BUCOVINA ÎN DEZBATEREA LUMII CONTEMPORANE

BUKOVINA AND THE EVOLUTION OF ITS NORTHERN FRONTIER/BOUNDARY: MIGRATION, DEMOGRAPHIC PRESSURES, AND REGIONAL VERSUS LINGUISTIC VERSUS NATIONAL IDENTITY

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Rezumat: Articolul *Bucovina şi evoluţia frontierei/hotarului său nordic: migraţie, presiune demografică şi identitate regională versus lingvistică versus* constituie a analiză pertinentă a diferiților factori (demografici, economici, geopolitici) care, alături de cel mai vizibil – politico-istoric –, au contribuit/determinat individualizarea, evoluția şi specificul acestei regiuni pe parcursul unui mileniu (respectiv de la începutul secolului al XI-lea şi până în prezent).

Bukovina (Bukowina, Bucovina, Bukovyna) is an arbitrary term given in the eighteenth century by the Austrians to the northern third of the Principality of Moldova, which they annexed largely for strategical reasons from the Ottoman empire in 1775. But the tensions along the Moldova – Halychyna boundaries have much older roots; they go back to when the various nationalities were still seeking territories to settle and were subject to the general migration pattern within Europe. We have to remember Charlemagne and his feudal system, rooted in a successful agricultural organization which permitted a thousand years of demographic expansion from West to East in Europe, and thus not only ended, but reversed the previous migration from Asia into Europe, thereby giving the majority of European languages their so-called Indo-European roots.

The Poles, their kingdom officially recognized as such by the German Emperor in 1000, began immediately to spread Eastward, into Mazovia, which was then a separate political entity inhabited by a people related, yet linguistically and ethnically differentiated, from the Poles and who only slowly merged with them. More important historically was the South-East extension of the Poles, with the moving of their capital from Gniezno to Krakow and a vigorous expansion East along the Carpathians. This led to their confrontation with, and capture of, one of the western principalities of the East Slavs, namely Galich, which at that time was itself pushing into the South-Eastern direction, roughly between the rivers Prut and Dniester, and, as the Ukrainian historian Hrushevsky speculates, may have more or less extended (politically, not demographically) as far down as the Danube and thus practically to the Black Sea. Since Poland conquered and then annexed the Galich Principality, one can see how in Polish history very early emerged the idea that the original axis of the Polish state ran along the Vistula – San-Dniester, that is from the Baltic to the Black Sea: Poland from sea to sea, which became an oft repeated slogan. Later, when Poland became a virtual

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East-European empire, but the Ottoman Empire controlled Moldova, as well as the Dniester and Southern Bug, the Polish vision of their Baltic-to-Black Sea Empire was modified to run along the axis Vistula-Western Bug-Pripet-Diepr. No doubt, as late as the inter-war period, Marshal Pilsudski and his supporters dreamed about the realization of a Poland from sea to sea, with the Ukraine possibly playing a subservient role and understood as extending roughly only from the Zbruch to the Dniepr.

To recapitulate, the feudal system, which was invented and perfected in Charlemagne's empire, had the military power to stop and reverse the Asiatic (mainly Tartar at this point) influx of people, while at the same time increasing its agricultural production to be able to feed larger and larger populations. This required, for both economic and military reasons, an increase in its own population and an absorption of populations it met in its path. Briefly, we have here the beginning of the phenomenon which the Germans were to name *Drang nach Osten,* and which they transformed into a policy that was equally adopted by other East-Central European nations, Poland especially, and on an even greater scale by Russia which is still practicing it in Asia.

The Romanian ancestors, and specifically those who were to be called Moldovans after they settled in, and named the area now called Moldova, were in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries mostly living on the Southern slopes of the Carpathian mountains, that is on the opposite side of Galiqa, but, in search of agricultural land, they often descended into it. There is a wide-ranging literature/ authored primarily by Polish researchers, about the many so-called Vlach villages that over several centuries were slowly absorbed into the Polish or **Ukrainian** countryside. Vlach often ceased to mean a nationality and was merely the designation of a profession, like shepherd. Thus we learn that these enterprising shepherds, whose ancestors originated in the Balkans, perhaps even South of the Danube, reached at one point the Tartar mountains and were well known in the future Slovakia. In other words, they still belonged to the original (first millennium) East-to-West demographic migration in Europe, while North of the Carpathians, the West-to-East migration was in full swing. Briefly, the Vlachs, still clinging largely to the occupation and life style of their mostly mountainous environment, were pushing also into the valley and, to feed their growing numbers, were learning a new profession: agriculture.

This is obvious when we study the Romanian vocabulary: whatever is related to wine growing is of Latin origin, obviously very old, but the agricultural vocabulary is of purely Slavic origin (remembering, of course **that** the Slavic languages also have some commonalities with Latin).

Further South, the Romanians had already earlier crossed the Carpathians and descended into the Siret valley where they mingled with other nationalities, Slav and non-Slav. In the area we today call Maramuresh, where they were numerous and politically organized, they were under Hungarian sovereignty. Some of their leaders, to avoid Hungarian domination, escaped across the Carpathians, established themselves in present day Bukovina, and founded an independent principality of Moldova with centers in Radauti and Siret. Meanwhile, Poland continued to push south along the Carpathians and very soon arose the question of the boundary between Halychyna and Moldova.

For the Vlachs, once they began to cross the Carpathians into Moldova, and ipso facto become Moldovans, their expansion and settlement was largely defined by the rivers along which they descended into the valleys, namely, the Prut, Cerernus, Siret and Bistritsa. The Carpathians still remained in many ways their cultural base, and only slowly and to a lesser extent, their economic base shifted down. The descent into the valley was only partly motivated by the search for agricultural land. The Moldovans were primarily shepherds and they descended with their flocks to the Siret valley, then to the Prut valley, and finally, to the famous oak forests in Bessarabia, which offered food and protection during the winter months. Of course, that was a centuries long historical evolution which ultimately took these shepherds and sheep into Transnistria and even further. History is a slow process and the Romanian peasant who was initiating historical transformations took his precautions. He built a new village down below in the valley, but not too far, and kept his parents in the old, the upper village, just in case there would come a Tartar, or some other, invasion from below. There are innumerable such upper and lower villages in Romania, and when, during the Austrian days in Bukovina there was an influx of German speakers, they kept the tradition of *Oberdorf* and *Unterdorf*.

The growth of the importance of agriculture in the river lowlands of Moldova was of greater significance, the more the nobility and the ruling princes themselves began to control large estates. Many peasants became tied to the land as serfs and many Gypsies became virtual slaves. At the same time, the raising of cattle, both for the plough, transportation, and even more important, for export, began to play a larger and larger role in the country's economy. While sheep were exported (and given as an obligation to the suzerain, to Turkey), cattle were exported to Hungary and Austria. This continued on a regular basis after Bukovina was politically cut off from Moldova, especially after the Lviv-Iassy railroad was built. But on many dark nights fairly large herds of cattle were driven over the boundary between Falticeni and Suceava and even more so in the Carpathians. Legal large exports of cattle from Bukovina to Austria did not stop after 1920. (My father rebuilt in the 1920s the large bam for one hundred oxen and the attached alcohol plant that the retreating Cossacks had burned in 1917, together with all the buildings on the estate. Thus it was possible, by mixing hay and grain with the residue from the production of alcohol, to fatten the oxen to the maximum in five or six months, and then, off they went to the railroad station and via Poland to Vienna.

The ox, as the primary “work horse”, including long distance transportation of goods and forest exploitation in the Carpathians, was (and to some extent still is) very characteristic for Moldova and all Romanian lands. The horse was serving principally the elite, while in the Slav and Hungarian countries the horse was ubiquitous. This contrast is writ large when we study the frequency of family names derived from blacksmithing. In Poland, Ukraine, Slovakia and Hungary, we meet repeatedly such names as Kovacs, Kovalski or Kovalciuk. They may even be the most common names in these countries, just as Smith and Schmidt are the most frequent names in English and German speaking lands. By contrast, in Romania such names hardly exist for the simple reason that the profession of blacksmithing as horse shoeing was far from being

a must in every village. (In my village of 6000 inhabitants, and I am speaking of the twentieth century, there were only two blacksmiths; both were called Mosbauer, which indicated their ethnic roots – they did not speak German — and the fact that they were originally Greek Catholic clearly showed that they were actually recent immigrants from Halychyna, but they were quickly swallowed by the solid mass of Orthodox believers in the village).

In Romania the profession of blacksmithing, relatively far less important and respected than in the Slav and Germanic countries, was exercised largely by Gypsies. It was they who shoed the ox for long transport, especially after some roads began to be covered with gravel. Characteristically, after these gravel roads became more common, one could often still observe running parallel to them the old soft road for the benefit of the ox cart. That cart was better adapted, from the point of view of longevity, to the soft than the hard road. Down to the twentieth century, the wheels of the ox cart were often completely wooden with the outer rim made from one piece of wood, artfully bent while steamed. Most, or even all, the "nails" were also wooden and so, of course, was the yoke.

But the Gypsy quasi blacksmiths, many of them, survived for a long time in Moldova while they seem hardly to have been present in Halychyna. I still remember an instance m Bukovina in the 1920s when our really old horse barn needed a new roof. One of the workers ripping down the old roof came to me and triumphantly declared that he had discovered something. He was holding in his hand an old, rusty, "gypsy nail", Yes, the old roof, probably well over fifty years old, was entirely nailed down by hand made nails that were the specialty of certain Gypsies when the industrial nail was too expensive or not yet commonly available, even in Bukovina which had already been Austrian for several decades but was probably not yet linked to the Western world by the Lviv-Iassy railroad. Of course, the Gypsy iron nail (made out of wire) was progress compared to the wooden peg, and whatever the Gypsies produced, dug out troughs for cattle or charcoal, was cheap, especially because their pay was usually not in cash but in some concession in what they were permitted to use, usually from the forest or forest clearings.

Now back to the question of how the frontier between the Moldovans, reinforced by the Vlachs who "descended" from the Maramures, and the Polish dominated Halychyna was formed. Moldova claimed so-called Pokutia, a sliver of land roughly between the Carpathians, the Prut and the two branches of the Ceremus River. In terms of present day towns, it is enclosed more or less the area between Sniatyn, Kolomea and Kuty. On what grounds did this old and obstinate territorial claim persist, as it did down to 1918, when Romanian troops marched up to the vicinity of Kolomea, trying to help the Poles to defeat the Ukranians? It was a cultural-geographical, in today's language, a geopolitical claim.

The connection was made by visualizing the Carpathians as the original home of the Romanians, which was extended into all the lowlands along the Carpathian rivers down to the Danube and Black Sea, The valleys of these rivers – Prut, Ceremus, Siret, and Bistritza – were the nurturing lands, the *Lebensraum,* of the Moldovans.

Interestingly, and with some logic, the Dniester was not included as such a

nurturing homeland of the Moldovans. Rather, it was perceived as the outer border of Moldova for several reasons, First, it was not a river originating in the Carpathians; its basin was mostly steep and rocky, in sharp contrast with the Moldovn rivers once they reached their valleys. Consequently, the Dniester was only in places suitable for any kind of navigation, while the Moldovan rivers played a very important role in connecting the upper Moldova (including Bukovina and Pokutia) with the Black Sea. Agricultural products had floated down river since medieval days and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, enormous quantities of logs went down from the Carpathians to the lowlands of Moldova, as well as for export. Only in the last twenty or thirty years have the rafts stopped floating, primarily because the forests became dangerously over exploited and some hydro dams were built.

The Dniester was always a cultural frontier, even if the Moldovans extended beyond it. North of the Dniester, the steppe was dominant, with very few forests, and for centuries, and even millennia, it was the domain of the horse rider, long represented by the Tartars and the Cossacks, enemies or allies, depending on the occasion. For the Moldovan, as already seen, the horse was not the primary animal, and when he fought it was mostly as a foot soldier. His most famous victory, against a cavalry, was the one he fought in the giant beach wood forests of Bukovina, in Dumbrava Rosie (just North of Czernowitz), where, in 1497, he annihilated the army of the Polish king, John Albrecht. Since then a Polish saying goes that during the reign of King John-Albrecht, the Polish nobility has perished.

For a time, Pokutia was firmly in Moldova's hands, but not for long. The Ottoman Empire was becoming stronger and stronger, which meant less power and independence for the princes of Moldova. Poland was now a powerful empire, which Moldova could no longer challenge. While its original capital, Siret, was oriented northward, toward Poland, the next one, Suceava, represented retreat and when Iasi became Moldova's capital, it was a clear indication of a redirection, political and demographic, eastward. By the early eighteenth century/ Moldova was in a pincer between the now declining Ottoman Empire and the growing Empire of the Tsars, which seized the Eastern half of Moldova and renamed it Bessarabia. In the North, Austria substituted its imperialism for that exercised previously by Poland, when it seized Pokutia. Now Austria, already in possession of all of Halychyna, grabbed also all of North Moldova in 1775 and renamed it Bukovina.

So now, for the first time, the line where the Halychyna and the Polish frontier of expansion and that of Moldovan expansion met was not a hot spot of competing demographic and cultural-political pressures, but, on the contrary, a simple administrative line, drawn by the decision of Austrian politicians and/or beaurocrats. The local population is not consulted. After some vacillation, Vienna declares Bukovina to be a separate administrative entity and a settlement territory. Measures are immediately taken for thousands of willing immigrants, overwhelmingly ethnic Austrians and Germans, to be helped to move into Bukovina and then assigned agricultural land, but also land for the purpose of developing mining and industry. At the same time, the borders of Bukovina are open to any Austrian citizen desiring to come on his own. Even non-citizens were permitted, or even encouraged to immigrate: for instance, there was a large Jewish immigration from Russia, and a few groups of Russian religious dissidents also came. Many Poles from Galicja streamed in

as mine workers, or railroad workers and employees when the Lviv-Iassy railroad was built, and as supervisory personnel on estates purchased m Bukovina by Armenians who had lived previously in Bessarabia or in Halychyna. On the other hand, quite a few Romanian estate owners of the minor nobility pulled out, selling out especially in the immediate vicinity of the frontier with Halychyna, probably not feeling at ease with the new neighbors, while hearing at the same time that the Principality of Moldova was making progress towards independence from the Ottoman Empire.

However, what has been called the Rutenization of Bukovina, that is the ethnic and linguistic transformation within Northern Bukovina, was due to a much older demographic trend. As long as the Moldovan Principality was still fairly free from close Ottoman supervision, the developments on both sides of the Poland-Moldova boundary were mostly friendly, with considerable economic and cultural exchanges. One could even speak of Polish penetration of Moldova in the religious sense, with Catholic influence growing and spreading as far as Iasi. But in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Ottoman hand began to weigh more and more heavily. The Turks were moving westward in the Balkans and in Hungary, where only Budda was still in Austrian hands, Pest being a Turkish base. At this point, the many Turkish-Polish wars created the situation that the Bukovina boundary with Poland was sometimes like an early version of the Maginot line. Hotin, once a Moldovan stronghold, was now an enormous walled fortress overlooking the Dniester and surrounded by a permanently settled, large Turkish garrison, while the local population was evacuated. Cernivtsi was guarded by the fortress Cecena, located high above the town, and even in villages along the frontier, military fortifications were erected. So, for instance, in my native village, Karapchiv on the Czeremosz, more or less vis-a-vis Sniatyn, there had been two permanent fortified Turkish bases, the ruins of which can still be inspected.

However, then came the Ottoman military debacle when, in 1683, they attempted to occupy Vienna and were defeated by a large Western military coalition, led by the Polish King Jan Sobieski. From then on, the Turks practically disappeared from the Moldova-Poland boundary, except from Hotin. Travelers passing this boundary coming from Sniatyn do not mention any Turks and in general, until Austria's seizure of the entire Galicja in 1772 and Bukovina in 1774, this was a very inconspicuous frontier. However, a quiet, steady traffic from Halychyna to Bukovina continued throughout the next century.

Poland was going through an economic crisis at least since 1600. As time went by, the crisis affected especially rural Poland. Wars and occasional anarchy played here a role, but the worst sufferers were the peasants – actually serfs – who were burdened by growing obligations to their masters. While the Polish Empire was extending its domain eastward, there was room for everybody, and peasants often abandoned their Polish masters and sought freedom in the East. It was a well known fact that many Cossacks, future builders of Ukraine, were originally former serfs who had found haven and protection beyond the Dnieper. Such an outflow of disgruntled and overexploited serfs was also taking place in Halychyna, where ethnic animosity between lord and serf was aggravating the situation. Moldova in general, and Bukovina after it was separated from Moldova, was a very tempting haven for the peasant escapees because peasant obligations to the landlord here were substantially lighter than in Poland or Austrian

Galiqa after 1772. Moreover, the density of population in Bukovina was incomparably lower. Consequently, acquisition of agricultural land was not difficult, especially because large areas were forested and in many places could be transformed into agricultural land. Last but not least, communal and state forests offered plenty of building material at low prices to construct and cover a house. Furthermore, most of the nineteenth century Bukovina peasants west of the Prut owned some forest land. Briefly, Bukovina tempted Halychyna peasants and the Halychyna nobility. The latter, when purchasing estates in Bukovina after 1775, were always bringing with them supervisor)[7] personnel and domestic servants, which led to an even larger group of Ukrainian speakers in the Bukovinian territory along the Halychyna border. It grew even faster after the railroad connection between the two provinces was established and Halychyna, up to Kolomea, was absorbed into the Chernovtsy economic sphere. Every Monday, the market day in Chernovtsy, a stream of merchants and customers from as far as Kolomea invaded the capital of Bukovina. On the other hand, there was in Pokutia a substantial market for Bukovina wood products.

However, from one point of view the old dividing boundary between Halychyna and Bukovina remained unmoved and solid as ever. It was the religious divide. Omitting the Poles and Jews, Halychyna remained firmly Greek Catholic while the Bukovina side remained solidly Greek Orthodox. Only here and there along the boundary emerged a small Greek Catholic church. There is one in Vashkivtsi, another in Vizhnitsa, another in a little village, Pohoryliuka; in Zastavia, in the Polish Roman Catholic Church, there is an altar for the Greek Catholics, and there may be some other Greek Catholic churches along the frontier. Also in Chernovtsy there is a nice Greek Catholic church.

We know that the linguistic change from Romanian to Ukrainian in Northern Bukovina involved hundreds of villages. This became clear after Austrian authorities began, at the end of the 19th century, to assign nationality according to the language spoken in the household, not according to individual declaration. The prevailing language was, in turn, the basis upon which decisions were made as to what language would be used in the local school. But before this change was implemented, an even more important one was taken in Chernovtsy by the highest authority of the Orthodox Church which was then in Romanian hands. The church, led by a leader, originally from the Hotin area, decided in I860, that in order to prevent a wave of Greek Catholicism from invading Bukovina following the large immigration from Halychyna, it was essential to introduce the Ukrainian language into the Orthodox churches. In other words, offer the newcomer in our churches a mass in his own language and he is not going to search for the church he knew in Halychyna. And this was what happened. In Vashkivtsi, a town well known to me, across the Czeremosz from Sniatyn, hundreds of worshipers, all Ukrainian only speakers and well aware of their nationality, streamed every Sunday to hear the Orthodox service in a large brick church, although a few hundred feet away there was a small Greek Catholic church. The big church was called Volosca Tserkva, and was undoubtedly founded by the local boiar, Baron Nikolaus von Petrino (born 1821) or his ancestors. Petrino was, of course, not Romanian by ethnicity/ which he loudly emphasized, but Greek, of the so-called Phanariot stock that the Turks imposed during the eighteenth century as rulers on the Romanian Principalities because they did not trust any more any local prince. Prior to Petrino, in the eighteenth century, Vashkivtsi

was the domain of the Flondors, an old Romanian Bukovinian family. Incidentally, in the park around his residence, Petrino built for himself a small, beautiful church all covered in Greek inscriptions, in which he was buried. The Soviets demolished this church.

What should be emphasized is that the Greek Orthodox churches in Bukovina were not labeled as belonging to this or that nationality. Neither were the great majority of the priests until well into the twentieth century. Sermons were multilingual in many churches to satisfy the needs and sentiments of the worshipers. All of this was in very sharp contrast to the situation just across the border in Halychyna, where church and nationality went hand in hand.

Today the two halves of Bukovina are miles apart, although not forcefully separated as they were during the Soviet period. On the contrary, there is quite a lively traffic between them, mostly in the form of small commercial exchanges and some family visits. Intellectual exchanges, although sincerely promoted by small groups on both sides are still, one could say, in their infancy. In part this is due to the fact that a kind of iron curtain atmosphere, or at least a memory of it, still floats in the air. For instance, the newspapers on both sides ignore life on the other side. Such "news"exchange, in fact, is hardly possible given the fact that on the Chernovsy side, newspapers hardly exist, especially one can remember that in the old days, Chernovtsy, with a population half as large as today, was producing four daily papers in four different languages and had also weeklies.

The difference, to a large extent, is due to the fact that the city population has completely changed. Before the war, 60% of the city was Jewish, while today, there are hardly any Jews, especially old times. The Poles and Germans have also disappeared and only the suburban, not the city, Romanian population is still there. Moreover, the city encompasses today several surrounding villages and the old city center has been practically abandoned and moved uphill, where a quite impressive commercial life flowers.

In southern Bukovina, life has changed far less, although one strongly feels the absence of a large commercial and intellectual center.