldavian boyars who made their appearance in tall sheepskin fur hats. To the Russian hosts it was a cultural shock, and time and again one can read how also later the tall sheepskin fur hat was something which the Russians (and other foreign visitors) saw as typical of and characterizing the Romanian and his culture, which it indeed did. Incidentally, no less characteristic of the traditional Romanian culture, and also frequently mentioned by Russians and other foreigners, was (and still is) the basic and favorite Romanian dish of corn mush with sheep cheese (mamaliga cu brânza). The dish is, of course, of relatively recent origin for corn does not grow in the Carpathians and it was not introduced into Romania before the middle of the sixteenth century (and on a large scale probably only later), but the very fact that it became the national dish illustrates the symbiosis between the pastoral and agricultural cultures consummated in the last few centuries; and the fact that today in Romania both the sheepskin hat and the sheep cheese are becoming scarcer and scarcer, almost a luxury, indicates that the days of the sheep and of the pastoral culture are definitely on the wane. The new symbiosis is between agriculture and industry.

At the time of the Tsar's visit in Bessarabia, just beyond the Dnestr extended the New Russia--territories acquired from the Turks and Tatars only toward the end of the eighteenth century--and a stream of Russians, at first mostly freemen but then mainly noblemen with their serfs, was poring into this black-earth belt which was soon to gain the reputation of being the bread basket of Europe. Odessa was founded in 1795; within two decades it became the leading port on the Black Sea, and throughout most of the nineteenth century

it continued to grow at a spectacular rate both as a city and as a port. By 1830 the agriculture and with it the whole economy of New Russia was oriented toward the production of grain for export, and later, with the development of the railway system and of a sugar-beet industry, this trend toward a cash-crop agriculture was accentuated even more. Whereas the noblemen in the Central Russian provinces continued for a time to practice the traditional, paternalistic, and autarkic serf economy--producing on their estates everything from food and clothing to art, music, even drama--those of New Russia manifested a budding entrepreneurial spirit. They were go-getters after land not so much to practice the Tolstoian type of gentle, and mostly indolent, agriculture as a way of life but a more modern and more rough-and-tumble and exploitative (from the peasant's point of view) agriculture as a business for profit. The nobleman was often nothing more than a remote investor of capital in land, actual management being in the hands of a rising new class of entrepreneurs, contractors and subcontractors who openly, or clandestinely or semi-clandestinely (if they were Jews), leased the land. This last trend was particularly characteristic of Bessarabia after the local boyars were pushed out and the whole province was assimilated into the economy and socio-political milieu of the new mother country.

The trend toward a market agriculture began to develop also in the Danubian Principalities but not until after 1821. Only after that date (which marked the elimination of rule by the foreign Phanariot princes, and in general the beginning of the end of Ottoman domination) did the Principalities orient themselves toward production of grains for the European export market as opposed to the basically internal, mostly non-voluntary and limited shipments to Constantinople which prevailed earlier and in which Bessarabian production played a major role.[23] It was also only in the 1820's and 1830's that the fabulously fertile Danube valley--the Bărăgan--began slowly to attract agricultural settlers, and it was only after 1856 that the two old Danubian ports, Brăila and Galați, became major grain exporters.

Thus at the time Bessarabia was annexed it was still in no way touched by the new economic trend (and the population movements stimulated by it) which was already stirring New Russia. True, there was a gradual eastward shift of population in Moldavia (which included Bessarabia), but, as has already been pointed out, it was not a movement which was caused by, or itself caused, significant changes within the life span of any one generation. Rather, it was part of that All-European Drang nach Osten--a migration from West to East that was slow, was mostly spontaneous and unplanned and only occasionally regulated by authority, and was nearly imperceptible (except to the individual participants). It was a migration that

began sometime in the Middle Ages and in the course of at least a millennium was shifting the populations, ethnographic boundaries, and destinies of France, Germany, Poland, Romania, the Ukraine, Russia, in a word, of practically every European country that had an "open" frontier toward the East--toward the Eurasian plains--where land was plentiful and where the nomadic way of life was gradually forced to beat a retreat before the massive wave of the agriculturalists who, driven forward by demographic pressures and secure in their hinterland protected by walled fortresses and towns, were ever advancing, ever multiplying and ever developing new technologies which in turn permitted the occupation of still different lands and soils and the squeezing from them of sustenance for still larger numbers.[24] This was the pre-nationalist and mostly non-political Drang nach Osten which can be called an organic (or "natural") historical development.

Colonial Versus Imperial Policy

The Russians' (and Ukrainians') movement into New Russia still had many traits characteristic of such an organic historical development, but it also had traits characteristic of a planned, deliberate, and policy-stimulated migration through which the government consciously seeks to achieve certain political ends. In other words, Russia did have a colonial policy in New Russia and basically it reflected the idea that this was the old patrimony of Rus lost centuries ago and since then slowly "gathered back together" first by Muscovy and then by Imperial Russia.

Bessarabia, however, was not considered part of the old Russian patrimony. This was why those who favored a more limited, strictly national Russian foreign policy, as distinct from the several variants of a broad imperial policy, considered that Russia reached its "natural frontiers" at the Dnestr and should not waste expenditure of men and resources for expansion beyond it.[25] In any case, even those who warmly welcomed the annexation of Bessarabia saw its future role as being quite different from that of New Russia, which simply was another land to be colonized by Russian peasants; they reserved, namely, for Bessarabia a role in the context of Russian imperial policy in the Balkans. At least that is how it was in the early stages of Russian administration of Bessarabia.

Among the reasons for which the beginning of the nineteenth century was momentous for Russia was the fact that within a few years it added to its crown four countries--Finland, Poland, Georgia, and Bessarabia--all of them Christian and none of them claimed on historical grounds, which was the first such annexation[26] and indicated Russia was crossing a Rubicon in her expansionist push. All

the previous imperial (i.e., beyond the Rus heritage) growth, from the days of Muscovy on, was achieved through annexation of lands inhabited by peoples who were not Christian and by the same token considered lacking both a legitimate political raison d'être of their own and a national or state idea which could be harmonized with the Russian Orthodox idea.

Of the four new acquisitions, only Georgia and Bessarabia were Orthodox and it was the latter which was more important for it lay on the path of the main imperial thrust of the Russian political and ideological ambitions which were concentrated at that time in the Balkans and Constantinople and beyond, in the Holy Lands, Of course, Bessarabia was a very truncated realization of the aim of the latest Russian war against the Turks. Still, in the Moldavians of Bessarabia the Russians saw the first chunk of the several Christian Orthodox Balkan people whom they expected to liberate in the near future, and when they began, in 1812, to ponder what kind of status Bessarabia should have and how it should be administered it weighed heavy on their minds that whatever government they established here would be carefully scrutinized for signs of the real Russian intentions not only by the Moldavians on the right bank of the Prut but by all the other Christians still under Ottoman domination.

There are indeed indications that in 1812 the Tsar and the men around him intended to make Bessarabia into an example of what status and treatment Russia would grant the Balkan Christians after their liberation. The Tsar wished to show that switching from Ottoman to Russian suzerainty would be an unmixed blessing and for this reason he urged Bessarabia should not be subjected to some Gleichschaltung with Russian provinces but, on the contrary, permitted to preserve its own laws, customs, and ways in government[27] Incidentally, there were good reasons for the Tsar to be concerned, for rather alarming reports about the situation in Bessarabia were reaching St. Petersburg. First, the southern part of the province was devastated and depopulated already during the years 1806-1812 as a result of war operations and the far from gentle Russian regime of military occupation and despoliation. Then, the news that Bessarabia was annexed by Russia fomented a mass exodus of peasants to Moldavia on the right bank of the Prut--some sources claim that from Khotin district alone the unbelievable number of over three thousand families fled[28] --because rumors spread that serfdom, nonexistent here,[29] would be introduced by the Russian authorities. Many boyars, for one reason or another, also began to sell out and move west of the Prut. By 1818 Bessarabia apparently lost one hundred thousand people, about a quarter of its population.[30]

From Imperial to Bureaucratic Policies

The first governor of Bessarabia named by the Russians was Scarlat Sturdza, a very well-known native boyar, who was to govern according to the old ways. These old ways, which had been respected by the Turks, implied self-government (exercised by the Divan, a kind of council) and autonomy, even for the judiciary, far beyond anything existing in Russia even after the Great Reforms. Naturally, it was not a democratic government for the authority was in the hands of an oligarchy of boyars who were not legally a blood nobility but a service nobility. Nor was it an efficient or uncorrupt government. Rather, it was a laissez faire, weak, and indolent government which governed little because, at least in practice, it had no extensive legislative powers, even less executive capabilities, and no administrative abilities to speak of. It was a government evolved out of the wisdom of the historical experience under Ottoman domination which taught that strong, centralized, and efficient government above all responded to and served the interests of the imperial power, not of the local people. Since under the terms of the vassal relationship the Turks were barred from sending their own men to enforce and administer their sovereign will, it was in the interest of the Romanians not to furnish them with an efficient government machinery. Briefly, the government machinery had been for all practical purposes sabotaged, or at least permitted to decay beyond repair. But the advantage derived from this state of affairs insofar as the relationship with outside world was concerned turned into a disadvantage when it came to dealing with internal problems. In the absence of an effective government human as well as property relationships were regulated partly by a few antiquated laws but mostly by a variety of local customs acceptable to the people but vague enough to be probably of dubious juridical validity.

Not surprisingly, within a few years of the takeover of Bessarabia, Russian bureaucrats began to complain that the idea that the province should be governed by its own laws turned in practice into a farce because there simply were no such laws to speak of, which was of course true if one was habituated to thinking in terms of a positive, uniform, and written law. Equally if not more irritating to the Russian bureaucrats was the institution of self-government. They were disturbed by the results of the voting procedures in the Divan and bitterly accused its members of being motivated by purely personal interests.[31] The conclusion was that self-government could not work because the boyars were all related to one another and were united by common bonds and "customs different from those of all other people."[32] The judicial

system also came under fire, and the result of all this criticism was that the original policy of letting Bessarabia live a distinct and autonomous life of its own quickly began to give way to a policy of tightening the bonds with St. Petersburg in general and with its bureaucracy in particular. More centralization meant, of course, more interference in the internal life of Bessarabia, further and further down the line to the lower and more provincial levels of government, everywhere imposing more and more uniformity with the All-Russian laws, the legally regulated social class system and especially the Russian bureaucratic ways. The local system of justice was effectively abolished by measures taken in 1822 and 1825, and the Basic Law (Aşezămantul) of 1818 which confirmed and regulated the autonomy of the province was abrogated in 1828 and only minor local administrative particularities were tolerated after that date. The sole major freedom enjoyed in Bessarabia, and not in Russia, which survived the original onslaught of centralization was the freedom of the peasants. This was due mainly to the fact that Tsar Aleksandr I forbade Russian serf owners not only to move their serfs onto the estates they were purchasing in Bessarabia but even to seek the forcible return of serfs that fled across the Dnestr. Though the latter prohibition seems to have been withdrawn under Nikolas I, or at least ignored by the authorities, and though the control of the landlords over the peasants tightened markedly through various economic and administrative measures, still the Bessarabian peasant was never reduced to that degrading status of human cattle in which the peasant on the other side of the Dnestr lived. This was due, among other reasons, to the continuing sensitivity of St. Petersburg to the unflattering (for the Russians) comparisons which might be made between the fate of the Christians "liberated" from Ottoman domination and those still living under it.[33]

From Policy of Bureaucratization to Policy of Russification

The Bessarabian boyars strenuously opposed the trend toward centralization. They argued that even under Turkey for four hundred years their domestic order was respected. Comparisons were also made with Finland which was permitted to govern itself according to its own ways.[34] In addition, what worried the local population was the fact that outsiders began to be nominated to positions in Bessarabia from the very beginning. Sturdza was the first and only local man to serve as governor, and he lasted for only one year. From 1813 on the chief executive was always a man sent from the depths of Russia. By the mid-1820's the judiciary was already dominated by Russian appointees, and so it went in all the branches of administration. Even the Church did not escape this fate though the takeover there took several decades and not merely several years.

The ascendance of the bureaucratic centralist policies inevitably led to pressures for more appointments from the ranks of the Russian bureaucracy, and such appointments in turn further strengthened centralization and in general assimilation of the administration of Bessarabia into the All-Russian administration. Not only were the two trends feeding on each other but they necessarily generated still another one, namely, the trend to Russify Bessarabia. Demands for the preservation of the Romanian language in the administration of the province were raised from the very beginning by worried boyars, and though the petition to make Romanian the sole official language was brushed aside as impossible, Russian and Romanian enjoyed at least nominally an equal status until the 1830's.

It cannot be said that Russification was from the very beginning a deliberate policy. Rather, it was something which grew out of the working of the system itself as a matter of efficiency and convenience and which was backed by only semi-conscious feelings of cultural superiority. Under Nikolas I, with his sponsorship of nationalism, the attitude toward national minorities began of course to change for the worse everywhere. But the position of the Romanians was affected adversely by still another factor. When the Russians originally embarked upon their crusade to liberate the Balkan people they did it under the banner "Free the Christians." In the course of the nineteenth century, with the growth of Russian nationalism and the emergence of an official Panslavism, the banner became "Free the Slavs." The Romanians fitted very well under the first banner but not under the second. Worse, they began to be seen as forming an inconvenient geopolitical barrier separating the Russians from their Balkan brothers. Hence there arose the wish, sometimes openly expressed, to do away with this island of Latin culture and Russification of Bessarabia was a good beginning.[35]

Conclusions

In the natural course of their "organic" expansion the Romanians reached, and began to overflow into, the territory of New Russia. On the other side of Dnestr there was a similar expansion of Russians and Ukrainians but it was both "organic" and colonial, that is, spontaneous as well as backed by the policies and the might of the state. Soon the Russian state power spilled over the Dnestr and the result was the annexation of Bessarabia. The two "organic" expansions, that of the Romanians and that of the Russians, came to a standstill after they met head on, though some intermingling and some gains or losses by each side were registered. The expansion of the Russian state power was, however, not halted by the masses of the Romanian peasant settlers. It superimposed itself on them while

they slid under it without either disturbing it greatly or being disturbed by it too much. A more direct and open conflict arose immediately only between the Russian administration and the pre-existing Romanian administration. The latter was weaker because it was always only half of the state power, the other half having been in Turkish hands (the half now inherited by the Russians), and because it was both culturally and numerically weaker. The result was that the old Romanian ruling upper class of Bessarabia was partly displaced from all political functions and partly absorbed through a process of Russification which it only mildly resisted for the new masters offered both social rank and material rewards.

Soon after the superimposition of the Russian (or in the process of being Russified) administrative class on the underlying peasant masses, and as a result of certain deliberate policies, non-agricultural economic activities began to develop in Bessarabia and with them cities grew rapidly. But they too represented a foreign element as well as a foreign civilization. Thus the native element was, so to say, buried, as well as exploited, by two layers of superimposed classes, which classes, incidentally, were far from living in harmony.

Most of these developments were, however, not the result of deliberate colonial policies. The one deliberate and consistent policy of the Tsarist government or, rather, of its bureaucracy, was to centralize and consequently assimilate the local administrative system into the All-Russian system. The rest was either an outgrowth of the centralization or the result of economic, social, and demographic developments which the bureaucracy usually tried to control but did not really control. The sorry state in which the Romanian population of Bessarabia ultimately fell was due to its unpreparedness in terms of cultural development to face the challenge, and the fact that a large number, actually the majority of the old native ruling class, abandoned it by choosing either to retreat into Moldavia beyond the Prut or to let themselves be absorbed by the new ruling culture.

NOTES

[1]In the period 1812-1856 Russia also exercised sovereignty over the Danube delta, that is, the Russo-Turkish boundary ran farther south, along the St. Gheorghe arm of the Danube. Besides this (and the much more important territorial shift of 1856-1878, about which later), there were in the course of the nineteenth century also some other, quite minor adjustments in the boundaries of Bessarabia.

[2]One of the best geographic surveys of Bessarabia remains Lev S. Berg, Bessarabiia: Strana, liudi, khoziaistvo (Petrograd: "Ogni," 1918). Various very useful and detailed data and statistics about nineteenth-century Bessarabia and the individual towns and villages can be found in Zamfir C. Arbure, Basarabia in secolul XIX (Bucharest: C. Göbl, 1898), and Pavel A. Krushevan, ed., Bessarabiia: Geograficheskii, istoricheskii, statisticheskii, ekonomicheskii, etnograficheskii, literaturnyi i spravochnyi sbornik (Moscow: Gazeta "Bessarabets," 1903). The most detailed description is to be found in a book not now available to me: Zamfir C. Arbure, Dictionarul geografic al Basarabiei (Bucharest, 1904). The most detailed economic studies of Bessarabia are Ia. S. Grosul and I. G. Budak, Ocherki istorii narodnogo khoziaistva Bessarabii (1812-1861) (Kishinev: "Kartia Moldoveniaske," 1967), and idem, Ocherki istorii narodnogo khoziaistva Bessarabii (1861-1905 gg.) (Kishinev: "Kartia Moldoveniaske," 1972).

[3]V. A. Urechia, Istoria Românilor: Curs făcut la facultatea de litere din Bucuresci, după documenta inedite (13 vols.; Bucharest: C. Gobl, 1891-1901), Vol. 9, p. 706.

[4]Farther south there are remnants of another, the Trajan wall which runs from the Prut, at a point somewhat south of Kagul (Cahul), eastward to the northern reaches of Lake Sasyk.

[5]Among Western-language studies of Bessarabia which at least briefly discuss this problem are Charles Upson Clark, Bessarabia: Russia and Roumania on the Black Sea (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1927), Antony Babel, La Bessarabie: Étude historique, ethnographique (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1926), and N. Iorga, Histoire des relations russo-roumaines (Jassy, 1917). The most comprehensive Western-language study of Romanian history, including the history of Bessarabia, is N. Iorga, Histoire des Roumaines et de la romanité orientale (9 vols. in 10; Bucharest: L'Académie Roumaine, 1937-44); see especially Vol. 3 (Les Fondateurs d'état), Vol. 4 (Les Chevaliers), Vol. 9 (Les Unificateurs). An interesting specialized study is Nicolae Iorga, Studii istorice asupra Chiliei si Cetatii Albe (Bucharest: C. Göbl, 1899); see especially pp. 60-76. Suprisingly, the official two-volume Moldavian-language Istoriia RSS Moldovenesht' (History of the

Moldavian SSR), published by the Moldavian Academy of Sciences (2nd ed.; Kishinev: "Kartia Moldoveniaske," 1967), has only a brief footnote on the subject of the origin of the name Bessarabia (Vol. I, p. 380). For a Bulgarian view, see Vl. Diakovich, Bŭlgarska Basarabiia: Istoriko-etnograficheski ocherk s spomeni za Generala Ivan Kolev (Sofia: "Radikal'," 1918).

[6]Iorga, Histoire des Roumains et de la romanite orientale, Vol. 3, pp. 187-188, argues that the name Basarabă is of Cuman origin (from the word aba, meaning father).

[7]Moldavia was founded and politically organized somewhat later than Wallachia and at the time was only a fledgling principality.

[8]Turkish for "corner," hence of (or in) the corner. The Bulgarians, and the Russians, too, have referred to this area as "the Corner" (ongŭl, ogŭl, ŭgŭl, ŭgol). In fact, the Bulgarians consider that this "corner" of Bessarabia, which in the seventh century became a territorial base of their ancestors when they were migrating from the Volga, should be considered as the original hearland, or birthplace, of the medieval and also modern Bulgarian state. (See Memoire des Bulgare de Bessarabie, 1919 [Bulgarian Delegation document, Paris Peace Conference, 1919], p. 7, and Diakovich, op. cit., pp. 17 ff.) Budzhak was for a time an important base of the Golden Horde. Later, under the Turks, especially after 1538 and until the end of the eighteenth century, it was the home of the so-called Budzhak Tatars.

[9]Demetrio Cantemirio, Descriptio antiqui et hodierni status Moldaviae (1716?), first published in a German translation, under the title "Beschreibung der Moldau," in Magazin für die Neue Historie und Geographie, Parts III and IV (Hamburg, 1769-70).

[10]The latter map is reproduced in Babel, op. cit., between pp. 128 and 129. It is a valuable map because it traces in detail the boundaries of historical Bessarabia. According to it the northern boundary of Bessarabia ran in 1812 from the Dnestr just north of Bender (Tighina) westward toward the Prut but, before reaching that river, turned south at Karpineny (Carpineni); it then ran southward parallel to the Prut at a distance of some fifteen miles until it made a sharp turn west to join the Prut just below Kolibash' (Colibaşi). For the sake of comparison we may thus note that the boundary of the old (original, or historical) Bessarabia extended farther north than that of the southern Bessarabia which is now included in the territory of the Ukrainian SSR.

[11]"Les troupes Russes se retireront des provinces de la Valachie et de la Moldavie . . . ." "Traité de paix et d'amitié conclu à Tilsit le 25 Juin (7 Juilet) 1807," Sbornik Imperatorskago Russkago

Istoricheskago Obshchestva, Vol. 89 (St. Petersburg, 1893), pp. 49-62; on p. 57. Note: In some published versions of the Tilsit Treaty this Article is numbered twenty-two because Article 9 was stricken out at the last moment and consequently the numeration changed.

[12]Letter of N. P. Rumiantsov, Russian Foreign Minister, to P. A. Tolstoi, Russian Extraordinary Minister in Paris, Nov. 8, 1807, in ibid., pp. 218-222. Also letter of Tolstoi to Rumiantsov, Man. 3, 1808, in ibid., p. 335.

[13]Rumiantsov to Tolstoi, Nov. 26, 1807, in ibid., p. 260, emphasis added.

[14]Aleksandr I to Tolstoi, Sept. 14, 1807, in ibid., p. 107. There were also other proposals for the settlement of the Russo-Turkish conflict; Bessarabia is explicitly mentioned in them but it is not clear whether it is meant in the narrow or large sense. Ibid., pp. 358, 359. For an excellent treatment of the negotiations surrounding the 1812 Bucharest Treaty between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, as well as of the background and subsequent development of Russian policy in Bessarabia seen from the perspective of Russian overall foreign-policy aims, see L. A. Kasso, Rossiia na Dunae i obrazovanie bessarabskoi oblasti (Moscow, 1913).

[15]For the sake of accuracy it should be pointed out that there did exist in Bessarabia territorial islands which indeed were, in the political, administrative, and also cultural sense, apart from Moldavia. These were the fortresses of Kilia, Ismail, Akkerman, Bender, and Khotin (the last outside historical Bessarabia) which, with a small hinterland around them, were not only occupied by Ottoman troops but also under direct Ottoman rule and thus sharply contrasted in all respects from the bulk of the Moldavian and Wallachian territories in which--conforming to their vassal status established back in the fifteenth century, and by and large respected by the Porte--direct authority within the country could be exercised only by a Christian prince and his Christian boyars or other representatives, and Turks as well as Moslems in general were not permitted to settle, acquire land, build mosques, or marry local women anywhere within the Principalities. In 1538 the whole of historical Bessarabia (i.e., of the Budzhak) in fact passed legally under direct Ottoman administration (it became the raia of Akkerman [Cetatea Alba, Belgorod Dnestrovskii] in which a sangaic was established), Sultan Suleiman having imposed this concession on the Moldavian Prince Stephen Lăcustă; but for the next two centuries this area became a perpetual battlefield between the Turks, Tatars, Poles, and Cossacks, with the Russians coming somewhat later, and with the Moldavians joining the one or the other

side depending on what their, or the Prince's personal interests dictated at the given moment. To the Turks complete direct control over southern Bessarabia was important because it eliminated a wedge thrust between their possessions (Dobrudja to the south and Tatar Ukraine to the north) and by the same token closed the circle of their firm contiguous control over the coastal territories around the whole of the Black Sea. -- On the question of the 1538 annexation of Bessarabia, see Iorga, Studii istorice asupra Chiliei si Cetaii Albe, pp. 186 ff.

[16]Kasso, op. cit., chaps. 2 and 3 (pp. 89-145), esp. pp. 107, 111, 122.

[17]Ibid., pp. 193, 224, and passim; Berg, op. cit., p. 2. -- Concerning the origin of the name one may note here a parallel between Bessarabia and Bukovina (Bucovina). The latter, too, was an integral part of Moldavia; the historical capital of Moldavia, Suceava, is located in what the Austrians were to call the Duchy of Bukovina. The term itself is first recorded in a document of 1482 and appears to have been a descriptive Slav word (Moldavian documents were written not in Latin but in Old Slavonic, which was the official Church language) for the northernmost part of Moldavia where the sub-Carpathian zone is covered by famous beechwood forests. (Beechwood in Slav languages is buk. Also from beechwood is derived the German name of Bukovina, Buchenwald; and in Romanian this area was often called Aroboroasa, meaning Heavily-Wooded-Land. Incidentally, there are many Bukovinas and Buchenwalds scattered over Slavic and German-speaking lands, e.g., the beechwood area in the northwest corner of Bessarabia has been called by the Russians Russkaia Bukovina.) Until the late eighteenth century, however, Bukovina did not denote a political or administrative area and even in the physiographic sense it was a vague term because beechwood forests are characteristic of the entire sub-Carpathian zone of Moldavia. When in 1774-75, the Austrians (under the dual pretext of needing a road connecting Galicia, freshly acquired from Poland, with Transylvania and of erecting a sanitary cordon to contain cholera allegedly spreading from the Danubian Principalities) carved here for themselves more than five and a half thousand square miles of territory, they at first toyed with the idea of calling it Komitat of Suceava, or Austrian Moldavia (to distinguish it from Ottoman Moldavia, which they coveted too), but then settled on the name Bukovina. -- On the latter point, see I. Nistor, Un Capitol din Viața Culturală a Românilor din Bucovina, 1774-1887 (Academia Română, Discursuri de Receptie, XLIV; Bucharest, 1916), p. 7, and idem, Die Vereinigung der Bukowina mit Rumänien (Bucharest, 1940), p. 5.

[18]Compact areas populated by Romanians east of the Dnestr can be found only till the Bug, some of them on the outskirts of Odessa; but isolated settlements extend as far as Crimea. See N. Iorga, Romînii de peste Nistru: Lămuriri pentru a-i ajuta in lupta lor (Iasi: "Neamul Românesc," 1918).

[19]The Ottoman Empire, too, played the role of a feudal protector. Whatever the disadvantages of the vassal relationship imposed on the Danubian Principalities, the Sultan's ability to control (most of the time) the Tatars provided the Romanian population a degree of security from the more outrageous depredations, which was something the local princes could rarely assure on their own. For a description of the terrible devastation of Polish territories that small but repeated Tatar incursions (which usually passed through Bessarabia) were causing as late as the seventeenth century, see M. Horn, Skutki ekonomiczne najazdów tatarskich z lat 1605-1633 na Ruś Czerwona (Wroclaw, 1964).

[20]To this day it is a characteristic of Romanian villages of the sub-Carpathian region that they are very long, spread for perhaps ten miles up and down some little valley; and hundreds of such villages are paired off as twins, both bearing the same name but with the qualification Lower or Upper added, and the Upper one is always the older--the original--village.

[21]A similar phenomenon could be observed among Europeans migrating to America. They, too, showed a preference for settling not in an environment that could be said to be the most suitable, pleasant, and in general superior to the one from which the given group of immigrants was coming, but in one which appeared to them most familiar in terms of landscape and of the type of husbandry which could be practiced there and the technology it required. Briefly, they wanted to be able to feel and live in the new homeland as they did in the old one, which is why the Scotch settled in Nova Scotia, the Scandinavians in Minnesota, the Germans in Pennsylvania, and so on.

[22]The lag which retarded the settling of some of the richest soils was not only cultural in the narrow sense but also technological and economical. To cultivate the heavy soil better ploughs were required than those the Romanian peasant utilized until well into the nineteenth century, and to plough in this area one had to hitch at least two or three pairs of good oxen, which was something few peasants had or could afford. Moreover, in this treeless region it was difficult if not impossible to practice the natural (autarkic) economy that was so essential for the survival and independence of the traditional peasant household. Periodical severe droughts which would completely wipe out a whole year's crop added another, dangerous risk. Thus the settlement of this area basically had to wait for the dawn of the capitalist, large-scale, cash-crop agricultural operations.

[23]Two-thirds of the tribute in grain shipped from Moldavia to Constantinople prior to 1812 was produced between the Prut and the Dnestr, which incidentally illustrates the severity of the loss of Bessarabia for Moldavia. Kasso, op. cit., p. 191.

[24]The Moldavians (Romanians) represent a case of irregularity (localistic distortion) in the just-described process in the sense that they did not become true agriculturalists before but only after, or during, their migration eastward. And to the extent that, because of cultural lag, they remained longer than either necessary or economically desirable a hybrid type, half-agriculturalists and half-pastoralists (and in part pseudo-nomads insofar as some members of the family would engage in semi-annual long treks with their flocks), they were at a disadvantage and in a weak position when forced to compete within an area with other migrants who had a longer tradition in the agricultural ways of life and who were therefore better prepared to take over and make good use of larger tracts of land.

[25]See, e.g., A. Kuropatkin, Zadachi russkoi armii, Vol. I, pp. 492-494; Vol. II, p. 502.

[26]Though that is how it was seen at the time in Russia, it was not quite literally true for the Baltic countries, annexed in the course of the eighteenth century, who were also Christian and either had ever before been a part of Russia in any sense (e.g., Estonia) or had only very remotely and indirectly ever been connected with it (e.g., Lithuania and Latvia).

[27]Kasso, op. cit., pp. 197-198, 206.

[28]Ibid., pp. 202, 211.

[29]Since 1749 the Moldavian peasant had been personally free, which was why in Bessarabia in the official Russian terminology he was not khrestianin (as the Russian peasant was called) but tsaran (from Romanian ţăran). Only Gypsies attached to the boyar's household were serfs. In 1858 there were 5,209 such serfs in Bessarabia. The peasants had the obligation to work for the boyar twelve days a year, give him one-tenth of all they produced, repair roads, bridges, dams, etc., and pay certain state taxes.

[30]No reliable statistics exist for the period. For a discussion of Bessarabia's demographical and ethnographical data, see the very detailed study by G. Murgoci, La Population de la Bessarabie: Étude démographique (Paris, 1920). See also Ion G. Pelivan, The Movement and Increase of Population in Bessarabia from 1812 to 1918 (Paris, 1920); John Kaba, Politico-Economic Review of Bessarabia (Washington, D. C., June 30, 1919); Facts and Comments Concerning Bessarabia,

1812-1940, compiled by a group of Romanian correspondents (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1940).

[31]Kasso, op. cit., p. 207.

[32]Krushevan, op. cit., p. 117.

[33]Kasso, op. cit., pp. 203, 22-224. See also Ion G. Pelivan, Chronologie de la Bessarabie (Paris, 1920); idem, La Bessarabie sous le regime Russe (1812-1918), Part I (Paris, 1919).

[34]Kasso, op. cit., pp. 209, 214.

[35]Ibid., pp. 228-229.