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BĂTĂLIA PENTRU IDENTITATE ÎN RSSM (1965)



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Autoare a mai multor lucrări, monografii, manuale, consacrate istoriei RASSM și RSSM, inclusiv *Politica etnoculturală în RASS Moldovenească (1924–1940)* (2003); *Din istoria Transnistriei* (2001, în colab.); *O istorie a regiunii transnistrene* (2007, în colab.); *Construcție și deconstrucție identitară în RSS Moldovenească 1940–1941, 1944–1989* (2023, în colab.); *Problema Basarabiei în discuțiile politice și diplomatice româno-sovietice. Studiu și documente (anii 1970–1980)* (2024, în colab.); *Politica identitară în RSS Moldovenească 1940–1941, 1944–1989* (2024, în colab.).

The Battle for Identity in the MSSR (1965)

Abstract. The year 1965 marked an open confrontation in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR), set against a backdrop of tightening ideological control and a return to Neo-Stalinism after the brief "Thaw" period. Although First Secretary I. Bodiul warned that no deviations would be tolerated, the Third Congress of Writers in Chișinău transformed into a platform for national resistance. Supported by a large audience, writers like Aureliu Busuioc, Mihai Cimpoi, Ion Druță, and mathematician Petre Osmotescu denounced the policy of Russification, criticizing the marginalization of the Romanian language in education and public life. The central demand, initially disguised as calls for the "sanitation" of the language from Russicisms, escalated into an explicit and collective demand for the return to the Latin alphabet.This stance by the writers, which was equivalent to asserting Romanian identity, clashed directly with the official moldovenism promoted by the Party through figures like Iuri Barjanschi and Iosif Varticean. The latter defended the Cyrillic alphabet and glorified Russification as a Soviet benefit. Thus, the Congress crystallized the struggle between a cultural elite demanding a cultivated, reintegrated language, and the Communist Party, which insisted on a separate identity and language, strictly subordinated to political control.

Keywords: MSSR, national movement, identity, Latin alphabet, Soviet Moldovenism.

Bătălia pentru identitate în RSSM (1965)

Rezumat. Anul 1965 a marcat o confruntare deschisă în RSSM, pe fondul înăspririi controlului ideologic și al revenirii la neostalinism după scurta perioadă de „dezgheț". Deși prim-secretarul I. Bodiul avertiza că nu va tolera abateri, Congresul III al Scriitorilor din Chișinău s-a transformat într-o platformă de rezistență națională. Susținuți de un public numeros, scriitorii precum Aureliu Busuioc, Mihai Cimpoi, Ion Druță și matematicianul Petre Osmotescu au denunțat politica de rusificare, criticând marginalizarea limbii române în educație și spațiul public. Revendicarea centrală, mascată inițial sub cereri de „asanare" a limbii de rusisme, a devenit o cerere explicită și colectivă pentru revenirea la alfabetul latin. Această poziție a scriitorilor, care echivala cu afirmarea identității românești, s-a ciocnit direct cu moldovenismul oficial, promovat de Partid prin vocile lui Iuri Barjanschi și Iosif Varticean. Aceștia din urmă au apărat alfabetul chirilic și au glorificat rusificarea ca fiind un beneficiu sovietic. Astfel, Congresul a cristalizat lupta dintre o elită culturală care cerea o limbă cultă, reintegrată, și Partidul Comunist, care insista pe o identitate și o limbă separată, subordonată controlului politic.

Cuvinte-cheie: RSSM, mișcare națională, identitate, alfabet latin, moldovenism sovietic.

Introduction. The year 1965 marks a turning point in the history of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, transforming a routine professional gathering – the Third Writers' Congress – into a genuine focal point of identity and ideological conflict. Although the 1960s had brought a certain ideological relaxation known as the "Thaw", the illusion of cultural liberalization was shattered by an open, collective defiance from the intelligentsia. The initial demands, centered on purging the literary language of Russianisms and the "parasitic" elements imposed by the regime, rapidly escalated into an explicit call for the return to the Latin alphabet. The intellectuals were not merely seeking a change of script; they were demanding recognition of their Romanian identity and their belonging to the Latin cultural sphere, rather than the Russian or Slavic one insisted upon by Party propaganda.

Neo-Stalinism and National Resistance. By the mid-1960s, the MSSR was characterized by considerable pressure generated by unresolved cultural and national issues, particularly Russification and the continuous suppression of national language and culture. This profound dissatisfaction was mirrored in other national republics on the periphery of the USSR. The ideological shift was directly announced by Nikita Khrushchev in March 1963, during a meeting with representatives of the creative unions. Despite having initiated De-Stalinization, Khrushchev vehemently condemned "modernist writers" such as Ehrenburg, Voznesensky, and Yevtushenko that year, accusing them of anti-Sovietism and of "adulating the enemies of the USSR". The key moment revealing the halting of De-Stalinization was his ominous warning: "You think that if Stalin died, everything is permitted [...]. No, gentlemen, we will not allow such a thing! You may consider that there is now neither thaw nor freeze, but frost. For such people, bitter frosts shall come [...]" [1, p. 276-277]. This declaration reinvigorated the Bolshevik principle of "those who are not with us are against us" and publicly rescinded any notion of peaceful coexistence of ideologies or liberalism in culture.

The implementation of this hardline policy in Chișinău was immediate. On March 16, 1963, First Secretary I. Bodiul reiterated the warning at a similar meeting in the MSSR, emphasizing that there could be no middle ground in ideology and warning that the Party's „hand would not tremble" when facing those who remained stubborn. The blocking of De-Stalinization manifested concretely through the censorship of memory; Bodiul stressed that works highlighting the "tragedy of entire groups of people during Stalin's cult" should have no place in the writers' creations, as they „harmed" the construction of communism. Furthermore, a repression of form took place: writers (Nicolae Costenco, Aureliu Busuioc, Petru Cărare) and artists (Mihai Grecu, Valentina Rusu-Ciobanu) were criticized for formalism, and American jazz was blamed as "propaganda of bourgeois jazz". A veritable hunt for „reactionaries" was unleashed [2, f. 108]. Literary critic Ion Vasilenco was admonished for his positive assessment of Constantin Stere's work, an action Bodiul considered a "political rehabilitation" of a „reactionary and nationalist activist from the past" [2, f. 91]. Thus, the meetings of March-April 1963 clearly marked the end of the "Thaw" and the return to strict ideological control, setting the stage for the repression of national manifestations, including those related to the alphabet, in the following years.

The Political Context and the "Hardening" of the Regime. The political climate changed dramatically with the removal of Nikita Khrushchev and the ascent of Leonid Brezhnev. The process of De-Stalinization continued to be obstructed, leading to the establishment of a regime that historians have termed Neo-Stalinist or "camouflaged Stalinism" [3, p. 49-75]. The authorities in the MSSR rapidly adopted Moscow's rigid ideological line. At the conference on "problems of political-ideological education of the youth", held on August 16, 1965, D. Cornovan, the Secretary for Ideology of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Moldova (CC of the CPM), mentioned that

while the 20th Congress of the CPSU's resolution condemning the "cult of personality" was correct, exaggerations had occurred in its implementation. Cornovan emphasized: "Under the pretext of criticizing the cult of personality, other party actions from the period of collectivization, industrialization, and the Great Patriotic War have begun to be discredited [...]. Under the pretext of criticizing the cult of personality, even that which should not have been rehabilitated was rehabilitated. There have even appeared those wishing to say certain things about Lenin, at a time when our country is facing a crisis of authoritative figures, especially among the youth [...]" [4, f. 60].

These statements provided further evidence that a process of "tightening the screws" and intensifying the Communist regime's control over people's lives was underway in the MSSR.

Despite this tightening of control, the Communist Party in the MSSR faced growing opposition from the scientific and cultural intelligentsia. These groups, alongside students, demanded the natural national rights of the majority population: the right to use their mother tongue in all spheres of social life and to know their national history. A symbolic gesture of resistance, considered a provocation to the official Soviet vision of heroes, occurred in October 1964, when students led by Mihai Moroșanu laid flowers at the statue of Stephen the Great in Chișinău. Thus, against a backdrop of a charged internal climate, where national and cultural frustration clashed directly with the return to strict ideological control, the Third Writers' Congress was convened, setting the stage for an open confrontation.

The Latin Alphabet and National Identity in the Writers' Debates. Within this political and cultural context, the Third Congress of the Writers' Union of the MSSR took place in Chișinău on October 14 and 15, 1965. The event, attended by a large audience – writers, scholars, teachers, engineers, and students – had a wide resonance in society. This was due to the social importance and echo of the issues discussed, as well as the courage shown in addressing them. Moreover, according to the testimony of writer Vladimir Beșleagă, who was present at the Congress, 90% of those who spoke at the event preferred the Romanian language. This was a challenge and an affront to the leadership in Chișinău, which was noted for its obedience and excessive zeal in promoting the center's national policy. According to the transcript, which unfortunately only mentions those who took the floor, among those present in the hall were members of the CC of the CPM and members of the Government of the MSSR, such as Dumitru Cornovan (Secretary of the CC of the CPM), Ivan Ustian (Secretary of the CC of the LCYM), and Nicolae Luchian (Deputy Minister of Public Education of the MSSR). Beside other officials, I. Bodiul himself, the First Secretary of the CC of the CPM, sat at the congress presidium. The congress was also attended by Voronkov (Secretary of the Board of the USSR Writers' Union), Valentin Katayev (Chairman of the Council for Moldavian Literature within the USSR Writers' Union), Ilya Frenkel, and Kiril Kovalgi (members of the same Council), as well as representatives of creative unions from the RSFSR, Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic Republics, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Chuvashia, Karelia, and the city of Leningrad [5, p. 69].

The scale of the event was amplified by two major elements: the participation of a vast and diverse public (scholars, teachers, engineers, students), which demonstrated that the issues raised were not those of a narrow elite but a deeply rooted general dissatisfaction; and the presence of Soviet delegations at the Union level (from the USSR, Ukraine, the Baltics, etc.), which gave the demands increased visibility, ensuring they echoed all the way to Moscow. The Congress thus functioned as a pressure valve and a symbol of cultural resistance under the superficial "thaw" of the time.

Consequently, under the pressure of this charged atmosphere and benefiting from a stage with Union-wide visibility, the writers transformed the Congress podium into a decisive

space for their demands. An analysis of their speeches reveals precisely how linguistic force and veiled criticism were used to launch a frontal attack on the Party's policy of Russification.

The writer Aureliu Busuioc, through his speech delivered at the 1965 Writers' Congress, aimed to emphasize – through a manner that alternated veiled criticism with stinging sarcasm–that systematic and official Russification threatened the very existence and dignity of Romanian national culture in the MSSR. His primary objective was to demonstrate that linguistic and cultural problems were not isolated accidents, but a direct consequence of Party policy that ostentatiously favored the Russophone element.

Busuioc did not limit himself to mere observations; he employed concrete and shocking examples to denounce, before the present Party leadership, the institutional marginalization of the national language. He directly attacked the Party's failure to ensure the normal functioning of basic institutions in the language of the titular population. By citing the example of kindergartens and the "only Moldavian school in the center of Moldova's capital" (School No. 1), he highlighted that access to education in the mother tongue had been transformed into a logistical ordeal – a deliberate marginalization of the Romanian language within the capital. Furthermore, his reference to the fact that 75% of medical students lacked textbooks in their native language emphasized that the "Moldavian language" was being prevented from evolving as a language of science and higher culture, thereby being relegated to a subaltern status [1, p. 79].

Moreover, the writer employed black humor and irony to illustrate the humiliating consequences of Russification and the failure of the educational system. His account of the school principal who misintroduced him as "Gavril Busuioc" – which provoked "laughter in the hall" [1, p. 79] – served as crushing evidence of linguistic corruption and the fact that the teaching staff itself was incompetent and Russified. Through this anecdote, Busuioc suggested that "the tree [of language] cannot grow straight" when the failure originates at the root. Ultimately, Busuioc demonstrated that not only was the language under attack, but also the collective memory and historical identity of the people. He criticized the anti-national toponymy of Chișinău, questioning why the great national geniuses, Eminescu and Creangă, were reserved only "some narrow streets, some dead ends", while the city center was dominated by Russian names such as "Moghiliovskaya" or "Gospitalnaya". By contrasting Pushkin and Gogol with Eminescu and Creangă – recognized as equals "on the same shelf in libraries worldwide"– Busuioc accused the Party of the intentional devaluation and humiliation of Romanian values. He also denounced the "game of hide-and-seek" surrounding the statue of Stephen the Great, showing that the authorities were afraid to publicly take pride in the nation's greatest hero. Additionally, he directly satirized the Russified and artificial names of localities (such as Lazovsk or Oktyabrsk), suggesting that a purely Moldavian name would have been much more "in the spirit of the language spoken by those townspeople". In conclusion, Aureliu Busuioc sought to emphasize that the Communist Party was actively engaged in a policy of cultural and linguistic uprooting designed to devalue national identity; his speech was an urgent demand to end Russification and restore Romanian language and symbols to their rightful place of honor in public life [1, p. 80].

The subtext of literary critic Mihai Cimpoi's speech at the 1965 Writers' Congress constituted a masked ideological critique of the policy of Russification and the artificial construction of a distinct "Moldavian language". The young intellectual utilized aesthetic and didactic arguments to launch a fundamental challenge against the cultural pillars of the regime, his discourse focusing on dismantling the ideological principles promoted by the Communist Party.

The essayist directly attacked the policy of forced equivalence of values, illustrating it

through the example of the seventh-grade textbook. In this context, the speaker highlighted the absurdity and humiliation of placing classics such as Eminescu, Creangă, or Alecsandri on the same level of literary mastery as opportunistic Soviet writers who lacked any real aesthetic value. The implicit message suggested that the qualitative factor was non-negotiable, whereas official policy – by subordinating aesthetic criteria to ideological ones –aimed to devalue the national canon by merging it with mediocrity. His assertion that "one must have great audacity not to be intimidated by such a proximity" represented, in essence, a demand to restore a hierarchy of values, which could be none other than that of Romanian literature [1, p. 80-81].

The most trenchant veiled criticism targeted the quality of the language, a context in which aesthetic objections actually masked political accusations. Cimpoi demanded that "piles of lexical garbage" be thrown into the "dustbins of history", a striking phrasing that drew applause from the hall. This "garbage" in fact referred to the Russianisms, barbarisms, and Soviet neologisms artificially imposed upon the Romanian language (officially termed "Moldavian"). The subtext of his intervention was unequivocal: the language used in textbooks and the press was not naturally corrupted, but rather altered through political engineering. Consequently, the critic pleaded for a "sanitization" that was essentially equivalent to alignment with the standard literary Romanian language from Romania, considered the only unadulterated model.

Finally, the request to resolve "the problem of our language's orthography" and to reconstruct the alphabet to correspond to "phonetic necessities" [1, p. 81] represented the boldest challenge to Soviet policies. The speaker implicitly suggested that the Cyrillic script was not a natural cultural element, but a forced imposition that culturally isolated the MSSR. The technical argument was irrefutable: if the alphabet had to be "reconstructed" to fit phonetics, it meant the existing system (Cyrillic) was inadequate and artificial. Through this technical plea, the young intellectual formulated what was, in effect, a masked request for the reintroduction of the Latin alphabet – an act considered by Party organs to be a "nationalist" manifestation [6, f. 24].

The moment of maximum tension during the 1965 Congress was marked by the speech of Ion Druță, whose intervention transformed the writers' podium into a veritable arena for national demands. This broad and courageous stance primarily targeted an open appeal for the adoption of the Latin alphabet, presented as a logical and necessary requirement for a language of Romance origin. The prose writer emphasized that he did not expect applause for his oratorical skills; instead, he explicitly asked the republic's present leaders to interpret the thunderous reaction of the hall as a "unanimous desire" to urgently resolve this issue and to communicate it to the "highest authorities" [7, f. 107]. Through this daring gesture, he transformed individual grievance into a collective and official demand, exerting direct political pressure on the presidium.

In this tense climate, the speaker firmly pushed back against the accusations of "Romanianism" previously leveled at other writers, such as Mihai Cimpoi, standing in solidarity with them by publicly affirming cultural and historical unity with Romania. Druță openly acknowledged that in Chișinău, people read "many newspapers, including Romanian ones", arguing that the space across the Prut River was close to them through language, history, and culture. He skillfully exploited the ideological framework of the era, pointing out that, since Romania was a socialist country, there was no justification for hostility. His central metaphor remained a memorable warning to the leadership: an exhortation not to rush "to erect a Chinese Wall along the Prut" [7, f. 107], thereby demanding an end to cultural isolation and the policy of division.

Furthermore, the writer drew attention to the deplorable state of the spoken language – "that great and living ocean"– considering it neglected and suffocated by parasitic elements. Through an anecdote about his brother, who accused him of speaking "Romanian", he

demonstrated with bitter irony that it was not he who had become estranged from his roots, but rather the language of the population that had been degraded through the mixture of numerous Russianisms. The author made an essential distinction between the Russian language of high culture and the Soviet-administrative jargon (such as *mezhkolkhozstroy* or *selispolkom*), which he defined as a "veritable epidemic" and a "cursed-word" [7, f. 108]. The speech concluded with a solemn appeal for the "sanitization and attentive care" of the mother tongue, a duty he elevated to the rank of a sacred obligation.

In contrast to the frontal approaches of the aforementioned writers, Emilian Bucov approached the Congress from the position of a faithful ideologue of the Soviet regime in the MSSR. Known as a dedicated Party cadre with an active history of combating "nationalism" – including during the purges at the university and among writers following the September 1959 Plenary– his speech represented a strategic balancing act. Bucov sought to validate certain cultural demands of the intelligentsia, being fully aware of the Romanian nature of the language, without undermining political authority.

Surprisingly, he supported the idea of returning to the Latin alphabet, defining it as a "natural alphabet for our Romance language." Although this formulation represented an explicit recognition of the language's Latin origin – and, implicitly, a defiance of the official thesis of a self-contained "Moldavian language"– the writer immediately placed this "complicated question" within a strictly controlled framework for resolution. By emphasizing that the issue had to be settled exclusively "with the help of the Central Committee of the Party of Moldova and our scholars", Bucov delegated the final decision to the power structures. Through this maneuver, he transformed an explosive identity claim into a technical matter requiring approval from the top of the Communist hierarchy, neutralizing its potential for cultural dissent [7, f. 131].

The most nuanced part of his speech concerned the defense of linguistic modernization against currents advocating for a certain archaism or "linguistic primitivism". Bucov warned these critics that "no one can turn back the wheel of time", arguing that the lexicon needed neologisms to reflect the realities of the "new culture"– namely, the technological and cosmic progress of the Soviet era.

In a clever rhetorical move, the ideologue rejected accusations of "Romanization", claiming that the goal of these adjustments was, in fact, a "Soviet Moldavianization" of the language [7, f. 132]. Through this phrasing, he positioned himself as a theorist of modern Soviet Moldavianism: a current that accepted linguistic development and even the return to the Latin script as technical necessities, but with one imperative condition. This process had to unfold exclusively under the control and for the ideological benefit of the Communist Party. In his vision, cultural emancipation was permissible only as long as it did not risk degenerating into a project of identity assertion with unpredictable political consequences.

While Emilian Bucov attempted to channel the writers' demands through a controlled political filter, Pavel Boțu offered a perspective more deeply anchored in the social realities of the time. During the same 1965 meeting, he advanced the idea that the deplorable state of the mother tongue was not an isolated failure of the educational system, but a systemic problem generated by Russification policies and the negligence of authorities, which allowed for the corruption of the lexicon at all societal levels. Boțu emphasized that the effort to teach language and literature in schools was constantly sabotaged by the external environment. The writer used an eloquent metaphor to describe this process of erosion, stating that "what is built during language classes is torn down during geography or biology classes" [7, f. 144]. With this remark, he criticized the fact that the Romanian (Moldavian) language was not used as a real tool of instruction for the exact sciences, which were taught either in Russian or in a hybrid language – a fact that gravely undermined linguistic standards among the youth.

Moreover, the speaker extended responsibility beyond the pedagogical circle, pointing directly to the fault of the Party-vetted leadership cadres. To the applause of the audience, he demanded that greater attention be paid to how "farm managers, agronomists, doctors, or judges" expressed themselves [7, f. 145], identifying these authority figures as the flawed linguistic models perverting the speech of the population.

Pavel Boțu also linked this degradation to the shortcomings of the higher education system, stating that teachers themselves reached the classroom without a proper knowledge of the norms because, during their student years, they "had no opportunity to study according to the curriculum". This was a direct allusion to the shortage of textbooks and the absence of university courses in the Romanian language. His critique culminated with the example of the parent who did not hear "correct speech in their mother tongue even from the kolkhoz chairman", thus indicating that the primary source of linguistic corruption lay at the very top of the local decision-making hierarchies.

Despite being a mathematician rather than a writer, Petre Osmotescu utilized the Congress podium to advance two primary ideas aimed at linguistic normalization. First, he called for the elimination of visual and public Russification, requesting that the mother tongue be used in public spaces, on posters, and street signs. Invoking the principle of equality among the Union republics and offering Georgia as a direct example, he suggested that the authorities in Chișinău were manifesting an excess of zeal in Russification – one that was not mandated by Moscow and that contravened practices in other Soviet capitals. Osmotescu thus denounced designations such as "*Ul. Shtefana Velikogo*" in place of the correct name, implicitly accusing the Party of tolerating this «lacuna» and failing to take public pride in its own national heroes. Secondly, the centerpiece of his speech was the definitive resolution of the Latin alphabet issue, a plea presented not as a nationalist demand, but as a logical and historical necessity. He argued that, given that "our language is of Latin origin, it is natural for the alphabet to be Latin". He used historical precedents, such as the use of the Latin alphabet in the districts on the left bank of the Dniester in 1937–1938, to categorize its replacement as a "mistake that can be corrected" [1, p. 80]. Through this language, Osmotescu conveyed a powerful message: resolving the alphabet question was "dictated by life" and could no longer be bypassed, transforming it from an ideological dispute into a practical imperative.

The Clash of Ideologies: Soviet Moldavianism vs. National Renaissance. Thee 1965 Writers' Congress crystallized an essential ideological confrontation in the MSSR, pitting two distinct currents against each other. On one hand was instrumentalist Moldavianism, which denied the Romanian identity of the majority population in the MSSR and promoted a separate language and identity ("Moldavian"). Represented by the CPM through the voices of writer Yuri Barzhansky and academician Iosif Varticean, this current sought to maintain political control and cultural isolation from Romania by preserving the Soviet Cyrillic alphabet and subordinating aesthetic criteria to Communist dogma. On the other hand, a cultural national renaissance manifested itself, supported by writers such as Druță, Cimpoi, and Osmotescu. Its goal was the reaffirmation of Romanian identity, the purging of parasitic Russianisms from the language, and symbolic reintegration through the return to the Latin alphabet, legitimizing these demands by appealing to the suffering and will of the people. In essence, the Congress exposed the struggle between an ideology that favored a corrupted, isolated, and politically controlled language and a movement that demanded a cultivated language reintegrated into its natural family.

Barzhansky's message, dictated by the Party's ideological vigilance, focused primarily on denouncing "Romanization as an imminent danger". He sounded the alarm, warning that replacing words borrowed from Russian, such as *spetsovka* and *snayper*, with their Romanian equivalents, *salopetă* (overalls) and *lunetist*

(sniper), represented an act of "Romanizing» «our original Moldavian literature and our language" [7, f. 65-66]. The subtext of this alarm was that any alignment with the Romanian literary standard was perceived as a subversive act, endangering the Soviet Moldavian identity. Furthermore, he moved to defend a popular and primitive Moldavianism, pleading for a "folk Moldavian language" which he used as a weapon against the intellectuals. By this, he implied a language detached from the literary standard, filled with regionalisms and, most importantly, permeable to Russian influence.

Finally, Barzhansky resorted to blaming the elites for a perceived linguistic «elitism,» targeting A. Busuioc and M. Cimpoi, who were proponents of Latin neologisms; he demagogically claimed that these words were not "understood" by the people. His true goal was not linguistic purity, but the discrediting of writers as an elite detached from the masses, using a "foreign" language to promote "bourgeois" interests. In essence, Barzhansky emphasized that the Cyrillic alphabet and Russianisms were mandatory ideological markers, and the struggle to purify the language and adopt Latin neologisms was perceived as a direct threat to Soviet control in the MSSR.

Varticean's discourse focused on the logical and ideological rejection of the demands, transforming the system's flaws into points of pride. He dismissed the idea of returning to the Latin alphabet by invoking the lack of an absolute normative basis, stressing that "nowhere is it written" that a people of Romance origin must necessarily write with the Latin alphabet. The subtext of his argument was political, not linguistic; by ignoring the natural and historical character of the Latin script, he suggested that as long as there was no superior directive from the Party in Moscow, there was no obligation to change the orthography – a position that reinforced his conviction that the authorities would not accept such a change. The most significant part of his speech was the glorification of Russification as a Soviet opportunity, a personal acknowledgement followed by an ideological justification. In response to a question regarding the blame for a child studying in a Russian school despite having Moldavian parents, Varticean admitted this was his own case but went further, asserting that he felt no inconvenience from this situation, but was, on the contrary, proud [7, f. 128]. This declaration served as a panegyric to the policy of Russification, presenting it not as a loss, but as a gain and an opportunity provided by the Soviet system. Through this personal testimony, Varticean attempted to legitimize the idea that forced bilingualism did not harm identity but provided access to Russian culture and, implicitly, to the benefits of the Soviet system. He sought to offer a model of a loyal intellectual who had totally accepted the Party line, even at the sacrifice of his mother tongue. In essence, Varticean employed a discourse of absolute loyalty to reject national demands, arguing that linguistic problems were not errors to be corrected, but rather benefits to be glorified within the Soviet model.

The poet Grigore Vieru's rebuttal addressed to Barjansky at the 1965 Writers' Congress constituted an extremely harsh and personal intervention, one that transformed linguistic criticism into a mechanism for defending the dignity of the youth and the people against the Party elites. Vieru sought to emphasize that the writer's task is profoundly social and linguistic, rather than ideological, turning a debate over neologisms and Russianisms into a question of accessibility and identity. Through the concrete example of the Russian term *speţovka* versus the correct term *salopetă* (overalls), he demonstrated that youth in agricultural and industrial sectors were being alienated from their own literature due to the corruption of language promoted by the Party. He thus suggested that writers are the ones who must correct and normalize the language, rather than passively accepting barbarisms. Addressing Barjansky, Vieru directly accused him of demagoguery and of exploiting the people for political gain, suggesting that the Party and its ideologues used "the people" as a pretext to maintain their grip on power while, in reality, isolating them culturally.

Vieru's intervention acquired a potent emotional and political significance because it attacked not only Barjansky's ideology but also his morality. The poet legitimized the youth's right to an opinion by publicly invoking their shared suffering and national sacrifices under the Soviet regime, explicitly mentioning the young people "who were left without parents, killed in the war" and who "in 1946–1947 fed themselves with pigweed and orache" (a direct reference to the organized famine). With the final phrase, "these young people know better than you what 'the people' means", Vieru achieved a symbolic reversal of power, denying the Party (represented by Barjansky) the moral authority to speak on behalf of the populace [1, p. 82]. This intervention was a declaration of moral independence, showing that writers no longer accepted the Party's monopoly on truth. Within the context of the Congress, dominated by collective courage, Vieru's rebuttal served as a catalyst, transforming linguistic dissatisfaction into a direct moral and historical indictment of the regime.

The fact that only Yuri Barjansky and Iosif Varticean trenchantly defended the Communist Party line against the wave of demands for the Latin alphabet and linguistic purity – while other high-ranking officials present remained largely silent – reveals a complex shift in the dynamics of power and fear within the post-Stalinist context.

The absence of strong retorts from the majority of the present Party leadership, including those from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Moldavia (CPM), can be understood through three interconnected factors. First, the geopolitical dilemma created by Romania's policy of distancing itself from Moscow made any excessively harsh or immediate reaction against demands for the Latin alphabet potentially look like a lack of cultural sovereignty for the Socialist Republic, in contrast to Romania's tacitly recognized autonomy. Second, the ideological strategy of the "Thaw" necessitated caution; as the Congress took place during the relative period of liberalization following Khrushchev, a brutal intervention would have contradicted the image of openness and "socialist democracy" the Party sought to project. Leaders, mindful of the presence of delegates from the USSR and other republics, preferred not to escalate the conflict *in situ* – that is, in public – choosing instead to let repression occur later through internal channels. Finally, the element of surprise and the scale of courage played a role; the Party did not expect the demands to be so coordinated, open, and supported by such a broad mass of intellectuals, and thus preferred not to validate the legitimacy of this "affront" through a public response.

In this context, Yuri Barjansky and Iosif Varticean were not mere participants; rather, they acted as the mouthpieces and enforcers of the Party's hardline stance. They took upon themselves the task of publicly reaffirming that the ideological monopoly belonged to the Party and that any demand leaning toward "Romanianism" or "bourgeois nationalism" was strictly unacceptable. Barjansky's attack on Mihai Cimpoi – who was accused of reading "Romanian newspapers"– represented a calculated attempt at public intimidation and character assassination. Their position should be understood as a loyal fulfillment of their Party duty, typical of ideologues who, sensing the risk of losing cultural control, intervened to symbolically draw a red line. By doing so, they communicated official dissent even before formal repressive measures were finalized and implemented.

Party Repression and the Genesis of the National Agenda. The 1965 Writers' Congress of the MSSR marked an overt ideological rupture, representing the first post-war collective defiance by the intelligentsia against the Moldavian Communist Party (MCP) regarding national identity and language. Although this "sensation that we could speak" was short-lived, it exposed the flagrant failure of Soviet Moldovenism.

The immediate aftermath was characterized by a furious campaign of repression led by the MCP leader, Ivan Bodiul. His reaction was swift, harsh, and coordinated across multiple

levels to restore total ideological control and annihilate the movement. Bodiul promptly initiated a campaign of combat and intimidation, employing demagogic arguments to revalidate Soviet founding myths. The writers' demands were labeled "retrograde dispositions" and "nationalist tendencies", attributed to "political illiteracy" and "narrow horizons", thereby politically delegitimizing the opposition.

Bodiul utilized a specific rhetoric to criminalize cultural opposition, asserting that the demand for a transition to the Latin alphabet was not a phonetic issue, but rather an attempt to "isolate [Moldavia] from the Russian people" and an "orientation toward the West", thus consolidating the accusation of ideological treason. He denied a shared identity, maintaining the thesis that the "Moldavian state" and "Moldavian language" predated the modern Romanian state and language, invalidating any rapprochement between the MSSR and Romania. Furthermore, Bodiul branded literary Romanian as a "bourgeois artifice" riddled with "Frenchified" neologisms, paving the way for the legitimization of Russianisms as a "distinct historical and cultural process" inherent to the Moldavian language [8, f. 75].

The regime's reaction materialized promptly: in direct response to sharp interpellations (such as that of Petre Osmotescu), Ivan Bodiul conducted a working visit to the Polytechnic Institute on November 16, 1965 – a gesture intended as a nuanced warning to the entire intelligentsia. Moreover, the Party Assembly of the Writers' Union was convened at the express direction of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU, with the explicit mission to "cauterize" nationalist tendencies and eliminate any pockets of liberalism. Although it was a symptom of an awakening national consciousness, the 1965 Congress actually marked the end of illusions regarding an authentic cultural "thaw"; the authorities' brutal reaction definitively consolidated the line of instrumentalist Moldovenism.

In the ensuing period, the issues raised by the writers were transformed into litmus tests for political loyalty. The Communist Party realized that the intellectuals' agenda attacked the very state legitimacy of the MSSR, leading to a radical ideological simplification. Thus, the request to return to the Latin alphabet was no longer interpreted as a mere graphic preference, but as an act of treason. The stakes were clear: accept the Soviet-Moldavian identity or be labeled a dangerous Romanian nationalist. Similarly, the plea to purge the language of Russianisms ceased to be a stylistic desire and became a test of adherence to the dogma of the "friendship of peoples" and the civilizing role of the Russian language.

One's position regarding these "tests" implacably determined their professional fate. Public support for official theses brought privileges and positions, while fidelity to the ideas expressed in 1965 drew marginalization, constant KGB surveillance, and social exclusion. Through this control mechanism, the MCP managed to impose an absolute taboo on Romanian identity – a state of affairs that would persist until the onset of Perestroika.

However, the Party's arsenal of control was not limited to coercion; it included a cynical strategy of material co-optation. Aware of the danger posed by a solitary intelligentsia, the authorities issued a resolution on December 13, 1965, titled *On the Grave Shortcomings in the Preparation and Conduct of the Third Congress of the Writers of Moldavia* [6, f. 24]. Beyond official criticism, this document provided for substantial privileges for writers, with the undeclared goal of neutralizing their critical spirit by subsidizing personal comfort.

The establishment of "creation houses" the distribution of apartments, the allocation of automobiles, and the granting of honorary titles became tools for "taming" the guild. By transforming the creator into a beneficiary of the system, the regime sought to substitute national consciousness with social comfort, effectively erecting a "golden cage" around potential opinion leaders. This method of institutionalized corruption succeeded in fragmenting the unity of the writers, forcing many intellectuals to

choose between remunerated silence and the risks of professional marginalization.

Historical Legacy: The Seeds of Liberty. Beyond these measures of control and material co-optation, the profound impact of the 1965 Congress was pedagogical and identitarian, far transcending the scope of a mere professional gathering. Through the courage of the speakers, this literary forum functioned as a space of revelation, offering the intelligentsia – and, above all, the youth – a rare opportunity to rediscover the authentic nature of their language and the depth of their historical heritage. In an environment dominated by ideological distortions, the event became an essential catalyst for self-awareness, granting new generations the possibility to understand their true identity, beyond the artificial constructs of the Soviet "New Man".

Equally, the virulent reaction of the authorities betrayed a profound vulnerability within the system. The regime felt a genuine fear in the face of evidence that its entire identity project – built upon cultural isolation and the invention of a hybrid identity – was in danger of collapsing under the pressure of historical truth spoken publicly. This realization of the fragility of its own dogmas forced the power apparatus to resort to the dual arsenal of repression and corruption. However, the effort to "contain the outbreak" by subsidizing personal comfort only served to confirm the perceived danger of the ideas launched from the podium.

Although it did not generate an immediate liberation, the Congress provided hope and, more importantly, a veritable program of action for the future. All the foundational pillars of the National Renaissance Movement of 1988–1989 – the Latin alphabet, the purification of the language, and cultural unity with the Romanian space – were first articulated publicly in 1965. Consequently, the youth who resumed the struggle in the late 1980s did not have to invent a new agenda; they adopted and carried forward the identitarian program that had been forced underground by the pressure of Bodiulist repression. This proved that the seeds of liberty, once planted, could no longer be uprooted from the collective consciousness.

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