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## **Moldavia and the Russian World: Is a Return Possible?**

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### ***Молдавия и Русский мир: возможно ли возвращение?***

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The Carpatho-Danubian region is the area of Slavic ethnogenesis. In the first half of the 6th century A.D., the lands north-west of the Black Sea through to the Danube, were occupied by the Eastern Slavs (the Antae). In the 8th – 10th centuries, the Uliches, the Tivertsy and the White Croats, ancestors of contemporary Rusins, roamed this area. In the 10th century these tribal unions were taken into the Old Rus' state and at the end of the 11th century formed a separate Galician Principdom.

In the period of an acute struggle for the Galician-Volhynian dynasty in the lands which were formerly in the Galician Principdom, the Moldavian Principdom was formed (1359). Both Vlachs and Rusins participated in its formation. The Moldavian State was formed along the lines of the Old Russian. The language of Western Rus' was the official language up to the beginning of the 18th century. At the end of the 1530s Moldavia fell under Turkish domination.

The territory between the Prut and Dniester Rivers, later called Bessarabia, was taken into the Russian Empire in May 1812. When Bessarabia was united to Russia, it was a land devastated by the Turks and the Tatars. From 1812 to 1828, Bessarabia was a province of special position with local features in its administration. From 1823

to 1874, the province was governed by the Governor General of New Russia. They were called Vicars of Bessarabia until 1828; since 1828 they were called New-Russian and Bessarabian. In 1873 the province was re-named as a governorate.

The improvement of the social-economic situation in the province was reflected in an increase in population. According to the results of the census in 1897, the population of Bessarabia was 1,935,412 persons. The compatibility of the various ethnic groups of Bessarabia in the Russian Empire allowed for a mutual enrichment of cultures and the formation of a basic polyethnic commonality – the Bessarabians, who differed from the Romanians in their heightened activity, “imperial” consciousness and mentality even though Romanians are similar to Moldavians in an ethno-cultural sense. This commonality showed itself clearly during the years of the revolution, the civil war, the Rumanian occupation and WWII. During this time, the various ethnic groups were able to keep their ethno-cultural identity. It was here that the Turkish-speaking settlers from beyond the Danube could form into an independent ethnic group – the Gagauz.

In 1918 Bessarabia was occupied by Romania. In 1940 Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia entered into the structure of the USSR. On August 2, 1940, a law about the formation of Soviet Moldavia was passed. On August 27, 1991, the Moldavian parliament accepted the Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Moldova. An unsuccessful attempt to quietly swallow up Moldavia during the early years of her independence, forced the leadership of Romania to re-work a long-standing plan. Its goal is the Romanianization of the Moldavian population by changing its mentality. The results of the census of 2004 show that only 2.2% of the population of Moldova consider themselves Romanian, while the majority, 75.8%, consider themselves Moldovan. Despite this fact, the Romanian leadership refuses the Moldovan majority its right of self-determination.

During these years, Romania has been able to carry out an effective ideological program of unification with Romania. This program has proven to be highly effective and could be used in the processes of integration in other lands of the former Soviet Union.

## Keywords

Moldavia, Bessarabia, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, Moldavians, Rusins, Russians, Integration, USSR, Russian World, Orthodoxy, Russian Language, Russian Culture.