MOLDO-CZECHOSLOVAKIAN RELATIONS IN 1955-1990

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Abstract. In the period 1955-1990, between Moldova and Czechoslovakia there were the most versatile relationships. They included political, economic, industrial, agricultural, cultural, sports, tourist and other contacts. These ties were mutually beneficial, in view of the fact that Czechoslovakia had more advanced machinery and equipment production, and Moldova advanced much further in the field of agriculture.
Despite the fact that these ties were managed by Czechoslovak consuls outside the republic, they constantly expanded and included all the new aspects. This publication may contribute to their further investigation.

**Keywords:** relation, international, politic, agricultural, commerce

The international relations of the Moldovan SSR of the postwar period and until the proclamation of independence (1944-1991) are still the *terra incognita* for researchers-historians even in the present days. Scientific articles related to this topic are practically missing, not to mention the monographs. The exceptions are some works of V. Andrușciak\(^1\) in the soviet period, and in the post-soviet one – works of the author that is writing these lines\(^2\). Anyway both mentioned sources don’t reflect the whole “soviet” period (1944-1991). Moreover, the papers related to the Moldova relations with a certain country from the world don’t exist until the present days. That is why the documents at the given topic represent a huge layer of information that should be analyzed thoroughly by contemporary scholars. In the given article we are going to reflect the Moldo-Czechoslovakian relations in 1955-1990, and by this, in a certain way, to cover this scientific “black whole”. We divided the information that we have according to the thematic directions.


Political Relations of Moldova with Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (CSSR)

According to existent sources there were no relations with political officials from CSSR until 1970. Even the ambassadors of CSSR in the Soviet Union (USSR) had never visited Moldova until that time. The first visit of this kind in the republic was the arrival of CSSR Ambassador in USSR, Ia. Havelka in April 1974. The delegation was composed by the IIIrd secretary of CSSR Embassy in USSR, Ia. Havelka and the correspondent of a Czechoslovak newspaper, A. Bak. The guests were welcomed by the prim-secretary of Central Committee (CC) of the Moldovan Communist Party (MCP), I. Bodiul. The topics of interest of the CSSR ambassador were related to the development of kolkhozes, the forms of managing the kolkhoz-cooperative system, the processes of specializing and focus in agriculture, its transfer to the industrial basis, the creation of Agro-industrial and Scientific Associations of Production, and the activity of Kolkhozes Council. Then, the delegation, accompanied by the vice-president of the Government of republic, G. Dolgoșei, visited a series of livestock objects and complexes of the enterprise “Kolhozjivprom”, studying the activity of territorial sovkhozes-factories³. Taking into account that in that period Moldova had a leading place in agricultural reforms that were taking place within USSR (and not only USSR), this topic represented a major interest for many Czechoslovak guests that were visiting Moldova in the period 1970-1980. According to that time, the guests were informed about the achievements in the science and culture domains, as well as about the history of MSSR formation, the structure of industrial production, the participation of republic in the union division of labor, and the realization of the agricultural policy of CPSU in Moldova⁴.


⁴ The diplomats from socialist countries in Moldova // The Soviet Moldova, 1975, July 17. (Дипломаты из социалистических стран в Молдавии // Советская Молдавия, 1975, 17 июля).
At the 7th of April 1978 Moldova was visited by the delegation of Federal Assembly (Parliament) of CSSR headed by its president, the member of the CC Presidium of the Czechoslovakian Communist Party (CCP), A. Indra. The delegation was accompanied by the president of the union Committee for Labor and Social Problems of USSR, V. Lomonosov. The president of the Presidium of Supreme Soviet of the MSSR K. Iliașenko told to guests about the discussion of the project of the new Constitution of 1941, that was in force at that time, about the activity of the Supreme Soviet, its permanent commissions and Local Soviets. This delegation payed special attention to the agricultural experience of Moldova5.

At 20-21 February 1979, Moldova was visited by the Minister of foreign affairs of CSSR, member of Central Committee of CCP, B. Hnioupek. In USSR he was invited by his soviet colleague A. Gromáko. The distinguished guests came together with the ambassador of CSSR in USSR, C. Lovetinski, and the ambassador of USSR in CSSR, V. Matkevici. The chairman of the Ministers’ Council of Moldova, S. Grossu, underlined in his discourse the role of the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA also known as COMECON) in increasing the economic potential of Moldova. The prime-secretary of CC of the MCP, I. Bodiul, described in detail the way of using the new technic, modern technologies, and at the guest request, he told about the development of gardening, cultivation of vegetables, gardening in the republic and its perspectives6.

The development of agriculture in Moldova was the object of attention and interest of other representatives of the supreme Czechoslovakian governance:


namely – the candidate for Presidium membership within Central Committee of CCP, M. Iakeş, the member of the Presidium of Central Committee of CCP, and the prime secretary of Central Committee of CP of Slovakia, I. Lenart, that visited Moldova on 27-29 May 1979⁷.

Then, after 1979, and until the proclamation of independence of Moldova, the official Moldo-Czechoslovakian relations were maintained through General Consuls of the CSSR from Kiev – Iu. Vargolik, M. Kovacz, Z. Guml, S. Ghinar, that were presented at Chisinau by the CSSR ambassador in USSR, that personally was coming in Moldova on that occasion⁸. The general consuls made visits in Moldova also on the occasion of celebrating the days of CSSR releasing in May 1945, anniversary dates of signing the soviet-Czechoslovak agreement regarding the friendship and collaboration, launching of a big exhibition, etc. They were received by the secretaries of the Central Committee of MCP – for ideology, agriculture or industry⁹.

**Interparty Relations of Moldova and Czechoslovakia**

The history of the relations between MCP and CCP had begun in January 1962 when in Moldova came a group of responsible officials of Central Committee

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of CCP. Besides studying the production in kolkhozes, the guests were interested in the experience of party working in Moldova. With this purpose, they visited enterprises and scientific institutions\(^\text{10}\).

In 1971-1986 the workers of administration of Central Committee of CCP, students of the Academy of Social Sciences (ASS) under the Central Committee of CPSU in Moldova and CCP officials made 5 visits. For example, in February 1972, in Moldova came a group of responsible workers of CCP: M. Grușcoviț (chief of the cultural section of Central Committee of CCP), I. Gaman (deputy chief of the economic section of Central Committee of CCP), F. Tesarj (prim-secretary of the party Regional Committee Gradeț-Kralove), G. Șlapka (prim-secretary of the party regional Committee Bratislava), Ia. Muha (prim-vice minister of the light industry of CSSR). Besides the history of MCP that was permanently described in these cases, during the visits of enterprises, party city Committees of Chisinau and Tiraspol, the guests were informed about the management by the party bodies of the process of socialist competition, problems of planning the party labor, party admission, control on the execution of taken decisions, working experience regarding the increase of the industrial production efficiency, selecting, placement and training of party staff, community and household organizations, activities of the organizations of cultural enlightening in villages\(^\text{11}\).

During other visits in Moldova, the party workers of Central Committee of CCP were studying the plans of social development of some farms, forms of international education (March 1973), evolution of economy, science and culture

\(^{10}\) Arrival of a delegation of Czechoslovakian party workers // The Soviet Moldova, 1962, January 19. (Sosirea la Chișinău a unei delegații a lucrătorilor de partid din Cehoslovacia // Moldova Socialistă, 1962, 19 ianuarie).

of the republic, its perspectives. During the visit from November 1976, the guests paid a special attention to the issues of ideological assurance of plans and obligations of the workers’ collectives, regarding the development of the internal party democracy, criticism and self-criticism (following the example of the Orhei district), the implementation of the socialistic rituals and traditions (following the Kotovsk district, nowadays Hâncești), the system of training the staff for agricultural sector. During the journeys of ASS students from CSSR in Chisinau (May 1986), the party management of social policy, the increase of citizens welfare and the stimulation of technical-scientific progress were emphasized.

In June 1987, in Moldova the delegation of Czechoslovakian People Party came. The guests were interested in the activity of Soviets, the preparations to local elections in republic.

The Union Relations between Moldova and CSSR

The union leaders from Czechoslovakia made some visits in the period 1969-1977. The delegation headed by the chief of the Section of Central Council of CSSR Unions, M. Skrijicil that came in Moldova in October 1969 was interested in the unions’ role in organizing socialist competition in enterprises and institutions. As example for them served the Garment Factory of Tiraspol and one of sovkhozes (state farms) of Tiraspol district (nowadays Slobozia). In May 1975 in Moldova the train “Drujba” (Friendship) came being organized by the CSSR unions. The guests were studying the life of peasants and kolkhoz

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workers from Moldova, the role of unions in the propagandistic activity related to the accomplishment of approved plans\textsuperscript{16}. In June 1977, in Moldova there was a delegation of medical workers union from CSSR that was studying the organization of medical services providing in cities, enterprises, kolkhozes, as well as the activity of union bodies for the improvement of social and cultural conditions, the living level of the medical staff. The guests found interesting the experience of organizing the provision of medical services directly to enterprises, for example – the hospital of the Garment factory of Tiraspol\textsuperscript{17}.

**Scientific Relations between Moldova and Czechoslovakia**

As example of such relations, we can consider the collective mutual research, as well as the individual ones. But, lacking space, we present just some cases. For example, the Moldovan physicist V. Langhe in 1960 years was carrying out successfully research in the domain of semi-conducting combinations together with colleagues from Czechoslovakia. He visited CSSR many times with scientific purposes\textsuperscript{18}. The Czechoslovakian enterprises were exporting in Moldova equipment for chemists and biochemists. This equipment was bought by the institutions of higher education from Moldova\textsuperscript{19}. In May 1981 at Chisinau, a Moldovan-Czechoslovakian symposium on gastroenterology issues took place. The guests from Czechoslovakia told about the new elaborations in this

\textsuperscript{17} Union delegation of CSSR in Moldova // The Soviet Moldova, 1977, June 10. (Профсоюзная делегация ЧССР в Молдавии // Советская Молдавия, 1977, 10 июня).
\textsuperscript{19} The exhibition of Czechoslovakian laboratory equipment // The Soviet Moldova, 1969, September 3; All exhibits of the Czechoslovakian exhibition remain in Moldova // The Soviet Moldova, 1969, September 12. (Expoziția de instalații de laborator cehoslovac // Moldova Socialistă, 1969, 3 septembrie; Все экспонаты чехословацкой выставки остаются в Кишиневе // Советская Молдавия, 1969, 12 сентября).
field\textsuperscript{20}. The Delegation of Central Council of technical-scientific Societies of CSSR that visited Moldova in June 1984 had studied the experience of primary organizations of similar societies in Moldova\textsuperscript{21}.

**Relations within CMEA**

Different discussions and meetings of the commissions and specialists of CMEA played an important role in the international relations of Moldova in the period 1969-1985. The range of discussed problems was wide: construction, statistics, house chemistry, machine construction, automatized systems of management, electro-energetics, elaboration of new species of vegetables, storage of easily destroyable products, oncology, material-technical assurance and other issues\textsuperscript{22}. The participants were elaborating the recommendations, getting acquainted with working experience in the respective domain in Moldova, visiting for documentation some enterprises of the republic. Solving some problems in Moldova was highly appreciated by foreign guests. For example, the Czechoslovakian delegation that came in Chisinau on the occasion of the 19\textsuperscript{th} meeting of permanent commission of CMEA in order to coordinate

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\textsuperscript{21} In the interests of friendship and collaboration // The Soviet Moldova, 1984, June 9. (В интересах дружбы и сотрудничества // Советская Молдавия, 1984, 9 июня).

the scientific and technical issues in 1970 was excited about the development level of machine building and food industry in Moldova²³.

**Moldo-Czechoslovakian Commercial-Industrial Relations**

The Moldo-Czechoslovakian commercial relations were founded in 1954, when the company “Koospol” from CSSR had bought for sale Moldovan wines in huge quantity. The CSSR became the first country that began the import of wines from Moldova²⁴. The industrial relations appeared later. If in the second half of the 1950 years we can mention only some visits of the specialists from Moldova and Czechoslovakia – in the field of leather processing, glass producing, extracting building materials. The 1960 years were marked by the intensification of Moldo-Czechoslovakian relations in different fields of industry and commerce which strengthened in the 1970 years. For example, Moldova imported goods from Czechoslovakia in building area, as well as machinery – tractors, buses, machines for producing tights. At the same time, Czechoslovakia bought wines tobacco and furniture in huge quantity from Moldova²⁵. In 1978, the Czechoslovakian delegation headed by the prim-vice minister of commerce F.


Rujicika had insisted on essential widening of commercial exchange, agricultural product exporting from Moldova and industrial products from Czechoslovakia and signing the respective contracts\(^{26}\).

In the 1973-1983 period, CSSR had organized several times at VDNKh of the MSSR exhibitions of its goods – glass (2 times), materials for foundry, agricultural technique, dental tools and diagnostic materials. In October 1980, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of CSSR, I. Nagr, had opened at VDNKh of MSSR the Days of Czechoslovakian economy and technique. At the same time, the Moldovan side at the exhibitions from Brno in 1973 and 1980 had presented furniture and different qualitative food products from Moldova\(^{27}\).

**Relations in the Agricultural Domain**

In this field, there was a convenient exchange for both sides. Czechoslovakia was exporting in Moldova since 1960 irrigation equipment, inclusively respective stations, machines of collecting different agricultural crops, equipment for soil analysis, and selection, combine-harvester for collecting maize and sun-flower etc. Simultaneously, the specialists from Czechoslovakia were studying in Moldova the planning process in the agriculture domain with usage of the electronic computing machines, the experience of specializing and focusing in agriculture and other agricultural branches (cattle and plants/vegetables breeding etc.), the principles of organizing the inter-kolkhozes complexes and agro-industrial associations. In the process of elaborating the Law regarding the land in CSSR,


they examined the Moldovan legislation. Accordingly, the administration of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food of CSSR visited Moldova for many times. Together with CSSR, Moldova elaborated the technology of cultivating plum and apricot trees by using complex mechanization\textsuperscript{28}.

**Relations in the Culture Domain**

The history of Moldo-Czechoslovakian relation in this field in the postwar period began in 1955, when Chisinau was visited by the conductor B. Bakala and soloist A. Ploțek of Czechoslovakian Philharmonic. They performed the works of B. Smetana, A. Dvorjak, L. van Beethoven and of other composers\textsuperscript{29}. It is worth to mention that the concerts of performers from Czechoslovakia were dominating in the cultural relations between Moldova and CSSR until the middle of 1960 years. Only once then (in 1962) the ensemble “Fluierâş” had a trip within Czechoslovakia with concerts. From 1967 the relations of our countries in this domain reached a new qualitative level. At the same time with Czechoslovakian musicians tours in MSSR, in August 1967, a group of journalists from different countries from all around the world came (CSSR was presented by M. Verner) in Moldova to study the lifestyle and situation in the republic. Such visits of foreign and Czechoslovakian journalists were taking place quite often (1976, 1978-1979, 1983 etc.) contributing to the process of knowing Moldova beyond the republic borders. In 1972, the Czechoslovakian television had presented an ample reportage about Moldova, and in Prague, an exhibition consecrated to Moldovan republic was organized. In Moldova and CSSR some exhibitions and month consecrated to our countries were organized. In 1981, the Chisinau


\textsuperscript{29} Șevcenco R. International relations of the Moldovan SSR. (Șevcenco R. Relațiile internaționale ale RSS Moldovenesti (1953-1955)...., p.85.)
section of the Society of Soviet-Czechoslovakian friendship was funded, headed by the minister of improvements and aquatic household, V. Olexici. In November 1984, it was changed into Moldovan Section of the given society headed by M. Bondarenko.  

Moldovan Tourism in CSSR

It started in August 1956, when in CSSR a group of tourists from Moldova went (36 persons). They were in CSSR for 12 days. The host country offered the best hotels and restaurants. They were traveling through Czechoslovakia in comfortable buses. They visited historical and cultural places of Prague city, inclusively the New Prague, Pioneers House, Technical Museum, National Gallery, Medieval Castles. They visited the factory of shoes “Sazavan”, the factories of beer of Plzen, the factories of ceramics and winery. They had a journey on Vltava river, got acquainted with Brno, Karlovy Vary, with life style of workers’ family. After that the tourists from Moldova were visiting mainly Prague, Brno, Karlovy Vary, Marianske-Lazne. In Moldova, the Bureau of tourism abroad was responsible for tourism propaganda in CSSR, and from Czechoslovakian side – the Bureau of trips “Cedok”. The last had organized in the second half of 1970-1980 years a series of exhibitions related to Czechoslovakia.  


Youth Relations of Moldova and CSSR

In the 1960-1970 period, the relations between countries were realized by means of students exchange, by doing their educational training to each other places. Besides, in the period 1967-1969, some students and youth delegations from CSSR visited USSR and Moldova particularly, where they had got acquainted with the republic. In July 1970, Moldova was visited by a group of district committees of the Union of Socialist Youth of CSSR, studying different issues of practical activity of Moldovan Komsomol\(^\text{32}\).

Sportive Relations

We would like to present some examples. At May 31, 1959, the football club “Moldova” (Chisinau) hosted the team “Dinamo” (Prague) and won with the score – 3:0. At October 10, 1965 an international motocross took place at Chisinau. One of its winners in the category of 500 decimeters motorcycles was the Czechoslovakian I. Grejebecek. In March 1967, the European games of athletics took place in Prague (in covered spaces). The double champion among women, at relay race, was the Chisinau citizen V. Maslovskai-Bolșova. In August 1968, a match between the artists of Czechoslovakian theatre “Prague” and football veterans of Moldova took place at Chisinau. The Moldovan professionals won with the score 5:2\(^\text{33}\).


Relations of Different Organizations of Moldova and CSSR

Besides the above mentioned, Moldova was visited by the representations of feminine organizations from Czechoslovakia (1961, 1969), the collaborators of Red Cross from CSSR (1965), the delegation of General Prosecutor’s Office of CSSR headed by the General Prosecutor of Czechoslovakia Ia. Feeș, the representatives of federal directions of statistics and prices of CSSR (1978, 1980), the delegation of forest and aquatic household of CSSR headed by the minister V. Marghetin (1980). All these visitors had studied the situations in the given related branches from the Moldovan colleagues and made exchange of experience34.

Other International Relations of Moldova and CSSR

In the list of other contacts are included the international courses of World Health Organization, that several times took place in the period 1970-1980 in Moldova, as well as different public lectures of philosophy, symposia on apiculture, conferences on linguistics, physics, buildings, obstetrics, sociology, viticulture, computing technique and a series of other scientific disciplines35.

The Perception of 1968 “Prague Spring” in CSSR and its Suppression in Moldova

From the first steps of the new prime-secretary of CC of CCP A. Dubcek the “order protectors/defenders” in Moldova suspected something. Several months before the invasion of Soviet army in CSSR, at the VIIIth plenary session of CC of MCP (8 May 1968) participants express the concern of created situation, the

actions of “contra-revolutionary elements” were criticized and they express the
willing to “offer help to the working people” in CSSR36.

Trying to have influence on the Czechoslovakian students mood that came
on basis of student exchange program in Moldova, the Secretary of Central
Committee of the MCP at 9 July 1968 tasked the administration of institutions
of higher education, that were hosting the students from CSSE (State University,
the Pedagogical, Agricultural Institutes, Sovkhozes – colleagues from Tiraspol
and Țaul) and their party organizations to “assure a high level of organizing-
party working” between them37. At 19th July 1968 a common meeting of the
Chisinau and republican parties took place, being consecrated namely to the
CSSR situation. The speaker, prime-secretary of Central Committee, I. Bodiul,
in detail described, in the Soviet opinion, the CSSR situation after the resignation
of the prime secretary of Central Committee of CCP, A. Novotnâi, in January
1968. According to him, shortly after that, the mass-media services got out of
control. A quick change of staff had begun. All these led to the strengthening of
“contra-revolutionaries” position, the requests to dissolve the Committee of State
Security and political organs, and the reestablishment of private property. Even
the own program had appeared – “2000 of words” that was providing the break
of the alliance with USSR and socialist countries. Within CCP began an “internal
fight”, its administration gave way to right forces etc.38.

In the days of invasion of the armies of socialist countries in CSSR, the
minister of telecommunications, V. Russu, received the order to create a battalion
of telecommunications. Despite of the lack of experience, he rapidly formed it,
and on August 23, he sent it to restore the telecommunications in CSSR. V. Russu
also had the task to block the access of newspapers from Czechoslovakia and
Romania that were describing the real situation in CSSR, but, he misunderstood

36 The Archive of Societal-Political Organizations of the Republic of Moldova (further ASPO RM)
(Архив Общественно-Политических Организаций Республики Молдова (далее АОПО РМ). Ф.51.
Op.29. Д.1. Л.18.)
37 ASPO RM. (АОПО РМ) Ф.51.Оп.29. Д.64. Л.23-24.
38 ASPO RM. (АОПО РМ) Ф.51.Оп.29. Д.92. Л.5-6, 8-9.
what was asked, and the Romanian newspapers were continuing to come to the Moldovan subscribers until 26 August. For this mistake he was prevented very strictly\textsuperscript{39}. Commenting the situation, the rector of the Polytechnic Institution of Chisinau S. Rădăuțan called for “focusing the attention” on the youth education, to reveal wider the lies of western propaganda that very often was leaving behind the soviet one\textsuperscript{40}. The district committees of MCP in an excessive rhythm were adopting decisions with unanimous conviction of “contra-revolutionary” forces and they sustained the suppressing of “antisocialist incursions”\textsuperscript{41}.

Thus, we can ascertain that in the period 1955-1990, between Moldova and CSSR there were very different relations. They included political, economic, industrial, agricultural, cultural, sport, touristic and other relations. These relations were mutual, because in CSSR the technique and equipment production were more developed, but Moldova plunged deeply in agriculture domain. Despite of the fact that these relations from CSSR side were managed by a consul that was outside the republic borders, they permanently were widening and included new aspects. This article could contribute to farther research.

\textsuperscript{39} ASPO RM. (АОПО РМ) Ф.51.Оп.29. Д.49. Л.13-15, 41; Д.97. Л.104.
\textsuperscript{40} ASPO RM. (АОПО РМ) Ф.51.Оп.29. Д.131. Л.37-38.
\textsuperscript{41} ASPO RM. (АОПО РМ) Ф.51.Оп.30. Д.111. Л.56-57, 59, 62-64, 89-90.