

Informative Tracking of Ethnic Poles by Soviet Repressive Bodies on the Territory of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic

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Abstract. *Through this article, the authors aimed to promote the historical truth about the atrocities committed by Soviet repressive bodies on the territory of the MSSR. Citing various reasons, the repressive bodies pursued the locals, considering them to be conspiring against the Soviet power. During the Soviet occupation of this region, many Poles living in Bessarabia became victims of political repressions, some of them being sentenced to death and others deported to Siberia by the communist totalitarian regime. The Soviet secret services were also active among the war prisoners in the camps of the MSSR. Due to the degrading conditions, some of them died during detention. Thus, the authors express the hope that the information provided in this article will be useful to Polish researchers involved in the process of identifying the victims of political repressions among ethnic Poles, as well as condemning the crimes committed by the Soviet totalitarian regime.*

DOI: 10.5604/01.3001.0054.4659

<http://dx.doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0054.4659>

Keywords: Soviet repressive organs, MASSR (Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic), great terror, political repressions, ethnic Poles, war prisoners

Introduction

Following the evolution of historical events, representatives of different peoples entered the Romanian space and remained to live here forever. The historian Gheorghe Bezviconi wrote about some Polish nobles who lived in Bessarabia in the book 'The Nobility of Moldova between the Prut and Dniester'. No one could have guessed that during the Soviet occupation of this region, many Poles living in Bessarabia would become victims of political repressions, some being sentenced to death and others deported to Siberia by the communist totalitarian regime. As the historian Igor Cașu mentions: 'Repression before 1940 was widely applied against ethnic minorities who lived on the borders of the Soviet Union and whose motherland, broadly speaking, bordered the world's first communist state. Representatives of these ethnic groups were suspected of dual loyalty in the best case,

or primary loyalty to the nation or mother country, and therefore of treason, Soviet treason, and espionage at worst. Among these ethnic groups were Romanians, Poles, Baltics, Germans, but also Koreans, Iranians, Turks and others. Regarding Soviet Moldova, a geopolitical notion that included not only Bessarabia after 1940 but also the autonomy on the left side of the Dniester from the interwar period, the research of political repressions in general and that concerning certain ethnic groups has been boosted recently, from 2010 onwards, with the wide opening of two important archives. One, that of the former KGB and the other, that of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the MSSR, both offering rich material to historians interested in the phenomenon of repression. In the meantime, several Moldovan authors approached this subject. One of them is Robert Conquest, who addressed the issue of consecrated persons more precisely, as the phenomenon of the Great Terror of 1937–1938 and more recently; David Shearer, who studied *The Great Purge*. Among them, Mihai Tașcă, Gh. Negru and Ion Varta stand out with several studies; Tașcă also publishing a volume of documents about the Romanian operation within the Great Terror of the MASSR, and Varta, together with Tatiana Varta and Igor Șarov, publishing a volume of 5 announced with the sentences of those convicted during the 16 months of the Great Purge. The Polish victims of the MASSR of 1937–1938 have not yet been the subject of specialised research.¹

Results and discussion

Considering the reported data, it is necessary to carry out as many studies as possible and to promote the historical truth about the atrocities committed by the Soviet repressive bodies on the territory of the MSSR. To our regret, we note that even in the third millennium, books do not stop being printed in which the activity of the Soviet secret services is glorified, presenting the abuses and crimes committed by them, as remarkable successes. The list of these works also includes the memoirs of the former Head of the KGB of the USSR, General G. Volkov, who, referring to the situation of the population in the districts to the left of the Dniester River, after the socialist revolution of 1917, stated the following: ‘Three years had passed since the October revolution. The peasants on the left of the Dniester received the land that had previously belonged to the landlords; poor committees and other forms of cooperation were created in the villages. Life in the cities returned to normal, local soviets were formed. The situation was completely different in the occupied territory of Bessarabia. Here, as in other districts of Romania, the representatives of the privileged classes took refuge, the White Guards, deserters and those who evaded military service in the Red Army. Petliura’s military units also arrived here, in which illiterate peasants from Ukrainians, Bulgarians, Russians and Poles were mobilised by deception. The Dniester separated many Moldovan families for a long time.’²

¹ I. Cașu, *Polish victims of political repression in the Moldavian SSR. The death sentence of Stanislav F. Baranschi (1940)*. Totalitarian Regimes & Cold War Study Center. State University of Moldova, Chișinău. ibn.idsi.md.

² G.M. Volkov, *Essays by a KGB lieutenant general on his personal life and security operations in Russia, Western Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Moldova*, Chișinău: Information and Security Service of the Republic of Moldova, 2004, pp. 137–138.

The authors of this volume did not present information about the fact that the repressive bodies, citing various reasons, pursued the locals, considering them to be conspiring against the Soviet power. Among the people undergoing operative processing were ethnic Poles, a large number of whom were sentenced to death. In this sense, the historian Igor Cașu notes that: 'As part of the Polish operation on the territory of the MASSR, 168 people were arrested. Thus, in total, among the victims of the Great Terror in the MASSR, there were several hundred Poles. They were repressed due to the suspicions of being agents of Poland, with a nationality belonging not the social one, being the essential criterion in determining their fate. Sometimes, both national and social criteria were invoked in the verdict of the local 'Troikas' or the Moscow 'Dvoikas' (special Soviet secret police agency called NKVD with their groups that executed the death penalty — author's note).³

It should be noted that from the first years after the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia, they were causing conflicts on the border with Poland. They constantly reported to the political leadership about the alleged spies and smugglers detained by the border guards of Soviet Russia. At the same time, the Bolsheviks did not stop victimising themselves, citing that Romanian and Polish border guards attacked them. Thus, in the archive materials from 1921, documents were identified in which they reported that: '...The units of the 29th brigade guarded the border of the Republic on the Zbruci river — the border with Poland and on the Dniester river — the border with Romania, from the sugar factory near the village of Dorofeevka on the Zbruci river to the Beloci river delta, a total of 518 versts... On the sector guarded by the 187th battalion in the Podoimiți district, a gang, probably Kovalenko's, attacked our border guards by surprise and retreated to Romanian territory... According to the testimonies of some captured bandits, the task of these gangs is to accumulate secret information and prepare a rebellion in order to expel the 'Katsaps' from Ukraine and demoralise the border guard units, with their removal from the border during the rebellion of Petliura's forces supported from over borders... Previously, on August 2, incidents were also recorded in the sector of the 189th battalion. The Romanian border guards opened fire on our sentry near the Isakovți locality. Ours have not responded... At the same time, it was found that the soldiers of the Red Army were not well trained because they were always on duty performing reconnaissance missions. They only attend literacy lessons, and because of this, the level of awareness is low, and many discipline violations are recorded. Such situations can be seen in all the border guard units. Another problem is the poor supply and lack of living space. As a consequence, most of the soldiers are not in the barracks, being assigned to the host on a very large territory. In such conditions, border guards are dependent on the owner of the household who provides them with food'.⁴

As is well known, the Bolsheviks constantly declared that they were fighting smuggling and spies on the border with Bessarabia. They persecuted and killed people who wanted to enter Romania for food products. In the information note

³ I. Cașu, *Polish victims of political...*, *op. cit.*

⁴ I.A. Doroshenko, V.A. Vdovin, N.N. Pavlovsky, *From the history of the Cheka troops and border guards. Documents and materials 1917–1921*, Moscow: Military Publishing House of the Ministry of Defense of the USSR, 1958, pp. 481–482.

presented on October 10, 1921, the commander of the Bolshevik border guard service mentions that on the segment guarded by the 28th brigade, the main points where contraband flow was recorded, are the following localities: '...Râbnița, Iagorlâk, Dubăsari, Grigoriopol, Tiraspol... These points serve as border crossing points for criminals and spies. The head of the border guard service reports, Volkovski'.⁵

Wishing to rehabilitate the image of the Soviet repressive bodies, the former head of the KGB of the MSSR, General G. Volkov, describes their struggle with alleged Polish spies, stating that 'Polish espionage (the second unit of the general staff and the consulate in Chisinau) was based on an agency network among ethnic Poles, who lived in the Bessarabia and Odessa regions. We have recently been told about the denouncement in 1921 by the security officers from Moldova and Odessa of a large group of residents of the Polish secret services led by T. Potton. On November 23, 1923, the representative of the Polish espionage, Linievskii, addressed the espionage unit of the third Romanian army corps with a request to open four crossing points on the Dniester river in the villages of Napadovo, Gura-Bâcului, Chițcani and Copanca in order to launch the agency network on the territory of the USSR. General Popovici's note is kept on the document: 'It is approved only under the control and supervision of border guards'. ...Melabenskii handled the transportation of the agency network through these points, and all the activity of the Polish secret services in Bessarabia was handled by the Counsel Petrovskii from Chisinau. He also maintained contact and ensured the exchange of information with the secret services of other countries'.⁶

As we see again this time, the Soviet general G. Volkov does not mention the files fabricated on political orders, based on which innocent people were accused. As a rule, the Bolshevik political elites gave instructions to track ethnic Poles with information and subject them to repression following political events in which Poland and Romania were targeted in the 30s of the last century. In this sense, the Romanian author Corvin Lupu states that: 'Poland played an important role in Romanian calculations regarding the establishment of diplomatic relations with the USSR on January 15, 1931, the Romanian government extended the Romanian-Polish Treaty of Alliance, as it had been formulated in 1926, introducing a clause regarding its automatic renewal for five years, provided that it is not denounced for at least one year before the deadline. Moreover, in November 1931, when Marshal Pilsudski visited Romania, he was appointed commander of the Polish-Romanian armies, in case of a conflict. The marshal's visit followed the visit of Prince Nicolae to Poland in August 1931'.⁷

We remind you that the repressive organs in the USSR were looking for different ways to physically liquidate Marshal Jozef Pilsudski. There were attempts to organise such an operation on the territory of Romania. For these reasons, precautionary measures were taken during his visit to Chisinau. In this context,

⁵ I.A. Doroshenko, V.A. Vdovin, N.N. Pavlovsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 506–507.

⁶ G.M. Volkov, *Essays by a KGB lieutenant general on his personal life and security operations in Russia, Western Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Moldova*, Chișinău: Information and Security Service of the Republic of Moldova, 2004, pp. 106–107.

⁷ C. Lupu, *Diplomatic relations between Romania and the USA until the Second World War*, Sibiu: 'Tribuna' Publishing House, 1999, p. 126.

the historian Ion Varta writes: 'The visit to Chisinau of a personality of such scope was a clear and unequivocal message sent to the Kremlin authorities. From the perspective of Poland signing the non-aggression pact with the USSR, Marshal Pilsudski really wanted to visit Bessarabia in order to convey to the Soviet leaders a more than conclusive message; namely that the Polish authorities recognised Romania's Eastern border on the Dniester River, and Bessarabia as an integral and inalienable part of the Romanian state. According to our view, the visit to Chisinau carried a certain risk for the Polish politician, if we take into account the terrorist operation set up by the Soviet secret structures, which planned the attempt on the life of Marshal Pilsudski in September 1928, when the group of terrorists entered Romania through Bessarabia, next to Tighina. However, he disregarded the possible dangers that such a trip to a territory surrounded by Soviet agents entailed, heading by train from Bucharest to Chisinau, where he would arrive on April 16, 1932'.⁸

At the same time, on the territory of the MASSR, the process of identifying people who had relatives in Bessarabia and sentencing them to death for alleged espionage in favour of the Polish secret services continued. In this context, we return to the memoirs of the Soviet general G. Volkov, in which he presents information about the activity of the Polish secret services on the territory of the MASSR, noting that: 'File No. 20985 in ten volumes, was managed by operative employees at point No. 3 of the border guard and by the representatives of the Extraordinary Commission of Tiraspol county and the Odessa governorate on the case of a group of agents of foreign secret services and smugglers, who were operating in Moldova and the Odessa region. The file was started when information was obtained about the fact that illegal border crossings across the Dniester river were being organised in the village of Ghidirim, Râbnița district. During verification, the persons involved were identified, who provided help to an active agent of the foreign espionage services, the Polish Ludvig Beneș, a former landlord. In the village lived Beneș's common-law wife, Ana Juraveli, with their common child. He was getting ready to transport both of them to Romania. Taking advantage of these circumstances, the security officers decided to carry out an operative combination, to entice lure Beneș to our territory and arrest him, to later uncover the entire spy network. The security officers sent a letter to Beneș, as if Ana had written it personally. In the letter, Juraveli 'begs' the lover to come for her personally. The plans came to fruition. On July 2, citizen Beneș arrived on our bank and was arrested. During the search, a weapon and a string of letters of recommendation sewn into the clothes as well as service card No. 279 of the Polish espionage centre, which gave him the competence to 'verify the activity of the information services on the territory of Soviet Russia', were found. During the interrogations, Beneș described how a network of the Polish security residence, which he had the mission to inspect, works in Odessa and in the districts near the city, as well as on the Odessa-Kiev railway lines, at the Birzula-Codîma and Vapnearca-Râbnița stations. According to the model of the affidavit raised, other documents were prepared, with which two employees of the Extraordinary Commission, who spoke the Polish language, visited the nominated addresses, identified the staff of the residency, headed by T. Potton, uncovering its hostile

⁸ I. Varta, *Marshal Jozef Pilsudski and Bessarabia*, Chișinău, 2013, p. 14.

activity. Based on these materials, 14 agents were arrested, who were carrying out missions of the Polish espionage service'.⁹

Within the reported context, we recall that the Soviet repressive bodies used torture against arrested persons to make them confess to committing crimes. Many victims were subsequently rehabilitated. We are convinced of this by analysing the situation in Râbnîța, where members of a counter-revolutionary organisation of Polish nationalists were documented in 1937–1938. The majority of them were sentenced to death. Among them are the following: '**Colomeeț Gavril I.** (year of birth 1888). He had been accused of participating in the activity of a counter-revolutionary organisation of Polish nationalists. Sentenced to death in 1937. The case was closed in 1958... **Cret Mihai I.** (year of birth 1879). He had been accused of participating in the activity of a counter-revolutionary organisation of Polish nationalists. Sentenced to death in 1937. In 1959, the case was closed... **Iarus-Nabojnâi Pavel N** (year of birth 1887). Sentenced to death in 1937 for being a member of a counter-revolutionary organisation of Polish nationalists. In 1959, the case was closed... **Maslițki Petru A.** (year of birth 1880). Accused of participating in the activity of a counter-revolutionary organisation of Polish nationalists. Sentenced to death in 1937. In 1959, the case was closed... **Regulski Iosif S.** (year of birth 1888). Accused of participating in the activity of a counter-revolutionary organisation of Polish nationalists. Sentenced to death in 1937. In 1958, the case was closed'.¹⁰

One of those arrested was sentenced to prison: 'Trus Ivan M. (year of birth 1893). Arrested in 1937 on charges of being a member of a counter-revolutionary organisation of Polish nationalists. Sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment in a correctional labour camp. In 1957, the case was closed'.¹¹ Other people sentenced to death followed: 'Țimbalaitis Cazimir F. (year of birth 1891). Accused of participating in the activity of a counter-revolutionary organisation of Polish nationalists. Sentenced to death in 1937. In 1958, the case was closed... Zemba Kazimir P. (year of birth 1904). Accused of participating in the activity of a counter-revolutionary organisation of Polish nationalists. Sentenced to death in 1937. In 1958, the case was closed... Dobrovoski Iuzefa F. (year of birth 1900). Sentenced to death for allegedly being a member of a counter-revolutionary organisation of Polish nationalists. In 1959, the case was closed... Dobrovolski Bronislav I. (year of birth 1895). Arrested on charges of participating in the activity of a counter-revolutionary organisation of Polish nationalists. Sentenced to death in 1938. The case was closed in 1959... Doleico Anton C. Worker at the sugar factory in Râbnîța. Arrested on 4 February 1938 on the grounds that he was a member of a counter-revolutionary organisation of Polish nationalists. He died on May 14, 1938, in the prison of Tiraspol. In 1989, he was rehabilitated... Iavorski Mihai N. (year of birth 1879). Accused of participating in the activity of a counter-revolutionary organisation of Polish nationalists. Sentenced to death in 1937. In 1958, the case was closed'.¹² Another woman from this group

⁹ G.M. Volkov, *Essays by a KGB lieutenant general on his personal life and security operations in Russia, Western Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Moldova*, Chișinău: Information and Security Service of the Republic of Moldova, 2004, pp. 138–139.

¹⁰ E. Postică, V. Belous, V. Stăvilă, *The memory book. Catalogue of the victims of communist totalitarianism*, Vol. III, Chișinău: 'Știința' Publishing House, 2003, pp. 168–169.

¹¹ E. Postică, V. Belous, V. Stăvilă, *The memory...*, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 170.

was sentenced to a custodial sentence: 'Țimbalaitis Veronica I. (year of birth 1896). Arrested on charges of being a member of a counter-revolutionary organisation of Polish nationalists and sentenced to 3 years of hard labour (1938). In 1958, the case was closed'.¹³

Some Soviet criminologists justified the crimes committed by the communist totalitarian regime during the Great Terrors. Thus, the author N. Kuznetsov launches the following conclusions: 'The great offensive of socialism on a huge front contributed to the formation of kolkhozes (1929–1932), to the reform of the Soviet economy and to the victory of socialism in the USSR (1933–1937) and throughout the country, radical changes took place in the political and social-economic field. With these accomplishments, the first stage of the development of the socialist society — the transition from capitalism to socialism — ends'.¹⁴ The author does not mention the hundreds of thousands of victims who were killed because they did not support Soviet power. Unfortunately, even more dramatic events, awaited the Poles. As the authors Corvin Lupu and Grațian Lupu mentioned in the summer of 1939: 'Poland was in a very difficult situation, attacked by both Germany and the Soviet Union. It was weighing between two options, finding that under German rule, it loses its independence and under Soviet rule, it loses its soul'.¹⁵

Thus, the terror continued. Studying the situation of the Poles during that historical period, the activist Anna Piekarska, participating in an international symposium held in Chisinau, provided information about the Poles persecuted in the Soviet Union in 1930–1939, stating that: 'According to research undertaken so far by the 'Memorial' Association, approximately 144,000 people were arrested between 1937 and 1938 (the years of the Great Terror) in the Soviet Union. Over half of them were executed. So far, no one has been able to establish exactly how many of them were Polish citizens'.¹⁶

Later on, the list of victims also included the people repressed after World War II. In this sense, the historian Anatol Petrencu states that: '...after the reoccupation of Poland, the NKVD began the 'hunt' for all Polish patriots, who resisted the Nazis with arms in hand, thus helping the Red Army in its advance to the West. And most importantly: after the war, Poland was subjected to Sovietisation, subordinated to the interests of the USSR'.¹⁷ Characterising the policy of the USSR in relation to the neighbouring countries, the Romanian author Ion Rațiu writes: 'In eleven of the fifteen neighbouring countries, Moscow imposed new governments, completely subservient to it'.¹⁸

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

¹⁴ N.F. Kuznetsova, *Crime and delinquency*, Moscow: Moscow University Publishing House, 1969, pp. 188–189.

¹⁵ C. Lupu, G. Lupu, *The history of international relations. Europe between the years 1919–1947*, Bucharest, 2013, p. 129.

¹⁶ A. Piekarska, Coordinator at the Karta Center in Warsaw. Poland. *Index of Victims of Repression — collection, verification and preservation of information on victims of Soviet persecution between 1930-1956*, [in:] *The impact of the totalitarian past on the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe (International Symposium)*, Chișinău, 1-2 July, 1999, Chișinău: ARC Publishing House, 2000, p. 118.

¹⁷ A. Petrencu, *Russia, 2019: 'This has been a difficult year...'*, 'ProMemoria', Chișinău, 2020, p. 62.

¹⁸ I. Rațiu, *Moscow challenges the world*, Timișoara: SigNata Publishing House, 1990, p. 27.

During the same period, our compatriots were also subjected to persecution: 'Since Bessarabia was part of an enemy capitalist state for 22 years and it was also not controlled by the USSR during the war, the Soviet regime had enough reasons to consider that the number of 'hostile elements' in this land is many higher than in its eastern territories'.¹⁹

Publishing a series of comments on the atrocities committed by the communist totalitarian regime, the author Ion Rațiu notes that: 'Within the struggle against capitalist society, communists have a terrible advantage arising from this new morality. A lack of mercy before all enemies is a virtue. In its most primitive form, this morality is only slightly better than mass murder. As Latsis wrote in *Isvestia*, 'this fight is for life and death. If you do not kill, you will be killed. That is why you should kill...'. In a more sophisticated form, this morality empowers the communist to eliminate his opponents by sending them to prison and forced labour camps. This struggle and rapid elimination of enemies continues until the last anti-communist is gone, and perhaps beyond that, although the watchful eye must not be closed, to prevent reactionary thinking from reviving'.²⁰

The Soviet secret services were also active among the prisoners of war in the camps of the MSSR. Due to the degrading conditions, some prisoners died during detention. It is regrettable that the places where prisoners of war were buried were left to deteriorate and over time; the graves disappeared. An eloquent example is the cemetery in Bălți where the prisoners who died during their time in the specialised hospital in this locality were buried. In the archival materials, it is mentioned that: 'Within the cemetery of the specialised military hospital No. 3376 of the NKVD from Bălți, between July 1945 and June 1948, according to the register, 216 people were buried, but in reality, there were 215 people. In the second half of 1945, 85 people were buried in this cemetery, in 1946–90, and in 1947–30 people. In the first half of 1948, the last 10 people were buried in this cemetery. Most of the dead were prisoners of Hungarian origin — 84 people. After them came the ethnic Germans — 80 deceased, then the Austrians — 31. 9 Romanians, 6 Czechs, 2 Poles, a Yugoslav, a Ruthenian, and a Serb were also buried in that cemetery'.²¹ Two Poles were also identified among the dead prisoners: 'Murusciac Evghen (year of birth 1907) Polish, soldier, died on 21.12, buried on 22.12 in grave number 25/3 perimeter 465; Bednoș Alois Macs (year of birth 1902) Polish, soldier, died on 23.01, buried on 24.01, in grave number 20/4, sector 465'.²²

Later, during certain periods, most of the prisoners of war were repatriated to their country of origin. Thus, in a strictly secret information note regarding the activity of the special transport section of the Chisinau railway junction during 1946, sent to the head of the transport section of the USSR of the MIA, Lieutenant Colonel Govozov, by the head of the transport section of the MSSR of the MIA, Major Jornicenکو, on January 12, 1947, the following are mentioned: 'The Chisinau railway

¹⁹ D. Lisnic, *Elites of Soviet Moldova. Recruitment, informal networks, social and ethnic identities in Bălți, 1940-41, 1944-50*, Chișinău: ARC Publishing House, 2019, p. 163.

²⁰ I. Rațiu, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

²¹ E. Postică, V. Belous, V. Stăvilă, *The memory...*, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

²² I. Varta, S. Carp, *War prisoners. Documented history, (The camps of the MSSR)*, Vol. II, Chișinău: 'Bons Office' SRL, 2014, p. 5.

this year was forced by order of the centre to carry out some missions of major importance outside the plan. These include:

1. Transportation of the military troops of the Precarpathian District to their new place of deployment.
2. Transportation of demobilised soldiers from the Red Army.
3. To provide transport for the evacuation of bread and other goods from Romania according to the terms fixed in the agreements.
4. Transportation of military equipment.
5. Transportation of repatriated military prisoners to their country of origin.
6. Transportation of Polish citizens to Poland, as well as other government missions that could not be postponed'.²³

As we can see, in addition to the repatriated prisoners, the information note also includes a group of Polish citizens who were transported to Poland in 1946. At the same time, there were also Polish soldiers in the camps for prisoners of war in the MSSR. Agents recruited from among the prisoners processed some operatively at the behest of the Soviet secret services. It is known that: 'The special investigative measures carried out by the MIA bodies among prisoners of war and interned civilians were aimed at preventing hostile demonstrations in prison camps, as well as punishing people who, by virtue of previous activities, possessed certain military information, political or economic that could later be used against the interests of the USSR. The informants reported on numerous cases of anti-Soviet activity within the camps. The MIA was targeting a significant number of prisoners, including officers, who displayed a hostile attitude towards the Soviet regime. Based on the information received from different agents, the special organs of the MIA closely monitored the inconvenient persons'.²⁴ Informants among prisoners held in the camps of the MSSR were trained to gain the trust of those in the sights of the repressive bodies by identifying common topics for discussion in narrow terms, to obtain as much information as possible that is of interest to the Soviet secret services. In a strictly secret information note sent to the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of the MSSR, Major General Orlov, by the Deputy of camp No. 198 responsible for operative work, lieutenant colonel Korcemnii, information is presented regarding the agency's activity among prisoners of war within the period May 5–22, 1948. At the same time, it is reported about the operative pursuit of some prisoners of Polish origin, specifying that: 'On 11.05.48, the 'Stainbah' agent informed Captain Şimbarevici that in a discussion with the prisoner Şefer Robert, he found out that he did not reach the front in Russia but was in a training regiment in Poland, later in Czechoslovakia in unit 209. His suspicions that he had a tattoo on his left hand did not turn out to be true. Next, agent 'Steinbah' had the mission to supervise the contingent of prisoners and to identify among them the persons who were of interest to us'.²⁵ In the same note, it is mentioned that: 'on 17.05.1948, the agent 'Gromov' informed ensign Lojkin (section No. 1 of the camp) that he learned from the prisoner Ganiş that he served

²³ Archive of the MIA of the Republic of Moldova, File No. 8, Vol. I, Fond 103, Opus 5, Ex. 61, Tab. 11.

²⁴ I. Varta, S. Carp, *War prisoners. ...*, op. cit., p. 17.

²⁵ Archive of the MIA of the Republic of Moldova, File No. 3, Vol. II, Fond 50, Opus 6, Ex. 76, Tab 47.

in the green police (the gendarmeriein) in Warsaw, and for this reason they wore a green uniform. There Ganiş was a translator and documented various cases related to theft and speculation committed by the Poles. Until the offensive of the Soviet Army, his regiment was redeployed in Czechoslovakia, in the city of Olesau, where he passed an infantry training course in December 1944. After the gendarmerie regiment was reformed, he was enlisted in an infantry regiment in the city of Găding, where the headquarters was located, and the company of which Ganiş was a part was sent to the city of Zlin. Later on, he was transferred to another regiment, in which he fought against the Soviet Army. Soviet units captured Ganiş in a village. A Russian officer with the rank of major gave Ganiş the mission to approach the German line and communicate to them that there was no point in resisting any longer. Ganiş mentioned that the Russian major was threatening him and he had to fulfil this mission. After this, he was sent behind the front from where he was escorted to the POW camp. In the discussion with Ganiş, I noticed that he sometimes lies, but he told me correctly that he served in the gendarmerie. (Next, the decision was made to include the prisoner Ganiş in the category of people who served in the gendarmerie and to accumulate materials in this regard. The 'Source' received the instruction to gain the trust of the prisoner Ganiş and to find out as much information as possible about his activity in the gendarmerie and whether he fought with the partisans'.²⁶ To find out more information about the prisoner Ganiş who was mentioned in the information note above, I consulted another bibliographic source, where I found the following data: 'Ganiş Emitl Andreas (personal file 3308) year of birth 1909, Polish, he is not a member of the party, catholic, 7 classes, shoemaker, soldier in the Polish Army, the 121st infantry regiment. In prison since 11.04.1945. On 31.08.1946, he was transported to the filtering point in the town of Mereni in the MSSR'.²⁷ Prisoners were monitored both during their stay in the camps and after repatriation to their country of origin. Soviet secret services took steps to avoid access of prisoners to classified information that would be of interest to the secret services of their country of origin. In a strictly secret instruction sent to all the Ministers of the Interior of the republics of the USSR by the Deputy Head of the Main Department of the Ministry of the Interior of the USSR for Prisoners of War and Internees, Lieutenant General Kobulov, sent on April 19, 1948, the following indication was found: 'An important task that must be ensured during the repatriation of prisoners of war is the protection of state interests and the preservation of state secrets... Practice has shown that prisoners of war will use any tricks to try to remove from the Soviet Union (in sticks, tubes or by other methods) documents containing secret information. During preparation of the groups of people intended for repatriation, operative personnel should be more active and energetic, and avoid any kind of leakage of documents and materials that could contain secret information. On the other hand, it is necessary as soon as possible to exclude all prisoners of war from working on objectives that represent state secrets. It would be desirable to make all the necessary efforts to stop the leakage of any data of interest to intelligence services hostile to our

²⁶ Archive of the MIA of the Republic of Moldova, File No. 3, Vol. II, Fond 50, Opis 6, Ex. 76, Tab 52.

²⁷ I. Varta, S. Carp, *War prisoners. ...*, *op. cit.*, , p. 7.

country, even those memorised by prisoners of war'.²⁸ After the repatriation of all the prisoners from the MSSR camps, articles were published in the press in which society was informed about the increase in the number of communists in the countries of the socialist camp. Information was also appearing about the situation in Poland. Obviously, at that time, the correspondents of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (RSSM) used a wooden language. In one of such articles, it is mentioned about the organisation of an exhibition in Warsaw devoted to Polish trade unions. Thus, the Soviet correspondent writes: '*The exhibition illustrates the development of the trade union movement in Poland. In 1945, the number of organised members of professional unions was 1,292 thousand people, and in 1949, 3,560 thousand people, of which 1,300 thousand were members of the United Workers Party of Poland*'.²⁹ At the same time, the Soviet repressive bodies continued their activity, continuing to violate people's rights and freedoms, even if the legislation changed along the way. As the author Boris Glavan mentions: 'At the official level, there was very brief talk about the Special Investigations Activity. Within the Basics of the criminal legislation of the Union and of the Republics Union, adopted in 1958 by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, there was a simple remark according to which the criminal investigation bodies were obliged to 'undertake the necessary operative investigative measures' in order to detect the crimes and the persons who committed them (art. 29). Pursuant to this act, the Codes of Criminal Procedure of all the Union Republics, including the MSSR from 1961, were developed, which included similar provisions. In paragraph (1) of art. 100 of the Code of Criminal Procedure of the MSSR it was foreseen: 'The criminal investigation bodies are responsible for taking operative investigative measures, including the use of video and sound recordings, filming, photography in order to discover the evidence of the crime and the people who committed it, the identification of factual data, which can be used as evidence in the criminal case after their verification, in accordance with the criminal procedural legislation'.³⁰ It should be noted that during this period, Polish citizens who showed interest in the Soviet secret services were monitored by the Polish secret services. As the historian Pavel Moraru mentions: 'To see the results of the KGB of the USSR within a year of activity, we will refer to the data presented in the 'report' for the year 1967, signed by I. Andropov. So, during 1967, the residences of the KGB received 25,645 informational materials and 7,290 materials obtained on the basis of the exchange of information with the secret services of the socialist states (especially from German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia and Poland)'.³¹ The same author states that: 'Andropov was generally in the camp of those who promoted taking drastic measures against the states of the socialist camp, which tended to pursue a domestic and foreign policy independent of that of the Kremlin. In 1956, he was ambassador of the USSR in Budapest and was actively involved in the annihilation of the democratisation process

²⁸ Archive of the MIA of the Republic of Moldova, File No. 1, Vol. I, Fond 45, Opus 6, Ex. 70, Tab 231.

²⁹ 'Socialist Moldova', May 24, 1949, No. 102, p. 4.

³⁰ B. Glavan, *Special investigative activity and the criminal process: commonalities and delimitations*, Chişinău: 'PRINT-CARO' SRL, 2022, p. 39.

³¹ P. Moraru, *Descendants of Felix Dzerzhinsky: State Security Bodies in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic 1940-1991*, Bucharest, 2008, p. 150.

in Hungary, which would have been fatal for any communist regime. In 1968, he contributed to the intervention in Czechoslovakia, and in 1979 to the introduction of Soviet troops into Afghanistan. In 1980, he insisted on military action against Poland as well.³² It is certain that the secret services were in constant competition to achieve results in the missions submitted by the political leadership. Some former leaders preferred to write in their memoirs about some of the results obtained. As we mentioned before, among them is the former Head of the KGB of the MSSR, General G. Volkov, who reviews the 'successes' achieved in combating and documenting smuggling crimes committed by Polish citizens on the territory of the MSSR. He writes that the employees of the KGB of the MSSR found that: 'Polish tourists visiting our republic were most involved in smuggling cases. If, in the past, citizens of the Polish People's Republic visited Moldova less often, then in 1989, their number reached five thousand six hundred citizens. Groups of Polish tourists were identified, traveling on the following closed route: Polish People's Republic – Ukraine – Moldova – Romanian People's Republic – People's Republic of Bulgaria – Turkey – Austria – Federal Republic of Germany – Polish People's Republic, or turning back to Turkey – Moldova – Ukraine – Polish People's Republic. They introduced scarce goods made abroad (jeans, computers, video equipment, electronics, cosmetics, etc.) into the republic, sold them to local residents or cooperatives, and exchanged the appropriated sums in foreign currency through foreign citizens from capitalist countries and through students studying in Chisinau and Odessa. By paying a higher price, they bought from our stores the most demanded goods on the market. They were taking Soviet rubles abroad. In only the last few months, large sums of Soviet money were extorted from the Polish tourists S. Malişevski, S. Mazur, Ia. Vrubeli, S. Stahira and others at the Leuşeni customs checkpoint. Among others, the same Ia. Vrubeli 'forgot' thirty-four GOLD rings in the 'Inturist' hotel in Chisinau in the last few days, which, according to the investigation, were purchased in jewellery stores of our city. At the new customs office, they showed us a confiscated box containing special felt-tip pens of different colours, with the help of which tourists from the Polish People's Republic erased the records of the Soviet customs officers and entered other data, in order to conceal the removal of the currency from the USSR'.³³

The Poles did not stop being persecuted even after the collapse of the USSR. We recall a case that occurred after the Republic of Moldova obtained independence on the territory not controlled by the constitutional authorities. It concerns the period of the start of the military actions provoked by mercenaries, guards of the self-proclaimed Moldavian Dniester Republic and by the 14th Army of the Russian Federation. Following the abuses and crimes committed by them, several complaints were submitted from the population regarding the kidnapping and disappearance without traces of some people. Some notifications referred to police officers who were on duty, others to citizens of the Republic of Moldova, or to foreign citizens who were transiting this region. Polish citizens were also among the victims. An informative note with the following content has been preserved in the archival materials: 'Citizen Gavin Z. addressed to the unit of internal affairs,

³² P. Moraru, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

³³ G.M. Volkov, *op. cit.*, pp. 155–156.

Bender, on 25.03.92, year of birth 1961, citizen of the Republic of Poland, soldier of the Polish armed forces, with a written complaint that on 24.03.92 at 5:00 p.m., on Sovetskaia street near the square in the city Bender, being in a 'Volvo-7421' car, was stopped by MDR guards, who escorted him to the headquarters of the guards, where he was held captive for 15 hours. Later, he was released in exchange for 4 bottles of 'Napoleon' cognac, which he personally handed over to the deputy battalion commander for educational work, Captain Serikov'.³⁴ Therefore, we see that the separatists who were in reality under the operative control of the Russian Federation were targeting certain categories of people. The Polish military seemed suspicious to them. In defiance of international law, they detained him and held him in captivity for 15 hours without ensuring him the possibility to notify anyone of his detention. During that time, many local people were kidnapped and later identified shot and thrown in the garbage. No one can know how this case would have ended if the Pole had not had the four bottles of cognac on him that he offered to the separatists in exchange for his freedom. Unfortunately, the current Kremlin leader, Vladimir Putin, also promotes a hostile policy towards Poland. When he was asked why he shows such an attitude, he answered evasively that in fact the Poles do not want to be friends with the Russian Federation. In this sense, it is necessary to quote the historian Anatol Petrencu, who writes in one of his works: 'Probably V. Putin does not know that in tsarist Russia corporal punishment was cruelly applied for a long time in the modern era, he does not know the causes and consequences of the Polish Uprising of 1863. Or, did he not wonder what the Soviets were looking for at the Vistula in 1920? We are no longer talking about the partition of Poland between Nazi Germany and the USSR and its occupation in September 1939. It is not necessary to insist, but at least to remind the president of the three partitions of Poland with the participation of the Russian Empire, of the four waves of deportations of Poles to Siberia already under the Soviet regime, of Katyn, by I. Stalin's betrayal of the insurgents in Warsaw (1944), by the sovietization of Poland after 1944 with the whole 'bouquet' of Bolshevik 'measures', such as assassinations, deportations, arrests, Russification, collectivization, etc., etc. Where does love towards Russians come from? Where are the Poles going wrong?'.³⁵

Conclusions

In conclusion, it is necessary to mention that many Polish activists and researchers have been involved during the last decades in the process of identifying their compatriots, who became victims of the repressions of the totalitarian Soviet regime. Among these activists is the Polish Dorota Pazio, who, being present at an international Symposium held in Chisinau in 1999, provided information about the activity of the Karta Center in Warsaw, Poland, in creating a special archive fund, noting that: 'When the archive was founded in November 1987, it was to be a collection of documents on the mass of Polish citizens in the Soviet

³⁴ S. Carp, *The search process for police officers, soldiers and volunteers who disappeared without a trace during the Dniester war in 1992*, Chişinău: 'PRINT-CARO' SRL, 2022, p. 156.

³⁵ A. Petrencu, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

Union or in the eastern regions of Poland under Soviet occupation. The archive was supposed to collect reports from living witnesses, memories, documents, photographs and maps or anything else left in the memory of the witnesses, as well as material evidence kept by them or their families. The main purpose and first step was to record or write these reports while the witnesses were still alive. 'The witnesses are leaving us, we must hurry!' was the mobilising motto.³⁶ Thus, we believe that the information provided in this article will be useful to Polish researchers who are involved in the process of identifying the victims of political repressions among ethnic Poles and condemning the crimes committed by the Soviet totalitarian regime.

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Streszczenie. Celem autorów jest zapoznanie i upowszechnienie prawdy historycznej o okrucieństwach popełnionych przez sowieckie organy represji na terytorium MSSR (Mołdawskiej Socjalistycznej Republiki Radzieckiej). Powołując się na różne powody, organy represji prześladowały miejscową ludność, uznając ją za spiskującą przeciwko władzy sowieckiej. Podczas sowieckiej okupacji tego regionu wielu Polaków mieszkających w Besarabii stało się ofiarami represji politycznych, niektórzy z nich zostali skazani na śmierć, a inni deportowani na Syberię przez komunistyczny reżim totalitarny. Sowieckie służby specjalne działały również wśród więźniów wojennych w obozach MSSR. Ze względu na poniżające warunki, niektórzy z nich zmarli podczas przetrzymywania. Autorzy wyrażają nadzieję, że informacje zawarte w niniejszym artykule będą przydatne polskim naukowcom zaangażowanym w proces identyfikacji ofiar represji politycznych wśród etnicznych Polaków, a także potępienia zbrodni popełnionych przez sowiecki reżim totalitarny.

Resumen. Resumen. Por medio del presente artículo, los autores pretendían promover la verdad histórica sobre las atrocidades cometidas por los órganos represivos soviéticos en el territorio de la RSS de Moldavia (República Socialista Soviética de Moldavia). Alegando diversas razones, los órganos represivos persiguieron a la población local, considerándola conspiradora contra el poder

soviético. En el periodo de ocupación soviética de la región, muchos polacos residentes en Besarabia fueron víctimas de la represión política, algunos de ellos condenados a muerte y otros deportados a Siberia por el régimen totalitario comunista. Las fuerzas especiales soviéticas también operaban entre los prisioneros de guerra de los campos de la RSS de Moldavia. Debido a las condiciones degradantes, algunos de ellos murieron durante la detención. Los autores esperan que la información contenida en el presente artículo sea de utilidad para los investigadores polacos involucrados en el proceso de identificación de las víctimas de la represión política entre los polacos étnicos, así como en la condena de los crímenes cometidos por el régimen totalitario soviético.

Zusammenfassung. Vorliegender Artikel liefert die historische Wahrheit über die von den sowjetischen Repressionsorganen auf dem Gebiet der MSSR (Moldauische Sozialistische Sowjetrepublik) begangenen Gräueltaten. Die Repressionsorgane haben die örtliche Bevölkerung aus verschiedenen Gründen verfolgt, da sie als Verschwörer gegen die Sowjetmacht angesehen wurden. Während der sowjetischen Besetzung der Region wurden viele in Bessarabien lebende Polen Opfer politischer Repressionen, von denen einige zum Tode verurteilt und andere vom kommunistischen totalitären Regime nach Sibirien deportiert wurden. Die sowjetischen Sonderdienste waren auch unter den Kriegsgefangenen in den Lagern der MSSR aktiv. Einige von ihnen starben wegen der menschenunwürdigen Bedingungen in der Gefangenschaft. Die Autoren des Artikels hoffen, dass die in diesem Artikel enthaltenen Informationen für polnische Forscher nützlich sein werden, insbesondere für diejenigen, die sich mit der Identifizierung von Opfern politischer Repression unter ethnischen Polen sowie mit der Verurteilung der vom totalitären Sowjetregime begangenen Verbrechen befassen.

Резюме. Цель авторов — ознакомить и распространить историческую правду о совершенных советскими репрессивными органами злодеяниях на территории МССР (Молдавской Советской Социалистической Республики). Ссылаясь на различные причины, репрессивные органы преследовали местное население, считая его заговорщиками против советской власти. Во время советской оккупации региона многие поляки, проживавшие в Бессарабии, стали жертвами политических репрессий, некоторые из них были приговорены к смертной казни, а другие депортированы в Сибирь коммунистическим тоталитарным режимом. Советские спецслужбы активно работали и среди военнопленных в лагерях МССР. Из-за унижительных условий содержания некоторые из них умерли во время заключения. Авторы надеются, что информация, представленная в этой статье, будет полезна польским исследователям, участвующим в процессе выявления жертв политических репрессий среди этнических поляков, а также осуждения преступлений, совершенных советским тоталитарным режимом.