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INTRODUCTION

The massive arrival of the communists to power, following the early parliamentary elections of February 25th 2001, has marked the beginning of one of the most „dark“ phases in the history of the independent state of the Republic of Moldova. That is why, immediately after their accession to power, I undertook the task of monitoring, with great attention, the activity of the communist government. At first, I did not intend to publish a book concerning the results of this monitoring, my aim was simply to observe and follow the course of the incumbent administration. The gathered data, however, has outlined a picture so dramatic, that I had the thought of presenting the errors and the consequences of the communists' reckless policies, during the three years of their reign – to the general public.

Throughout the pages of this book - the ignorance, wantonness and the pharisaic mentality of the communists come to light. Under the layer of pompous declarations the following aspects lay hidden: the worsening of the population's living standards, the demolition of the democratic institutions, the persecution and suppression of the opposition, the flourishing corruption and protectionism, the destruction of: the local autonomy, university autonomy and independence of the judicial system, the harassment of the business people that are not loyal to the powers-be, the banishment of the western investors, the freezing of relations with foreign creditors, the discrediting of the international image of the state, the mass exodus of the able working population abroad – all of the

above-mentioned emphasizing the disastrous situation plaguing the Republic of Moldova.

The events brought to light are presented in chronological order. The texts concerning each development contain an information element and a short commentary. I did not necessarily intend to evaluate the events, but rather wanted to signal a violation or other perpetrated by the Bolshevik clique. I only focused on the well-known cases, on the heaviest abuses; in reality, however, the communist violations are far greater in number.

I hope that this book will open the eyes of the population on the true essence of the communist government, and will contribute to the cultivation of an electorate which will be oriented to the values of democracy and European civilization.

Veaceslav Untila
Co-president of the Alliance
„Moldova Noastra“ Party



FAREWELL TO THE
PARLIAMENTARY REPUBLIC!

Since the communists came to power, the Republic of Moldova actually lost its status of a parliamentary state. The leading position of the parliament in administering state affairs remained only on paper, while, in reality, Moldova became a state with an evident presidential governance. The legislative body had changed into a voting machine used only for promulgating the decisions taken by the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The first signal that the Republic of Moldova was no longer a parliamentary state came on March 15, 2001, merely 20 days following the parliamentary elections that brought the communists to power.

On the same unforgettable day, Vladimir Voronin (just communist party leader at the time) made a statement menacing the followers of democracy. Without taking into account the Constitution, which clearly stated that the Republic of Moldova was a parliamentary state, and without even trying to veil the intention of his party to reduce the role of the parliament, the future head of state declared that the new speaker of parliament would be appointed at the plenary meeting of the Communist Party (!). Through that statement, Vladimir Voronin was suggesting that the actual leader of the republic would be the plenary session of the Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova, and in no way the parliament.

On March 22, the newly-elected parliament began the formation of permanent commissions. That day was also marked by the first communist abuse at parliamentary level. Thus, according to the number of seats obtained, the communists got seven out of the ten positions of parliamentary commissions chairmen, the Braghis Alliance – two, and the Christian-Democrats – one.

The communists were marginalizing the opposition by offering them chairs of less important commissions, such as, the head of the ecological commission. At the same time, not without the communists' assistance, Mihail Sidorov was appointed as chairman of the commission for human rights and national minorities, who, though being elected as a member of parliament on the „Braghis Alliance“ list, is a supporter of the communists. Sidorov left the „Braghis Alliance“ and declared himself an independent member of parliament, but basically every time votes with the communists. As a reward, the parliamentary majority is keeping the chair of the head of parliamentary commission for him, and is opposing when the faction tries to dismiss Sidorov and replace him with one of its representatives, as it is provided by the regulation of the parliament.

On April 7, 2001, President Vladimir Voronin officially started his term in office. On that day, the new government made the first attack against the press by denying access for the representatives of some mass media, including „Flux“ and „Tara“ opposition newspapers, to the ceremony of Vladimir Voronin's inauguration. From then on, it became clear that under the communist regime, no freedom of press would be possible, and that, for the leadership, the press was just a propaganda instrument and by no means an indispensable element of a democratic society.

On the same day, in his inauguration speech, President Vladimir Voronin proves that he does not intend to be a president of the entire nation, but only of those citizens who see the future of Moldova alongside with Russia. The new chief of state makes it clear that the Russian Federation is going to be Moldova's „strategic partner“. The orientation of the political vector eastwards puts an end to the European aspirations of the majority of population. Although later on the communist government is trying to show that the European integration has become its priority as well, everybody still understands that the change of attitude was more like a measure imposed on the communists by the new geopolitical changes. Even after declaring European integration as a national priority, the communists played the same game of double standards by promoting policies that suited the Kremlin.



NATIONALIZATION BEGINS

The first act of economic pressure occurred on April 20, 2001. The parliament then declared certain brands of goods registered before the beginning of 1992 as state property.

While pretending that they wanted to prevent some well-known brands from possible alienation, the communists were actually initiating a quite profitable business – allowing for a special fee the economic agents to use certain brand names. In that way, some of the businessmen disgraced by the power were estranged from the most well-known brand names, and the right to use the brands was given to the communists' favorites or to those who paid most, not necessarily to the state.



WE ARE MILITARILY COLLABORATING WITH RUSSIA

On the same day, the parliament ratified the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Government of the Russian Federation regarding military cooperation. The act stipulates that the parties will collaborate in the areas related to: providing the utilization of weapons and military equipment by the Moldovan national army and by the Russian armed forces; technical and material supply of armed forces from both countries; training of soldiers from the Moldovan national army in Russian education institutions, and of the Russian soldiers – in those from the Republic of Moldova; common development of scientific and research works in the military area; collaboration on the use of military bases and training centers, etc.

According to this document, the cooperation between the parties will be carried out through mutual official visits, working meetings of the ministers of defense and of other military leaders, consultations, exchange of experiences, trainings, conferences, seminars, etc. In other words, the Republic of Moldova is acknowledging its role of Russian vassal, maintaining its dependence on this powerful military force.



THE REAL ATTITUDE
TOWARDS „IMPERIALISTS“

While being in opposition, the communists were using every single occasion to attack the international financial organizations. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were called all sorts of bad names: international beasts, vampires, enemies of proletarians, imperialists, etc. This hostile attitude towards foreign creditors was actively propagated during the communists' election campaign. Yet, after the elections of February 25, 2001, the situation had radically changed, and the communists had to beg from the same „imperialists“, whom they previously called enemies of the proletarians.

In the second half of April, the communists had to give a sound answer: would they or would they not be ratifying the Agreement with the World Bank, which was providing for a \$10 million preferential credit for reforming the health system in the Republic of Moldova. Of course, the answer was affirmative (though the actual voting took place a couple of months later).

Interestingly enough, previously, the communists were not only criticizing the foreign donors, they had even voted against the respective Agreement when that was submitted for ratification to the parliament of the 14th legislature. People began to understand the real value of Voronin team's statements!



THE COMMUNISTS LEGALIZE
THE DISASTER IN THE NATIONAL ARMY

On April 26, the new communist parliament rejected the draft law aimed at replacing the mandatory military service with the contract based one. At first sight, nothing seriously happened – the members of parliament had expressed their opinion regarding a certain document, following their conscience. Yet, that is just the first impression, while the real meaning of this gesture is completely different.

First of all, the communists prove that they are not disposed to consider the draft laws proposed by the opposition. Second, it is obvious that the new government does not accept any amendments even when the latter are accompanied by strong arguments. Third, the rejection of this draft law proves the incompetence of the communists, as well as their poor knowledge of the actual situation in the national army. Everyone knows that 'army' in the Republic of Moldova means nothing else but a group of poorly dressed, poorly fed youngsters, who are engaged in all sorts of activities, excepting the ones related to the military area. The transition to a professional army on a contractual basis is the only possibility to catch up with the civilized world.

We should not forget that many provisions of the international law provide for the right of the recruits to refuse the military service, if that comes into contradiction with their religious, pacifistic or other beliefs. However, the communists are ignoring these arguments, and, by rejecting the respective draft law, they actually come out in favor of keeping the disaster in the national army.



THE FIRST ATTEMPT TO RECOGNIZE RUSSIAN AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

On the same day, the parliament adopts in final reading with the majority of votes the Law on registries' office civil acts, which stipulates that „drafting of civil acts as well as introducing the additional data shall be made in the state language and in the Russian language”. This act is adopted at the initiative of the communist members of parliament, Victor Andrusciac and Victor Stepaniuc.

The ruling authorities are bringing back into spotlight the language issue, which already made the Republic of Moldova suffer a lot at the beginning of 90's. Implicitly, the communists are questioning the existence of the Republic of Moldova as a state, which, according to their statements, they are so insistently defending.

The voters get another proof that the interests of the majority of the population do not coincide with those of the communists. The new government speaks in favor of a language spoken by a minority, that is not even the most numerous (the Russian minority is smaller in number than the Ukrainian one), to the detriment of the majority and of other minorities in the republic. That was a wrong policy, which at the beginning of 2002 had brought into the streets tens of thousands of people, thus destabilizing the situation in the republic at utmost.

The conflict was settled only after repeated interventions of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.



SETTLING SCORES WITH UNDESIRABLE PERSONS

The „Teleradio-Moldova“ company was and continues to be one of the main instruments for any ruling party to promote its personal interests. That is why the communists would not let the old leaders of the company perform their jobs any longer, and, on April 27, 2001, Anatol Barbei was dismissed from his position of general director of the State Television (at that time), and Vasile Grebencea – from the position of general director of the National Radio. Iulian Magaleas, the general director of the company was left in his position, because he was a member of the Communist Party and was previously promoted into that position by the same political party.

From that moment on, the national television and radio were transformed into some „brain-washing“ tools, becoming the main levers of communist propaganda. The opposition, the civil society and the journalist community could not tolerate that situation. As a result, the protests, which were taking place at the end of 2001 – beginning of 2002, reached the „Teleradio-Moldova“ company as well. Although, a lot of efforts were made to transform the „Teleradio-Moldova“ company into a public broadcasting institution, those actions remained only on paper. In reality, the company continued to be subservient to the communist power.

▷ RELEASE OF ILIE ILASCU – A PROOF
OF THE COMMUNISTS SIDING WITH RUSSIA
AND THE TIRASPOL CRIMINALS

At the beginning of May, the public opinion was shocked by stunning news: Ilie Ilascu, a political prisoner of the Tiraspol criminal regime, regained his freedom! Unfortunately, Ilascu was the only one released that day, rather than all the members of his group. Undoubtedly, that was a real great event that should have happened long time ago. At the same time, leaving emotions aside, a question emerges: how did the communists succeed where the democrats had failed, and why were the other members of the group not also released?

Taking a sober view, we realized that the ruling party from Chisinau was not at all bothered with the fact that the members of Ilascu group were illegally detained in Tiraspol, that their human rights were severely violated, and that they were humiliated by criminals. The communists simply used Ilascu for satisfying Moscow's interests. At that time, the European Court for Human Rights (ECHR) was due to examine the Ilascu case. It was expected that Russia would be found guilty for violating the human rights of the group members and, implicitly, for starting the Transnistrian conflict, and for creating the phantom-republic on the left bank of the Nistru River. That is why, Voronin and Smirnov received orders to release Ilie Ilascu in return of his promise to withdraw the complaint from the ECHR. According to a statement made later on by Ilie Ilascu, that condition was brought by Sevtov-Antiufieiev prior to the release. However, in Ilie Ilascu's opinion, the rebels from Tiraspol must pay for the sufferings of his group members.



PRICE FOR EMPTY
ELECTORAL PROMISES

On May 10, a special commission was set up, being in charge of developing proposals aimed at adjusting the national legislation to the Law on the special legal status of the autonomous territorial-administrative unit Gagauz-Yeri. The communists started to proclaim some of the Gagauzia's rights at constitutional level, actually legalizing the existence of a state within a state.

During the election campaign, while hunting the votes in the southern part of the country, the communists promised the Gagauzian voters whole mountains of gold. They promised them even the right to found their own state in case Moldova was to loose its actual status. The Law on the special legal status of the autonomous territorial-administrative unit Gagauz-Yeri already provided for this right since 1994, but none of the previous governments had taken the risk to include it in the Constitution. Later on, the communists also gave up their intentions to legislate the respective provision, but only after they got aware of the implied risks.

However, let us get back to the commission. Its creation and further activity brought to the edge the relations between Chisinau and Comrat. The Gagauzian authorities were opposing in all possible ways to the proposals suggested by Chisinau and, consequently, Gagauz-Yeri, which used to be a quite peaceful region before the communists came to power, had suddenly turned into a centre of instability. The conflict between the communists and the Comrat team had already reached the Congress of local and regional authorities

of the Council of Europe, and could be stopped only through antidemocratic methods. For that, the communists had to leave aside the state affairs and deal exclusively with the Gagauzian issue, created with their own hands. Thus, in the beginning, they established a new majority in the Comrat People's Assembly, subservient to the Chisinau ruling authorities, and then they caused anticipated Governor elections, which enabled them to appoint a loyal leader and government (it is not worth talking about all the frauds registered during those elections). A question emerges: who needed that conflict that had emerged out of nowhere and had paralyzed the activity of the autonomy for quite a long period of time?



The liquidation of judet and the return to rayon system was by all means one of the greatest „achievements“ of the communist government. Thus, the territorial and administrative structures founded in 1998 with the support of the international community had not even started their normal functioning when they were already replaced by other structures, established without any proper economic reasons.

The return to rayons was one of the main issues in the communists' electoral program. Still, many people were hoping that the new government would ignore that promise (as they did in relation to a lot of others) and would not allow the party interests dominate over the state interests. But those hopes were shattered away on May 14, 2001, when parliament speaker Eugenia Ostapciuc made a statement in the „Parliamentary Hour“ TV program saying that in the shortest period a special commission would be created, aimed at reviewing the administrative and territorial structure of the republic.

That statement hid the communists' populism, as well as the personal interests of some members of the ruling party. The communist regional leaders were pressuring their colleagues from the Chisinau administration to vote as soon as possible for the rayon structure so that they would get their chairs. In some way, the communists from Chisinau became hostages of those from the regions and finally had to comply with their insistence. The regional communists had certainly won, but the republic hindered its natural development for quite a long period of time.



EVEN THE APPEARANCES HAVE NOT CHANGED

We start to get used to the pro-European statements made by Vladimir Voronin's team. The communists seem to be more European than the Europeans, despite the fact that a couple of months ago they were shouting about Moldova's integration into the Russia-Byelorussia Union and that we had nothing to do in Europe. Still, on May 17, the communist parliament rejected the initiative on setting up a ministry for European integration. Officially, the communists grounded their refusal with the fact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was successfully fulfilling the functions, which were supposed to be carried out by the new ministry. In reality, the communists did not want to listen to the population's wish (opinion polls show that the majority of the population supports the European integration of the Republic of Moldova). At that moment, the communists were not ready to change a bit of their look, let alone their morals.



IN THE SAME BOAT WITH NAZIS AND FASCISTS

On May 25, the parliament rejected a draft law submitted by the opposition on the prohibition of the parties of fascist, Nazi and communist orientation. Given the severe crimes committed by the parties of those orientations during different historical periods, many countries adopted similar laws. Since the Republic of Moldova intended to integrate into the large family of European states, then it should have acted in the same manner. However, apparently, for the communists 'the shirt is near, but nearer is the skin', i.e. their personal interests were above the state interests.

It is worth mentioning that through that draft law the opposition did not intend to take Voronin's communists out of the law – they would have been compelled to change just the name of their party. Nobody questions the legitimacy of their acceding to power.

Therefore, while protecting their private interests, the communists found themselves in the position of defending the Nazi and fascists. That was an unprecedented case in Europe, when a ruling party refused to prohibit in its country the activity of Nazi and fascist parties. Let us admit that the communists were concerned exclusively with their own name, then, why didn't they launch a draft law referring to the Nazi and fascists only? Probably, the answer to that question and to lots of others will be found out only after the communists go to the place where they belong – to the trash bin of history.



SALUTE PIONEERS!

On May 28, 2001, Eugenia Ostapciuc, in her new position of parliament speaker, paid a working visit to the „Ionel“ sewing factory. During that visit, the speaker promised that the new ruling party would make the unique school uniform compulsory for all the pupils, as it used to be during the late USSR.

Through that statement, Eugenia Ostapciuc wished to suggest to the „Ionel“ employees that the state had not forgotten them and that soon they were supposed to get a big workload, making school uniforms for the entire country. Yet, in her „noble“ intentions, the speaker pretended to forget several important things: in a market economy, the state cannot be in favor of one economic agent to the detriment of others (that is in contradiction with many normative acts, including the Constitution); the state is breaking the right of parents and of pupils to decide on what to wear; children are basically compelled to bear additional unjustified costs. Either Eugenia Ostapciuc had realized the threats which that initiative would bring or the new chairwoman of the parliament was tempered by her more experienced colleagues, still, that idea was never implemented. Regretfully, the Communist Party did not give up in the same easy manner its other hoodoo initiatives.

COMMUNISTS OPPOSE
AGAINST NATO

In the first stage after the communists came to power, Vladimir Voronin’s party is behaving like a real opposition party. The communists are criticizing everybody without even thinking that they are exactly the ones that are supposed to change the situation in the republic. The new government is having the same attitude towards NATO. For many old-style communists NATO continues to be the „number one“ enemy as it used to be considered during the cold war.

The west was expecting from the new Chisinau government if not a friendly attitude towards NATO, then at least a modest one. Instead, Andrei Neguta, the chairman of the parliamentary commission for foreign affairs, declared that the Communist Party of Moldova was against NATO expansion. Following that statement, the situation was both alarming and ridiculous. Alarming, because the new government was questioning many projects that were developing under NATO auspices, and, first of all, the participation of Moldovan soldiers in the „Partnership for peace“ program. Second, the communists were excluding Moldova from a possible NATO expansion, which actually extended only up to the Prut River, and the Republic of Moldova remained under the Russian military influence. Ridiculously enough, a bunch of communists, which came to run a state in the center of Europe merely due to the irony of fate, dared to challenge the most powerful military bloc in the world.

On May 31, the parliament started the examination of a draft law submitted by the opposition regarding „the access to individual records and de-conspiracy of security as political police“. The approval of that draft law could have served as a step forward towards the democratization of the society, and its concordance to international standards; it would have ended that terror period, once borne by the humiliated Moldovan people. However, the communists rejected that document without bringing any serious arguments.

Voronin's buddies behaved that way because the majority of them „were coming from the past“, as comrade Stepaniuc stated. Meaning, they were part of the ruling clan of the former communist regime. At that time, every single leader, regardless of his/her grade, had a record at the KGB, which also specified the cases of „voluntary cooperation“ with the political police. The approval of the act submitted by the opposition would have brought light on many of the present dignitaries. We have enough reasons to assume that lots of events would have happened completely different and that many of the decision-makers, who today represent us throughout Europe, should have at least asked for dismissal.

Undoubtedly, the murder of Gheorghe Grumatchi, the head of the market association from Balti, is one of the dirtiest spots on the red government's conscience. The public opinion was shocked by the cruelty of that homicide, executed at order. Gheorghe Grumatchi was murdered in the middle of the street in the very face of the day while driving to his job.

May be the case would not have been so widely publicized, if prior to his death, Grumatchi did not have stated at a press-conference that he was put under terrible pressures and intimidations due to his refusal to comply with the interests of certain groups. He had also mentioned some names of high ranking persons amongst whom were: Member of Parliament Victor Morev, minister of justice Ion Morei, former Balti chief police inspector Nicolae Negrei. Although the opposition had required removing the above mentioned persons from their posts throughout the inquiry, the communists ignored that initiative! During the investigation, a couple of confusing news sneaked, alleging that murderers were caught, then that the detainees were not those wanted, and then again that some facts proved to be true, etc. But not a single word was mentioned on who had ordered that murder, or whether the accusations brought against Morei, Morev, Negrei were proved true or not. Just silence!



PRESS STAYS
„SHACKLED“

The first summer of the communist government started pretty sadly for the press – on June 1, 2001, the communist members of parliament rejected the legislative initiative regarding the abrogation of the Law on press that, in the opinion of many mass media representatives, was an obsolete normative act that was hindering the development of press as the fourth power in the state. At that moment, the communists were the only ones who did not recognize that the Law on press was not meeting the democratic spirit of the society's development.

An impartial evaluation of the act that, unfortunately, remained in force, was given in the informative note, accompanying the initiative on the abrogation of the Law: „The law was conceived as an artificial hybrid of soviet and international press standards. It does not provide for the independence of periodicals, and rather describes in a trivial manner the way of organizing their activities. Moreover, the Law is trying to regulate the relations between founders, publishers and journalists under the positions and ideas of 1994, which are already far obsolete and do not meet the actual realities“.

The experts were mentioning then (during the parliamentary sittings) that the law was worked out in 1994 in response to some press articles related to cases of corruption involving state officials. Thus, the law was amended with restrictive measures in order to keep the journalists' mouths shut.



ANTI-JUDET OFFENSIVE STARTS
WITH A NEW COMMISSION

The former statements made by speaker Eugenia Ostapciuc and by other communist leaders were not empty words – the communists had really started to demolish the new administrative and territorial system built in 1998. And, as usual, in order to demolish something – in this case, the judet system – the new government formed a special commission. The official objective of that structure was „to submit for approval to the parliament the amendments to the Law on local public administration and administrative and territorial organization of the Republic of Moldova“. Yet, it was enough to look at the members of that commission (communists or persons promoted by them), and especially to see who was appointed as its head (Vasile Iovv) in order to realize immediately the real goal of the commission.

Above I have already mentioned what was the actual purpose of that „reform“ and there is no need to do it once again. Moreover, it shortly became obvious why and who needed the return to rayons. The only thing still worth mentioning is the form under which the communists masked their horrid initiative. Therefore, the commission was supposed „to study the compatibility of the above mentioned laws with the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, as well as with the European Chart for local self-administration“. The new government was suggesting that the judet system would be in contradiction with the Constitution and, especially, with the international legislation in that area. Queerly enough, the experts

from the Congress of local and regional authorities of the Council of Europe were asserting exactly the contrary. Therefore, the return to rayons was made against the common sense, the international legislation and the opinion of the Council of Europe experts.



On June 5, the communists expressed their readiness to ratify the Treaty on the delimitation of borders with Ukraine. Doubtlessly, Moldova needed such a Treaty, but not at all in the version it was finally concluded. That act was a big disadvantage for us from several viewpoints, as we had to cede some of the territory to Ukraine, including 7,7 strategic km in the vicinity of Palanca village and the biggest isle of the Nistru River– Nisalu. And we got nothing in return. Moldova conceded to Ukraine important territories at 7 frontier points, while Ukraine – only at two (Giurgiulesti and Basarabasca).

It is worth mentioning that this rush decision taken by the communists for the ratification of an act that was in contradiction with the interests of Moldova led to the destabilization of the situation in the country. During that period the first anticommunist actions of protest had been registered and the first civic Committee had been founded, named „Palanca“. The ratification of the Agreement revealed another relevant aspect – it was for the first time when the communist authorities dared to violate the provisions of the Constitution in an open and direct manner, which were stipulating that the territory of the Republic of Moldova was inalienable. That case proved that the new Chisinau government was not observing the legislation in force and was identifying itself with the state. Yet, in a democratic state such an attitude is unacceptable.

▷ COMMUNISTS AGREE WITH THE PRESENCE OF RUSSIAN SOLDIERS IN MOLDOVA

The problem of the Russian military presence in the Republic of Moldova still remains one of the most acute. Although the terms for the withdrawal of weapons and of Russian troops out of Transnistria were set up during the OSCE summits in Istanbul and Porto, nothing happened so far. Some people assert that Russia is to be blamed, others bring charges against Smirnov, still a part of the guilt (and it might be the biggest) stands with the Voronin regime. Since coming to power, the exponents of this regime were the ones saying that they would not mind the Russian military presence in Moldova.

The first statement related to that was made by vice-speaker Vadim Misin during a press conference on June 5, shortly after the communists came to power. According to his statement, „nobody is interested in withdrawing the Russian troops from Transnistria as long as the weapons are still stored in the region.“ Vadim Misin was suggesting that „the Russian military troops are not the main problem“. He also stated that „Moldova could even examine the possibility of their further staying in Transnistria even after the withdrawal of weapons on condition that those troops would have the status of peace-keepers and stay under the OSCE auspices“. Obviously, following that statement, the Russians did not rush to fulfill their international commitments.

▷ COMMUNISTS DENY THEIR RESPONSIBILITY IN ILASCU GROUP'S CASE

On June 6, hearings related to the case of Ilascu group members took place at the European Court for Human Rights. The respective case was submitted back in 1999, when the petitioners were requesting the high international courts to attest the violation of the following human rights: the right to freedom and personal safety, the right to a fair case trial, the right to live, the right not to be subjected to torture, as well as the right to observe their private and family lives. As Transnistria was not a subject of international law, Ilascu group requested the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation governments to be found guilty.

The new Moldovan authorities were not only overlooking the well-grounded claims of their citizens who had to suffer a lot from the actions committed by the criminal regime, they were even straightly confronting them. It would have been normal if the Chisinau government, after shouting at every corner about how difficult it was getting Ilie Ilascu released, acknowledged its guilt (even implicitly) and compensated the petitioners their material and moral damages, borne during all those years.



NEARER AND YET
NEARER TO THE EAST...

On June 7, 2001, Andrei Neguta, the chairman of the parliamentary commission for foreign policy brought „delighted“ news to the Moldovan public opinion – the Parliamentary assembly of the Russia-Byelorussia interstate union was eager to confer on the Republic of Moldova the status of permanent observer. The point was that Andrei Kirilovici just came back from Grodno (Byelorussia) where that assembly had taken place, and where he most probably had received the big news about the „charitable“ decision adopted by the elder brothers – Russia and Byelorussia.

Probably, after making the issue public, the communists were suggesting to their electorate that they had not forgotten their promises. But the price of that „nice electoral gesture“ was a bit too high for us. That action, as well as many other similar ones, made the international organizations forget about Moldova until 2003, so that our republic lost two years that could have been very valuable for its European destiny. That was exactly the period when new spheres of influence were being established and a new splitting of Europe was taking place. The European organizations „contacted“ us again only in 2003 in order to inform us that we were offered to play the humiliating role of EU neighbor-state. Had Moldova promoted a more efficient foreign policy, and had some of the communists not shown their pro-Russian predilections, then, who knows, may be we could have been proposed the status of associate-member. The dialogue carried out lately with the European structures, and which Voronin tries to describe as „successes of the European integration policy“, is nothing but a formality which the European Union has to follow when setting up some basic rules for its new neighbors.



THE START OF SETTLING SCORES
WITH THE OPPOSITION

In order to keep the opposition press silent, the communists launched a draft law aimed at prohibiting the financial or any other form of support provided by the governments of other states to political newspapers in Moldova. Their goal was more than clear, as some of the newspapers published in Chisinau were receiving technical assistance in the framework of different projects funded by Romania. Yet, the communists forgot that, through some programs, the USA was also supporting occasionally certain publications in Chisinau. This could be exemplified by the „Jurnal de Chisinau“ newspaper that at the time received a grant from the US Embassy in the Republic of Moldova.

The communists failed to understand one thing: the press could not be silenced through administrative methods. If necessary, people rather raise by one Leu to support the publication that would offer them objective information and get rid of the brain-washing newspapers subservient to the incumbent authorities. Thus, Voronin’s regime did not benefit of the respective draft law, as the opposition newspapers continued to carry out their activities and write the truth about the „high results“ achieved by the present government. Instead, the Chisinau press lost important financial sources, the external image of Moldova had to suffer, and the West got another proof that in the Republic of Moldova repressive methods were used against the opposition.



COMMUNISTS CONQUER THE NORTHERN CAPITAL

By mid of June 2001, using administrative resources, the communists succeeded in appointing their comrade, Vasile Panciuc, as the head of Balti municipality. The position of mayor of that city was vacant since Victor Morev became a member of parliament in Chisinau.

The saddest thing was that Panciuc managed to come to power in Balti in the same manner as the Communist Party did at national level, i.e. due to a very low voters' turnout. Thus, only 34,7% of the voters participated at the municipal elections in Balti. The voters' turnout should have been at least 33,3% in order to have valid elections. The communist candidate came to power in a city where he was supported only by 1/4 of inhabitants. Similarly, the communists are ruling the country after being elected by a little bit more than 1/3 of the total number of citizens that have the right to vote.



BLACKMAILING THE OPPOSITION MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, THE JUDGES AND THE PROSECUTORS

The first half of 2001 was marked by feverish attempts made by the communists aimed at taking control over all the fields of activities in the country. The main objective was to keep the opposition members of parliament silent. But how to achieve this when, according to the legislation in force, a member of parliament cannot be charged for the statements made during the period of his mandate?

On June 18, Maria Postoico, the chairwoman of the Parliamentary juridical commission for appointments and immunities, stated that, soon, the parliament was going to examine the possibility of depriving the members of parliament, judges and prosecutors of their immunities. Maria Postoico said that the parliament had two draft laws on that issue – one worked out by the Government, and the other – by a group of members of parliament. She did not specify whether the given drafts were providing for full or partial depriving of immunity of the above mentioned categories (and up to now there is no total clarity in that issue).

Why, while wishing to put the opposition in its place, did the communists also „disturb“ the judges and the prosecutors? The answer is simple. There is no use in depriving a member of parliament of immunity, if he/she cannot be then prosecuted and intimidated by involving him/her in various trials. The new government was not only interested in keeping

the opposition silent, but also in taking control over the prosecutors, and, especially, over the judges. By the way, given the number of statements made by experts during the last years, we can assume that Voronin's regime accomplished that mission very successfully – the judges and the prosecutors are strongly subservient to the ruling party. Therefore, if one does not have total control, the blackmail becomes the most efficient mechanism for enforcing the position, even if it is done in quite a latent form.



On June 22, the Parliament adopted with the votes of the communist parliamentary faction a draft law providing for the cases when the enterprises, which are in the process of bankruptcy, are transferred into state ownership. According to the amendments, in case the debt of the enterprise to the state exceeds 50% of its assets, it shall pass into the administration of a state representative appointed by the Government. The state was supposed to become the owner of the enterprises that were profitable before privatization, while their new owners brought them to bankruptcy.

The enterprises that broke or did not fulfill the contract of sale were also supposed to become state ownership. The same would happen to the enterprises that were built or rebuilt with the credits provided or guaranteed by the state, but later on brought to bankruptcy by the owner. In such cases, the state had to return to the owner the money invested by him/her and, at the same time, to deduct from that sum the lost profit.

The communists have anticipated most of the cases when, through certain levers, it is possible to nationalize many formerly privatized enterprises. The law seems to be well thought-out, but its practical use has proven that it was developed just to satisfy the personal and group interests of the communists. In this context, we may bring the example of the „Farmaco“ case, when the investors from Romania and the USA were forced out of the country without receiving a single penny back; another example could be the „Air-Moldova“ case, or the „Union Fenosa“ company that is frequently harassed, etc.



FIRST ATTACK AGAINST THE LOCAL AUTONOMY

Many times, after the parliamentary elections from February 2001, the communists have complained that, basically, they cannot do anything to improve the situation in the country as they do not hold total control over the local authorities. In reality, the point was not related to „improving the situation“ in the state, because it was hardly possible to find a mayor or a councilor who would strongly oppose to any really successful initiatives, which met the needs of the people. The new government was rather concerned with the fact that many locally elected officials were not communists and they could serve as an eventual base for the democrats in their acceding to power at central level. Therefore, the communists were doing everything possible to restrict the actions of the opposition representatives in the regions. Namely, on June 22, 2001, certain amendments to the Law on local public administration were adopted, according to which the local councils were deprived of the right to administrate the budgets of the regions. Under that law, this responsibility rested with the prefectures.

As prefectures were representatives of the government in the regions, we can say that the new Chisinau authorities centralized the administration of public funds. Not only the communists committed a serious attempt against the principle of local autonomy guaranteed by the international legislation, they also provided real conditions for some eventual abuses. Basically, being the administrators of the local budgets, the communists can easily favor their representatives in the regions to the detriment of the democrats. In that way, the new government got an important leverage over the „disobedient persons“ by restricting their competencies of locally elected officials at most.



THE REAL SOCIAL EQUITY AND CARE FOR PEOPLE

One of the first concerns of the communist parliament was to increase the salaries of the members of parliament! That „remarkable“ event took place in the second half of June 2001. It was difficult to find out the exact date considering the total lack of transparency during the approval of the respective decision. It is worth mentioning that the respective issue was not discussed during the parliamentary sitting, but at the permanent bureau in the presence of a limited group of persons. The communists did their best to conceal the truth about their care for the voters and whose interests they were defending.

According to some information, the salary of the parliamentary speaker was raised from 2505 to 3074 lei, of the vice-speaker – from 2250 to 2695 lei, of the parliamentary commissions' chairmen – from 2289 to 2600 lei, and of the rest of the members of parliament – from 2210 to 2526. Those salary raises were implying additional monthly costs of 57000 lei.

That initiative stirred up the society and made the communists considerably „reduce their appetite“. On June 26, 2001, the parliamentary press office released a note denying the information regarding the salary raises for the members of parliament. We can assume that the salary raises occurred, but being afraid of the public effect, the new government changed its attitude. Who knows whether that was a change of attitude, or maybe the real purpose was to mislead the voters? Although the decision was cancelled, who can guarantee that no other secret meetings took place, aimed at establishing other salary raises for „comrades proletarians“?



THE FIRST MASS PROTEST

After the communists came to power, the first mass protest occurred on June 28, 2001. On that day, around 300 inhabitants of Palanca village organized a meeting in front of the Parliament, protesting against the intention to ratify the Treaty on the delimitation of borders between the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. The protesters were supported by the representatives of different public organizations as well as by some opposition members of parliament.

During that meeting, the protesters developed a memorandum that included a number of requirements to the state authorities. The main demand was to establish a National Commission formed by members of parliament and representatives of the civil society, and who, after analyzing the situation, were to renegotiate a new Treaty regarding the borders with Ukraine. That action, organized by Palanca inhabitants, proved that the communists' abuses were not going to be overlooked, that each action against democracy and people's interests would be strongly sanctioned by the society. Since then, the communists had no easy life – every time they were trying to benefit of their mandate, the people were protesting in the streets. And each protest brings us closer and closer to the overthrowing of Voronin's regime.



RUSSIANS FAVORED ONCE MORE

On the same day, the Parliament made a series of amendments to the Law on publicity, stipulating that the publicity in the Republic of Moldova was to be broadcasted in the language chosen by the producer. Through this document, the communists made a new attack against the state language and tried to raise the prestige of the Russian language. It is not hard to imagine what other language, besides the state language, is usually used for broadcasting the publicity in the Republic of Moldova.

Of course, nobody denies the right of the economic agent to advertise a product in the language chosen by him, and that right is being applied on a large scale in many states. However, in the civilized world, the producer of publicity is compelled to broadcast his product both in the chosen language and in the official state language. The purpose is to protect the consumers in the respective country. Many of them could not be able to understand the language chosen by the producer, thus missing the full and truthful information about a certain good or service. Yet, in our country, the new government chose to favor once more the Russians ignoring the interests of the majority population of the Republic of Moldova.



COMMUNISTS SQUANDER WORLD BANK MONEY

Although previously they made triumphal statements and flexed their muscles belligerently defying the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, at the beginning of July, the communists realized that the state budget could not be replenished with mere wishful thinking. That was precisely the moment when the government was not able to honor its obligations on repaying back some foreign loans. Initially, the authorities were putting their stakes on covering part of the loan with money from the World Bank – \$30 million, and \$6,3 million from the European Union. But those organizations had suspended crediting Republic of Moldova until the latter renewed its relations with the IMF.

The government was hoping to compensate a part of the budgetary deficit hole with funds obtained from the privatization of the RED-Nord and RED-Nord-Vest power distribution networks, jointly both deals were supposed to levy around 151 million lei. As those privatization plans never materialized, and as the Republic of Moldova did not receive any financial assistance from abroad, the government had to ask the members of parliament to amend the Law on budget, so that the World Bank would get permission to provide the Government with loans until the end of 2001 aimed at repaying the foreign debt in the amount of \$30 million. The budget amendment was the only chance to overcome that situation with a clean conscience. On the other hand, by borrowing money from WB, the communists were jeopardizing the stability of the national currency, those \$30 millions being part of Moldova's National Bank reserve fund.



A MERE „SETTLING OF SCORES“?

On July 5, the Parliament voted for the suspension of the parliamentary immunity of the Christian Democratic People's Party leader, Iurie Rosca. That was the first case in the history of the young democratic state, the Republic of Moldova, when the leader of an opposition faction was deprived of his immunity and brought in the dock. The refusal of the opposition factions to vote proved that what happened in the parliament that day had nothing in common with democracy.

The opposition members of parliament qualified the depriving of the CDPP leader of his immunity as „settling of scores with no legal grounds”. The ruling authorities were insisting on depriving him of immunity without having any evidence or arguments proving his guilt. Whether Iurie Rosca was guilty or not – had to be decided by the court, which had finally brought its verdict. Yet, something else was relevant for the moment, i.e. a dangerous precedent had occurred. Later on, the communists were repeatedly depriving the opposition members of parliament of their immunities.



INCENTIVES FOR THE FORMER MSSR MINISTERS

After taking care of their personal welfare, the communist members of parliament proceeded to solving the problems of their former mentors from the Soviet Union times. While the former leaders of other states were brought to court for their actions committed during the Soviet time, those from the Republic of Moldova, on the contrary, received various concessions. Under a law adopted by the Parliament on July 5, the ministers of the former Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) received the same social privileges as the members of the executive committees after the year of 1991. According to that law, the former leaders of consumers' cooperatives and the ex-chairmen of the kolkhozes from the Soviet Moldova era received social benefits at the same level with the former ministers.

One moral and one legal violation are worth mentioning. The moral aspect: why alongside with the soviet ex-ministers similar benefits were not attributed to those who had suffered from the Soviet communist regime? The legal aspect: did the communists forget that a law could not be retroactive, thus, its action could not have any impact on the former soviet officials?



A SLAP ON THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA'S CHEEK

At the beginning of July 2001, the European Court for Human Rights found as well-grounded the case of Ilascu group, through which the political detainees of the Tiraspol separatist regime were blaming the governments of Russia and of the Republic of Moldova for violating a series of their fundamental human rights, and namely: the right to freedom and personal safety, the right to a fair case trial, the right to live, the right not to be subjected to torture, as well as the right to observe their private and family lives. The petitioners considered Russia partly guilty due to its influence over Transnistria, and the Republic of Moldova – for not being capable to ensure the rights of its own citizens.

The fact that the European Court for Human Rights found the case of Ilascu group grounded could be interpreted as a slap on the Republic of Moldova's cheek. Had the Chisinau authorities officially assumed the responsibility for the detention of a group of innocent citizens, had they undertaken all the possible steps to release all the members of the group, had they established certain compensations for the moral and material damages borne by those people, the respective issue for sure would not have become a debate at Strasbourg.



THE „DEATH TRAIN“

Those who were following the activity of the Parliament of the 14th legislature could not miss the conflict emerged around the issue of transportation of nuclear waste from the nuclear power plant from Kozlodui to Russia via the Republic of Moldova. At the time, the members of parliament, though not managing to impede the transition in the summer of 1998, at least got a break of several years. Since then nothing was heard about that „death train”, which was jeopardizing the health of the people (because of its dangerous load) as well as the internal state security. On July 6, 2001, due to the „wise“ policy carried out by the communists, the issue again was brought into the spotlight.

According to some opposition leaders and some ecological organizations, the communists decided that the „death train“ would transit the republic without anybody knowing that, thus, avoiding the mistakes of the former parliament, when the respective issue was made public. It is worth mentioning that the Republic of Moldova was supposed to receive only \$50 thousand for that transit. That was the sum the communists valued the health of the people and the national security! It should not be overlooked that Voronin’s party had again broken the national and international legislations in force. The legislative acts in that area were stipulating that, as Moldova was not a nuclear state, its territory could not be used for storing or transition of nuclear waste. Due to the top secret nature of that „affair”, nobody was sure whether

the „death train“ had transited Moldova in the summer of 2001. Yet, given the fact that the „red government“ later on ratified an Agreement providing the Bulgarians with the right to transit periodically the nuclear waste via the Republic of Moldova, we can assume that that dangerous transportation still took place.



ATTACK AGAINST THE JUDGES' INDEPENDENCE

One of the main goals of the „red government“ was to subordinate the third power in the state. Thus, Voronin & company undertook several actions with that view, either of legislative nature, or in form of direct pressures over the employees from the respective area. Though some of the judges left themselves dominated by the communists, in July 2001, the majority of the lawyers were still trying to oppose to the antidemocratic offensive that was widely spreading. Thus, on July 7, the VII extraordinary Congress of the Association of Judges was called. The judges adopted a resolution, blaming the leadership of the republic for its attempts to control their independence.

The judges brought the following arguments in favor of their accusation: the abrogation by the parliament of the article 32 of the Law on the status of the judge providing for the retirement conditions for the judges; the development of the draft law on the judges' immunity, etc. The resolution stated that „those proposals were actually aimed at destabilizing the courts so that it would be easier to manipulate and influence them. At the same time, during the transition period, the judicial power had to be as stable as possible“. The judges also expressed their disapproval of the leadership's intention to amend the Constitution in order to allow the liquidation of certain courts and the reconfirmation of the judges by the new parliamentary majority. The communists did not listen to the judges' opinion and, as a result, the bases of the democratic functioning of the system were severely

damaged. Consequently, the people were denied the possibility to appeal to a court that was free from any pressures, as well as the external image of the country was compromised given the fact that the judicial system and the bases of the judicial and law reform, which functioned before the communists came to power, were adopted in accordance with the Council of Europe recommendations and in full conformity with the fundamental principles of judges' independence, approved by the UN General Assembly in 1985.



CITIZENS DEPRIVED OF
THEIR RIGHT TO APPEAL TO
THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT

On July 12, 2001, the communist parliamentary faction voted against the citizens' right to appeal to the Constitutional Court. Thus, the ordinary voters were denied their primary right to contest those decisions of the Parliament and of the Government they disagree with, and which, in their opinion, contradicted the Constitution and the international legislation.

The reason invoked by the communists was that the experts had already developed the draft of the new law on the Constitutional Court, which was also providing for the citizens' rights to appeal to the Constitutional Court. The new government used the trick with the new law to mislead the voters, as the mentioned document was never adopted. Moreover, the communists also stated that the citizens could appeal to the Constitutional Court through the Supreme Court of Justice. Yet, everyone knows that the judges of this court are all appointed by the communists, and that if a certain citizen decides to contest a legislative act which is convenient for the communists, then he will never reach the Constitutional Court. The reason of the refusal was simple: as the communists were periodically adopting laws in contradiction with the international legislation and the Constitution, they were afraid to leave at the citizens' disposal such an important lever as the right to appeal to the Constitutional Court.



THE FIRST
LEGISLATIVE BOYCOTT

The new leaders were so surprised by the massive coming of the communists to power after the parliamentary elections of February 25, 2001, that they started to think they could do everything they wished. Unsurprisingly, during their first stage of governance, they did not even deign to listen to the opposition, to say nothing about taking it into consideration. Thereby, the opposition was forced to begin the boycotting of the parliamentary plenary sessions.

On July 20, 2001, the Christian Democratic People's Party parliamentary faction declared that it was not going to attend the parliamentary plenary sessions until speaker Eugenia Ostapciuc brought her apologies for breaking the faction's right to express its opinion regarding the draft laws discussed in the parliament. The chairwoman of the parliament did not allow the faction to express its attitude regarding the law on national minorities. By the way, that was far not the first case when the opposition was denied its right to take the floor.

That frustrating attitude of the authorities towards the opposition led to the destabilization of the situation in the country at the beginning of 2002. The passions ran high when, in her usual manner, Eugenia Ostapciuc deprived the member of opposition Vlad Cubreacov of the right to express his opinion by sending him to make his statements in the streets. Such a behavior smelt much like a severe usurpation of legislative power. There is no another word that could describe the situation when a party monopolizes the micro-

phones in the parliament and sends the other parties into the streets. The communists realized their mistake too late – only after seeing from the parliament’s windows thousands of people claiming for the resignation of the usurpers. Had the Council of Europe not interfered in due time, nobody knows how the situation would have developed.



The conflict related to the trading of 25 „MIG-29“ planes, which remained in the Republic of Moldova’s ownership after the collapse of the USSR, had once scandalized the public opinion in the country. A special parliamentary commission found out that not all the money gained from the respective trade reached the state budget. That commission also disclosed some other severe violations, but, as usual, all we got were just those findings. And who knew that after that scandal, in which the communists were acting more like prosecutors, the issue of trading the military equipment would again become relevant.

On July 23, the communist Member of Parliament Iurie Stoicov, the one who once headed the commission for the investigation of the MIG-29 case, declared that the new government intended to sell a part of the national army’s military equipment. The communist official pointed out that only the military equipment that was not being used anymore was for sale, and that a special list of that type of equipment would be prepared, while the Government was given the right to sell some of the items even through direct negotiations (when the buyers are not identified through a tender).

The new government had then proceeded to sell the equipment not because it was not being used anymore, but because the authorities were in a desperate need of funds to replenish the budget. Without having access to foreign credits, the fulfillment of the budget was one of the most urgent issues for the communists.

Although accusing their predecessors of lack of transparency during the MIG trading, the communists were acting far not openly. The public opinion did not get any information regarding the transactions with military equipment concluded by the „red government”. It is also unclear what happened to the funds gained from the given transactions. Probably, the answer to these questions will be found out from future governments, as it was in the case of MIGs.



VORONIN TAKES REVENGE ON LUCINSCHI AND SNEGUR

In the first stage after coming to power, the communist president was obsessed with the idea that Snegur and Lucinschi would „steal“ the power from him; therefore he was doing everything possible to reduce their influence and make their lives harder. In this context, on July 26, 2001, amendments to the Law on the activity of the president of the Republic of Moldova were introduced, providing for fewer benefits for former heads of state. Incidentally, this draft law was officially submitted to parliament by the communist Member of Parliament Simion Dragan, and not by Vladimir Voronin.

According to this law, former presidents were deprived of the lifetime right to have a bodyguard and a car provided by the state, and of the right to diplomatic immunity. The former state leaders are now entitled to use the state-provided car only a fixed number of hours a week. It is well-known that in most countries former presidents enjoy similar benefits, and that is quite normal, given the fact that during their mandates these people had to take certain decisions for which later on they could be persecuted or intimidated. It is quite curious to see if Voronin dares to walk without bodyguards (as he made Snegur and Lucinschi do) after his mandate expires?



RED GOVERNMENT ATTACKS THE PENSION SYSTEM REFORM

Alongside with the return to the rayon system, one of the main issues of the communists in their election campaign was the reversal of the pension system reform, previously promoted by the democrats in 1998. Having undertaken a number of actions aimed at destroying the administrative and territorial system, the new ruling authorities proceeded to wreck the pension system that had been reformed with the support of international creditors. The first signal in that respect was sent on the evening of July 30, 2001 by Eugenia Ostapciuc.

The speaker promised that the majority faction would examine the possibility to reduce the retirement age by five years during the autumn-winter parliamentary sessions. That statement of Eugenia Ostapciuc was significant due to the fact that it was for the first time when a deadline was specified for the examination of an issue, and it made clear which item of the 1998 reform was going to be tackled by the communists.

Still, the communists' populist approach backfired on them again – they hastened to make promises without previously identifying the necessary funds. It is worth mentioning that the five-year reduction of the retirement age would increase the number of pensioners by 70 000 people every year. And those people would have to be paid and not just „retired“ from their jobs. Subsequently, the retirement age was reduced by only three years, yet the situation remained difficult.



THE GOVERNMENT – A TOY OF THE POWER

Even though the communists boast about stability in the country, praising the professionalism of their ministers and the high level of interaction between the branches of power, in reality things are completely different. There is no interaction to speak of – just blind subordination of the Government and Parliament to a small group of people who are part of President Voronin's entourage. The illusive stability is the result of the communists hijacking the entire state apparatus, and as for the professionalism of the ministers, one can judge it by the number of ministers still in office since the initial approval by the parliament.

The resignation games in the government began in August 2001, when people started hearing different rumors about the possible resignation of the minister of economy, Andrei Cucu, and the minister of finance, Mihai Manole. On August 1, at a meeting of the National Press Club, prime-minister Vasile Tarlev stated that the information concerning the resignation of ministers was groundless. Tarlev also mentioned that at that point he had no serious objections against the performance of any ministers, and that there were no forthcoming changes in the composition of the cabinet. However, those two ministers resigned shortly thereafter.

Tarlev often learned about a dismissal of a cabinet member concomitantly with the journalists, and some of the ministers, including, Stefan Odagiu, found out about the loss of their positions from reporters. These actions exemplify the fact that Voronin's party never treated prime-minister Tarlev and his team seriously.

The government that was supposed to lead the reforms in the Republic of Moldova is nothing else than a plaything in the hands of a group of certain persons. Undoubtedly, this practice had negative consequences for the development of the Republic of Moldova during the communist rule.



At the beginning of September 2001, the government submitted to parliament for examination and approval a new draft of the Land Code. The executive body grounded the approval of the new act by stating that the Land Code, then in force, did not address many issues that had emerged after the land reform. „The Land Code was worked out and adopted to regulate the process of appropriating land to farmers, establishing the land market, and other aspects related to land reform. Those objectives have already been achieved, yet other issues emerged, which are not regulated at all,“ stated the informative note accompanying the document.

The new Land Code pays special attention to protection and improvement of the agricultural land. In that context, the Government will establish a state land service that will perpetually monitor the situation in agriculture. Therefore, the owners shall be deprived of their ownership rights in case they will use methods damaging the soils, will change the destination of agricultural land without having authorization, will not process the land during a three year period or will not pay the land tax during one year.

That was the sore point – appropriation of land to farmers bothered the communists, thus, they were constantly looking for different pretexts that would help them take the land away from the farmers. Had that normative act been adopted, who could guarantee that, being covered by the above mentioned provision, the state emissaries would not take the land away from anyone they wished.

For the farmers who did not fall under that provision, the communists worked out another law providing for the possibility of land consolidation and common land use. Yet, the goal was the same – reviving the Kolchozes. Incidentally, that law entered into force, but the communists are not putting it into practice as they are afraid of possible social outbursts. Most probably, the new Land Code had not been adopted yet because of the same reasons.



ANTI-ROMANIAN OFFENSIVE LAUNCHED

In the autumn of 2001, a big diplomatic scandal occurred – following communist leaders' orders, the minister of justice Ion Morei accused Romania of expansionism and interference in the Republic of Moldova's domestic affairs. The „smart“ minister made that statement nowhere else but in Strasbourg during the hearings related to the Bessarabian Church case in the European Court for Human Rights.

That statement shocked many people in Chisinau and Bucharest, as well as in the west. People hardly understood: how was it possible to attack a neighbor which had repeatedly declared that it had no territorial claims against the Republic of Moldova, which was the first to recognize Moldova's state independence, which was supporting Moldova through different unbiased cultural programs, and, moreover, which promised to advocate for Chisinau's interests at various foreign organizations. The communist phobia against everything Romanian was not the sole explanation of the event from Strasbourg. Further developments (continuous tensioning of affairs between Bucharest and Chisinau) proved that the communist leaders were driven by strategic calculations, rather than following a reckless policy. According to some information, the Chisinau government was doing everything possible to hinder Romania's plans of joining the OTAN. Had Romania not joined the OTAN, the Republic of Moldova would not have become a neighbor of that prestigious international organization, and the Chisinau government would not have been perpetually monitored by Brussels, and the communists would have continued their reckless policy.



COMMUNISTS REFUSE TO MAKE LOBBYISM LEGAL

On October 5, 2001, the Parliament rejected the draft law on lobbyism, elaborated and submitted to approval of parliament by ex-president of Moldova, Petru Lucinschi. This act was developed with the aim of legalizing lobbyism, setting out provisions prescribing its regulation and accountability, conditions for registration and accreditation, as well as stipulating responsibility for breaches of the law.

Lobbyism in Moldova could have become a transparent practice as it was in other states. This means that the law would have clarified who was lobbying and who was representing certain interests (with the official disclosure of lobbyists and their advocates in government), bringing to light data showing who was getting what for lobbyism or other activity (of course, this practice would have been taxed and the state would have levied certain financial benefits), and finally, it would have reduced abusive behavior at the highest levels of power. Instead, the communists decided that the society in the Republic of Moldova was not yet prepared for the approval of the document and the draft law was rejected. Therefore, the „red government“ sided with secrecy, corruption and fiscal evasion.



CRACKDOWN ON IMPORTERS OF CIGARETTES

One of the main concerns of the communist parliament members at the end of 2001 was to reduce the influence of cigarettes importers and to encourage local producers who, according to some unofficial information, partially funded the Communist Party's election campaign. With that view, the majority faction voted for raising the excise on the import of cigarettes from \$2,5 to \$3,5 per one thousand pieces. Deliberately or not, yet the communists were contributing in the most active manner to the development of cigarettes smuggling.

The majority faction could easily realize that higher excises would considerably increase smuggling. The \$3,5 excise had once been in force in 1999, and the results of that experiment were far not successful: since introducing the new excise of \$3,5, the budget accumulated only 4-5 millions of lei. While in 2000, after establishing the \$2,5 excise, the budget accumulated about 65 millions of lei. Was the hatred of the communists for the importers of cigarettes so special (or, was it about the „love“ for the local producers) that they dared to deprive the budget of 60 millions?



„UNION FENOSA“ – A VICTIM
OF COMMUNIST AMBITIONS

Immediately since coming to power, the communists started an aggressive campaign against the Spanish company „Union Fenosa“, the owner of the power distribution networks from Chisinau, the center and the south of Moldova. The passions ran high especially in the autumn of 2001 when the Court of Accounts and the Department of Migration undertook a series of inspections at „Union Fenosa“.

Following all those inspections, the Court of Accounts brought severe accusations against the company related to the accuracy of the contract on purchasing the power distribution networks, and the Department of Migration questioned the legal character of the company’s employees staying in the country. According to some information, even the papers of Ignacio Ibarra, the president of the company, were checked. The conflict reached the point when the company was asked to pay penalties for imaginary offences, the sum of which was even higher than the initial value paid for the networks. It was obvious that the new government strived to force the foreign investor out of the country in the same way as it did with „Europharm Ltd“, „Air-Moldova“, etc. The communists’ goal was clear: transferring that profitable business from the western investors to the ruling authorities’ „friends“. The hostile attitude would stop the western investors coming to Moldovan market so that the Republic of Moldova would remain under the local influence of a close group of persons as well as of the economic agents from Eastern Europe.

Had a number of international decisive factors not interfered, the communists would have implemented that diabolic intention. For the sake of their democratic and pro-European image, Voronin’s buddies had to call for a back off.



THE TRUTH ABOUT THE COMMUNIST „PROLETARIAT“

In the autumn of 2001, having already accustomed to power, the communist „proletarians“ decided to improve a little their lives. Therefore, speaker Eugenia Ostapciuc benefited of her high-ranking position in order to persuade the Government to take out of the reserve fund the sum of 361 thousand lei aimed at building several apartments for her and for another two or three communist officials. Naturally, the communist „proletarians“ could not build themselves apartments somewhere in the suburbs, but only in the center of Chisinau. Yet, madam speaker committed another abuse by ordering to clear the Parliament’s storing places that were occupying the first floor of a building situated on Serghei Lazo street, and turn those premises into apartments for the respective communist members of parliament.

Initially, Eugenia Ostapciuc’s apartment was supposed to occupy around 250 square meters, but following the scandal made by the opposition, the chairwoman of the parliament decided to have just 140 square meters.

The government had no right to allocate the money from the reserve fund, as that money was assigned for emergency cases and unforeseen situations. The communists used the money assigned for natural calamities in their personal interests. And, as a confirmation of the unfair step made by the communists, in a couple of months the country had to confront with severe natural calamities – the frost and sleet. Hundreds of

power pillars fell down and hundreds of kilometers of communications were broken off. While the state was missing money for carrying out necessary repairs, and entire villages were left in darkness and without telephone connection, the communist „proletarians“ were successfully using that money for building their luxury apartments.



IRRATIONAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE PARLIAMENT'S BUDGET

On October 18, 2001, a new scandal emerged in the Parliament – the opposition accused (and offered convincing proofs) the parliament's leadership of inefficient administration of the parliament's budget, and stated that the parliament was irrationally spending large sums of money for providing accommodation to the parliamentarians from the regions.

For the accommodation of one Member of Parliament in the „Codru“ hotel, the parliament had to pay 50\$ for every 24 hours. In October 2001, 15 members of parliament were living in that hotel. The parliament's debt to the „Codru“ hotel reached \$280 000, and almost half of that debt was accumulated groundlessly.

The members of parliament were spending the weekends in their villages, meaning that several days a week nobody was living in their rooms. Therefore, the parliament was weekly losing \$150-200 for each Member of Parliament.



PROTESTS AGAINST COMMUNIST CENSORSHIP

On October 26, a group of protesters, consisting of members of the Social-Liberal Union „Force of Moldova“, were picketing the headquarters of the „Teleradio-Moldova“ State Company, expressing their disapproval against the political censorship imposed by the communist government within the framework of this institution. The protesters have showed their indignation over the fact that the information, pertaining to the picketing of the Belarus Embassy, organized previously by the Social-Liberal Union „Force of Moldova“, as a result of which the President of Belarus A. Lukashenko has renounced on his visit to Moldova, was not made public on any state channels.

Usually, the information provided by „Teleradio-Moldova“ is biased, one-sided and has a tendentious nature. The broadcasted information is especially favorable to the governing party. Probably, the powers-be pretend to forget that the National Radio and Television belong to the whole nation, these institutions carry out their activities based on contributions from ordinary citizens and, therefore, must provide information about citizens and for citizens even if these networks are controlled by the Communist Party.



„GAGAUZ-YERI“ CLAIMS
FOR FEDERATION!

By the end of 2001, the communists' „efforts“ of strengthening Moldova's statehood and integrity began to bear fruit. The Comrat authorities, which for years had no constitutional claims, felt encouraged by the communists' intention to bring Moldovan legislation in accordance with the Gagauzian one, and submitted their own draft providing for the federalization of the Republic of Moldova.

Comrat started to demand for a certain number of its representatives in the Chisinau parliament, for their permanent representatives in all the central state bodies, for administering the budget of that region, etc. In other words, instead of strengthening the statehood and independence of the country, the ruling authorities provoked new hotspots, and separatist tendencies reborn in the south of the republic. The echo of the events of 2001 will be felt later on when the Gagauzian authorities claim the status of a federal subject every time the discussions on settling the Transintranian issue occur. Even after the communist governance ends, the Republic of Moldova will still have to pay for the wrong internal policy promoted by the communists in the southern part of the country.



VICTOR STEPANIUC – THE GODFATHER
OF THE „HISTORY OF MOLDOVA“

In October 2001, it became obvious that the introduction of the „History of Moldova“ course was not only an electoral promise, and that the new government was going to do everything possible in order to achieve that objective. The communist parliamentary faction leader, Victor Stepaniuc, stated that the introduction of the „History of Moldova“ course in schools was absolutely necessary for the future of the Republic of Moldova.

Victor Stepaniuc described the current „History of Romanians“ course taught in the Moldovan schools as „sabotage against the ethnical conscience of the Moldovans, an unprecedented ethnic suppression in modern Europe etc.“ In response to the Government's initiative to replace the „History of Romanians“ course with the „History of Moldova“, more than 30 thousand people gathered within one hour in the National Assembly Square. Apparently, had the communists not reviewed their attitude in due time, they would have sacrificed their chairs to the implementation of Victor Stepaniuc's „famous“ ideas.



INCREASING PRESSURE ON RADIO AND TV STATIONS

On November 2, the parliament voted for the introduction of two new types of licenses for radio and TV stations: access license and retransmission license. Until then, only one type of license – for broadcasting – had existed in the Republic of Moldova. The retransmission license was established for local radio and TV stations that were also broadcasting foreign stations, and the access license – exclusively for foreign channels that were broadcasting programs within the audio and visual space of the Republic of Moldova.

The communists tried to find another way of making money (given the fact that the country was not receiving any money from abroad, the communists were desperately searching for additional funds), and a more efficient control over the broadcasting media. If, for example, the communists did not like the TVR-1 channel, that channel, according to new rules, was obliged to apply for the access license and the communists could invoke any possible reason for not issuing the license. Therefore, through a simple law amendment, the ruling authorities could easily eliminate an inconvenient channel. Probably, those abuses were too obvious. Probably, the communists realized that they could cause new tensions in the society. Regardless of the reason, the parliament later on abrogated its legislative „innovation“.



„LENIN FOREVER“

Before the communists' return to power, the Republic of Moldova succeeded in getting rid of some legacies, as, for example, the „tradition“ of the ruling authorities to participate in parades dedicated to the „great October“. Yet, on November 7, 2001, president Vladimir Voronin, parliament speaker Eugenia Ostapciuc, communist members of parliament, other activists of the communist party, surrounded by hundreds of old people, shouted revolutionary slogans in the Opera and Ballet Theater square. The participants had red ribbons pinned on their chests; many of them were carrying red flags, portraits of Vladimir Lenin and placards with the following inscriptions: „Viva October!“ „Lenin forever“ „Socialism is our goal“, „Republic, power of people, socialism“, etc.

That communist action was a clear signal that the Republic of Moldova did not learn the lesson of democracy, that we made no progress since 1989, that the aspirations for European integration were nothing but dreams, that the Republic of Moldova would stagnate as long as the power belonged to those who on November 7 shouted „Lenin vsegda jiv!“ in the center Chisinau.



„BACK TO KOLKHOZ“

One of the communists' electoral promises was the return to kolkhozes. And, if during the first stage of their governance, the communists avoided making public statements on the respective issue, then, by the end of 2001, they became braver. On November 12, Ion Filimon, the chairman of the parliamentary commission for agriculture and food industry, stated that the new authorities had not forgotten about their promise and that the form of collective ownership in agriculture would be reintroduced by all means, that, in his opinion, being the only possible way to revive the agriculture in the country.

The private farmers, who had succeeded in starting their agricultural business, got confused. „Why should we cultivate the land if the communists are going to take it away from us and will lead us back to kolkhozes?“ – people were sadly asking themselves. That feeling of uncertainty hampered the initiative spirit of the farmers who were really willing to work their land, to get good yields and, thus, to contribute to the prosperity of their country.



ABOUT THE NEW CONCEPT OF FOREIGN POLICY

At the end of October-beginning of November, the new Concept of foreign policy was made public, and, due to its poor quality, it exceeded the most pessimistic forecasts.

That document did not clearly define the priorities of foreign policy of the Republic of Moldova. The concept stipulated that the country would make itself available in places that would meet its interests. That was an outrageous diplomatic illiteracy, as any student studying at the faculty of international relations would know that Moldova could not be simultaneously in two places: the European Union and the CIS.

Another absurdity of that Concept was the way of developing foreign economic affairs. The document stipulated even the states where Moldovan economic agents were to purchase a certain product for import. That was dictatorship, and not market economy.



ATTACK AGAINST EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS STARTS

In the middle of November 2001, a new communist „brilliant“ plan stunned the opposition and the public opinion from Chisinau – taking control over all higher education institutions in the country. To that end, the parliament worked out a legislative initiative, according to which the rectors of the respective education institutions were to be appointed by the Government.

From the very beginning it was obvious that the initiative was going to wreck the entire education system and would inevitably lead to the corruption of a considerable part of the teaching staff in favor of the ruling party. It is worth mentioning that the respective initiative came into contradiction with the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, which was stipulating that „higher education institutions were entitled with the right to autonomy“. Normally, the communists needed to understand that higher education institutions had the right to elect independently and in full transparency the members of their administrative boards.

Later on, the „red government“ found another way of „solving the problems of the education system“. Therefore, given the fact that they had not succeeded in taking control over some important institutions, the communists decided to close them by raising the threshold of statutory capital for the respective education institutions to 1 million lei. Under those circumstances, many education institutions were brought to dilemma: was it worth carrying on the activity in the situation when, every day, the ruling authorities were inventing new laws aimed at suppressing the university autonomy?



COMMUNISTS VOTE AGAINST THE INTRODUCTION OF RELIGION AS A SCHOOL SUBJECT

On November 16, the communist majority faction rejected the draft law submitted by the opposition and providing for the introduction of religion as a school subject. We had all the grounds to consider that such a school subject would have a positive impact on the young generation and would raise the moral responsibility of the youth.

The communists did not know to quote any serious reasons against the newly proposed school subject. They tried to invoke there were not enough specialists to teach that subject, and the schools were not the proper place for such activities as learning religion. Yet, the authorities showed their real face, their real antichrist nature.



SECOND CRACKDOWN ON IMPORTERS OF CIGARETTES

As it was expected, the communists did not limit their respective activity to only raising the excise from \$2,5 to \$3,5 per 1000 pieces. On November 16, 2001, they made the next step aimed at pressuring the importers of foreign cigarettes, and, implicitly, at „supporting“ their own colleagues involved in the cigarette business. That was the day when the communist parliamentary faction voted for the introduction of the VAT and of the customs duty for the import of cigarettes starting with 2002.

Besides the two above mentioned reasons – pressuring the importers and facilitating their own affairs – the communists were guided by another reason: increasing the budget incomes. Given the lack of foreign funds, the new government decided to make money on the shoulders of Moldovan economic agents, who were already carrying an enormous fiscal burden. That sort of approach showed once again the communists' incompetence, as the quantity of cigarettes imported from abroad did not reduce, but, on the contrary, it even increased a little. Instead, the budget did not gain any money, because, alongside with the increase of the fiscal burden, the smuggling of imported cigarettes increased as well.



GOVERNMENT ENCOURAGES MONOPOLY ON THE OIL MARKET

In the autumn of 2001, the communist government adopted another „remarkable“ decision – it prohibited the import of oil products through auto transportation. As a result, hundreds of small importers lost their jobs, tens of small petrol stations were almost brought to bankruptcy, social riots and waves of protests emerged. The government's decision was directed against local small and medium importers and aimed at allowing the monopolization of the oil market by big companies.

The majority of the opposition parties had severely criticized that decision. At meeting of protest that took place on November 20, I mentioned that the government violated the constitutional right of the citizens to free entrepreneurship and competition. Moreover, enormous moral and financial damages were brought both to small petrol importers and to the state. The budget was losing 10 millions of lei daily.

Had that government's decision not been partially reviewed, the communists would have achieved their goal – bringing the small oil companies to bankruptcy. Big foreign companies, which any moment could suspend their activities and leave the Moldovan market, would have bought those companies for a scant price. The republic would have depended on a small group of private capital representatives, thus jeopardizing the state energetic security.



COMMUNIST WELFARE MYTH SHATTERED

Though the communist government was constantly trying to show that the population started to live better since their acceding to power, that did not come even close to the truth. That was proved by the results of an opinion poll, made public at the beginning of December 2001. The poll was conducted by the Center of analysis and sociological, political and psychological investigations, at the request of the Institute for Public Policies.

The results of the poll showed that the largest part of the population – 88% – was not happy with their standard of living. The majority of the population – 89% out of 1104 respondents – was not happy with the health-care system, 73% – with the cleaning and maintenance of their localities, 88% – with their financial situation. The biggest fears of the population were: poverty – 26%, future of their children – 17%, diseases – 13%, and war – 12%.

The results also showed that 62% of respondents were concerned with their personal safety, 58% – with ecological, 57% – with economic, 46% – with public, and 29% – with political and food security.

More than half of the respondents (54%) stated that if they had the opportunity to leave the Republic of Moldova, 19% of them would leave it forever, and 35% – just for a certain period of time.

Those results were a big blow for the communists who were assuming the people were happy just because they were having such „brilliant“ leaders as Tarlev, Ostapciuc, Stepaniuc, etc. For the public opinion, that poll proved once again that the population could not live just with empty promises and hollow words.



GOVERNMENT FOUND GUILTY IN BESSARABIAN CHURCH CASE

In early December 2001, the European Court for Human Rights adopted a final decision in the case of the Bessarabian Church and called on the Government to register that structure. The communist authorities were in no rush to comply with the European Court for Human Rights decision, and in doing so called into doubt the competence of that international institution. The respective decision was executed only after the political crisis of 2002, when the registration of the Bessarabian Church became one of the conditions imposed by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Yet, the most important aspect was the development of Moldovan-Romanian relations in the course of the dispute. Trying to draw the attention of the public opinion away from the unlawful infringement of human rights in the Republic of Moldova, the communist authorities accused Romania of expansionism and interference in the domestic affairs of the Republic of Moldova. The European Court for Human Rights decision proved that the claims brought by the Chisinau authorities against officials in Bucharest were groundless. Despite that, no apologies from the officials in Chisinau to the Romanian leadership were forthcoming.



PARLIAMENT RATIFIES THE FUNDAMENTAL MOLDOVAN-RUSSIAN POLITICAL TREATY

On December 27, the communist parliament ratified the fundamental Moldovan-Russian political Treaty. In doing so, the communists implemented one of their major ideas – providing Russia with a Treaty that met its geo-strategic interests in that part of Europe.

That was all about the Transnistrian issue. The Treaty proclaimed the mediating role of Russia, and, after the conflict was settled – the role of a guarantor power. The Republic of Moldova voluntarily provided Russia with the possibility to get involved in its domestic affairs at any time using the right of the guaranteeing power. Let us not forget the commitments undertaken by the Republic of Moldova to provide the necessary conditions for the study of the Russian language on its territory. While the Republic of Moldova openly supported the process of russification of its citizens, Russia made only some general commitments that did not, in fact, provide any particular benefits for our fellow citizens who lived in that country. It will be possible to fix the communists' mistakes only in ten years after the respective Treaty expires. Though that is hardly encouraging.



RAYONS – AN ACCOMPLISHED FACT

On the same day of December 27, 2001, the new Law on the administrative and territorial division of the Republic of Moldova was adopted in its final reading. According to it, 32 rayons were created in the Republic of Moldova, which were supposed to replace the system of judet established in 1998. Thus, the communists managed to destroy the administrative and territorial system that was implemented with the support of the international community, without giving it any chance for self-affirmation.

The government did not make the information regarding the costs of that counter-reform public. According to Prime Minister Vasile Tarlev's statement, the return to the rayon system cost 54 million lei. During the discussion held with the representatives of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, that amount was not confirmed.

At the same time, independent experts of the Institute for Democracy and Social Initiative „Viitorul“ and those of the Business Consulting Institute calculated that the return to the rayon system cost more than 700 million lei. Unlike the Prime Minister, the independent experts brought precise and well-grounded figures taken from real life. Therefore, I incline to believe the cost of the counter-reform as calculated by the experts, rather than the one given by the Prime Minister. And, if that is right, a question arises: where did the money come from?



„MAYORS TO BE ELECTED
BY COUNCILORS!“

The finishing touch of the year 2001 was the approval, on December 28, of the Law on local public administration. The most important provision of the act was the transition to a new system of electing mayors. While in conformity with the previous law the mayors were elected by the entire population, in accordance with the new „legislative masterpiece“, this would be done by the members of local councils alone.

The „red government“ enforced the legislation as they wished, pursuing their own interests. However, the ruling party’s plan was upset by the Constitutional Court, which ruled that the new way of electing mayors contradicted the Constitution. Thus, the communists were forced to exercise some restraint.



START OF PROTESTS
AGAINST RUSSIFICATION

The beginning of 2002 was marked by massive actions of protest against the communists’ intention to introduce Russian as a compulsory school subject starting with the second grade. On January 9, over 2000 people coming from different parts of the country went out into the National Assembly Square. The protesters were supported by schoolchildren and teachers from many lyceums of the capital: „Vasile Alecsandri“, „Gheorghe Asachi“, „Prometeu“, „Mircea Eliade“, etc.

Those people had good reason to be worried, as besides their intention to introduce Russian as a compulsory school subject, the communists were planning to attribute to the Russian language the status of second official language. The fact that three days before the end of 2001 the fundamental political Treaty with Russia was ratified, providing for the encouragement of those willing to carry out their studies in Russian, should not be overlooked.

Besides the fact that by encouraging the Russian language the „red government“ was acting against the interests of the majority of the population and of the other national minorities, another worrying aspect emerged – the communists, with or without ill intentions, were stirring up the problems of 1989-1990. Thus, instead of focusing on European integration, improving living standards, safeguarding of borders and bringing the country’s legislation into conformity with international standards, the communists made another attempt to destabilize the situation in the

country, and thus, to draw the attention of public opinion away from their own failures. And it should be acknowledged that, for the most part, they succeeded. But the price the Republic of Moldova had to pay for that experiment was too high: interethnic relations were considerably strained, a serious deviation from the democratic development of the country was registered, the international image of the Republic of Moldova was tarnished, and the capacity of the country to execute the presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe was called into doubt.



The very next day after January 9, the communists started a major campaign of persecution and intimidation against the people who dared to speak up and express their opinion regarding the excesses of the power. Those who had the courage to speak from the platform were visited at their homes by police authorities, and administrative proceedings were initiated for unauthorized participation in the rallies.

It became clear that the ruling authorities would use all their power to squash the protests. Along the same lines, an order was given to the capital's City Hall to calculate all the damages brought by the protesters who closed the main road to public transport. The communists intended to make the protesters cease their actions by threatening them that, if they opposed, they would have to pay huge compensations.

All those procedures against the people who shared opinions other than those of the communist authorities resembled the sad times of the Stalinist repressions. The communists had already repeatedly displayed their Stalinist nature, yet neither in January 2002, nor later, would the people allow themselves be intimidated, and they knew how to demand respect for their rights.

▷ OMBUDSMAN LOOSES HIS JOB OVER HIS DISAGREEMENT WITH THE POLITICAL VIEWS OF THE RULING PARTY

In the first days of January 2002, the People's Advocate – Constantin Lazar – addressed the Constitutional Court requesting the prompt examination of the constitutionality of some provisions regarding the administrative and territorial organization of the Republic of Moldova. The new law stipulated the right of the Parliament to initiate administrative and territorial changes without taking into account the position of the Government and local public authorities. Constantin Lazar brought arguments showing that those provisions were in contradiction with the European Chart for local autonomy, and had damaging effects on the fundamental principles of the rule of law.

The ombudsman requested the examination of the issue with utmost promptitude, because at the end of January, a group of experts from the Council of Europe were going to visit the Republic of Moldova with the purpose of assessing the lawfulness of the provisions of the new law on the administrative and territorial division of the republic. In the opinion of Constantin Lazar, by examining the issue before the visit of the experts, the Constitutional Court would have the opportunity to show that the Republic of Moldova was a democratic state.

Unfortunately, the ombudsman's arguments fell on deaf ears. For his courage to contest the law, as well as for other disagreements, Constantin Lazar was dismissed from his position. That is the usual way the communists perceive the freedom of expressing opinions in the Republic of Moldova.

▷ MOREI TAKES ACTION

In the second half of January 2002, the communists started worrying about the scale of the protests developing in the center of the capital. To put the end to the opposition's peaceful and democratic demonstrations, the government was ready to resort to the dirtiest methods of suppressing freedom of expression. The communists decided to use the Minister of Justice – Ion Morei – who, during the hearings in Strasbourg on the Bessarabian Church case, proved to be a faithful executor of the orders given by the leadership, as a tool against the opposition.

The next action undertaken by that character was his letter addressed to the mayor of Chisinau, Serafim Urechean, requesting the local authority to put an end to the opposition's protests. The minister cautioned the Mayor's Office against being misled by the arguments brought by the Christian Democratic People's Party stating that those protests were nothing more than ordinary meetings of the Christian Democratic People's Party deputies with their supporters, which, according to the law on the status of members of parliament, could take place without the authorization of local authorities. While trying to hide his intention behind some legal terms, Morei was discrediting the image of the Ministry of Justice, which, in a democratic state, would have to be the guarantor of the citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms. The role of suppressing the opposition, attributed to this institution by the communists and by Morei, does not help the image of a Ministry of Justice that wants to be regarded as an unbiased and fair structure, a promoter of the European values.



„TO THE MEMORY
OF ILYICH“

The provocative behavior of the communist leadership of the Republic of Moldova was successfully nourishing the nostalgic hopes of the population, that being a serious obstacle in the development of the country. Thus, many people, instead of realizing that the „glorious past“ cannot be brought back, and that they should move on towards Europe, continue to believe that the statue of Vladimir Ulianov (Lenin) is going to be re-erected in squares and streets. A proof to that effect came on January 21, 2002, when a group of about 150 Moldovan citizens, mostly elderly persons, commemorated the 78th anniversary of Lenin’s death.

The event took place next to Lenin’s monument, located on the territory of the free enterprise zone „Expo-Business-Chisinau“. The rally was attended by the country’s president Vladimir Voronin, who made a short speech in Russian about the important role Vladimir Lenin played in the history of manhood, and about his legacy. The event was also attended by: the parliamentary majority leader, Victor Stepaniuc, vice-speaker Vadim Misin, minister of energy Iacob Timciuc and the minister of finance Mihai Manoli.

Of course, nobody denies the right of the people to worship whoever they wish to, and to organize all sorts of public meetings, as long as all this is performed in a peaceful manner, without any excesses. Thus, the people who took part in that meeting cannot be blamed for anything – they can just be pitied for being confused by the incumbent leadership.

By participating in such a meeting, the communist leaders turned their own ideology into the ideology of the state, and that is something inadmissible in terms of current legislation.



COMMUNISTS DENY THE OPPOSITION
OFFICIAL TRIPS ABROAD

By the end of 2002, more and more international organizations were taking closer looks at the sole communist state in Europe, trying to understand why the opposition had to take to the streets. In order to let the international structures know as little as possible about the real state of affairs in the Republic of Moldova, the authorities decided to block the opposition from going abroad on different official delegations. And, as the Council of Europe was the most important European forum entitled with the right to judge cases of infringement of human rights and freedoms on the whole old continent, the communists decided not to include the representatives of the opposition on the parliamentary delegation that was going to participate in the work of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe at the end of January.

Obviously, that abusive behavior of the authorities led to the revolt of the opposition. Their representatives qualified as groundless the arguments brought by the communists, alleging that the opposition members were not included for lack of funds. That was not much of an argument. It is enough to recall that at the time the speaker, Eugenia Ostapciuc, was doing the rounds abroad with or without good reason. She spent her time between Moscow and Byelorussia, where she was visiting her comrade Alexander Lukashenko, etc. By preventing the opposition from going abroad, the communists were not only exceeding all the limits of common sense and breaking the law, but also defying the international community.



On January 21, the Ministry of Justice decided to suspend the activity of the Christian Democratic People's Party for one month. The reason invoked was that the Christian Democratic People's Party was holding anticommunist protests for two weeks, and that was, in the opinion of the ruling authorities, illegal since they were not authorized by the mayor's office.

The goal pursued by the communists in suspending the Christian Democratic People's Party's activity was obvious – intimidation of the opposition, forcing it to end its protests, depriving it of any real leverage over the leadership's behavior. The decision to suspend the opposition party's activity was not adopted by a court, as it should have happened under the law, but by a subdivision of the executive power, totally under the communists' control. Nobody can deny that the Ministry of Justice is a part of the Government, and that Ion Morei was voted in as minister only by Voronin's clique.



The political crisis in the Republic of Moldova was growing stronger. Public opinion at home and abroad got a clear signal to that effect on January 25, when two opposition factions – the Christian Democratic People's Party and the Braghis Alliance – decided to boycott the special session of parliament.

The Christian Democratic People's Party faction published a declaration stating that it would not attend parliament sessions until the communist majority in parliament did not cease the sustained violation of the opposition's right to express its opinion, ask questions and ask for the examination of certain issues. Of a special concern to the Christian Democratic People's Party was the behavior of the chairwoman of parliament, Eugenia Ostapciuc, who, according to the declaration „had an abusive and discriminatory attitude towards the opposition”.

The Braghis Alliance refused to participate in the special session, because the agenda did not include the draft law submitted by the members of the faction, providing for essential amendments to the Electoral Code, such as: transition to a new electoral system based on several districts, mandatory participation of the citizens at voting, etc.

The majority faction continuously ignored the proposals made by the opposition factions, trying to exclude them from the legislative process. As a result, the confrontation between the ruling party and the opposition escalated.



STEPANIUC ATTACKS ROMANIA AGAIN

The communist authorities in Chisinau would not miss the opportunity to attack Romania again, when the latter expressed its attitude towards the protests in Chisinau. At the end of January, Victor Stepaniuc, the leader of the communist parliamentary faction showed his „resentment“ with the way Romania was treating the protests in Chisinau. That „resentment“ was „stirred up“ by the fact that Romanian officials disapproved the decision taken by the communists to introduce Russian as a compulsory school subject starting with the second grade.

It was natural for the Bucharest authorities to express their support for the Romanians living in the Republic of Moldova, whose rights were being infringed, while Victor Stepaniuc pretended he was busy keeping electoral promises. Though the Communist Party has a huge presence in the leadership of the country, it cannot claim to represent the whole state in the Republic of Moldova. It would be reasonable for Stepaniuc to ask himself: what sort of a ruling party are the communists, if the interests of the majority of Moldovan citizens have to be defended by other states?



„RED GOVERNMENT“ PRIVATIZES THE PARLIAMENT

Every party that succeeds in coming to power in a state makes huge efforts to strengthen its positions, and restricts the access of the opponents to power. The „red government“ was not an exception, and moreover, it went further than all its predecessors in its attempts to „privatize“ the Parliament. Thus, on January 25, 2002, the communist faction voted to increase the electoral threshold for blocs formed by two parties from 6% to 9%, and for those formed by three and more parties – from 6% to 12%.

The communists were obsessed with the idea that they could lose the power at any time, as their antidemocratic way of ruling could not exclude the possibility of early parliamentary elections. If that happened, two or three opposition parties could create a single bloc, and thus easily exceed the electoral threshold of 6% and enter the Parliament. Therefore, the communists made the right estimation: there were too few parties in the Republic of Moldova that could exceed the limit of 9% and 12% by joining forces. At best, following early or scheduled elections, only two or three opposition parties could enter parliament, and that suited the communists who would again find themselves in favorable conditions during the distribution of the seats of the parties that did not pass the electoral threshold.

Yet, the communists overlooked one thing: the opposition parties that intended to form electoral blocs before the respective decision was taken, chose to merge, therefore the limit of 6% was still valid for them. As a result, the „red government“ encouraged the consolidation of the opposition, which, hopefully, will bring the time of the overthrow of the communists closer.

At the beginning of 2002, besides the intimidation and persecution of the protesters in downtown Chisinau, the communist authorities had another „important“ concern, i.e. destabilizing the situation in Gagauz-Yeri for the purpose of bringing persons loyal to them into the leadership of that region. For an easier implementation of that plan, the communists decided to split the Comrat authorities, by putting them in a confrontation which would eventually lead to the elimination of their opponents from the leadership. And they succeeded in doing so.

A group of members of the People’s Assembly of Comrat announced its intention to hold a referendum on dismissal of the Governor, Dumitru Croitor. The reason quoted by those members was the report made by the Audit Chamber, which stated that Dumitru Croitor had misused public money. It is enough to remind that the Audit Chamber was headed by the communist Vasile Pantelei to understand how well that argument was grounded. Even admitting that Dumitru Croitor committed the actions he was accused of, then why was that issue not brought up earlier, but exactly at the time when the Governor was opposing communist initiatives?

In a relatively short period of time Gagauz Yeri changed from an area of stability into a hotbed of instability. And this settling of scores ended in the delay of any development in the region for a period of about two years.

On February 3, the anticommunist protests from the capital spilt over and reached Orhei. On that occasion, the organizer of the rally was the Democratic Forum of Moldova, a bloc formed by seven parties of extra-parliamentary opposition. The meeting in Orhei was attended by 1500 persons from several regions of the judet.

The protesters accused the communists for their revision of the law regarding the administrative and territorial reform and local public administration reform, for their intention to introduce Russian as a school subject starting with the second grade, and for other antidemocratic actions undertaken by the ruling party. They were supported by the majority of mayors in the judet, as well as by doctors and teachers.

The fact that the supporters of seven opposition political groups took to the streets constitutes evidence that the communists’ abuses were becoming unbearable. That was also noted by officials from the west.

It is significant that people from the provinces, where access to information sources is limited, started protesting against the communists. Most of the times, the rural population, as well as the people from certain regional centers, have access only to the TV programs broadcasted by the Moldova-1 channel, which is singing praises to the ruling party all day long. There is no doubt that the protests in Orhei were the merit of the opposition, which knew how to mobilize the people.



PROTESTS OF THE STUDENTS

At the beginning of February, students at the State University of Moldova formed a Committee for the support of protests against the „russification of Moldova“. Students declared that the Committee would demand the de-russification of national schools, for free public transport for students, for the state providing graduates with jobs, leaving the CIS, integration into the European Union, etc.

Involvement of the students in the protests should have alerted the communists. It is well known that students have led protests around the world. Sometimes those protests ended in the change of the ruling party. At the very least, the communists should have taken notice for the mere reason that people had not forgotten the events of 1995, when tens of thousands of students took to the streets, and made the agrarians, who were running the country at the time, give up their idea of excluding „History of Romanians“ from the curriculum.

The students' involvement in the protests in Chisinau qualitatively changed the latter. It was no longer a confrontation between the ruling party and the opposition, but a confrontation between the communists and the society. And what kind of government confronts its own people?



COMMUNIST AMBITION COSTS 8.3 MILLION LEI

On February 8, 2002, the Central Election Commission adopted the estimate of costs for the early local elections of April 7. According to it, the organization and unfolding of the elections would cost the Central Election Commission 8,3 million lei. In other words, the communists' ambitions to have their followers in local governments would cost the tax-payers in excess of 8 million lei. Since these were early elections, the necessary amount was not provided in the state budget; therefore, it had to be found by re-distributing incomes and expenditures, or by increasing the budget deficit.

The communists would take a part of the money either from healthcare, from the educational sector, or from public security, etc. and waste it. Needless to say how much would then be used for electoral purposes, and how much would be spent by the communists in terms of state administrative recourses – telephone, offices, cars, etc. That means that probably several tens of millions of lei would be thrown away, while the ruling authorities were not capable to find money for raising pensions, salaries, payment of external debt, etc.

At the beginning of 2002, the communists succeeded in a double „performance“ of international importance: the political crisis in Moldova became a matter of discussion within many assemblies in Europe; the reckless actions of the „red government“ led to the tensioning of relations with the foreign creditors. Thus, on February 18, Carlos Elbirt, the permanent representative of the World Bank in Chisinau, made a statement expressing his concern over some of the events developing in the Republic of Moldova.

Carlos Elbirt expressed his concern over some of the initiatives of the ruling party that „came into contradiction with prior achievements in the process of implementation of reforms“. Among the initiatives mentioned were: establishment of a parliamentary supervisory commission over the National Regulatory Agency for Energy, the attempt to re-nationalize 25 enterprises without specifying the development of that process, etc.

Carlos Elbirt's message was clear: in its undertakings, the communist authorities did not follow the democratic rules of market economy. From a different viewpoint, that statement could have been interpreted as a warning given by the international institution to the officials in Chisinau, a set of conditions for restarting external crediting. Unfortunately, the communists were too busy with the intimidation of their political opponents in Chisinau and Comrat, and did not take the respective statement seriously enough. All that left Moldova without external financial support for a long time, and that had a negative impact on the development of the republic.

On February 19, the Constitutional Court finally put an end to the issue of early local elections and declared unconstitutional the Parliament's decision according to which the respective elections were to take place on April 7, 2002. In that way, the Constitutional Court officially confirmed that the communists' intention to grab the power at local level had no legal grounds.

In adopting that decision, the Court was guided by the provisions of the legislation in force that guaranteed the locally-elected officials a four years mandate. Through the abusive decision to organize early local elections the communists were restricting the respective mandate, defying the Constitution, as well as the will of the people who empowered with their confidence the mayors and local councilors at the elections on May 23, 1999.

Besides moral, financial and legislative aspects, there are also aspects of tactical and strategic nature. By provoking the respective dispute ongoing for three months, the communists hampered the normal activity of mayors and councilors. They could not focus on work as they were always thinking whether they were going to lose their jobs or not. As a result, the activity of local public administration was paralyzed for a long period of time, and that had a bad impact on the development of the regions and, implicitly, on the population's standard of living.

 COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CRITICIZES COMMUNISTS' ACTIONS

On February 20, a delegation of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, which was paying a working visit to the Republic of Moldova, declared that the referendum on recalling the Gagauzian Governor, Dumitru Croitor, scheduled for February 24, was illegal.

The organizers of elections did not observe the terms of calling the referendum as provided by the laws on the activity of the autonomy. A referendum under those circumstances meant a full disregard of the principles of a state of law and could have led to a new destabilization of the situation in the region.

The accusations against Dumitru Croitoru regarding the misuse of public money could not serve as grounds for calling a referendum. The „red government“ should have paid attention to the warning of Yavuz Mildon, vice-chairman of the Congress, who stated that if the referendum was to take place then the Congress would not acknowledge its results.

Those warnings did not bring any effects, and, as a result, Moldova defied again the Council of Europe. By ignoring the opinion of the Congress, the communists showed that their party interests were higher than the interests of the country.

 „NO“ – TO THE RECOGNITION OF
RUSSIAN AS AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

At the beginning of 2002, the Constitutional Court did a really great job by adopting several important decisions for the destiny of the Republic of Moldova. Thus, after hindering the communists' intentions to call early local elections, the Constitutional Court adopted a new resounding decision – it refused to examine the draft law submitted by the communists regarding the recognition of Russian as an official language.

That document was providing for the amendment to the art. 13 of the Constitution, that very controversial article, which had repeatedly generated social outbursts in the Republic of Moldova and brought the people into the streets. The Constitutional Court stated that some of the draft law provisions were in contradiction with the constitutional standards. For example, the document stipulated that Russian language should be used in the Republic of Moldova as an official language in the local public administration and legal areas. At the same time, art. 118 of the Constitution stipulated that the legal proceedings were to take place only in the official state language.

The respective draft law defied once more the public opinion of the Republic of Moldova and proved the communists' „political short-sightedness“. Only a party, which was totally far from reality, could leave aside the crowds of protesters in the center of capital, and blindly insist on some legal and moral absurdities. Through that gesture, the communists showed that they did not care a fig for the aspirations of the people, while the interests of Moscow considerably overbalanced the interests of the Republic of Moldova.

▷ PERSECUTIONS AGAINST
„TELERADIO-MOLDOVA“

On March 12, 2002, the Striking Committee of the employees of the „Teleradio-Moldova“ state company addressed an open letter to President Vladimir Voronin, accusing the ruling authorities of „launching a persecution and intimidation campaign“ against the journalists involved in actions of protest. It was no secret that the employees of the state TV company who were disapproving of the communist censorship were being penalized. Everybody also knew who guided all those persecutions – high-ranking state authorities.

Still, why did the victims of the persecutions address a message to the president of the country? Maybe the journalists simply wanted to test the honesty of the head of state, who previously declared that he would be the president of all the citizens. Apparently, the situation was quite different. Vladimir Voronin did not pass that test, as he did not defend the members of the striking committee, the latter being persecuted further on.

That letter could be considered the most eloquent example of the fact that within one year the „Teleradio-Moldova“ company became an instrument of promoting communist ideology, brain-washing and misinforming the population, and denigrating the opposition. Thus, the communists dared once again to violate in the rudest manner the fundamental rights of the citizens – that time, the right to true and equidistant information.

▷ NEW LAW ON LOCAL PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION DECLARED
UNCONSTITUTIONAL

On March 14, 2002, the communists suffered a new blow, which showed that their dictatorial manner of ruling the country could not be simply overlooked in a state situated in the center of Europe, and which already managed to feel the taste of democracy. Following a seven hours session of discussions, the Constitutional Court adopted a decision that declared unconstitutional a number of amendments made by the communists to the Law on local public administration. The most important provision of the document aimed at establishing a new procedure of electing mayors – by local councils.

While trying hard to modify the law according to their needs, the communists forgot that the new system of electing mayors violated the citizens' constitutional right to take an active part in administration of local public affairs, and thus the citizens were deprived of another fundamental right – to elect and to be elected.

Another severe violation committed by the communists was the fact that they did not specify, as it was provided by the legislation in force, the funds necessary for the implementation of the new law, and where those funds would come from. As usual, the communists were playing possum when it came to the issue of public money. They pretended to forget that only the return to the rayon system cost more than 700 millions lei.

 COMMUNISTS USE THE PARLIAMENT
IN THEIR PERSONAL INTERESTS

The „red government“ often used the state structures for satisfying their party interests. After the first year of communist governance, that thing became so usual that nobody was paying any attention. Therefore, the communists did not hesitate at all, and used the Parliament for hindering the General National Assembly of Voters, which took place on March 31, 2002.

Following the communists' initiative, the Parliament addressed the citizens to refrain from participating in the meeting, while the General National Assembly of Voters was qualified as an „illegal action“. The communist faction could have easily launched itself that appeal, but it did not. One thing is when the population is addressed by the Parliament, and a totally different thing is when that is done by the communist faction. Thus, people were misled given the fact that the supreme legislative body of the country was against the General National Assembly. Through that appeal, the government dared to blackmail its own citizens, suggesting that the polarization of the society could again bring into the spotlight the problems that had emerged ten years ago.

 OPPOSITION MEMBER OF
PARLIAMENT KIDNAPPED IN MOLDOVA

At the end of March 2002, the public opinion was shocked by an unprecedented case – the disappearance of the Member of Parliament from the Christian Democratic People's Party, Vlad Cubreacov. The case was even more serious taking into account that the missing Member of Parliament was one of the most active organizers of anticommunist protests.

Nobody can ascertain who exactly kidnapped Vlad Cubreacov and kept him so long in detention. Still, it is not clear why the „red government“ did not accept the assistance offered by the international community. It is also awkward that the investigation did not register any progress, and the competent authorities did not examine Vlad Cubreacov's petition to interrogate some high-ranking state officials. And that procedure is not unusual – in some states even state presidents testify. The incompetence of the ruling party in solving the case seriously tarnished the international image of the Republic of Moldova.

 ▷ KOLKHOZES ARE MADE LEGAL
(IN FIRST READING)

Sometimes the logic of some actions undertaken by communists is hard to explain. This is also exemplified by the approval in the first reading of the draft law on agricultural land consolidation on March 28, 2002. In other words, the kolkhozes were made legal in first reading. Was it really necessary to provoke the society again, so that the owners of agricultural land were forced to protest in the National Assembly Square?

The respective draft law came in contradiction with the Constitution that provided for the citizens' right to private ownership. Of course, the communists did not stipulate in the law that farmers would have to yield their lands to kolkhozes; still, everybody knew what to expect if they did not obey to the authorities. The approval of that draft law hampered the development of agriculture. Those who cultivated their land individually did not know how to proceed as they were expecting their lands to be expropriated at any moment.

Therefore, after, through their reckless actions, the communists paralyzed the activity of the local public administration, made the students and pupils leave their schools and protest in the streets, made many economic agents cease their activity, they finally succeeded in wrecking the farmers too.

 ▷ ATTACK AGAINST THE
CONSTITUTIONAL COURT

The decisions of the Constitutional Court related to local elections, the new Law on local public administration and the recognition of Russian as an official language etc. upset most of the communists' plans. The Constitutional Court became a big headache for the ruling party, which was controlling all the branches of power to its delight. Thus, the communists started to plan how to take control over that institution as well.

The first sign that the „red government“ seriously intended to subdue the Constitutional Court came on March 28, 2002, when vice-speaker Vadim Misin made his „revolutionary“ statement that the decisions of the Constitutional Court should not be decisive anymore, and encouraged the members of parliament and the judges to give a considerable thought to that „very serious“ issue.

The communists undertook a number of actions aimed at reducing the independence of the Constitutional Court. Undoubtedly, the most important of those was the one depriving the president of the Constitutional Court of his right to the double vote. The vote of the president of the Constitutional Court was decisive in case of vote parity (three to three). By denying Victor Puscas' right, the communists ensured that the Constitutional Court would never again adopt a decision, which was inconvenient to them. As a matter of fact, three out of the six Constitutional Court judges were appointed by the communists. Thus, even

if the other three judges had a different opinion on a major issue, the Constitutional Court would not be able to adopt that decision. According to the amendments made by the communists, in case of vote parity and in the absence of the court president's double vote, the examination of the respective case had to be ceased.



COMMUNISTS STRIVE TO KEEP THEIR CHAIRS

On April 5, the communist members of parliament rejected the draft law providing for a mixed electoral system, where 71 out of 101 members of parliament were to be elected by individual districts and the other 30 – by party lists. According to the proposed system, local elections were to take place by individual districts.

Similar systems are functioning in many advanced democracies. Yet, the communists have again disregarded state interests, following their personal and party interests. Obviously, the „red government“, which was already controlling all the branches of power, would never agree to become a simple opposition party.

It is a well-known fact that the Communist Party came to power due to the symbols borrowed from the former USSR communists, and for a big part of the voters those symbols were related to their dreams and nostalgia for the glorious past. The overwhelming majority of the communist members of parliament are unknown to the population, as people did not vote for certain persons, but by a list made by the Central Committee. If elections by individual districts are held tomorrow, the communists would get few seats in the parliament. Therefore, the incumbent government will do everything possible to keep the current electoral system valid, as it suits them perfectly.

The communists have repeatedly declared that the authorities should be accountable to the people. And, when is the responsibility of a member of parliament bigger: when he is directly elected and the citizens

know who is accountable, or when the voters do not even know the name of the Member of Parliament who apparently is in charge of their locality? The event of April 5, 2002 showed the real attitude of the communists towards the control, which the society was supposed to exercise over the government.



THE SYSTEM OF LOCAL
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION FACES
A STATE OF DEEP CRISIS

The frequent pressures over local public administration and the short-sighted policy promoted in that field by the communists brought the system into a state of profound crisis. That fact was stated not only by the opposition, but also by independent experts. On April 19, the experts from the Institute of Development and Social Initiative „Viitorul“ declared that „the crisis in that field had started a year ago, immediately after the communists came to power“.

The judet councils and the prefects, who officially did not exist anymore, were carrying on their activity, while the rayon councils, though officially existing, were not actually functioning. Such an awkward situation emerged because the Communist Party did not have the courage to acknowledge that they rushed to return to rayons, and that the ground for that counter-reform had not been prepared. The „red government“ was so confused that it was not even able to decide what to undertake in order to save face in that difficult situation. However, the solution was simple: following the decision of the Constitutional Court, which overturned the Parliament’s decision on calling early local elections on April 7, the Parliament had to review the new law on administrative and territorial division of the republic, stating that it would enter into force after the local elections scheduled for May 2003.

The constant pressures over the Comrat local government, and, especially over its Governor, Dumitru Croitor, exercised by the communists from Chisinau and by their representatives in the regions could not pass without consequences. Thus, on April 15, 2002, the Gagauzian local government resigned, though its members admitted that the resignation would have a negative impact on the social and economic situation in the region.

The communist authorities did not comment on the resignation of the Comrat government. They were behaving as if they had nothing to do with the things that happened in Gagauzia. That event proved once again the political selfishness of the „red government“: Voronin and his comrades allowed the Gagauzian region to slip into a state of deep crisis in order to appoint their supporters in that region, as well as to secure in Comrat authorities that would obediently fulfill all the orders given by the Central Committee of the Communist Party.

On April 24, 2002, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted a resolution, which was supposed to end the political crisis ongoing in the Republic of Moldova for several months. Though the document was not of an accusatory nature, after examining the recommendations made by the high international authority, it was not hard to realize which of the parties involved in the conflict won the case. The PACE was requesting the communist leadership to meet the majority of the claims laid by the protesters, and the opposition – to stop the actions of protest.

The recommendation made to the opposition was more like a formality intended to console the communists' pride. The opposition had all the reasons to stop its protests even without the PACE recommendation, if, of course, the communists were to fulfill the PACE resolution. Those recommendations referred to: the registration by the end of July 2002 of the Bessarabian Church; submitting the new Criminal Code and the new Administrative Code to the Council of Europe for review; transformation of the „Teleradio-Moldova“ state company into a public institution; ensuring the independence of the judicial power; establishing a moratorium over the actions related to the history of the country and to the language issue etc.

Judging by that resolution, we can conclude that the Chisinau government appeared in front of the international public opinion in its real position – a dictatorial regime, which was violating the fundamental human rights and freedoms. It is reasonable to consider that later on the image was strengthened also by the fact that a big number of the above mentioned recommendations were never fulfilled.



OPPOSITION CONTINUES
TO BE DISCREDITED

The lesson of democracy given to the communists in Strasbourg did not bring the expected effects – the communists continued to violate the rights of the opposition and of the citizens by ruling the country in an authoritarian manner. Therefore, one week after the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe issued the resolution on the functioning of democratic institutions in the Republic of Moldova, vice-speaker Vadim Misin launched a new attack against the opposition – he accused the „Braghis Alliance“ of „planning to destabilize the situation in the country“.

In reality, the respective party simply launched an initiative to amend the electoral system in the Republic of Moldova. Had the initiative of the „Braghis Alliance“ been adopted, that would have immensely disadvantaged the communists. Above I have already mentioned that elections by individual districts or a mixed electoral system would transform the incumbent government into a small parliamentary opposition party. Most probably, the communists would not have been worried too much, had that initiative been adopted or rejected by the Parliament, which was totally under their control. Yet, in that case, the initiative of amending the electoral system was to be decided through a referendum by the whole nation. Thus, unsurprisingly enough, the „red government“ used all the possible levers for discrediting the authors of the initiative: television, local public administration, newspapers, state officials etc.

The abusive manner used later on against that initiative – the Parliament refused to appoint a date for the referendum, though, according to the legislation, it was obliged to do that – proved once again that, even if they came to power in a democratic way, the communists were ruling the country in a dictatorial manner.



COMMUNISTS AGAINST INCREASING THE NUMBER OF MEDIATORS

On May 14, 2002, at the sitting of the Permanent Round Table of the political parties from the Republic of Moldova, Andrei Neguta, the chairman of the parliamentary commission for foreign affairs and representative of the communist faction, rejected the proposal of the opposition parties aimed at increasing the number of mediators for the Transnistrian conflict negotiation process.

Undoubtedly, Romania will join the European Union, and this important international organization is directly interested in settling the Transnistrian conflict in order to have peace and order at its future frontiers. Following the discussions in Strasbourg in the first half of 2002, which focused on the critical situation in the Republic of Moldova, it became obvious that the Council of Europe was also willing to give us a helping hand. The Chisinau authorities had to request officially the involvement of those structures in the negotiation process. The internationalization of the conflict would have generated new opportunities for its settlement. The communists were the only ones who seemed to misunderstand that.



A NEW STEP EASTWARDS

In May 2002, the Eurasian Economic Community was the most discussed issue in the Republic of Moldova. Being created by Moscow, the Union had the goal to keep the ex-soviet states under the Kremlin's economic influence. It was obvious that the communists got involved in that political affair without taking into account that Moldova's status was different from other member-states. Moldova was already a member of the World Trade Organization, where the rules of the game differed from the ones functioning in the Eurasian Economic Community.

However, the communists played possum and declared that if the Republic of Moldova was to join the Eurasian Economic Community (at the time Moldova had only the status of observer in the respective structure), that would bring only positive effects. The representatives of the „red government“ stated that joining the Eurasian Economic Community would allow to reduce customs procedures, would facilitate the development of relations between the economic agents from the member-states, as well as between the state authorities etc.

In reality, the communists were concerned with keeping Moldova under Kremlin's influence, rather than with possible economic advantages, which could be offered by the Eurasian Economic Community. At that stage, there were talks about the possible replacement of the CIS, which became an inefficient regional structure, with the Eurasian Economic Community.

Therefore, had the ruling authorities not done everything possible in order to join the new organization, they could simply find themselves outside the CIS space. Being nostalgic for the glorious past, the communists' hearts would not have endured such a turn.



COMMUNISTS IGNORE THE MAYORS' PROPOSALS

Above we have written about the fact that, since the communists came to power, the local public administration system entered a state of deep crisis. This crisis could have been overcome, had a permanent dialogue been established between local authorities and the government. However, the communists rejected the mayors' proposals, opting to maintain the promotion of the policy of confrontation, of the barricade struggle. As a result, the situation in the country deteriorated considerably.

The communists are not only declining the invitation for dialogue, but they even refuse to comply with the Parliament's earlier decision that the old laws concerning administrative-territorial organization and local public administration will remain in force until the ordinary spring 2003 local elections. Thus, while ignoring the respective decision, the government undertakes specific actions regarding the transition from the judet to the rayon system. This is exemplified by deputy-prime minister Vasile Iovv's decree introducing two new positions: representative of the judet council chairman in the regions, and representative of the prefect. These officials are entitled to set up their own departments in the regions. The newly created structures were designed to prepare the grounds for the return to the rayon system. In other words, the communists are doing everything possible to maintain a state of uncertainty within the local public administration system for another year.



If at the beginning of summer 2002 anyone still nurtured any hopes that the ruling party in Chisinau would comply with the PACE resolution concerning the functioning of democratic institutions in the Republic of Moldova, those hopes vanished on June 4, when President Vladimir Voronin declared that the government had no intentions of transforming the „Teleradio-Moldova“ state company into two public broadcasting institutions, as recommended by PACE. During the program called „Ora Presedintelui“ („The President’s Hour“), broadcasted on TVM, he stated that he saw no reason „why the TV network owned by the state and belonging to the whole nation, should be transformed into a public organization“.

The President sent a clear signal that the „red government“ did not recognize the authority of the Council of Europe, and the capacity of the latter to intervene promptly and solve problems of the Council of Europe member-states. Following the president’s statement, several government bodies, which had intended to comply with some of the PACE recommendations, radically changed their position.

Had the president voiced his opinion only with regard to the „Teleradio-Moldova“ company, the situation would not have been as grave. People might have thought that overall the chief of state accepted the PACE proposals, but had a different opinion only in relation to a specific issue. Nevertheless, Vladimir Voronin went further in his accusations. Thus, he was quite critical of the PACE recommendations and the role of the opposition in unleashing the political crisis in the Republic of Moldova at the beginning of 2002.



At the beginning of June 2002, the Republic of Moldova became once more a target of criticism voiced by the European experts. At fault was the reckless policy of the ruling party in the area of local public administration and territorial-administrative reorganization. The Congress of local and regional authorities of the Council of Europe adopted a resolution concerning the situation of the local autonomy in the Republic of Moldova, criticizing the new laws on local public administration and administrative-territorial organization of Moldova.

The Congress of local and regional authorities of the Council of Europe showed its dissatisfaction with the state leadership of the Republic of Moldova for not consulting in advance the opinion of local public authorities regarding those two important normative acts, as it should have done under the provisions of the European Chart for local autonomy. The Congress of local and regional authorities of the Council of Europe expressed its regret over the fact that, contrary to earlier promises, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova did not take into account the Council of Europe recommendations regarding the adopted laws.

Every time the communists were criticized for their policy in the area of local public administration and administrative-territorial reforms, they claimed that those were just subjective opinions of the opposition. At the same time, the „red government“ remained voiceless when members of the Congress qualified as unjustified the arguments brought by the communists in favor of the return to the rayon system.



VORONIN SUSPECTED OF TAKING BRIBES

On June 13, Iurie Rosca, the Christian Democratic People's Party leader, addressed an appeal to the Public Prosecutor Vasile Rusu, requesting him to look into bribing allegations against President Vladimir Voronin by Russian company „LUKoil“, through the agency of his son, Oleg Voronin, who was at the time director of the Moldovan company „Metal-market“.

The issue was 5 million lei granted by „LUKoil“ to the „Metal-market“ company and the „Moldsilva“ association for the renovation of the „A. S. Pushkin“ house-museum in the Dolna village. As many others before it, the appeal remained without an answer. Normally, the competent authorities had to initiate an investigation to confirm or deny the statement of the Christian Democratic People's Party leader. Curiously enough, the competent authority overlooked that case, and, moreover, President Vladimir Voronin did not make any statement on the respective issue. An attitude of this kind shows that in the Republic of Moldova the opposition and the public opinion are completely ignored, while the legal authorities are subservient to the state power.



IP TELEPHONY PROVIDERS MARGINALIZED

IP telephony providers were probably among the most disadvantaged categories during the communist rule. Following several unsuccessful attempts at forcing certain individuals and legal entities to give up their IP telephony activities, the communists decided to extend the monopoly of „Moldtelecom“ JSC. Thus, after some amendments to the legislation in force, the national operator became a monopolist on the IP telephony market as well.

So far so good; however, this abusive decision could not have gone unnoticed by foreign investors. Previously the latter accepted the arguments brought by the Government of the Republic of Moldova, which alleged that the monopoly of „Moldtelecom“ JSC had to be maintained until January 2004 in order to prepare the respective market segment for liberalization, as well as to make the enterprise more attractive for investors. However, the monopolization of the IP telephony market was already redundant, and was reminiscent of a planned economy system. Therefore, foreign creditors asked the Chisinau authorities to reconsider their decision.

Contrary to expectations, on June 14, the communist parliament members voted in favor of keeping the monopoly of „Moldtelecom“ JSC over the IP telephony service market. That irresponsible attitude shown by the communists provoked a new wave of social protests and proved the government's disregard for Moldova's foreign partners.


 WALTER SCHWIMMER IS NOT AN
 AUTHORITY FIGURE FOR COMMUNISTS

President Vladimir Voronin's negative attitude towards the fulfillment of the PACE recommendations had bore its fruit. The communist parliament members chose to ignore the constructive and well-balanced proposal issued by the Council of Europe General Secretary, Walter Schwimmer. I mean the voting of June 20, 2002, when the majority faction rejected Walter Schwimmer's proposal according to which the Parliament from Chisinau had to send some important draft laws for review to Strasbourg.

The Council of Europe General Secretary sent a letter to the leaders of the three parliamentary factions, requesting that some drafts regarding the university autonomy and amendments to Parliamentary regulations were sent to Strasbourg for review. The events that took place at the beginning of 2002 in the Republic of Moldova and the positive attitude of the PACE played a decisive role in overcoming the critical situation; the communists had no reason to reject the respective initiative. The communist leaders lost face in front of the Council of Europe and harmed the image of the Republic of Moldova, jeopardizing its turn to chair the Ministers Committee of the CoE.


 REFERENDUM HINDERED
 BY COMMUNISTS

In the second half of July 2002, the communists intensified their actions aimed at hindering the referendum for modifying the electoral system in the Republic of Moldova, initiated by the Social-Democratic Alliance. The government started a vast campaign of defamation, intimidation and persecution of persons who were collecting signatures in favor of the prospective referendum.

Using various pretexts, the mayors siding with the Communist Party refused to authorize the lists with signatures collected in their localities, while the members of the initiative group were threatened and even dismissed from their jobs. Some Parliament members were also involved in the process of frustrating the referendum and gave certain orders to local public authorities forbidding them to stamp the subscription lists. The aggressive and intolerant behavior of the ruling authorities is an obvious example of the way the communists comprehend the notion of democracy. A European state is ruled by a dictatorial regime concerned solely with its own interests and opinions, and which perceives the fundamental rights and freedoms as nothing but empty words.

FEDERALIZATION IMPOSED
ON THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

In July 2002, the communists sought to implement the main goal of their governance – undermining the statehood of the Republic of Moldova and the subordination of the country to the geo-political interests of Russia. The respective objective had to be achieved through federalizing the country. In July 2002, following the consent between the mediators and the tacit approval of the Chisinau authorities, the OSCE mission launched the draft Agreement for the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict which provided for the federalization of Moldova.

Had the agreement been signed, Moldova would become a hostage to the Russian Federation or, better to say, to the Transnistrian region. The competences delegated to Transnistria under this document were so large that, de facto, the country was going to be governed by Smirnov's gang. However, the most important aspect was that the agreement set up the grounds for the legitimization of a criminal regime. If Transnistria wanted to leave the Moldovan federation, and the document provided several possibilities for doing that, every country could recognize its statehood given the fact that Tiraspol could have requested it from the position of a federative subject with equal rights, rather than a separatist region.

Even to an untrained eye it was clear that the document was not drafted by OSCE, but by the Russian Federation – the agreement contained articles copied integrally from the Constitution of the Russian Federation. Russia took advantage of the fact that Moldova

was governed by a party loyal to Moscow. But how can we explain the communists' behavior which neglected the interests of their country? Had the Chisinau authorities used the veto right and had they a clear position in the respective problem, nobody – neither OSCE, nor Russia – would have dared to propose plans that would undermine the statehood, independence and territorial integrity of the Republic of Moldova.

▷ GOVERNMENT PREPARES
„SURPRISES“ FOR PARISHIONERS
OF THE BESSARABIAN CHURCH

On July 19, 2002, the Parliament adopted a series of amendments to the Criminal Code that stipulated specific sanctions for unauthorized occupation of ecclesiastic premises. Thus, an infringement of that kind could result in a prison sentence ranging from one to three years or a fine of one hundred to three hundred minimal salaries (1800-5400 lei).

For the same actions yet committed by a group of persons on a basis of conspiracy, and which caused serious bodily harm or damaged the assets of the religious premises, the penalty provides for 3-7 years of imprisonment. If these actions caused considerable material damages or heavy consequences, then the penalty could result in 7-15 years of privation of liberty.

At first sight, this law seems reasonable. However, the PACE resolution of April 2002 clarifies the real objective pursued by this legislative act. In accordance with the above mentioned document, the Government had to register the Bessarabian Church until July 31, 2002. The communist leadership was obliged by the international authority to observe the citizens' right to free association, and thus, the government decided at least to deprive them of the mere possibility to enter into the possession of the patrimony, rightfully belonging to them. The Government declared the Moldovan Church as the legal successor of the Bessarabian Church which functioned on the present territory of the Republic of Moldova until 1940. As a consequence, the Bessarabian Church, which had restarted its activity at the

beginning of the 90's, was deprived of the right to regain its assets. Nevertheless, even after this abusive decision, the communists were still restless. Probably they were afraid that the parishioners of the Bessarabian Church would occupy by force the ecclesiastic premises that legally belonged to them once.

This decision confirmed once more that communist sponsored laws are not designed for the good of the country and the people, but are rather directed against certain categories of citizens. Instead of paying off moral and material damages to parishioners of the Bessarabian Church and securing the legal status of this entity, the „red government“ continued its repressive policy of persecution and intimidation of its own citizens.

COMMUNISTS MAKE THE
„NATIONAL PUBLIC BROADCASTING
INSTITUTION“ LEGAL

On July 26, 2002, the Parliament adopted with the votes of the majority faction the Law on the national public broadcasting institution, a normative act supposedly aimed at reforming the „Teleradio-Moldova“ state company. It is worth mentioning that the respective document was adopted just five days prior to the expiration of the deadline given by the PACE to the communist authorities in order to transform the state television and radio networks into public broadcasting institutions. Thus, the approval of this law was not a voluntary act of the „red government“, but rather an imposed measure.

However, even though the communists observed the deadline, they violated the main requirement – the law fabricated by the government did not ensure at all the transformation of the company into a public institution. Voronin’s advocates were aware of the important role that this institution could play in the „brainwashing“ campaign, and they could not yield so easily a propagandistic instrument of this kind. Had the ruling authorities truly desired to reform the company in accordance with the European standards, they would have approved the draft laws proposed by the members of parliament from the Social-Democratic Alliance. This document was developed with the assistance of the experts from the audio-visual field, who treated the issue in a professional manner rather than ideologically.

In the first phase, the ruling party accepted this document, creating the impression that they would be in favor of ensuring the transformation of the company into a public institution. Later on, it became obvious that the authorities used the draft law to conceal their intentions of further keeping control over „Teleradio-Moldova“. In the second reading, the communists excluded from the document the provisions referring to the procedure of constituting the Council of observers and electing the management of the public television and radio networks, replacing them with the provisions from their own draft. As a result, the Social-Democratic Alliance had to recall its draft, and the communists adopted their own document.



NEW RESTRICTIONS ON THE OPPOSITION AND VOTERS

The fear experienced by the communists in the spring of 2002, when protesters reached the steps of the Parliament, made the representatives of the ruling party resort to a new trick. On July 26, the Parliament adopted with the votes of the majority faction a series of amendments to the Law on the status of a member of parliament. The amendments stipulated that the meetings of the legislators with their voters were to be authorized by the local public administration.

The communists did not rule out the possibility that the opposition could organize new protests in the fall of 2002 following the non-fulfillment of the PACE resolution by the „red government“. Therefore, the authorities decided to deprive the opposition members of parliament of the legal ground to organize protests. At the beginning of 2002, the opposition members of parliament had resorted to the Law on the status of a parliament member, under which they were allowed to organize meetings with voters without the public administration authorization. The communists claimed that the events which took place in the center of the capital were public meetings, which, under the present Law, could take place only with the permission of the local authorities; whereas, the Christian Democratic People’s Party members of parliament insisted that those were meetings with voters. As a consequence of this play with normative acts, for a while, the communists could not lay sanctions against the organizers of the protests.

In order to deprive the opposition of the chance to have a legal argument in its own favor, the communist members of parliament modified the Law on the status of a parliament member. In its blind desire to destroy the opposition, the „red government“ did not take into account only one thing – the amendments to the respective law enacted by their representatives were in contradiction with the European law. According to international standards, not only the members of parliament, but in general, anyone who intends to organize public meetings, are obliged to inform the local authorities about the planned action without asking for a permission to protest.



CONSTITUTIONAL COURT
HINDERS COMMUNISTS' PLANS

Even though the Constitutional Court had declared as unconstitutional the procedure of electing mayors by councils, the communists prepared a new legislative „sabotage“ that aimed at depriving the citizens of the right to elect mayors by direct vote. Analyzing the arguments used by the Constitutional Court when it thwarted their initiative, the communists came to the conclusion that the terms of „elected mayor“, „elected councils“ and „autonomy authorities“ should be excluded from article 112 of the Constitution. This particular article, and especially the above mentioned terms, was the main obstacle for the communists, who, by all means, wanted the mayors to be elected by the councils.

Yet again, the „red government“ got what it deserved – the Constitutional Court issued a negative note in response to the respective legislative initiative. Although Victor Stepaniuc, the leader of the parliamentary communist faction, tried to convince the court that the new procedure would be more efficient, and that the mayors and the major part of councilors would represent one political force, the Court was not persuaded. Victor Puscas, the chairman of the Constitutional Court, declared that the initiative of the communist members of parliament was in contradiction with some articles of the Constitution, and that a positive note could be given only when those articles were revised.

The communists might have started to revise some other articles of the Constitution in order to satisfy their caprice, if they had enough time for that. It is

worth mentioning that there were approximately ten months left from that moment until the following elections. Taking into account that the initiative on amending the Constitution could be adopted only after six months from the date when the Constitutional Court had given a positive note, and also the fact that, according to European standards, the legislation in this area could not be modified during the last half of the year prior to elections, it becomes obvious that, regardless of their strong wish, the representatives of the incumbent power already could not change the rules of the game.

▷ COMMUNISTS NOT
FULFILLING THEIR OBLIGATIONS

On July 31, 2002, the deadline when the communists had to register the Bessarabian Church, as well as transform the „Teleradio-Moldova“ company into a public broadcasting institution and undertake specific actions for fulfilling other fourth recommendations of the PACE resolution from April 2002, expired. The communists did almost nothing in this direction, betraying the expectations of the opposition, of the civil society and of the international community.

The communists' behavior was extremely defiant – they were fooling the foreign and internal public opinions by declaring that at least two PACE recommendations were fulfilled. They meant the registration of the Bessarabian Church and the transformation of the „Teleradio-Moldova“ company into a public institution. The „red government“ pretended to forget that, though it made the Bessarabian Church legal, through the agency of some abusive decisions it deprived that entity of its legally owned assets and introduced provisions allowing the persecution of the parishioners of this Church etc. The „Teleradio-Moldova“ company became so public, that only communist faces could be seen on the TV screen and the leadership of the company was mostly formed of persons loyal to the communist regime.

It is not worth speaking about other recommendations: justice remained subservient to the state power, the local autonomy was destroyed, the university autonomy was permanently under attacks, the language and history moratoriums were often violated. All these communist tricks have diminished for many years ahead the credibility of the Republic of Moldova in Europe.

▷ OPPOSITION STRIPPED OFF THE RIGHT
TO PICKET THE HEADQUARTERS
OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

The fact that democracy in Moldova has been deficient during the period of communist rule is also exemplified by the decision of the Chisinau Police Inspectorate which, at the beginning of August 2002, rejected the request of the Social-Liberal Party to receive authorization for picketing the Government and the headquarters of the Communist Party from Moldova. The event was scheduled for August 16.

The Police Inspectorate qualified as groundless the motives invoked by the Social-Liberal Party, although it did not advance arguments for the adopted decision. We can only assume what was the reason of that refusal. The communist government was afraid of an eventual new political crisis in the Republic of Moldova. Many opposition parties condemned the Agreement of Federalization launched by OSCE and disapproved of the fact that the communist authorities did not oppose to the promotion of that project. The communists simply could not admit the picketing of their party headquarters. One thing is to picket the Government and the Parliament, and another – the headquarters of the ruling party.

This is an unprecedented case. It is not normal that in a democratic state the organizers of the actions of protest are forced to ask the mayor's office, the local councils, or the police authorities for the permission to organize public meetings. I am surprised that the communists have not issued a law under which the authorization to organize actions of protest in the Republic of Moldova is granted by the Central Committee of the Communist Party!



THE „BLACK LIST“ OF JUDGES

After the communists came to power in February 2001, the judicial authority of the Republic of Moldova was split: those loyal to the power and who were rewarded for their devotion with new appointments, and those who opposed to the communist attack on the judicial system and were later dismissed. As a consequence, the communist government seized total control over the justice and did not change its positions even after the approval of the PACE resolution of April 2002, which clearly stated that the authorities from Chisinau had to ensure the independence of the judicial power.

For a while, the communists were denying the fact that any judge had been dismissed on political grounds. In order to prove that the situation was different from the one alleged by the „red government“, at the beginning of September 2002, the Association of Judges worked out a list of judges who had been dismissed on political grounds. The list was submitted to the Council of Europe observers in Moldova. The respective list included 57 persons. Half of them (29 persons) were ex-presidents and ex-vice-presidents of courts, and the others 28 – ordinary judges.

The dismissal s of those persons became possible after the Parliament had established a new procedure of appointing the presidents of courts. According to that, the Supreme Council of Magistrates suggested several candidates for a vacancy to the president of the Republic of Moldova for approval, and the presi-

dent of the state had to select one of them. It is obvious even for a non-expert that a president of a court appointed in this manner could not be independent in his/her activity because he/she would represent the interests of the head of the state. This procedure was a direct interference of the president of the country in the activity of the judicial system, a breach of art. 6 of the Constitution, providing for the principle of separating the powers in a state.

▷ COMMUNISTS „BIND“ MOLDOVA
TO RUSSIA FROM THE MILITARY
STANDPOINT AS WELL

No previous governments dared to focus on military collaboration with Russia or any other state from the CIS. Moldova had even expressed restraints regarding its activity in the CIS, according to which we would prevalently collaborate with the CIS states in the economic areas, rather than in the military ones. The former governments also had reasons to act similarly given the fact that the Constitution clearly stipulated that the Republic of Moldova was a neutral state. However, the communists left this constitutional standard as well as the policy promoted by their predecessors aside and, on October 3, 2002, the Parliament ratified the Agreement on technical/military cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation.

The Moldovan-Russian Agreement on technical/military cooperation referred to the following areas: projection and fabrication of military goods, mutual supplies of military goods, rendering of services with military destination etc. According to the document, each party would assure in conformity with their national legislations the establishment of necessary conditions for concluding contracts between the economic agents which activated in the technical/military area. The implementation of that document had to secure optimal conditions to the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Moldova for active participation in the process of elaboration and realization of different military projects, of the security policy in the region, of a permanent

exchange of information and experience in the area of military legislation, and also of increasing technical-material assistance to the troops.

In other words, Moldova „was militarily bind“ to Russia. Finally, strengthening the military collaboration with Russia questioned Moldova’s cooperation with NATO, especially in the framework of the „Partnership for Peace“ Program.

MOLDOVA „INTEGRATES“
MORE AND MORE IN THE CIS

On October 4, the Parliament withdrew some restraints expressed by the Republic of Moldova at the moment of signing the Agreement of creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Under that agreement, our country had the right not to coordinate with the member states its actions in the area of foreign and migration policy.

The initiative to withdraw those restraints was launched by President Vladimir Voronin, and was aimed at making the Republic of Moldova closer to Moscow and moving it away from the European Union's sphere of influence. At that time, the issue on the expansion of the European Union up to the Prut River and the relations to be established with new neighbors were intensively discussed. In this context, both the foreign and migration policies, as well as the Transnistrian issue, presented the greatest interest. By withdrawing those specific restraints, the communists basically constrained the subsequent Moldovan governments to ask for Moscow's permission before concluding any agreements with the European Union in the area of foreign and migration policies. Thus, the Republic of Moldova could not conclude an agreement of partnership with the European Union until it received approval from the Kremlin. If the withdrawal of the above mentioned restraints was not aimed at subduing the foreign policy to Moscow's imperial interests, why then the communists had not specified the limits of the so-called „co-ordination of actions in the area of foreign and migration policies“?

ANOTHER TWO THOUSAND
LEI THROWN AWAY

The communists who plotted the dismissal of Dumitru Croitor, the Governor of the Territorial Administrative Unit Gagauz – Yeri, not only disturbed the situation in the region and slowed down its development for a certain period of time, but also caused the autonomy and state budgets lose important sums of money. After spending about 200 thousand lei for the Governor's elections of October 6, 2002, the communists had to allocate another 200 thousand for the repeated elections.

The policy oriented against the executive power in Comrat and promoted by the communists and their advocates from the People's Assembly was so disgusting that people refused to participate in the elections of October 6. Instead of recognizing their mistake, the communists continued to promote the same reckless policy of groundless accusations against the opponents. Moreover, after calling those elections, the government made the taxpayers of the Gagauzian region cover their cost. The Comrat authorities were forced to beg both from the Central Election Commission and the Government. Finally, it appeared that people paid for some antidemocratic elections, which resulted in the communists appointing one of their deputies – Gheorghe Tabunscic. The reports of the accredited national and international observers exemplified that the respective elections seriously violated the legislation in force.

▷ „COMMUNISTS MUST STOP
THE ANTI-ROMANIAN POLICY“

The anti-Romanian hysteria promoted by the Chisinau government culminated in the fall of 2002 with the suspension of broadcasting of the Romanian TV channel TVR-1 on the Moldovan territory. The „red government“ grounded its decision with some financial arguments – allegedly Romania had debts to the „Radio communications“ state company for the broadcasting of this TV channel in the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, the communists forgot about their own, much bigger debts to the western neighbor.

If we were to follow the statements of some communist leaders, according to which TVR-1 contributed to the education of Moldovan citizens in Romanian spirit, which in their opinion posed a danger to the Moldovan state, we can assume that, by suspending the TVR-1 channel, the communists were driven by ideological reasons, rather than by technical/financial issues. This assumption was also confirmed by the fact that, after solving the problem of the alleged Romanian debt, the communists delayed for several months the renewal of broadcasting of the TVR-1 channel on Moldovan territory.

This frustrating behavior could not pass without consequences. On November 10, 2002, a protest meeting organized by the „Journal de Chisinau“ newspaper took place in Chisinau. The participants at that meeting requested the ruling party to stop the anti-Romanian and antinational policy of defying the Romanian language in the Republic of Moldova and of russification of the population.

After that protest meeting, the ruling party did not tackle the issue.

▷ SITUATION IN THE ENERGETIC
SECTOR IS AGGRAVATING

At the beginning of November 2002, on the eve of the heating season, the experts signaled a serious disturbance of the situation in the energetic sector which suffered serious perturbations during the previous years as a result of an imprudent policy promoted by the ruling party. In this context, it is enough to remind ourselves of the conflict created at „Termocom“ JSC, when the communists made everything possible to take control over that enterprise.

After the communists came to power, the major enterprises from this sector – CET-I, CET-II, CET-Nord, CET-Nord-Vest, Moldova-Gas and Termocom – reached a state of deep crisis. Between April 1, 2001 and July 1, 2002, the debts for the services and products delivered to energetic companies increased by 650 mil. Lei; the balance losses of the energetic companies increased by 470 mil. Lei; the debts to the state budget – by 110 mil. Lei. At the same time, the equity of the energetic companies decreased by 850 mil. Lei.

The worsening of the situation in this field was a real danger for the population taking into account the possibility of a future conversion of these enterprises' debts into state debts. In this case, the fiscal burden on the taxpayers could have increased. Moreover, the population had to support increases in the tariffs on energetic products.

The communists could have avoided the catastrophe in the energetic sector. It was necessary to accept the constructive proposals of the opposition: the inclusion of 50-100 mil. Lei in the state budget, which

were supposed to be paid to the population as compensations for paying the debts to the energetic enterprises; the redirection of more than 40 mil. Lei earmarked for the indexation of the population's money deposits in the „Banca de Economii“ (Savings Bank), as well as for paying off the debts of the population for the consumed energetic products; the creation of opportunities for the citizens to pay their debts by performing various public works.



By the end of 2002, the communists intensified attacks on foreign investors aimed at expelling them by all means from the Republic of Moldova and taking hold of the profitable businesses set up by western economic agents. The main target was the Spanish company „Union Fenosa“, the owner of the power distribution networks from Chisinau, the south and the centre of Moldova. Therefore, on November 13, at the sitting of the Permanent Round Table, the opposition parties adopted a common declaration disapproving of the actions undertaken by the ruling authorities with a view to expropriate some foreign investors, especially the „Union Fenosa“ group.

In that sense, the political orders given to different state bodies (the Court of Accounts, the Department of Migration, the General Prosecutor's Office) were so obvious that economic experts did not mind to call the created situation as a direct conflict between the ruling party and the foreign investors. The decision adopted by the Supreme Court of Justice, which allowed the General Prosecutor's Office to examine the legality of the transaction, was a political one, rather than of economic or legal nature. „Union Fenosa“ came to Moldova at the Government's invitation and through an open investment tender, organized under principles of equality and transparency, in accordance with the Law on the individual project of privatization of the enterprises from the electric power sector.

Being pressed by the international community, the communists stopped the attacks against „Union Fenosa“. However, nobody can guarantee that the „red government“ will not restart its diabolic work of compromising the investment climate in the Republic of Moldova.

▷ VORONIN SETS UP NEW
PLANS FOR SETTLING SCORES
WITH THE OPPOSITION

By the middle of November 2002, President Vladimir Voronin submitted to the Parliament a legislative initiative, a draft law mainly aimed at establishing new methods of settling scores with the opposition. Officially, it was called the „draft law on fighting extremist activities“.

In order to be convinced of the repressive nature of the document, it is sufficient to bring some examples. In accordance with the draft law, the Prosecutor’s Office, the Ministry of Justice and other state bodies were supposed to be authorized to suspend the activity of „organizations which propagated extremism“. The respective provision referred to parties as well as NGOs, religious structures and even mass-media.

The definition of „extremism“ was so large and so confusedly explained that any action inconvenient to the communist authorities could go under that category. For example, if a citizen declared that he was Romanian, the authorities could qualify that behavior as anti-state, antisocial, dangerous etc., and the person could be imprisoned. Or, if a newspaper wrote about the protest actions organized by the opposition, the communists could decide that those protests had an extremist character and could suspend the activity of the respective opposition party, as well as of the newspaper.

The most terrible thing is that the document did not remain a draft; it was adopted, promulgated and published in the „Monitorul Oficial“ newspaper. The law is in force and can be applied anytime against those who share ideas different to those of the communists.

▷ VORONIN WANTS TO BE A TSAR
OVER EDUCATION SYSTEM AS WELL

November 2002 was a productive month for the head of the state as he launched many legislative initiatives. The citizens did not manage to forget the shock caused by the Law on fighting extremism, while the president stunned their minds with new sensational news – another draft law referring to education. The new „legislative masterpiece“ requested additional competencies for the president in the area of administration of the education system.

Voronin proposed to add a new chapter to article 40 of the Law on education, according to which the president of the country could confirm, at the Government’s proposal, the creation, reorganization and liquidation of graduate and postgraduate institutions, of scientific research institutions and of personnel training institutions. That was an example of a new masked attack against the university autonomy. By launching that document, president Vladimir Voronin violated the basic rights of the education establishments in the Republic of Moldova, and also defied once more the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, given the fact that the above mentioned initiative violated the PACE resolution of April 24, 2002, under which the ruling party was advised to ensure the university autonomy in the Republic of Moldova.

▷ GENERAL PROSECUTOR'S
OFFICE IS „PUSHED“ AGAINST
THE UNION OF JOURNALISTS

During the years of communist rule, Voronin's supporters made everything possible to silence the civil society which repeatedly criticized the aggressive, abusive and antidemocratic behavior of the ruling authorities. In those areas where the communists could not manage to suppress the freedom of expression, they created parallel structures aimed at eliminating the criticism addressed to the ruling authorities by civic organizations.

By the end of November 2002, the communists „set on“ the General Prosecutor's Office against the Union of Journalists in order to bring the latter to silence. Being totally controlled by the „red government“, the General Prosecutor's Office announced its intentions to obtain, through courts' decisions, the evacuation of the Union of Journalists from the „Casa Presei“ state building. The Prosecutor's Office accused the union of the fact that it had rent arrears of 17 854 Lei to the „Casa Presei“ building. The Prosecutor's Office actions were a response to the Union of Journalists for the meeting organized few days before in front of the Parliament to protest against the suspension of broadcasting of the Romanian TV channel TVR-1 on Moldovan territory.

Aware of the fact that they would not be able to silence the Union of Journalists by exerting pressures, the communists decided to choose another track – they created their own union of journalists called the League of Professional Journalists. Thus, the communists accomplished another antidemocratic „achievement“ – the splitting of the civil society.

▷ ISRAELI INVESTORS
ALSO UNSATISFIED

After the attacks against „Union Fenosa“, „Air Moldova“ and „Europharm“, it was the turn of Israeli investors to feel on their own skin the particularities of doing business in a state ruled by communists. In 2000, the Israeli Company „Avi Waks“ won the investment tender on privatization of „Moldova Tur Ltd.“ and had to pay \$1.55 mil. for a package of shares of 73,25%. Initially, „Avi Waks“ paid the sum of \$650.000, but, later on, the company was forced to suspend the money transfers to the Government because Israel entered into war with Palestine.

Although the contract provided for the suspension of payments in case of war, political crises and natural cataclysms, the Moldovan authorities did not take into account those provisions and cancelled the contract unilaterally.

The „Avi Waks“ company had deposited \$22 mil. on the London Bank „B.L.“ accounts, designated for renovation of „Moldova – Tur Ltd.“ and especially of the „National“ hotel, which was a part of that business entity. „Avi Waks“ concluded preventive agreements with „BASS“ international hotel network aimed at developing tourism and hotel businesses in the Republic of Moldova.

The „red government“ neglected all the intentions of the Israeli company and was not capable of carrying out a civilized „divorce“.

▷ COMMUNISTS RESTRICT THE RIGHT
OF MAYORS TO BE RE-ELECTED

After unsuccessful attempts to establish a new procedure of electing mayors (by councils), as well as to exclude those norms of the Constitution which did not allow them to implement the mentioned procedure, the communists decided to eliminate some serious rivals from the election campaign (especially, Mayor Serafim Urechean) through introducing a legislative norm that would restrict the mayors' right to be elected more than two times consecutively.

The communists' plan was simple: if they did not manage to get a communist mayor elected by the communist members of council, then, they had to exclude Serafim Urechean from the race, who was already serving his second consecutive term of office, and consequently they would have seized power in the capital. In their desire to satisfy their personal interests, the communists again did not take into account the provisions of the Constitution, which clearly stipulated that the Republic of Moldova citizens had the right to elect and to be elected. The introduction of the above mentioned interdiction would have deprived most of the citizens of the constitutional right to be elected as mayors.

There are no doubts that had the amendment to the legislation been disputed in the Constitutional Court, it would have been immediately qualified as unconstitutional. Fortunately, the communists voluntarily abandoned their own legislative absurdity. That happened not because the communists felt guilty, but because they realized that the respective provision

would have no repercussions on Serafim Urechean. In the heat of the campaign, the „red government“ probably forgot that the incumbent mayor of the capital had exercised his first mandate being appointed by president's decree, rather than elected by the population.

▷ WHY WERE THE PERSONS, DECLARED AS MENTALLY-SICK ON POLITICAL GROUNDS, NOT REHABILITATED?

On December 20, 2002, a group of doctors requested the Parliament, the Government and the League of Doctors to cancel the diagnosis „mentally-sick“ attributed on political grounds to certain persons in the former USSR. The declaration was made public at a Parliamentary plenary sitting by Member of Parliament Viorel Prisacaru, who is a doctor by trade.

In Soviet times, the majority of dissidents from the Republic of Moldova were interned in the „Costiujeni“ psychiatric hospital with the diagnosis: „schizophrenia, paranoid form, antisocial behavior“. Even though those persons had been later released, the diagnosis was not amended. The competent authorities should have stepped in. Unfortunately, the communists did not undertake any steps in that direction. May be they were guided by carelessness and indifference or by some other political reasons, but the conclusion was one: it was not normal that in a state, which pretended to be democratic and which is situated in the center of Europe, there existed victims of political pressures, who were not rehabilitated. Probably, one of the future governments should return to this issue and correct the communists' mistakes.

▷ COMMUNISTS DEPRIVE THE POPULATION OF THE RIGHT TO OPINION

The year of 2002, one of the most difficult for the destiny of democracy in the Republic of Moldova, ended with a revolting abuse – the communists deprived the population, which according to the Constitution represented the supreme will in the state, the cornerstone of the country's sovereignty and statehood, of the right to express the opinion on a problem of major importance – the modification of the electoral system.

The Social-Democratic Alliance launched an initiative concerning the introduction of a mixed electoral system – the members of parliament were to be elected both by individual districts and by party lists. That system disadvantaged the communists, who had no remarkable persons on their lists. Yet, that was not a reason to ignore the initiative supported by more than 200 thousand citizens. Exactly so many signatures were collected by the initiative group in order to support the referendum.

It was important that the Central Election Commission confirmed the validity of the overwhelming majority of those signatures. In that case, the Parliament was supposed either to amend directly the legislation in accordance with the citizens' request, or set the date for the referendum. However, the communists flagrantly violated the legislation in force, and chose a third path – they rejected the initiative to conduct the respective referendum. Allegedly, many signatures collected in favor of the referendum were invalid.

How had the communists come to that conclusion? The only body authorized to verify the lists with signa-

tures was the Central Election Commission, which had already voiced its position on the respective issue. The communists allowed themselves to replace the Central Election Commission, accusing the latter of „incompetence and bad intentions“. Thus, if you did not obey to the communists, it meant that you were incompetent!

Therefore, the communists achieved their goal. They deprived the population of maybe the most important right – to decide through referendum problems of major importance in the state.



COMMUNISTS OPPOSE REFERENDUM ON MOLDOVA JOINING NATO AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

The year of 2003 began with another abuse of the communist authorities – the Central Election Commission (CEC) refused to register an initiative group, which intended to organize a state referendum on Moldova joining NATO and the European Union. No, I did not overreact when I said, that although the decision had been adopted by CEC, the respective abuse could be attributed to the „red government“. At the beginning of 2003, CEC was on tenterhooks – it was the last year of the then Commission members' mandates and their destiny (whether to be reconfirmed or not) depended on the ruling party. Therefore, it was not a surprise that some points of view expressed by the communist leaders in their speeches strangely „coincided“ with the opinions of the CEC members.

The Commission grounded the refusal with the fact that, according to the Constitution, the Republic of Moldova was a neutral state and could not join NATO. It is worth mentioning, that CEC did not express its attitude towards a possible referendum on joining the European Union, although it could easily separate those two issues. CEC was not entitled to refuse the registration of the initiative group, because the latter had not posed the problem of reviewing the Constitution and of Moldova joining NATO, but only of consulting the public opinion on the respective issue. The communists got scared by a possible affirmative answer of the population – yes, we want to join NATO! In that case, they were supposed either to accept

Moscow's wish (which was opposed to Moldova joining NATO), against their own nation's will, or to fulfill the will of the people by risking in that case to fall into Kremlin's disgrace. The government chose the third path, a completely dishonorable one for them – to deprive again the people of the right to express their opinion upon a problem of major importance in the state.

▷ THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA –
ON THE BRINK OF A NEW POLITICAL CRISIS

In the middle of January, Jossette Durrieu, the chairman of the monitoring commission of the Council of Europe and the CoE rapporteur for the Republic of Moldova, declared in the framework of the CoE monitoring commission's first meeting of that year, that she did not exclude the possibility of a new political crisis unleashing in the Republic of Moldova. Despite being far away from Moldova, the officialdom from Strasbourg showed a greater insight than the communists, which were in Chisinau and witnessed all the above mentioned events.

Although they hardly managed to overcome the political crisis of 2002, Voronin's adepts did nothing to prevent a similar development of events in 2003. They committed the same mistakes, and, at the beginning of 2003, Moldova was again on the brink of a major political crisis.

Furthermore, the communists ignored the statements of the CoE rapporteurs for the Republic of Moldova and did not undertake any measures aimed at improving the situation. As a result, the confrontations between the government and the opposition intensified, and new protests against the communists resumed in Chisinau.

OPPOSITION RESUMES
ANTICOMMUNIST PROTESTS

After new abuses committed by the „red government“ at the beginning of 2003, on January 19, anti-communist protests were resumed in Chisinau. The first meeting of protest in 2003 was attended by approximately 3 000 persons. It is worth mentioning that, the protesters that time were members and supporters not only of the Christian Democratic People’s Party, but also of the Liberal Party and of the Christian Democratic Peasants’ Party.

The opposition parties began to unite their efforts, because the refusal of the Central Election Commission to register an initiative group, which had the goal to organize a referendum on Moldova joining NATO and the European Union, was a clear signal that there were no impartial and objective electoral authorities in the Republic of Moldova, which could ensure a fair election process. Moreover, the spring general local elections of that year were adding more reasons of worry. The destiny of democracy in the Republic of Moldova depended a lot on the election results, because it was well known that local elections served as a basis for the future parliamentary elections.

The resumption of protests in Chisinau proved that the CoE experts were right when they warned of a possible political crisis in the Republic of Moldova. Given the fact that those tensions occurred while the Republic of Moldova was preparing to take over the CoE presidency, we could realize the mood of the European officials: how to delegate the leadership of Europe to a government, which could not ensure a stable state of affairs at least in its own country?



SITUATION IN PARLIAMENT
NOT STABLE ANYMORE

The „red government“ of the Republic of Moldova should be entered in the „Guinness“ book of records due to its unique antidemocratic „performance“ – during less than one month the ruling authorities violated twice the rights of the people to express through referendum their opinion on issues of major importance in the country. The respective cases are the referendum on the modification of the electoral system (rejected by the communist parliamentary majority at the end of December 2002), and the referendum on Moldova joining NATO and the EU (rejected by the Central Election Commission at the beginning of January 2003). And while the Christian Democratic People’s Party, the initiator of the second referendum, decided to protest in the street, then the Social Democratic Alliance, which launched the idea of organizing the first referendum, decided to boycott the plenary meetings of the Parliament.

The antidemocratic and restrictive behavior of the representatives of the ruling party violated the principles of political pluralism and freedom of opinion. Yet, the protest of the Social Democratic Alliance had another serious reason – the persons who took part in collecting signatures in favor of the referendum were pressed by the government, being intimidated and dismissed.

As a result of those two protests initiated by the opposition, a very strange situation emerged in Moldova: one faction was protesting in the street, another – inside the Parliament, but the communist government did not rack its brains over and continued to commit new abuses. The government’s attitude could be called anything but democratic.

In January 2003, the communists brought again into the spotlight another scandalous issue – the „death train“, which transported nuclear waste from Bulgaria to Russia, transiting Moldova. That time, the problem was discussed both inside and outside the country. Seeing the indifference of the communist party towards the population’s health and the state national security, the „Alianta Verde“ Ecologist Party requested the help of the European Alliance of green parties in carrying out an international independent inspection of the above mentioned transit of nuclear wastes from the nuclear power plant from Kozlodui (Bulgaria) to Russia via Moldova. The inspection was supposed to be carried out from different standpoints: legal, ecological, political and economic.

The ruling party was accused of violating the environment legislation of the Republic of Moldova and refused to reveal the possible dangers, which could be caused by the transit. According to national and international laws in that area, the population had to be fully informed and participate in taking appropriate decisions.

Instead of complying with the ecologists’ warnings and observing the legislation in force, the communists decided to amend it and legalize their own abuses. The parliament amended the legislation by allowing the authorities to deny environment information to the population, „if that information could be perceived in a wrong sense and could cause panic among the people“. Even though they hijacked the right to conceal

the truth about dangerous transits, the communists did not solve the problem, but rather aggravated it. The citizens, whose lives and health were jeopardized, were deprived of the elementary right to know when exactly the „death train“ was crossing the country.

 COMMUNISTS' TRICK WITH
TELERADIO-MOLDOVA FAILED

Although the „red government“ strived to persuade the public opinion and the international community that it fulfilled most of the PACE recommendations, they did not succeed. That was exemplified by the hearings which took place in Strasbourg in the last week of January 2003. In the framework of that meeting, PACE showed its dissatisfaction with the way the Moldovan authorities fulfilled the provisions of the resolution of April 24, 2002 regarding the transformation of the „Teleradio-Moldova“ state company into a public broadcasting institution.

According to the report, the new Law on the public broadcasting institution did not solve the issue of independence of the „Teleradio-Moldova“ state company, and offered the government more possibilities to interfere in the activity of the state television and radio networks. The European experts emphasized that they did not agree with the procedure of electing and appointing the company's Administrative Council members. Moreover, that law did not guarantee the freedom of expression.

Although the Chisinau authorities had promised to modify the law and grant greater independence to the state television and radio networks, that did not happen. Their personal interests mattered so much to the communists that they compromised the external image of the Republic of Moldova.

 OPPOSITION ORGANIZES
JOINT PROTESTS

Victor Stepaniuc, the leader of the communist parliamentary majority faction, launched the initiative of an annual mandatory reconfirmation by the parties of the number of their members. According to the respective act (which, by the way, was adopted in final reading by the end of December 2002), Moldovan political parties were to present the list of their members each year, until March 1, to the Ministry of Justice. Those lists had to be accompanied by the signatures of the party members, and the parties were also obliged to present the electronic versions.

In other words, the political parties were to loose the first two months of every year roaming the country and asking people to reconfirm their memberships. After drawing up the lists, the party representatives were to travel again through the republic and collect the signatures of those persons. Given their control over the Ministry of Justice, the communists could always dissolve an inconvenient party by claiming that, as a result of verifying the lists, the respective party had less than five thousand members (the minimum provided by the legislation).

Obviously, the opposition could not overlook that abuse and, by the end of January 2003, the majority of political parties decided to organize joint protests. The Mayor's office authorized those rallies to take place on February 6 and 7, the very date the new parliamentary session was due to begin. Only the opposition leaders gathered to protest in front of the Parliament and the Presidency.

The communists remained absolutely alone – the Christian-democrats, the liberals and the socialists were all protesting against them. In order to save face, the communists decided to sacrifice the Minister of Justice, Ion Morei, who allegedly was partially guilty for that situation. As for the initiative of Victor Stepaniuc, at first, the term of confirmation of the number of party members was extended from March 1 till December 1, and then, in general, the procedure was cancelled.



COMMERCIAL BANKS – COMMUNISTS' NEXT TARGET

Besides the abuses of political nature, communists did not forget to commit economic abuses. At the beginning of February, the communist Member of Parliament, Alexandru Ciugureanu, submitted to the Parliament's Permanent Bureau a legislative initiative aimed at authorizing the Court of Accounts to check the administration of public money by the Moldovan commercial banks.

The communist deputy's goal was to initiate a new leverage over the banks. Had the initiative been adopted, the communists would have real possibilities of settling scores with any bank. The arguments officially brought by the communists were so ridiculous, that they had not resisted any critics. For example, the government pretended not to know that the banks did not administrate public funds; they just transferred the money to the final beneficiaries or to one of the agents.

The Court of Accounts' control over the banks violated the international standards. Moreover, the deputy did not even conceal that thing, and only mentioned that the Republic of Moldova could allow itself a deviation from those standards due to its own specific nature. What specific nature, gentlemen? Perhaps that we are the single communist state in Europe and that many high ranking officials own banking businesses, which have to be promoted.

At the beginning of February 2003, President Vladimir Voronin came up with an initiative to adopt a new Constitution which, in his opinion, would contribute to the settling of the Transnistrian conflict. The development of the new Supreme Law, according to the intention of the head of state, should involve the Tiraspol administration. In his „noble“ intention, the president conveniently forgot some important points. First, this initiative aimed at enforcing the Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria proposed by the OSCE Kiev office in the summer of 2002. That Agreement goes against the interests of the Republic of Moldova, as it undermines its state system, independence and sovereignty, and questions its future as a state.

Second, the head of state offered the Tiraspol leaders to take part, on equal conditions, in the drafting of the new Constitution, and in doing so he de facto reprieved and forgave them all their crimes, committed until now. And this amounts to a betrayal of the memory of soldiers, fallen during the military conflict on the Nistru River.

Third, the head of state completely neglected the fact that neither he, nor anybody else, had the right to repeal the Constitution in force and propose a new one for the simple reason that the Supreme Law did not provide for the mechanism of its revoking. If communists wanted to amend the Constitution, all they had to do was hold a referendum on the issue and consult the opinion of the nation. Thus, a paradoxical situation emerged: the head of state, as the guarantor of the Constitution, himself violated the Constitution.

Although, according to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe April and September 2002 resolutions, the communists were supposed to institute a moratorium on the approval of decisions regarding history and language, this was not the case. The „red government“ continues to insist on replacing the course of „History of Romanians“ with the more „patriotic“ ones. As a result of the communists' defiant attitude, social pressure is growing, and historians are showing their protest against this abuse. On February 17, 2003, the Association of Historians of Moldova protested against the introduction in schools of the subject „History. The Integrated Course“.

The course of integrated history aims at substituting the current subject „History of Romanians“ and integrates several history courses: of Romanians, of Moldova, and even universal history. It is easy to see that, by promoting this subject, the government is trying to affect the rights of those who consider themselves Romanians, to reduce them to silence, and to put them in the humiliating position of national minority in the Republic of Moldova.



COMMUNISTS AMEND THEIR OWN LEGISLATIVE CREATURE

On February 28, the Parliament passed a new law on public broadcasting institution. The legislature was forced to come back to this document being pressed by the Council of Europe, which ruled that the Law adopted on July 31, 2002 did not transform the „Tele-radio-Moldova“ state company into a public institution, and maintained the ruling party’s control over it.

The parliament reviewed simultaneously three draft laws on the issue: one submitted by the Social-Democratic Alliance, another by independent deputies Mihai Camerzan and Vitalie Mrug, and the third – by a group of communist deputies. The Social-Democratic Alliance draft was expected to be taken as a base, as this was the document praised by the Council of Europe. That was what happened in the first reading, but the communists later decided to make a series of amendments to it (thus acting exactly as in the summer of 2002), and the social-democrats had to withdraw it.

The ruling party refused again to comply with the recommendations of the PACE and those of international democratic norms, and adopted the draft submitted by the two independent deputies, which was only slightly different from the „legislative masterpiece“ submitted by the communists.



ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA IS WORSENING

Against a background of continuous confrontations between the ruling party on one hand, and the opposition, civic society and a large share of the population on the other, the economic situation continued to worsen. On March 5, 2003, the Social-Democratic Alliance made a public declaration focusing on the critical situation of the economy, and suggested solutions for redressing it. The first issue emphasized by the social-democrats was the continuing deterioration of relations between the Republic of Moldova and the major international financial partners.

The Social-Democratic Alliance urged the country’s leaders to take urgent measures to improve the country’s economic situation, as well as to establish positive relations with external donors. The following were suggested: revision of the 2003 Budget Law, with the indication of real incomes from privatization and tax collection; approval of the new privatization Law in a new wording to encourage foreign and local investors, and increase their confidence in the Moldovan business environment; approval of the privatization program, and implementation of a transparent privatization process for wineries; urgent enactment of a new Civil Code.

These proposals went unheeded, and the Republic of Moldova all but failed in its attempts to unblock external funding throughout the communists’ term in office.



THE „RED GOVERNMENT“
DEFIES EXTERNAL CREDITORS

If anybody is guilty of escalating relations with creditors, it is the Communist Party. The communists were the ones who challenged in the Constitutional Court the legislative and normative acts introducing pre-shipment inspection of goods in the Republic of Moldova, with the exclusive right to offer these services being granted to the Swiss Company SGS.

The International Monetary Fund declared that the reintroduction of pre-shipment inspection of goods was an obligatory condition for resuming external crediting of the Republic of Moldova. The communists acknowledged the demands of the biggest external creditor, but, as usual, they did what was convenient to them. On March 14, 2003, the Parliament adopted a new Law on pre-shipment inspection of goods, stipulating that these services would be provided by at least two companies. This attitude was seen as a defiance of the IMF, which clearly stated its position on the issue – pre-shipment inspection must be performed by one company.

I will not elaborate on the importance for the Republic of Moldova of pre-shipment inspection, and neither will I comment on the IMF's or the communists' position on how many companies should provide these services.

Something else bothers me: having fed illusions to the Council of Europe (about compliance with the PACE April and September 2002 resolutions), the communists tried the same trick with the IMF. As a result, the „red government“ only consolidated Moldova's

image as an unreliable counterpart internationally. I believe the authorities would have been fairer towards the IMF and towards their own citizens, had they simply opposed the introduction of pre-shipment inspection outright. That, of course, would have drawn the criticism of foreign creditors, but the communists would have been more sincere and would not have compromised the country's international image.



CONFRONTATION WITH TIRASPOL ESCALATES

In March 2003, the confrontation between Chisinau and Tiraspol reached new proportions. Thus, after the Council of Europe and the USA had denied access to a number of officials from the self-declared Transnistrian Republic to their territory, the Tiraspol administration introduced similar sanctions against officials from Chisinau. The responsibility for what happened rests both with the separatist leaders, and the officials in Chisinau. The latter are responsible for not promoting a balanced policy towards the separatist region's administration, and allowing the tensioning of relations between the sides.

Since coming to power, the communists have been promoting an irresponsible and ambiguous policy on the Transnistrian issue. The more the authorities insisted upon hasty and reckless actions, the further became the resolution of the Transnistrian dispute. The actions, which the USA and the EU saw themselves forced to take, could be qualified as a helping hand stretched out to the Chisinau authorities, which had exhausted all their capabilities of solving the problem. No one questions the fact that the Transnistrian conflict must be solved with the support of the international community. This support, however, must not be one provided exclusively as a cover up for the communists' mistakes.



REGULATING THE TRANSPORTATION OF NUCLEAR WASTE THROUGH MOLDOVA

One feature of the communist rule has been the fact that whenever they could not promote an abuse more or less legally, the communists amended legislation so as to make it possible to do what they had planned. They would not stop even when the suggested amendments posed a direct threat to public health and national security. A proof to this effect is the transit of nuclear waste from Bulgaria to Russia through the Republic of Moldova, which had been described above. Seeing that they did not stand a chance of succeeding in allowing this transit under the existing legal framework, the communist majority in Parliament amended on March 27, 2003 several legislative acts.

These amendments were designed to prepare the grounds for promoting an agreement between Bulgaria, Moldova, Ukraine and Russia, which authorized the transit of nuclear waste, including through Moldova. This agreement was ratified immediately after the approval of amendments to the legislation. To this day, it is not clear what arguments the communists used when they amended the legislation, ratifying the Agreement. Since they jeopardized public health and national security, it would have been logic to get something valuable in return. Alas, this failed to happen. The Republic of Moldova did not gain financially (we receive only 50 thousand dollars for each transit), or strategically (Bulgaria did not cancel the visa regime for Moldovan citizens, or make significant efforts to support Moldova in the process of European integ-

ration). The saddest thing is that we will not receive external help, should an accident happen with this „death train“. The agreement envisages that the consequences of any accident will be mitigated by the country, on whose territory it happens.



COMMUNISTS INCREASE PRESSURE ON BUSINESSES

The creation of the Center for combating Economic Crimes and Corruption (CCECC) never got a keen reception by businesses. The ruling party instituted the law enforcement agency, which was then used as a kind of bludgeon against inconvenient businessmen. Entrepreneurs highlighted the exaggerated and broad prerogatives of this Center, but the authorities, instead of engaging in a civilized dialogue with the business community, delegated more authorities to CCECC.

On March 28, the Parliament voted in the first reading a draft law, giving the Centre some additional powers: fighting money laundering, fiscal administration, undercover investigations and so on. CCECC was also authorized to investigate crimes jeopardizing the economic security of the state, especially cases of contraband and cyber crime.

The above listed amendments enabled the Centre to interfere directly with the activity of commercial banks, as they are under obligation to provide information concerning all accounts with relatively big amounts. The established limit is so low that CCECC is aware of most bank operations performed in Moldova. This strict control goes against legal stipulations concerning the commercial secret.

Another abusive power granted to the Centre through the said law is the right of CCECC employees to demand from businesses the accounting documents if these are necessary to prove some specific cases of tax evasion. Moreover, the Centre employees were

authorized to stop any cargo truck to inspect the accompanying documents. Add also the right of the Centre to apply sanctions in the process of work, and one can see that this structure has become a perfect instrument of settling scores with inconvenient businesses.



PARLIAMENT SETTING THE
FOUNDATIONS OF A FEDERAL STATE

In April 2003, the communists turned their attention to legalizing the monstrosity called the Federal Republic of Moldova. On April 4, the Parliament approved the Protocol „On the creation of the mechanism for the development and approval of the Constitution of the Federal State”, submitted to the deputies by the minister of reintegration Vasile Sova. This document was coordinated during five-party negotiations, and signed by the representatives of all sides. The approval of the Protocol is a first serious step in executing the federalization Agreement proposed in Kiev by OSCE.

The first and most serious mistake made by the communists was that they accepted Russia’s game to the detriment of the Republic of Moldova. The creation of a federal state would absolve the separatist leaders of their responsibility for the grave crimes committed against the Republic of Moldova, and would create real premises for subsequent declaration of sovereignty of the Transnistrian region.

The second serious mistake is that the Protocol assumed a process of negotiations between two sides equal in rights – the Republic of Moldova and Transnistria. By ratifying this protocol, the communists implicitly recognized the equality in rights of the Transnistrian region, and allowed again Smirnov’s clique to claim international treatment, similar to that applied to legal authorities in Chisinau.

The third mistake was the fact that the „red government“ proceeded to negotiations on the creation of the federal state without consulting the opinion of the population. It would have been better first to hold a referendum on the issue. The communists took on the role of the nation, thus usurping state power.

Another mistake is that, in trying to solve (their way) the Transnistrian problem, the communists created real premises for Gagauzia to be declared an independent state. Thus, the law on the special legal status of the territorial-administrative unit Gagauz Yeri entitles it to be declared an independent if the Republic of Moldova loses the present status.



VASILE COLTA – A VICTIM OF THE GOVERNMENT’S POLITICAL AMBITIONS

At the beginning of the election campaign for the 2003 local elections, the ruling party launched a campaign of intimidating candidates from other parties, so as to force them not to take part in the elections. The communists’ opponents were subjected to continuous pressure by decision makers. Thus, in mid April, the mayor of Hincesti, Vasile Colta, was arrested by the police.

Due to that fact that Vasile Colta was an active member of the Liberal Party, whose president I was, I am well aware of the incident. Obviously, I protested against the respective abuse. What was the reason officially invoked by the communists? Ostensibly, Vasile Colta was arrested on a case brought against him in 1999 (!). Initially, the authorities did not attempt to explain what the case involved. It was only later that I learned that Vasile Colta was charged with misuse of public funds, earmarked for the construction of a stadium in the locality.

In reality, it meant nothing more than political settling of scores. Vasile Colta was a serious obstacle in the way of the communist candidate for the position of mayor of Hincesti, and had to be removed at any price. There were no charges against Vasile Colta between 1999 and 2003. Probably the case would not have emerged in 2003 either, had the mayor not decided to run for a new term.

The communists’ persecutions went so far as to deny Vasile Colta his most basic rights. For example,

the officers of the law would not let him see a doctor, even though he had a serious heart condition.

Vasile Colta's case showed that nobody in the Republic of Moldova is safe. In a state where Stalinist methods of coercion are widely used, nobody can guarantee that, at the next parliamentary elections, some opposition leaders will not end up in jail, under some phony allegations.



COMMUNISTS DENY THEIR
OPPOSANTS THE RIGHT TO SHOOT
THEIR ELECTORAL PUBLICITY CLIPS

To better understand the difficult conditions the opposition faced during the election campaign for the 2003 local elections, it is enough to look at the case of the OWH television studio team, who were arrested in the Botanica district of the capital by officers of the „Scut“ unit during the closing stages of the shooting of an advertising clip with the election logo of the Social Democratic Party-Social Liberal Party bloc.

According to an official release, officers of the unit responded to a complaint by a citizen who was apparently outraged by the fact that an eight-year old child, who was being filmed by the OWH studio, was drawing with chalk on the pavement „The Bethlehem star“ – an electoral logo of the SDP-SLP bloc. That citizen declared that „the drawing of that Jewish symbol defiled the pavement“. It would have been logical then to arrest that person too, as the endorsement of anti-Semitism is a crime, but nobody seemed concerned. In any case, I doubt you will find many people who will agree that the drawing of a star on the pavement is a crime serious enough to warrant the arrest of an entire television crew, and their interrogation for three hours. This incident was probably planned by proxies of the communist power, and „the outraged citizen“ was infiltrated intentionally in order to provoke a conflict.

At the beginning of May, the protests of attorneys and notaries intensified. Word has it that the representatives of those two groups were asked to pay a monthly contribution to the Social Fund equal to 29% of the amount of three average wages (711 lei). This provision of the Law on the state social insurance budget contravenes art. 58 (par. 2) of the Constitution, which stipulates that the „legal taxation system shall ensure a fair distribution of fiscal burdens“.

It would have been reasonable for notaries and attorneys not to have to pay a fixed contribution to the social insurance budget, but a certain percentage of their income. Initially, the communists were reluctant to satisfy this demand, and as a result the country risked a general strike of the said groups. Subsequently, however, the communists were forced to review their own legislative absurdity, and bring the situation back to normality.

In the spring of 2003, the situation emerging in agriculture gave serious reasons for concern. Due to freezing, about 150 mil. ha of wheat and barley had to be sown again. The government did not seem concerned about the situation in agriculture, and in those conditions, the opposition had to take the initiative. However, on May 8, the communist deputies rejected the proposal of the Social-Democratic Alliance of Moldova to constitute a parliamentary commission which would examine the situation in agriculture and suggest solutions for its improvement. The Social-Democratic Alliance deputies warned that the situation in agriculture was rather difficult, and that if urgent measures were not taken, the country would be facing a severe shortage of certain agricultural goods, such as wheat and barley.

The opposition reminded that although earlier the Government had adopted a decision to redress the situation in agriculture, it was not executed. According to the Government decision, the necessary seeds for re-sowing those 15 mil. ha had to be exempted from VAT; the state had to pay, by May 10, those farmers who in previous years received credits and reimbursed them in time, 22 mil. lei in the form of subsidies; the Ministry of Finance – had to write off historic penalties of agricultural producers affected by the frost etc. The deputies of the majority faction did not take seriously into account the opposition’s proposals, qualifying them as an attempt to make election advertising. As a result of this irresponsible attitude, in the second part of 2003, prices for bread increased considerably, thus seriously affecting socially vulnerable groups.

▷ PRIME MINISTER'S MOTORCADE ACCUSED
OF THE DEATH OF SEVERAL PERSONS

In the Republic of Moldova, it has become a tradition of bad taste for high-ranking officials to periodically disrupt traffic whenever they are driven to or from work, or on official trips, in the exercise of office. Eager to show their importance, they surround themselves with bodyguards, police cars etc. Needless to mention the excessive speed with which these convoys are traveling. At the beginning of May 2003, a serious accident took place, which ended in the death of several persons, including children. We do not know exactly who is guilty of this serious incident, but according to some information, at fault was the Prime Minister's motorcade, which was moving at a very high speed.

The accident took place on the Soroca-Chisinau highway, near the village of Micauti. According to official information, the driver of a Mercedes, resident of Ialoveni, driving at a very high speed, lost control of the car, crossed to the opposite side of the road, and crashed into a bus. As a result, seven persons died, including three children. However, according to official information provided by eyewitnesses of this accident, the Prime Minister's motorcade was guilty, which was at that time traveling on the respective segment of the road at a high speed.

Later, the Prime Minister – Vasile Tarlev – appeared outraged by that fact that the opposition accused him of this accident. He declared that he was not on the mentioned portion of road at the moment the accident took place. Partially Tarlev was right, as according to

other information, the convoy was not accompanying him, but the car in which his wife was traveling. In other words, the motorcade was not escorting a high-ranking state official, but an ordinary citizen, who happened to be the Prime Minister's wife.



THE RULING PARTY INTERFERES WITH
THE MERGING OF OPPOSITION PARTIES

In May 2003, the Liberal Party, the Alliance of Independents and the Social-Democratic Alliance of Moldova were due to merge. But the event planned for May 22 took place only after the local elections. The reason was simple – the communists did everything they could to prevent the merging of those three important opposition parties, at least until the local elections, so that it could be a serious election boost for the opposition.

Thus, based on a prior agreement, the merger congress was due to be held at the National Opera and Ballet Theatre on May 22, but on May 19 the director of this institution refused to make the room available to those three parties, invoking a direct order received from the minister of culture. According to the director of the Opera and Ballet Theatre, he was even threatened with dismissal, if he allowed the congress to be held in the respective institution.

In that situation, those three opposition parties tried to find another room to hold the May 23 congress, but everywhere they received the answer that the rooms were occupied. It is worth mentioning that on May 21, the leaders of the parties which intended to merge were contacted by the director of the Opera and Ballet Theatre, who told them that the situation had changed and that he was at liberty to allow the congress to be held in the theatre's room. Those quick changes of tone were nothing but a dirty game, organized by the ruling party – first they disrupted the Congress, and then, so as not to be accused of abuses,

allowed the Congress to be held in the Opera and Ballet Theatre, knowing perfectly well that the opposition had no time to save the day. Fortunately, neither that trick of the communists, nor others, could prevent the merger – the Liberal Party, the Social-Democratic Alliance and the Alliance of Independents constituted the strongest opposition party – the „Moldova Noastra“ Alliance, which during the general local elections took second place after the Communist Party.

On May 27, the Constitutional Court (CC) declared as constitutional the provisions of the Law on the judges' status and of the Law on the Superior Council of Magistrates, according to which the state president's refusal to appoint a judge for life, can serve as a reason for initiating the latter's dismissal.

This means that judges remain continuously in check. Just how independent can a judge be in exercising his mandate, if he knows that failing to please the powers means he does not stand a chance of being appointed by the head of state for life. Furthermore, these judges not only lose the right to be appointed for life, but can also be dismissed from their positions. Because the Law stipulates that the repeated refusal of the president is „a serious reason for the judge's dismissal“. In this context a question emerges: who is the president of the country to allow himself this unjustifiable interference with the activity of the judicial system? Indeed, doesn't it constitute a violation of the constitutional principle of separation of state powers? The Constitutional Court is definitely not to blame, because this instance does not pronounce political opinions on this situation or other. The responsible for this abnormal situation, which developed in the judicial system, are only the communists – they alone, motivated by narrow party interests, have promoted the respective amendments to the legislation in force following their landslide win at the elections of February 25, 2001.

The communists could not accept the thought that, as a result of the local general elections of May and June 2003, they did not obtain the position of the Mayor of the capital. Therefore, immediately after those elections, they put in application different schemes, which goal was to annul the results of the elections and make a new attempt to capture the power in the Chisinau municipality. One of those schemes consisted in carrying out a new additional verification of election lists. Thus, a group of 30 communists, led by Victor Stepaniuc, submitted a note to the Central Election Committee, whereby they request the verification of the said lists. They stated that, according to their data, there were „dead souls“ on those lists. The communists had already calculated that this way about 12 thousand persons could be taken off the lists. This number could give a serious reason for holding repeated elections. The calculation was simple: the fewer citizens on the lists, the higher were the chances of a communist candidate, supported mostly by the elderly and by the Russian speakers.

But the Central Election Committee ended this new abuse. As a result of verifications on the scene, it was stated that the numbers invoked by the representatives of the Communist Party are exaggerated. Even if such contraventions took place, their number was about three times less than the authors of this note indicated.

The Central Election Committee members rejected Victor Stepaniuc's note, quoting three arguments: the

discovered contraventions could not considerably influence the results of the elections in Chisinau. The Election Code did not provide for the possibility of verifying election lists by the Department of Information Technologies (as the communists had asked); an eventual verification of the respective lists would paralyze the activity of the newly elected local government at least until October 2003.



OPPOSITION'S LOCALLY
ELECTED OFFICIALS' RIGHTS VIOLATED

Although in the second half of 2003 the ruling communist party held the presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Voronin's tyrants did not become any more tolerant towards the opposition and engaged in the same antidemocratic behavior. Immediately after the local elections, the democratic and pro-reform forces faced yet another significant abuse – using different pretexts, the courts, controlled by the communists, refused the validation of the mandates of elected opposition mayors and councilors. This abnormal situation was highlighted by the Social-Liberal Alliance „Moldova Noastra“.

The mandates of opposition representatives were not validated because of disputes invented by the representatives of the ruling party, who questioned the legality of voting. These challenges constituted an attempt to ignore the will, expressed by the citizens at the polls. We showed that the ruling party involved the judiciary in places where communists lost the elections to the bloc's candidates. As examples to this end were the villages of Tapala, Horasti and Zimbreni, all in the Ialoveni district, where, „upon the government's intervention“, the results of the elections were cancelled.

The ruling party did everything they could to prevent the Social-Liberal Alliance „Moldova Noastra“ candidates from taking part in the repeated elections, held in those localities on June 22. By canceling the results of the voting in these localities, the communists caused both moral damages to the voters, and material losses to the state, which had to incur the expenses for holding repeated elections.



SPECIALISTS WORRIED ABOUT THE SITUATION IN THE NATIONAL ECONOMY

Despite the triumphant declarations of the communist government, claiming that the situation in the economy has improved visibly since their ascent to power, the real situation in this area has remained very difficult. Confirming this is the position expressed on June 26, 2003 by the League of Pro-reform Economists of Moldova, which, undoubtedly being an uninterested organization, is more credible than the government.

It might be possible to change the situation if the authorities took into account the proposals of the opposition and civil society. Thus, having rejected the proposals of the Social Democratic Alliance concerning the improvement of the situation in agriculture, the communists behaved in the same way with the League of Professional Economists. This organization put forward about 30 proposals aiming to improve the situation in the national economy, but the authorities did not take into account any of them. The only argument, quoted by the communists, unofficial at that, was that „we have a proper program of governing and cannot accept other proposals, which do not conform to that program“. Needless to mention how efficient the communist program of governing is. It is enough to remember that we are the poorest country in Europe.



COMMUNISTS SAVE ON CHILDREN

At the end of June 2003, dissatisfaction with the policy promoted by the ruling party was also expressed by non-governmental organizations engaged in the area of child and family protection. The reason is the same – the ruling party is promoting a policy not to considerate in this area. The protest was expressed not just by one or two organizations, but by over 80. That is the exact number of NGOs that form the Alliance of non-governmental organizations for the protection of child and family.

The representatives of those NGOs published an open letter, addressed to President Vladimir Voronin, where they called upon the head of state not to allow the liquidation of regional authorities dealing with children's issues. Those authorities were to be substituted by one person in each district.

It is not difficult to see why the communists liquidated these offices, despite the fact that there are enough problems with the protection of children and family. The reason was the lack of money. Because, as opposed to the administrative-territorial reform and that of the system of local public administration of 1998, which was supported by international institutions, nobody wanted to finance the communist counter-reform of 2003. However, from another point of view it's not clear why the communists decided to save on children, as they could easily have achieved savings on other things. For example, would it not have been more appropriate for luxury cars not to be

bought for district officials, and for the respective money to be directed elsewhere? That way the men in power would have been closer to the people, and there would have been somebody to deal with children's issues in the field.



At the beginning of July 2003, the Social-Democratic Alliance members of parliament were forced to resume the boycott of plenary parliamentary sessions, because the speaker of the parliament Eugenia Ostapciuc did not keep her word, given to the faction, that all the persons involved in the process of collecting signatures in favor of holding a referendum on the issue of changing the election system, who were subjected to pressure by the communist authorities, would be re-instated in their previous functions, and their persecution and intimidation would be stopped.

This attitude constitutes not only additional proof of the way in which over the years of communist rule the legislation in force has been broken (the Parliament has no right to ban the holding of a referendum, provided it is demanded by more than 213 thousand citizens), but also of the way Voronin's disciples treated their own citizens. Those who dared to have an opinion different to that of the ruling party were immediately dismissed from their positions. The last straw was that the „red government“ refused to re-instate the respective persons in their positions even in cases when the courts issued decisions to that effect. Thus, the communists showed that the law is only law when it is convenient for them.

 ▷ MIHAI MAGDEI – DISMISSED BECAUSE
 PRESIDENT VORONIN SO WISHED

The list of communist abuses was extended in July 2003 with the dismissal of Mihai Magdei, the general director of the National Scientific-Practical Centre for Preventive Medicine. According to him, this dismissal was not based on any legal argument – the communists simply did not want him in that position.

The minister of health asked him at the beginning of February 2003 to write a resignation letter, indicating that that was a direct order of President Vladimir Voronin. Obviously, Mihai Magdei refused to write that letter, and the minister of health handed him an order of dismissal from that position, in connection with the reorganization of the Centre. This is what the communists do to those who do not share their ideology: they ask them to write resignation letters, and if that does not happen they „help them“ to leave the position.

 ▷ THE „RED GOVERNMENT“ OPPOSES
 THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE SITUATION
 IN AGRICULTURE AGAIN

In late July 2003, the Social-Democratic Alliance faction addressed an open letter to the President of the republic, to the speaker of Parliament and to the Prime Minister, where some urgent measures for the improvement of the critical situation in agriculture were proposed. The proposals were rejected. Since the ruling party foiled the initiatives of their colleagues from the opposition, they should have come up with something instead. Unfortunately, this never happened.

The measures included: exemption from land tax and contributions to the Social Fund for agricultural lands affected by the natural disasters of 2002 and 2003; acquisition and free distribution in the form of credit of seeds, fuel, lubricants, necessary for seeding farmland in autumn 2003-2004 years; exemption from VAT on agricultural equipment and spare parts imported for the agricultural sector, including the equipment leased by local companies.

The Alliance „Moldova Noastra“ faction also suggested the allocation from the state budget of 100 million lei for the compensation of losses, caused by the natural disasters. They also recommended such urgent measures as: spreading out bank credits taken by agricultural producers and reimbursement of interest by the state; compensation of increasing prices for most basic agricultural products for the socially vulnerable groups of population.

Regretfully this letter remained unanswered. Is Voronin's party indifferent to the situation in agriculture?

▶ BANKING SYSTEM IN
AUTHORITIES' SIGHT AGAIN

On the last day of the spring-summer 2003 session, the Parliament adopted in its first reading a draft law, stipulating that the asset share of former collective farms and state farms in the social capital of agri-business enterprises would be re-distributed – one part will become the property of the successors to those collective farms and state farms, and another one (which is not claimed by the successors) – will become state property, which has to put up for sale the shares that belong to it.

As a result of the liquidation of collective farms and state farms to which, according to the Government decision dated July 1997, 50% of the social capital of manufacture enterprises have been attributed, about 600 thousand shares remained unclaimed, being under temporary administration of the local authorities.

At first sight, the intention of the communists seemed to be rather noble – they did not want 600 thousand shares to remain suspended in air. In reality, other goals were pursued. Firstly, as it is well known, at that time the communists were not receiving one cent from abroad, so they hoped to earn some funds as a result of the sale of shares, which would belong to them. Secondly, through this draft law, the communists wanted to reward some of their comrades in the regions, who would be identified as successors to the collective farms and state farms. Thirdly (which is the worst), the implementation of the document would set the bases for new settling of scores with and pressures on the country's banking system.

▶ THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO
APPLY PRESSURE ON LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Although, as a result of local elections in mid 2003, the communists managed to gain an impressive number of mandates, they did not stop pressuring local authorities. As proof in this respect can serve the joint declaration of the national League of the associations of mayors and the Federation of local and regional authorities, where these organizations accused the Government of applying administrative and political pressures on local authorities.

Those pressures targeted first, the issue of internal organization of mayors' offices, which, contrary to the provisions of the European Chart for local autonomy, were obliged to reduce staff numbers and the range of provided services. Secondly, it concerned the associative issue. In this sense, the creation, on August 9, 2003, of the Association of mayors and local communities comes into question. This structure was formed at the direct indication of the government, which wanted this way to quell any resistance of the local authorities, and to take full control over them. The events that took place since 2001 and until then were still very vivid in the communists' memory. Over those two years, the „red government“ had not managed to promote any abusive legislative act concerning local administration, without it being exposed to heavy criticism by public organizations active in the area.

The communists did not take into account one thing – the involvement of the Government in the process of creation of associations of local authorities contradicted the spirit of local autonomy and the recommendations addressed to the central authorities of Moldova by the European Commission and the Council of Europe, just one month before the described events.

SUSPECTED OF CORRUPTION
AND PROTECTIONISM

On September 9, the leaders of the Association for the protection of citizens' rights „Adjuta – Cives“ accused a number of high-ranking officials of protectionism and corruption. Andrei Luchian, the president of the organization, specified that this was particularly true for the secretary of the Supreme Security Council of the president's office – Valeriu Gurbulea.

„Adjuta-Cives“ asked the country's leadership to investigate the „illegal activity“ of Valeriu Gurbulea, and of some judges and prosecutors. The country's leaders, however, did not respond in any way. Given the fact that Valeriu Gurbulea was later appointed as First Deputy Prosecutor General, one can assume that either the authorities did not believe his guilt, or they appointed him in the new position for certain reasons.



PAMELA HYDE SMITH
GIVES A VERDICT

Without doubt, the farewell speech of the US ambassador to Chisinau, Pamela Hyde Smith, was a kick for the communist government. In that speech, the ambassador declared that she was worried about the economic situation in the Republic of Moldova. At the same time, Pamela Hyde Smith specified that, in making that declaration, she did not refer to the poverty in villages.

To improve the situation in the economy, the Ambassador suggested a series of specific actions: mending relations with the IMF and the World Bank, attracting foreign investors, reducing corruption at different levels and dropping the idea that a planned economy or a mixed quasi-collectivized economy could be efficient.

Pamela Hyde Smith pointed out that foreign investments had fallen considerably in 2002 and would also remain low in 2003.

The Ambassador mentioned that „some persons seem to want the reorientation of the authorities of the Republic of Moldova backward to the centralized economy“. As an example, she told about the involvement of the Government in setting prices for electric power, and also a series of draft laws that favor state control in the farming sector.

The speech of the American Ambassador showed the real value of the communist statements regarding the „improvement of the economic situation in the country“, the „normal investment climate“, the „efficient mechanisms of organization in agriculture“ etc.

▷ THE FOREIGN POLICY OF
THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA
DEPENDS ON VORONIN'S WHIMS

In the second half of September, at the CIS summit in Yalta, V. Voronin made a shocking declaration to the effect that the reunion could constitute the beginning of the end for the CIS. The president referred to a specific situation when four member states of that organization – Russia, Ukraine, Byelorussia and Kazakhstan – proceeded with the formation of a new organization, leaving out the Republic of Moldova. It was a very clear signal that Moscow needs the Republic of Moldova inside the CIS so as not to lose it from the sphere of its influence, but when it comes to pragmatism, strategic interests, nobody in Eastern Europe needs our republic.

V. Voronin took offence at Putin, Kuchma, Luca-shenko and Nazarbayev and got spiteful. He hinted that, if that was how it was going to be, the Republic of Moldova would focus on integration into the European Union. Only the head of state did not take into account one thing: it is not the EU who needs the Republic of Moldova, and is waiting impatiently for the communists to finally decide in favor of integration into this structure, it is Moldova who needs the European Union. Therefore, Voronin's declaration did not bring us any closer to the European Union. The only thing our head of state managed in Yalta was to appear rather amusing on the international arena. For I doubt the four countries were frightened by Voronin's pessimistic predictions – the presidents of the four countries probably laughed at the nerve of their colleague from Chisinau, who threatened them in a moment of self-importance. Even if he did it in a camouflaged way.

▷ MOLDOVA – 102ND PLACE WORLDWIDE
IN TERMS OF CORRUPTION

It is no secret to anyone that corruption feels at home in the Republic of Moldova. This is further confirmed by the report of Transparency International, presented by its Moldovan office on October 7, 2003. According to this report, in 2003, the Republic of Moldova was 102nd worldwide in terms of perception of corruption. This index is a relative notion that reflects the level of corruption perceived by simple citizens, businessmen, other categories of people in their country.

To make the picture clearer it will be useful to add that the Republic of Moldova holds 102nd place from among 132 states. As far as the index goes, it contains numbers situated in between 0 and 10. The higher the figure – the lower is the level of corruption in the given state. In 2003, no state managed to accumulate 10 points, the figure of 9, however, was attained by Finland, Island, Denmark, New Zealand, Singapore and Sweden.

The Republic of Moldova, alongside Guatemala, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Venezuela and Vietnam, accumulated 2,4 points. This is an extremely poor result, given the fact that countries which attain less than 3 points are considered as states with a high level of corruption. Better placed than Moldova were the following former soviet republics: Estonia – 5,5 points, Lithuania – 4,7, Belarus – 4,2 and Russia - 2,7.

The situation regarding the index of corruption perception worsened since the communists came to power. In 2001, when the communists were governing

for less than a year and did not yet manage to infiltrate their adepts into all state bodies, the Republic of Moldova accumulated 3,1 points. Under communist governance, however, we joined the category of states with high levels of corruption. Instead of elucidating the grave accusations of corruption and protectionism brought against some high-ranking governmental officials, the communists promote them into even higher positions!



COMMUNISTS UNMASK THEIR
STATUS OF VASSALS OF MOSCOW

On October 9, the opposition submitted for approval of the Parliament a draft statement condemning the defiant behavior of Russia in relation to the OSCE Istanbul and Porto summits' decisions. The communists did not even bother to read the statement, claiming instead, that it was not a draft law, but rather a „useless declaration concocted in the streets by one of the opposition parties“.

The importance of the respective document was incontestable, especially if we take into account the fact that, in less than a month, another OSCE summit was due – in Maastricht. Within the framework of the above-mentioned reunion, the withdrawal of Russian arms and troops from the territories of Georgia and Transnistria was to become a special topic. If the parliament in Chisinau adopted the draft statement proposed by the opposition, then the OSCE would have had strong argument in its discussions with Russia. In the absence of such a document, no decision was adopted in Maastricht, and Russia continues to keep its troops and arms in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova. Finally, why should the OSCE feel the obligation to fight for the interests of the Republic of Moldova, if the authorities in Chisinau do not desire this?

▶ AUTHORITIES – SUSPECTED OF PROVOKING THE WHEAT CRISIS

A great deal of the guilt for the wheat crisis, which took place in Moldova in 2003, should be carried by the communist authorities. Of course, part of the blame could be attributed to the caprices of nature, however, had the government acted more responsibly – the consequences of the wheat crisis were not as grave. Moldova is not the only country growing wheat and not all the states were affected by natural calamities. The communists, however, ignored all the proposals voiced by the opposition aiming to improve the situation and, thus, we arrived to the present state of affairs.

If initially the communists could be merely accused of incompetence in regard to the management of the agricultural sector, later on it became clear that it was more an issue of malevolence. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry, there has not been any wheat exporting from the Republic of Moldova since February 15 of this year, whereas according to data supplied by the Ministry of Agriculture of Romania, some 26 663 tones of wheat were imported from the Republic of Moldova in the same period. It came to light, that Petru Tarlev, the brother of prime-minister Vasile Tarlev, for a period of time, while Moldova was already in the grips of the crisis, was the sole importer of this product in the Republic of Moldova. Evidently, the exclusive right to import wheat was awarded to him by a government led by his brother, Vasile Tarlev. Thus, Petru Tarlev was able to fix the prices for the import of the wheat. The

bakeries, in the absence of home grown wheat, were forced to accept the prices imposed on them. As a result, the purse of the Tarlev family widened, while the price of the bread was increasing. Regretfully, in this case, the Prosecutor's Office again did not issue any clear answers. In the absence of a person or group guilty of artificially provoking the bread crisis, the whole blame falls on the shoulders of the powers be, which did not wish to bring to account those who profited on the misfortune of the people.



TORTURE CONTINUES TO BE APPLIED IN MOLDOVA

The fall of 2003 could be justly considered the season of verdicts given by international organizations. Thus, after *Transparency International* classified us as 102nd worldwide in regards to the perception of corruption, *Amnesty International* followed suit with great concerns for the fact that in Moldova torture continues to be applied to prisoners in penitentiary institutions, as well as to persons during apprehensions conducted by the personnel of police structures.

A representative of *Amnesty International* pointed out the case which took place in Ribnita, where an innocent person was accused of being involved in a road accident, which resulted in the death of a pedestrian. The citizen was tortured to death by policemen who were forcing him to confess to a crime he was not a guilty of.

The communist authorities are busy demolishing democratic institutions and annihilating the opposition, and apparently have no time to make order in the enforcement bodies. The governing party has to pay increasingly more attention to this problem, the image of our country outside greatly depends on how the issue is being approached and solved. States where torture is applied are not that far from being full-fledged dictatorships.



COMMUNISTS UNDERTAKE A NEW ATTACK AGAINST ROMANIA

Romania repeatedly declared its readiness to serve as a sincere advocate of the Republic of Moldova in the process of European integration and to do everything possible for our republic to enter the great family of European states. Apparently, these declarations were disturbing to communists and the „red government“ decided on a new attack against the neighboring state. Thus, at the beginning of October, 2003, the communist authorities, through their representative, Alexei Tulbure, solicited the support of the Council of Europe in the resolution of certain disagreements, which supposedly existed in the relations between Chisinau and Bucharest.

We can only guess on the nature of the disagreements referred to by Alexei Tulbure. Most probably, he meant the anti-Romanian verbal attacks, voiced in Strasbourg by another communist functionary, Ion Morei. Or maybe, he referred to the anti-Romanian non-sense, often expounded by Stepaniuc, Voronin, and other communists in Chisinau. It is worth mentioning that even if there was a degree of tension in the relations between Chisinau and Bucharest, then most certainly it was solely provoked by the „red government“ and its exponents. Romania never allowed itself to respond in a harsh manner to the communists' provocations. Quite the opposite, the officials from Bucharest repeatedly stated, that irrespective of those declarations, they would continue to remain sincere friends of the Republic of Moldova.

▷ TWO STEPS BACK AND
NOT ONE STEP FORWARD

On October 24, the communist parliamentary faction proposed that the 85th anniversary of Lenin's Union of USSR Youth (Komsomol) be celebrated in the Republic of Moldova, mentioning „the important historical role of this organization in educating the youth of USSR, including hundreds of thousands of citizens of the Republic of Moldova“.

The Komsomol was the intrinsic element of a totalitarian regime, with the aid of this organization countless violations of human rights were committed, including the annihilation of those persons, who had views, different from those expounded by the regime.

By proposing and even celebrating the anniversary of Komsomol on a nationwide level, the communists elevated (yet again) their own ideology to the state level. This, however, is inadmissible and creates a dangerous precedent. For example, tomorrow other organizations with a historical past as resonant as that of Komsomol, could demand the celebration of their anniversary on a nationwide level. How will the communists behave in this case: if they refuse - they will be accused of social discrimination, whereas if they accept, they risk to be misunderstood by their own voters. That is why it would have been much better if the communists refrained from performing cheap yet dangerous tricks, such as awarding state status to ideological party holidays.

▷ COMMUNISTS „RENDER THE
OWNERS OF VEHICLES HAPPY“

After augmenting the prices of bread, eggs, milk, meat, increasing tariffs on natural gas, electricity, utilities etc., the „welfare process“ promised by communists, continues with the raise of duties levied on car owners. Thus, in accordance with certain amendments to the current legislation, adopted by the communists on October 31, 2003, the duties on auto vehicles increased by 1,5-6 times, depending on the engine capacity. Some 246 046 vehicles are registered in the Republic of Moldova. The payments of the vehicle taxes will result in over 44 million lei deposited in the Road Fund in 2004.

The communists grounded their initiative as a necessity aimed at maintaining the roads of the republic in better condition. However, the latter continue to remain in a lamentable state. In this respect, a natural question emerges: where is the money? Why are the people paying great sums of money if the roads do not become better? And why isn't the money gained as a result of doubling the duties on the import of cars (starting with January 2004) used for bringing the roads to a normal state?

On October 31, the Chisinau government excluded from the Law on pre-shipment inspection of goods the deadline for reintroducing the respective procedure in the Republic of Moldova. According to the initial version of the Law, which was adopted several months before, the Government had to introduce the pre-shipment inspection of goods in one month since the Law was enforced. However, the Law had not been published yet, therefore, it was not in operation, and the pre-shipment inspection of goods was not reintroduced.

In other words, the ruling authorities postponed the enforcement of the Law, in order to review the Law later on and exclude the deadline, using as a pretext the fact that the Memorandum between Moldova and the IMF, which stipulated the compulsory reintroduction of that inspection in a certain term, had expired. Therefore, the IMF found itself in the situation when, on one hand, it could not accuse the communist leaders of the fact that they did not reintroduce the pre-shipment inspection of goods (because the law was in force), and, on the other hand, the reintroduction of this inspection, as the Law was in force, was totally at the communists' disposal.

Anyhow, the governors were not receiving funds from the IMF and, by unfulfilling an assumed obligation, they tried a tiny blackmail – the foreign creditor had to understand the message in the following way: „if you want the pre-shipment inspection of goods to be

reintroduced in a certain term, unblock the foreign credits for Moldova“. However, the blackmail of the IMF did not offer the expected result. The only thing the communists managed to obtain through this trick was to discredit Moldova's image in front of the foreign creditors.

Above I have described the scandal provoked by the permanent representative of Moldova to the Council of Europe, Alexei Tulbure, whose goal was to compromise the chances of Romania in the process of European integration. Although the authorities from Bucharest did not react in the manner desired by the Moldovan leaders (with tough statements, which were to tension the relations between those two states), the communists continued the same reckless policy towards Romania. Having arrived in Chisinau on October 6 to participate at an international event of major importance related to the CoE Committee of Ministers, Tulbure made a shocking statement – he did not exclude that the Chisinau authorities could ask again this organization to mediate the improvement of relations with Romania.

Officials from Chisinau were allegedly offended by the declaration of Prime-Minister Adrian Nastase, who stated that the basic political agreements were not relevant and their signing was not necessary. The communists assumed that the Romanian authorities questioned the necessity of signing a basic political treaty with the Republic of Moldova.

Few hours prior to Tulbure's declaration, the Romanian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mircea Geoana, called a press-conference in Chisinau, where he clearly stated that Romania did not see the reason of that Agreement unless it provided for the specific nature of relations between those two states. Bucharest was simply insisting to introduce some truths which could be seen with an untrained eye and nothing more.

Yet, the communists were having another headache and namely the fact that Romania had a support fund for the Republic of Moldova. Voronin's advocates alleged that the fund was destined to support the Romanians, and in that way the Bucharest authorities „denied the national identity of the Republic of Moldova citizens”. Instead of saying „thanks“ for the foreign aid, the communists attacked those, who honestly wished to support the development of certain areas of activity in the Republic of Moldova.

Later on, the Bucharest authorities reorganized that fund, and also changed its name. This action slightly tempered the communists' anti-Romanian hysteria.

▶ QUALITY OF JUSTICE IMPROVED
BY THOSE WHO DESTROYED IT

Just imagine: the communists, who, since coming to power, had been systematically destroying the justice in Moldova, by the end of October – the beginning of November 2003, came up with an initiative aimed at „ensuring its efficiency and quality“. The parliament formed a working group following an appeal of the President of the Republic of Moldova, which attacked the Moldovan justice, accusing it of incompetence, non-professionalism and even corruption.

The communists seemed to forget that they were the ones who dismissed tens of inconvenient judges and replaced them with persons loyal to the power; they modified the procedure of appointing the presidents of the courts and virtually allowed the chief of the state to appoint the persons who were expedient to him; they made the judges depend on the president of the country and established that the repeated refusal of the head of state to confirm a judge in a position for life could be a serious reason for his/her dismissal; they introduced amendments to the Constitution and virtually reviewed the bases of the activity of the judicial system etc. Therefore, the system, which was in force in the autumn of 2003, was totally a communists' work and if they determined its inefficiency, they did nothing than accepted their own mistakes.

The limit of the irony is the fact that the authorities formed that working group not for correcting their mistakes, but for completing the work of destroying the independence of justice in the Republic of Moldova.

According to some sources, the working group had to propose such changes „in order to increase the efficiency“ of the justice, which would allow the government to eliminate the last independent judges from the system.

▷ VORONIN CREATES HIS OWN UNION OF WRITERS

I suppose I will not be mistaken by assuming that the most serious problem of the communists during their governance was the fact that their actions were not supported by the public society, in general, and by the creative unions, in particular. For a long period of time, the communists tried to attract on their side some creative unions, but they did not succeed. Therefore, they decided to choose another way – the creation of their own unions. Thus, during a comparatively short period of time, alternative organizations of journalists, trade unions, local authorities had appeared in the Republic of Moldova, and, by the beginning of November 2003, the communists „gathered“ their own union of writers.

By influencing the creation of one or another organization, the ruling authorities violated the constitutional right of citizens to free association. Besides the violations of legal nature, the communists made some strategic ones as well. Thus, while satisfying their personal and party ambitions, the „red government“ left aside the fact that it split the society into two camps – ours and theirs. The meeting of inauguration of the alternative union of writers „Nistru“ was also attended by the head of state. He delivered a speech, seriously accusing the Moldovan Union of Writers. The president of the state did not focus on the perspectives of the new union of writers, and hardly attacked the Union, which was already active, splitting the Moldovan community of writers into „ours“ and „theirs“.

▷ COMMUNISTS PLOT A MASSIVE SETTling OF SCORES AT „TELERADIO-MOLDOVA“

Although they repeatedly promoted draft laws, which were supposed to be the most appropriate for ensuring the reorganization of the „Teleradio-Moldova“ company into a public institution, at the beginning of November 2003, the communists were forced to admit that their legislative „works“ were of bad quality and that it was necessary to review the problems of this institution. Thus, with the vote of the communist faction, the Parliament adopted a draft law which provided for the reorganization of the „Teleradio-Moldova“ company through the agency of its liquidation and setting up of a new broadcasting institution.

The new „way out“ proposed by the government was even more faulty. First, the liquidation of the company created real possibilities for settling scores with inconvenient persons. It is well known that an anticensorship Committee exists within the company, and recurrently it has brave attitudes to the abuses committed by the communists. It is not difficult to realize that many of the Committee members could easily not be rehired. A lot of official reasons could be invoked, and the experience of the last years showed that the power was good at that.

Second, the liquidation of the company would allow the communists to conceal the results of administering the public money by the „Teleradio-Moldova“ management. In case the company is liquidated, all the debts, including those accumulated by the communist managers of this institution, will be reimbursed from the state budget. In other words, the tax payers will be those who will pay for the communists' incompetence and abuses.

▷ RUSSIANS IMPOSE THE PLAN OF
„ASYMMETRIC FEDERATION“ ON MOLDOVA

On November 15, the Russian Federation proposed the Memorandum for the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict through an asymmetric federation, better known to the public opinion as the „Kozak plan“.

The respective document was as dangerous for the state, the integrity and the independence of the Republic of Moldova, as was the draft Agreement launched by OSCE in July 2003 in Kiev. The Memorandum's goal was to legalize the Transnistrian state, because throughout the document the separatist region was called the „Moldovan Nistrian Republic“. The competences delegated to Transnistria were supposed to transform the respective region into a state within a state. Transnistria was to become a time bomb pressed hard against the Republic of Moldova, and that would create a real mechanism for permanent blackmailing of the Chisinau authorities by Moscow.

The communists again were more concerned with the Russian interests, rather than the Moldovan ones. Chisinau did not need that Memorandum, but Russia – did, and as quickly as possible. The OSCE summit from Maastricht was due to take place, and Russia had nothing to declare at that meeting. Had the parties signed the Memorandum, the Kremlin would have avoided the non-fulfillment of the decisions of the OSCE Istanbul and Porto summits, being covered by the „essential progress“ registered in the negotiation process.

The signing of the Memorandum was hindered not thanks to President Voronin and the communist

government, but rather to the opposition, the internal public opinion and other external forces, which knew to exercise pressures over the leaders of the Moldovan government. The opposition had already united by creating the Committee for the Defense of the Independence and the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, and that thing worried the ruling authorities. Voronin did not sign the Memorandum not because he suddenly became more patriotic of this state, but because he was afraid of the opposition's protests, that could result in losing his chair. That was a real danger, especially if we take into account that only a few days earlier a similar scenario was realized in Georgia.

RUSSIANS NOT KEEPING
THEIR WORD AGAIN

After the OSCE summit from December 1 in Maastricht, it became clear that Russia broke again its international commitments and will not withdraw the arms and the troops from Transnistria until the end of the year 2003. The Chisinau authorities were guilty of that situation, because they did not know how to ask in a clear and unconditional manner the observance of the decisions of the OSCE summits from Istanbul and Porto.

Moreover, the Moldovan diplomacy did not manage to obtain even the condemnation of Russia's attitude in the framework of the Maastricht summit. Instead of having a well defined position on that issue, the Moldovan Minister of Foreign Affairs mumbled some general phrases, which rather rehabilitated Russia than accused it.

It is worth mentioning that the communist authorities qualified the Maastricht summit as a huge success of the Moldovan diplomacy. And the communists were right! The Moldovan diplomacy was successful, but ...in promoting Russian interests.

AUTHORITIES PRESSURE
THE BUSINESSMEN

The end of the year 2003 was marked by the increasing pressures exercised by the power over the businessmen. The latter were made to call an extraordinary congress, where they brought into discussion the alarming situation in the national economy and the government's pressures over the businessmen.

The businessmen certainly declared themselves dissatisfied with the increase of the bureaucratic apparatus and of the exaggerated number of paid services, which the state bodies were rendering to the economic agents, many of them being simply invented, while the economic agents were made to pay for the services they did not need.

The state management in economy is not a qualitative one, and in some areas it is even absent. An efficient state program does not exist, and any measures for promoting the export of our products are not undertaken. Therefore, the deficit of the commercial balance is over \$500 mil.

In the process of drafting the budget, the government is guided only by its own fiscal interest and neglects the proposals of the economic agents. This attitude does not stimulate the entrepreneurial activity, and, thus, the national economy has to suffer. The condition of the national economy has worsened more, and some economic agents, in order to avoid the authorities' pressure, prefer to hide a part of their activities in the shade.

BELGIAN INVESTOR
FORCED OUT OF MOLDOVA

In the middle of December 2003, the Republic of Moldova found itself in the centre of a new scandal related to the persecution of foreign investors. That time, the „Dacia“ hotel was in the spotlight. The hotel had been previously privatized, but, after coming to power, the communists nationalized it.

As a result of the privatization tender in 1999, the owner of that hotel became the Moldovan-Ukrainian company „Selicat-Mix“. In order to pay off the cost of the hotel – 20,15 mil. Lei, the new owner took a credit from an Austrian company. Later on, the Austrian investors passed all the rights for that credit to the Belgian Company „Vicol NV“.

The problems of the Belgian investor began in 2003, when the General Prosecutor’s Office decided that some violations were admitted in the privatization process and passed the hotel to the State Chancellery. The Prosecutor’s Office brought three arguments in favor of its decision: the hotel was included in the list of privatized goods without consulting the State Chancellery, which owned the hotel; accused the investor of paying off with delay the cost of the hotel; decided that the selling price was about 5 mil. Lei less than it should have been.

It is obvious that all the arguments are groundless. The Government was not obliged to consult the State Chancellery, because the latter was a part of it. The investors stated that the payment for the cost of the hotel was delayed for a few days because they had to convert the dollars into Moldovan Lei. It was not the

investors’ fault that they were asked to pay a price less than the real one. The Chisinau authorities should have found the person who set that price and prosecuted him.

The „Dacia“ hotel case was actually a forced nationalization. After getting hold of the hotel, the communists did not even return the money paid or the sum of investments made along the way by the investor, let alone compensations for moral damages. Then, we still ask ourselves: why is Moldova not attractive for foreign investors and why is the national economy not working well?



„WE ARE MOLDOVANS
AND THERE IS TO IT“

The year 2003 ended with the approval of the national policy concept of the Republic of Moldova, the document being oriented against everything that is Romanian between the Prut and Nistru rivers. That conception, launched as a legislative initiative by President Vladimir Voronin, aimed at declaring the Republic of Moldova as the successor of the medieval Moldovan state, and as a proof served the provision that the Republic of Moldova was „the political-juridical continuity of the century-old continuous process of confirming the Moldovan statehood“.

The communists hinted that the Republic of Moldova was a much older state than Romania and, therefore, the idea of „two Romanian states“ was groundless. In order to make their position clearer, they introduced two more radical notions into their Concept – „the founding nation of the state are Moldovans“ and „the representatives of other ethnic groups: Ukrainians, Russians, Gagauzians, Bulgarians, Israeli, Romanians, Byelorussians, Roma, Polish and others, contributed to the confirmation of the statehood“. The second provision aimed at proving that the Romanians are only a national minority in the Republic of Moldova.

The Romanian language was marginalized; the Concept stipulated that „the state official language was Moldovan“. Concurrently, the communists favored Moscow by stating that „the Russian language, which in Moldova had the status of interethnic communication language, would also be used in the areas which were important for the state and the society“.

The communists did not take into account only one thing: you cannot force a nation, through administrative methods, to deny its identity, as well as falsify through abusive documents the major historical truths.

THE SUPREME COURT
OF JUSTICE RECOGNIZES
THE MISTAKE OF THE COMMUNISTS

From the point of view of the present paper, 2004 may be characterized as a period of continuation of communist abuses, and at the same time, also as an echo of these abuses. A proof of this is the decision of the Supreme Court of Justice of February 2, 2004, which annuls the governmental decree of September 26, 2001, regarding the recognition of the Church of Moldova as the legal successor to the Bessarabian Church, the latter functioning on the current territory of the Republic of Moldova until 1940.

The step undertaken by the communists in 2001 may be only interpreted as an attempt at expropriating an ecclesiastic premise. Already in 2001 it was clear that the Chisinau leadership will not be able to hide behind words for long, and sooner or later, will have to register the Bessarabian Church. It is worth recalling that at the precise moment when the Government adopted the above-mentioned decision – the case of the Bessarabian Church entered the last examination phase at the European Court of Justice.

The communist leadership, being aware of its lack of hopes for success in Strasbourg, decides to deprive the Bessarabian Church of any rights to advance property claims. The most worrying is the fact that the Government is involved administratively and is trying to interrupt the succession of the Bessarabian Church. That is, it attempts to show that the present Church of Bessarabia has nothing in common with the one that functioned until 1940, and that this is merely a coincidence of names.

Initially, the communist-concocted trick „bore fruit“. Certain judicial bodies, which to everyone’s knowledge are controlled by the communists, left the governmental decision intact. One should not get the impression that the Supreme Court of Justice is „free“ in its actions either. Simply enough, the communists have understood: that if the Supreme Court of Justice does not rule in favor of the petitioners, a new trial will follow in Strasbourg, and the government of Moldova will again be the „laughingstock“ of Europe. The important thing, however, is, that either out of objective or subjective motives, the communists were forced to recognize their own mistake and refrain from committing an obvious abuse vis-à-vis the Bessarabian Church.

▷ PRESIDENT VORONIN'S
„GENEROUS“ GESTURE

At the beginning of 2004, yielding to the constant pressures of the opposition, civil society and international community, the communist government was obliged, finally, to offer at least one hour per week on the national television channel „Moldova 1“ to other parties. However, taking into view the fact that the communists are not capable of doing a good thing without, simultaneously, trying to conduct dirty tricks, it has come as no surprise that the „Opposition hour“, hatched in the offices of the presidency and appearing at the orders of Vladimir Voronin, was of a very poor quality.

Firstly, there is already food for thought in the fact that the idea for the broadcast came from Vladimir Voronin, rather than from the management of the television channel. This proves that the program could not be objective and is only a modality of compromising the opposition. Subsequently, these assumptions were proven right. How was the opposition going to be compromised in line with Bolshevik propaganda?

In the following way: at the orders of the powers-be, the topics arranged for discussion in this program were mostly of a theoretical nature. That is, they did not have any practical application, the participants talking in general terms, far from the interests of the ordinary voter, a fact which increased the electoral antipathy towards the opposition.

It is worth mentioning that a very great number of participants were invited to the respective broadcasts. As a result, the parties did not have sufficient time to

bring a clear position on various matters to the attention of the viewers. To top it all up, among participants, representatives of various „small parties“ were infiltrated, they pretended to belong to the opposition, but in reality did the communist' bidding, compromising any attempts at the solidarity of the non-communist parties.

In this way, the communist propaganda achieved its earlier proposed aims. Fortunately, the true opposition and the civil society had the guts to protest against this „gift“ granted by Vladimir Voronin, forcing the management of the „Telradio-Moldova“ to cancel this electoral farce called „Opposition hour“.

The citizens who came out into the streets on February 25th to protest against the communist regime, did so in conditions of illegality: their meeting had not been authorized by the Mayor's office and they did not find any other modality to defend their rights in a state with an emerging dictatorship, where justice is at the beck and call of the authorities. I think that the Law on public meetings should be modified because it contradicts the international legislation in this field.

The current variant of the Law on public meetings is convenient to the communist government; the latter adjusted it to its own taste in the course of its years in power. A modification is proposed in accordance with which organizers of public meetings will simply have to notify local authorities about the date of the gathering, without having to solicit the agreement of the latter. A regime that is not capable of defending its own position without the use of force is doomed to destruction. Especially since those who protest are opting against the destruction of the state of the Republic of Moldova, against encroachments on the state of law, market economy and national values, opposing the installment of a communist dictatorship.

In legal practice, if a law of a country contradicts international legislation, then the judicial ruling defends those who respect the international legislation. A natural conclusion for the powers-be will be to bring the respective law into concordance with the international norms, rather than bring the shepherd-dogs into the streets.

The beginning of 2004 was marked by an unprecedented scandal – the communists, with the aid of their loyal structures, have ceased the broadcasting of two municipal networks - „EURO-TV-Chisinau“ and Radio „Antena-C“ The Broadcasting Coordination Council, which in this case acted as a political bludgeon against the opponents of the communists, has brought forth arguments that do not resist any criticism. In reality, the following aim was followed: reducing to silence the broadcasting networks which refused to sing in unison with the communists.

However, in their blind desire to exterminate everything that was not communist oriented, the authorities have forgotten about civil society, human rights and international community etc. This political scandal could have resulted in loss of human lives. Some employees of the two networks went on a hunger strike, their state of health being at certain moments quite grave. That is why – the government was forced to recognize its own defeat and yield to the demands of the people.

The communists have tried to come out of this conflict with a clean face, putting the responsibility for the crisis onto their opponents from the mayoralty, which supposedly „have placed their own political interests in front of the interests of journalists“. The authorities have forgotten to specify that it was not the functionaries of the city-hall that closed down those two municipal networks, and it was not the functionaries of the city hall that forced the people to go on a hunger strike, but rather the state structures controlled by the communists.



„THE TROJAN HORSE“

On February 18, 2004, the Government approves the candidature of Victor Zlachevski for the position of Ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Bucharest. Previously, Zlachevsky was permanent representative of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova at the inter-parliamentary Assembly of CIS countries.

In my opinion, with this appointment the communist administration from Chisinau could not have brought a greater insult against the Romanian authorities. First of all, it is quite defiant to appoint one of the most anti-Romanian persons in Chisinau as ambassador to Bucharest. Second of all, it catches the eye that Victor Zlachevski was sent to Bucharest directly from Saint-Petersburg. Was it mere coincidence or was the nomination of a new ambassador inspired by Moscow?

If anyone thought that Zlachevski changed his behavior and became more loyal to the Romanian manifestations in Bessarabia, these hopes vanished exactly on the day of his appointment. Asked by journalists whether he considers himself – Romanian, Moldavian, Russian etc. – he declared in response that he considers himself „son of his land“. What an ingenious and diplomatic answer! There are no doubts whatsoever that the policies promoted by this diplomat vis-à-vis the rapprochement of the two banks of the Prut River will be as „clever“ as the abovementioned answer.



COOMUNISTS ATTACK THE
„TIMPUL“ NEWSPAPER

The „Timpul“ newspaper is one of the most inconvenient publications to the „red government“. Hence, it is no surprise that the authorities have done everything they could to „hush“ this publication up. However, fearing a new wave of international criticism, the communists preferred to act from the shadows, through the aid of companies, we may assume, are on friendly terms with the authorities.

Thus, at the beginning of 2004, the „Daac-Hermes“ company files a suit against „Timpul“ for the publication of the article „Luxury in the land of poverty“, which boarded the subject of a commercial transaction between the company and the Government of the Republic of Moldova. The company claimed that it was harmed by this article and solicited from the court to sequester the goods and the banking accounts of the editorial office, as well as demanded moral and material damages in the amount of 20 million lei and 500 000 USD.

These sums are enormous even for economically advanced countries, let alone for the Republic of Moldova, where the editorial offices must keep each penny under strict control. In other words, the above mentioned trial could have easily terminated the newspaper „Timpul“. At the same time, if we take into consideration the fact that in the Republic of Moldova – the independence of justice is limping, then we can realize the situation of the newspaper. The „red government“, however, forgot that the stick has two ends, and if you use one to strike your opponents, the second one, will surely, strike yourself.

After taking power, in an attempt to prove that not all public organizations and creative unions are against them, the communists have rushed to create numerous alternative organizations and unions (including trade unions). This, however, did not diminish the protests and the criticism incoming from the civil society. The protests initiated by the Confederacy of Unions of Moldova on February 26, 2004 may serve as another example of the trend

Thus, although the authorities went out of their way to prove that things are improving in the country, the simple people could no longer bear this demagoguery accompanied by a continuous worsening of the socio-economic situation. The populist measures undertaken by the powers-be in this direction were only to the detriment of the situation. At the beginning of 2004, the Republic of Moldova continues to have the lowest figure of economic growth in the CIS, the living standards of the citizens were and are in constant decrease, the absolute poverty of the majority of the population reaches a catastrophic extent due to inflation and a galloping increase in the prices of first necessity food products, like bread, sugar, dairy-products, as well as utilities etc.

The unions have formulated a series of grievances of an organizational nature, as well as a number of social-economic demands: a halt to the illegal meddling of the communists in the affairs of the Confederacy of Unions, and at least a two-fold increase of the minimal

salary, a measure that could eliminate the created disequilibrium between the level of work-remuneration and the minimal consumption basket etc. However, these and other grievances were ignored by the authorities, confirming the fact that things are not going as well for the country as the government attempted to prove.

▶ INVESTORS' RIGHTS
CONTINUE TO BE VIOLATED

In February 2004, the Republic of Moldova becomes yet again a conflict arena with a German investor harmed as a result. Herman Weis, president of „Weis Reben“ GmbH, founder (retaining 40,6% of the social capital) of the Joint enterprise „Weis-MD Vine Co“ SRL, declares that his investor's rights were violated in the Republic of Moldova.

The German investor claims that, using falsified documents, a plantation of 54 hectares of vine was estranged from his property. This plantation was set up in 2000 with the seeding material provided by the company of the German businessman. Subsequently, the seeding material was included into the statutory capital of „Weis-MD Vine Co“ SRL, and not in the least was it destined for sale or transfer to other owners. Even though Herman Weis affirmed that notary bodies and the Anenii Noi regional cadastre body participated in the falsification of documents, no reaction ever followed from the authorities.

The most sad part of this story is the fact that, by appealing to a court, the foreign entrepreneur has experienced on his own skin the „efficiency“ of local justice, it had him in a legal limbo for over two years and nobody knows how much longer will he have to await a resolution of the case.

You do not have to be Nostradamus to realize that this investor will never want to hear anything of Moldova again and will certainly advise his compatriots to keep clear of the local market. It is rather strange that the authorities, which refused to take actions in this case (as in many other cases as well), have the nerve to declare that they want to attract foreign investments to the Republic of Moldova.

▶ AN „OLD FASHIONED“
MINISTER

During the communists' stay in power, the farmers were kept in a permanent position of „checkmate“. Just when they were beginning to calm down after an ill-famed communist initiative aimed at returning to a collective form of agricultural property, other similar initiatives or declarations immediately followed suit. One similar statement was made by Dumitru Todoroglu, minister of agriculture and food industry, who declared that „the only way to revitalize the agriculture is by working the land in common“.

The minister claimed that, currently, „the specialists are identifying various methods of consolidating agricultural land“. At the same time, he mentioned that this consolidation should take place only following the „voluntary agreement“ of agricultural land owners. It is already known though what „voluntary agreement“ means in the understanding of communists: if you do not „voluntarily agree“, then you will encounter so many difficulties, that you will have to simply give up.

The minister was invited to the Parliament to talk about the situation created on the cereal market after the natural disasters of 2003. Given the fact that the „situation was under control“, Todoroglo started fantasizing about the return to „kolkhozes“, projecting beautiful images of Moldova's „kolkhoz“ future. As subsequent developments showed, the situation on the cereal market was not really „under control“. However, when several persons guilty of causing „the bread crisis“ were dismissed in a spectacular fashion, the minister of

agriculture was left alone. Most probably, the respective minister is part of Voronin's regime „strategic reserve“ and emerges to the surface only when it is necessary to start a discussion on the return to a „collective form of agricultural property“.



„OPPOSITION HOUR SHOULD BELONG TO OPPOSITION PARTIES“

The program „Opposition Hour“ broadcasted on the public network channel „Moldova-1“ was instituted at the order of the powers-be in order to compromise the image of the opposition parties. The „Opposition Hour“, in its conceived format and style, seems more like an „Opposition Choir“, where the chorus boys and girls stumble onto themselves, mutually blocking each other in the process. I was surprised to discover how many opposition parties we have in the Republic of Moldova, I found out about the existence of some of them only after watching a couple of broadcasts.

The number of participants is increased from one broadcast to the next, a deliberate step undertaken by the administration of the television channel, which is in continuous subservience to the authorities. In order to dilute the image of the opposition as a political force, the powers-be attempt to infiltrate among participants persons that are loyal to the government. For example, it is surprising to see the appearance on „Opposition Hour“ of V. Efremov, who additionally to being an associate of the ruling party is also an ardent fighter against opposition formations in the Republic of Moldova.

It is a motley crew of political actors that does not allow us to come out with constructive and specific proposals, to show the electorate the fact that there is an opposition force which knows what it wants. In other words, the communists want to transform a civilized dialogue into a bad-taste circus and portray the opposi-

tion leaders as clowns. This broadcasted program should present only parties which truly represent the opposition in the Republic of Moldova and should refrain from inviting participants representing dwarf parties which discredit this notion.



The opposition protest actions, which continued in 2004, were not spared of new abuses committed by the authorities. Thus, instead of conforming to national interest and vehemently rejecting the Kozak Memorandum, putting a stop to the erosion and demolition of democratic values, the communists unleash a new campaign of intimidation of their opponents. As a result, in only two months time – January and February 2004 – the Ministry of Internal Affairs initiated 72 administrative-criminal cases against participants at protest actions.

Most of the cases were initiated after Stalinist-style nocturnal visits of police personnel to the residencies of the abovementioned persons. Methods of this kind are applied only in countries where dictatorial regimes are in power. The protesters were forced to bear all these indignities and persecutions only because they rose to their feet to defend the national interests of their country, because they dared to openly voice their point of view! In a way, these citizens have compensated for the absence of the will power of the authorities, the latter never having the courage to oppose foreign intentions aimed at the destruction of the statehood of the Republic of Moldova by means of federalizing it.

▶ ANOTHER EXAMPLE
OF „ECONOMIC INGENUITY“

In conditions when external financing is absent, the communists undertake a series of desperate attempts to identify alternative sources which could allow them to coat certain „budgetary gaps“, and implicitly, to maintain themselves in power. However, again and again the solutions found by communists are harmful to the citizens. An example of this is the introduction of the off-shore tax.

The communist „strategists“ have thought and decided that each operation performed by means of an off-shore should be taxed with 15% of the total value of transaction. At first sight, the intention seems to be good – the budget will get considerable revenues in the process. However, following a deeper analysis of the situation, it can be seen that the introduction of this tax is neither convenient to the national economy, nor is it convenient to the ordinary consumers.

It is worth mentioning that this tax will surely be accompanied by an increase in prices of the main goods. It will affect the prices for the petroleum based products, most of which are imported through off-shore zones. The importers, in order to avoid losses, will be forced to raise the prices of the petrol and diesel by 15%. Same thing can be said about sugar and other products. And certainly an increase in prices for some goods – will lead to an increase in prices for other goods as well.

Regarding the losses of the national economy, they will be enormous considering the scope of trafficking after the introduction of the above-mentioned tax. For, many entrepreneurs, unwilling to pay more, will seek ever less legal ways of bringing their goods into the country.

▶ AUTHORITIES WORRIED
ABOUT THE RISE IN POPULARITY
OF SERAFIM URECHEAN

In the middle of March 2004, the behavior of the „red government“ becomes ridiculous to an alarming extent – the powers-be attempt to sanction Serafim Urechean, General Mayor of Chisinau, because of the latter’s trip to Moscow without securing the preliminary consent of the central authorities.

In reality, however, the true motive which determined communists to act this way is the continuous rise in the mayor’s popularity. Political experts have noticed that the higher the popularity of Serafim Urechean, the more hostile is the pressure from the side of the communist power. That is why I think that the whole commotion surrounding the Mayor’s visit to Moscow was nothing else but political vendetta.

These methods of scuffles against political opponents are reminiscent of 1930’s Stalinist repressions and, unquestionably, affect the image of the Republic of Moldova outside of the country.

In the same context, it is worth mentioning that the arguments utilized by the communists are obvious and clumsy. The respective visit was carried out on one’s own account; it was of a private nature and did not require any „coordination“ with governmental bodies.

On March 18, the parliament adopts the Law regarding investments in entrepreneurial activity, which stipulates that local and foreign investors will be treated equally. However, additionally to having positive connotations, the Law also implies certain consequences. Regretfully, once it enters into force, another normative act, „the Law on foreign investments“ will be repealed.

Of course, nobody doubts the necessity of raising the importance of local investors, but we should not forget that foreign investors are precisely the ones that could contribute to an improvement of the situation in the local economy, and to become more economically attractive, the Republic of Moldova requires a Law regarding foreign investments. By regulating this field by means of a general law, the communist authorities have diminished the importance of foreign investments. Thus, they have completed the work of destroying the favorable investment climate, which started immediately after they came to power.

The gravity of the situation is further underlined by the fact that foreign investors who previously came to Moldova, benefited from certain facilities on the basis of the former law. Although the communists claim that similar facilities will be preserved in the future, nobody can guarantee that they will keep their words.

Meanwhile, the situation regarding foreign investments has considerably worsened. In the last five months of 2004 the state budget has not received even

one cent from privatization deals. Nobody wishes to enter the market of a country where the rules of the game change so often and so dramatically! One should not forget that the budgetary surplus foreseen for the current year, for the most part, is to be covered precisely by revenue resulted from privatization sales.

▷ THE COMMUNIST SHOW
AROUND THE „BREAD CRISIS“ ISSUE

After almost half a year passed since the increase in the prices of bread (November 2003), the communists decided to find out who was the culprit of this situation. At the end of February 2004, President Vladimir Voronin convenes a session of the Higher Security Council to discuss the problem of the „bread crisis“, a session which ends with two spectacular dismissals (general Roibu, and the management of SA „Franzeluta“). A special commission is created to investigate the situation, which after a month, on March 24, comes forth with an ample report on the „political sabotage“ carried out by the adversaries of the authorities, who supposedly „did everything in their power to raise bread prices and compromise the government“.

By trying to prove that the culprits are certain political opponents, the communists wanted to save face in front of the voters. Voronin and his commissions forgot one thing, however: the people do not want merely a show „with the guilty decapitated on the Great National Assembly Square“, they also want affordable bread prices. And if all the „political saboteurs“ were uncovered, why are the prices not lowering to the level of early November 2003? Maybe it wasn't „political sabotage“ after all, but rather a case of electoral sabotage on the part of the authorities?!

▷ PENSIONERS EXPERIENCING
THE „CHARITY“ OF THE COMMUNISTS

I do not think that I will be wrong if I say that the current administration „cares“ about pensioners, invalids, veterans only when the elections are due. Every time the opposition had reasonable proposals aimed at improving the situation of these social strata, the communists were vehemently opposing against them. An example of this is the initiative of Lidia Gutu, a member of the „Moldova Noastra“ Alliance, who proposed exempting pensioners, owners of agricultural land, from paying social insurance contributions in 2003.

The communists pretended to be unaware of the existence of this initiative until the end of February-beginning of March 2004. Then, they introduced the draft law into the agenda and rejected it with the motivation that the period for which it was designed had already passed. As if the persons it was designed for – were not eligible for reimbursements for the already paid contributions. Of course, there is a principle according to which a law cannot have retroactive effect, but considering the fact that the communist majority has violated it so many times, why not apply the same approach here? Thus, the pensioners would have gotten proof that the government cares about them not only when it is convenient to their electoral results, but rather permanently.

▷ EVERYTHING FOR THE IMPROVEMENT
OF PRESIDENT VORONIN'S VILLA

At the beginning of April 2004 a new communist abuse comes to the attention of the public – starting with December 2003 illegal tree cutting has been taking place in the Condrita forest, aimed at enlarging the area occupied by a local resort, which is used by President Voronin as his own personal villa.

The forest strip, which was sacrificed for the desire of Vladimir Voronin to surround his villa with a wall of wire and concrete, is 10 kilometers long and 3 meters wide. This new abuse committed by the authorities was carried out in the conditions where the Forest Code categorically prohibits any reductions of the forest areas. In addition, we should not forget that forest strips in Moldova have exclusively environmental functions. Anyway, neither the President, nor the State Chancellery, nor any other mentioned governmental structures reacted to this scandal, confirming their guilt for the illicit tree cutting in the Condritia village area.

Why the communists, who portray themselves as great „fighters“ for the supremacy of the law, did not sanction their leader? Or is the law applicable only against the adversaries of the powers-be?!

▷ PARLIAMENT REGULATIONS –
AT THE BECK AND CALL OF THE SPEAKER

Parliament's plenary session of April 8, 2004 will remain memorable not only as the last session before the holy celebrations of Easter, but also as the day when the communists openly made it clear that Parliament Regulations are merely a piece of paper used when it is convenient to them.

At that session, speaker Eugenia Ostapciuc, declared out of the blue that „Government Hour“ (foreseen by the Regulations), during which deputies interrelate and receive answers to their previous questions, will not take place. The reason – Mrs. Speaker of the Parliament has decided that before Easter it would not be good if representatives of the opposition, with their „annoying questions“, ruin the mood of certain persons from among the ruling party. If we are to follow this logic, taking into account the number of holidays in Moldova, the opposition should never open its mouth to avoid ruining someone's mood.

The speaker did not reconsider her view even after the opposition made repeated requests and references to Parliament Regulations. In this situation, it is no wonder that the opposition occupied without authorization the floor of Parliament's central tribune, in effect blocking the plenary session. Subsequently, the opposition formulated a series of demands, which remained unanswered by the parliamentary majority and have resulted in a two-month long conflict in the Legislative branch.

On April 16, 2004, the Parliament adopts the Regulation regarding the modality of distribution of means out of the Fund for the support of the agricultural sector. At the distribution of 36 million lei, foreseen in this direction by the Law on state budget for 2004, the majority faction commits one of the gravest violations possible – it reduces by 14 million the sources which were earmarked for supporting the process of subsidizing agriculture. Regarding the new destination of the above-mentioned funds – they were to be directed towards creating farm equipment centers, structures on the basis of which (in accordance with communist intentions) the return to the kolkhoz system was to be finalized.

In this context, it should be mentioned that the Budget Law was violated in the gravest manner; the latter has a clear stipulation that 36 million lei are foreseen for subsidizing and crediting agriculture, and hence, the respective funds may not be used for other aims. At the same time, the notion of „subsidizing“ itself was compromised, for, the Regulation voted by the communists stipulates that those redirected 14 million lei would not be allotted as non-reimbursable loans, but rather under the form of technical credits. That is, with one hand the authorities hand things out, and with the other they grab them back. The respective funds should not return in any form back into the state budget – they are a means of assistance granted by the state to agriculture. The above-mentioned example is a proof of the communist attitude

towards their fellow co-citizens. In this way, the government not only reduced the chances of the farmers to benefit from credits, but also forced them to institute farm equipment centers at their own expense (as the credits directed to agricultural entrepreneurs, in the end, will return into the budget). To top it all up, in the end, the communist will brag about how they instituted so many farm equipment centers. Whereas the people will not realize that it was not the communists that created them, but rather the people themselves, at their own expense.

▷ COMMUNIST AUTHORITIES
HUMILIATED IN STRASBOURG
YET AGAIN

At the end of April 2004, the European Court for Human Rights (ECHR) has ruled in favor of pensioner Tatiana Prodan who sued the Government of the Republic of Moldova. The pensioner has solicited to be reinstated in the right of property over a house situated in Chisinau, which previously belonged to her family and was nationalized during the existence of the USSR.

In 1997 the court of the Center sector of the capital has ruled that the state must return the property to Tatiana Prodan. Subsequently, the pensioner solicited the modification of the decision; she was to be given an apartment in the respective house, and the rest – in cash. The Court satisfied this request as well; however, the pensioner received only reimbursement for part of the house, and not the apartment which was to be allocated in accordance with the decision. In this situation, she was forced to appeal to ECHR.

This was the third trial lost by the Republic of Moldova at ECHR after the communists came to power. It should be mentioned that the previous governments were never humiliated by losing trials in Strasbourg. This proves the incompetence of the powers-be to solve conflicts amiably with its own citizens so that the latter are not forced to appeal for justice in Strasbourg.

▷ LOCAL AUTHORITIES STILL
DEPRIVED OF THEIR LEGAL RIGHTS

The vertical consolidation of power is one of the main goals of the communist government – a goal which the latter do not even try to hide. However, this process has a negative impact over the local autonomy, which practically was destroyed since the communists came to power. Thus, after the mandates of the local authorities over the distribution of public finances were considerably reduced, the government undertook the task to take out of their competencies purely managerial powers as well. A first step in this direction was taken on April 29th 2004, when the government authorized the National Agency for the Regulation of the Energy sector (NARE) with the right to set up tariffs for technical water.

Initially, the communists intended to allow NARE to set up tariffs for drinking water as well. Only after long discussions in Parliament, accompanied by the arguments of the opposition representatives, did the majority faction moderate its appetite for centralizing competencies in this field. The arguments voiced by the communists were quite simple: the local enterprises that operate in this domain suffer considerable losses due to the fact that local authorities do not timely revise the tariffs, so that the latter correspond to the current situation. NARE, according to communists, would react more adequately. However, the „red government“ forgot one thing – local authorities are better aware of the situation in the regions and know what tariffs would be bearable for the population. Let's imagine that NARE would only set tariffs that corres-

pond to reality. Will this solve the problems of the enterprises in this field? No. On contrary, the situation could aggravate even more, as people, unable to face exaggerated tariffs, will not pay at all. In this case, the abovementioned enterprises will simply go bankrupt. Who is to suffer when this state of affairs becomes a reality: people in the regions and local authorities or the communists with their „ingenious“ ideas concocted in their Chisinau offices?



With the parliamentary elections approaching, the communists are ever more „concerned“ with the fate of the „poor shareholders who do not receive any dividends for many years“. Thus, at the beginning of 2004, the authorities „steal“ a draft law from the members of the „Moldova Noastra“ Alliance which stipulated that investment funds were obligated to buy back at real prices shares from their shareholders. Therefore, at first, the communists had rejected the draft of the opposition, which was deposited at Parliament’s Permanent Bureau as early as in 2002, and then they put forward a similar draft. The next step undertaken in the direction of „gratifying the interests of shareholders“ is a legislative initiative of a group of parliamentarians led by Victor Stepaniuc, which obligates a share-holding association to direct at least 30% of the annual profits to payments of dividends.

The „brave defenders of the shareholders’ rights“ do not take into consideration the fact that in a market economy the state does not have any right to intervene into the activity of entrepreneurs and dictate them how their profits should be distributed. This can be done only by a general meeting of the shareholders. Shareholders must decide whether this money is to be distributed among them or reinvested into the development of the business.

In this context, it should be mentioned that the odd idea put forth by the group of parliamentary members has very few chances of being adopted, and even if this thing happens, the ordinary shareholders

will not experience any favorable effects. Thus, if we take into account the official statistical data, the number of enterprises that secure certain profit is extremely limited and the dividends that are to go to a shareholder will be quite insignificant. Instead, negative effects will follow: first of all, the businesses will move their affairs into the shade, unwilling to let the state know their true profit figures and dictate them how to administer it; secondly, the enterprises will be deprived of important sums of money which eventually could be allocated towards further expansion or development. Divided between shareholders, these sums will be insignificant, whereas, put together, they will be quite helpful for the business.



VORONIN SPLITS THE PRESS INTO TWO CAMPS

The beginning of May as usual is marked by various events dedicated to the International Press Freedom Day. However, the communists have „honored“ with their presence only the manifestation of the League of Professional Journalists, a structure which was created at the initiative and support of the communist authorities.

By participating in the abovementioned event, President Vladimir Voronin confirmed once more that the party he leads, in all its years in power, has done nothing else but split the society into two camps. In this fashion, the chief of state showed that he recognizes only the journalists that are members of the League, whereas all the other professional organizations from this field have no importance whatsoever for the powers-be. In this fashion, Vladimir Voronin defied the entire journalistic community; he admitted that he is not concerned at all by the fact that, simultaneously with the Conference of the League, a protest march against censorship was taking place in Chisinau.

For the occasion of the professional holiday, the President did not address a speech aimed at the entire press corps of the Republic of Moldova, but rather delivered a message to a narrow group of journalists who do not anger him with their articles. He spoke of his vision vis-à-vis the development of the press in the Republic of Moldova in front of a limited group of journalists, as if other representatives of the trade were non-existent.

▶ WHO WILL COMPENSATE EXPORTERS' LOSSES?

It is no secret that domestic exporters have found themselves in a very difficult situation due to the continued appreciation of the national currency. According to official data, enterprises from the wine-making industry alone sustained circa 10 million lei in monthly losses. If we are to look at these enterprises separately, then each one of them suffered losses in the figure of 500 thousand – one million lei. Wine-making enterprises, exporting their production for the most part to CIS states, are forced to convert about 70% of their profits. Considering the fact that the rate of the dollar is low, the abovementioned entrepreneurs often do not even manage to cover their expenses.

The other exporters found themselves in a similar situation. However, it is hard to understand why the state, which has the capability to assist them, chooses instead to put further pressure on them. Thus, in this period, exporters were not permitted to contract credits in foreign currency. Taking into view that the rate of the dollar and euro was low, the exporters could have been favored while contracting credits. The government decided instead that importers could contract credits in foreign currency! At the same time, the governor of the National Bank, Leonid Talmaci, declared that entrepreneurs should accept the situation when they sustain losses, because previously, they repeatedly profited as a result of the depreciation of the national currency. If we are to follow this logic, then it results that we are to allow the exporters to

die out, just because previously, they prospered. Instead of counting the money obtained by exporters up to the present, we should rather ask ourselves: what should we do to save domestic exports and shouldn't we compensate the entrepreneurs for the losses sustained following the depreciation of the dollar and euro?



THE STATE LOSES CONTROL OVER „BANCA DE ECONOMII“

After years of communist super-imposed administration, our society has already gotten use to the excessive secrecy practiced by the authorities. Simultaneously though, the same society has understood another thing: secrecy is a breeding ground for new abuses and violations. Taking this principle into consideration, at the beginning of May 2004, opposition parliament members raise the issue on the necessity of holding parliamentary hearings in relation to the situation at „Banca de Economii“ (Savings Bank).

Questions arose when the bank's shareholders general meeting, without voicing any public reasons, unanimously replaced the leadership of the bank, including the director of the Administration Council. This situation would not have been so alarming if „Banca de Economii“ was not the only state-owned bank in the Republic of Moldova (circa 56% of shares) and if the press did not report that a certain Austrian investor was interested in buying the controlling shares package in this institution. It is possible that someone intended to make good money on this transaction and has influenced the change of bank's administration.

These assumptions were further reinforced by the refusal of the Parliamentary leadership to organize hearings on this issue within the frames of a plenary session. In this context, a question emerges: why, if everything is in accordance with the law, is it necessary to withhold this information from the public?

Who will be held responsible if the assumptions of the opposition are proven right and if „Banca de Economii“ changes ownership to the detriment of the state's interests?



MIMICKING THE NEGOTIATION PROCESS

Recently, the process of negotiations in a five-sided format, striving for a settlement of the Transnistrian conflict, has been resumed. The resumption of discussions is yet another example of incapacity shown by the current administration in solving the Transnistrian problem in accordance with the interests of the Republic of Moldova and further proof of inability to oppose Moscow's plans aimed at the destruction of our state. For, as long as Chisinau has not officially renounced the Kozak Memorandum, all the negotiations that are taking place are only to the detriment of the statehood and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova.

It could happen that sooner or later, President Vladimir Voronin will be pressured into accepting the Kozak Memorandum. A deliberate pause was made in the process of negotiations from November 2003 and until April 2004, aimed at numbing the vigilance of the opposition, civil society and Western opinion. This tactic worked out fine: presently, practically no one pays attention to the steps undertaken by the government in the direction of resolving the Transnistrian problem. The Committee for the Defense of Independence and Constitution of Moldova is, de facto, defunct. Same fate befell the two Round Tables of political parties (in an old and new format); the latter could have opposed the resumption of negotiations which were harmful to the fate of statehood of the Republic of Moldova.

The resumption of the negotiation process is all the more humiliating for the Republic of Moldova as Georgia demonstrated that the problem of separatism could be solved in a pretty efficient way. Why was President Saakashvili able to expel separatist Abashidze and send him away to his real masters, and why is Voronin not capable of doing the same thing to Smirnov? Instead of following Georgia's example, we mimic a sort of a negotiation process, risking legitimizing the crimes committed by the Tiraspol regime and placing the future of the Republic of Moldova into Igor Smirnov's hands!



AUTHORITIES UNDERMINE
THE ACTIVITY OF THE
„MOLDOVA NOASTRA“ ALLIANCE

Several months ago the Ministry of Justice warned the Liberal Party and the Alliance of Independents that they did not fulfill all the formalities related to self-dissolution, in effect questioning the legality of the „Moldova Noastra“ Alliance.

Although the Liberal Party and the social-political movement „Alliance of Independents of the Republic of Moldova“ have fulfilled all the legal requirements needed for the fusion with the „Social-Democratic Alliance of Moldova“ party and creation of the „Moldova Noastra“ Alliance party, the communist authorities keep postponing the implementation of the procedure pertaining to the termination of the respective parties.

The co-presidents of the „Moldova Noastra“ Alliance party have informed the Ministry of Justice in written form that the Liberal Party and the social-political movement „Alliance of Independents of the Republic of Moldova“ had fulfilled all the conditions required for the fusion with the „Social Democratic Alliance of Moldova“ party and creation of the „Moldova Noastra“ Alliance party. In accordance with the current legislation, we were to receive, within a month, a written notification from the respective ministry regarding a set of documents referring to the termination of the abovementioned parties and creation of the „Moldova Noastra“ Alliance party. The communists do not change their work methods and, until present time, we still did not receive any answer, although the deadline has already expired.

These are cheap tricks employed by the current administration which desperately tries to undermine the activity of the „Moldova Noastra“ Alliance party with the intention of impeding its work on the eve of the election campaign.



The months of March, April and half of May 2004 were characterized by a total rout on the currency market in the Republic of Moldova. In the situation of panic, which emerged on the market due to oscillations in the exchange rate of the national currency, ordinary people were trying to understand what was happening, why they were forced to sell their dollars and euros, earned at great pains abroad, for nothing. Many of them still have not understood that they were the victims of a pharisaic game designed by the current administration.

Officially, it was said that there are two reasons for the dollar and euro depreciation: 1) similar tendencies in world markets; 2) excess of currency due to transfers into the country of unprecedented amounts of euros and dollars by persons who work abroad. None of the abovementioned reasons are resistant to criticism. First of all, if this was a tendency of the international markets, why did the dollars and euros not depreciate so drastically in neighboring countries like Ukraine and Romania? Secondly, why wasn't a similar situation registered in the previous two years when the financial transfers performed by our compatriots from abroad were practically at the same level as this year? In reality, however, the communists avoided to recognize the fact that they put the burden of repaying the external debt (not by means of the Budget Law) directly onto the shoulders of ordinary citizens. Thus, in 2004, Moldova was due to repay external debts in the figure of 70 million US dollars. The calculated rate in the

Budget Law for repaying this debt was set at 15, 2 lei. Diminishing the exchange rate to 10 lei for one dollar by means of administrative methods, the communists managed to save practically 1/3 from the price of every dollar. As a result, with the money which was to cover only 2/3 of the external debt, the communists were able to return the whole sum. Those who lost out on this deal were the ordinary people who ceded to the government their hard-earned cash for only 2/3 of its real price. Of course, subsequently, the communists will take a small part of the money saved as a result of repaying the foreign debt and will increase pensions and salaries by several lei. And the people will be thankful, without in fact knowing, that they are receiving only a little part of the sum „stolen“ from them by the communists!



INCOHERENCE OF
THE COMMUNISTS IN HOME
AND FOREIGN POLICIES

During a meeting with ambassadors accredited in Chisinau, V. Voronin has made public a new initiative of his own. He solicited Russia, USA, Romania, Ukraine and the European Union to sign a Stability and Security Pact for the Republic of Moldova. In the opinion of the President of the country, granting external long-term guarantees will lead to a resolution of the major problems with which our state is confronting today. In reality, however, the communist leader merely wants to delegate the responsibility for the failure of the current administration onto someone else, in this case, the abovementioned countries.

This project confirms once more the lack of coherence of the communists in home and foreign policies of the Republic of Moldova. Applying double standards and mimicking certain structural reforms are part of the populist vocabulary of the present administration. And now, on the eve of the parliamentary elections, they have „woken up“ to understand that they are not capable of implementing their electoral promises. All the projects advanced by representatives of the authorities have been inefficient and counterproductive for the society and the state. The abovementioned project is not an exception either, it has similar confusing collocations: multilateral compromise, strategic neutrality, permanent neutrality, „choosing between two goods“ etc.

The Stability and Security Pact for Moldova, proposed by President V. Voronin, represents, essentially, a

project which compiled all the ideas promoted by the communists during their years in power, which are aberrant and harmful to the statehood of the Republic of Moldova. Here, we can find: motives taken from the Social Pact, which did not go down well with the society; theses regarding poly-ethnicity and linguistic diversity, borrowed from the National State Concept; as well as the term of federalization, the latter denoting that Voronin has not altogether given up on the Kozak Plan.

Voronin's initiative is more likely a trick, rather than a strategy that would give priority to the interests of the Republic of Moldova. We get the impression that the President simply wants to wash his hands, putting the blame in case of failure on the countries whose support is solicited by this project.

What Voronin in fact proposes, offers very few chances for the Republic of Moldova to become a zone of stability in the region, instead it will continue to remain a „bone of contention“. A suitable solution in this case could be found if Moldova was to conjugate its efforts with Romania, the latter being qualified by USA to act as bridge between West and East. This joint effort could propel the Republic of Moldova onto the path of stability and prosperity.

The Republic of Moldova could welcome a succession of administration, rather than a succession of ideas.

In other words – we will not be saved by a new plan, but rather by a new president and a new team.



Reinstalling Lenin's monument in Balti is probably part of the communist plan aimed at Sovietizing the Republic of Moldova. Returning Lenin's monument to the center of Balti is not the first case of this kind – similar actions have previously taken place in Don-duseni, Ocnita and other towns. For example, in Ocnita, Lenin's monument replaced the monument of Gheorghe Asachi. In this context, a natural question arises: how much longer will the people tolerate this travesty?

I would like to recall that in 1989 I was a deputy in the municipal soviet of Chisinau when we decided to remove Lenin's monument from the capital.

Up until now Lenin's monuments were only existent in Transnistria. When the communists finalize their masterpiece, installing monuments to Lenin on the right bank of Nistru, the Republic of Moldova will practically conform to the rules of the game adopted by Transnistria. Is not this, in fact, a Transnistria-ization of the Republic of Moldova?

Generally, I think that the actions of the communists are incompatible with each other. For example, how can you simultaneously commemorate Stefan cel Mare, who built dozens of churches and monasteries, and Lenin, who exterminated millions of Christians and persecuted the church?

In this context, I would like to mention that all these actions undertaken by the communists with the view of repairing churches and monasteries are based exclusively on populist, electoral motives.

The communists have understood that people believe in God more than in anything else (this is apparent from all latest polls) and that is why they (the authorities) are trying to speculate using this faith.



On July 1 and 2, I had the happy occasion to participate in the events commemorating 500 years since the death of Stefan cel Mare. This extraordinary event which took place at Putna was attended by numerous clerical persons from a number of European states, among them: France, Greece etc., as well as by the top leadership of Romania.

On the part of Moldova this event was attended by His High Grace Petru, Metropolitan of Bessarabia, as well as by the representatives of opposition parties and the Writers' Union. No one from the Chisinau officialdom bothered to come to Putna, even though these persons create so much fuss around the name of Stefan cel Mare.

The communists showed their true colors, they have proven that their interest in the figure of Stefan cel Mare is non-existent and the use of his name is done strictly for populist and electoral aims.

Moreover, I have never believed the communists when they declared themselves Christians. The exponents of a party, which during the USSR destroyed thousands of churches and banished millions of believers, cannot be Christians.

When the time arrives for some electoral populism, the communists do not see great difference between visiting Lenin's Mausoleum and going to Putna, to the grave of Stefan cel Mare.

Nevertheless, V. Voronin & company have not dared to visit Stefan's last earthly haven. The message boys

of Marxism-Leninism did not have the courage to cross the doorway of the monastery where the exponent and defender of Romanian-hood and Christendom rests. And probably this is for the best. Otherwise, who knows what a communist might do in a monastery?



The examples brought in this paper have been selected from the activity of the „red government“ over the past three and a half years. I do not find it relevant to continue the monitoring since, in any event, on the eve of the 2005 election campaign, the communists will modify their populist message depending on the circumstances, or in other words „anyway the wind blows“. As many times before, they will be cheating and will strive to convince the electorate that they had not kept their promises because the opposition hindered their plans.

The next period of the „red government“ will be directed to dumbfounding and confusing the population. They will „fabricate“ criminal cases aimed at intimidating, persecuting and annihilating the opposition. Everything will be done to induce fear into people (the communists have great experience in this respect).

In other words, we shall see what happens, nevertheless it is obvious that the incumbent government wasted those four years for the destiny of the Republic of Moldova.

IN PLACE OF AN EPILOGUE

Ever since the emergence of the communists on the political scene of the Republic of Moldova, they have guided themselves by the principle: „The worse for the country, the better for the communists“. If one is to carefully follow the activity of the communists during their years in power, one can notice with an untrained eye that they did everything they could to halt the implementation of reforms in the economy of the Republic of Moldova. Whenever they were forced to adopt certain reform oriented laws, they tried by all possible means to stop the mechanism for the realization of the latter. And, in the absence of a mechanism of implementation, the law, however good it is, becomes dead. In this manner, leading the country into poverty, the communists prepared the terrain for their arrival to power. It is a known fact, that the poorer the people are, the easier can they be manipulated.

In 2001, skillfully speculating and handing out empty promises, like cheap bread and easy lifestyles, the communists have come to power. During the election campaign, they also promised to solve social problems. I refer to the reduction of unemployment and the creation of jobs. However, in these three years, the communists have practically forced the most active part of the society to flee abroad in search of work. In this manner they have solved two problems. The first one – is the economic dimension. Our compatriots who work abroad send almost one billion dollars into the country, money which effectively saved the country from a *default*. The second one – is part of the political

dimension. By forcing the people to go abroad, they got rid of voters that would have never voted for the communists.

The majority of the opinion polls conducted in the latest years show that the citizens of the Republic of Moldova are mostly worried about poverty. Over 80% of the population continues to live under the poverty limit. This fact should give food for thought to the current administration. But even with all these considerations, they did not want to or were not capable of finalizing the Strategy of economic growth and reduction of poverty, a project, which in line with the requirements of the World Bank, was supposed to be finalized in March of 2000. This however has not happened yet, even though it would have contributed to the creation of an investment climate favorable to the Republic of Moldova.

In fact, the incumbent authorities are not keen on improving the living conditions of the citizens of the Republic of Moldova. If we analyze the Budget for the year 2004, we can observe that the expenditures for education have increased by 7,4%, whereas for healthcare only by 2,7%. Meanwhile, the expenditures for the State Chancellery and the Presidential Apparatus – were increased by 34,2% each, the expenditures for servicing the Parliament – were increased by 21,4%, for the Guard and Protection Service – by 54,2%. Thus, the communists want to return to the ill-famed Soviet times and are reinforcing their bureaucratic apparatus.

Even though the current leaders are boasting left and right about the successes achieved in the economy, the economic decline deepens ever more. The level of poverty in the Republic of Moldova did not decrease;

the situation on the job market worsened; whereas the degradation of the human capital and the continuous pauperization of the population are realities that only the communists fail to notice.

The lack of professionalism and the incompetence have provoked chaos in various spheres of the economy. The refusal to conform with the requirements of the IMF and other international financial organizations has led to the suspension of external crediting. The attempt of the communists to renationalize certain enterprises will have dire consequences, whereas the repeated intimidation of foreign investors has practically left the country without substantial financial support.

In order to distract attention from the failures of the „red government“, the communist leadership is trying by all means to divide the society into „ours“ and „theirs“, proposing aberrant projects such as integrated history, national conception, federalization.

The lack of coherence and the inconsequence in promoting foreign policy, the tendency to sign, without prior consultation with political parties and civil society, the Kozak Memorandum, which would have led to the demolition of the Republic of Moldova's statehood, have estranged even further the resolution of the Transnistrian conflict and the perspectives for the reintegration of the country.

Regretfully, the powers-be have declined the invitation to a civilized and constructive dialogue between all the political forces in the Republic of Moldova, choosing instead to ignore any reasonable proposals advanced by the opposition.

In situation when the communist dictatorship is only busy pursuing the abolition of political pluralism

and the destruction of democratic institutions, the Parliament, by means of the communist majority faction, has become an automatic vote machine bent on setting up the communist ideology on a state level, especially since most of the adopted laws have a political character. I have already repeatedly stated that any idea, however ridiculous, if it is to the liking of the communists, by means of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova – may become a law. Unfortunately, ideology and indoctrination have penetrated into almost all the state institutions, given the fact that the ruling comrades do not recognize any other laws except for those promoted by the Communist Party.

In spite of all the triumphant rhetoric of the communist big shots, the Republic of Moldova remains the poorest European country and one of the most corrupt states in the world.

During the communist governance, mass-media signaled a lot of serious cases of corruption. In this context, not going further into details, I could mention a few: the case of the Minister of Transportation, Kuptsov, the Skoda affair, the modality of holding tenders and selecting the winners, the operations and the activity of FinComBank. The powers-be, given the fact that all these cases involved persons from the entourage of the ruling party, preferred to play dumb. It is exactly in this fashion that the party at the helm of the country has fought and continues to fight corruption. As a result, if in 2001 Moldova was 64th corruption wise, in 2003, according to *Transparency International*, we are already placed as 102.

In this context, I do not think that the National Strategy for preventing and combating corruption has

appeared on the eve of the election campaign by coincidence. If we analyze it carefully we can notice that the majority of actions in this direction will be undertaken in the fourth trimester of 2004 and the first trimester of 2005, exactly in the period when we will be in the midst of the election campaign.

In other words, this will be an attempt to intimidate and neutralize political opponents. A mechanism for the strangulation of the opposition will be introduced, especially given the fact that political police obtain ever more new competencies and enlarge their field of activity. In this manner, the ruling party creates conditions for falsifying the 2005 parliamentary elections.

It seems quite pharisaic when under the pretext of solving society's stringent problems the powers-be every time pursue their own petty interests.

The communists have showed total incapacity in leading the country, whereas their intolerance, primitivism and aggressiveness have provoked a deep social-economic crisis. Taking into consideration the current state of affairs, the failure of the ruling party seems inevitable, as I am convinced that the ordinary citizen, who has suffered the most as a result of reckless policies and communist populism, will be able to make the right choice in the 2005 elections.