

The Republic of Moldova from Perestroika to Independence, 1989-1991
(Abstract)

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The Center for the Study of Communism and Post-Communism (CSCP), the Romanian Society for Historical Studies (SSIR), and the Institute for the Investigation of the Crimes of Communism and the Memory of Romanian Exile (ICCMER) held a conference on “The Republic of Moldova from Perestroika to Independence, 1989-1991,” on February 24, 2012. On this occasion, a volume edited by Igor Cașu and Igor Șarov on *Republica Moldova de la Perestroika la Independență, 1989-1991. Documente secrete din arhiva CC al PCM* (Chișinău, Editura Cartdidact, 2011) was launched. The participants were the historians Ovidiu Buruiană, Igor Cașu, Dorin Dobrinu, Flavius Solomon, and Igor Șarov.

The topics approached in the conference were related to USSR in general, and to the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldavia (RSSM) in particular in the era when Mihail Gorbachev came into power and introduced *Perestroika* and *Glasnost*. The central point of the discussion was the rapid change that took place in the RSSM between 1989 and 1990. The most famous were those involving symbolic identity: the recognition of Romanian as official language, the use of Latin alphabet, and the adoption of the Romanian flag with the arms of the historic Moldavia. This led in 1991 to the proclamation by the RSSM Parliament of the independence of the Republic of Moldavia.

These facts are generally known, but the opening of the archives of the Moldovan Communist Party and of the KGB in Chisinau offered important new information on the period that is relevant for understanding the center-periphery relationship under Gorbachev; how the elite attempted to manage ideological, ethnical, social and economic issues; the establishment of the Popular Front and the Interfront; and the tensions between different power factions, especially in Chisinau, and elsewhere in Moldova. The participants in the debate also took into consideration how Romania related to the changes produced in Moldova during this time and the vice versa.

The topics of defining the national and regional identity, of constructing or reconstructing, of tracing ideological political influence, the manner in which researchers and different groups have approached these issues were also debated.

Examples from European history, including Romania and Moldova, were analyzed, something that has been avoided within the two historiographies. The tensions between official and professional history and between history and memory are also important aspects, mainly in the Central Eastern Europe. Their analysis is important not only for the small world of the professional historian or the larger circle of those passionate about the past, but also for society in general, if only to remove convenient but false “patriotic history”, and to create an alternative, breathable space where history may be questioned, analyzed and not grossly utilized as a political instrument.