

## Political Struggle in Bessarabia and at the Romanian Front. The Beginning of Romanian Occupation of Bessarabia (November 1917 – February 1918).

Vitali Repin / e-mail: repinv@bsu.by

Department of History of the southern and western Slavs, Faculty of History, Belarusian State University, Minsk, Republic of Belarus

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*The emergence of the Soviet-Romanian conflict in Bessarabia was largely caused by the October revolution in Russia that had left Romania one-on-one fight against the unit of the Central Powers in the Balkans and turned the former Romanian ally in the factor threatening the political stability of the Romanian kingdom. Faced with the threat of surrender, Romania sought to compensate unrealized territorial ambitions in Transylvania by joining at least the Russian province of Bessarabia, which the Romanian political elite considered as the historical and ethnic Romanian territory.*

*Key words: Bessarabia; Soviet-Romanian Relations; Moldavian Democratic Republic; Romanian Front; Rumcherod*

The Bessarabian province of the Russian Empire, the territory between the Dniester and Prut rivers, is an agrarian and industrially undeveloped region that would remain on the periphery of revolutionary events if not the proximity of the Romanian front. It was opened in 1916, when Romania sided with the Entente after a long bargaining about the price of participation in the world war. The Romanian kingdom was promised the expansion of borders in all directions, but with the exception of the East – Bessarabia. It was, in its turn, promised to Bucharest by the Central Powers<sup>1</sup>. The course of the war in 1916–1917 did not meet the

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<sup>1</sup> Vinogradov, V. (1987). *Kratkaya istoriya Rumynii s drevneyshih vremen i do nashich dnei*. M: Nayka, p. 309.

expectations of Bucharest: after suffering defeat, the Romanian troops with the help of four Russian armies were holding only the eastern regions of the kingdom, smaller than Bessarabia itself.

The political situation in Bessarabia in 1917 was developing along the lines of all-Russian processes. In the democratic field that arose after the February Revolution, several poles of power struggle emerged and put forward various programs of political and socio-economic transformation of Bessarabia within Russia. The specific character of the region manifested itself in the fact, that besides the authorities of the Provisional Government, as well as various elective Soviet structures, the Moldovan national movement received political registration there as well. It created the regional authority – Sfatul Țării (Country Council) on November 21 (December 5), 1917<sup>2</sup>. Despite the fact that its delegates represented only four counties inhabited mainly by Moldovans, the course for autonomy within the federal state was proclaimed after the Bessarabian and All Russian Constituent Assemblies. Spreading the boundaries of autonomy throughout the territory of Bessarabia, Sfatul Țării ignored the complex ethnic composition of the southern regions of the land (Budjak), where the majority consisted of the representatives of the Slavic and other nationalities, but not the Moldavians, constituted 47% of the population in the province according to the Census of 1897<sup>3</sup>. Although the Romanians at the Paris Peace Conference used other data, referring to 72% of the regional population as the Romanians, the Census of 1930 recorded 56.2% of the Romanian population<sup>4</sup>. Sfatul Țării proclaimed the creation of the Moldavian Democratic Republic (Republica Democratică Moldovenească) as a part of the "Russian Democratic Republic" on December 2 (15), 1917; this, in turn, aroused the criticism of the Soviet authorities that were also functioning in the cities of Bessarabia<sup>5</sup>. Sfatul Țării, which at first declared the preservation of the province within the

<sup>2</sup> New style of chronology was introduced in Romania starting March 1919.

<sup>3</sup> Pervaja Vseobshhaja perepis naselenija Rossijskoj imperii. (1899–1905). T. 3 Bessarabskaja gubernija. St. Peterburg: centr. stat. kom. m-va vn., p. 3

<sup>4</sup> Livezeanu, I. (1995). *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, p. 92; Spector, Sh. (1962). *Rumania at the Paris Peace Conference: A study of the diplomacy of Ioan I. C. Brătianu*. NY: Bookman Associates, Inc., p. 101.

<sup>5</sup> Vinogradov, V. (1996). *Bessarabija na perekrestke evropejskoj diplomatii. Dokumenty i materialy*. M: Indrik, pp. 200–202; GARF. F. 5936. Op. 1. D. 577. (1917–1918). Zapiski adjutanta glavnokomandujushego Rumynskogo fronta A. D. Shcherbacheva o Rumynii i Bessarabii, p. 177; Sovetsko-rumynskije otnoshenija. 1917–1941. (2000). Sbornik dokumentov. T.1: 1917–1934. M: Mezhdunarodnyje otnoshenija, pp. 8–10, 20–22.

Russian state, did not begin to recognize the supremacy of the executive power of the Council of People's Commissars (CPC) and declared its readiness to consider it only as the government of Great Russia<sup>6</sup>. Despite the fact that Sfatul Țării attempted to seize the political initiative from the Provisional Government, which was formed after the February Revolution, and the Soviets, it also did not recognize the authority of the CPC. The weak positions of the Bolsheviks in Bessarabia did not put the immediate change of power on the agenda. As a result, the relations of the government of V. I. Lenin and the Directorate of Sfatul Țării manifested itself in mutual ignoring each other without discussing the future state status of Bessarabia.

Locally emerged centers of Soviet power in the southwestern territories of the former Russian Empire were represented by the Front Department of the Executive Committees of the Councils of Rumfront, the Black Sea Fleet and the Odessa District (Rumcherod). The last coordinated the Bolshevisation of Odessa and the surrounding territories but was not subordinated to other Soviet bodies of Ukraine. In Bessarabia, Rumcherod relied on the revolutionary parts of the 6<sup>th</sup> Army, which disorganized and controversially left the Romanian front, as well as the Chisinau Council of Workers' and Peasants' Deputies, where, at the turn of 1917–1918, the Bolsheviks formed the majority.

Only on November 22 (December 10), the Chisinau Council recognized the authority of the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets. The predominance of the Socialist-Revolutionaries and Mensheviks in its composition, who had no radical contradictions with the program of Sfatul Țării, close to the Socialist-Revolutionary ideology, allowed for a long time to keep the political process in a peaceful framework. Some Bessarabian Bolsheviks, without any instructions from the CPC regarding the attitude to Sfatul Țării, assessed the project of Moldavian Republic even as a progressive one. In the meantime, Petrograd sent commissars to the Romanian front setting the goal to complete the Bolshevisation of the army, and practically did not interfere in the events in Bessarabia. No Soviet body perceived the initiative of the autonomy of Moldova in opposition to the autonomy proclaimed by Sfatul Țării<sup>7</sup>.

900 thousand soldiers of the four Russian armies of the Romanian Front posed the great danger for the fragile dual power that was

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<sup>6</sup> State archives of Russian Federation (GARF) F. R. 3439. Op. 1. D. 2. Komitet osvobodzenija Bessarabii, 1917–1918 g., p. 19.

<sup>7</sup> Levit, I. (2000). *God sudbonosnyj: Ot provozglashenija Moldavskoj Respubliki do likvidavii avtonomii Bessarabii*. Kishinev: Centralnaja tipografija, pp. 59–60.

established in November 1917 in Moldova. Despite the preservation of their fighting capacity, after the peace initiatives of the CPC, which forced Romania to sign a separate truce with the Central Powers in Focsani on November 26 (December 9), massive desertion began. The situation was further aggravated after the Soviet Supreme Headquarters in Mogilev issued an order to withdraw all Russian troops from Romania<sup>8</sup>. The looting and pillage that arose during the retreat of the troops provoked the growth of peasant demonstrations and banditry, which neither the Soviet authorities nor Sfatul Țării could effectively fight.

Chisinau preserved the model of the dual power of the Directorate of Sfatul Țării and the Chisinau Council. The political situation in other cities and districts of Bessarabia had a small impact on the development of the Soviet-Romanian conflict. The front-line status of Bessarabia affected the increasingly radicalization of the mood of Moldovan Soviet bodies, that tried to establish their authority on the Romanian front. However, the leaders of Sfatul Țării, despite the fact that the conflict with the Soviets did not turn into armed clashes, could not create the effective system of managing the region and did not feel safe. At the end of November 1917, the Head of the Directorate of External Affairs I. Pelivan together with Professor O. Gibu, a supporter of the concept of "Great Romania", arrived in Iasi, where they held consultations with the Minister of Foreign Affairs Take Ionescu and other high officials regarding the possibility of entering Romanian troops in Bessarabia to maintain order. I. Pelivan and the Head of the Directorate of Interior in mid-December 1917 visited Iasi again and directly requested the Romanian government, the headquarters of D.G. Shcherbachev and the diplomatic corps of the allied powers to send troops to Bessarabia to fight against anarchy<sup>9</sup>.

Upon the return of diplomats, at the meetings of Sfatul Țării on December 27–28, 1917 (January 9–10, 1918), after heated debates, a secret decision was made to turn to external assistance in order to suppress anarchy in the province. The Regional Council considered three drafts of the resolution. The SR-Menshevik bloc and the bloc of deputies from national minorities insisted that military assistance should be requested from the Ukrainian Central Rada and the Entente missions. The deputies of the Moldovan bloc did not speak out their desire to invite the Romanian units, but the heads of the directorates of internal and external affairs, V. Christi and I. Pelivan, actively lobbied for seeking help from

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid, p. 150.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 103, p. 180.

Romania<sup>10</sup>. On December 22 (January 4), a telegram was sent to Iasi addressed to the Romanian Minister of War, General A. Jankovescu and signed by the Chairman of the Board of General Directors P. Erhan and the abovementioned Christi and Pelivan. The telegram contained the request to send to Sfatul Țării a regiment of prisoners of war of the Romanian Transylvanians who were returning from the East to the homeland<sup>11</sup>. The majority received a draft proposed by the bloc of national minorities on December 28 (January 10). Thus, the Directorate received a *carte blanche* from the deputies.

At the end of 1917, the Romanian leadership in Iasi faced a difficult dilemma of continuing to participate in the war. The government of I. Brătianu had to look for a way in the narrow space of diplomatic maneuver, the extreme points of which were expressed in the desire to maintain loyalty to the Entente powers and the need to meet the conditions of the Central Powers. The preservation of the Romanian front and its possible evacuation to the territory of Bessarabia, the opposition to the anti-war agitation of the Bolsheviks, participation in the project of the creation of anti-Bolshevik union of Romania, the Ukrainian People's Republic and the Cossack territories on the Don were the measures that were considered by Paris and London as factors making possible for Romania to continue the war. A number of Romanian politicians (for example, Take Ionescu) actively supported this path. At the same time, the Entente plan was almost unreal. It led to the open confrontation with Soviet Russia, and in Iasi they least of all wanted the escape of the royal court and government to the East and war on two fronts with the Germans and the Bolsheviks. "The collapse of Russia" was evaluated as a prologue to the return of Bessarabia; that is why Berlin and Vienna made great advances regarding the annexation of the province to the Romanian kingdom as a compensation for the renunciation of Transylvania and territorial concessions in favor of Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria<sup>12</sup>. This variant of events was already discussed in December 1917 by the authorized

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<sup>10</sup> GARF. F. R. 3439. Op. 1. D. 2. Komitet osvobodzenija Bessarabii, 1917–1918 g., p. 26; Levit, I. (2000). *God sudbonosnyj: Ot provozglashenija Moldavskoj Respubliki do likvidavii avtonomii Bessarabii*. Kishinev: Centralnaja tipografija, p. 185, pp. 194–200.

<sup>11</sup> Unirea Basarabiei și a Bucovinei cu România: 1917–1918: documente / antologie de Ion Calafeteanu și Viorica-Pompilia Moisuc; prefață, Viorica-Pompilia Moisuc. (1995). Chișinău: Hyperion, p. 133.

<sup>12</sup> Levit, I. (2000). *God sudbonosnyj: Ot provozglashenija Moldavskoj Respubliki do likvidavii avtonomii Bessarabii*. Kishinev: Centralnaja tipografija, p. 91.

person of the Romanian Government A. Marghiloman at the beginning of negotiations with the Germans<sup>13</sup>.

According to the memoirs of A. D. Shcherbachev, the son of the Commander-in-Chief of the Romanian Front, General D. G. Shcherbachev, the Romanians quite reluctantly executed the orders of the Commander-in-Chief in the struggle against anarchy. However, the situation of the Romanian army was also critical, since with the withdrawal of the Russian units it could hold the front for no more than a few weeks. The issue of the possibility of the Romanian army withdrawal to the territory of Bessarabia, the evacuation of the government and the court, the availability of sufficient supplies became vital factors for the existence of the Romanian army and power. That is how the Commander-in-Chief D. G. Shcherbachev and the Chief of the Romanian General Staff, General K. Prezan, initially evaluated the events in Bessarabia<sup>14</sup>. During the joint operation in December 1917, the Ukrainian Haidamaks, Shcherbachev's headquarters and loyal to him soldiers' councils represented by the Committee of National Commissioners, as well as the Romanian units disarmed the most Bolshevized retreating Russian units, liquidated a number of active agitators, including the appointed CPC Commissioner for the Romanian front S. G. Roshal<sup>15</sup>. This caused the first conflict in Soviet-Romanian relations. The notes dated December 16 (29), 1917 and December 31, 1917 (January 13, 1918) and delivered in Petrograd to the envoy of K. Diamandi, demanded "to punish the criminal elements among the members of Romanian officers and Romanian bureaucracy, who dared to raise their hand to the Russian Revolution". Supreme Commander-in-Chief N. V. Krylenko called upon the soldiers of Rumfront to provide armed resistance to the Romanians. The Romanian response dated January 4 (17), 1918, contained notes on lasi non-participation in the assassination of Roshal and military operations on the territory of Bessarabia<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> Notovich, F. (1959). *Bukharestskij mir 1918 g.* M: Socekgiz, pp. 128–130; Marghiloman, Alexandru. (1995). Ediție și indice de Stelian Neagoie. Volumul III: România și primul război mondial (1914–1919). Războiul. (1918–1919). România politică după întregire (1920–1924). Buc.: Machiavelli, p. 295.

<sup>14</sup> GARF. F. R.3439. Op. 1. D. 2. Komitet osvobodnenija Bessarabii, 1917–1918 g., pp. 24–26.

<sup>15</sup> Torrey, Glenn E. (1995). *The revolutionary Russian Army and Romania*. Pittsburgh: The Center for Russian & East European Studies: University of Pittsburgh, pp. 62–67.

<sup>16</sup> Zemskov, I. (1957). Dokumenty vneshnej politiki SSSR. T.1. 7 nojabrja 1917 g. – 31 dekabrja 1918 g. M: Politizdat, p.70, pp. 79–80; Sovetsko-rumynskije otnoshenija. 1917–1941. (2000). Sbornik dokumentov. T.1: 1917–1934. M: Mezhdunarodnyje otnoshenija, pp. 11–12, pp. 17–18.

The establishment of control over Bessarabia became increasingly important for the Romanian elite in December 1917. At least this would make it possible to protect the country from the growing influence of the Russian revolution. Expelling the disorderly retreating Russian units, no later than December 7 (20), 1917, Romanians entered the territory of Bessarabia in the place of Leovo<sup>17</sup>. This episode subsequently received diametrically opposite coverage in the historiography of the USSR and Romania. The Soviet official version, published on January 26, 1928 in "Pravda" stated that the Romanians began occupation after the murder of their officer, who came to confiscate food stocks in the military warehouse. According to the Romanian version, it was believed that the officer conflicted with the supporters of the Bolsheviks from the local council. However, he was killed by an ambush shot from the other bank of the Prut when he was already on the Romanian side<sup>18</sup>.

The course of Romania was predicted as early as June 1914 by the Head of the Russian Foreign Ministry S. D. Sazonov: "... (it) will try to join the party that is stronger, and which will be able to promise it the greater benefits"<sup>19</sup>. At the end of 1917, the diplomacy of the Entente and the Central Powers, ready to use Bessarabia as a bargaining chip, became an important factor. Inducing the Romanians to peace, the Head of Political Department of the German occupation forces in Romania A. Horstman in a conversation with future Prime Minister A. Marghiloman drew attention to the community of interests: "Russian anarchy led to the creation of a kind of brotherhood. You are fighting the Bolsheviks in Bessarabia, we entered Ukraine with the same goal"<sup>20</sup>. In the conditions of the armistice that prohibited the redeployment of front-line units, the Germans closed their eyes to the removal of four divisions from the front for the operation in Bessarabia. The Romanians found a formal reason for occupation in the protection of warehouses and stocks with foodstuffs to prevent the famine in the country. The Entente, however, wishing to leave the way for returning both Petrograd and Iasi to the bloc open, supported the Romanian action as a means of resuscitating the obligations of the Russian-Romanian union. To the requests of Sfatul ării, which tried to obtain recognition of the Moldovan statehood project, the Entente

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<sup>17</sup> Levit, I. (2000). God sudbonosnyj: Ot provozglashenija Moldavskoj Respubliki do likvidavii avtonomii Bessarabii. Kishinev: Centralnaja tipografija, pp. 136–139.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, pp.135–138; S etogo nacalos. (1928). G. Pravda. 26 janvarja. P. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Sazonov, S. (1991). *Vospominanija*. M: Mezdunarodnyje otnoshenija, pp. 326–334.

<sup>20</sup> Vinogradov, V. (1969). *Rumynija v gody pervoj mirovoj vojny*. M: Nauka, p. 286.

diplomats in Romania replied that the occupation “can not influence the existing political situation or the future destiny of this country”<sup>21</sup>. Moreover, trying to bring Austria-Hungary out of the war, the Entente diplomats promised it the preservation of the borders. As for Romania, it was promised Bessarabia as a compensation for refusing Transylvania, Banat and Bukovina. They could not have known about this in Iasi<sup>22</sup>.

Sfatul Țării tried to legitimize the project of Moldovan Republic during peace negotiations of the Central Powers with the RSFSR and the UPR in Brest, giving instructions to the delegation on the indivisibility of the country's territory within the borders of the Bessarabian province. However, Romania and the Ukrainian People's Republic remained the only states that de facto recognized the state project of the Moldavian Republic<sup>23</sup>. Regarding the position of politicians of the Ukrainian Central Rada, the territorial demarcations in Bessarabia did not represent an urgent problem. Under the preliminary conditions of the treaty with Soviet Russia, approved by the government of the Ukrainian People's Republic on February 14, 1918, it was noted that the UPR would handle the situation of Bessarabia “on the basis of self-determination of nations by the agreement with Romania and Bessarabia”<sup>24</sup>.

The Military Revolutionary Committee of the Southern District, which coordinated the disparate Bolshevik organizations of Bessarabia, reported to Petrograd about the incident in Leovo on December 15 (29). But even at the beginning of January 1918, the councils and Rumchirod that supervised them did not raise the issue of forceful seizure of power in Chisinau, but the process of centralization of Soviet and pro-Soviet authorities in Bessarabia continued<sup>25</sup>. Only on December 31 (January 14), the Front-Line Department of Rumcherod issued an order No. 1 proclaiming itself as authority over the troops. After that, the Bolsheviks from the Chisinau Council took under their control the station, post and telegraph in the city, thus creating the appearance of establishing Soviet power. During these days, the meetings of Sfatul Țării were not hold,

<sup>21</sup> Vinogradov, V. (1996). *Bessarabija na perekrestke evropejskoj diplomatii. Dokumenty i materialy*. M: Indrik, p. 203, pp. 209–211; Vinogradov, V. (1987). *Kratkaya istorija Rumynii s drevnejshih vremen i do nashich dnei*. M: Nayka, p. 303.

<sup>22</sup> Levit, I. (2000). *God sudbonosnyj: Ot provozglashenija Moldavskoj Respubliki do likvidavii avtonomii Bessarabii*. Kishinev: Centralnaja tipografija, pp. 182.

<sup>23</sup> GARF. F. R. 3439. Op. 1. D.2. Komitet osvobodzenija Bessarabii, 1917–1918 g., p. 19.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, pp. 168–170.

<sup>25</sup> Levit, I. (2000). *God sudbonosnyj: Ot provozglashenija Moldavskoj Respubliki do likvidavii avtonomii Bessarabii*. Kishinev: Centralnaja tipografija, pp. 209–210.



some of his members went underground, and V. Christie went to Iasi with a request to speed up the infusion of troops.

During these days, the decision to start a full-scale occupation of Bessarabia was taken in Iasi. At the governmental meeting on January 3 (16), the occupation plan received the support of the Entente representatives, who saw in it the way to create the front against the Bolsheviks and to keep Romania from exiting from the war<sup>26</sup>. The request of Sfatul Țării for assistance was a weighty, but not the main argument for such a risky operation, since in Iasi it was understood that failure would not only disgrace Romania, but would also aggravate its precarious position, depending on Germany's intentions to observe the truce. Initially, they planned the occupation of Bessarabia to be carried out by the Romanian-Transylvanians, Ukrainian Haidamaks and Romanian border troops. In early January, Cahul, Bolgrad and Ungheni were occupied on the left bank of the Prut. However, a regiment of captured Transylvanians, who arrived in Chisinau on January 6 (19), was disarmed by Soviet units, and Romanian units were stopped on the approaches to Chisinau<sup>27</sup>. A full-scale offensive of Romanians with the forces of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> infantry and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> cavalry divisions began on January 8 (21). Despite the active resistance of units of Rumcherod, joined by units of other movements disloyal to the Romanians, the resistance to occupation was unorganized and disjointed. Romanian divisions that were withdrawn from the front were resisted by the units of the forming Romanian Front, for the needs of which in those days the funds from the reserves of the State Treasury were allocated by order of V.I. Lenin<sup>28</sup>.

The power of the Soviets in Chisinau ended on January 13 (26). The memoirs of A. D. Shcherbachev stated that the Romanian troops entered Chisinau "under the general joyful cry of the entire Chisinau, on the carpet of flowers," and the population of the city was "so exhausted and intimidated that they were willing to have anyone: a German, a Romanian, a Japanese, a Hottentot, only to be given the order"<sup>29</sup>. Rumcherod continued to resist in eastern and southern Bessarabia (Budjak), where the legitimacy of Sfatul Țării was not recognized.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., pp. 218.

<sup>27</sup> Dembo, V. (1924). *Bessarabskij vopros: Bessarabija, Rumynija, Dunaj. Kak zachvachena Bessarabija, uderzitsa li Rumynija v Bessarabii*. M: Gos. Voen. Izd-vo., p. 73.

<sup>28</sup> Levit, I. (2000). *God sudbonosnyj: Ot provozglashenija Moldavskoj Respubliki do likvidavii avtonomii Bessarabii*. Kishinev: Centralnaja tipografija, p. 230, p. 235.

<sup>29</sup> GARF. F. 5936. Op. 1. D. 577. (1917–1918). *Zapiski adjutanta glavnokomandujushchego Rumynskogo fronta A. D. Shcherbacheva o Rumynii i Bessarabii*, p. 26.

The political forces disloyal to Iasi faced repressions on the occupied territory. These forces included the Socialist Revolutionary Council of the Peasants' Congress of Bessarabia, whose representatives, deputies Sfatul ării, V. Rudjev, V. Prahnițky, a Menshevik N. Grinfeld and several others were arrested and soon shot without trial. In these conditions, the independence of the Moldavian Democratic Republic was proclaimed on January 24 (February 6) at the meeting of Sfatul ării. The Declaration of Independence that contained not a word about the federal future of Bessarabia as part of Russia, explained the presence of "fraternal Romanian troops" as not an aggressive act of Romania, but as their help in establishing order and peace in the province<sup>30</sup>. As Shcherbachev wrote later, "the Romanians behaved like some conquerors ... At first, the landlords and the intellectuals were delighted with the Romanians, but then, after getting accustomed, were horrified"<sup>31</sup>.

During the first weeks of occupation, the Romanian government represented by the Minister of War K. Prezan and General E. Broshtyanu, as well as the head of Sfatul ării represented by the new Chairman of the Council of General Directors D. Chuguryanu in their statements excluded the possibility of annexing Bessarabia and appealed to the need to support the young Moldovan statehood<sup>32</sup>. At the same time, the independence of the Moldavian Republic, which abolished the sovereignty of Russia, created the necessary conditions for the subsequent inclusion of Bessarabia into Romania.

Thus, the Bessarabian problem in Soviet-Romanian relations arose from many political challenges appeared in the process of simultaneous withdrawal of Russia and Romania from the First World War, revolutionary processes and national movements on the territory of the south-western provinces of the former Russian Empire. The establishment of Soviet

<sup>30</sup> Vinogradov, V. (1996). *Bessarabija na perekrestke evropejskoj diplomatii. Dokumenty i materialy*. M: Indrik, pp. 208–209; Boranda, Georgeta. (2008). *Operațiunile militare desfășurate în sudul Basarabiei în anul 1918*. Constanța: Editura Muzeului marinei române, p. 347; *Unirea Basarabiei și a Bucovinei cu România: 1917–1918: documente / antologie de Ion Calafeteanu și Viorica-Pompilia Moisuc*; prefată, Viorica-Pompilia Moisuc. (1995). Chișinău: Hyperion, pp. 148–150.

<sup>31</sup> GARF. F. 5936. Op. 1. D. 577. (1917–1918). *Zapiski adjutanta glavnokomandujushego Rumynskogo fronta A. D. Shcherbacheva o Rumynii i Bessarabii*, p.26; Vinogradov, V. (1996). *Rossijsko-rumynskij konflikt vokrug Bessarabii v 1918–1920 gody*. M: Indrik.

<sup>32</sup> GARF. F. R.3439. Op. 1. D. 2. *Komitet osvobozdenija Bessarabii, 1917–1918 g.*, p. 32; *Unirea Basarabiei și a Bucovinei cu România: 1917–1918: documente / antologie de Ion Calafeteanu și Viorica-Pompilia Moisuc*; prefată, Viorica-Pompilia Moisuc. (1995). Chișinău: Hyperion, pp.137–138, pp. 144–146.

power in the Bessarabian province was running late, and the initiative for the national-state transformation of the region was intercepted by the Bessarabian political structure Sfatul ării, which was created on the initiative of the Moldovan Peasant Bloc deputies, but also included the representatives of democratic parties and national minorities. Despite the sufficiently peaceful nature of the coexistence of Sfatul ării with local Soviet structures at the end of 1917, the threat of Bolshevisation of the province, as well as the growth of anarchy in Bessarabia connected with the retreat of the Russian armies of the Romanian front through its territory forced the leadership of Sfatul ării to ask the Allied powers for military assistance, even despite the threat of Romanian incorporation of Bessarabia in the event of such campaign.

The Romanian government with the assistance of Kaiser Germany and the loyalty of the Entente powers to this action carried out the occupation and annexation of Bessarabia, risky violating previous diplomatic agreements with Russia. Thus, it ensured not only satisfaction of its foreign policy ambitions to create "Great Romania", but also eliminated the threat of radicalization of the socio-political situation within the country as a result of Soviet revolutionary agitation. In the future, the issue of the recognition of the sovereignty of Romania over Bessarabia by the Great powers was linked with the participation of Bucharest in the anti-revolution movement in Central Europe. This resulted in the inclusion of the Bessarabian problem in the architecture of the Versailles system of international relations after the signing of the Bessarabian protocol by Romania, Britain, France, Italy and Japan on October 28, 1920 in Paris.