



OPINIONS, COMMENTARIES AND INTERVIEWS

1. The prospective for normalization of the Republic of Moldova's relations with Romania and the Ukraine. APE. 23.08.2009.
2. The Russian factor impact on the informational space of the Republic of Moldova. APE. 30.08.2009.

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1. The prospective for normalization of the Republic of Moldova's relations with Romania and the Ukraine. APE. 23.08.2009.

**Excerpt from the radio program "Moldovan Foreign Policy Debates" broadcasted on Radio Vocea Basarabiei, on August 23, and produced by the Foreign Policy Association (APE) in collaboration with Imedia News and Analysis Agency and with the assistance of the German Foundation Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES). The broadcast is aired on Radio Vocea Basarabiei every Sunday.*

Corneliu RUSNAC, journalist Imedia: *Recently, the communist authorities have tried to come closer to Russia, promoting at the same time as bad as possible relations with Romania. However, these last days the head of the Romanian diplomacy Cristian Diaconescu expressed his confidence that Romania and the Republic of Moldova will finalize the bilateral agreements after a new government is designated in Chisinau. The communist authorities have accused Bucharest before for refusing to sign these agreements, meaning the fundamental political treaty and the one regarding the state border. How should these declarations of the Mr. Minister Diaconescu be interpreted? Is this a signal for the new majority in Chisinau?*

Oleg SEREBRIAN, first vice-president of the Democrat Party from Moldova, Member of Parliament: It is, no doubt a signal. It is a positive signal. It is good for Bucharest to give new signals to Chisinau. There have been voices that vehemently opposed any discussions about the fundamental bilateral treaty, considering it an old fashioned practice. Yes, it is to some extent true, these fundamental bilateral treaties are no more of that much contemporaneousness, they were up-to-date somewhat after the end of the second world war and have made a comeback in the 90's, thus together with the series of independence declaration sins in the post-communist space. But, taking into account the circumstances, I believe it is not an insurmountable impediment in the relation between Chisinau and Bucharest. It matters a lot what we put into this treaty, which ultimately, frankly speaking, is to a large extent a formality –



Romania has recognized the independence of the Republic of Moldova –, as very many lawyers from Bucharest recognize, this border treaty comes only to confirm certain things, in that Romania has anyway recognized the borders of the Republic of Moldova and, the Republic of Moldova being the by right successor of the USSR, there is an identical treaty with the USSR.

Therefore, there can be no room for further interpretations. Neither should we leave any space for interpretation; I think we should do all we can so that there is no place for suspicions nowhere in future relations between Bucharest and Chisinau. We want Bucharest to be a partner, we need the support of Romania, and we need the relations between these two countries to be as good as possible, because we do not have that many friends and potential allies within the EU, diplomats that would know well the situation in the Republic of Moldova. From our point of view, we will make everything possible so that relations with Bucharest and Kiev to become normal, with Kiev it might be even more difficult given some circumstances, but I think that with Bucharest, to a large extent, these tensions were tensions of characters, if you wish, generated by certain temperaments and characters of some politicians and had no real substance, and any real reason, they were mostly artificial. I consider and the colleagues from the coalition have declared this repeatedly that among the first gestures undertaken by the Alliance for European Integration will be canceling those stupid restrictions to circulation that have been imposed by the communist regime in April – the visa regime, to have invitations etc. We believe that the treaty about the border traffic needs to be signed urgently, in order to facilitate at least to some extent the possibility for a part of Moldovan citizens to cross the Romanian border. We also believe that both Bucharest and Bruxelles will be more flexible in what regards the visa regime between the Republic of Moldova and Romania, not in the sense of visa exoneration for Moldovan citizens to go to Romania, but in the sense of facilitation of visa receiving process for Moldovan citizens wanting to go to Romania.

Iurie LEANCĂ, Liberal Democrat Party of Moldova, Member of Parliament: I also think that the declaration of the Romanian Foreign Minister, Mr. Diaconescu, is a welcomed one, which once again proves that in the moment when in Chisinau and in Bucharest is a political will to normalize the relations and to quickly overcome the problems that were, in my opinion, mostly of an absolutely subjective character and totally artificial, thus, from the moment there is such a political willingness it will be very simple to overcome all these problems. The respective document to which Mr. Minister made reference have more of a symbolic character and their eventual signing I believe, as Mr. Serebrian said, will eliminate all eventual suspicions from the part of certain circles within the Republic of Moldova and eventually from outside the republic of Moldova. And then, I think it is for the better of both Chisinau



and Bucharest not to leave room for such possible interpretations by our partners or less by the friends of both our country and those of Romania.

In the Republic of Moldova and in Romania there are much more problems, which if resolved would indeed change the situation for the better, life, comfort of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova, and respectively of those from Romania and I believe that it is this kind of subjects that both governments from Chisinau and Bucharest should immediately concentrate on. I am quite optimistic in this sense; I am convinced that Bucharest will react positively to the availability that the coalition has already displayed. I am absolutely convinced that we will be able to overcome these problems quite rapidly and the benefit will be, again, in the interest first of all of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova. I am sure that this is going to change the image of the Republic of Moldova both regionally and in the European space, because the decisions which Mr. Serebrian made reference to, those from April, by which the citizens of Romania were put into the same situation as the ones from Sudan, Somalia etc., countries that bear a tremendous risk from the security perspective etc., do you realize what an anomaly?

Thus, I am sufficiently optimistic in this sense, just like in our relation with Kiev. From what I understand, the recent decision of the Kiev government is, as I have mentioned before, a discriminatory act, but, at the same time, it represents a reaction to the lack of any attitude from the side of Chisinau, a lack of any effort to engage Kiev. Thus, we are much more interested, I am convinced, than Bucharest or Kiev to have a very good relation, a very pragmatic one both economically and politically with both capitals, because they head us in territory size, economic, political and military potential. They, in turn, have many more neighbors, whereas we only have two neighbors and therefore we are obliged to have good relations with these two neighbors. And then it was and still is the duty of Chisinau to be the initiator of some actions on bilateral level. But, let us not forget, in the year 1997, if I am not mistaken, we had from my point of view a very positive example of trilateral cooperation. I would say it might be the case to come back to these kinds of practices, because the benefit would be again first of all for the Republic of Moldova. And then it is absolutely natural from the moment a new government is in place in Chisinau, the relations with the neighbors should be a priority, we should get rid of problems, of this artificial, subjective context, and to orient ourselves on real problems.



2. The Russian factor impact on the informational space of the Republic of Moldova. APE. 30.08.2009.

*****Excerpt from the radio program “Moldovan Foreign Policy Debates” broadcasted on Radio Vocea Basarabiei, on August 30, and produced by the Foreign Policy Association (APE) in collaboration with Imedia News and Analysis Agency and with the assistance of the German Foundation Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES). The broadcast is aired on Radio Vocea Basarabiei every Sunday.***

Corneliu RUSNAC, journalist Imedia: *How does Russian influences in the media, informational space manifest itself and what could be the consequences of this kind of influence for the national security of the Republic of Moldova? And what should the Republic of Moldova do in order to assure its media security, Mr. Cristal?*

Oleg Cristal, Expert of the Association for Participatory Democracy (ADEPT): I have launched, some time ago, an idea which apparently is not very popular and I have even been attacked rather strongly. I think that the Ukraine did, it did well when the government prohibited the broadcast of Russian television channels on the territory of the Ukraine, and however, I also believe that they have exaggerated in the case of cable networks. In the Republic of Moldova we have four state frequencies, for the moment they broadcast three television channels, out of which two are foreign. One is from the Russian Federation and the other one from Romania. Both countries have important interests in the Republic of Moldova, and if we want to keep our sovereignty, we should keep track of the informational security, because these days conventional wars go into history, nowadays there are first of all informational and economic wars. Thus, it remains to be decided, do we keep on the state frequencies two foreign channels or not. Besides these frequencies there are numerous channels broadcasted regionally, TV and radio channels or cable ones, well, through cable or satellite every citizen decides what television channels to watch. [...]

Oazu Nantoi, Expert for the Institute of Public Policies (IPP): In this sense I recall my experience when I was in Israel a few years ago in a visit to some family friends, as usual, when the mistress was getting everything ready in the kitchen, I was left in front of the TV with more than two hundred channels out of which about fifty were Arab. This was in Israel, which has been in a state of war from its formation, if I am not mistaken in 1948, because I am the same age with Israel. Thus, this is one approach. We regret that citizens of the Republic of Moldova are being manipulated by foreign media.



And indeed, here we had the war in Georgia in August 2008. In October 2008 IPP from Moldova produced a poll in which people were asked who was responsible for the conflict between Russia and Georgia. 20% of the respondents, I might be wrong, I cite from memory, thus, 20% declared that Russia was to blame, 32% declared that it was Georgia's fault, about 10% declared it was the USA who was responsible, then came NATO and Abkhazia and I don't know who else. Therefore, it is indeed the case, as Mr. Cristal just said, nowadays we are constantly without knowing it subjects of informational warfare. I remember how the CNN channel reflected the beginning of the operations in Yugoslavia in 1998 and the war in Georgia, how the websites were blocked and how difficult it was to find alternative sources of information. But I would like to mention another thing here, I am a taxpayer, I pay money to the budget of the Republic of Moldova and in return I am offered the junk called Public National Broadcasting Company "Teleradio Moldova".

Well, we cannot close, prohibit the access of electromagnetic waves of the channels we do not like, someone does not like Romania, others do not like Russia, I could have some objections towards the Ukraine where I was born, but that is, we live in a world of competition including in the informational sphere. I have no illusions about the potential of the society, so that the Moldovan state could compete with the US in the economic area, but we must have a national public television channel which would offer an alternative to the Moldovan citizen: what happens in Transnistria, what happens in the relation between Comrat and Chisinau, what is going on in the relation between Chisinau and Bucharest, why there are so many unresolved problems during the last 20 years between two neighboring countries like the Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, etc. In such circumstances, I could consider that we have done our homework. We come with our position, with our view, with our interpretation of different events that touch upon our national interests. But, yes, there is a problem with the state in the process of its building as is the Ukraine, as is the Republic of Moldova, how should they position themselves in regards to the informational sources of the former metropolis, yes?, to make it more precise, that treat the CIS area by double standards, as a kind of unaccomplished states, with a degree of sovereignty determines by the Kremlin. This is the problem.

But it is the first part of the problem; I see that we should have here open and competitive mass media, and the citizen should have access to them, thing that we lack. And after that, we should have the moral right to think well, whom we restrict access to our informational market. Well, "à la guerre comme à la guerre" (at war like at war).



Radu Vrabie, Expert of the Foreign Policy Association (APE): I am not a specialist in mass media; still, I would say that we have a law stating that we should have 70% of local product, which makes however, instead of doing what Mr. Nantoi said, a local public television that would be an alternative source of information, if does in fact destroy other foreign television channels that we have, because these local programs implemented now and the re-transmitted ones, in fact I do not know, I don't think they enjoy any popularity and nobody watches local products. Another aspect, besides what my colleagues have just mentioned, is the fact that we not only are under the influence of Russian mass media, we are in general within a Russian information space just like in many other aspects of daily life, entertainment, I do not know how else to call it. Cinemas, discos, well, night clubs, malls are places where Russian language is mostly spoken. And I believe that indeed the government of the Republic of Moldova could pay more attention to this issue in order to change a little bit the situation, because many times it is very hard to get to watch a movie in the mother tongue, the Romanian language. As for the television, coming back to TV, it is very good that there are many channels, but it is sad that certain foreign television channels have disappeared, which when present could have been compared. Now we do not have. And besides the fact that we need public television, local television in general, we need foreign televisions, western, in order to be able from the variety of information, to make certain conclusions.