

**Moldavian SSR's Border Revision Question:
From The Project of „Greater Moldavia” to The Project of “Greater Bessarabia”
and The Causes of their Failure (December 1943 – June 1946)**
(Abstract)

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Keywords: Historical Moldavia, Bessarabia, communism, Central Committee of Communist (Bolshevik) Party of Moldavia, Soviet territorial claims, Romania, review Moldavian SSR-Ukraine SSR border, competing political elites, Nichita Salogor, Nicolae Coval, Fiodor Brovco, Stalin, Khrushchev, Tehran Conference 1943, Paris Peace Conference 1946

On the 29th of June 1946, Nichita Salogor, the *ad interim* prime secretary of the Central Committee of Communist (Bolshevik) Party of Moldavia sent a letter to Stalin asking for the ceding of the former South and Northern Bessarabian territories to the Moldavian SSR. After August 1940 in the aftermath of Soviet occupation of Romanian Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, these territories were included in the Ukrainian SSR, contrary to the expectation of many, including the editors of “Pravda”. The letter has been accompanied by 5 annexes, only the last one being dated: December 9 1943 – an essay on the borders of historical Moldavia since mid 14th century to mid 19th century, elaborated by the Institute of Ethnography of USSR’s Academy of Sciences and quoting Russian, Soviet and Romanian authors. One of the other 4 annexes represented a letter signed by Fiodor Brovco, the President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Moldavian SSR sent to Bureau of CC of CP (b) of Moldavia asking for the need to reunite the entire “Moldavian people” in one Soviet Moldavian state. He urged for all territories of historical Principality of Moldavia from Carpathian Mountains in the West to Dniester River and Black Sea in the East and South, i.e. raising territorial claims not only to Soviet Ukraine, but also to Romania. The other 4 parts of annexes represented analytical chapters written probably between December 1943 and June 1946, some of them focusing on the idea of “Greater Bessarabia” and others on “Greater Moldavia”, based mainly on Romanian medieval documents and Romanian historians’ works like Iorga and Xenopol.

In less than a month, Salogor was demoted from his post as *ad interim* first secretary of Moldavian Communist organization and retrograded to insignificant second hand posts in various ministries until his retiring in 1959. This was for sure a reprisal and the editors of the dossier are raising the question if that was a direct consequence of his letter sent to Stalin on June 29 1946. The tentative conclusions are circumscribed to justify this hypothesis. The editors embarked in this sense on an analyses that considers other

potential causes that could be at the origins of Salogor's demotion and his further marginalization even though he was only 45 years old at that time and he had certain merits to the Soviet regime during the Great Patriotic War (he coordinated from the rear the partisan movement in Bessarabia). Reprisal hypothesis is backed also by the fact that even though Nicolae Coval, the head of the Council of Ministers of Moldavian SSR who was listed along with Salogor in the letter sent to Stalin in June 1946 did not signed it. And this was crucial as to his subsequent career as he became fully fledged first secretary of CC of CP (b) of Moldavia for the next 4 years, replacing thus Salogor who was approved only as *ad interim* from September 1942. One can thus conclude that there were elements of elite competition in the elaboration and denouement of this border revision question.

As to the aim and timing of the first part of the dossier – December 1943, previous analyses focused on the assumption that there was linked to Tehran Conference (November 29 – December 2 1943) and to the anticipation of Romania's entry in Soviet sphere of influence after the war. As to the time of sending the letter and adjacent documents in June 29 1946 it was argued that is was also connected to the international events, namely that it happened exactly one month before the starting of the Paris Peace Conference. That is, Moldavian Soviet leadership hoped that is was the right moment to push for territorial pretensions against Romania based on the idea to unite the whole "Moldavian people" in one Soviet Moldavian state. The editors of the whole dossier of June 1946 embarked however on other explications. In brief, it is about the hypothesis that the inception of the dossier in December 1943 was indeed a result of changing international status of USSR, but it was instrumentalized to press Romania's leader Ion Antonescu or the democratic opposition to decide on an immediate withdrawal from the Axis camp if Romania wanted to save Western Moldavia from Soviet annexation. In June 1946, the fact that Paris Peace Conference was to start in a month was secondary to the motivations and timing of sending the letter to Stalin. It was rather internal phenomena (such as the beginning of the mass famine) and elite competition that contributed to the raising of the border revision question to Stalin. More exactly, Salogor mentioned only territorial pretensions against Ukraine, excluding the ones against Romania. Why? It seems that he thought that this was less problematic and easy as it was a problem of administrative borders inside Soviet Union and did not presupposed international complications. Another important element mentioned in the letter to Stalin was to link implicitly the poor situation of Moldavian postwar economy and famine to the fact that the 2 Bessarabian southern counties ceded to Ukraine in 1940 – Ismail and Akkerman – counted for more than a third of grain harvest before the

October Revolution. This was, for sure, a hint that the deficit of food and especially grain could be easier met if these territories would be transferred to MSSR.

Salogor however seemed to misunderstand that territorial pretensions of MSSR to Ukraine mentioned in the Moscow document of December 1943 was not the main target of the question and it was just a part of the story to make territorial pretensions against Romania to look *coherent* and thus to make the threat of territorial dismemberment to Romania look very likely not virtual. In the summer 1946 Moscow agreed already on the postwar borders of Romania and it was undesirable from various motives to change them in the detriment of Bucharest. In other words, Salogor, the only Moldavian Soviet leader signing the letter to Stalin did not understand that Moscow will not agree to a border revision between MSSR and Romania (which he implied by annexing the December 1943 Institute of Ethnography essay and other pieces justifying the inclusion of Western Moldavia to MSSR) and *even less* to one between MSSR and Ukrainian SSR. The editors of the June 1946 border revision question's dossier formulated a hypothesis that the sending of Salogor's letter to Moscow had long lasting effects on center periphery relations and pattern of elite recruitment in Soviet Moldavia up to late 1980s. More exactly, Salogor was the first and last Moldavian Communist leader that raised directly the question of border revision with Ukraine as probably Kiev insisted that this becoming a taboo forever. Khrushchev played presumably a key role in this story as he is known to be the person that insisted on the drawing of borders with MSSR in 1940 and his insisting on territorial expansion of Ukraine in detriment to Byelorussia too in the fall of the previous year, 1939. Khrushchev is known as Ukraine protector while being Soviet supreme leader after 1953 – in 1954 he transferred Crimea from RSFSR to Ukraine. Thus one can deduce that Khrushchev was determined after this incident of 1946 to keep an open eye on who was to rule MSSR in the aftermath. Coval, Salogor successor, was the right person as under his rule (in 1947) MSSR lost the only 5 km of sea border (in area of Dniester Liman) to Ukraine, only 340 meters access of MSSR to the Black Sea via the Danube remaining in the area of Giurgiulești village.