

THE HISTORY TEXTBOOKS AND SOCIAL CONFLICTS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Abstract

In the context of the socio-political, economic and cultural changes of the end of the 20th century, the Republic of Moldova is laying down the foundation of a state based on democratic principles. The main problem experienced by this political entity in its endeavor to assert itself since the declaration of independence and to the present day has been its national identity - a subject closely linked both to the history and the language of the majority population as well as to the attitude of the country's ethnic minorities towards it. The excessive involvement of the communist authorities in (re)writing the history has triggered each time major revolts and social movements. The paper introduces the problems around the history development and teaching in Moldova and describes deficiencies of this process.

The relation between history textbooks and social conflicts in the Republic of Moldova represents a special case. Soviet historiography invented, in order to justify certain political steps, the Moldovan language and nation and counterfeited the history of the local population¹. The population of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) was subject to communist ideology aimed at replacing the Romanian identity with another, newly-created one. "Moldovenism" became not only a historiographic strand but also a policy promoted for decades by the central authorities. In the end, the people living in Bessarabia were deprived of one of their fundamental rights - the knowledge of their national language and history. Given the attempts at returning to Romanian national cultural values and the historic truth, most initiatives are treated today by leftist political parties and some organizations, representing ethnic minorities, as nationalist. Most of the historians from Moldova replayed to this by defending the Romanian identity of the majority of the population from Moldova. They state that the Romanian nation developed in a common geographical, political, cultural, and linguistic area during the centuries. The historical evolution of Eastern Europe and especially the great-power politics of the 18th-20th centuries in this particular space disturbed the Romanians' integrity. This discussion, however, is not closed yet and it does not take place only in history books.

In an attempt to trace the way in which the definitions of national identity and history education have developed since the declaration of independence to the present day, we can observe several stages:

I. 1988-1991 – the national movement culminated in the declaration of the sovereignty and independence of the Republic of Moldova, the transition to the Latin alphabet, the replacement of the history of the USSR and history of the MSSR courses with world history and the history of the Romanians.

II. 1992-1994 – the War in Transnistria, was a military conflict, but speculated on Moldova's national identity and interethnic relations. The accession to power of the Agrarian Party resuscitated the discussion around language and history. The promotion by the Agrarians of the "Moldovenism" policy led to increased tensions inside the country and the setting of the *Moldovan language* into the Constitution of Moldova².

¹ King 1994; King 2000, 63-88; Carauș 2003; Ghervas 2005; Neagu 2006.

² Moldovan language and Moldovan nation firstly appeared as an invention of the Stalinist propaganda in order to justify the military intervention and annexation of Bessarabia to the USSR. The intention to name the spoken by majority of the population language as Moldovan, has a political aim. However, today in schools the studied subject is Romanian language (not Moldovan), despite the fact that Constitution stipulates the „Moldovan language”.

III. 1995-2000 – the History enters the phase of curriculum reform. During this period the political crisis around the school subjects of Romanian language and history became extremely intense³. As a result of street rallies in the spring and fall of 1995 the government approved the school programs for World history and the history of the Romanians. Later the national curricula for the two subjects of history and the corresponding school textbooks were approved by the Government of Republic of Moldova.

IV. Since 2001 - The communist government came to power in February 2001 elections. The relationship between the government and historians put again the subject of history in the public's attention⁴.

The first three stages have been described in a number of papers on the political evolution, the issue of identity and the subject of history in the schools of Moldova⁵. Therefore, I will dwell on the fourth stage concerning the issue of history teaching in schools and national identity during the Communist government – since 2001.

When the Communist Party came to power, the discussion around history teaching in Moldova was rekindled. The communist government has been trying hard to change the name and content of the *History of the Romanians* course into a *History of Moldova*⁶, and after seminars organized in September 2002, February and October 2003 by the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Council of Europe⁷ the idea of an *Integrated History* course appeared⁸. Many historians in Moldova

³ In March 1995 the Government of Republic of Moldova made the decision regarding exclusion of the course of History of Romanians from schools. This provoked huge street demonstrations for two months. After long negotiation the President of the state elaborated a decree which established a moratorium on this issue. The previously taught courses of World History and History of Romanians were to be continuously studied in schools. Based on this conception after words was elaborated national curriculum and published textbooks. The project for elementary and secondary school was financed by a World Bank's program. *Implementation Completion Report on a Loan and Credit in the amount of US\$ 16,8 Million to the Republic of Moldova for a General Education Project*, February 24, 2005.

<http://web.worldbank.org/external/projects/main?pagePK=64283627&piPK=73230&theSitePK=40941&menuPK=228424&Projectid=P008558>

⁴ For example the Communist Government did not support the publishing of the history textbooks for 8th and 9th grades. The finance by the World Bank for the secondary schools project was interrupted and the textbooks were published at the expenses of the publishing houses. But, in the conclusions of textbooks workshop of the Seminar on Teaching history in Moldova (Chişinău, 24-26 September 2002) organized by Ministry of Education and Council of Europe we can see that "participants also agreed that it is necessary to continue the development and introduction of the textbooks for Grades 8 and 9".

⁵ Bruchis 1982; 1996; Caşu 2000; 2001; Dyer 1996; King 1993; 1995; 1996; 2000; Dima 1991; Dima 2001; Musteaţă 2002; 2003a; 2003b; 2004; 2005a; 2005b, 2006a; 2006b; Neagu 2005; 2006; Solomon 2001; Turliuc 2001, etc.

⁶ In 2002 Chisinau saw the publication of a book, *The History of Moldova* by Vasile Stati, and the author (V. Stati) believed it could be used as a textbook for this new course. The book is referring to the History of Moldova as a separate region from other Romanian territories. It individualizes the "Moldovan statality" and "Moldovan people" and represents Romanians and Romania in negative light. For example the union of Bessarabia and Romanian from 1918 is treated as Romanian occupation, however the entering of the Soviet troops in 1940 is presented as the liberation from the Romanian yoke. Some historians argued that this work contains numerous false, errors, and even plagiarisms from other works. See: Eremia 2003 and Ene 2001.

⁷ Seminar on Teaching history in Moldova (Chişinău, 24-26 September 2002) and Seminar on Teaching history in Moldova (Chişinău, 18-21 February 2003), Targeted co-operation and assistance co-ordination Programme for Moldova, Both Reports by Dr.

Laura Capita, Romania, See: [http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/education/History%5FTeaching/Reform_of_History_Teaching/Joint_Programme_CoE-EC/Moldova/a.Chisinau%20sept%202002.asp#TopOfPage)

[operation/education/History%5FTeaching/Reform_of_History_Teaching/Joint_Programme_CoE-EC/Moldova/a.Chisinau%20sept%202002.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/education/History%5FTeaching/Reform_of_History_Teaching/Joint_Programme_CoE-EC/Moldova/a.Chisinau%20sept%202002.asp#TopOfPage) and [http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/education/History%5FTeaching/Reform_of_History_Teaching/Joint_Programme_CoE-EC/Moldova/b.Chisinau%20feb%202003.asp#TopOfPage)

[operation/education/History%5FTeaching/Reform_of_History_Teaching/Joint_Programme_CoE-EC/Moldova/b.Chisinau%20feb%202003.asp#TopOfPage](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/education/History%5FTeaching/Reform_of_History_Teaching/Joint_Programme_CoE-EC/Moldova/b.Chisinau%20feb%202003.asp#TopOfPage). Other Seminar on *History Curricula. History textbooks and*

teachers training was in October 20-22, 2003.

⁸ **An integrated course means no specific differentiation between national and world history, and has a balanced representation of local to world history.** The idea of a course in integrated history is not new in Moldova; in 1994 the spouses Valentina and Vasile Haheu published in Chisinau a textbook of (integrated) ancient history for the 5th grade, which is replete with conceptual, scientific and methodological errors, which triggered severe criticism in academic circles, schools and the mass media of Moldova. Even though this textbook was distributed by the Ministry of Education to schools, it remained practically idle. The more so that it was largely plagiarized from other school history textbooks and the ancient national history was given, in the context of the

viewed this attempt as Communist Party's continuation of the tradition of Soviet historiography, concerning the Moldovan nation and language, an effort to develop further the counterfeit identity of the Moldovan state and nation as separate from Romanian. The new administration's policy included both internal and external measures to promote a Moldovan identity. Thus, the Chisinau government which refused to sign agreements of cultural cooperation ignored the scholarships offered by Romania to Moldovan children and students produced the cooling of relations between Moldova and Romania in 2001-2004. Internally this campaign was focused against the *History of the Romanians* course under the pretext that this is the history of "another country", that its teaching "undermines Moldova's statehood", that "our children don't study enough of the history of their native communities", etc. With these arguments the Communist authorities try to achieve support from various international governmental and nongovernmental organizations in order to maintain this policy.

Civil society, in general, and the academic community, in particular, is against the involvement of politics in history education. Thus, at the Congress of the Historians of Moldova, held on 1st of July 2001 in Chisinau, university professors and school teachers of history, scientists and people of culture, students from various universities protested against the communist government's attempt to replace the *History of the Romanians*. It was adopted the declaration *For the Defense of National Dignity, Cessation of Romanophobia and Vilification of the History of Romanians*⁹. The participants at the Congress also asked the leadership of Moldova to stop their campaign of vilifying the *History of the Romanians* course and pressuring scholars. The intellectual community of Moldova thus, tried to defend the right to its Romanian history and identity. In November 2001 the leadership of the Historians' Association of Moldova published a declaration against the pressure from the central authorities to introduce the *History of Moldova* course, as a landmark in Moldova's statehood. They drew the public's attention to the fact that such actions were pursued in order to use history to the ideological interests of the Communist Party of Moldova¹⁰.

Ignoring the opinion of civil society and historians, the communist government issued a decision in late 2001 introducing the Russian language as a compulsory school subject, starting in the second grade, which triggered major protests by parents, teachers, pupils and society as a whole. During the period of rallies in downtown Chişinău a small group of people required the president of Moldova to introduce without delay the *History of Moldova* course as, according to them, the *History of the Romanians* contributed to the "destruction of the Republic of Moldova". Under the circumstances, on 1 February 2002 the Historians' Association of Moldova addressed to the authorities a memorandum in which historians and scholars expressed their concern around the attempts to institute a dictatorial regime and resume "the old practices of indoctrinating the population with false and distorted ideas regarding the past of the Romanian people and especially of the Romanians living in Bessarabia as a component part of the Romanian nation". The authors of the memorandum asked the Moldovan authorities to respect and promote scientific truth in issues of national language, literature and history, and stop the Romanophobia campaign and the vilification of the Romanian

world ancient history, only a few pages. For details please refer to the reviews published in the newspaper: *Pătrunderea mediocrității în manualul școlar*, In: Mesagerul, October 7, 1994 and Făclia, October 14, 1994.

⁹ The declaration of the Congress of the Historians of Moldova *For the Defense of National Dignity, Cessation of Romanophobia and Vilification of the History of Romanians (1 July 2003)*, In: *În apărarea istoriei și demnității naționale* (Defending National History and Dignity), Chişinău, 2003, 33-35.

¹⁰ Declaration of the Historians' Association of Moldova, 27 November 2001, In: *În apărarea istoriei și demnității naționale* (Defending National History and Dignity), Chişinău, 2003, 37-38.

language and history¹¹. This opinion was supported by the participants at the 1st Congress of Historians from Republic of Moldova which held in Chişinău on July 1, 2001¹².

In spite of the mass protests in Chişinău's main square, on 12 February 2002 the Minister of Education and five department directors of the Ministry of Education fully endorsed the Governmental Resolution on the introduction of the *History of Moldova* as a subject in schools, high-schools, universities and post-graduate institutions as of 1 September 2002, and on 15 February this resolution was approved at a governmental meeting¹³. This reckless decision enhanced the force of protests by teachers, students and other social and professional groups. Prime-Minister Vasile Tarlev considered a personal responsibility the adoption of those decisions because "the majority of independent states have their own histories", while the Vice-Prime-Minister Valerian Cristea stressed that the Decision had been adopted following "numerous" requests of the parents. Historians responded by asking questions as: *Why there were no such requests in the previous ten years?* and *From which parents came the requests since the school children who protested on 24 February were accompanied by their parents?*

For a "smooth" implementation of this course a decision was taken to develop a textbook of the *History of Moldova*. This was an initiative of President Voronin, who appointed in 2001 one of the champions of "Moldovenism", Vladimir Ţaranov editor of the textbook¹⁴.

On 22 February 2002 the government of the Republic of Moldova approved a resolution "On steps to improve the study of history"¹⁵, which revoked the decision of the executive from 15th of February 2002 concerning the implementation of the *History of Moldova* as a discipline to be taught in the educational institutions of Moldova. However, by this resolution Vice-Prime-Minister Valerian Cristea was charged to create a state commission for the development of the concept of the History of Moldova¹⁶. Thus, this was a clear sign of the decisiveness of the communists, who wanted to force the *History of the Romanians* out of school, who might delay immediate realization of the project because of the street protests, but have not renounced it¹⁷.

On March 20, 2002, the Scientific Council of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova adopted a decision *On the teaching and study of the History of the Romanians in the*

¹¹ Memorandum of the Historians' Association of Moldova, 1 February 2001, In: *În apărarea istoriei și demnității naționale* (Defending National History and Dignity), Chişinău, 2003, 39-43.

¹² The majority of well-known historians from Moldova presented 4 reports on Historical periods and History teaching: 1. *The ethnic unity in the Carpathian–Danubian–Pontic space in Antiquity* (Ion Niculuță, Ion Hîncu, Ion Tentiuc, Gheorghe Postică, Tudor Arnaut, Aurel Zanoci, Ilie Borziciac, Oleg Levițchi, Sergiu Musteață, Octavian Munteanu, Vladimir Potlog); 2. *National History from Republic of Moldova – part of the History of Romanians. Medieval Period* (Demir Dragnev, Andrei Eșanu, Pavel Parasca, Gheorghe Gonța, Ion Eremia, Pavel Cocârlă, Ion Chirtoagă, Ion Negrei); 3. *Modern History of Bessarabian Romanians – integral part of Modern History of Romanian people* (Ion Varta, Alexei Agachi, Nicolae Chicuş, Mitru Ghițiu, Eugenia Danu, Valeriu Popovschi, Gheorghe Negru, Nicolae Chibotaru, Lidia Moldovanu); 4. *Romanian nation in the historical events of the contemporary epoch* (Gheorghe Palade, Anton Moraru, Anatol Petrencu, Elena Postică, Ion Şișcanu, Rodica Solovei).

¹³ Resolution of the Government of Moldova (no. 180) on the implementation of the *History of Moldova* as a discipline to be taught in educational institutions, In: *Monitorul Oficial al Republicii Moldova*, no. 27-28, 18 February 2002.

¹⁴ V. Ţaranov is one of the historians educated and advanced in the Soviet period. He is known as an adept of Soviet view on the issues of language, nation, and history of Moldovans.

¹⁵ Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Moldova (no. 217) on some steps to improve the study of history, In: *Monitorul Oficial al Republicii Moldova*, no. 39, 16 March 2002.

¹⁶ Ibid, point 2.

¹⁷ At the first Commission's meeting, which held on July 26, 2002, V Cristea declared that „the main goal of the Commission is to elaborate the conception of History of Moldova, History Curricula and Programs of the country were we lived”. **Source:** Declaration of the members of Commission who said that Commission is created against Council of Europe resolution and decided to not participate in its works.

*educational and academic systems of Moldova*¹⁸. On March 26, 2002 the Academy of Sciences of Moldova voted by a majority to preserve the *History of the Romanians* in schools. Initially, the ex-president of the Academy of Sciences, Andrei Andrieș, supported certain changes in the history research in Moldova. The heavy criticism that followed in the mass media and academic circles severely affected his public image and authority and influenced a change in his position.

In tune with other academic institutions, the Historians' Association of Moldova expressed numerous times its support for the preservation of the *History of the Romanians* and *World History* courses in schools and other educational institutions of the country. The historians of this organization pointed out many times the fact that the national history was undergoing essential changes, which were fully justified in a period in which the historic discourse was evolving, and that was totally against the professional ethics and any moral principles of historians to harness those changes to purposes dictated by the politics.

In the wake of visits paid by European experts, and as a reaction to the rallies in Chișinău, on 24 April 2002 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted Resolution 1280 (2002) *On the functioning of democratic institutions in the Republic of Moldova*, which provided for an extension of the existing moratorium on the reforms concerning the study and status of the Russian language, as well as the changes in the history curricula¹⁹. Disregarding the resolution, Vice-Prime-Minister V. Cristea created a commission for the implementation of the *History of Moldova* course, which was largely composed of people supporting the elimination of the *History of the Romanians*.

On September 26, 2002, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted the Resolution 1303 (2002) whereby the Assembly expressed its satisfaction with the fact that the Moldovan authorities had maintained the moratorium on the reforms concerning the study of Russian, its status and changes to history curricula, which, according to the Resolution, permitted the preservation of stability in the country²⁰. However, the Russian language is studied as a mandatory discipline in school starting with grade 5th and new textbooks for history have been elaborated.

In 2002 the Government of the Republic of Moldova launched a competition for the best concept of history teaching in Moldova and through the Moldovan Embassies asked the European countries to provide suggestions on reforming the History Teaching in Moldova. In February 2003 the Moldovan Government collected the so-called 42 concepts and transmitted to the Secretariat of the Council of Europe. Out of the 42 concepts, the Committee of Experts selected just five that were also approved by the Council of Europe delegation which also suggested „that these five concepts should be developed further into, possibly, one or two concepts which would be acceptable to all the parties involved”. In February 2003, the Ministry of Education of Moldova sent a set of Moldovan history textbooks to the Secretariat of the Council Europe, via the Permanent Representation of Moldova.

¹⁸ Decision of the Scientific Council of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova *On the teaching and study of the History of the Romanians in the educational and academic systems of Moldova*, In: Revista de Istorie a Moldovei (History Review of Moldova), Chișinău, 2001, no. 1-4, 152-154.

¹⁹ Resolution 1280 (2002) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe *On the functioning of democratic institutions in the Republic of Moldova*, 24 April 2002, In: *Bulletin of the Information Office of the Council of Europe in Moldova*, Chișinău, 2002, no. 1-2, 36-39.

²⁰ Resolution 1303 (2002) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe *On the functioning of democratic institutions in the Republic of Moldova*, 26 September 2002, In: *Bulletin of the Information Office of the Council of Europe in Moldova*, Chișinău, 2002, no. 3-4, 17-29.

The Secretariat was asked to see whether the Georg Eckert Institute could analyze them²¹. During 2003, the Council of Europe supported the foundation of the Teacher's Training Centre and became a member of its Board. The Council of Europe agreed with the Moldovan Government that the Center will be a non-governmental entity, but the members of the Board can be members of the Government (e.g. Mrs. V. Haheu and V. Cristea who in fact are against Moldovan Law on NGOs and the principles of activity of NGOs²²).

In April 2003 the 2nd Congress of Historians from the Republic of Moldova condemned the interference of the Communist Government in the field of historical education and declared the existing concept of historical education: two courses "History of Romanians" and "World History", as a scientific foundation for the education of the young generations. The participants also called on all history teachers from the Republic of Moldova to support them in the attempts to educate cultivated citizens, aware of their mission in the history and contemporary world society, profoundly harbored in Europeanism²³.

During 2002-2003, the Council of Europe and the European Association of History Teachers EUROCLIO were actively involved in the development of a new history concept for Moldova. Representatives of these international organizations have often visited Moldova for supporting and participating in training seminars. By their presence at such meetings they managed to introduce a multilateral and objective approach regarding history education in Moldova. During the meeting of the Council's of Europe experts with president of the Republic V. Voronin, which was held in Chişinău on February 18, 2003, the president said that "the government had decided to renounce to its initial idea to change the name of the course on national history into the history of Moldova and replace it with the idea of an integrated course for history". He also mentioned that "a depoliticised history only revealing the historical truth." The new history curriculum should be based on the principles laid down in the Council of Europe *Recommendation, on history teaching in the twenty-first-century (Rec (2001) 15)* and should reflect the multicultural composition of the Moldovan society. He also emphasized that such approach to the teaching of history would also be helpful in the integration process of Moldova into Europe. At the of the Seminar Mrs. Cardwel Alison, representative of the Council of Europe said „Both the experts and President Vladimir Voronin have agreed on the necessity to have a single course of history that would include all courses and would reflect the multiple cultures in Moldova. We must do what has been done in other European countries”²⁴. The support showed by these organizations to the "Integrated History" course provoked disagreement of the Moldovan historians, who stated that this change contrasts with the current educational realities of the country. Some foreign experts responded by insisting on a single course of history, branding as nationalists those local historians who plead for the preservation of the two courses of history: the history of the Romanians and World history. M. Stobart described of the Council of Europe's discussions about a single course and textbook for history teaching²⁵. In 1997, the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education condemned "the idea of trying to impose a uniform or standardized version of European history in schools in member states". On

²¹ The Council of Europe decided to give a necessary support to Georg Eckert Institute to carry out an expertise on the present history school textbooks and also to invite the Moldovan textbook authors and the authors of the curriculum outlines to the Institute to discuss the analysis and make recommendations.

²² Articles 4 (4) and 14 (5), *Legea Republicii Moldova cu privire la asociațiile obștești*, nr. 837, 17.05.1996, In: Monitorul Oficial al Republicii Moldova, nr. 6/54, 23.01.1997.

²³ Resolution of the II Congress of Historians from the Republic of Moldova, Chisinau, April 12, 2003.

²⁴ Tuesday, February 18, 2003, Bassa-News, *Council of Europe experts plead for teaching of integrated course of history in Moldovan schools*. www.basa.md

²⁵ Stobart 1999, 151-152.

the other hand, the Ministers pointed out that “the changes in Central and Eastern Europe offer an opportunity to give a fully European dimension to history curricula in schools”. They recommended that the “education authorities should review their curricula to ensure that they reflect the richness of the history of Europe”²⁶.

The discussions that took place in Germany at the Georg-Eckert Institute, during 2003-2006²⁷, between historians from Moldova and other countries led to the identification of some elements of the national history curriculum and textbooks that need to be improved. However, there were no suggestions to replace them by other textbooks. The participants of the seminar which held in Braunschweig on June 25-29, 2003 mentioned that intention to replace history curricula and textbooks in Moldova is like revitalization of “the Stalinist conception on creation of the Nation, Language and History of Moldovans as different then Romanians”²⁸, which is totally in contradiction with Council of Europe’s Recommendation 15 (2001)²⁹.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education started an experiment³⁰ whereby a new course, the *Integrated History* was introduced in 50 schools across the country. The lack of a concept, strategy, and transporence in the realization of the experiment, as well as the nominalization of authors of the textbooks for this course by the Ministry of Education, done on non - open competition basis unmasks the politicized goal for supporting this Integrated History course. The Communist authorities have distorted the concept of an integrated history by adjusting it to their political ideology. During 2002 and 2003 some Moldovan officials declared that *History of Romanians* creates barriers for integration of Moldova in EU and solution of the conflict with Transnistria³¹. Experiment and these declarations provoked new tensions in the society.

Through a Declaration from September 10, 2003 and then during a press conference, the Association of Historians of Republic of Moldova declared that the experiment of the Ministry of Education is “supporting soviet historiography dogmas about „Moldovan people“ being a different entity than Romanians” and they asked Ministry of Education to stop this experiment and to maintain the two courses of history in the Moldovan schools³². One month later, more than 300 participants at the General Assembly of the History Teachers from Republic of Moldova, which was held in Chişinău on October 26, 2003, asserted that „ the Communist leadership planned a diabolic

²⁶ Resolution no. 1 of the 19th session of the Standing Conference of the European Ministers of Education, Kristiansand, 22-24 June 1997, In: Council of Europe, *Education 2000: Trends, common issues and priorities for pan-European co-operation*, Strasbourg, 1998, 19-20.

²⁷ Seminar *History Conceptualizing History: History Textbooks and History Curriculum in the Republic of Moldova*, Braunschweig, 25-29 June, 2003; Multiperspectivity in History-Textbooks, A one-week workshop for 10 Schoolbook-Authors and Curricula-Planers from the Republic of Moldova, 16th-21st December 2003, Braunschweig/Germany; Ethnic Minorities in History-Textbooks, A one-week workshop for 10 Schoolbook-Authors and Curricula-Planers from the Republic of Moldova, Braunschweig, Germany, February 17-22, 2004; Workshop for Schoolbook-Authors from Republic of Moldova, December 11-15 2005, Braunschweig/Germany; Bibliotheksworkshop Republik Moldova, Workshop for Schoolbook-Authors from Republic of Moldova, January 22-28 2006, Braunschweig/Germany. Other three seminars were done during 2006 year.

²⁸ Wim van Meurs, *History Textbooks in Moldova*, Expert Report, Braunschweig, June 26-27, 2003, p. 5.

²⁹ See: Point 2. History Manipulation.

³⁰ The experiment started on 1 September 2003 in 50 schools across the country. Neither the way the schools had been selected, nor their list was made public. In the school year 2004-2005 the number of schools involved in the experiment increased, according to the Ministry of Education, to 150, and in year 2005-2006 the number was increased up to 400, which is difficult to verify. Thus, the “secret” experiment with a course of integrated history reveals the political interest of the current government against History of Romanians.

³¹ Regarding to the situation in Transnistria, this region continued using the traditional standards for history education of the Russian Federation (its means the same teaching program and the same number of hours). The school programm is including two course *World history* and *History of the Fatherland*, which means the history of Russia, the USSR and independent Transnistria.

³² *Declaration of the Association of Historians of Republic of Moldova*, September 10, 2003.

experiment aimed to liquidate the national identity of the majority population and to create an artificial nation inside the present political borders of the Republic of Moldova³³. In the final declaration it is mentioned that „We inform the public opinion that the curriculum and the existing history textbook have been elaborated with participation of the Council of Europe experts and approved by the College of Ministry of Education. They correspond to provisions of the *International Convention concerning autochthon people* from June 27, 1989, which stipulate that: „... history textbooks and other didactic materials should contain a verdict, precise and informative description concerning society and culture of autochthon peoples”. Thus, they criticized the national history textbooks that for the majority of population are the only source of information about our historical past.”³⁴

In July 2004 the Minister of Education Mr. V. Beniuc declared that the new textbooks authors were nominated by Ministry in April 2004 and the textbooks will be ready at the beginning of the new school year (September 1, 2004). But in 2006 the new Minister of Education Mr. V. Țvircun said that these authors participated in the competition and were selected through a just selection process which is a false statement. Indeed, in 2004 Ministry of Education announced the competition for writing new history textbooks, but most of historians and publishing houses refused to participate in this process as considered it undemocratic and without any conceptual support. So, Minister V. Beniuc just nominated in 2004 the leaders of the new history textbooks authors’ teams. So, it’s difficult to assert that it was a real democratic and transparent process.

In 2005 the Ministry of Education excluded the final exams on the subjects of History of Romanians and World History from the list of exams for High Schools. For social science, the High School was proposed to conduct the exam in Geography and for the rest of schools the Ministry proposed History as an optional exam. These changes challenged again the public opinion. The leaders of professional association (A. Petrencu and L. Stavinschi) asserted that the history teachers associations are not supporting this decision and looked at it as a new interference of the Communist Government in the problems of history teaching³⁵. This position was supported by the participants at the 3rd Congress of Historians of Moldova which was held on November 5, 2005 in Chisinau.

³³ *Declaration of the General Assembly of history teachers from Republic of Moldova*, Chișinău, October 26, 2003.

³⁴ *Ibidem*. We, participants of the General Assembly of History Teachers:

- blame the antinational campaign organized by the present-day leadership of the Republic of Moldova and claim to stop defamation of the authors of textbooks and of the History of Romanians textbooks;
- declare in favor of maintaining further on of the existing conceptions in the historical education, that means teaching those two courses of history – Universal and Romanians;
- declare ourselves available to participate in the process of improving the existing history Curricula and history textbook, of preparing and editing other didactic materials that should assure the quality of historical education;
- claim the respect of the opinions of the specialists in the field during the decision-making process concerning the problem of teaching and learning history;
- claim the official recognition of the national Romanian identity of majority population of the Republic of Moldova and of the national Romanian character of the Moldavian state;
- put into attention of the local and international public opinion the fact that the existing leadership from Chișinău evolves to a dictatorial politic regime by the methods using during the making decisions concerning national interest, by ignoring the professionals’ opinions, by aggressiveness in the promotion of personal ideological ambitions;
- express the conviction that the whole Moldavian society, including ethnic communities, will find forces sufficient to thwart the attempts to suppress a course of national history and will stop the intention of the authorities to impose Romanian population an false ethnic identity;
- in order to maintain social peace and to consolidate the democratic processes in the Republic of Moldova, appeal to the proper international organizations and governments of the world states to support our approach.

³⁵ <http://www.azi.md/news?ID=31470>

On November 30, 2005, president Voronin convoked a meeting with members of the Government and Parliament and discussed the problem of implementing the course of integrated course of history, based on Council of Europe recommendations. Voronin mentioned that implanting this course is part of Moldova's efforts to bring the national educational standards to the European level. He also said that, new textbooks should have better quality and price, and that the commercial factor should be excluded from the evaluation, editing and distribution of books to schools³⁶.

On July 27, 2006 the Ministry of Education approved the decision of introducing the course and textbooks of integrated history in the pre-university education starting September 2006³⁷. Hence, following September 1, 2006, the Ministry of Education introduced in all secondary school new curricula of History, with one course of *History*, excluding previous two courses of *History of Romanians* and *World History*. Also, Ministry of Education distributed the new history textbooks in all schools and demanded schools to stop using other textbooks³⁸. This situation again generated an opposing reaction from teachers, professional organizations and civil society that pointed out to the multiple mistakes in the content of the new books.³⁹

In this very difficult situation the president V. Voronin convoked on September 29, 2006 another meeting with participation of the most well-known historians from Republic of Moldova and he said that for the first time he was getting involved in the discussions of teaching integrated history in Moldovan schools⁴⁰. Moldova has to do a lot of political, legal, economical, social and educational reforms according to the Moldova-EU Action Plan, but the problem of history teaching is just a political speculation of the Communist Government, to show that they are acting according to European values⁴¹.

During this meeting, Voronin said "Educating through history is our first step, in the process to attend the general-human values, accepted by the European Union. The introduction of the integrated course of history in our educational institutions is just a small step in the process of integrating our country into Europe - a very important step." Voronin also mentioned, that "School is not a polygon for battles and exercises of scholars. At the same the chair of teacher cannot be a political tribune. During the last 15 years the Republic of Moldova has been an international law subject and our country is not a gubernia or province of some others states, but has its own contemporary state symbols with multi-century traditions, culture and history".

That is true, since 1991 we are an independent country, but before that, our territories were linked with various European political and historical events, as part of: the Medieval state Moldova (15-17 cc.), Russian Empire (1812-1917), Great Romania (1918-1940, 1941-1944) and U.S.S.R. (1940-

³⁶ <http://chisinau.novopress.info/?p=73>; <http://www.azi.md/news?ID=36982>

³⁷ Decizia Colegiului Ministrului Educație și Tineretului „Cu privire la implementarea în învățământul preuniversitar, începând cu 1 septembrie 2006, a manualelor de istorie integrată”. <http://www.azi.md/news?ID=40312>

³⁸ My son is the 7th grade pupil and I know this situation from direct source. At the beginning of September 2006 they received the „old” textbook, which was published by World Bank support, and just 2 weeks later they got new-one and teacher asked to use it, and if they want to look in old-one they could do at home for themselves.

³⁹ In many national newspapers were published articles about quality of new textbooks. The most criticized was textbook for 9th grade, which content a lot of pictures and comments of actual Communist government and leaders.

<http://www.jurnal.md/articol.php?id=5431&cat=4&editie=511>

⁴⁰ Since 2001 president Voronin is very active involved in this process. In 2003 he met the experts of the Council of Europe and discussed the issue of integrated course of history, on which we already talked upper.

⁴¹ <http://www.azi.md/news?ID=39954>

1941, 1944-1991), and we cannot speak about own multi-centuries history without taking in account all these historical contexts.

President's declaration about political involvement in history research and teaching is contradictory, because the Communist Government is promoting exactly the opposite things. Most of historians participating at this meeting criticized the new history textbook and at the end of discussions, president Voronin asked to exclude all the mistakes from these textbooks as urgently as possible. He also, suggested to create a group of experts under the Institute of History and Law of Academy of Science to develop the second edition of the integrated history textbooks, and invite all interested institutions and organizations to participate in the editing process⁴². Hence, after this meeting, in November 2006, a 35 member Commission for scientific expertise of history textbooks was created at the Academy of Science of Moldova.

Since the decision of the Ministry of Education to introduce a new curriculum and textbooks on integrated history in Moldova we can see a new wave of activism of the Moldovan society against this decision. Hundreds of declarations in local mass media of diverse institutions and groups of people (political parties⁴³, professional organizations⁴⁴, mass media organizations⁴⁵, group of teachers and parents⁴⁶, Parliamentary debates⁴⁷, etc.)

On December 22, 2006, after two months of evaluating the content of the new history textbooks, the State Commission approved the evaluation report⁴⁸. But at the final meeting only 19 members from 35 participated and just 8 of them voted for the final decision. Most of historians left the meeting because they thought that many of the reviews (cca. 40) criticized the new textbooks, but the leaders of the Commission tried to push for a positive decision, which finally prevailed. Chiril Stratievski, chief of the Commission, declared that the final decision is based on the vote of the majority of the members of Commission. The Commission admitted that the textbooks content had mistakes (conceptual, linguistic, facts, technical, and ethic) which should be excluded during the next 2

⁴² <http://www.president.md/press.php?p=1&s=4221&lang=rom>

⁴³ „Liberal Party considering that by introduction a course of integrated history by pretext of Moldovan statehood consolidation, Communist Government is institutionalizing the communist ideology as state official ideology. By changing the History of Romanians with “Integrated History” the Communist governance continue soviet policy, anti-scientific “moldovenism”, which is against 5th Article from Constitution, “no-one ideology cannot be institutionalized as state official ideology”. September 25, 2006, *Declarație privind instituirea anticonstituțională, de către guvernarea comunistă, a propriei ideologii la nivel de politică oficială a R. Moldova*. www.pl.md; Declarația Ligii Tineretului Social-Liberal 19 septembrie 2006 privind introducerea manualelor de istorie integrată în școlile din Republica Moldova <http://www.parties.e-democracy.md/docs/psl/200609191/>; Rezoluție privind distrugerea conștiinței naționale de către guvernarea comunistă prin introducerea cursului de istorie integrată, The Youth Organization of the Liberal Party, November 26, 2006. They added to the Liberal Partu declaration and stipulation of the Article 35 (9) from Constitution that „Priority right to choose the educational sphere of children is responsibility of the parents”. <http://www.parties.e-democracy.md/docs/pr/200611263/>

⁴⁴ On October 11, 2006, in Chisinau, the Association of Historians organised an protest meeting against introduction in the schools of the integrated course of history. „Istoria integrată” - blamata de istorici, promovata de guvernanti. <http://www.api.org.md/reporter71.html>

⁴⁵ <http://basarabia.discutfree.com/Social-c1/Politica-f3/Istoria-integrata-t69.htm>; Literatura si Arta, 14.09.2006; <http://www.azi.md/news?ID=40312>; Contrafort, 6 (140) iunie 2006; <http://www.flux.md/news/modb2.php?action=show&idu=15202&cat=Cotidian%20National&rub=Eveniment>; <http://garda.com.md/93/investigatii/>; <http://gazeta.md/75-3.php>; <http://social.moldova.org/stiri/rom/14436/>;

⁴⁶ <http://www.jurnal.md/articol.php?id=5514&editie>;
<http://www.timpul.md/Article.asp?idIssue=383&idRubric=4153&idArticle=10033>;
<http://www.timpul.md/Article.asp?idIssue=425&idRubric=4563&idArticle=10981>

⁴⁷ Dezbateri Parlamentare, Parlamentul Republicii Moldova de legislatura a XVI-a, Sesiunea a IV-a ordinara – Noiembrie 2006, Sedinta din ziua de 17 noiembrie 2006 (Stenograma) <http://www.parlament.md/news/plenaryrecords/17.11.2006/>

⁴⁸ www.asm.md

years⁴⁹. The Commission held the Ministry of Education responsible for these mistakes⁵⁰, but recommended that teachers use the textbooks while being critical on the controversial issues. The Ministry of Education was to elaborate and distribute appendices to these books (*as errata*) in all the schools⁵¹.

V. Țvirun, Ministry of Education declared that introduction of new curriculum and publishing the new textbooks was accomplished with the recommendation of the Georg Eckert Institute for Textbook Analyzing from Braunschweig, Germany⁵², which again is not true. As we mentioned early, the Government asked the Council of Europe and the Georg Eckert Institute to offer these authors their expertise in textbook research⁵³. The *Georg Eckert Institute* stressed that its role in the process of textbook development was to help improving the didactic quality of the work and supporting the textbook authors in their efforts towards an integrated approach to the teaching and learning of history⁵⁴.

In the Georg Eckert Institute Press Release from December 15, 2006 it is mentioned that “The *Georg Eckert Institute* has no mandate to approve textbooks neither in the German nor in the international context. The *Georg Eckert Institute*’s role is that of a consultant body. Thus its expertise did not substitute the comprehensive internal process of reviewing the textbooks, or the procedures of textbook approval. The *Georg Eckert Institute* has supported the Moldovan Government in its undertaking to improve history teaching and textbook writing, yet the Georg Eckert Institute has *not approved* the textbooks and their content”. The German Institute’s experts reviewed the new school textbook manuscripts and mentioned that “none of the manuscripts reached fully the goals set by the Moldovan curriculum. Some were still far from meeting the new methodological standards at all”. The experts recommended “serious reworking of all of these books and did not suggest that they should be published in the form they were submitted for review “. Also, the Georg Eckert Institute was “not of the opinion that the “new textbooks” should replace the previous ones exclusively. On the contrary, given the shortcomings of the new textbooks, use of the previous textbooks in addition to the new ones seems to be a beneficial approach”⁵⁵.

The recent attempts to change the history teaching and develop new textbooks practically stopped the previous history curricula reform in Republic of Moldova. The Ministry of Education has not supported the publishing of all history textbooks for secondary schools sponsored through a World Bank project, but initiated the elaboration of a new set of textbooks. The critics argue that instead of evaluating the old textbooks, a list with necessary changes should be developed and an open competition for textbook authors should be launched for supporting really democratic educational reforms in our society.

⁴⁹ http://www.moldova-suverana.md/index.php?misc=search&subaction=showfull&id=1168441116&archive=1168521827&cnshow=news&ucat=9&start_from=&

⁵⁰ http://www.moldova-suverana.md/index.php?misc=search&subaction=showfull&id=1168868064&archive=1168958596&cnshow=news&ucat=9&start_from=&

⁵¹ <http://www.timpul.md/Article.asp?idIssue=460&idRubric=4894&idArticle=11731>

⁵² See: interview in Moldova Suverana, October 2006. <http://www.moldova-suverana.md/>

⁵³ Georg-Eckert-Institut für Internationale Schulbuchforschung, *First Evaluation of the Draft History Textbooks for the Republic of Moldova*, 2005; Georg-Eckert-Institut für Internationale Schulbuchforschung, *Second Evaluation of the Draft History Textbooks for the Republic of Moldova*, April 2006.

⁵⁴ Georg-Eckert-Institut für Internationale Schulbuchforschung, **Press Release** “The Moldova Project and the Controversies about the New History Textbooks in the Republic of Moldova”, December 15, 2006.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

In the majority of Western European countries, the history education goes beyond the national framework and is now moving towards a common European history. Moldova has not embraced this approach yet. Now, when the Republic of Moldova has the opportunity to go back to its own history, get rid of the remnants of the false version of history promoted during the Soviet times and develop a comprehensive accurate history that may incorporate regional and European elements⁵⁶. More important, as the community of historians of Moldova stated, this process of creating a single history course in the Moldovan schools should have a natural evolvement, based on democratic principles and supported through public debates⁵⁷.

Conclusions

For more than a decade of independence, the concept of history education has been developed and implemented in Moldova. Two complementary courses of history were introduced in schools - the *History of the Romanians* and *World History* – which ensured a very good assimilation of the national and world history. When the national curriculum was approved, this permitted the development of school history textbooks, which evolved in terms of quality of their design, subjects and educational content. Since September 1, 2006 by introducing a new curriculum and one-single course of History, Ministry of Education stopped this process. Publishing a new series of textbooks was again a *fiasco* of the current Ministry of Education. The History teaching in schools is based on textbooks published with the support of the World Bank and the new books remain to be just complementary materials. Throughout history the historians have been trying to revitalize the national identity, which was consequently oppressed during the totalitarian period. Now they are accused of Nazism and xenophobia⁵⁸.

The issues of language and history in Moldova have remained issues of political importance, preserving a state of tension in society⁵⁹. The identity problem still remains central in this context: some people would see themselves Romanians - supporting the Romanian History and Romanian language, and others would consider themselves Moldovans - embracing the idea of a Moldovan language and Moldovan History. For more than a decade, the Republic of Moldova has been looking for its national identity, facing a modern dilemma of *state independence* and *national identity*. Indeed this problem is not so easy to solve, when the society is divided over this issue.

History education in post-totalitarian states, such as the Republic of Moldova, for too long time has been both a political and academic issue⁶⁰. Unfortunately, we can see that in Moldova, the History curriculum and school textbooks became a political and ideological subject⁶¹. Committed politicians

⁵⁶ “We strongly state that the Republic of Moldova is a South-Eastern European state that has to rediscover its place within the united European family. We are absolutely sure that the problems of the Republic of Moldova can be solved only within the common frame of European security. The reintegration of the state must have as an essential, priority objective European integration that represents our fundamental national interest and not the integration into some illusionary Euro-Asian structure. We ask the Government, the Presidency and the Parliament to act strictly according to this fundamental national interest.” Declaration of the second congress of Historians from the Republic of Moldova regarding the federalization project of the communist government, Chişinău, April 12, 2003.

⁵⁷ <http://chisinau.novopress.info/?p=395>

⁵⁸ See: *articles in the print media of Moldova: Moldova Suverană, Tineretul Moldovei, Vremea, Comunistul*, from September-October 2003.

⁵⁹ *Teama mi-i să nu ne trezim și cu o literatură integrată*

http://www.unghiul.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=348&Itemid=32

⁶⁰ Memorandum by scholars to the leadership of Moldova, 1 February 2002.

⁶¹ „The *Georg Eckert Institute* regrets that the new textbooks have become the subject of so much politicized controversy and expresses its hope that the critique will become part of a more rational debate of and professional search for new concepts of teaching Moldovan history within a European and global context.” *Georg-Eckert-Institut für Internationale Schulbuchforschung, Press*

and some historians in Moldova still try to create a myth around the historical facts in order to “justify” certain steps and political actions that are counter to all the principles of history research. These “achievements” only create tension and even social and political conflicts in our society.

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