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## LATVIAN AND MOLDAVIAN COMMUNIST PARTIES (1959-1961): A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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*Keywords:* Korinizatsiya, Latvianization, Besarabianization, Russian patriots, Marxist internationalists, Moldavian nationalists, National communists.

### Intro

This paper seeks to compare factions within two Soviet republics, Latvia and Moldavia. The two share a number of commonalities that make for an interesting comparative study. First, they are both on the western edge of the Soviet Union, incorporated after the Second World War. Secondly, nationalism was a perennial concern for Moscow in both republics. The paper will begin with an examination of the factions within each republic and the degree to which they are comparable. Next, the paper will examine nationality policies emanating from the Kremlin and the way each republic responded. In this comparison of the two case studies, ideally the reader will finish with a better understanding of the system as whole.

### Factions Within Each Republic

In the Latvian Communist Party (LCP), divisions between two clearly defined groups were as much generational as ethnic. The older generation was comprised of either ethnic non-Latvians, or Sovietized Latvians who fled to the east during the First World War, where they witnessed and survived Stalin. We could sub-divide this faction further into what we might loosely call “Russian patriots” (that is to say, all non-Latvians) and Marxist internationalists. To understand each, a brief overview of leading examples is useful. Ivan Lebedev and Fyodor Titov were typical of the cadres sent to Latvia after the Second World War. They were products of Stalinism and the victorious Great Patriotic War and were transient by the nature of their positions. Before the war, they probably knew little of the tiny republic, and their tenure in Latvia lasted less than a decade. First Lebedev, then Titov held the post of Latvian sec-

ond secretary. While the first secretary was theoretically a higher position and held by a Latvian, the second secretary wielded the real power in the republic. The Soviets frequently viewed Latvians with suspicion, even as Nazi collaborators and partisan terrorists. Thus, the post of second secretary was crucial to monitoring the republic and its party (Berklavs 2003a; Berklavs 1998, 97; Prigge 2015, 9).

Many historians of Latvia do not make distinctions within the older generation, but Arvids Pelshe, represents a flavor distinct from the “Russian patriot”. Pelshe was Latvian and born of wealth in 1899. In this highly industrialized region of the Russian Empire, he joined the burgeoning Latvian Social Democratic movement. As German troops advanced in 1915, Pelshe and some 570,000 refugees poured across the border into neighboring Russia. Following the First World War, a Latvian Soviet government was established. During this period, Pelshe fought “white Latvians” (bourgeois nationalists) near Riga. While the Baltic Provinces were one of the few places where the Bolsheviks initially enjoyed widespread support, the state lasted only the first four months of 1919. After its defeat by German and Latvian nationalists, most of Latvia’s communists escaped to Soviet Russia. There, Pelshe joined a thriving Latvian expatriate community. Many of the industrial workers who were evacuated during the First World War chose to remain in Russia, numbering some 151,400 in 1920. By 1923, 150 Latvian-language schools, seventy libraries, and sixty social clubs existed throughout the Soviet Union. Moreover, their political significance in the party far outweighed their actual numbers. The Latvians were only 0.15 percent of the total Soviet population, yet they made up 2.53 percent of the party and 7 percent of the delegates at the Thirteenth Party Congress in 1924 (Plakans 1995, 115, 120-121; A Biographic 1981, 158-61; БСЭ 1975, “Пельше, Арвид Янович”).

Surviving in the Soviet Union during the Great Purges required something different of people. One needed the brutal mindset of betray or be betrayed. Life taught Pelshe the prudence of bidding one's time while working quietly behind the scenes. If Pelshe has been labeled a Stalinist, a better description would be a strict, conservative, Marxist purist. Even though he was likely complicit in Stalin's crimes, he disapproved of its excesses. He would also consider Khrushchev's departure from collective leadership and the nationalism of the Berklavs faction perversions of Marxist ideology. If Andrei Zhadonov's ideal was the *Ruskii norod*, Pelshe's would have been the *Sovetskii norod* (Prigge 2015, 15).

In contrast to the older generation, the younger party members consisted mostly of indigenous Latvians, who came of age during the 1930s, imagining the Soviet Union from afar rather than experiencing it firsthand. There was something dynamic, yet uncontrollable, in this new breed of communist. They never experienced the Great Purges; thus, they were both energetic and naïve, hardly the model New Soviet Man. While Lenin's ideal of collective leadership had long since disappeared in Stalinist Russia, the post-war generation of Latvian communists deeply valued the concept. What is more, this younger generation did not regard Stalin's constitution as a mere scrap of paper. To them, it embodied rights that could and should be exercised. Even after the national communists realized the constitution was a farce, it's words could be used to legitimate opposition. The center of this clique swirled around a young livewire named Eduards Berklavs. He epitomized Latvia's fierce independent-mindedness and found himself immediately at odds with the incoming non-Latvian functionaries. This tension quickly took on a nationalistic character. In his memoirs, Berklavs recalls a confrontation he had with second secretary Lebedev, not long after the end of the Second World War. One evening, second secretary Lebedev called Berklavs to his office. "What's the meaning of your stance against the Party today in the Bureau session?" Lebedev demanded. Berklavs understood, but pretended otherwise: "If you mean that our differences on the university Komsorg [Komsomol Organization] means opposing the Party, then I must tell you I was not speaking against the Party, but objecting to only one paid Party worker's viewpoint. You are not the Party...To express

an opinion is the right and obligation of everyone present. I know the Party statutes, comrade Lebedev... Do you want anything more?" (Berklavs 1998, 32). Without waiting for a response, he left. In a separate bitter exchange, Lebedev complained to the head of the Soviet Komsomol: "Do you know... why Berklavs attacked me? Because I am Russian and he hates Russians" (Berklavs 1998, 32).

For the Moldavian case, there are clear similarities to Latvia, but also important differences. This paper identifies at least three distinct groups. The Moldavian version of the Russian patriots would be its top leadership that came largely from Ukraine, and Russia as well. They, together with party members from the Left Bank of the Dniester River, made up most of the political leadership initially. Among the Ukrainians themselves we can identify various factions within Moldavian leadership. The first group would be the Khrushchev faction, such as First Secretary Zinovie Serdiuk. The Dniepropetrovsk, or the (Leonid) Brezhnev Faction, is a second. A third is comprised of the Bessarabian Diaspora, which extends all the way to the Dnieper, but whose families had lived among Ukrainians for generations and had largely assimilated. First Secretary Ivan Bodiul would be such an example. The final sub-group are All-Union imports who came from all corners of the Soviet Union, spent only a few years in the republic, then moved on. Phillip Kashinkov was secretary of agriculture for Moldavia and would eventually go on to serve as second secretary in Latvia, before being voted out of that position in 1958 (in favor of a Latvian!). As with the Latvian example, transience is a defining characteristic of this faction<sup>1</sup>.

The so-called Right-Bank, or Bessarabian Moldavians were the rough equivalent of the Latvian national communists. Linguistically, they were Romanian-speakers<sup>2</sup>. Bessarabia was annexed by Russia in 1812 where they remained until the dissolution of the empire, when they became part of a Greater Romania. The fact that Romania was a co-belligerent of the Nazis made matters difficult when the Soviets reoccupied Bessarabia in 1944. The greatest difference with Latvia was the Moldavian Right Bank lacked the same size

<sup>1</sup> This is most true with the All-Union imports and least true with the Bessarabian diaspora.

<sup>2</sup> This would not necessarily include minority groups of Gagauz, Jews, Russians, Bulgarians, Ukrainians and Poles.

and dynamism. There was no equivalent clique in Moldavia who immediately after the war came to leadership in major institutions, like the Komsomol, then went on to dominate the Bureau after Khrushchev's Secret Speech or took the role of second secretary by 1958. The reasons for this difference can only be guessed at. However, a second major difference that likely influenced the first was the fact that Latvia existed as its own entity – entirely outside the Soviet Union during the interwar years, and entirely within the Union after the war. For Bessarabia, after the Russian Empire was toppled, it fell under Greater Romania, and was subject to Romanianization. After the war, because Romania continued to exist outside the Soviet Union it served as a potential alternative for Bessarabian allegiances. While this was a constant fear of the Kremlin, it is unclear the degree to which it affected recruitment or promotion in the party. For Latvia, it had no alternative source of allegiance within the Soviet bloc. Whereas both were viewed as Nazi collaborators, only Bessarabia had the possibility of defecting to an alternative power. A second explanation could be as simple as the lack of dynamic leadership. To expect the emergence of the same type of leadership clique in Moldavia as in Latvia is unrealistic. The total number of local Latvians recruited were only a few hundred. Those few were then galvanized by a uniquely charismatic and effective leader, Eduards Berklavs. Without Berklavs, it is easy to imagine a completely different scenario. Luck may have been a crucial factor. A Bessarabian clique, with the same organization, numbers and leadership simply did not exist. Dr. Marius Tăriță identified the heart of this faction with the Right Bank intelligentsia, centered around Andrei Lupan and the Writers Union (Tăriță 2014, 138). This faction would identify the language spoken in Moldavia as Romanian, and even perhaps that its future lay with Romania.

The final group, to which there is no equivalent in Latvia are what this paper will call the Moldavian nationalists. This faction has frequently been confused with both the Russian (here, better to say Ukrainian) patriots, and as well as Right Bank pro-Romanians. In fact, they were neither. It centered around the Left Bank of the Dniester. Historically, it existed as the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) before the Second World War. The push for a Moldavian entity came from Moscow

to demonstrate to western powers that the Soviet Union was the true home of national flowering and independence, whereas Europe remained the domain of multi-national empires under the veil of national self-determination (Martin 2001, 74-75). A second important factor was ethnically, the Left Bank was uniquely heterogeneous. In the rural regions, Moldavians and Ukrainians mixed, and as the republic's industrial heart, the urban composition (in 1959) was 27% Moldavian, 30% Russian, 17% Ukrainian, 14% Jewish, 13% other<sup>3</sup> (King 2000).

While historians have frequently understood the Left Bank as Russified Moldavians, this study takes a different position. In the heady and idealistic years of *korenizatsiya* (indigenization), it is possible that the Left Bank became a true seat of Moldavian national identity. While at this point it cannot be fully demonstrated, it is this author's supposition that many who lived on the Left Bank, or idealists who fled there, became Moldavian nationals—something different from the more pro-Romanian tendencies of the Bessarabians, who were either Romanianized, or perceived to be Romanianized by the Left Bankers and Moscow. Because the Left Bank was particularly heterogeneous, mixed marriages and bi or tri-lingualism was commonplace<sup>4</sup> (King 2000, Chap 5, para 19). More than other groups, Left Bank intellectuals (whose most prominent voice was Artiom Lazarev) had a sincere belief in the Moldavian Project that is:

1. an eventual unified Moldavian state would extend from the old MASSR extending to the east bank of the Prut;
2. that the historically predominantly Bessarabian lands lost to Ukraine be returned to the new Moldavian state;
3. that a Moldavian language exists and it would be the primary language and culture of that entity;
4. that there is no harm in bi-lingualism or tri-lingualism;
5. that the Bessarabians should participate in this project as long as they were trustworthy.

<sup>3</sup> Direcția Arhiva Organizațiilor Social-Politice (further DAOSP), F. 51, inv. 19, f. 284, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Speaking on the Moldavian republic as a whole, Charles King notes that Moldavia had one of the highest rates of mixed marriages among the non-Slavic nationalities.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1995, Lazarev published the work “I am a Moldovan”, where he affirms the understanding of Moldavian nationalism – that they are separate and distinct from the Romanian people; they have their own language, history and culture. In Izeaslav Levit’s memoirs, he summarized Lazarev’s view on Moldavian national consciousness as follows:

“A person’s belonging to a particular nation is a purely personal matter, determined, first of all, by his national consciousness. It is not for me, a Jew, to tell other residents of Moldova what nationality they should be considered and called – Moldovans or Romanians, Russians or Ukrainians, Bulgarians or Gagauzes, etc., given the multi-ethnic composition of the population of the republic and a lot of mixed marriages” (Левит 2014, 199, 200).

Lazarev was a communist and staunch supporter of the regime, but he also ran afoul of leadership over the loss of historically Bessarabian lands to neighboring Ukraine (Cașu, Pâslariuc 2010, 292, 293). While he and Brezhnev became lifelong friends when Brezhnev served as Moldavia’s first secretary, Lazarev’s relationship with the next two first secretaries, Zinovie Serdiuk and Ivan Bodiul, were extremely strained (Левит 2014, 110). Together with the Right Bank intelligentsia, Lazarev and the Left-Bank intelligentsia often had common cause in defense regarding the party’s insufficient attention to culture in favor of agriculture. However, the two were not the same. Levit continues that it was not an accident that “I am a Moldovan” was published in Tiraspol instead of Chisinau.

“After the withdrawal of Moldova from the USSR, the most hotheaded advocated the urgent unification of the Republic of Moldova with Romania. In the reigning new environment... the works of A.M. Lazarev, and others who did not share this point of view of the national patriots, were almost excluded” (Левит 2014, 200).

While there are similarities between the two republics, the presence of Romania as well as the existence of a portion of the Moldavian SSR that lived under Soviet rule during *korenizatsiya*, creates a more complicated picture than in Latvia. However, the pugnaciousness of Eduards Berklavs set the stage for confrontation first among the leading factions within Latvia that eventually became an All-Union issue, which included Moldavia.

### **The Evolution of Nationality Policy with Moldavia and Latvia**

While the nationality policy was derived from the All-Union level, it took on its own distinct character at the local level, depending on the degree of agency local party officials felt, as well as the amount of real power they held. According to Michael Bruchis’ work *Nations-Nationalities-People: A Study of the Nationalities Policy of the Communist Party in Soviet Moldova*, Moscow was deeply suspicious of Bessarabians and did not accept into the Communist Party anyone who remained in that territory after the retreat of the Red Army in July 1941. However, this policy changed in 1946. It was noted at the July All-Union Central Committee meeting that there is “an insignificant number of communists of indigenous nationality, which is inadequate to the task of broadening the party’s ties with the masses” (Bruchis 1984, 4-5). The first secretary of Moldavia, Nikolai Coval, subsequently announced at the October CC plenum that he sought “more workers, kolkhozniks, poor peasants and peasants of average means, and representatives of the Soviet intelligentsia, especially from among the Moldavians. This push for Moldavians was emphasized again in July 1950 by incoming secretary, Leonid Brezhnev (Bruchis 1984, 5, 72). Bruchis argues: “these years of preferential treatment for Moldavians (including Bessarabians) in entering both the Communist Party and institutions of higher education could not be to the liking of the Russianized Moldavians from the left bank of the Dniester who headed the Republic’s party and state organs and who did not carry them out [Bessarabian recruitment] in earnest”. He goes on to say: “they understood perfectly well that the promotion of the Bessarabian Moldavians could lead in the end to their gradual displacement from key positions in the Republic” (Bruchis 1984, 72).

The calls for greater representation of minority groups within the Soviet Union reverberated in Latvia as well. During the 1946 congress in which Berklavs became first secretary of the Latvian Komsomol, his speech was unique in its sharpness of tone. He boldly tackled what would later become a common theme—the place of the Russian language *vis-à-vis* Latvian:

“If we want youth to take active participation in community life, then we need to give great attention to the national question. Why, for example, in the Stalin District [of Riga – *W.P.*] are all con-



ferences, including district conferences, conducted in Russian? Why are the Komsomol meetings conducted in Russian when the majority of organization members are Latvians who poorly understand Russian?”<sup>5</sup>

The push for local party members had a practical purpose in that Moscow needed the party to learn the local language. First, Soviet leadership was keenly aware that a failure to respect the local language could generate a dangerous nationalistic backlash. To avoid this, this paper will show that the Kremlin went to extraordinary lengths to placate the republics, or at least Latvia. Second, because the incorporation of new territories into the Union required more than just brute occupation of the territory, the success of Soviet propaganda was crucial. The local population needed to understand the Kremlin’s message; this necessitated some mastery of the local tongue. A letter from Moscow to the LCP CC regarding their choice of propagandists reflects this practicality:

“The Board of the All-Union Association considers that the deputy chair or the executive secretary of the Board of the Republican Association should master Latvian in order to be able to control the quality of the given lectures and the published pamphlets in the local language. We support the recommendation of Latvian CP CC candidate Comrade Chuklinoi P. Ia. In the capacity of deputy chair of the Board. In connection with this request, Comrade Gusarov M.V. is recalled from the position of executive secretary of the Board of the Republican Association and recommend placing in that position a qualified worker – a Latvian. (21 February 1953)”<sup>6</sup> (Prigge 2015, 19).

### **The Fate of the Nationality Policies in Moldavia and Latvia**

Ultimately, were the Bessarabianization, or Latvianization policies of the 1940s and 1950s successful? At the first level of analysis, bureau membership, there were a higher number of Latvian national communists on the Latvian Bureau than Bessarabians on the Moldavian Bureau. Latvians were either recruited or rose in the ranks faster than their Bessarabian counterparts. Latvian national communists had a presence on the Bureau by the early 1950s and briefly dominated

it after 1956<sup>7</sup> (Prigge 2015, 85). In Moldavia, only one Bessarabian, Dumitru Cornovan, sat on the Bureau from 1961 to 1971 (Bruchis 1984, 75). The problem with analyzing bureau membership is its small size. Are leadership differences the product of a general policy of discrimination? If so, at what level? Or is it the product of individual rivalries? Even in Latvia, how do we understand the comparatively faster promotions? Is it a difference in general policies and attitudes towards the Latvians, or is it from simply one or two well-placed leaders like Berklavs and Vilis Kruminsh, who then colonized the leadership ranks with other local Latvians? At this point, what is required, but to this author’s knowledge has not yet been done, is a tracking of party membership over the years in Moldavia, not only by claimed nationality, but by age and their village/city of origin. It would next be interesting to compare Bessarabian Party membership growth with Left Bank Moldavia and with Latvia, perhaps providing a better clue as to the origins and degree to which discrimination existed.

One major difference between Latvia and Moldavia is the presence of a potential external patron, Romania. For the Bessarabians, it was a rival to Moscow, which had the ability to chart its own separate course. Both the Soviets and Romania had implicit or explicit claims on the territory, whether linguistic, ethnic or historic. It is unknown to what degree this fact contributed to lower numbers on the Bureau. According to Bruchis, bourgeois nationalism and pro-Romanian sentiments were noted at the 9<sup>th</sup> Moldavian Party Congress in January 1960, and Bessarabianization came to an end at the 11<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in December 1963. He believes the reason was a growing divide between Romania and Khrushchev. He states: “The fact that after D. Cornovan’s appointment in 1961 as a secretary..., Moscow did not allow another Bessarabian Moldavian to become a member of the Bureau... for a whole decade, can be explained first and foremost by the strain in Soviet-Rumanian relations in the 1960s as a result of Khrushchev’s attempts to turn Rumania into an agrarian appendage of the more developed socialist countries and the opposition of the Rumanian communists leadership to these attempts” (Bruchis 1984, 76).

<sup>5</sup> Latvijas Valsts arhivs (further LVA), F. 201, inv. 1, f. 245, p. 87.

<sup>6</sup> LVA, F. 101, inv. 16, f. 192, p. 53.

<sup>7</sup> LVA, F. 101, inv. 12, f. 10, p. 1; F. 101, inv. 14, f. 14, p. 1-3; F. 101, inv. 17, f. 12, p. 2-3.

In Latvia, its stance soon became untenable with Moscow. Latvia began to require in 1956 that non-Latvians placed in the republic learn the local language within two years or risk losing their job. There were also complaints about restrictions of non-Latvian migration to the capital, Riga. Berklavs' policy stopped all migration to Riga to avoid the charge of nationalism; however, the intention was to stop the inflow of non-Latvians (Berklavs 2003a; Berklavs 2003b; Prigge 2015, 56; see also Loader 2017). When Nikita Khrushchev visited Latvia on the return from a routine trip to East Germany, he was told about the activities of the national communists. There was a sharp exchange between Khrushchev and Berklavs, and soon, a chain of events was set in motion that led to the dismissal of Berklavs from party leadership (who was then exiled to a distant Russian town). Many other prominent members were removed or demoted – for either direct complicity, or failure to control party members under their charge. This included the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Vilis Lacis, First Secretary, Janis Kalnberzinsh and Second Secretary, Vilis Kruminsh (Plakans 1995, 157, 159; Misiunas, Taagepera 1993, 143; Prigge 2015, 111-123). With that, national communism in Latvia disappeared from the scene and over time, their ranks were demoted from the Bureau and Central Committee. This event was discussed at the CPSU CC July Plenum of 1959.

Interestingly, Khrushchev stated that he had reconsidered moving against the Latvian national communists and complained that a purge was carried out regardless. The reason he gave was that it would provoke troublemakers, and spoil “the wonderful picture of brotherly friendship of nations of our Great Soviet Union” (Plenums 2001; Prigge 2015, 116). Latvia's policies were already known to many in the Kremlin, such as Aleksandr Shelepin, who called Berklavs in early 1959 to let him know he had received let-

ters of complaint and tried to persuade him to reconsider his policies. Berklavs rebuffed him (Berklavs 1998, 180-84). This later statement by Khrushchev just after the purge demonstrates the fear top leadership had over the latent power of nationalism and the Kremlin's sensitivity to the bad publicity it might generate (Prigge 2015, 79, 80).

However, the purge happened, and the results were reported out to the Moldavian CC in September 1959, where First Secretary Serdiuk indicated that a review of the Moldavian Party occurred as a result of the summer events. He stated:

“Those individual distortions and mistakes in the national question, which were mentioned at [today's] plenum, take place not only in our republic. Recently, questions of ideological work were discussed at the plenums of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Latvia, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan. This was preceded by a deep familiarization with the state of ideological work in the given Party organizations to the workers of the Central Committee of the CPSU. In a number of Party organizations, including our Moldovan Party organization, a review of such issues as the state of training, placement and education of cadres, were carried out”<sup>8</sup>.

This summary of the experience of the two parties can only touch the surface, and perhaps raises more questions than it answers. There is a similarity in the messaging coming from Moscow, but how those directives are being executed. In Latvia, they take on a sharp nationalistic tone with strong initiative coming from Eduards Berklavs. The reasons why difference in tone or leadership was absent in Moldavia is unclear. It also remains to be studied the impact of proclamations from Moscow or top local leadership actually impacted the growth of local party membership, and why or why not. A more detailed analysis is required.

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<sup>8</sup> DAOSP, F. 51, inv. 19, f. 13, p. 226.

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### **Partidele Comuniste din Letonia și Moldova (1959-1961): studiu comparativ**

*Cuvinte-cheie:* indigenizare, letonizare, basarabenizare, patrioți ruși, internaționaliști marxiști, naționaliști moldoveni, național-comuniști.

*Rezumat:* Acest studiu își propune o examinare comparativă a cazurilor RSS Letone și RSS Moldovenești în încercarea de a oferi o explicație parțială a schimbărilor neobișnuit de mari, care au avut loc între anii 1959 și 1961. În acest scop, studiul identifică cel puțin două facțiuni de bază în Letonia și cel puțin trei – în Moldova. Este elucidată activitatea național-comuniștilor din Letonia, evidențiindu-se rolul pe care l-au avut în această activitate atât liderii locali, cât și cei din Kremlin. Printre figurile-cheie în desfășurarea evenimentelor letone din această perioadă sunt Eduards Berkļavs, Ivan Lebedev, Feodor Titov și Arvids Pelshe, iar printre cele de la Moscova – Nichita Hrușciov și Alexandr Șelepîn; în Moldova, asemenea roluri au avut Zinovie Serdiuk și Ivan Bodiul. Compararea schimbărilor produse în ambele republici, plasarea lor într-un context unional mai larg contribuie la reflectarea mai clară a realității decât în cazul unor analize separate. Un interes particular îl reprezintă succesul inițial al basarabenizării și letonizării, similitudinile și diferențele dintre republici și, în final, eșecul acestor proiecte în fiecare din cele două republici. Studiul identifică – printre factorii majori cu impact – personalitățile liderilor de facțiuni, independența din perioada interbelică și influența unică a României în cazul Moldovei. În studiu sunt folosite texte de ziar, memorii, stenograme ale CC-ului și interviuri luate în Letonia și Moldova.

### **Коммунистические партии Латвии и Молдавии (1959-1961): сравнительный анализ**

*Ключевые слова:* коренизация, латышизация, бессарабизация, русские патриоты, марксисты-интернационалисты, молдавские националисты, национал-коммунисты.

*Резюме:* В статье предпринята попытка сравнительного изучения некоторых вопросов истории компартий Латвийской и Молдавской ССР для определения причин необычайно высокой текучести партийных кадров в период 1959-1961 годов. Автор выявляет как минимум две ключевые группировки в Латвии и как минимум три в Молдавии. Рассматривается вопрос чистки партийных рядов от национал-коммунистов в Латвии, а также роль местных лидеров и Кремля. Ключевыми фигурами латвийских событий стали Эдуардс Берклавс, Иван Лебедев, Федор Титов и Арвидс Пельше; в Москве – Никита Хрущев и Александр

Шелепин; в Молдавии — Зиновий Сердюк и Иван Бодюл. Сравнительный анализ изменений в Латвии и в Молдавии позволяет рассмотреть события в двух республиках в более широком, общесоюзном контексте и создать более полную картину происходившего. Особый интерес представляет первоначальный успех бесарабизации и латышизации, сходства и различия этих программ и причины их окончательного провала в каждой из республик. Исследование показало, что основными определяющими факторами в развитии событий явились личности лидеров фракций, межвоенная независимость и уникальное влияние Румынии на Молдавию. Работа основана на изучении материалов прессы Латвии и Молдавии, мемуаров, стенограмм ЦК и интервью.

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