

==== *Marius Tăriță* =====

/// in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic after Khrushchev's speech (1956–1959)

The topic of Moldavian nomenklatura is specifically important due to the widespread idea of the existence of a Moldavian clan, faction, or feud. This was a later idea which emerged during the Leonid Brezhnev era, especially in some Western publications linked with those authors who had left the USSR. It also appeared during Yuri Andropov's campaign against specific forms of corruption,¹ as exemplified in statements such as those of Mikhail Voslensky.² Formally, the idea of this faction is explained by the young Brezhnev's stay of more than two years (between July 1950 and September 1952) at Chisinau as the Republic's first secretary. This idea, in fact, is disputable. I would pay attention to some highlights of Moldavian nomenklatura around the beginning of 1956 and after Khrushchev's secret speech. One problem in approaching this issue in the Moldavian case arises from the relative lack of historiographical approaches. Among key contributions we can enumerate those of Igor Casu (especially aspects of anti-regime resistance and KGB presence), Gheorghe Cojocaru (who dealt mainly with cultural issues and Romanian emergence), and Will Prigge – this last contribution focusing on a comparative study of purges and Nationalist topics in Latvia and Moldavia, specifically in 1959-1961.

This relative lack of existing scholarship is one of the reasons why it is not so easy for me to approach this topic. I can base my work mainly on archival evidence (which assuredly has its limits), and on the few statements of the above-mentioned

1 == "Fief des 'brejnéviens.' Le Parti communiste de Moldavie fait son autocritique," [Feud of the 'Brezhnevans. The Communist Party of Moldavia is self-critical] *Le Monde*, February 7, 1984, 2.

2 == Michael Voslensky, *Nomenklatura: The Soviet Ruling Class* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1984), 252–53.

historians. As a result of this, my own statements may be easily contested by a subsequent scholar.

In this paper, I propose to make only a tentative introduction to the subject. I aim to devote attention to the following: some theoretical aspects concerning the possible existence of a Moldavian faction; what changes can be observed and to what degree within the Moldavian high-level *nomenklatura* (secretaries, Bureau, CC, and Council of Ministers); the strange ascendancy of Ivan Bodyul; and how different or not the elite of the late 1950s was (i.e., whether it was still hard Stalinist at its core, or whether it had arrived at a softer approach). Sources for this paper derive mainly from Party archive documents, preserved at the Directia Arhivei Organizatiilor Social-Politice in Chisinau (Moldova). Unfortunately, apart from some separate remarks and the comparative study of Will Prigge on Moldavia and Latvia in late 1950s, there is no other study to serve as a parallel reference. In this paper, I would also give brief attention to the historiography of Soviet *nomenklatura*, after which will follow certain remarks about the specificity of the Moldavian *nomenklatura*, Ivan Bodyul's rise to prominence, the Rudy case, tensions between the district-level Communists and *nomenklatura* in Chisinau, and two examples of erased or omitted information in 1959.

= = = Short overview on Party *nomenklatura* historiography

An important contribution to the study of the Party *nomenklatura* belongs to the American scholars of the 1960s–1980s. These scholars typically did not have access to the Soviet archives, and their main strength lay in their analysis of both official information and the books of the Communists who fled the Soviet Union.³

In his book, the scholar M.C. Lodge (1969) remarked that the “system is not monolith” and that there existed an interdependence between Party and specialist. He also paid attention to an infrequently discussed issue, which he projected to the 1960s: the so-called “groupism” (in Russian, *gruppovshchina*). In reality, the archival evidence in the Moldavian case shows that this groupism existed since the end of World War Two. Groupism was officially criticized for distorting Party politics, but in fact it seems to have been the intrinsic characteristic of the system. Groups with poorly established roots used the context (e.g., of a campaign) to marginalize or purge their Party colleagues from other groups. While I will not foreground this issue in the present paper, it is nevertheless important to remark the contribution of Lodge.

³ = = One example of such a book is *The Communist Party Apparatus* by Abdurakhman Avtorkhanov, published in Chicago in 1966. Also the book on “Corrupted society” by Alec Nove and much later the “*Nomenklatura*” of Voslensky. There is also the book of Milovan Djilas (*The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System*, New York: Praeger, 1957), which was somehow cited more frequently than expected in the Political Sciences.

The issue of interest groups in Soviet politics was extended by H. Gordon Skilling and Franklyn Griffiths (1971). Skilling considered the political interest group to be, even if not a dominant factor, an important element, the neglect of which makes the picture of the Soviet political system incomplete. In addition to the “Party *apparatchiki*,” they also distinguished the interest groups of the Security Police, Militaries, Industrial Managers, Economists, Writers, and Jurists.⁴ For his part, Kenneth Jowitt dealt with the politics of inclusion that began in Communist parties in the late 1950s. Importantly, in his remarks he observes the appearance, in the 1970s, of a new type of Party cadre with socio-manipulative skills. This cadre differed greatly from previous Stalinist and Brezhnevist types, which were generational in practice and less competent.

Jerry Hough dedicated a study to the Soviet elite.⁵ Additional studies on regional *nomenklatura* were also made and usually appeared at the *obkom* level. Robert E. Blackwell analysed alternative recruitment methods at the regional level.⁶ In the same year, he together with William E. Hulbary dedicated an analysis to the political mobility among Soviet *obkom* elites, their social backgrounds, and career development.⁷ There are also other numerous more or less well-known contributions of American scholars which I would not mention here, but all of which should be overviewed in some future retrospective study.

One important post-Soviet contribution on the study of Party *nomenklatura* belongs to T. Huszár. Unfortunately, his work “Az ellittől” has not circulated in the English language. It seems to me that there is a lack of such an approach in other former Socialist countries. I share some of this author’s ideas, but I remain unsure of how ideas concerning the transition from Socialist *nomenklatura* can be supported. It is a broad discussion, which must be approached in the future. Additionally, some other study cases would help any scholar dealing with the Communist period on the aspect of *nomenklatura*.

=== Technical remarks and the idea of specificity of Moldavian *nomenklatura*

The Moldavian *nomenklatura* which developed in the little republic after August 1944 was an heterogenous one. Beside this, I would make a remark which I hope will be supported in a future study: namely, that the State Security Department

4 == Gordon Skilling and Franklyn Griffiths, *Interest Groups in Soviet Politics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971).

5 == Jerry Hough. “The Soviet Elite I,” *Problems of Communism* XVI, no. 1 (1967): 28–35.

6 == Robert Blackwell, Jr., “The Soviet political Elite. Alternative Recruitment Policies at the Obkom Level: An Empirical analysis,” *Comparative Politics* 6, no. 1 (1973): 99–121.

7 == Robert Blackwell, Jr. and William E Hulbary, “Political Mobility Among Soviet Obkom Elites: The Effects of Regime, Social Backgrounds and Career Development,” *American Journal of Political Science* 17, no. 4 (1973): 721–43.

(later Ministry and later Committee [KGB]) was a parallel world. In fact, it was not subordinated to the Party and experienced several conflicts which did not become public and which have not previously been studied.

Concerning *nomenklatura*, it was mainly composed of a portion of the former *nomenklatura* from the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic: mainly people promoted during the Great Purge. There were a few survivals, such as Stepan Taranov, but these were rather an exception. This left-bank *nomenklatura*, who during the war took refuge in Moscow and Chkalov, came back to the republic in autumn of 1944. The other portion of the *nomenklatura* was composed of persons sent from Russian or Ukrainian regions. Also, up until 1950 there was some representation of Moscow by means of a Bureau. Some historians also pay attention to, and exaggerate the role of, the second secretary. As we would see, in the case of Moldavia, the second secretary would not be so important. For the most part, these left-bankers and Russian-speaking Communists (and to a lesser extent the local Bessarabians) were the ruling class in the Republic during the late Stalinist years.

A lack of high-level rulers was visible after the departure of Leonid Brezhnev in September-October 1952. Shortly afterward, Dmitry Gladkiy became the leader, but he is not remembered as having high authority in the Republic. Rather, it seems that he ruled in the name of a collective group. In 1954 the role passed to Zinoviĭ Serdyuk. Since Serdyuk, who was sent to the Republic from outside, became the first secretary, it can be stated clearly that in the Moldavian case, the rule of the second secretary did not apply: a fact which would be also confirmed by the ascension of Ivan Bodyul.

After Stalin's death, the most important thing on which a scholar must focus is whether there were real purges and conflicts in the Moldavian Communist Party. Analysis of the changes to the CC membership and of the discussions at the CC's plenum shows conflicts, but of another type. In the case of Moldavia, there were no connections to or accountability for the previous period. Even the KGB chief, Iosif Mordovets, was dismissed (and replaced by the Ukrainian Andrey Prokopenko) only in January 1956 and formally because of his age. Historian I. Cașu states that in several republics, after the Khrushchev speech, there appeared an external pressure on cadres. Constantin Chernenko, who was for eight years chief of the Propaganda and Agitation Section, wrote a letter to Moscow with the request to be transferred anywhere in Russia.⁸

The main conflict that can be seen in discussions arose from Khrushchev's frequent reforms and the fact that, due to this, several tensions developed between

8 = = Igor Cașu, "Revoluția silențioasă: Revizuirea identității naționale în Moldova sovietică în anii 'dezghețului' lui Hrușciov (1956-1957)." *Plural* 3, no. 1 (2015): 122.

Communists from the reynons – districts (David Lane uses “district” for this unit)⁹ level and those from Chisinau. Here it is important to make a remark regarding the accuracy of the sources. Several Western scholars who came to the former Soviet archives worked with the corrected transcripts,¹⁰ although in the archives were also accessible the versions made before the proofreading. These versions contains several corrections by pens in blue or red ink, or by pencil. In these can be seen some critical voices that are still unknown in Moldavian and Romanian historiographies.

On the basis of an analysis of these media, it can be supposed that the Party intentionally changed their tone. The discontent of the people was a real one, but the Party had not begun implementing punishments at a high level. There were no known cases of Stalinist functionaries who were opposed to justice. In fact, the Party played a game against the local nomenklatura in districts, the corruption and factions of which are even less studied than those in Chisinau. What is important is that despite this, it was not the district elites who were guilty in the highest degree for repressions. The arrests, deportations, forcible collectivisation, and other totalitarian processes were managed from Chisinau. KGB officials were implicated, as well as prosecutors and Bureau members. Additionally, the Government played an important role in the technical or formal implementation of the Party policies. It is for this reason that a portion of our paper below will shortly reflect on the case of Gerasim Rudy, the chief of the Council of Ministers of Moldavia, between 1946 and January 1958.

In January 1956, some time before the secret speech, an editorial on bureaucratism appeared in the Russian-language republican newspaper *Sovetskaya Moldavia*. This editorial criticized various Soviet officials at the district and provincial levels, but especially attacked the issue of workers’ letters and requests addressed to the institutions. After stating that the ignorant approach in the letters was not proper for Soviet functionaries, the editorialist gave several examples. The approach was named “formal-bureaucratic,” and the cases were presented separately.¹¹ The problem is that people who read such articles may have perceived them as some kind of democratisation, while in fact at the high level no changes occurred.

One can also view this in the light of Voslensky’s ideas. While these can be challenged, they can also show us a possible unknown world, in which the quiet little republic played a more important role than it might at first seem:

9 == During the Soviet period, the division of the Moldavian SSR varied from 40 to 60 small districts, which were in fact less practical than the previous Romanian județ. Every district had its own Party committee, at least one surveyor from the KGB, and all the necessary structures.

10 == Also, we note that the discourses of some delegates at plenums and Congresses were published in the press according to shortened transcripts.

11 == “Chyutko otnositsya k pis'mam i zhalobam trudyashchikhsya,” [Treat the letters and requests of the workers with attention] *Sovetskaya Moldavia*, January 7, 1956, 1.

That is the utterly prosaic explanation of the Brezhnev-era overrepresentation at the highest level of the Dnepropetrovsk and Moldavia. Those regions must be regarded as a breeding ground not of Russian genius but of the Brezhnev clan. That those people were Brezhnev's proteges was frankly admitted at the ceremony in September 1977 at which Scherbitsky was decorated with the Order of Lenin...¹²

At the end of this paragraph, it is necessary to refer to an afore-mentioned scholar's statement on the divisions in Moldavian *nomenklatura*: namely, that of American historian Will Prigge. Even if I would challenge some of the nuances of what he describes, his remains the first step in addressing this topic. He distinguishes several subgroups within the Moldavian Party organization:

The first group would be the Khrushchev faction, such as First Secretary Zinovie Serdiuk. The Dniepropetrovsk, or the (Leonid) Brezhnev Faction, is a second. A third is comprised of the Bessarabian Diaspora, which extends all the way to the Dnieper, but whose families had lived among Ukrainians for generations and had largely assimilated. First Secretary Ivan Bodiul would be such an example. The final sub-group are All-Union imports who came from all corners of the Soviet Union, spent only a few years in the republic, then moved on. Phillip Kashnikov was secretary of agriculture for Moldavia and would eventually go on to serve as second secretary in Latvia, before being voted out of that position in 1958 (in favor of a Latvian!).¹³

In my opinion, the factions were organized differently: between the hard Stalinists and the pure ideologists (these last being especially prominent in propaganda and in republican newspapers and Party journals). The persons from this group were mainly from Russia, highly educated, and generally critical of locals. They never were dominant, but they played a role in certain situations (e.g., the Ivan G. Batov case in 1948, the Nikolay Zverev case in 1953, the case of Secretary Boris Gorbany,¹⁴ and others). The main part of the *nomenklatura* consisted of a mix of left-bankers and émigrés from Russia (in this case, with no higher education). This population contained at least two conflictual groups; one had built a strong relation with the centre (as it seems to be also in the Rudy affair), while the other did not participate in plots. The last were also more tolerant of National elements. This possibly ex-

12 = = Voslensky, *Nomenklatura*, 252–53.

13 = = Will Prigge, "Latvian and Moldavian Communist Parties (1959–1961): A Comparative Study," *Tyragetia* 2 (2022): 230.

14 = = Discharged from the position of "secretary of the CC" in February 1954.

plains why certain of them were dismissed between 1959 and 1961. But these are only general remarks which need to be elaborated. In any case, while Serdyuk criticized Dmitry Tkach (one of the CC secretaries) for ideological mistakes, it was also because Tkach tolerated both the “Corobanists”¹⁵ and the mistakes made by the Moldavian literary journal *Nistru* (previously known as *Octombrie*). Additionally, in my opinion there was also a parallel group that was completely omitted in Moldavia: those which belonged to the KGB, which had its own interests and rivalries. This group comprised both Russians and Ukrainians, and its members were present both in urban areas and rural districts.

As an interesting aside, linked mainly with the second large group were some Communists who had been in the CC for some thirty years. These were the Russian-speaking Communists who appeared in the CC in the mid-1950s, and who stayed on during the next thirty years in several important Party and Soviet jobs in the Republic (being finally discharged in 1986-1987). Among them were Pavel V. Voronin, Gleb Dygay, Mikhail Dyeur, and others.¹⁶ These were more long-lived in the CC than the future first secretary I. Bodyul; they appeared before his ascendancy and left some six to seven years later after he had been transferred to Moscow.

== The case of Ivan Bodyul's ascendancy

The analysis of the Bureau's lists of members and chiefs of sections, as well as the CC's members from 1956 to 1959 does not produce a clear picture. There were no radical changes among the members of the CC of the CPM (Communist Party of Moldavia). A red flag for many mainstreamers was the promotion of I. Bodyul, who was sent to the Republic after receiving political education and holding positions in Moscow. His rise to prominence became clear in April 1959 and ended with his election as first secretary in May 1961. It was at this very moment that Serdyuk, the first secretary who hailed from outside the Republic, was transferred to Moscow. I have examined Bodyul's ascendancy in paragraphs within several of my own studies, but I have heretofore not identified precisely what was his milieu was, or who played the role of his “praetorians.” For several years after April 1959, many Communists of the late Stalinist *nomenklatura* were discharged one after another. The puzzle is that they were not removed because of their activity during the Stalinist age. It also seems it was too late for any kind of justice; indeed, such a development would have been expected between 1954 and 1958. They were removed rather because they had their own opinion in face of the newly arisen I. Bodyul, who at this point was already second secretary. Another instance of the rules not applying in the specific case of the Moldavian SSR appeared when (apart from the two cases of the foreign

¹⁵ = =aNamed after Vasile Coroban, a Bessarabian literary critic.

¹⁶ = = Marius Tăriță, *Moldavian SSR Fall 1986–Summer 1987: Questions. Hopes & Pains* (Wrocław: Amazon, 2021), 74-81.

first secretary, Brezhnev and Serdyuk) someone from the locals, albeit Russified, was appointed as the second secretary.¹⁷

The transcript of the Eighth plenum of the CC of the CPM on April 14–15 shows an unusual atmosphere. Serious criticisms came from the lowest to the highest members (e.g., Ivan D. Mikhailov; see the penultimate paragraph of this paper). In the end, Serdyuk managed to effect some significant changes, first of which was the transfer of D. Gladkiy (which represented, in fact, his exclusion from the first echelon). Another change was the exclusion from the CC of Trofim Bagrin, Mikhail Dyomin, and Vasily Selivestrov,¹⁸ the lattermost having previously served as the secretary of the Chisinau City committee.¹⁹ At the same plenum, Bodyul was appointed second secretary. The way in which this happened is relevant for how the decisions were taken, and it also shows the Communist Party of Moldavia's lack of autonomy in high-level nominations.

Using the third person, Serdyuk proposed Bodyul as a candidate and, as the archive proves, this was accepted without a murmur:

COMRADE SERDYUK. Hereby is made the proposal of electing, as second secretary of the CC, the comrade Bodyul Ivan Ivanovich, former first secretary of the Volontiry and then the Oloneshty Party district committees. He afterward studied in Moscow at the High Party School, and he now works in the (erased: orgotdel of) CC of the CPUS. He is a member of the CC of the CPM. It seems you know him?

VOICES. We know.

COMRADE SERDYUK. What thoughts do you have?

VOICES. To approve.

COMRADE SERDYUK. Are there any questions?

VOICES. No.

COMRADE SERDYUK. Is it desirable that anyone express his opinion?

17 = = Here I would like to comment on the approach of the Lithuanian historian Saulius Grybkauskas who considered the institution of the "Second Secretary" (in the National Republics of the USSR) as a "general governor." The Moldavian case does not validate this theory. And what arguments could there be for this Moldavian exception? My hypothesis is that the group of Communists in Moscow who managed the Moldavian case simply did not have confidence in Moldavians to govern themselves. This could be due to the agricultural character of the region and to the religiosity of the local communities.

18 = = It is interesting to recall that secretary D. Tkach—who was removed in January 1960—was a colleague of Selivestrov in 1946. While Tkach was editor of the Republican Party newspaper "Moldova Socialistă," Selivestrov was the secretary of the Party organization of the same newspaper. I propose at this moment the hypothesis that Selivestrov could have been an opponent for Bodyul's candidature.

19 = = DAOSP, Fund 51, inv. 19, f. 11, 447. Record and transcript of the Eighth plenum of the CC of the CPM, April 14–15, 1959.

VOICES. No.

COMRADE SERDYUK. It this case, please permit me to propose the voting. Who is for electing, as second secretary of the CC of the CPM, the comrade Bodyul, please – hands up. Please – hand down. Who is against? No. Who abstains? Decision is taken unanimously. Due to the election of comrade Bodyul as second secretary, there is a proposal of electing him also as a member of the Party Bureau. Is there any objection?

VOICES. No.²⁰

This excerpt from the transcript shows a typical Stalinist session. The proposal was introduced unexpectedly and without any prior consultation. In reality, Bodyul was brought in to replace D. Gladkiy, who had been transferred to another institution.²¹ There was no alternative, no question, and no discussion of his introduction. Because this simulated election was not announced on the agenda of the meeting, it is possible that the factions who might have been able to react more aggressively were too surprised to do so. But the most important element here is the role of the CC of the CPUS. The rise of Bodyul had originated there and was part of a plan that corresponded to the intention of a faction from Moscow. The question is, who were these people? Why in fact was Gladkiy removed? Did he know something about Bodyul? What was his place in the plan, and what was the purpose of the plan by which Bodyul was promoted? It is now easy to see that this was one of several steps leading to his promotion to first secretary in May 1961.

Another step was the exclusion of D. Tkach in January 1960. Here the reason for which Serdyuk attacked and dismissed Tkach is relevant. Tkach appears in Serdyuk's report published in *Sovetskaya Moldavia* on January 29, 1960; in this report, Serdyuk referred to the mistakes of writers and historians, for which Tkach was primarily responsible:

The community of writers and historians have discussed neither seriously nor critically the handbooks of the history of Moldavian literature, the articles and books dedicated to the history of the Socialist revolution in Moldavia, the literary essays of G. Menyuk like "The Breaking River", and some certain articles of V. Coroban, N. Romanenko, and some others.

This is why, at this Congress, one has to say with Bolshevik directness that the actual extent of management of ideological activity does

20 == DAOSP, Fund 51, inv. 19, f. 11, 395. Record and transcript of the Eighth plenum of the CC of the CPM, April 14–15, 1959.

21 == Dmitry Gladkiy became secretary in September 1951, when Brezhnev was in Chisinau. At that moment he replaced D. Tkach who was in the first team of Brezhnev for a year. After 1955 he was colleague with Dmitry Tkach who regained the position of secretary of CC of CPM.

not correspond to the tasks which the Republican Party organization faces. Especially in this sector one finds great deficiencies and omissions. Responsibility for this lies with the Bureau of the CC of the CPM, its Propaganda and Agitation, Science, Schools, and Culture divisions, and most of all, the secretary of the CC: comrade D. G. Tkach.²²

It can be remarked that Tkach's offense was tolerating some texts perceived as Nationalist, even if it was not said directly; otherwise, it would be strange that he was the only guilty party to be named. It is also strange that he was not defended by the community of writers. About two years later, when writers and artists began to attack the secretary Evgeniy Postovoy, Bodyul and his "praetorians" would sacrifice him; i.e., Postovoy was simply discharged from office. At the very least, this attack on Tkach appears strange. Was this accusation on the secretary a formal one? Or did it reflect his protective stance toward the mistakes of writers and historians?²³

Whatever the case, he was an older cadre and he certainly knew more details and secrets. As a problem for Moldavia, I would add here, that there do not exist published memoirs. But I suppose that there could be memoirs or diaries of such persons as V. Selivestrov, D. Gladkiy, D. Tkach or M. Scurtul.

As one final point regarding Tkach: the writer Menyuk, whose work *The Breaking River* was omitted on ideological grounds by Tkach, proceeded normally in his career. In September 1960, he and other Bessarabian writers received the distinction of the Byelorussian SSR Supreme Soviet.²⁴

= = = The Rudy case

The Rudy case is an interesting one, even if it is mainly a case which necessitated justice. In the rumours of the second-echelon *nomenklatura* is recalled a special relation between Rudy and Brezhnev up to Brezhnev's late years. Before Brezhnev's death,

22 = = "Doklad sekretarya CK KPM Z.T. Serdyuka na IX s'ezde 28 yanvarya 1960." [Report of Z. T. Serdyuk, secretary of CC of CPM at the Ninth Congress on January 28, 1960] *Sovetskaya Moldavia*, January 29, 1960, 2.

23 = = The writer's community in Chisinau was dominated by Bessarabians and some of partners they found in left-bankers. However, some of the left-bankers were ejected; such was the case of the writer Ion Canna. He was accused of plagiarism by Bessarabians and dismissed from any position in 1954. Generally, the attacks on him had the appearance of a Stalinist purge. In 1955, Canna was admitted to the hospital from where he wrote a letter to the secretary D. Tkach. Tkach did not respond to it. The only one who tried to defend Canna was another Moldavian, Maksim Scurtul.

24 = = "Decorați cu gramota de cinste al Sovietului Suprem al RSS Beloruse," [Awarded with honorary diploma of the Supreme Soviet of the SRR of Byelorussia] *Tinerimea Moldovei*, September 28, 1960, 1.

Rudy was the director of the Agricultural Institute in Chisinau. There were some attempts in 1970s to dismiss him, but they met with no result. As Petru Luchinsky, formerly a young Moldavian secretary of the CC in the 1970s, recalled, it was suggested to him that he should leave “the old man in peace.”²⁵

What was astonishing is that even after the death of Stalin, Rudy retained his position as chief of the Council of Ministers, which he had held since summer 1946. His career was linked with the career of Nikolay G. Koval, the first secretary from summer 1946 to June 1950. In early July, L. Brezhnev was sent to Chisinau to check on the situation in the Moldavian Party’s organization. The result of this visit was the dismissal of N.G. Koval and the “election” of Brezhnev to take his place. This was a rare case in the Soviet Union of an outsider becoming first secretary of a republic. However, in the case of Moldavia, it would not be the last.

In October 1950, at the scheduled Party plenum, the head of the Council of Ministers G. Rudy was harshly criticized. He admitted his mistakes and promised to improve, and he was thus left in office. None of the Moldavian historians after 1991 has had the courage to study and analyse the corruption during Rudy’s era. The fact that he remained in office after Stalin’s death is also strange. However, if the idea of his close relation with Brezhnev during late years is true, the roots of their possible friendship would have been in the early 1950s. So, if he was being protected by Brezhnev, it must have been clear that he was untouchable. Despite all this, in January 1958 the members of the Bureau of the CC of the Communist Party of Moldavia finally had the courage to dismiss him.²⁶ I should remark here that I have found details on his case in a folder that was catalogued in a Party archive only in the 1970s. Also, in the post-Stalinist years, the Council of Ministers remained untouchable; only in January 1958 was he dismissed. The folder on him contains serious complaints from different years. There were even enumerated cases involving contraband Moldavian agricultural products. In this case, the members of the Bureau ruled by Z. Serdyuk acted unanimously and finally discharged him. But this was the only punishment for Rudy – the loss of his office after around twelve years. A strange process began soon after his discharge; the members of the Bureau were sent to other jobs, or simply dismissed one after another. Rudy came back to the CC in the first part of 1960 and remained there up to his death. Additionally, in April 1962 he was appointed director of the Agriculture Institute in Chisinau. Beside this, the comeback in 1960 of N. G. Koval, the generational colleague of Rudy, as chief of the Planning Committee was also symptomatic.

25 == I obtained this information during an interview conducted by Will Prigge and myself with P. Luchinsky on October 13, 2022 in Chisinau.

26 == “The information about his exclusion from the Bureau of the CC of the CPM “Informatsionoye soobshcheniye,” [Announcement] *Sovetskaya Moldavia*, January 24, 1958, 1.

= = = The tensions between the district-level Communists and Chisinau nomenklatura

The main challenge for the Chisinau Party nomenklatura was the courage of the Communists from the districts in critiquing them. Even if it was not done frequently, some of the district committees' delegates criticized the Bureau, Sections, and Council of Ministers. These Ministries were criticized for not facilitating the delivery of supplies necessary for the districts; indeed, sometimes the local hierarchy was forced to contact enterprises at great distance from Moldavia to obtain wood, stone, technical pieces, and so forth.

The problem, however, is that not all delegates took such a critical approach. Several enumerate their alleged successes and made promises. At the Seventh Congress of the CPM on January 28–30, 1958, the secretary of the Faleshty district gave certain examples. He mentioned cases in which the Council of Ministers promised them forty tonnes of stone. Since these were unfortunately dependent on the production of Moldavian mines, the district did not receive the stone. The ruler of the district, Vasile K. Moldovan, succeeded in obtaining wood instead from far-off Petrozavodsk (in Karelia). Another example he referred to was that the technology for the Faleshty sugar enterprise was transmitted to the Drokia sugar enterprise.²⁷ In this case, a strange fact is that four years later Moldovan would become the chief of the Organizational Section of the Council of Ministers. It is hard to say whether he obtained this position thanks to his criticisms or because of his merit, or if he improved management in relation to the districts.

Another secretary, this one from the Ungeny district, paid attention to the artificial equivalencies between districts that were encouraged by the centre. In fact, the reported results were ordered statistically in reports, but in fact the resources, prospects, and expanses of the districts were different. He also mentioned the fact that in 1957, not one of the members of the Agriculture Bureau had visited the district.²⁸

One of the most critical discourses I have found in the archive belongs to I. D. Mikhailov, the secretary of the Komrat district. He spoke during the Eighth plenum on April 14–15, 1959, at the conclusion of which Bodyul was promoted to the second secretary of the Republic. First, it is clear that Mikhailov's discourse was ignored. Second, Mikhailov showed on a structural level the distorted ways in which the Khrushchev reforms were applied to the Moldavian case. For this reason, I will cite a larger piece from this discourse at the end of this paper. The problems

27 = = "Rech tov. Moldovana V.K., sekretarya Faleshtskogo raykoma partii," [The speech of comrade V.K. Moldovan, secretary of the Party Committee in Faleshty district] *Sovetskaya Moldavia*, February 1, 1958, 2.

28 = = "Rech tov. Smirnova L.P., sekretarya Ungenskogo raykoma partii," [The speech of comrade L. P. Smirnov, secretary of the Party Committee in Ungeny] *Sovetskaya Moldavia*, January 30, 1958, 3.

which appeared as a result of parallel administrative reforms were ignored by the Bureau of the CC of the CPM. Additionally, another vital conclusion is that one could not criticize the upper hierarchy – and that even if one would do so, they would soon regret it.

I would like to make some remarks on the address of the CC and the Council of Ministers regarding the problem of work with the cadres. We, the locals, do not understand where the cadres, which were discharged in result of merging of the twenty districts and republican departments, disappeared. Anyone knows, and comrade Serdyuk has reported at this plenum, that in the republic twenty *districts* were merged, and half of the central apparatus of the departments was reduced. Despite this, district three functionaries from the reduced one came to our district. There is no functionary from republican departments that reduced their apparatus. At this moment in our district, there is an acute lack of specialists and functionaries for chief positions. [...] From Komrat district, twenty persons left to study at the Republican Party High School. Only three of them came back to the district. I think that one must finish with this!

Concerns criticism, I think my colleagues will support me. It seems that one receives a lot of criticism from above, but from below (erased: to those who are on us) there is little (laugh, liveliness). It is clear that this also depends on us. But I would say how it depends on us. You criticize the chief of a CC department or the deputy president of the Council of Ministers, and after that they look at you with askance. They do not travel to your district. They do not support the district. Who among the chiefs of departments or their deputies has been in Komrat district? With the exception of Cranga²⁹ (but I have worked there for the last four and a half years), no one. Comrade Dudko has only passed through the Komrat district.³⁰

In fact, such approaches as this would completely disappear in the 1960s, when there would be only the official mainstream approaches of the Brezhnev generation. Even when these criticisms existed (and they were not public, being voiced at closed Party plenums), the chiefs from the Bureau and Departments ignored them. On one hand, it was the sign of some form of limited, internal Party democracy, but on the other hand it did not produce any result. The subject remains open, and the

29 == Pyotr F. Cranga, who between November 1952–April 1959 was the chief of the Administrative and Finance Department of the CC of the CPM.

30 == DAOSP, Fund 51, inv. 19, f. 11, Transcript of the Eighth plenum of CC of CPM, April 14–15, 1959.

present paper has only an introductory character.³¹ What follows is two examples from a thousand on how the texts of the transcripts were edited.

= = = Comments on Party transcripts and what was erased from them

While approaching Soviet Party documents, several Western scholars use the final or so-called “corrected” transcript, in addition to published sources. What is overlooked is that there are also two or three complementary versions (of Party plenum discussions) that contain the live version: the initial, typed document, and frequently also the questions, which were omitted. These are the transcripts (in Russian, the so-called *nepravlennaya*) as they existed before being proofread, or reports before they were submitted in a final version. Frequently, there are considerable differences between these versions. Even if these documents had only an internal Party circulation, some of the harsh remarks, criticisms, and conclusions unpleasant for the Party establishment were simply erased from the first version. Because of this fact, some information was never accessible even for loyal Communists of the second echelon in Chisinau, let alone for those from the provinces. This also raises a subsequent question: how truly accurate are all the Party documents from the Soviet Union that were published after 1991?

The first example I would refer to is the final page of the report on the implementation, by republican Ministries and Departments, of the resolution of the Eighth plenum of the CC of the CPM (August 1959) regarding management of the cadres. For little-known reasons, the following paragraph was eliminated from the official version, although it does not seem to contain any special information. Indeed, it only remarks a phenomenon that existed well up to the 1980s: that the Ministries did not consult anyone while promoting their cadres in the provinces. At the recent plenums and meetings of the districts’ and towns’ committees activists, several ministries and departments of the republic were criticized for deficiencies in managing the cadres. Attention was paid to the weak relation with the local Party’s and Soviet’s organs in solving the questions of nomination and the transfer of the cadres. Facts about a formal-bureaucratic approach were remarked in this question.

Generally, and as I remarked above, the problem of formalism-bureaucratism was present in the Party’s press since January 1956. But if in that case it involved the attitude towards citizens’ letters and the complaints from the Soviet cadres, here it involves the same approach, but in the central ministerial and departmental branches appointing the cadres in the provinces. The erasure of this information shows

³¹ = = In a previous study, Tăriță, “The Purges of the Members of the Central Committee of Communist Party of Moldavia in 1958-1963,” *Tyragetia 2* (2022): 221–27. I made an analysis of the changes in the CC between 1958 and 1963, but the image of what the real factions were, who promoted and supported Bodyul, and why former Stalinists were brought back in early 1960s, remained unclear for me.

that those who ruled the Moldavian Communist Party believed that second-echelon Communists were not to know about it.

The second example refers to the elimination of a reference to incompetence in supply management from the first version of a report (August 1959). It is an example of Party inefficiency; for example, it refers to the fact that while twenty-two people were accepted for the job, only nine of them had proven their education, while for the remaining thirteen the only remark was about unsupported information from the completed questionnaire. Also omitted from this text was a conclusion on the state of the facts (some parts were circled in blue, and others were erased):

This is how easily and simply the question of fulfilling the apparatus by the chiefs of this Direction is approached. It is evident that people who do not have special education and experience are not able to understand the nomenklatura of the supplies and technology and are not able to solve correctly the issues involved in supplying the enterprises.³²

Usually such a report after a Party plenum had to be published in brochures for internal use. The printed versions were sent to all Party committees for consideration as they solved the final issues. The instance given above was not a formal one, and it seems that it reflected a widespread phenomenon. The question is: did this not confirm once again to the district-level Communists something they knew, they saw, and they were discontented with?

=== Conclusions

In this paper, I have only made an introduction to the issue of the nomenklatura's evolution in the case of the Moldavian SSR beginning in 1956. It must be mentioned that no public dismissals of Stalin post-war era functionaries occurred. On the contrary, one of them, the President of the Council of Ministries, even remained in his position until 1958. Also, the context of the ascendancy of I. Bodyul. In April 1959, he simply appeared at the plenum and was "elected" as second secretary of the CC of the CPM with no discussion. What was this: a promotion managed by the Party from Moscow (the Administrative Section of the CC, or perhaps the Bureau itself), or maybe a stratagem by a faction that simply knew that there would be no opposition? If the second of these is true, this may explain why during the next period, several persons from the Bureau of the CC of the CPM were discharged. The main case for a future study may be that of D. Tkach, who was incongruously accused of missteps on the ideological-cultural front. On the other hand, despite

³² == DAOSP, Fund 51, inv.19, f. 146, 77. On execution by Ministers and Departments of the republic of the resolution of the VIIIth plenum of CC of CP of Moldova. Draft version, August 1959.

this ideological direction, the Party “masses” (the Communists) from the district level were in some kind of opposition to Chisinau. This was driven by a lack of supplies, neglect of local issues, ignoring their voice, and simply uncontrolled cadre politics (in the case of the representatives of the Ministries). Unfortunately, this opposition did not develop into something strong. And last, there is the issue of approaching the Party transcripts of that age. It shows the tendency of those who were at the head of the CC of the CPM to erase paragraphs from plenum transcripts, even including the final reports which usually were sent also to districts in printed form. A future analysis should examine why criticisms, despite the supposed context of the “thaw,” were so “painfully” perceived by the Party’s elite, and why real problems were erased from the Party’s agenda.

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