A SWEET HISTORY IN BITTER TIMES: REFINING SUGAR IN THE TRANSNISTRIAN BORDERLANDS (1898-2015)

by

Alexandru Lesanu
A Dissertation
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of
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of Doctor of Philosophy History

Committee:	
	Director
	Department Chairperson
	Program Director
	Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences
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by

Alexandru Lesanu Master of Arts Central European University, Budapest, Hungary, 2005 Bachelor of Arts Low Danube University, Galati, Romania, 2003

> Director: Steven Barnes, Professor Department of History and Art History

> > Fall Semester 2015 George Mason University Fairfax, VA



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workday), Drumul Socialist, 4 May 1936, p.1.	192

LIST OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ChGK- Extraordinary State Commission for the Investigation of the Crimes of the Fascist German Invaders and Their Accomplices, and of the Damage They Caused to Citizens, Collective Farms, Public Organizations, State Enterprises, and Institutions of the USSR

Glavpishchemash- General Administration of the Machine Building for the Food Industry

Glavsakhar- General Administration of the Sugar Industry

Glavsnab MSSR- General Procurement Agency of MSSR

Gosplan- Central Soviet Planning Agency

kolkhoz- collective farm

MASSR- Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic

CPM- Communist Party of the MSSR

MMZ- Moldova Steel Works

Moldsakhsveklotrest- Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust

MSSR- Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic

NKVD- People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs

Obkom- Regional Committee of the Communist Party

PMR- Transnistrian Moldavian Republic

Sakharotrest- Trust of the Sugar Industry

SMU-1- Administration for Building and Restoration nr.1

Sovnarkom- Council of People's Commissars

Sovnarkhozy- Regional Economic Councils

Trudosakhar- Trade Unions of the Workers in the Sugar Industry

TSC- Turkish Sugar Corporation

Ukrglavsahar- General Administration of the Sugar Industry in Ukrainian SSR

VSNKh- Supreme Council of the National Economy

VTsSPS- all-Union Central Council of the Professional Unions

The following abbreviations are used in the notes:

ANRM- State Archive of the Republic of Moldova

AOSPRM- Moldovan Archive of Socio-Political Organizations

ark.- arkush (page)

d.- delo, dosar (file)

DAOO- State Archive of Odessa Region.

F.- fond (collection)

f., ff.- fila, file (page[s])

GARF- State Archive of the Russian Federation

inv.- inventar (inventory)

1.,ll.- list, listy (page[s])

op.- opys, opis' (inventory)

RGAE- Russian State Archive of Economics

RGANI- Russian State Archive of Recent History

RGASPI- Russian State Archive of Social-Political History

spr.- sprava (file)

In this dissertation, I will refer to places, which hold several names in different languages of the region. For the sake of clarity, I will use the Romanian version of the names for all the places that are currently situated on the territory of the Republic of Moldova; the Ukrainian version for all the places in the Ukraine and the Russian version for the localities in the Russian Federation. However, in the case of more widely known places such as Moscow, I will use the English version of the names.

Nistru is the Romanian name of the river, which is known as Dniester in English; Dnestr in Russian; Dnister in Ukrainian.

During its history, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory went through various changes of names. In order to avoid any possible confusion and to keep the clear geographic focus of my research, I will use the name Rybnitsa Sugar Factory throughout this dissertation.

ABSTRACT

A SWEET HISTORY IN BITTER TIMES: REFINING SUGAR IN THE

TRANSNISTRIAN BORDERLANDS (1898-2015)

Alexandru Lesanu, Ph.D.

George Mason University, 2015

Dissertation Director: Dr. Steven Barnes

My dissertation A Sweet History in Bitter Times: Refining Sugar in the Transnistrian

Borderlands (1898-2015) traces the ground-level impacts that repeated changes of

borders and political regimes had on the social, economic, and technological conditions at

the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova. This

carefully chosen location offers a different kind of transnational history. From its

founding in 1898, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory never moved, but found itself

consecutively subject to the authority of the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union's

Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, the World War II Romanian occupation regime, the

post-war Soviet Union's Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic, and today's contested

Transnistrian region in the independent Republic of Moldova.

The seemingly inconsequential town of Rybnitsa experienced and was shaped by the key

events of twentieth-century European history, revealing in great complexity the impacts

of two World Wars, the Soviet attempt to build a "socialist" state, the Cold War, and the post-Soviet "transition" to a market economy. My study also recovers the lives of factory personnel who were far from passive witnesses to the frequent border changes. Factory management and employees both influenced and were influenced by each successive socio-political and economic regime. To sum up, my dissertation draws on a case study in order to show how a small East-European borderland community negotiated its place through the major events of the twentieth century.



Figure 1 Map of Eastern Europe



Figure 2 Map of the Republic of Moldova

INTRODUCTION

In June 2011, on my first visit to the town of Rybnitsa, in the contested Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova, I noticed that the local sugar factory displayed the inscription "1913" on its smokestack. (Figure 3 and Figure 4) As it turned out, the smokestack of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was established on the last peaceful year before the outbreak of World War I. Today, this smokestack still dominates the landscape of the sugar factory. Moreover, it is the only artifact from the Russian Empire that has been preserved in the town of Rybnitsa.¹

The smokestack is an important symbol for any factory. It represents the driving force of any industrial development. However, upon a closer look at the courtyard of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, one can notice a statue of the Bolshevik leader, Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, in his characteristic pose with the right hand pointing to "the bright future." (Figure 5) In this dissertation, I will show that Lenin's guiding hand along with other political and ideological goals were more important for the history of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory than the technological prowess of the smokestack.

¹ M. Chernega. *Rybnitsa* (Kishinev: Izdatel'stvo Timpul, 1986), 56.



Figure 3 A View of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in 2011

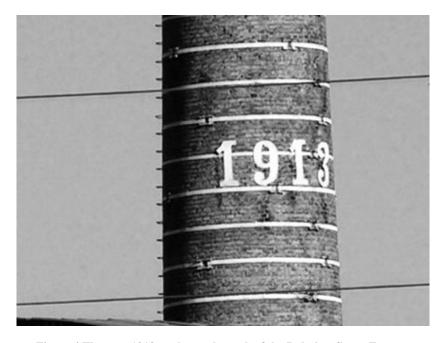


Figure 4 The year 1913 on the smokestack of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory



Figure 5 The statue of Vladimir II'ich Lenin in front the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory

In her study of the Turkish sugar industry, Catherine Alexander points to the important role of the sugar factories in the state building efforts of Turkish authorities.² From the founding of the first Turkish sugar factory in 1923, sugar factories were known

² Catherine Alexander, "The Factory Fabricating the State," *Journal of Material Culture* 5, no. 2 (July 1, 2000): 177–95.

as "Ataturk's minarets," which had to bring the values of secular modernity to the Turkish countryside.

According to Alexander:

In their early years, the sugar factories were touted as being 'Centers of Culture and Civilization' and were seen by the elite as channels of state ideology, symbolizing the state's presence at the periphery, bringing colonies of city people to the rural areas and so setting an example of a modern, urban, 'Western' way of life.³

Initially, Turkish authorities promoted the idea of sugar factories as being more than production facilities. Sugar factories were there not only for the production of sugar. In addition to sugar, they had to produce "culture and civilization." For this reason, the Turkish Sugar Corporation (TSC) built social buildings such as schools or hospitals in the neighborhood of the sugar factories. ⁴ In this way, the sugar factories would provide more than jobs for the local population. They would educate the local communities according to the values of the Turkish state.

In the early 1990s, Turkish authorities adopted a more pragmatic attitude toward the role of Turkish sugar factories. ⁵ With this decision, the main role of the sugar factories would be to prevent emigration from the eastern regions of Turkey by providing employment to the local population. Consequently, the new Turkish sugar factories displayed few social buildings and turned into simple production facilities.

Along with the emergence of the sugar factories as simple production facilities, the Turkish Sugar Corporation had a dilemma: either to invest in the modernization of the

³ Ibid., 179.

⁴ Ibid., 181.

⁵ Ibid., 181-183.

existing sugar factories or to build new sugar factories in the regions with massive unemployment.⁶ As the main objective of the Turkish state was to limit the level of unemployment, often the Turkish officials opted for the building of new sugar factories in the eastern regions of the country, even if these regions were not suitable for the cultivation of sugar beets.

Whether operating as cultural or production facilities, Turkish sugar factories were conceived as more than just profit generating enterprises. In many cases, Turkish authorities discarded financial profit in favor of other goals, such as the modernization of the Turkish countryside or the limitation of unemployment. Turkish authorities built these sugar factories because they sought to achieve certain social or political goals. Thus, these factories have been described as "social" or "political" factories.⁷

In this dissertation, I will show how various state authorities used the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in order to achieve their social or political goals in the Transnistrian borderlands. From its foundation in 1898, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory takes us through a different kind of transnational history. While the town itself never moved, the frequent change of regimes in this oft-disputed border region brings the story consecutively into the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union's Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Romanian occupation of World War II, the post-war Soviet Union's Moldavian Socialist Republic and today's contested Transnistrian region in the independent Republic of Moldova.

⁶ Ibid., 191-192.

⁷ Ibid.

Along with numerous territorial changes, borders have moved and the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory has moved in tune with them. The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory and its workers were involved in two World Wars, the Soviet attempt to build a socialist state, the Cold War, and the post-Soviet transformation of the planned economies. Focusing on one geographic location and one economic institution allows for a careful evaluation of the impacts of numerous changes of borders and political regimes and many of the major events in twentieth century European history.

In 1898, the founders of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory invested in the establishment of a sugar factory in the western borderlands of the Russian Empire, because they wanted to benefit from the cheap labor force on the local labor market. By contrast, in the Soviet Union, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory functioned mostly as a "social" or a "political" factory.

In 1926, the Soviet government restored the factory in order to improve the lives of the local peasantry. The Soviets sought to reeducate the local "backward" peasants and turn them into loyal Soviet workers. So, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory functioned more like a cultural and welfare institution tasked with reducing the inequality between peasants and workers.

After World War II, the symbolic value of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory took precedence over its technological performance. The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was celebrated as the first Moldavian sugar factory and as the cradle of the Moldavian proletariat. The leading cadres of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory became the directors of

several Moldavian sugar factories. The peasant-workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory became the founders and the experts of the Moldavian sugar industry.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory became the only sugar factory in the de facto Transnistrian state. Despite the attempts of the Transnistrian authorities to privatize its production facilities, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was not able to turn from a social factory into a simple production facility. Due to numerous debts, it ceased the production of sugar in 2003 and since then it exists only on paper.

Historical and Geographical Background

Rybnitsa is a town that lies on the Nistru River in the contested Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova. The foundation of Rybnitsa dates back to 1628, when the locality was mentioned for the first time in a map of the Polish Kingdom.⁸ After the second partition of Poland in 1793, Rybnitsa became a part of the Podol'sk province in the south-western borderlands of the Russian Empire.

The Podol'sk province was renowned for its sugar production. If the Donbas region was famous for its coal mining, then the Podol'sk province was called "the sugar Donbas." The rapid development of the sugar industry coincided with the extension of the railway network in this part of the Russian Empire. The diversification of the transportation network facilitated the access of the sugar factories to raw materials and to a wider market for their products.

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⁸ "Gorod: Istoricheskaia Spravka," Gosudarstvennaia Administratsia Rybnitskogo Raiona i Goroda Rybnitsy, http://rybnitsa.org (accessed June 6, 2015).

At the end of the nineteenth century this transportation revolution reached Rybnitsa. In 1893, a pier established the connection of Rybnitsa to other localities on the Nistru River. In 1894, Russian authorities inaugurated a new railway line, Balti-Slobodka, which connected Rybnitsa to the railway network of the Russian Empire.

In 1898, a group of shareholders sought to profit from this favorable geographic location and founded what would be the most southern sugar factory in the Russian Empire. ¹⁰ The staff of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory came from different social, ethnic and educational backgrounds. For instance, the director of the factory, Fadei Ipolitovici Otto, graduated from the Polytechnic Institute in Riga, while the chemist Mecislav Ksaverievici Grjibovskii graduated from the technical school in Warsaw and the mechanic Vladimir Antonovich Tatarskii from the Lublin gymnasium.

In 1905, a German citizen, I.G. Gornung, became the owner of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. Along with the new owner, the administration of the factory moved its office to Kiev. In 1910, the factory produced 478,536 poods¹¹ of sugar, out of which 55,614 were exported. At the same time, the total workforce of the factory was 405 people.¹²

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ M.A. Tolpyghin, Ezhegodnik po sakharnoi promyshlennosti Rossiiskoi Imperii za 1898-99 g. (Kiev, 1900), 51.

¹¹ In the Russian Empire 1 pood was a unit of weight, which was equal to 40 Russian funts or 16, 37 kilograms.

¹² N.V. Babilunga, Promyshlennost' Bessarabii v kontse XIX-nachale XX v. (Kishinev: Shtiintsa, 1985), 42.

In 1912, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was purchased by the Society of Iul'evskie Sugar Factories. ¹³ The estate of the sugar factory consisted of a production unit, a plot of land and a railway line. The new owner invested in the reconstruction of the factory. As a result, the fixed capital of the factory increased from five hundred thousand to one million rubles. The largest investment was made in the building of a new smokestack, which increased the processing power of the sugar factory.

In 1914, the director of the Society of Iul'evskie Sugar Factories, I.G. Gepner, was one of "the 1,455 captains of business," who represented the business elite of the Russian Empire. According to Aleksandr Bokhanov, these "captains of business" had shares in more than two companies and they profited the most during the last decade of the Russian Empire.

After the October Revolution of 1917, the Bolshevik government came to power in Petrograd. The Bolsheviks met with fierce resistance from some segments of the population. As a result, a Civil War ensued in the borderlands of the former Russian Empire. For several years, Rybnitsa became a no man's land, which was occupied by various military groups: from the Austro-Hungarian Army to various fractions of the White and Red Armies. During the Civil War, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory suffered considerable damages and the former owner, I.G. Gepner, emigrated.

In 1924, Soviet authorities established The Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR), inside the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. Rybnitsa

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ A. N. Bokhanov, *Delovaia elita Rossii 1914 g.* (Moskva: Institut rossiiiskoi istorii RAN, 1994), 114.

became a small locality on the Soviet-Romanian border. On the other side of the border was Bessarabia, a former province of the Russian Empire, which became a Romanian province.

The Soviet government never officially recognized Bessarabia as Romanian territory. Soviet officials considered Bessarabia a Soviet territory, which was conquered by "the Romanian boyars." In the interwar period, the Soviet-Romanian border was a highly guarded and deeply militarized territory.

In 1926, Soviet authorities revitalized the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, and named the factory after the Moldavian Soviet revolutionary Mikhail Frunze. For most of the twentieth century, Rybnitsa was part of the Soviet Union. In economic terms, this meant that the industrial administrators had to comply with the demands of central planning in an economic environment, which discarded the values of the market economy.

During its history, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory went through numerous reconstructions. Major architectural changes happened in tune with the major events of the twentieth century. World War I, The October Revolution of 1917, and World War II left their marks on the architecture of the sugar factory. The factory went through major technological renovations just before the start of the major conflagrations of the twentieth century. Thus, the first improvement came in 1913 and the other technological renovation came in 1937 during the Great Terror and before the start of the World War II.

In June 1940, the Soviets annexed Bessarabia according to the secret protocol of the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. As a consequence, MASSR was dissolved and a part of it was ceded to Ukraine, while the other part united with a part of Bessarabia to become the

Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR). This new Soviet republic interrupted its existence on June 22, 1941, when Nazi Germany and its Allies declared war on the Soviet Union. From 1941 to 1944, Rybnitsa was included in the Government of Transnistria, which was occupied by the Romanian Army. During World War II, Transnistria became a venue of the Holocaust. In March 1944, the Soviet administration returned to Rybnitsa and the MSSR was recreated as a Soviet republic.

In 1991, the Soviet state ceased to exist and it was replaced by fifteen independent republics. In the process of gaining its independence, Moldova went through a "national revival," which diminished the status of the Russian language in this post-Soviet republic. As a consequence, mostly Russian speaking districts from the eastern part of Moldova, declared the establishment of a separate Pridnestrovskaia Moldavskaia Respublika (PMR), which is widely known as Transnistria.

Despite the efforts of the local authorities to get international recognition,

Transnistria is not officially recognized by the international community. As a

consequence, all the import-export operations of the Transnistrian enterprises are

considered smuggling, unless they are coordinated with the Moldovan authorities. The

Rybnitsa Sugar Factory failed to adapt to these new economic realities in the post-Soviet

de facto state of Transnistria and ceased the production of sugar in 2003.

Sugar Technology

In 1747, A.S. Markgraf, a German chemist, was the first to crystallize sugar from sugar beets. ¹⁵ Along with his discovery, Markgraf opened the road for the industrial

¹⁵ P. M. Silin, Technology of Beet-Sugar Production and Refining (Jerusalem: Israel Program for Scientific

production of sugar in Europe. Before Markgraf's invention, the main source of sugar was sugar cane. Being a tropical plant, sugar cane did not grow in Europe. Consequently, all European countries depended on the import of cane sugar.

In the eighteenth century, Great Britain had a monopoly on the supplies of sugar to the European countries. ¹⁶ In 1806, Napoleon proclaimed the Continental Blockade and prohibited trade between Britain and French occupied Europe. As a result, European countries had to find an alternative to the British supply of cane sugar. From the beginning of the nineteenth century, beet sugar would serve as an alternative to cane sugar.

At the end of the nineteenth-beginning of the twentieth century, the major producers of beet sugar were Russia, Austria-Hungary and Germany. In 1913, Germany produced 2,719,759 metric tons¹⁷ of sugar, followed by Russia with 1,750,029 tons and Austria-Hungary with 1,703,435 tons.¹⁸ In the same year, the global production of sugar was 18,714,726 tons, of which 9,053,561 tons was beet sugar and 9,661,165 was cane sugar. Thus, on the eve of World War I, the world sugar market was divided almost equally between the beet and cane sugar producers.

After World War I, Austria-Hungary and the Russian Empire disappeared and the international market of beet sugar was redistributed between Germany, the Soviet Union and the United States of America. In 1939, on the eve of the World War II, the Soviet

Translations, 1964), 4.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ A metric ton is equivalent to one thousand kilograms.

¹⁸ Noel Deerr, *The History of Sugar* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1950), 2:492-493.

Union emerged as the leading producer of beet sugar with a total production of 2,516,000 tons. In the same year, Germany produced 2,289,790 tons and the USA produced 2,000,000 tons of beet sugar.

At the same time, the global production of sugar was 30,511,322 tons, of which only 11,116,481 tons was beet sugar and the rest, 19,394,841 tons, was cane sugar. In contrast to 1913, when the global production of sugar was equally distributed between beet and cane sugar, in 1939 cane sugar occupied 67% of the international sugar market.¹⁹

Along with the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the reunited Germany became the leading producer of beet sugar. At the same time, the share of beet sugar on the global market continued to decrease. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, in 2013-2014 the global sugar production amounted to 175,563,000 tons. ²⁰ During the same production season, beet sugar accounted for 20% of the world market and the European Union emerged as the leading producer of beet sugar with a total production of 16,020,000 tons.

On January 31, 1963, Aksel Ivanovich Berg, the coordinator of the cybernetic research at the Soviet Academy of Sciences, claimed that the technology of sugar production had the same level of complexity as nuclear technology.²¹ Indeed, the

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ USDA Foreign Agricultural Service, "World Centrifugal Sugar," United States Department of Agriculture,

http://apps.fas.usda.gov/psdonline/psdReport.aspx?hidReportRetrievalName=World+Centrifugal+Sugar&hidReportRetrievalID=2422&hidReportRetrievalTemplateID=8 (accessed August 3, 2015).

²¹ RGANI, F.5, op.43, d.99, ll.2-3.

extraction of white sugar crystals from raw sugar beets requires a series of strictly monitored operations, and minor mistakes in this process could cause considerable damage to the quality of the final product.

The extraction of sugar from sugar beets starts at the sugar beet farm and ends in the laboratory. From the gathering and transportation of the sugar beets to the emergence of white sugar crystals, the technological process includes the following basic stages: the extraction of the juice from the sugar beets; the purification of the juice; evaporation and crystallization.

The technique for the extraction of juice from sugar beets is known as "diffusion." The sugar beets are washed and cut in thin slices. The thin slices of the sugar beets are then soaked in hot water. As a result of diffusion, the sugar from the sugar beets dissolves into the water, and the water is turned into juice. The resulting juice contains sugars and non-sugars. The remaining slices are called beet pulp and they are used as livestock fodder.

In order to separate sugars from non-sugars, the raw juice is treated with lime and carbon dioxide. The purified juice boils in pans and microscopic particles of sugar are added to the mix. These particles of sugar grow into crystals, which are separated from the juice inside the centrifugals. After separation, the raw sugar is dried and packed. The remaining brown liquid, which is a result of the separation, is known as molasses and it is another by-product of the sugar industry.

These basic principles of sugar refining are followed by all beet sugar factories.

At the same time, each technological operation can be performed in several ways. One

technological problem can have several solutions. When faced with a particular technological problem, each sugar factory can opt for several technological solutions depending on many factors.

Among these factors, the local and regional traditions of sugar refining have a major impact on the choices of technological solutions at a given factory. As the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was founded in the Russian Empire and was a part of Soviet economy for most of its history, it encountered many of the same problems and chose the same solutions as many other sugar factories in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union.

In the Russian Empire, the sugar industry was one of the most innovative industries. ²² The technology employed at Russian sugar beet factories was comparable to the technology of French, Austrian or German sugar factories. In 1900, the average extraction rate of sugar in the Russian Empire was 11.1% from the total amount of processed sugar beets. ²³ In the same year, the extraction rate in France was 10.6%, Austria (11.0%) and Germany (12.4%). In 1911-1912, Russia had an extraction rate of 13.8%, France (11.2%), Austria (13.2%) and Germany (14.6%). Thus, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Russian sugar industry was second only to the German sugar industry in the efficiency of sugar production.

At the same time, the main problem of the Russian sugar industry was the low efficiency of sugar beet farms. In 1900, Russia had an average beet yield of 1,014 poods

²² Roger Munting, "The Russian Beet Sugar Industry in the XIXth century," *Journal of European Economic History* 13, no. 2 (1984): 308-309.

²³ Ibid.

per desyatina, while Germany had 2,028.7, France (1,809.9) and Austria (1,551.6).²⁴ In 1911-1912, Russia had an average yield of 1,081.7 poods per desyatina, while Germany had 1,816, France (1,666.0) and Austria (1,630.5).²⁵

In the Soviet Union, the increase of the sugar beet harvest was among the goals of collectivization. In the Russian Empire, private landholders grew sugar beets only after counting the possible profits. This is why they chose to grow sugar beets only in areas with the most favorable soil and climate conditions. Thus, the growing of sugar beets in the Russian Empire was concentrated mainly in Ukraine.

By contrast, in the Soviet Union collective farms had to grow sugar beets because it was a state policy to increase the supply of sugar beets to the sugar factories. As a result of collectivization, Soviet authorities managed to increase the supply of sugar beets and to extend the growing of sugar beets to new areas, such as the Altai Region or Central Asia. The increasing quantity of sugar beets put pressure on the processing capacities of the sugar factories. Thus, factories had to extend their production season and find a method for the storage of sugar beets.

In the Russian Empire and in the Western countries, the production season lasted for less than one hundred days. ²⁶ Basically, the production season lasted as long as the harvest of the sugar beets. The sugar factories did not need to store the sugar beets, because they acquired only the amount of sugar beets that were processed during the

²⁴ In the Russian Empire, desyatina was a land measurement which was equal to 10, 925 square meters.

²⁵ Roger Munting, "The Russian Beet Sugar Industry in the XIXth century," *Journal of European Economic History* 13, no. 2 (1984): 308-309.

²⁶ P. M. Silin, *Technology of Beet-Sugar Production and Refining* (Jerusalem: Israel Program for Scientific Translations, 1964), 29.

production season. The Soviet sugar factories had to fulfill their production plans and process an increasing quantity of sugar beets. So, Soviet sugar factories had to extend their production season to 150-200 days.

The quality of the sugar beets is of the utmost importance for the quality of the sugar. During the harvest, the beet roots are removed from the soil, but they are still alive.²⁷ Since they cannot use their leaves to consume solar energy and they cannot feed on the nutritious elements in the soil, beet roots start to consume their own sugar. The processing of sugar beets into sugar is a battle against time. The more sugar beets are stored the less sugar they provide. In addition, large amounts of sugar beets can be spoiled in a very short time due to the exposure to molds or bacteria.

The storage of sugar beets became the most important problem of the Soviet sugar industry. ²⁸ Soviet scientists recommended the storage of sugar beets in beet piles, which had to be arranged on the territory of the sugar factories. They noticed that at low temperatures, sugar beets lost less sugar and were less vulnerable to microbes. The temperature inside the beet piles had to be kept close to 0°C, but not below 0°C. Also, the sugar specialists had to make a careful selection of sugar beets before piling them. The spoiled sugar beets had to be transported to the sugar factories for their immediate processing and only the healthy sugar beets could be stored.

Despite all these measures for the optimal storage of sugar beets, Soviet sugar factories lost considerable amounts of sugar due to their defective storage. Often, sugar beets were stored in a plain field without any monitoring of the temperature regime. In

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 29-43.

the rush of the harvest, workers did not always have time for the proper sorting of sugar beets. Many spoiled sugar beets were arranged in piles along with the healthy ones. As a result, entire piles of sugar beets got infected with microbes. Even in the ideal situation when sugar beets were properly stored until January or February, they still lost sugar due to the time of storage. According to Silin, the production of sugar from 100 kg of sugar beets was usually 2.0-2.5% lower in January-February, than in September-December.²⁹

By extending the production season, Soviet authorities also sought to extend the employment of seasonal workers. During the production season, sugar factories considerably increased their labor force. They hired seasonal workers for the labor intensive and low skilled activities. The minority of permanent workers monitored the technological processes and prepared the equipment of the factories for the production season. Soviet authorities hoped that during a longer production season, many seasonal workers would increase their professional skills and become permanent workers.

Historiography

The choice to focus on the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory allows my study to offer many of the benefits of transnational history while maintaining a clear focus on history from the ground up-at the most geographically anchored local levels. The trope of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory as a social/political factory engages with very specific scholarship on Soviet social engineering policies, as well as with the broader transnational literatures in the history of technology and borderlands studies.

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²⁹ Ibid., 43.

For most of its history, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was part of the Soviet Union. It witnessed all the key events of Soviet history, from the October Revolution to the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991. Being the oldest factory in Soviet Moldavia, its workers played a key role in the legitimization of Soviet power in the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and in Soviet Moldavia. In 1926, Soviet authorities restored the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory because it had to become the cradle of a Moldavian working class. More than sugar, the factory would have to produce workers.

Most historians analyze factories as places of production, where individuals become workers during the production process. The most notable example is Stephen Kotkin who shows how the Soviet government brought people from all over the Soviet Union to build Soviet civilization in Magnitogorsk. ³⁰ Along with the building of a giant steel plant, former peasants became steel workers. By changing the landscape, builders of the Magnetic Mountain changed themselves.

Focusing on a single location, Kotkin provides a complex representation of an ambitious Soviet project to transform a bare territory into an industrial city. In some ways, particularly in the micro-historical focus on the life of the community creating and being created by an enterprise in a single location, my project follows Kotkin's approach of integrating the study of the Soviet economy and Soviet civilization.

However, the case of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory provides a more extreme example of Soviet social engineering. By restoring the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory at the Soviet periphery, Soviet authorities admitted that the sugar factory would function more

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³⁰ Stephen Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

as a cultural center than as a production unit. Sometimes, it was more important for a factory to produce the working class than to refine sugar. In some ways, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory refined the Moldavian working class more than it refined sugar.

The workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory consisted mostly of seasonal workers, and the Soviets ascribed them to the hybrid social category of peasant-workers. As workers, they were potentially the heroes of the Soviet story, serving as a bridge between peasants and workers. Yet, as peasants they were potentially a source of contamination, bringing their supposedly backward "peasant worldview" into the world of the working class. As a consequence, peasant-workers were among the main beneficiaries of Soviet affirmative action policies as well as among the main targets of Soviet repression policies.

Moshe Lewin points to the important role of peasants in Soviet society. ³¹ He argues that contrary to Soviet efforts to transform peasants into workers, Soviet society preserved its rural character until the demise of the Soviet Union. Paradoxically, after the Civil War, the number of peasants in Bolshevik Russia was higher than the number of peasants in the Russian Empire. If at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Russian Empire experienced a dynamic industrial development and a rapid growth of the working class, then during the Civil War numerous industrial enterprises were closing and the nascent Russian proletariat either returned to villages or enrolled in the Red Army.

³¹ Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System: Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 209-240.

According to Lewin, the peasantry would have to assure the revival of the Soviet working class during the First Five Year Plan.³² Soviet workers could not keep up the pace of Soviet industrialization. In a short period of time, the Soviet Union acquired an extensive industrial base. At the same time, the Soviet state could not supply all the new factories with trained workers. As they did not have much time to train the new workers, frequently the Soviets recruited peasants into industrial labor.

The newcomers into the working class had a low level of professional education.³³ The Soviets hoped that new workers would learn their skills on the factory floor. For these new workers, learning by doing came with numerous industrial accidents. Soviet authorities invoked the peasant background of Soviet workers each time they failed to behave according to their expectations.

Even in Moscow, Soviet authorities had difficulties integrating the numerous peasants who came to the Soviet capital in search of work.³⁴ David Hoffmann argues that in response to the Soviet attempts to assimilate them, the peasant in-migrants in Moscow were able to preserve their peasant traditions. As Soviet authorities devised policies for the integration of peasants into Soviet society, peasant in-migrants relied mostly on their peasant networks and preindustrial traditions.

By contrast with Moscow's peasant in-migrants, most of the workers at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory did not live in Rybnitsa. After the end of the production season,

33 Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³⁴ David L. Hoffmann, *Peasant Metropolis: Social Identities in Moscow*, 1929-1941 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

they had to go back to their villages. So, in order to shape the local peasant-workers into Soviet workers, the Soviets had to change the social identity in nearby villages, along with the transformation of the workers at the sugar factory. At the same time, local Soviet authorities did not expect a rapid transformation of the peasant-workers into model workers.

Hiroaki Kuromiya provides a vivid description of the rapid industrialization of the Soviet Union during the First Five Year Plan.³⁵ He claims that the industrial growth of the First Five Year Plan was concentrated around the steel industry. As the prestige of the steel industry was growing, many workers preferred to be employed at the steel factories and ignored other industries. According to Kuromiya, "Stalin's industrialization was a drive not for 'cotton' but for 'steel,'" a symbol of modernity and power.³⁶

Along with extensive industrial growth, Stalin's industrialization established a new model of a labor hero. This new labor hero was the shock worker. Kuromiya explains that:

The new model worker of the First Five Year Plan was neither the old nor the new worker. It was the shock worker, usually young men from urban areas, who managed to start their work in factories in the first years of the revolution.³⁷

The peasant-workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory did not correspond to this heroic image of model Soviet workers. The sugar industry did not have the same prestige as the steel industry. Refining sugar at the Soviet periphery was very different from

³⁵ Hiroaki Kuromiya, *Stalin's Industrial Revolution: Politics and Workers*, 1928-1932 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

³⁶ Ibid., 305.

³⁷ Ibid.

manufacturing steel at the giant steel plants in Magnitogorsk or Donbas. By contrast with the new model workers of Stalin's industrial revolution, peasant-workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory came from the nearby villages. Thus, their Sovietization would be a much more difficult task.

Taking on this difficult task, Soviet authorities would privilege the cultural aspect of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory over its productivity. In order to bring Soviet civilization to the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, Soviet authorities shaped the sugar factory into a cultural center. After World War II, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory would assume a more prominent role in the Sovietization of Soviet Moldavia. Along with the building of other sugar factories in Soviet Moldavia, the former peasant-workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory emerged as the leading specialists of the Moldavian sugar industry.

In this spectacular transformation of the peasant-workers into experts of the sugar industry, the role of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory as a social/political factory was more important than its technological performance. The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory became the crucible of the Moldavian sugar industry, not because of its spectacular technological results, but because of its assigned revolutionary merits.

The fact that the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory didn't have spectacular technological results didn't mean that its technological infrastructure was a passive witness to the history of the factory. On the contrary, its technological infrastructure had an important role in the establishment of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory as a social/political factory.

In its approach to the technological history of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, this dissertation relies on Gabrielle Hecht's study of the political importance of the French

nuclear industry.³⁸ Hecht shows how the French nuclear industry was shaped by the French national discourse and how it participated in the redefinition of French identity after World War II. In their struggle for the future of atomic power in France, French nuclear engineers used their expertise to gain political and national capital. Thus, Hecht shows that technological solutions to technological problems are not merely technological; they are political.

My project uses a similar strategy to show how the community of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory played a key role in the establishment of the Moldavian sugar industry. Being the oldest sugar factory in Soviet Moldavia, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had a key role in the development of the sugar industry in Soviet Moldavia. Local specialists participated in the establishment of other Moldavian sugar factories because they were celebrated as heroes of labor and the forerunners of the October Revolution in Soviet Moldavia. Thus, they emerged as the leading specialists of the Moldavian sugar industry primarily because of their revolutionary credentials.

In addition to the role of technology in the national context, my dissertation explores transnational technological transfers. After World War II, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory went through the largest exercise of technological transfer in its history. After the capitulation of Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union removed thousands of German factories as war reparations. Among these factories was the Zörbig Sugar Factory, which had to replace the former Soviet sugar factory in Rybnitsa.

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³⁸ Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1998).

During the Cold War, many historians argued that Soviet industry was not able to invent new technologies and that the only technological improvements came from the West. In his study of the Soviet borrowing of Western technologies, Sutton emphasized the technological backwardness of the Soviet Union in comparison with Western countries. ³⁹ He claims that the Soviets failed to innovate, because they based their extensive model of economic development on an intensive borrowing of Western technology.

Sutton argues that the tsarist sugar industry was more innovative than the Soviet sugar industry. According to him, the Russian Empire was one of the pioneers of beet sugar refining and one of the main innovators in this field. Some of the Russian innovations such as the method of purifying sugar in steam powered centrifuges, also known as "the Russian sugar washing," became worldwide standards in the sugar industry.

Sutton mentions that the Soviet sugar industry was less innovative, even if it had the largest productive capacity in the world. ⁴¹ At the same time, Sutton shows that the Soviets did not just borrow the equipment, but they also had to find the appropriate equipment for the Soviet context. The borrowing party was not just an automatic receiver of a certain technology, but it was an active participant in the process of technological transfer.

³⁹ Antony C. Sutton, *Western Technology and Soviet Economic Development* (Stanford: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University, 1968), 378.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 335.

⁴¹ Ibid., 347.

A group of scholars propose a more complex analysis of technological borrowings in a study of the post-War Americanization of Western Europe and Japan. ⁴² Their main argument is that each technological borrowing requires some technological innovation in order to adapt the foreign equipment to the local context. The American equipment did not determine the Americanization of Western Europe or Japan because it was transformed by the local technological practices. Moreover, the fact that there was no single model of the American equipment made the concept of Americanization even more problematic.

Kendal Bailes claims that the ideological factor played a key role in the transfer of American technologies to the Soviet Union. 43 If the market-oriented economies were driven mainly by the profitability of the new technological transfers, then the Soviet planned economy evaluated a series of political, economic or ideological factors before proceeding to the borrowing of certain Western technologies. In Western countries, private firms were the main proponents of technological transfers, whereas in the Soviet Union, the state had a leading role in these transactions. Thus, Bailes points to the fact that the Soviets were very selective in their borrowing of Western technologies.

If Sutton claims that the Soviet Union was backward because it mostly borrowed technologies, then Holliday states that there are examples of developed countries that

⁴² Jonathan Zeitlin and Gary Herrigel, ed., *Americanization and Its Limits: Reworking US Technology and Management in Post-War Europe and Japan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁴³ Kendall E. Bailes, "The American Connection: Ideology and the Transfer of American Technology to the Soviet Union, 1917–1941," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23, no. 3 (1981): 421–48.

based their technological success on the efficient borrowing of foreign technologies.⁴⁴ In fact, he argues that the technologically developed countries are also the most successful borrowers of technologies.

Both Sutton and Holliday evaluate the success or failure of Soviet attempts to borrow some of the Western technologies. During the last decade, scholars started to question this asymmetrical model of technology transfer.⁴⁵ They have paid more attention to the intermediaries of the technological transactions. Intermediaries were not only means of transportation for the technologies; they also translated and adapted foreign technology to the local environment.

In his analysis of technological transfers between the American and European automobile companies, Steven Tolliday shows how some French automobile companies surpassed their American counterparts in the "Americanization" of the French car market after World War II. 46 As Renault and Citroen were more familiar with the French car market than the American companies, they were more efficient in borrowing some American technologies and adapting them to the French market.

In contrast to the French car manufacturers, American companies still delivered big cars even if the local customers required smaller cars. In this way, the intermediaries

⁴⁴ George D Holliday, *Technology transfer to the USSR*, 1928-1937 and 1966-1975: the role of Western technology in Soviet economic development (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1979), 174.

⁴⁵ Liliane Hilaire-Perez and Catherine Verna, "Dissemination of Technical Knowledge in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Era: New Approaches and Methodological Issues," *Technology and Culture* 47, no. 3 (July 1, 2006): 537–538.

⁴⁶ Steven Tolliday, "Transplanting the American Model? US Automobile Companies and the Transfer of Technology and Management to Britain, France, and Germany, 1928-1962" in *Americanization and its Limits: Reworking US Technology and Management in Post-War Europe and Japan*, ed. Jonathan Zeitlin and Gary Herrigel (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 76-122.

of technological transactions question the very idea of a single model, which should be implemented in "the best way." In their attempt to transfer useful elements from various technological models, they become the agents of cross-fertilization.

At the same time, numerous local case studies have examined the role of the periphery in technological dissemination. As a result of these studies, the periphery emerged as an active participant in technological exchange. For example, in medieval studies, towns are no longer perceived as centers of technological diffusion.⁴⁷

Technological dissemination has become a circulatory process, which equally involved the countryside and the town. Thus, all technology is circulatory and the concept of "indigenous technology" is obsolete.

Cohen and Lin are skeptical of any evaluation regarding the success or failure of technological borrowings. ⁴⁸ For them, it is important to show how ideas or objects change in the process of circulation and how they are seized by local practices. They argue that until recently, scholars paid more attention to diffusion studies, but during the last fifteen years they have reconsidered the value of reception studies. In particular, designers and historians of technology have paid more attention to the impact of local practices on the assimilated objects.

Cohen and Lin refer to the manufacture of American tractors at Soviet factories. 49

The Soviets sought to manufacture Fordson tractors at the Putilov mechanics factory. 50

⁴⁷ Ibid., 557.

⁴⁸ Yves Cohen and Stephanie Lin, "Circulatory Localities: The Example of Stalinism in the 1930s," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 11, no. 1 (2010): 11–45.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 25-31.

The Putilov factory was an old factory, which was not tailored for the mass production of tractors. Still, Soviet engineers drew the design of each part, while the workers assembled the tractors. The Soviets were able to reproduce the image of the American tractors, but they could not reproduce the parts of the tractor in all the details. Cohen and Lin show how Soviet management practices affected and reconstituted the foreign equipment at the Putilov factory.

Similarly, during the post-War reconstruction of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, local practices transformed the equipment of a German sugar factory, which had to be assimilated in Rybnitsa. In fact, the removed equipment was shaped by Soviet practices from the beginning of the removal operations. The Soviets did not just move one unit of equipment from Germany to the Soviet Union. They subjected the equipment to Soviet evacuation practices. Soviet specialists were more concerned with the massive scale of the evacuation process than with the details of the evacuation.

At the same time, Rybnitsa was not a new host for a sugar factory. In fact, the sugar industry had a major role in the local economy. The removed German factory had to replace another sugar factory, which was affected by the war. As a result, the removed equipment had to adapt to the local traditions of the sugar industry. Thus, the Soviets had to recreate the German equipment according to the local practices.

The whole process of removing a German sugar factory to Rybnitsa illustrated that Soviet bureaucracy did not act as a unified mechanism. The relocated German

⁵⁰ Dana G. Dalrymple, "The American Tractor Comes to Soviet Agriculture: The Transfer of a Technology," *Technology and Culture* 5, no. 2 (1964): 191–214.

factory was twice as big as the factory that it had to replace in Rybnitsa. The administration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory asked the commanders of the neighboring military base to yield some of the land for the extension of the sugar factory. The military refused on the ground that this land was granted to them before World War II to establish a border control unit.

After the end of the war, Rybnitsa was no longer a border locality. However, the local military guards still acted as border guards and affected the relocation of German sugar technology to the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. Rybnitsa was always situated in the borderlands of different polities. The case of the post-war technological transfer between a German sugar factory and Rybnitsa Sugar Factory shows that even when the sugar factory was not on the border, the infrastructure of the borderlands still had a strong impact on its activity.

Throughout its history, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was closely associated with the borderlands of the various states. At first, it was founded on the Nistru River, in the Podol'sk Province of the Russian Empire. The Nistru River separated the Podol'sk Province from the Province of Bessarabia, which was on the border of the Russian Empire with Romania. Secondly, after the October Revolution, Bessarabia became a part of Romania and the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory found itself on the highly contested Soviet-Romanian border.

Thirdly, during World War II, the Romanian Army advanced to the east of the Nistru River and Romanian authorities established the Government of Transnistria on this territory. Though Transnistria was occupied by the Romanian Army, it was not formally

a part of Romania. The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was situated on the border between Romania and the Government of Transnistria.

Fourthly, after World War II, the Soviet Army returned to the former occupied Western borderlands. The former border between the Russian Empire and Romania turned into the border between the Soviet Union and socialist Romania. The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory became a part of Soviet Moldavia—a Soviet republic on the Soviet-Romanian border. Finally, in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory found itself on the border between the Republic of Moldova and the de facto state of Transnistria.

In a seminal synthesis of borderlands studies, a group of anthropologists argue that the study of borderlands is important because "*some things can only occur at borders*." ⁵¹ Borders are areas of encounters and confrontations between states. Borders may have a peripheral representation on the maps, but they play a central role in the establishment and consolidation of sovereign states.

People from the border regions are at the forefront of this struggle for the legitimization of modern states. Contrary to the expectations of state authorities, people from the borderlands do not always behave according to the prescriptions of the center. Rather than being passive witnesses to the implementation of the central directives in the borderlands, they actively shape the border processes according to their interests.

In a "Special Section: Border Visions and Border Regimes in Cold War Eastern Europe" published in the *Journal of Contemporary History*, the authors try to convey the

⁵¹ Donnan Hastings and Thomas M. Wilson, *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State* (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 4.

idea that despite the harsh attempts of the socialist states to isolate themselves, they still had to communicate with the external world.⁵² For instance, Tim Grady shows that, despite the rhetoric of the Berlin Wall, the two German states had to cooperate with each other in order to solve ecological problems, which emerged at their borders.⁵³ In this way, the political borders separated the states, but the natural landscape united them.

In the same section, Eagle Glassheim describes the correspondence between the Czechoslovak government and the former German residents of the Sudetenland region, who were relocated from Czechoslovakia to Germany after World War II.⁵⁴ The former German residents criticized the Czechoslovak government for the difficult ecological and economic situation of their former homeland. In response, the Czechoslovak government denied the problems raised by the German emigrants, but they still paid attention to the problems in the borderlands and tried to solve them.

Michiel Baud and Willem van Schendel argue that a comparative history of borderlands could show that rather than just being fixed lines on maps, borders have a more dynamic role in the shaping of the modern world.⁵⁵ At the same time, the study of borderlands societies illustrates that borders are more porous than state authorities would

⁵² "Special Section: Border Visions and Border Regimes in Cold War Eastern Europe," *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 3 (July 1, 2015).

⁵³ Tim Grady, "A Shared Environment: German–German Relations along the Border, 1945–72," *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 3 (July 1, 2015): 660-79.

⁵⁴ Eagle Glassheim, "Unsettled Landscapes: Czech and German Conceptions of Social and Ecological Decline in the Postwar Czechoslovak Borderlands," *Journal of Contemporary History* 50, no. 2 (April 1, 2015): 318-36.

⁵⁵ Michiel Baud and Willem Van Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands," *Journal of World History* 8, no. 2 (October 1, 1997): 211–242.

like to admit. A comparative history of borderlands would have to show how borderlands societies in different parts of the world or in different periods of time contested and shaped the state borders.

In this context, Baud and van Schendel observe that:

Research on the changing practice and meaning of borders can provide us with valuable clues as to the magnitude and limitations of the most powerful mental construction of the present day world, the nation-state. Borderland studies offer a way of correcting the distortions inherent in state-centered national histories. They can be powerful exactly because they dispute the territoriality to which modern states lay claim.⁵⁶

At various moments in the history of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, the impact of borders on the sugar factory was very different. During the Russian Empire, the proximity of the border facilitated the export of sugar. In the interwar period, the Soviet-Romanian border was highly contested and the factory was at the forefront of the struggle between the Soviet model of socialism and the Western model of capitalism.

During World War II, the Romanian administration applied harsh policies for the movement of people from Transnistria to Romania. As Transnistria was shaped into a colonized territory with a large number of deported Jews, Romanian authorities strictly monitored the border between Romania and Transnistria. After World War II, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was no longer situated on the highly contested Soviet-Romanian border. Romania became a socialist country and the Soviet-Romanian border was supposed to become a place for the encounter of two socialist countries.

Still, in the 1970s and 1980s, the tensions between the Nicolae Ceausescu and the Soviet leadership had a strong impact on the Soviet-Romanian border. After the fall of

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⁵⁶ Ibid., 242.

the Soviet Union, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was de jure inside the sovereign territory of the Republic of Moldova, but de facto it became a part of the border infrastructure, which was established by the secessionist Transnistrian authorities on the Nistru River.

As borderlands are places where different states encounter each other, they are frequently places of extreme violence. Kate Brown examines the violent transformation of a Ukrainian-Polish-Jewish-German borderland into a Ukrainian heartland during the three decades from 1923 to 1953.⁵⁷ Brown argues that, irrespective of their ideologies, imperial Russia, socialist Soviet Union, fascist Nazi Germany, parliamentary Poland, and nationalist Ukrainian parties all participated in the destruction of the local multinational culture because they sought to create a clear and legible national space.

In the same context, Hiroaki Kuromiya provides the example of the Donbas region in the Ukrainian-Russian borderland. From the 1870s to 1990s, people from Donbas were distrusted by the state authorities, because Donbas was always a place for the hiding of outlaws or some other marginal groups. Thus, all the state authorities subjected the local population to terror because they sought to limit the representation of Donbas as a frontier of freedom.

Kuromiya argues that during the major wars, people in the borderlands had to make difficult choices during a short period of time. For instance, during World War II, people from Moscow or Leningrad did not face the risk of immediate military occupation, whereas in the borderlands, people had to decide on leaving to the interior or

⁵⁷ Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place: From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁵⁸ Hiroaki Kuromiya, *Freedom and Terror in the Donbas: A Ukrainian-Russian Borderland*, *1870s-1990s* (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

staying in the occupied territory.⁵⁹ This choice was not only important for the people themselves; it was also important for the Soviet state and for its leaders. To a certain extent, this was a kind of plebiscite. Some voted with their feet, while others stayed.

After the end of the war, the returning Soviet administration was suspicious of the people who stayed in the occupied regions. Amir Weiner argues that the first action pursued by the returning members of the Communist Party was to purge the Party of suspicious elements. ⁶⁰ All the people from the occupied territories were suspected of collaboration until they proved that they resisted the occupational authorities.

During its history, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory went through many violent events. The two major conflagrations of the twentieth century had a major impact on the activity of the sugar factory. Along with the start of World War I in 1914, the factory had to halt its production until 1926, when it was restored by the Soviet government. During World War II, the factory halted its activity again in 1941 and was restored in 1950.

During the World Wars, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was closed, but its workers still had to make complex choices. The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory provides a complex picture of the wartime reality. After World War II, Soviet tribunals sentenced both the inmates of the concentration camps and their perpetrators to ten or fifteen years in labor camps for their alleged collaboration with the Romanian administration. According to the Soviet prosecutors, the participants in mass murders were prosecuted because they contributed to the Romanian genocidal policies, while the former inmates of the

⁵⁹ Ibid., 339-340.

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⁶⁰ Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2001), 86.

concentration camps were prosecuted because they didn't rebel against the Romanian administration.

The case of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory shows that wartime behavior was more nuanced than the imaginary of the Soviet postwar tribunals. Most of the locals were neither collaborators nor war heroes. When confronted with various choices they didn't consider them solely from the perspective of war heroes or collaborators. Often, they had to act in a gray area, where the immediate choices seemed to turn them into war heroes, but the subsequent developments transformed them into collaborators.

Methodology and Sources

In this dissertation, I rely on microhistory to show how a sugar factory from the peripheral town of Rybnitsa can enhance our understanding of the Soviet polity, borderlands societies and the history of technology. I follow the methodological example provided by Andrew Jenks, who completed a microhistory of the small community of artisans from the Russian village of Palekh. Under the Russian Empire, these artisans were icon painters. After the October Revolution, these icon painters did not disappear; they started to paint the famous black lacquer boxes, which became the iconic symbol of Russianness in the Soviet Union. Thus, instead of being repressed, painters were cherished by the Soviet regime as popular artists.

Jenks began his narrative during the last decades of the Russian Empire and brought it into the first decade of the twenty first century. This approach allowed him to show how a seemingly minor material object like the black lacquer box could play a

⁶¹ Andrew Jenks, *Russia in a Box: Art and Identity in an Age of Revolution* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005).

central role in the understanding of Russian national identity. In the same context, I will rely on microhistory to show how a particular sugar factory from a particular location can enhance our understanding of multiple historiographical issues such as: borderlands, class identity, Soviet civilization and industrial development.

Furthermore, my project incorporates an important technical dimension.

Technological studies provide a useful framework for the analysis of the mutual relationship between technology and politics. At the same time, in order to supplement archival resources and to understand the last decades of the factory's existence, I refer to the extended anthropological literature on the post-Soviet transition. Finally, I use economic history only to provide a general perspective on the developments in the region.

Pursuing microhistory does not mean focusing on isolated issues, but rather exploring small things in relation to other small things and to bigger issues. I pursued the same approach in my analysis of the primary and secondary sources. In order to provide a more balanced representation of the center-periphery relationship, I corroborate the evidence from various archival documents in Moscow (Russia), Washington DC (US), Odessa (Ukraine) and Chisinau (Moldova) with the reading of the local and central newspapers.

Throughout its history, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory found itself under different economic and political regimes. From the Russian Empire to the current de facto state of Transnistria, all these administrative entities left their marks on the archival record of the sugar factory. The fact that the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory changed hands between different

polities explains why its archival record is spread in different places. At the same time, different archival practices created a discontinuity in the archival record of the sugar factory.

As a result, it is exactly during the periods of transition from one regime to another that the activity of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory is less reflected in the archival documents. For instance, there are very few documents on the transition from the Russian Empire to the Soviet Union and from the Soviet Union to the post-Soviet period. In the same context, as soon as a certain political regime was stabilized, it started to produce more documents. For most of the twentieth century, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was part of the Soviet Union. Thus, most of the archival evidence comes from the Soviet period.

The Soviet state also left a rich archival legacy because it was a dual structure with a party cell of the Communist Party attached to each Soviet institution. The activity of each Soviet institution was reflected not only in the institutional archives, but also in the archives of the Communist Party.

Similarly, the activity of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was reflected both in the archives of the Soviet state and in the party archives. As a matter of fact, in the Moldovan Archive of Socio-Political Organizations, the former archive of the Moldavian Communist Party, I found a collection of documents left by the party cell of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. The collection consists of reports from each meeting of the party cell, with an overview of the issues that were discussed during the meetings.

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⁶² Each Soviet institution was attached to a primary organization of the Communist Party. These primary organizations were known as "party cells." They gathered all the party members from any Soviet institution. The structure of party cells was shaped like the structure of the central party institutions. Each

In addition to the political and ideological factors, the human factor also had a decisive impact on the preservation of the archival materials. Some of these actors are known and others are unknown. Some of them even left traces in the archives of the sugar factory. In 1935, Ivan Lepota, the secretary of the local party cell, was accused of destroying the archive of the party cell. By destroying the archive of the party cell, Lepota left a blank spot on the history of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. As a consequence, the collection of the party cell of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory at the Moldovan Archive of Socio-Political Organizations contains only documents from 1936 onward.

If the Soviet Union left a rich archival legacy about the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, then the Russian Empire was not so productive. The factory spent considerably less time in the Russian Empire than in the Soviet Union. From its founding in 1898 to 1913, the last year before the outbreak of World War I, there were only fifteen years that the factory was part of the Russian Empire. By contrast, the factory was part of the Soviet Union for almost seven decades, from the establishment of the Soviet state in 1922, to its demise in 1991.

On my quest to trace the origins of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, I found that even this thin legacy of the Russian Empire suffered from the inadequate preservation of the archival materials. In the Russian Empire, Rybnitsa was included in the Podol'sk Province. At that time, all the documents on the production and consumption of sugar in the Podol'sk Province were stored in Kamianets-Podilskyi. In the Soviet era, the Podol'sk

party cell had a secretary and a bureau. Periodically, the members of party cells gathered in closed or open meetings to discuss the activity of the supervised institution.

⁶³ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.497, ff.173-175.

Province was disbanded and these documents were transferred to the State Archive of Khmel'nyts'ky Region in Khmel'nyts'ky, Ukraine.

On my visit to Khmel'nyts'ky, in summer 2012, I found out that most of the documents in the collection of the local Treasury Chamber (F.226; 1795-1919), covering the financial and productive activity of all the factories in the Podol'sk Province, were burned during a fire at the local archive. Among all these documents, the fire also destroyed the reports from the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. As a result, I didn't have access to the firsthand reports on the activity of the sugar factory in the Russian Empire and I had to reconstitute this period from *The Yearbook of the Sugar Industry of the Russian Empire*, which provided a short annual summary for the activity of each sugar factory in the Russian Empire.

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the new independent states sought to shape the former branches of the Soviet archives into national archives. During this chaotic process, many archival collections were lost or destroyed according to the national or personal interests of the new post-Soviet bureaucrats. In the same context, the new authorities restricted access to some documents and allowed access to other documents. Along with the privatization of the state enterprises, most of the archival personnel started to treat the state documents as their private estate.

As my research topic was considered inoffensive or insignificant by the archival personnel, I didn't have any problems accessing the archival materials either in Moldova or in Russia. Moreover, during one of my visits to the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, I was able to access some documents at the factory's archive before these documents were sent to

the Transnistrian archives. I used these documents primarily for writing Chapter 6. As they were not assigned to any collection in the Transnistrian archives, I couldn't cite them in a standard form. So, I cite them by providing all the available information on the authors, titles, and the dates of issue that I could identify on the documents.

Chapter Outline

Chapter one "Refining the Moldavian Peasant-Workers in the Soviet Borderlands (1918-1938)" describes the role of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in the emergence of the Moldavian working class. Being the first large factory in the MASSR, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had the main role in the emergence of the Moldavian working class. The Moldavian working class emerged from the employees of the sugar industry, who were represented as half-workers/half-peasants or peasant-workers.

The category of "peasant-worker" had an ambiguous status. On the one hand, peasant-workers represented the working class in the village. So, they could serve as a bridge between the peasants and the workers. Moreover, with the help of this social category, Soviet power could improve its image in the villages. On the other hand, half-peasants/half-workers were more exposed to "the peasant worldview". Thus, the peasant-workers had to be permanently "cultured" and "educated."

Chapter two "Humans and Machines in Times of War: Between Collaboration and Resistance at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory (1941-1944)" illustrates the occupational policies of the Romanian administration during World War II. Both the USSR and Romania engaged in the scorched earth policy—a war strategy which included the evacuation or destruction of all the industrial potential, preventing the enemy from using

it. The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was not an exception. Being repeatedly bombed, it has known all the traces of a modern total war. The local population could not stay on the sidelines of this global conflict. Through a series of individual accounts I show the diversity and complexity of individual choices in a wartime borderland.

Chapter three "Assembling the Enemy's Line: A Case Study of the Postwar Technological Transfer in Soviet Moldavia (1944-1952)" shows how the returning Soviet authorities sought to restore the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory by removing a whole factory from the defeated Nazi Germany. After the capitulation of Nazi Germany, the USSR removed a series of industrial enterprises from Germany to the Soviet Union.

The relocation of a factory from one place to another does not imply only the movement of equipment. A factory is more than a sum of buildings and technologies. It directly affects and is affected by the social, cultural, economic, political and natural environments. In the same way, the removal of a factory from one place to another shapes both places, and the local cultural practices structure the evacuation and assimilation of a factory.

The Soviets sought to get the best German technologies and to relocate them to the Soviet Union. Whole industries were changed by this reconstruction effort. The Soviets not only had to evacuate thousands of factories, but they also had to assimilate them in the Soviet context. They acted as the winners in the war, and they demanded a replacement for Soviet losses. But could German factories serve as a replacement for Soviet factories? How did the Soviets recreate the German equipment in Soviet sugar

factories? Was it enough to encounter and relocate the foreign technology in order to assimilate it?

Chapter four "The Role of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in the Establishment of the Moldavian Sugar Industry (1945-1972)" illustrates the key role of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in the establishment of the sugar industry in Soviet Moldavia. The Soviet sugar industry was organized in various regional sugar trusts, which were subordinated to Glavsakhar (The Main Administration of the Sugar Industry). During the interwar period, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was affiliated with the different sugar trusts in the Ukrainian SSR. In 1953, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory became the founding member of the Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust. Until the dissolution of the Soviet Union, all the sugar factories in the MSSR would be affiliated with the Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust.

The staff of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was employed in the creation of a sugar industry in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR). By the 1960s, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory experienced a golden age, treated by authorities as an exemplary Soviet enterprise. Praised as the first Moldavian factory and the cradle of the Moldavian working class, local workers were called upon domestically to assist in the construction of all subsequent Moldavian sugar factories and internationally to reshape the sugar factories of Fidel Castro's Cuba.

Chapter five "We Were Here From the Beginning": the Symbolic Value of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in Soviet Moldavia" provides an analysis of the press coverage of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory during the Soviet Union. Soviet newspapers sought to shape the community of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory into the forerunners of the Moldavian

working class and the founders of the Moldavian sugar industry. On the subsequent anniversaries of the sugar factory, local newspapers dedicated whole pages to the celebration of local labor heroes. Thus, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory acquired a mythical representation, which gradually overcame its technological and economic performances.

Chapter six "The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory and the (II)licit Flows in the

Transnistrian Borderlands (1996-2015)" illustrates how the workforce of the Rybnitsa

Sugar Factory coped with the fall of the Soviet Union, in the de facto state of

Transnistria. After the fall of the Soviet Union, workers had to come to terms with the

loss of social benefits and the change in the status of workers on the post-Soviet labor

market. As the sugar factory collapsed during the post-Soviet "transition," its sugar

industry experts turned from being the favored exemplars of the Moldavian working class

into "violent entrepreneurs," who profited from the weak institutions of the post-Soviet

states in order to navigate through the restless waters of the post-Soviet transition.

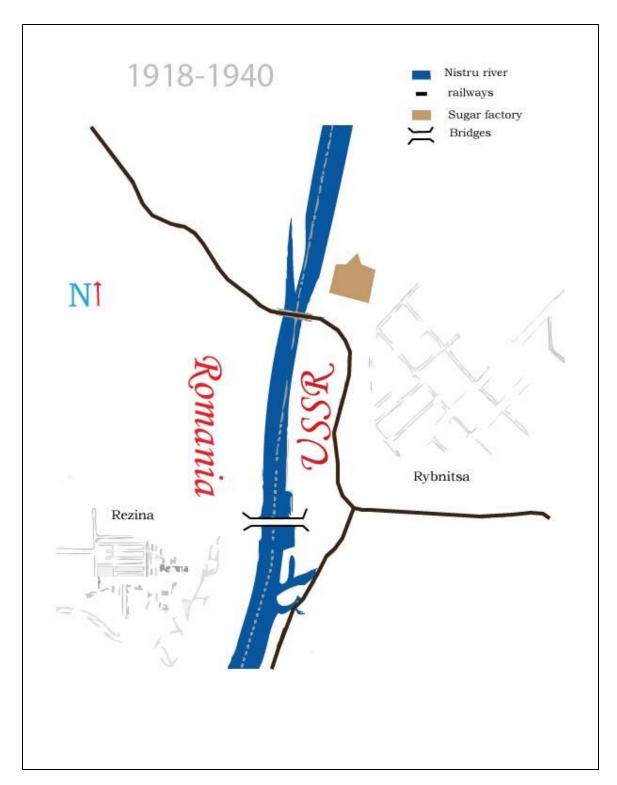


Figure 6 Map of the Transnistrian Borderlands (1918-1940)

CHAPTER 1: REFINING THE MOLDAVIAN PEASANT-WORKERS IN THE SOVIET BORDERLANDS (1918-1938)

The October Revolution was only the beginning of the Bolshevik's rise to power on the territory of the former Russian Empire. As soon as the Bolsheviks came to power in Petrograd, different groups contested the legitimacy of Soviet power and engaged each other in a Civil War. Although each region of the prospective Soviet Union had its own experience of the Civil War, Soviet authorities sought to unify the total sum of these experiences into one grand myth of a single Civil War in which the Bolsheviks heroically defeated all of their opponents.

The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was also part of this myth. From 1917 to 1920, Rybnitsa had changed hands between different military groups. Austro-Hungarian troops, Red Army soldiers, Cossacks, independent Ukrainian forces, the White Army of Anton Ivanovich Denikin and other groups established temporary control over the town. Soviet historians sought to convey the impression that Bolshevik partisans were the only stable presence in this dynamic and fluid environment.⁶⁴ In their narrative, the Rybnitsa Sugar

⁶⁴ A. S. Esaulenko, Za respubliku Sovetov: vospominaniia krasnykh partizan Moldavii, 1918-1920 gg. Kishinev: Gos. izd-vo Moldavii, 1958; Idem, Bortsy za schast'e narodnoe. Kishinev: Kartea Moldoveneaska, 1987; Z. M. Ivanova, Levoberezhnye raiony Moldavii v 1918-1924 Gg. Istoricheskii ocherk. Kishinev: Shtiintsa, 1979; Nikolai Berezniakov, Bor'ba trudiashchikhsia Moldavii protiv interventov i vnutrennei kontrrevoliutsii (1917-1920), Kishinev: Kartea Moldoveneaska, 1967; Idem, Za Vlast' Sovetskuiu: Bor'ba trudiashchikhsia Moldavii protiv interventov i vnutrennei kontrrevoliutsii (1917-1920), Kishinev: Kartea Moldoveneaska, 1970; I. I. Dovgopolyi, and N. D. Roitman. Iz istorii bor'by za vlast' sovetov v Moldavii. Kishinev: Kartea Moldoveneaska, 1964.

Factory was represented as the stronghold of the partisan struggle against the enemies of Soviet power.

In a collection of memoirs, V. M. Senkevich, a former red partisan during the Civil War and a worker of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, provided a vivid description of the partisan underground at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. ⁶⁵ According to him,

It was during the dry and warm days of autumn 1919. The sugar factory was a horrible site. Next to the main entrance there was a huge shell-hole. The same kinds of holes were all over the factory. The roof was destroyed and all the windows were broken. The metal and wood parts of the equipment laid in the yard...The Bolsheviks organized an underground party committee at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. Among the members of the committee were: Zavadskii, Bondarchuk, Shtemberg, Fridman, Nartsov and others. The committee organized several groups of activists, who had to organize revolts against Denikin and to engage in partisan warfare. ⁶⁶

On September 5, 1920, shortly after defeating the White forces, the communists of the Balta province gathered for their first party conference.⁶⁷ The main objective of this meeting was to evaluate the state of the province after the Civil War. As part of the Balta province, the Rybnitsa district had its own representative at the conference.

In his address to the conference, Vasin, the representative of the Rybnitsa district party organization, stated that the district party organization consisted of seven primary party organizations (party cells) with twenty-two party members and twelve candidates.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ A. S. Esaulenko, Za respubliku Sovetov: vospominaniia krasnykh partizan Moldavii, 1918-1920 gg. Kishinev: Gos. Izd-vo Moldavii, 1958, 155-168.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ "Iz protokola pervogo uezdnogo soveshchaniia komiacheek Baltskogo uezda" in Nikolai Berezniakov, Bor'ba trudiashchikhsia Moldavii protiv interventov i vnutrennei kontrrevoliutsii (1917-1920), Kishinev: Cartea Moldoveneasca, 1967, 549-550.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

At the same time, he pointed to the absence of communists in rural areas. Referring to the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, Vasin praised the factory for its cultural activities. He reported that the factory had a school and it was building a cultural center.

Usually a factory is praised for its products. One would expect that after a devastating Civil War, Soviet authorities would grant priority to the restoration of the production facilities. From the emergence of the Soviet Union until its demise, Soviet authorities sought to achieve high productivity rates in order to overcome the perceived backwardness of the Soviet Union and to prove the superiority of the Soviet economy over its Western competitors. In this light, the decision of the Soviet authorities to turn the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory into a cultural center seems to not fit into the usual logic of the Soviet economy.

The impact of industrialization on Soviet social engineering policies has been widely debated in the historiography of Stalinism. Some scholars have studied factories as a place for the creation and maturing of the Soviet working class.⁶⁹ Others pointed to the persistence of the peasant mentality and to the failures of the Soviet state in creating a working class.⁷⁰

Despite their disagreements, both groups of scholars analyzed factories as production facilities. Peasants succeeded or failed to become workers while producing

⁷⁰ Moshe Lewin, *The Making of the Soviet System: Essays in the Social History of Interwar Russia*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985; David L. Hoffmann, *Peasant Metropolis: Social Identities in Moscow, 1929-1941*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994.

⁶⁹ Hiroaki Kuromiya, *Stalin's Industrial Revolution: Politics and Workers, 1928-1932.* Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]: Cambridge University Press, 1988; Kenneth M. Straus, *Factory and Community in Stalin's Russia: The Making of an Industrial Working Class.* Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997.

various industrial goods. The case of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory provides a different example of Soviet social engineering. During the interwar period, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory emerged more as a cultural center for the production of a Moldavian working class, than as a production facility for the production of sugar.

Moldavian Peasant-Workers in the Soviet Borderlands

After the Civil War, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was situated on the highly contested Soviet-Romanian border. Soviet authorities did not recognize the fact that Bessarabia, the former province of the Russian Empire, became a part of Romania in the aftermath of the October Revolution. From the Soviet point of view, Moldavian peasants constituted most of the Bessarabian population and they had a different social and national background than "the Romanian boyars," who conquered Bessarabia and exploited its population.

In order to promote an alternative to Romanian rule in Bessarabia, the Soviets established the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) as their model for the resolution of class and ethnic conflicts on the Soviet-Romanian border.

This new territorial formation emerged in October 1924 as a part of the Ukrainian SSR.⁷¹
In 1926, the local population consisted mainly of ethnic Ukrainians (49%) while ethnic Moldavians represented only one third of the population.

Moldavians were a minority in their own republic, but the Soviets established the MASSR taking into consideration the Moldavian majority in Bessarabia. From the Soviet perspective, the MASSR was meant to become the avant-garde republic of the nascent

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⁷¹ Charles King. *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture*. Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 2000, 53-56.

Moldavian proletariat. The Soviets claimed that this Moldavian proletariat had to liberate the Moldavian peasants from the exploitation of the Romanian boyars. In their rush to create a Moldavian working class, Soviet authorities had to solve a major problem: at the moment of its establishment, the MASSR did not have any major industrial enterprise. Thus, the Soviets had to create a Moldavian working class in a deeply agrarian borderland republic.

In 1925, shortly after the establishment of the MASSR, the regional Party instructor, Tarasov, recorded in a report that the only industrial enterprises in the MASSR were a dairy plant and a stagnant sugar factory. According to him, the lack of industrial development weakened the positions of Soviet power in this border region whereas "anti-Soviet elements" had a solid ground in the MASSR.

In April 1931, at the height of the Soviet industrialization campaign, Rogovskii, the head of the Council of National Economy of the MASSR, reported to his superiors in the Ukrainian SSR, that "in contrast with the other parts of the Soviet Union, the Moldavian republic did not inherit any industrial enterprise from the Russian Empire, with the exception of few small workshops." At the same time, Rogovskii specified that: "in a national republic, the nurture of specifically Moldavian cadres was the main political task." ⁷⁴

⁷² AOSPRM, F.49, inv.1, d.167, ff.1-23.

⁷³ Iz materialov k dokladu SNKh MASSR na Prezidiume VSNKh USSR "Puti razvitiia mestnoi promyshlennosti MASSR" in B.K. Vizer, Z.M. Ivanova, *Sotsialisticheskaia industrializatsiia i razvitie rabochego klassa Sovetskoi Moldavii*, (1926-1953), Kishinev: Izdatel'stvo TsK KP Moldavii, 1970, 42-50.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

The MASSR was established in the context of the Soviet Union as "an affirmative action empire." The Soviets believed that nations were a necessary stage on the way to a communist society. They divided the Soviet nationalities into eastern and western nationalities, according to the level of their national development. Russians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Armenians, Jews and Germans belonged to "the culturally advanced" western nationalities, while all other Soviet people belonged to "the culturally backward" eastern nationalities

On May 18, 1925, Joseph Stalin delivered a speech at the University of Peoples at the East in Moscow. The In his speech, Stalin emphasized the non-colonial character of the Soviet state and the need for mutual assistance among the Soviet people in the task of building socialism. Referring to the "eastern nationalities," Stalin pointed to their "industrial under-development" and to the need for the local cadres to develop "industrial centers in the Soviet republics of the East to serve as bases for rallying the peasants around the working class."

In addition, Stalin emphasized that another major task of the communist cadres in the republics of the East was "to develop national culture, to set up a wide network of courses and schools for both general education and vocational-technical training, to be

⁷⁵ Terry Martin. *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.

⁷⁶ Joseph Stalin, "The Soviet Republics of the East (from a speech delivered at the University of Peoples at the East, May 18, 1925)" in Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question. Selected Writings and Speeches*, New York, 1942.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 193.

conducted in the native languages for the purpose of training Soviet, Party, technical and business cadres from the local people."⁷⁸

In the absence of any other industries in the Moldavian republic, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory became a crucible for the Moldavian working class. As the sugar industry is a seasonal industry, most of the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory were seasonal workers, who were recruited from the villages in the neighborhood of the factory. In contrast with a minority of skilled permanent workers, seasonal workers were employed in low skilled activities. They spent the production season at the factory and after the end of the season they went back to their villages. For this reason, they were represented as half-workers/half-peasants or peasant-workers.

The category of peasant-workers was not a Soviet invention. In late Imperial Russia, industrial officials used the category of peasant-workers to show that the Russian proletariat was different from the revolutionary proletariat envisioned by labor activists.⁷⁹ According to them, all Russian workers were hybrid peasant-workers who came from villages and did not cut their ties with the land. Industrial officials sought to convince the Russian workers that they were too dependent on their peasant roots and they couldn't change the rural character of the Russian Empire.

By contrast with the industrial officials in the Russian Empire, Soviet industrial officials had the task to prove that despite their strong connections with the countryside, peasant-workers were still workers. On August 7, 1920, the administration of Glavsakhar

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Madhavan K. Palat, "Casting Workers as an Estate in Late Imperial Russia." Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History 8, no. 2 (2007): 307-48.

(Glavnoe Upravlenie Sakharnoi Promyshlennosti-The General Administration of the Sugar Industry) informed Trudosakhar (Profsoiuz Rabotnikov Sakharnoi Promyshlennosti- the Trade Unions of the Workers in the Sugar Industry) that local Soviet authorities frequently mistook the proletariat of the sugar factories for peasantry, because the workers of the sugar factories owned cows, pigs and sometimes pieces of land.⁸⁰

Glavsakhar officials were concerned with the fact that the Agricultural Division of Glavsakhar was overwhelmed by numerous complaints about the peasant behavior of the workers of the sugar industry. In June, VTsSPS (Vsesoiuznyi Tsentral'nyi Sovet Professional'nykh Soiuzov-all-Union Central Council of the Professional Unions) summoned a meeting with the representatives of Glavsakhar and Trudosakhar to discuss "the negative aspects of the ownership of land among the workers of the sugar industry."

According to Glavsakhar, its representatives, together with the delegates of Trudosakhar, managed to prove during the meeting that the seasonal character of the sugar industry meant that sugar factory workers could own cattle or individual pieces of land while remaining proletarians. However, shortly after the meeting, Glavsakhar continued to receive similar complaints. Glavsakhar officials specified that they would

⁸⁰ GARF, F.5463, op.4, d.144, l.32.

⁸¹ Ibid.

forward all future complaints to Trudosakhar, because it was the main protector of the workers of the sugar industry.⁸²

The Moldavian working class emerged from the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. In the framework of Soviet affirmative action policies, local peasant-workers were nurtured as the pioneers of the Moldavian working class. Central authorities in Moscow granted resources for the building of a specifically Moldavian working class at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory and closely scrutinized the social engineering policies at the factory. In response to the central monitoring, local authorities in the MASSR would have to prove that the local peasant-workers were members of the proletariat.

"Affirmative Action" at All Costs

In May 1920, Glavsakhar divided all the Soviet sugar factories into 4 categories:

- a) "Udarnye zavody" (the leading sugar factories);
- b) The sugar factories of the first category: these factories were similar to the leading sugar factories, but they didn't have access to the railways;
- c) The second category of the sugar factories were the factories which harvested less sugar beets and lacked advanced technology;
- d) The third category consisted of the sugar factories which were destroyed during the Civil War. These factories lacked some basic equipment and harvested less sugar beets. They also required large investments for the restoration of the factory. Basically, these sugar factories provided sugar beets for the leading sugar factories. ⁸³

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⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ GARF, F.5463, op.4, d.144, ll.60-63.

Glavsakhar used this classification when it distributed resources to the sugar factories. The leading factories would receive the most financial assistance, while the factories from the third category would receive assistance only if they managed to preserve their equipment.

According to this classification, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was ascribed to the third category and it was supposed to receive minimum financial assistance. However, as an outpost of working class culture in the rural borderlands of the Soviet empire, it would get the attention and the resources that Soviet authorities commonly granted only to the leading sugar factories.

Factories from the third category functioned more like centers of Bolshevik culture than as production facilities. In October 1920, the director of the Cultural Section of Trudosakhar wrote a report on the state of the theaters at the sugar factories.⁸⁴ In this report, he argued that sugar factories served as cultural centers not only for workers, but also for the peasants from the neighborhood.

The report emphasized the fact that all sugar factories had theaters, but their facilities and repertoire were simplistic. In some cases, different plays had the same decorations. So, in order to avoid "an eventual diminishing of the massive interest for theater," the author of the report asked for a better provisioning of theaters.⁸⁵

In 1923, the secretary of the Central Committee of Trudosakhar noted in a letter to one of his subordinates that he opposed the closing of the libraries and cultural centers

⁸⁴ GARF, F.5463, op.4, d.160, ll.114-115.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

along with the closing of the sugar factories.⁸⁶ According to him, the cultural work in the peasant communities around the closed factories was as important as the cultural activities at the active factories.

From 1920 to 1926, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory functioned as a cultural center for the peasants from the neighboring villages. In his annual report for 1921-1922 production season, I.Sidorov, the head of the trade unions at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, observed that there were no production activities at the sugar factory.⁸⁷ At the same time, he noted that the factory had 165 employees who received monthly wages and food packages.

In the absence of any production activities, these employees used the factory's facilities to organize cultural and education activities. Sidorov confirmed that the factory hosted a theater with 600 seats. The theater opened in 1917, and all the actors were either workers or administrative personnel at the sugar factory. The report stated that among other plays, the amateur theater staged plays by Chekhov. ⁸⁸

In addition to theater, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory hosted a series of other social and cultural institutions. First of all, there was a hospital, which was attended by 4,600 patients every year. Sidorov mentioned that among the patients of the hospital there were also peasants from the neighborhood of the factory. Secondly, 70 children from the worker's families attended the school and 49 illiterate workers attended the courses for the liquidation of literacy. Thirdly, the factory hosted a library with 200 political and

⁸⁶ GARF, F.5463, op.7, d.234.

⁸⁷ GARF, F.5463, op. 6, d.207, ll.117-121.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

technical books. Finally, Sidorov declared that in the near future the factory would have a kindergarten and an orchestra.⁸⁹

In October 1924, Soviet authorities established the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Along with the establishment of the MASSR on the Soviet-Romanian border, the status of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was elevated from a small cultural center to the economic and social base of the MASSR.

On March 17, 1925, Sovet Truda i Oborony (The Council of Labor and Defense) issued a decree "On the restoration of the sugar factories from the Podolsk branch of Sakharotrest (Trest Sakharnoi Promyshlennosti- The Trust of the Sugar Industry) in 1926." ⁹⁰ According to the decree, Sakharotrest would allocate two million rubles for the restoration of seven sugar factories from the border areas of Podilia, Volynia and the MASSR. The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was among these seven sugar factories to be restored in 1926.

Referring to the reasons for the restoration of these sugar factories, the decree specified that:

The population of these border areas suffered much during the imperialistic and the Civil wars. The revival of the sugar industry would considerably ease the lives of these people. Being the most backward in the technological sense, these seven sugar factories will have a low productivity rate. As a consequence, their sugar will be more expensive than the sugar of the other sugar factories from the region. At the same time, these sugar factories represent only a small share of all the Soviet sugar factories. So, the average price of Soviet sugar would increase only

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⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ RGAE, F. 4372, op.9, d.931, ll.1-2.

by 1-1.5 kopeika for a pood. 91 On the other hand, in exchange for this minor increase of the sugar price, people from the border regions will get better lives. 92

The decision to restore these old factories was not followed by a plan to increase their productivity or to improve their technological process. Moreover, the document clearly stated that the restoration of these factories would only increase the burden for the whole sugar industry of the Soviet Union. The authors of this document sought only to restore the factories in order to improve the lives of the population from the border areas. Factories would function more like institutions of social welfare, rather than production facilities.

Collectivization as the First Test of the Moldavian Working Class

The start of the production season in 1926 changed the relationship between the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory and the peasants from the neighboring villages. In the Russian Empire, sugar factories procured most of the sugar beets from their own estates. ⁹³ After the October Revolution, sugar factories were nationalized and their estates were divided among the peasants. As a consequence, sugar factories had to procure sugar beets from many individual holders in the vicinity of the factories.

⁹¹ During the 1920's, the Soviet Union used the same units of weight as the Russian Empire. Thus, 1 pood was equal to 40 Russian funts or 16, 37 kilograms.

⁹² RGAE, F. 4372, op.9, d.931, ll.1-2.

⁹³ S.S Wheatcroft and R.W. Davies, "Agriculture" in R. W. Davies, Mark Harrison, and S. G Wheatcroft. *The Economic Transformation of the Soviet Union*, *1913-1945*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994, 111.

In April 1920, Glavsakhar officials noted that: "the speculations and the scarcity of food created an aversion among the peasants towards the cultivation of sugar beets." ⁹⁴ As a consequence, Glavsakhar proposed a plan to increase the supply of sugar beets from individual households. Glavsakhar recommended that peasants who planted sugar beets had to be exempted from any other obligations from April until October. ⁹⁵

In addition, Glavsakhar argued for the establishment of its subdivisions on the regional and district levels. At the same time, Glavsakhar officials noticed with skepticism that "the achievement of this objective was difficult, because there were practically no Communists among the backward proletariat in the villages." 96

In March 1926, the all-Union Sovnarkom (Sovet Narodnykh Komissarov-Council of People's Commissars) confirmed in a decree that peasants had to receive 30 rubles as advanced payment for the cultivation of one desyatina⁹⁷ with sugar beets. The decree stated that there were discussions to lower the amount of the payment to 20 rubles per desyatina, but Sovnarkom decided to keep the payment at 30 rubles, because "it did not want to discourage the peasantry from planting the sugar beets."

⁹⁴ RGAE, F.6967, op.3, d.4, ll. 7-16.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Desyatina was a unit for the measurement of land in the Russian Empire and in the early Soviet period. One desyatina is the equivalent of one hectare.

⁹⁸ RGAE F.1576, op.6, d.1, 1.64.

Despite the implementation of these measures, Lugovoi, the head of Trudosakhar, evaluated that in 1926-1927, peasants reduced the supply of sugar beets by 15-20%. ⁹⁹ According to Lugovoi, peasants preferred to plant grains, because grain prices were higher than the prices offered by the sugar factories for sugar beets. Also, he pointed out that sugar factories did not pay all the advanced payments from the previous season.

At the moment when the individual households reduced the supply of beets to the sugar factories, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was preparing for its first production season after World War I. The local party cell sought to employ the peasant-workers as a transmission belt between the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory and the farmers from the neighborhood of the factory. Peasant-workers represented the working class in the village. They could serve as a bridge between the peasants and the workers.

At the same time, local Soviet authorities were concerned that peasant-workers were more exposed to "the peasant worldview." On May 28, 1927, during a meeting of the party cell at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, Bobrov, a local party member, declared that: "in contrast with the workers from other industrial areas, our workers have a peasant psychology. It will require much effort to wake them up and to bring them closer to the party." 100

On February 4, 1930, Golod, the Secretary of the CC of the Ukrainian Communist Party, stated in a letter to the Moldavian Regional Party Committee, that the sugar

⁹⁹ GARF, F.5463, op.10, d.71, ll. 149-155.

¹⁰⁰ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.160, f.35.

industry had an important role in the collectivization of agriculture. ¹⁰¹ Golod argued that the workers of the sugar factories had to participate in the collectivization drive if the factories wanted to secure the necessary amount of sugar beets for the following seasons.

At the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, collectivization was also an opportunity for the local peasant-workers to show that they were members of the proletariat. During the collectivization campaign, they participated in the organization of the three kolkhozy (collective farms) in three villages from the neighborhood of the sugar factory.¹⁰²

During a meeting of the local party cell, Alekseev, the secretary of the party cell, made an evaluation of collectivization in each of the three villages. He noticed that in the villages of Mikhailovka and Saratseia, "the atmosphere was healthy and the pace of collectivization was satisfactory." At the same time, Alekseev pointed to the fact that in the village of Erzhovo, "the moral state was miserable."

The party cell of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory granted special importance to the kolkhoz "Avangard" from the village of Erzhovo, because this village was in close proximity to the sugar factory and most of the factory's peasant-workers came from Erzhovo. Alekseev saw that in Erzhovo, the collective farmers refused to harvest the sugar beets. ¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ AOSPRM, F.49, inv.1, d.1736, f.34.

¹⁰² AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.276, ff.53-54.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

As a consequence, the district executive committee mobilized the entire population of the village for the harvest of the sugar beets and prohibited anyone to travel out of the village until all the sugar beets were harvested. Despite all these measures, Alekseev noticed that 120 hectares of sugar beets were still not harvested because kolkhoz members refused to work. He specified that "under the influence of kulak propaganda, 70 people left the kolkhoz." ¹⁰⁵

In his note to the Rybnitsa District Executive Committee, Bobrov claimed that the main reason for the unrest in Erzhovo was the famine and the shortage of bread. ¹⁰⁶
Bobrov argued that the party had to improve the supply of food for the twelve residents of Erzhovo who worked at the sugar factory. In contrast to the workers, who lived in Rybnitsa, workers from Erzhovo did not receive their bread coupons. Bobrov warned the district executive committee that if these peasant-workers did not get a better provisioning of food, the unrest could spread from the village to the sugar factory.

This case is a vivid example of the changing role of the peasant-workers in the villages. From being the agents of the revolution and collectivization, they could rapidly become agents of social unrest. In Bobrov's example, peasant-workers ceased to be the progressive agents of socialist change, and they became dangerous elements who could spread unrest from the village to the factory. The ambiguous status of the peasant-workers made them suspicious for Soviet authorities. Thus, the only Moldavian sugar factory was not only a welfare institution, but it also became a constant target for numerous purges and control commissions.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.182, f.21.

The Water is Flowing, but the Stones Are There to Stay: Purging the Moldavian Peasant-Workers at the Soviet Periphery

Soviet authorities in Moscow had put all their hopes in the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory as a stronghold of the Moldavian proletariat. Since they had high expectations, it was not very difficult to disappoint them. Local peasant-workers could not always conform to their appointed revolutionary destiny. In the 1930s, the central authorities inquired into the state of the Moldavian working class by purging the party cell of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. Being the main educator of the local working class, the party cell defended itself by proving that the local peasant-workers were members of the proletariat.

Purges or *chistki* had been common events in Soviet party life since 1918.¹⁰⁷ After the October Revolution, the Bolsheviks turned from an underground revolutionary party into the ruling party of the first socialist state in the history of humanity. Before the Revolution, the entry card into the Bolshevik party was the will to fight against the tsarist autocracy. After the Revolution, the Bolsheviks became a ruling party and the appeal of party membership extended dramatically. Thus, periodical purges of the party became a mechanism for the constant testing of party members in regard to their behavior and beliefs.

During the first decades of its existence, the Soviet state had to face constant tension between the ideological need to purge the old imperial cadres and the deficit of

¹⁰⁷ Getty, J. Arch, Oleg V Naumov, and Benjamin Sher. *The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Bolsheviks*, 1932-1939. New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2010, 125.

qualified workers in the Soviet factories. At the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, the deficit of qualified workers was even more acute because the MASSR did not have any industrial tradition. Thus, the few local communists had to purge the old qualified workers and shape the peasant-workers into a new group of qualified workers.

Under pressure from Moscow, the leadership of the MASSR constantly scrutinized the party cell of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in search of "the class enemies." After a visit to Rybnitsa in March 1927, Bogopol'skii, the secretary of the Moldavian branch of the trade unions, alleged that, "instead of being the initiators of healthy ideas, the party members were the main proponents of unhealthy tendencies at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory." Bogopol'skii claimed that the Komsomol members did not attend the courses on the technology of sugar production, while the workers who were not party members did attend them.

In 1930, Alekseev, the secretary of the local party cell, reported that the party cell consisted mostly of young people who became party members in 1928-1929.¹⁰⁹ At the same time, he was concerned with the fact that almost all of these party members were not *korennye rabochie* (longtime workers) but *polurabochie*, *polukrest'ane* (half workers, half peasants) who owned individual households.

On November 26, 1930, the Moldavian Regional Party Committee specified in the decree "On the consolidation of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory" that "the local party cell

¹⁰⁸ AOSPRM, F.49, inv.1, d.960, ff.49-57.

¹⁰⁹ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.276, ff.53-54.

was ill." ¹¹⁰ The decree mentioned that the members of the party cell owned individual plots of land and they refused to grant their cattle to the collective farms. Thus, the Moldavian Regional Party Committee announced the replacement of the local party members with new party members.

In order to cure the local party cell, Soviet authorities appointed a Communist with a long party membership as the director of the Sugar Factory. Born in 1894, Kazimir Gul' was a Belarusian veteran of the Civil War and a member of the Communist Party since 1919. ¹¹¹ He only graduated from the fourth grade of elementary school, but due to his revolutionary and military merits, Gul' was appointed the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in 1932.

In his long party career, Gul' managed to acquire a few less than heroic deeds. Prior to his appointment at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, Gul' was excluded from the party for "the illegal purchase of grains in the sovkhoz," but he was able to regain his party membership due to his revolutionary and military merits. During his tenure at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, Gul' would continue to reconcile his heroic past with spots on his party record.

On May 25, 1933, Podar', the head of the Rybnitsa District Control Commission, claimed that the main task of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was to fight against "gepnerovtsy"—some of the old workers who were employed by Gepner, the

¹¹⁰ RGASPI, F.17, op.26, d.604, l.140.

¹¹¹ AOSPRM, F. 3, inv.1, d.453, f.191.

¹¹² Ibid.

prerevolutionary owner of the factory. ¹¹³ He added that the district party committee was convinced that Gul' would be able to clean the party cell of class enemies, because Gul' was an old party member and there were few old party members in the sugar industry.

In 1934, a group of workers who identified themselves as "the old qualified workforce" sent a letter to the Rybnitsa District Purge Commission. ¹¹⁴ In this letter, workers claimed that:

Gul' is the son of a former imperial bureaucrat from Belorussia. He deals with workers like an animal. He drinks our workers' blood in revenge for his father. Gul' is worse than the White Army. He is an anti-Semite and a chauvinist.¹¹⁵

At the same time, the authors of the letter affirmed that if they were called to testify against Gul', they would not serve as witnesses because they were afraid of reprisal. They argued that in 1933, they were witnesses at the proceedings of another control commission. Despite their testimonies, Gul' was rehabilitated while some of the witnesses were dismissed from their workplace. 116

In July-October 1934, the Rybnitsa District Purge Commission conducted the purge of all the party cells in the Rybnitsa district. In the final report, the Commission mentioned that, at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, "gepnerovtsy" did not like when the director of the sugar factory requested that they raise their labor discipline. 117 As a

¹¹³ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.384, ff.44-46.

¹¹⁴ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.456, f.11.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.457, ff.1-54.

consequence, they sabotaged the orders of the administration and wrote numerous complaints against the director.

In addition, the Commission revealed that the old workers had their own theory, according to which "the water was flowing, but the stones were there to stay." In other words, the old workers presumed that the directors were flowing away like water, while the old workers stayed at the factory like stones. The workers relied on their previous experience when they coined this theory. Throughout the interwar period, Gul' was the only director who managed to stay at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory for more than five years. All the other directors did not stay at the factory for more than two years.

As a result of the 1934 purge, the party cell of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory excluded 40-50% of its members. Those excluded from the party cell were old workers. Nevertheless, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory needed its old workers because it faced a deficit in their workforce. So, the workers who were excluded from the party continued to work at the factory. In a way, after the 1934 purge, old workers stayed at the sugar factory like stones.

After the party purge in 1934, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory did not improve its productivity. On the contrary, it became the factory with the lowest productivity in the Odessa Sugar Trust. On May 22, 1935, Mazur, the deputy director of the Odessa Sugar Trust, participated in a meeting of the party cell at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. During the meeting, he mentioned that, in 1934 the Odessa Sugar Trust brought many losses to

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.521, ff.32-34.

the state and the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, in particular, had the worst results among the factories of this Trust.

Mazur admitted that the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had many technical defects. In his opinion, the main culprit for the difficult situation of the sugar factory was the chief engineer, Dmitrenko, who was a good technologist, but lacked leadership skills. Mazur's report, like many other reports of the Soviet control organs, rarely blamed the old technological equipment for the poor performance of the sugar factory. Instead, they preferred to blame the director of the factory or the technical personnel.

At the same meeting of the party cell, Dmitrenko defended himself by pointing to "the especially difficult character of this factory." He mentioned that the Trust did not provide assistance to the sugar factory and "the factory was pickled in its own juice." In his speech, Lepota, the secretary of the party cell, stated that the factory promised to work better each year, but the results were the same. Lepota blamed the technical personnel for the bad results of the sugar factory and concluded that the appointment of new technical specialists would improve the productivity of the sugar factory.

As a consequence, the bureau of the party cell fired Dmitrenko from the position of chief engineer and appointed Dragomiretskii, a party member, as the new chief engineer of the sugar factory. The bureau also decided that "due to his good knowledge of the technological process;" Dmitrenko should be appointed the chief chemist of the

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

factory. In Lepota's words, "the party had to urge Dmitrenko to become the chief chemist of the sugar factory because he had to expiate for his previous sins." ¹²³

On July 19, 1935, the bureau of the Rybnitsa District Party Committee adopted the resolution "On the criminal blunting of the party vigilance in the party cell of the sugar factory." The resolution included that, at the end of 1934, the district party committee excluded Dmitrenko from the party and dismissed him from the sugar factory.

At the same time, the resolution claimed that Gul' and Lepota defied the party bureau by appointing Dmitrenko as the chief chemist of the sugar factory. The party bureau accused Lepota of easing party discipline because he did not dismiss Dmitrenko from the sugar factory. In response, Lepota argued that he did not dismiss Dmitrenko because he sought to preserve "the good collaboration between the leading cadres of the factory.¹²⁵

In addition, the bureau accused Lepota of destroying the archive of the party cell without the sanction of the party bureau. As a result, the bureau of the Rybnitsa District Party Committee dismissed Lepota from his tenure at the party cell of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. Despite this spot on his party record, Lepota survived through the Great Purge and reinvented himself during World War II as an active collaborator of the Romanian administration (see next chapter).

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.497, ff.173-175.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

From Peasant-Workers to Stakhanovites

On May 4, 1935, Stalin argued that:

Without people who have mastered technique, technique is dead. In the charge of people who have mastered technique, technique can and should perform miracles. If in our first-class mills and factories, in our state farms and collective farms, in our transport system and in our Red Army we had sufficient cadres capable of harnessing this technique, our country would secure results three times and four times as great as at present. That is why emphasis must now be laid on people, on cadres, on workers who have mastered technique. That is why the old slogan, "Technique decides everything," which is a reflection of a period already passed, a period in which we suffered from a dearth of technique, must now be replaced by a new slogan, the slogan "Cadres decide everything." ¹²⁶

Stalin's famous statement that "Cadres decide everything" sounds more ambiguous in Russian than in its common English translation. In the current English translation, this statement gives more agency to the cadres than the original Russian version. In Russian, it implies a certain dose of agency on behalf of the all-union and local cadres, but at the same time it emphasizes the strategic importance of "having the right people in the right place." In other words, Stalin's statement did not preclude the state bureaucracy from acting, but the center still kept a decisive role in the appointment of cadres. Thus, the more appropriate English translation of Stalin's "Kadry reshaiut vse" would be "Cadres are decisive."

¹²⁶ J. Stalin, "Address to the Graduates from the Red Army Academies (delivered in the Kremlin May 4, 1935)" accessed on July 29, 2014 at

https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1935/05/04.htm

Shortly after Stalin's speech, a Soviet miner, Aleksey Stakhanov, mined a record quantity of coal. 127 Along with this achievement, Stakhanov was celebrated as a Soviet hero and he was promoted as an example for thousands of workers from different branches of Soviet industry. These workers were to become the members of the Stakhanovite movement and the new model workers. According to Siegelbaum,

Stakhanovism consisted of more than the setting of records and their celebration. It, in fact, constituted an important ingredient of the socialization of a largely peasant derived labor force. It offered a model of behavior and a set of values that workers could adopt to negotiate the difficult transition from a largely preindustrial to an industrial society. 128

Beyond the celebration of worker heroes, the Stakhanovite movement was also an instrument to increase labor productivity at the Soviet factories. Stakhanovites achieved production records, but they also put pressure on other workers to increase their productivity rates. As a consequence, many workers resented the Stakhanovite movement. 129

In December 1935, Anastas Mikoian, the Commissar of Food Industry, mentioned at the Plenary Session of the Central Committee of CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) that the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was as an example of the weak development of the Stakhanovite movement in the sugar industry. Mikoian blamed the local party cell for failing to lead the Stakhanovite movement.

¹²⁷ Lewis H. Siegelbaum, *Stakhanovism and the Politics of Productivity in the USSR*, 1935-1941. Soviet and East European Studies. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.)

¹²⁸ Ibid., 148.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 42.

¹³⁰ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1 d.574, ff.100-103.

In response to Mikoian's criticism of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, Gul' sought to explain the weak development of Stakhanovism at the factory by the seasonal character of the sugar industry. On January 5, 1936, he explained at a meeting of the party cell that there were more Stakhanovites during the production season, but once the seasonal workers were no longer at the factory, the number of Stakhanovites diminished. In addition, Gul' claimed that 70% of all the workers were from villages and they lacked any knowledge of the technological processes involved in making sugar. Thus, they had to be enrolled in special courses on the technology of sugar production before they could become Stakhanovites.

In March 1936, Sozykin, a leading Stakhanovite of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, was beaten by a group of workers for "his attempts to raise the labor norms." ¹³² The district party committee accused Gul' of protecting the class enemies who had beaten the Stakhanovites. Also, the district party committee argued that Gul' discriminated against the Communist workers because he did not want to appoint them to key positions.

On June 25, 1936, Mikoian stated in a decree that Antonov, the deputy director of Glavsakhar, inspected the Odessa Sugar Trust and found numerous problems at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. Furthermore, Mikoian claimed that: "Gul' ignored my warning from the December Plenum of the Central Committee, because the sugar factory still had losses during the first half of 1936." Nevertheless, Mikoian did not dismiss Gul', but he

¹³¹ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.36, d.1, ff.1-4

¹³² AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d. 521, ff.102-121.

¹³³ AOSPRM, F.49, inv.1, d.3549, f. 215.

warned him that if "he would not correct his mistakes during the next production season" then he would be fired from the factory and appointed to a lower position.

Contrary to the requests of the local party functionaries, Gul' was not dismissed from the factory. Some of the local party secretaries started to refer to a special protection which Mikoian granted to Gul'. Thus, when asked about the measures which he took in order to improve the situation at the sugar factory, Kior, the secretary of the district party committee, replied "What can I do if Mikoian doesn't want to dismiss Gul'?" ¹³⁴

On December 4, 1936, the Central Committee of the CPSU issued a resolution "On the results of the exchange of the Party documents in the MASSR." One of the statements of this document suggested that: "the exchange of the party documents revealed big problems in the activity of the Rybnitsa District Party Committee and especially at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory (the presence of class enemies, weak development of the Stakhanovite movement and the low level of self-criticism)." 135

This resolution served as a starting point for the Great Purge in the MASSR. The resolution criticized the Rybnitsa District Party Committee for failing to lead the Stakhanovite movement and to purge the class enemies in the Rybnitsa district. As a consequence of the resolution, Kior, the first secretary of the Rybnitsa District Party Committee, was excluded from the Party in April 1937 and arrested in June, for

¹³⁴ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.617, ff.10-23.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

"protecting some Trotskyites and for failing to purge the bourgeois nationalists." ¹³⁶ He was sentenced to ten years of imprisonment and died in 1943 before his sentence expired.

The resolution of the Central Committee also referred to the extremely difficult situation of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. In January 1937, the local party cell organized a special closed meeting dedicated to the resolution. At this meeting, Kapustian, a member of the party cell, declared that even if the discussions on the purge of "the foreign elements" at the sugar factory had been going on for 4 years, the administration of the factory still could not get rid of "these specialists."

In response to Kapustian, Gul' declared that he could not immediately dismiss the class enemies: Stepanova, Shuljik, Karvasovskii and Ivanovich. He could fire them if the Party would find other cadres to replace them. In other words, Gul' preferred to keep "the class enemies" at the factory, rather than to face a deficit of cadres. This statement provided additional arguments to the local leaders who wanted to dismiss Gul'.

In February 1937, the Moldavian Regional Party Committee mandated that the Party instructor, Tsaranov, inspect the state of the party organization at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. In his final report, Tsaranov claimed to offer a detailed representation of "this network of the class enemies at the Soviet-Romanian border." ¹³⁹

¹³⁶ C.King, Moldovans, 87-88.

¹³⁷ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.633, ff.7-13.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ AOSPRM, F.49, inv.1, d.3759, ff.8-14.

According to him, the factory implemented only 50% of the production plan because the class enemies wrecked the sugar factory. Also, Tsaranov clarified that on paper there were 62 Stakhanovites at the sugar factory, but in reality there were none. Nevertheless, he argued that these fictional Stakhanovites could become real Stakhanovites if the administrative personnel did not sabotage the Stakhanovite movement at the factory. ¹⁴⁰

The report traced the existence of an alleged group of anti-Soviet Polish elements who had been wrecking the factory since 1927-1929. This group was supported by some older Polish gepnerovtsy who praised the former owner of the factory. Tsaranov argued that this anti-Soviet group still existed in 1937, because engineer Cherkas continued to sabotage the Stakhanovite movement. Vladislav Cherkas was born in 1903 and he became a party member in 1929. In November 1935, Cherkas was excluded from the party for supporting the previous chief engineer Dmitrenko, but he remained at the sugar factory. The supporting the previous chief engineer Dmitrenko, but he remained at the

In the report, Tsaranov blamed Gul' for supporting the old workforce of the sugar factory. In 1934, a group of old workers wrote denunciations against Gul', informing the purge commission about his collaboration with class enemies. In 1937, Gul' was accused of collaboration with the same gepnerovtsy who wrote denunciations against him

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1 d.574, ff.100-103.

¹⁴³ AOSPRM, F.49, inv.1, d.3759, ff.8-14.

in 1934. Tsaranov claimed that: "after a thorough examination, the responsible institutions will be able to discover the anti-revolutionary nest, which emerged there at the border." 144

Along with this report, several secretaries of the Moldavian Regional Party

Committee asked Mikoian to dismiss Gul'. In their requests, they insisted that the

Rybnitsa Sugar Factory could not achieve better results as long as Gul' was the director of
the factory. They argued that Gul' protected the class enemies who undermined the
activity of the factory. They concluded that, in order to get rid of the class enemies, the
factory should get rid of Gul'.

In July 1937, Kisil', the inspector of the Industrial section of the Moldavian Regional Party Committee drafted a detailed report on the state of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. He claimed that during the last 3 or 4 years, the administration of the sugar factory spent 66 thousand rubles on useless equipment. In the same context, Kisil' acknowledged that the sugar factory had a bad name at the Odessa Sugar Trust. There were rumors at the Trust that the administration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory did not welcome specialists. The factory became only a school for the training of the junior specialists, who went to other sugar factories after a short stay in Rybnitsa.

At the end of the report, Kisil' overtly stated that: "We hope that after this report, Mikoian will pay attention to the factory and will fire Gul'." According to the

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ AOSPRM, F.49, inv.1, d.4070, ff.12-18.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

inspector, Gul' had to be fired because he supported some "anti-Soviet elements" and discouraged the Stakhanovite movement at the factory. In addition, during the first half of 1937 the factory had losses worth 600 thousand rubles.

In July 1937, Gul' was dismissed from the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory and delegated to another sugar factory in Soviet Ukraine. 147 The Great Purge was not the last appearance of Gul' in the party records. Gul' not only survived through the Great Purges, but he also survived through World War II, and emerged in 1956 as the director of the Zhdanov Collective Farm in the Rybnitsa district.

In 1956, Batushkin, the secretary of the Rybnitsa District Party Committee, mentioned in a brief note that Gul' became the director of the Zhdanov Collective Farm in June 1953. Has Batushkin praised the initial performance of Gul' at the collective farm, but then he noticed that "during the last year and a half, Gul' started drinking, lost his authority, and the collective farm delayed the harvest time." As a result, he received a severe reprimand from the district party committee in November 1955 and on March 11, 1956 the general meeting of the collective farm did not renew his tenure at the collective farm.

Despite his shortcomings, on the 44th anniversary of the October Revolution, the district newspaper dedicated an article to the revolutionary merits of Gul'. ¹⁵⁰ T. Ivanova,

¹⁴⁷ AOSPRM, F.49, inv.1, d.3868, f.27.

¹⁴⁸ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.1029, f.76.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ T. Ivanova, "Serdtse ne ukhodit v otstavku" in *Sotsialisticheskii put'*, p.2.

the author of the article, praised Gul' for being an active party member even after his retirement in 1956. She mentioned that after his retirement, Gul' could not just read books or enjoy his life.

According to Ivanova, "the restless heart of an old communist could not find its peace" and Gul' became the secretary of the party cell at a bus depot in his neighborhood. Evaluating his performance as a party secretary, Ivanova claimed that even if Gul' was not employed at the bus depot, he spent whole days at the bus depot and became "the soul of the collective." As a result of his two-year tenure at the bus depot, 20 drivers became shock workers and many of the drivers attended institutions of higher education.

After the dismissal of Gul', the Director of the Odessa Sugar Trust appointed Iurkovskii as the new director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. ¹⁵² If Gul' didn't have any specialized knowledge of the sugar industry, then Iurkovskii had a degree from The Academy of the Food Industry. Along with the appointment of a new director, Soviet authorities sought to renew the workforce at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory.

To a certain extent, the Great Purge served as an opportunity for the local Communists to start a new page in the history of the sugar factory. On October 1, 1937, the Moldavian Regional Party Committee issued a decree "On the activity of Rybnitsa Sugar Factory." The decree urged the Rybnitsa District Party Committee to detach

¹⁵² AOSPRM, F.49, inv.1, d.3868, f.27.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵³ RGASPI, F.17, op.21, d.2924, ll.104-105.

some of the district's collective farmers as unskilled laborers at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. At the same time, the Regional Komsomol Committee would have to delegate forty Komsomol members from all over the MASSR to become qualified workers.

Despite all these efforts to renew the workforce, the factory still showed bad results during the following production seasons. On November 11, 1938, the Bureau of the Rybnitsa District Party Committee criticized Iurkovskii for the low productivity of the sugar factory. Party officials connected the low productivity of the factory with weak political work. As a consequence, the Party recommended that Iurkovskii had to organize courses on the Stakhanovite methods in the sugar industry.

The Party repeatedly emphasized the value of the political factor over the technological factor in Soviet industry. The workers could lack some technological skills, but they had to receive an appropriate political education. With this political education, the Soviet workers were expected to perform miracles on the factory floor.

Conclusion

The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was the cradle of the Moldavian working class. The leadership of the MASSR had an almost impossible task: to shape a Moldavian working class in an overwhelmingly rural republic on the Soviet-Romanian border. In the absence of any industrial legacy from the Russian Empire, the Moldavian working class emerged from the peasant-workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory.

During the Civil War, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was destroyed by the succeeding waves of occupations by numerous military groups. In their attempts to revive

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¹⁵⁴ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.668, ff.48-49.

the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, Soviet authorities made their priority to restore the cultural infrastructure of the factory, instead of restoring the production facilities. The Moldavian working class was supposed to emerge from the theater plays and movies projected at the factory, as opposed to its involvement in the technology of sugar production.

The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory would function more like a cultural center for the education of a Moldavian working class than as a production facility. Many other Soviet factories hosted theaters, hospitals and schools. The difference was that upon the establishment of the MASSR, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was the only major enterprise and it had to lay the basis of an industrial culture in this predominantly agricultural region.

The production of sugar is a seasonal industry. At the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, the production process started usually along with the gathering of the sugar beets in September and ended in February or March. By contrast with the production facilities, the social and cultural infrastructure of the sugar factory was available all year round. Thus, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory produced sugar during the production season, but its social and cultural infrastructure continued to shape a Moldavian working class.

The peasant-workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had an ambiguous status. On the one hand, they were praised as the representatives of the working class in the villages. They had to perform an important role in the Sovietization and collectivization of the neighboring villages. On the other hand, the fact that the peasant-workers lived in villages made them the primary targets in the Soviet campaign against backwardness.

The party bureaucrats suspected that peasant-workers did not cut their ties with their peasant ways. The central party authorities carefully monitored the peasant-workers as the weak link of the working class. At the same time, the few members of the party cell of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory usually had to prove that despite the seasonal character of the sugar industry, the local peasant-workers were members of the proletariat.

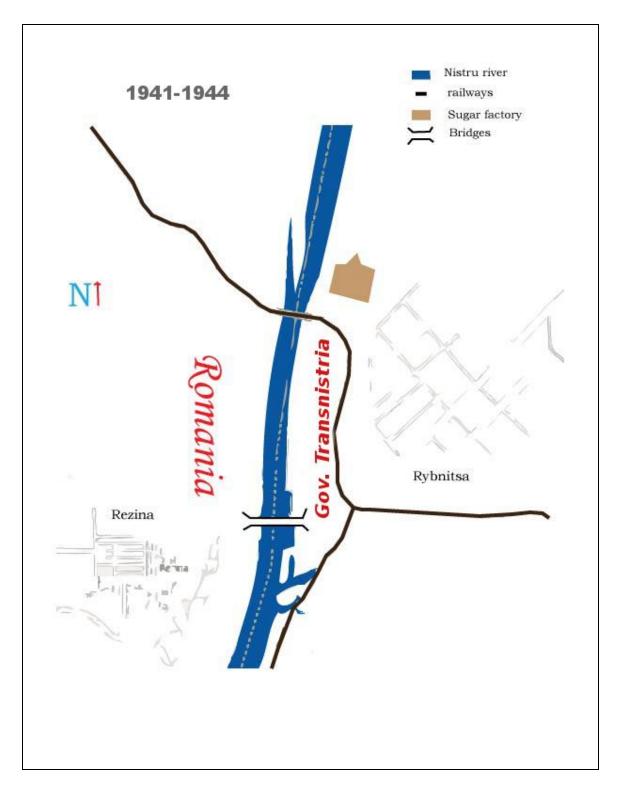


Figure 7 Map of the Transnistrian Borderlands (1941-1944)

CHAPTER 2: HUMANS AND MACHINES IN TIMES OF WAR: BETWEEN COLLABORATION AND RESISTANCE AT THE RYBNITSA SUGAR FACTORY (1941-1944)

On June 22, 1941, Nazi Germany and its Allies invaded the Soviet Union. Two days later, a group of workers and engineers from the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory pledged in the local newspaper to support the Soviet government in "the decisive struggle against the fascist aggressors." ¹⁵⁵ In their address, the workers promised to prepare for an exemplary production season and to enroll into the Red Army at the first call of the Soviet Government.

On July 5, 1941, the sugar factory's administration organized a meeting to support the mobilization of the local workers into the Red Army. ¹⁵⁶ In his speech, the loader Fillip Zaritskii declared:

I was a participant in the Civil War, and I fought for freedom, land, and a happy life. We have a good and happy life under the leadership of Lenin's party. The fascist barbarians want to steal our achievements and to enslave the Soviet people, but they will never succeed. In order to continue my struggle against the fascist barbarians, I decided to enlist in the People's Guard.¹⁵⁷

For Zaritskii, the upcoming war was part of the continuous struggle for the survival of the Soviet polity. He mentioned that this struggle started during the Civil War,

¹⁵⁵Drumul Socialist, June 24, 1941.

¹⁵⁶Drumul Socialist, July 8, 1941.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

when the Bolsheviks fought against the Whites, and it had to continue with the Soviet mobilization against the Nazi invaders. At the same meeting, fifty people followed Zaritskii's example and enlisted into the Red Army. The local newspaper enthusiastically concluded that: "All the collective of the sugar factory, together with the heroic Red Army, is ready to crush the fascist occupiers." ¹⁵⁸

The Second World War disrupted the continuity of Soviet power in the western regions of the Soviet Union. The war was a major test for the whole Soviet polity, but only the Soviet Union's western regions were occupied by Nazi Germany and its allies. According to Hiroaki Kuromiya, "people had to decide their own fates, however few and unattractive available options may have been." 159

The retreating Soviet authorities expected that all Soviet citizens would engage in active struggle against the occupation regimes. ¹⁶⁰ In the Soviet scenario of wartime behavior, bystanders occupied the same position as collaborators. The war was nothing less than a test for the superiority of the Bolshevik Revolution. Those who didn't pass this test would be subjected to purges after the return of Soviet authorities.

After the war, the Soviets started a massive inquiry into the behavior of the population in the Nazi-occupied territories. ¹⁶¹ Soviet authorities considered that all the survivors of the occupation had to provide evidence of their active struggle against the

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Hiroaki Kuromiya, *Freedom and Terror in the Donbas: A Ukrainian-Russian Borderland*, 1870s-1990s (Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 339-40.

¹⁶⁰ Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2001), 85-86.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

occupation regime. Since the party members were supposed to be the leaders of popular resistance against the occupiers, they were the first to be asked for evidence.

In a series of purges, the local party cells examined the wartime conduct of party members. Any able-bodied male was excluded from the Communist Party if he could not provide some evidence of his struggle against the occupiers. The most credible evidence was service in the Red Army. Besides the growing prominence of partisans in the party's rhetoric, in some regions, like western Ukraine, former partisans were purged because they were suspected of collaboration with various nationalist groups.¹⁶²

To prosecute individual cases of alleged wartime collaborators, the Soviets organized special NKVD military tribunals. These tribunals examined both the cases of genuine war criminals who participated in the massacres of civilian population, and the cases of many other people who failed to follow the wartime conduct envisioned by Soviet authorities. Among the latter were some former Jewish detainees of the ghettos and concentration camps. ¹⁶³

Soviet investigators assumed that Jewish inmates collaborated with the occupation regime by providing their labor for the restoration of the wartime economy. In the Soviet version of the war myth, the Nazis inflicted suffering on all of the Soviet population, irrespective of its ethnic background. Hence, the Jewish inmates of the ghettos and concentration camps were subjected to the same scrutiny as the non-Jewish population from the occupied territories.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 211-213.

¹⁶² Ibid., 79.

Jeffrey Herf explains the neglect of the Holocaust in Communist discourse by a series of dominant antifascist themes in Communist ideology. First of all, Nazism was perceived as an exploitative form of capitalism, which had to be confronted as an enemy of the international working class.

Secondly, the Communist master narrative reduced Nazi anti-Semitism to a decorative element of the economic superstructure. ¹⁶⁵ In this scheme, the Nazis didn't believe in their anti-Semitic ideology, but merely used it for dividing and confusing the working class. Finally, the antireligious character of Communism contributed to the marginalization of the Holocaust in Communist discourse.

Jeffrey Jones claims that Soviet society had a more nuanced representation of the collaboration than the party purges tried to convey. ¹⁶⁶ The wartime reality was much more complex than its representation in the Soviet postwar purges. Often, the occupied population operated within "a moral gray zone," where the separation between collaboration and resistance was not evident. The issue of collaboration was addressed differently on the various levels of Soviet discourse. The intraparty discussions displayed a harsh rhetoric against the collaborators, but ordinary citizens did not always accept the party's dichotomy between collaboration and resistance.

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¹⁶⁴ Jeffrey Herf, *Divided Memory: The Nazi Past in the Two Germanys* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 14-17.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Jeffrey Jones, " 'Every Family Has Its Freak': Perceptions of Collaboration in Occupied Soviet Russia, 1943-1948," *Slavic Review* 64, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 747-770.

Soviet citizens made a distinction between "collaboration" and "collaborationism." It was one thing to engage with the occupation regime in order to survive, and another thing to share the same ideological views of the Nazi regime. The majority of the occupied population collaborated with the occupiers because they just wanted to survive, while a minority shared the spirit of collaborationism because they believed in the Nazi ideology.

At the same time, Jones points to the dual feelings of the Soviet people toward the repressive policies of the Communist Party. On the one hand, many people supported the harsh rhetoric of the party against the collaborators. On the other hand, some people criticized the party for applying severe punishments to minor collaborators while sparing the "true" traitors among the party members.

Tanja Penter argues that the NKVD military tribunals issued many arbitrary sentences, but they also had an important symbolic function: they reestablished Soviet order in the former occupied territories. ¹⁶⁹ Many people criticized the postwar trials because, in some cases, war criminals could get milder punishments than other alleged collaborators. Nevertheless, these trials were not solely imposed by the Soviet authorities. They were established in cooperation with the local communities that aspired for revenge and order.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 770.

¹⁶⁹Tanja Penter, "Collaboration on Trial: New Source Material on Soviet Postwar Trials against Collaborators," *Slavic Review* 64, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 782-790.

Finally, Martin Dean shows that the Soviets hesitated to purge all of the instances of wartime collaboration because they needed local personnel to ensure the stability of the former occupied regions. According to him, the returning Soviet authorities recruited former collaborators of the Nazi administration, in the same way the Nazi regime relied on some former members of the Communist Party in order to administrate the occupied territories.

In mid-July 1941, the staff of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had to deal with the immediate occupation of the region by the German and Romanian armies. During the interwar years, Soviet newspapers devoted numerous pages to the depiction of the Romanian administration in Bessarabia. They asserted that Romania was governed by a group of wealthy landowners who occupied Bessarabia and exploited the local Moldavian peasants.

Now, the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory could check if the appearance and the policies of the Romanian occupational regime coincided with the content of Soviet propaganda. In this chapter, I will show how the community of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory lived through the years of Romanian occupation and made sense of its wartime experience in the Soviet postwar trials.

The Establishment of the Romanian Administration

As a result of the agreement with Hitler, on August 19, 1941, Romania's ruler, Ion Antonescu, established the Romanian administration on the territory between the rivers

¹⁷⁰ Martin Dean, "Where Did All the Collaborators Go?" Slavic Review 64, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 791-798.

Nistru and Bug.¹⁷¹ The parties agreed that this territory would be under temporary Romanian occupation until the end of the war when its legal status would be fixed. In order to define the separate status of this occupied territory, the Romanian authorities referred to it as "Transnistria," which in the Romanian language means "the territory beyond the river Nistru." Thus, Transnistria was not a part of Romania, and it was assigned to a second class territory beyond Nistru.

Although they share a similar name, Romanian Transnistria was totally different from the post-Soviet Transnistrian Moldavian Republic (Pridnestrovskaia Moldavskaia Respublika), which emerged in the early 1990's after separation from the Republic of Moldova. The post-Soviet Transnistria comprises just a thin strip of land on the left bank of Nistru, while the Romanian Transnistria covered some 40,000 sq. km. from the Nistru to the Bug. As a matter of fact, the area of Romanian Transnistria was bigger than the area of the whole Republic of Moldova, including TMR. In addition, from October 17, 1941, the Romanians occupied Odessa and made it the capital of Transnistria.

On August 19, 1941, Antonescu issued a decree, which established the general framework of the Romanian administration in Transnistria. ¹⁷² In the decree, Antonescu appointed Gheorghe Alexianu, a professor of law at Chernivtsi University, as the Governor of Transnistria. The Office of the Governor consisted of several Directorates responsible for the social and economic administration of Transnistria.

¹⁷¹Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and His Regime, Romania, 1940 -1944* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 166-168.

¹⁷² Ibid.

The administrators of the Directorates were appointed by the Governor and were directly responsible to him. The territory of Transnistria was divided into 13 districts, which were headed by prefects, who were usually Romanian army officers. In their turn, these 13 districts were divided into raions, which were run by the praetors and appointed by the prefects. The praetors were typically Romanian civil servants or officers.

The decree established a special formula for the remuneration of the Romanian functionaries in Transnistria. The official currency of Transnistria, RKKS (Reichskreditkassenschein), was a special German mark, which was introduced in all the German-occupied territories. RKKS was constantly devalued in relation to the Romanian currency.

In order to attract more Romanian specialists into Transnistria, the Transnistrian government would offer a special package for the remuneration of these cadres. This package consisted of a salary paid in Romanian currency and a monthly allowance paid in RKKS. Thus, the monthly wage of a Romanian specialist in Transnistria could be the equivalent of four month's wages paid to a local specialist. ¹⁷⁴

Despite all the special benefits granted to the Romanian functionaries in Transnistria, local Governorship could not rule the province without the contribution from the Transnistrian residents. The Romanian administration sought to employ primarily ethnic Moldavians, because it regarded Moldavians as ethnic relatives. In

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

addition, Moldavians could serve as intermediaries between the Romanian administration and the local population, because they spoke both Russian and Romanian.

According to Alexander Dallin, "the Moldavian minority was transformed into [an] ethnic elite by the new regime." Moldavians represented just over ten per cent (290.000) of the Transnistrian population. The majority of the local residents were either Ukrainians or Russians. Apart from the Slavic majority, Transnistria had large German (125.000) and Jewish populations (300.000). 176

In Holocaust literature, Transnistria is known as one of the killing grounds for Eastern European Jewry. In July-August 1941, Einsatzgruppe D-led by Colonel Otto Ohlendorf-together with the German Eleventh Army and the Romanian Third and Fourth Armies marched through Transnistria and engaged in what is known as "the Holocaust by bullets." As a basic pattern, Jews were ordered to gather somewhere in the locality. They were then executed on the outskirts of the localities, preferably in wooded locations.¹⁷⁷

During the same period, Antonescu started the deportations of Jews from Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina to Transnistria. A small number were transported on carts, while the vast majority had to walk. Those who could not walk were shot on the

¹⁷⁵ Alexander Dallin, *Odessa*, 1941-1944: A Case Study of Soviet Territory under Foreign Rule(Iasi: Center for Romanian Studies, 1998), 89.

¹⁷⁶Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and his Regime, Romania, 1940 -1944*,(New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 167.

¹⁷⁷ Jean Ancel, *Transnistria*, 1941-1942: the Romanian mass murder campaigns, 3 vols. (Tel Aviv. Tel Aviv. University, 2003).

spot. Therefore, Transnistria became a place of death marches. During these marches, most of the Jews died of exhaustion on their way to the ghettos. 178

On November 11, 1941, the Romanian government issued Ordinance no.23, which limited the mobility of Jews and confined them to ghettos and concentration camps in Transnistria. In the ordinance, the Romanian authorities euphemistically stated that all Jews had to be grouped in colonies, and each colony had to be administered by a head of the colony. The district praetors, the heads of the Romanian administration in the district, had to select one member from each Jewish colony and appoint them as colony heads. ¹⁷⁹

Jewish specialists could be employed in the reconstruction of the factories or at various construction works. The Inspectorate of the Gendarmerie was responsible for the enforcement of the ordinance. According to Article 8, "Any Jew found in a place other than that in which his residence is fixed without the approval of the authorities, will be considered a spy and immediately punished according to military law in time of war." ¹⁸⁰

On March 25, 1942, the Governor of Transnistria restricted the mobility of the local population in Transnistria. First of all, the Governor's decree established limitations on the mobility inside Transnistria. Except for the civil servants, all the people who intended to travel from one locality to another inside Transnistria had to ask for

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and his Regime, Romania, 1940 -1944* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 278-279.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ ANRM, F. 706, inv.1, d.43, f.52.

official permits from the Romanian administration. Secondly, no civilians could travel outside Transnistria without a special permit from the Transnistrian administration.

Finally, the decree established a special border regime for Transnistrian residents who wanted to cross into Romania. Only the residents who were able to prove their Romanian origins could travel to Romania for more than 30 days. Jews were denied any access into Romania. In exceptional cases, all other residents could travel to Romania, but they could not exceed their stay for more than 30 days.

From the Restoration to the Evacuation of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory

Upon their arrival in Transnistria, the Romanian authorities started a detailed inventory of the local economic, social, cultural and demographic potential. They summarized all the findings in separate monographs devoted to each Transnistrian county. *The Monograph of Rybnitsa County* noted that the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was the largest factory in Transnistria, with the capacity to produce sixteen million kilograms of sugar per year. According to *The Monograph*, this productive capacity meant the factory could supply enough sugar for all Transnistria and still have extra that could be exported from the region. However, the same source acknowledged that the factory had outdated technology and was not even functional, since the Soviets had evacuated some of the necessary equipment. 183

¹⁸² ANRM, F. 706, inv.1, d.1213, ff.10-11.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

In June 1942, the Romanian Ministry of Economy delegated engineer Paul Gavrilescu to inspect the Transnistrian sugar factories. In the final report, Gavrilescu mentioned that the Soviets simplified the classic system of sugar production by eliminating some technologies of juice purification like sulphitation, the second defecation and the use of mechanic filters after the first carbonation. Gavrilescu evaluated the general state of the equipment as "primitive and without anything rationalized or systematized." ¹⁸⁴As a consequence, Gavrilescu argued that the evacuation of the sugar factories to Romania was not profitable.

Gavrilescu added that, in Romania, sugar factories worked at half of their productive capacity because they had a deficit of sugar beets. In his opinion, the evacuation of the Transnistrian sugar factories to Romania would increase the deficit of sugar beets in Romania. Gavrilescu mentioned that the Transnistrian sugar factories were located in a region with large sugar beet farms and they would yield better results if they were not evacuated to Romania. In conclusion, Gavrilescu recommended that the existing sugar factories had to be exploited during the 1942-1943 production season and some of the factories, including the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, had to be restored for the 1943-1944 production season. 185

On October 2, 1942, the Directorate of Industry summoned a conference with the administrators of the Transnistrian sugar factories. ¹⁸⁶ At the meeting, participants

¹⁸⁴ANRM, F. 706, inv.1, d.802, ff.18-22.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ DAOO, F.2265, op.1, spr. 359, ark. 2-4.

evaluated the state of the sugar factories and prospects for the next production season.

The Directorate urged the administrators to overcome every difficulty and to perceive sugar production as their military duty. The final declaration of the conference proclaimed that:

Administrators should work hard, until they fall down. At the front they die. We need to work 14 hours. Corrective: there are no selfish interests. Punishment: a bullet. We need heroic deeds!¹⁸⁷

Pavel Avram, the administrator of the Socolovca Sugar Factory, was the only administrator who did not attend the conference. Nevertheless, he would embody the military ideal of the factory administrator during his tenure at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. On June 12, 1943, the Directorate of Industry appointed Pavel Avram as the administrator of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. Avram was one of the numerous functionaries recruited by the Transnistrian authorities in Romania. He came to Transnistria from the town of Vatra Dornei, in Romania.

The new administrator started an energetic campaign for the restoration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. From the beginning of his mandate, Pavel Avram sent numerous telegrams to the Directorate of Industry asking for the acceleration of bureaucratic procedures. In one instance, Avram received a reprimand from the Directorate of Industry regarding his rush to send telegrams. The Directorate warned him that there was no need

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¹⁸⁷Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ DAOO, F. 2265, op.1, spr. 380, ark.65.

to send telegrams unless some issues were really important and couldn't be postponed for a few days. 189

After the general evaluation of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, Avram mentioned that all the buildings of the sugar factory had been preserved and only the roofs needed extensive repairs. Peferring to the state of the equipment, Avram claimed that the Rybnitsa Prefecture granted some of the factory's equipment to various enterprises from the Rybnitsa County. Thus, a crucial step for the restoration of the sugar factory would be to reclaim the missing equipment from the Rybnitsa prefecture.

On June 23, 1943, the Directorate of Industry requested from the Rybnitsa prefecture that all former inventory of the sugar factory be returned to its former owner. As a consequence, the prefect authorized Avram to locate and to reclaim the former equipment of the sugar factory from any other organization in the Rybnitsa County. Avram sent delegations around the Rybnitsa County in order to locate and reclaim the missing inventory.

In addition to the deficit of equipment, Avram had to solve the problem of personnel. On July 1, 1943, Avram requested that the Rybnitsa prefect provide additional space for the housing of workers. ¹⁹² He noted that all of the 120 workers of the sugar

¹⁸⁹ DAOO, F. 2265, op.1, spr.375, ark. 30.

¹⁹⁰ ANRM, F.1553, inv.1, d.5, ff.204-205.

¹⁹¹ DAOO, F. 2265, op.1, spr.380, ark.116.

¹⁹² ANRM, F.1553, inv.1, d.5, f.221.

factory lived on the premises of the factory and the high density of workers inside the factory could start an epidemic. In conclusion, Avram declared that:

Taking into consideration our common goal to restore the factory, in order to raise the morale of these families, which will yield a better productivity rate, I appeal to your noble soul, Mr. Prefect with the request that you as the guiding star of the high patriotic love, would dispose that some of the workers and their families be housed in the town on the account of the Prefecture. 193

The morale of the workers was also affected by the lack of food. At all the other Transnistrian sugar factories, a part of the salary was paid in RKKS and another part consisted of molasses. ¹⁹⁴ At the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, the workers were paid only in molasses. For instance, in July 1943, each worker received fifty kilograms of molasses. Workers sold the molasses and procured their food at the local market.

In a letter to the Directorate of Industry, Avram mentioned that the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory were starving because the price of molasses at the market was low and they couldn't buy enough food with the currency that they gained from selling molasses. Thus, Avram proposed that the Directorate of Industry remunerate the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory according to the same formula applied to other sugar factories. The Directorate approved Avram's request, and from August 1943, Rybnitsa workers were remunerated with a monthly wage and a quantity of molasses.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴Ibid., f.126.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

On July 14, 1943, Avram mentioned in a note to the Rybnitsa prefect that the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory did not have any functionary. Avram noted that Elizaveta Shulzhik, the former chief accountant of the sugar factory, was employed by the Rybnitsa district administration. During the Soviet period, Shulzhik had worked at the sugar factory for eight years. Avram insisted that Shulzhik had to come back to the sugar factory because she held unique expertise in the sugar industry. In the end, Avram did not manage to convince the local authorities to delegate Shulzhik to the sugar factory.

On July 15, 1943, Avram requested that the Directorate of Industry appoint engineer Curovschi Andrei as the chief engineer of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, because "the factory did not have any other specialist in the sugar industry." Born in the Bessarabian town of Hotin, Curovschi was appointed the chief engineer of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory on July 23, 1943.

On some occasions, Avram asked for permission from the gendarmerie to hire Jews from the Rybnitsa ghetto. In August 1943, he requested the release of two tinkers from the Rybnitsa ghetto. He mentioned that the tinkers were needed at the factory for 15 days. In the same letter, Avram asked for permission to hire the turner Stein Abram, who "was much needed at the factory for 60 days." In October 1943, Avram repeatedly

¹⁹⁶ ANRM, F.1553, inv.1, d.5, f.209.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., f.203.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

asked for the release of Stein Abram, who was needed at the factory for another two months.¹⁹⁹

Despite the deficit of specialists, Avram still preferred to hire specialists among the Moldavian minority. He required birth certificates, which served as proof that job applicants were "ethnic Moldavians." On October 20, 1943, Pavel Avram requested the birth certificate of the boiler maker, Lipota Ioan, "in order to establish Lipota's Moldavian descent." Subsequently, Lipota was appointed the expeditor of the sugar factory.

As a reward for his service to the Romanian administration, on November 16, 1943, Lipota received a certificate, which confirmed that:

Mr. Lipota Ioan, boiler maker, 42 years old, from Rybnitsa, is in service of the Romanian administration in Transnistria, from the date of occupation to the present. All this time, he proved his loyalty, and good behavior, fulfilling his duties and showing a good mastery of his profession.²⁰¹

During Soviet rule, the Moldavian Ioan Lipota appeared on the list of the sugar factory personnel as the Ukrainian Ivan Lepota. Moreover, Ivan Lepota was a party member and the secretary of the local party cell. In 1935, Lepota was dismissed by the district party committee for supporting the appointment of a former alleged kulak as the deputy chief engineer. At the same meeting of the district party committee, Lepota was accused of destroying the archive of the party cell. Despite the serious charges against

²⁰⁰ Ibid., f. 69.

²⁰²AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.497, ff.173-175.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., f.165.

²⁰¹ Ibid., f.50.

him, Ivan Lepota survived the Great Terror, only to be hired by the Romanian administration, who granted him a certificate of loyalty.

By destroying the archive of the party cell, Lepota left a blank spot on the history of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. At the same time, the destruction of the party archive might have provided him with a fruitful career during the Romanian administration. By destroying his record in the archive of the party cell, Lepota could reinvent his identity during the Romanian administration. In this way, by manipulating the state documents a former Ukrainian secretary of the party cell became a loyal Moldavian servant of the Romanian administration.

In May 1935, during his tenure as the secretary of the party cell, Lepota sent a letter to the director of the Odessa Sugar Trust.²⁰³ In this letter, Lepota argued against the frequent replacement of factory personnel. He mentioned that the continuity of the cadres improved the productivity of the sugar factory. Even if subsequent developments disrupted the productivity of the sugar factory, Lepota survived the ruptures of the Great Terror. Thus, Lepota's survival of the Great Terror assured the continuity of the factory's personnel during the Romanian occupation.

As the situation on the Eastern Front worsened for Nazi Germany and its Allies, the criteria for hiring workers became more restrictive. On October 21, 1943, the Directorate of Industry sent a note to the administrators of all the Transnistrian sugar

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²⁰³ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.499, f.11.

factories, urging them not to hire any local personnel without prior favorable notice from the gendarmerie.²⁰⁴

On October 6, 1943, the Directorate of Industry, dismissed the chief engineer Curovschi from the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory and restricted his access to the premises of the sugar factory. Avram accused Curovschi of stealing some furniture from the sugar factory. He summoned Curovschi to immediately return the stolen goods: a wardrobe, a kitchen wardrobe, a bed, and a bed for children. If he failed to return these goods, Avram warned him that he would appeal to the gendarmerie.

In December 1943, Avram sent numerous reports to the gendarmerie denouncing the suspicious behavior of certain employees. In one such report, Avram denounced the chief accountant Maria Regulska for sabotaging her workplace. Born in 1920, Regulska was appointed the chief accountant of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in August 1943. Avram claimed that Regulska left her workplace on November 27, 1943, without any prior notice and she ignored all the subsequent calls to come back to the factory. In conclusion, Avram recommended that Regulska must be prosecuted for sabotage, because "she was openly hostile to the interests of the state." 206

On December 14, 1943, Avram denounced the chief engineer Robert Coblas, for "drinking alcohol and leaving his workplace in a scandalous manner." ²⁰⁷ In the report,

²⁰⁴ DAOO F.2265, op.1, spr.375, ark.434.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., ark.334.

²⁰⁶ANRM, F.1553, inv.1, d.5, f.40.

²⁰⁷Ibid., f.22.

Avram requested that local gendarmerie escort Coblas back to his workplace. At the same time, he warned that Coblas should be under surveillance, because he was "a recalcitrant element." On the same day, Avram denounced Valentin Humovskii, the cashier of the factory, who was missing from the factory for a few days. Avram suspected that Humovskii pretended to be ill, but in reality he was involved in some illegal dealings. ²⁰⁸

The Soviet offensive on the Eastern Front determined that the Romanian administration would stop the restoration of the factory. On November 16, 1943, Ion Antonescu summoned a special meeting of the Romanian Council of Ministers to discuss the evacuation of the factories from the occupied territories. Antonescu urged all the responsible authorities to evacuate as many materials as possible to Romania. Referring to Transnistria, Antonescu stated that Romanians had to evacuate everything that could be used in Romania. Otherwise, he predicted that the German Army would come and use all the local resources for its own supply, because "the wartime needs excluded the respect of any rules."

Antonescu pointed out that in some cases, local Romanian authorities focused on the evacuation of certain industries and neglected other industries. For instance, he emphasized that there was a surplus of sugar factories in Romania and there was no need to evacuate more sugar factories. At the same time, Antonescu made it clear that the surplus of sugar factories in Romania did not mean that the Transnistrian factories had to

²⁰⁸ Ibid., f.23.

²⁰⁹ANRM, F.706, inv.1, d.590, ff. 66-73.

be left to the enemy. On the contrary, Antonescu insisted that the equipment of these factories had to be dismantled or it had to be destroyed.²¹⁰

Shortly after this meeting, the Romanian authorities started to dismantle the equipment of the Transnistrian factories. At the same time, the wartime needs of the Romanian and German troops affected the dismantling of the equipment. For instance, on December 18, 1943, Avram accused the Romanian Army of using the sugar factory as lodging for Romanian soldiers. He argued that the soldiers expelled the workers from the sugar factory, and he could not continue the dismantling of the factory.²¹¹

As a major railway hub, Rybnitsa was a transit point for many carriages with evacuated equipment. On its way to Romania, some of the equipment was temporarily stored at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. As the Soviet offensive approached Transnistria, Antonescu's remarks on the behavior of the retreating German armies proved visionary. On February 23, 1944, the German Army occupied the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. Avram complained to the Directorate of Industry that German soldiers occupied the factory and removed all the stored equipment. He asked for the immediate evacuation of these materials to Romania.²¹²

On March 1, 1944, Avram accused the local prefect of surrendering the sugar factory to the German Army. He mentioned that the German soldiers used the materials of the sugar factory for their own purposes and "the administration of the factory did not

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²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ ANRM, F.1553, inv.1, d.5, f.18.

²¹² DAOO, F. 2265, op.1, spr. 384, ark.26.

have any authority." In a defiant tone, Avram claimed that the factory should be either guarded by Romanian soldiers or it should be officially granted to the German soldiers. Otherwise, he couldn't assume any responsibility for the preservation of the sugar factory.²¹³

Soviet troops reached Rybnitsa on March 30, 1944. By then, Pavel Avram evacuated to Romania. On May 1, 1944, upon his arrival to Viisoara in the Turda County, Avram wrote a telegram to the Romanian Council of Ministers. In the telegram, he informed the authorities that he held the archive of the sugar factory and he intended to submit the documents for further preservation.²¹⁴

In contrast to the former secretary of the Communist Party cell, Lepota

Ivan/Lipota Ioan, who destroyed his party record during his tenure at the Rybnitsa Sugar

Factory, Pavel Avram, the Romanian administrator of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, sought
to preserve the archive of the sugar factory. In his brief letter to the Council of Ministers,

Avram did not mention why he decided to keep the archive of the sugar factory. He could
have been proud of his activity at the sugar factory or he could have just respected his
administrative duties.

The fact is that because of Avram's gesture to hand the archives of the sugar factory to the Romanian authorities, I was able to consult these archives. After the war, the Soviets brought the record of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory from Romania to the Central Archives of Soviet Moldavia. Today, these documents are kept at the National Archive of the Republic of Moldova, in Chisinau. The documents are in very bad shape

²¹³Ibid., 1, 32.

²¹⁴ANRM, F.706, inv. 1, d.1200, f.234.

and some of them are already missing. Nevertheless, they provide invaluable insight into the daily routine of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. Together with the proceedings of the Soviet postwar purges, these documents offer a more detailed perspective on the Romanian administrative practices at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory.

Soviet Postwar Purges

Long before the end of the war, Soviet authorities started to gather information on the consequences of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. On November 2, 1942, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR issued a decree "On the establishment of the Extraordinary State Commission for the Investigation of the Crimes of the Fascist German Invaders and Their Accomplices, and of the Damage They Caused to Citizens, Collective Farms, Public Organizations, State Enterprises, and Institutions of the USSR (ChGK)."

The Commission had more than 100 local branches in various administrative-territorial units of the USSR. Each local branch consisted of three members: the first secretary of the regional party committee, plus the heads of the corresponding local Council of People's Commissars and the NKVD-KGB. The Commission estimated the value of the material damage and the number of the victims in the occupied territories.²¹⁶

On August 13, 1944, the Rybnitsa subdivision of the ChGK issued a final report "On the shooting of the peaceful Soviet citizens by the fascists in Rybnitsa." The report

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²¹⁵ M. A Sorokina, "People and Procedures: Toward a History of the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in the USSR," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 6, no. 4 (2005): 797.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

mentioned that in August-September 1941 and March 1942, the occupiers established a camp in the Rybnitsa prison. From August 1941 to March 1944, around three thousand "party members, Soviet functionaries and Jews" had been confined in the prison. The commission found that 1297 prisoners were shot; 1194 died of starvation and 240 were burned.²¹⁷

The final report mentioned that the occupying administration destroyed all the evidence of war crimes: the files of the prison and the lists of the executed prisoners. The commission wrote the final report from the depositions of Guberman Khaim Berkovich and Mazler Gersh Markovich, the two Jewish survivors of the camp. The witnesses testified that after the execution of the prisoners they had to bury the corpses.²¹⁸

They also claimed that the prison administration took all the possessions from the victims and shared them with the prefecture and gendarmerie. The report declared that the main perpetrators of these crimes were: Popescu Ion, the head of gendarmerie; major Delcea, the director of the Rybnitsa prison; Popescu Virgiliu, the mayor of Rybnitsa; Popescu-Corbul, the Rybnitsa prefect.²¹⁹

On March 25, 1945, the Commission issued a report "On the Shooting of the Soviet Patriots and Romanian Political Prisoners in the Rybnitsa Prison."²²⁰ Frantskovich Valentin Antonovich testified in front of the commission that, on March 19, 1944, a

²¹⁷ S. Ia. Afteniuket al., *Moldavskaia SSR v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine Sovetskogo Soiuza 1941-1945:* Sbornik Dokumentov i Materialov v Dvukh Tomakh, vol.2 (Kishinev: Shtiintsa, 1976), 193-194.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid., 216-217.

group of forty Romanian and German soldiers accompanied by the commandant of the Rybnitsa prison, Pantelei Valutsa executed 238 prisoners out of 245 inmates of the Rybnitsa prison. The commission could not establish the names of the soldiers who participated at the execution, but it concluded that Pantelei Valutsa was primarily responsible for the massacre.

In addition to the Soviet prisoners of war and former members of the all-Union Communist Party, the Rybnitsa prison confined 55 Jewish members of the Romanian Communist Party. In 1996, Matei Gall, one of the three Jewish survivors of the Rybnitsa massacre, gave an interview to the Shoah Foundation. Fifty years after the final report of the Soviet commission, Gall recounted the details of the Rybnitsa massacre. Matei Gall was arrested by Romanian authorities in November 1940 for being a member of the Romanian Communist Party. In spring 1941, Gall was sentenced to 3 years in prison. In September 1942, Gall and other Jewish political prisoners from all over Romania were moved to the Vapniarka concentration camp in Transnistria.

Gall claims that in contrast to the commandant of the Rybnitsa prison, Sabin Motora, the director of the Vapniarka concentration camp, avoided the execution of all 600 inmates. In March 1944, prior to the arrival of the SS units, Motora liberated all the inmates of the concentration camp. According to Matei Gall, Motora was a Romanian Schindler.²²²

²²¹Matei Gall, interview by Cornelia Maimon Levi, February 14, 1996, The University of Southern California (USC) Shoah Foundation Institute's Visual History Archive, The US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington DC.

²²² Ibid.

In November 1943, Gall was transferred from Vapniarka to the Rybnitsa prison.

In his interview, Gall recounted that:

The morning of March 19, 1944, appeared to be the same as other numerous days in the prison. There was no sign of a future massacre. Moreover, on that morning, prisoners were brought into the courtyard and told that, due to the rapid advancement of the Soviet army, soon all of them will be transferred to Romania. So, all of us [prisoners] were preparing for our departure. Then, the administration of the prison told us that we will have to wait until evening, because there were no trains for us. First of all, the Romanian administration had to evacuate the Romanians and the local collaborators... In the evening, we heard some noise in the basement. It was the sound of shooting and shouting. At a certain point, the door of our cell opened, and I saw a couple of men in SS uniforms. Then we aligned at the wall and the officer ordered the shooting. It was a miracle that I survived as all my cellmates perished.²²³

Gall mentions in the interview that his escape from the Rybnitsa prison was a miracle. In postwar Romania, the authorities did not believe in miracles. Many of Gall's former colleagues became prominent figures in Communist Romania, and they didn't want to accept his story of a miraculous escape from the Rybnitsa massacre. Instead, they assumed that Gall bribed the SS officer who was in charge of the executions. All the charges against him were dropped only after Stalin's death. At the end of the 1960's, Gall immigrated to Germany.

Along with the regional commissions for the investigation of war crimes, the NKVD organized special tribunals to prosecute the alleged collaborators. The collection on "The War Crimes Investigation and Trial Records from the Republic of Moldova, 1944-1955" at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) comprises the detailed proceedings of the sixty one trials organized by the Moldavian Soviet authorities

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²²³Ibid.

in order to investigate war crimes and enemy collaboration in Moldova and Transnistria.²²⁴ The USHMM obtained these records from the Archives of the State Security and Information Service of the Republic of Moldova (ASSIRM) at the end of 2003.

In Rybnitsa, the NKVD tribunals convicted all of the former leaders of the Rybnitsa ghetto "for anti-Soviet behavior and collaboration with the Romanian administration." All of them were sentenced to detention in labor camps. On September 24, 1944, Roizman Khaim Falikovich, the former premier of the Rybnitsa ghetto was sentenced to ten years of labor camps for "forcing the Soviet citizens to participate in labor projects of the Romanian administration."

On October 31, 1944, Shtrakhman Nakhman Mortkovich, deputy head of the Rybnitsa ghetto, was sentenced to fifteen years of labor camps, "for anti-Soviet agitation." Shtrakhman was sentenced to labor camps even though he had two brothers in the Soviet Army. On April 6, 1946, Akhtenberg Moisei Iakovlevich, the deputy head of the Rybnitsa ghetto was sentenced to ten years of labor camps "for active collaboration with the Romanian administration and beating of the Soviet citizens." On August 20, 1948, Bosharnitsan Samuil Samuilovich, premier of the Rybnitsa ghetto and director of

²²⁴RG-54.003 War Crimes Investigation and Trial Records from the Republic of Moldova, 1944-1955, Moldovan Service of Security and Information (former KGB) Archive, The US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington DC.

²²⁵ Ibid.

the soap factory, was sentenced to ten years of labor camps "for anti-Soviet agitation and for organizing a soap factory on the territory of the ghetto."²²⁶

At the same time, the NKVD tribunal in Rezina- a Bessarabian town across the river from Rybnitsa-convicted a former Romanian policeman, Sergienko Pavel Evtikhievich, along with Vieru Mikhail Vasilevich, Vieru Tudos Vasilevich, and Patlazhan Panteleimon Eremeevich to ten years in labor camps "for the mass execution of the Jewish population in Rezina."²²⁷According to the proceedings of the trial, in July 1941 the four defendants participated in the mass execution of the local Jewish population and divided the belongings of the Jewish victims.

The NKVD trials convicted participants at the mass murders of Jews, but also the heads of the local Jewish ghettos. Both groups were sentenced to ten or fifteen years in labor camps. Pavel Sergienko, a former policeman in the Romanian administration, received the same sentence as the leaders of the Rybnitsa ghetto. If the policeman was sentenced for deliberately participating in the massacre of Jews, then the administrators of the Jewish ghetto were sentenced for forcing the Soviet Jews into various labor projects of the Romanian administration.

In his study of postwar L'viv, Tarik Amar finds similar cases in which Soviet prosecutors sentenced Holocaust survivors for alleged collaboration with Nazi

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ RG-54.003 Moldovan Service of Security and Information (former KGB) Archive, The US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington DC.

authorities.²²⁸ Amar asserts that the Soviet postwar trials established a hierarchy of war victims. In this hierarchy, the party activists had priority, while most of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust were included in the general category of ordinary civilians. For the Soviets, the alleged disloyalty to Soviet power was a more serious crime than participation in the mass execution of the civilian population.

The loyalty of many former party members was put on trial during the party purges. At the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, the party purges started at the end of 1944. The district party committee assigned the party instructors with a task to gather information about the wartime behavior of former party members. In one note, the instructor of the Rybnitsa District Party Committee recommended the exclusion of Murzhinskii Leonid from the Communist Party. ²²⁹

Born in 1897, Murzhinskii had been a member of the party since 1931. An ethnic Pole, Murzhinskii came from a family of workers. During the Romanian occupation, he worked as a guardian at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. The Soviet instructor noticed that:

Murzhinskii did not fight against the occupants and sometimes he even denounced the Soviet activists to the Romanian authorities. He often had German and Romanian guests. In 1944, the occupants installed an anti-aircraft gun in his garden. During his tenure as a guardian, Murzhinskii stole molasses from the sugar factory. Instead of sharing the molasses with other workers, he sold it. Murzhinskii destroyed his party card. I consider that Murzhinskii could not be a party member.²³⁰

²²⁸ Tarik Cyril Amar, "A Disturbed Silence: Discourse on the Holocaust in the Soviet West as an Anti-Site of Memory," in *The Holocaust in the East: Local Perpetrators and Soviet Responses*, ed. Michael David-Fox, Peter Holquist, and Alexander M. Martin (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014), 158-184.

²²⁹AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.709, f.19.

²³⁰AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.709, f.17.

On December 3, 1944, the same instructor recommended the exclusion of Baranovskii Anton Aleksandrovich from the Communist Party.²³¹ Born in 1896, Baranovskii had been a party member since 1929. An ethnic Ukrainian, Baranovskii was assigned to the social category of worker. Before the war, Baranovskii was a locksmith at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. At the start of the Nazi-Romanian invasion, he failed to evacuate into the Soviet rear and returned to the village of Erzhovo.

At the beginning of 1944, Baranovskii came back to the sugar factory and remained there after the return of the Soviet administration. ²³² The instructor of the Rybnitsa District Party Committee recommended his exclusion from the party because Baranovskii did not belong to any partisan brigades and he was not a member of any underground organizations. The fact that Baranovskii kept his party card throughout the entire occupation did not preclude the instructor from recommending his exclusion from the party.

Baranovskii was excluded from the party for failing to enroll in any partisan brigades. When asked about his passivity during the wartime, Baranovskii argued that he could not enroll in partisan brigades because there was "no one to organize them." And the could not enroll in partisan brigades because there was "no one to organize them." And the could not enroll in partisan brigades because there was "no one to organize them." And the could not enroll in partisan brigades because there was "no one to organize them."

On June 30, 1941, the Central Committee of the Moldavian Communist Party issued a decree "On the organization of the communist underground and partisan

²³² Ibid.

²³¹Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

brigades in the rear of the enemy."²³⁴ The decree urged all the district party organizations to establish partisan brigades, which could remain on the occupied territory after the evacuation of the Soviet administration.

These partisan brigades had to be completed primarily from the former members of the Romanian Communist Party or from the Moldavian members of the all-Union Communist Party, who knew the landscape and spoke the language. In order to lead the partisan brigades, the district committees had to create underground party cells in each locality. According to the decree, "these party cells had to employ primarily Moldavians, who spoke the Romanian and Moldavian languages." ²³⁵

In order to recruit more Moldavians into the partisan brigades, the Soviets provided different material incentives. These incentives generated some negative reactions from the other members of the partisan brigades. On January 12, 1944, recruit P. Miasnikov, complained that his wife did not receive her monthly allowance, whereas all the Moldavian representatives received greetings and small gifts for the New Year's Day. ²³⁶ In the following, Miasnikov claims that:

We are not the representatives of the Moldavian Government, but we are just simple Russian warriors, who are called to serve our socialist country-Mother Russia. I think our service is not worse than the service of those who receive compliments from the Government. So, you have to understand that it is very upsetting.²³⁷

²³⁴S. Ia. Afteniuk et al., *Moldavskaia SSR v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine Sovetskogo Soiuza 1941-1945: Sbornik Dokumentov i Materialov v Dvukh Tomakh*, vol.2 (Kishinev: Shtiintsa, 1976), 234-236.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ AOSPRM, F.3280, inv.1, d. 64, f.10.

²³⁷ Ibid.

Despite their early attempts to organize a massive partisan movement in Soviet Moldavia, the Soviets failed to mobilize the local population into partisan brigades. Even some Soviet historians acknowledge the failure of the partisan movement in Soviet Moldavia. Dmitrii Elin remarks that "the struggle of the Moldavian people against the fascist aggressors had its own particularities." He claims that in western Ukraine and Belarus, the geographical factor was favorable for the organization of the partisan movement, whereas in Soviet Moldavia, the absence of forests precluded the development of a massive partisan movement.

A group of Soviet authors argue that in Soviet Moldavia, the partisan movement started to have a massive following only in early 1944, when the Soviet Army was in the neighborhood.²³⁹ In 1943, the Soviets established two "Moldavian" brigades of partisans. These brigades operated on the Ukrainian territory, under the supervision of the Ukrainian Staff of the Partisan Movement.

Mukhin, the head of the Moldavian partisan brigades, pointed to the poor selection of recruits.²⁴⁰ According to him, many Moldavian districts did not delegate any partisans, while such districts as Dubasari or Camenca delegated only cowards or old and disabled people. Moreover, Mukhin declared that there were no party members among

²³⁸DmitriiElin, *Partizany Moldavii: iz istorii partizanskogo dvizheniia moldavskogo naroda v gody Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny Sovetskogo Soiuza* (Kishinev: Cartea Moldoveneasca, 1974), 22-23.

²³⁹S. Ia. Afteniuk et al., *Moldavskaia SSR v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine Sovetskogo Soiuza 1941-1945:* Sbornik Dokumentov i Materialov v Dvukh Tomakh, vol.2 (Kishinev: Shtiintsa, 1976), 18.

²⁴⁰ AOSPRM, F.3280, inv.1, d.30, f 90.

the partisans of the two Moldavian brigades and there were no Moldavians in the commanding staff.

At the end of 1943 and the beginning of 1944, the Soviet command made several attempts to send the Moldavian brigades on the former territory of Soviet Moldavia, but these attempts failed. The Moldavian brigades fought along with the units of the Red Army, until June 1944, when the Central Committee of the Moldavian Communist Party decided to dismantle them.²⁴¹

The postwar party purge generated a massive campaign of denunciations. Some workers used their status as war veterans in order to advance their career goals. On May 7, 1948, Prostak, the initiator of the Stakhanovite movement at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, claimed that the director of the factory, Manulis, dismissed communists like him and hired former collaborators of the Romanian administration, like Sulima, who supplied vodka for the Romanian administration. In conclusion, Prostak compared the behavior of the director with the artillery, which targeted its own soldiers.

In a similar denunciation, Edelshtein G.M., a war veteran and an officer of the Red Army, claimed that the director Manulis broke party discipline when he dismissed Edelshtein from the factory and hired the former collaborators of the Romanian administration.²⁴³ As a result of these denunciations, the bureau of the party cell decided that Prostak and Edelshtein had to return to the factory while the alleged collaborators of

²⁴¹S. Ia.Afteniuket al., *Moldavskaia SSR v Velikoi Otechestvennoi Voine Sovetskogo Soiuza 1941-1945:* Sbornik Dokumentov i Materialov v Dvukh Tomakh, vol.2 (Kishinev: Shtiintsa, 1976), 477-478.

²⁴² AOSPRM, F.3, inv.36, d.3, ff.17-31.

²⁴³Ibid.

the Romanian administration had to be dismissed. The director Manulis was dismissed from the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory.

At the end of 1951, Mikhailenko N.M., a former soldier of the Red Army, sent letters to the Central Committee of the Moldavian Communist Party and to the Soviet Ministry of Food Industry complaining about "the wrong policies" of Ostromogilskii, the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory.²⁴⁴ Mikhailenko claimed that, instead of hiring war veterans, Ostromogilskii hired former collaborators of Nazi Germany.

For instance, Mikhailenko accused Khomenko P.E., the chief chemist of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, for working as a chief engineer in one of the Ukrainian sugar factories during the Nazi occupation of Ukraine. At the beginning of the war, Khomenko was an officer in the Red Army. In November 1941, he was captured by Nazi troops. From November 1941 until January 1944, Khomenko was employed at one of the sugar factories in Nazi-occupied Ukraine. In January 1944, he was confined in a camp for Soviet prisoners of war. He was liberated from the camp in April 1945. In June 1945, Soviet authorities appointed Khomenko as the chief chemist of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory.²⁴⁵

On the other hand, Brodskaia, the secretary of the party cell, notified Kudrea, the Director of Ukrglavsahar (Glavnoe Upravlenie Sakharnoi Promyshlennosti Ukrainskoi SSR- the General Administration of the Sugar Industry in Ukrainian SSR), that Mikhailenko made several attempts to break into Ostromogilskii's office and to request

²⁴⁴ AOSPRM, F.51, inv.11, d.103, ff.9-10.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

his appointment as engineer.²⁴⁶ Brodskaia remarked that Mikhailenko was often drunk and aggressive toward Khomenko and other specialists. Brodskaia claimed that as a result of Mikhailenko's aggressive behavior, the few qualified specialists could leave the sugar factory. In addition, she criticized Mikhailenko for being "an anti-Semite and a drunkard, who gathered around himself all the lazybones."²⁴⁷ As a result, Mikhailenko was dismissed from the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory.

Conclusion

After a joint German and Romanian offensive into the western borderlands of the Soviet Union, the Romanian ruler, Ion Antonescu, established the Romanian occupational regime in Transnistria. Upon their arrival, Romanian authorities started a detailed assessment of all the local material resources. Without a clearly defined legal status, Transnistria would become a source of industrial goods for the Romanian war effort.

From his appointment as the administrator of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, Pavel Avram started an energetic campaign for the restoration of the sugar factory. From June to November 1943, he traced the lacking equipment and hired some specialists. Since the factory needed qualified personnel with experience in the sugar industry, Avram sought to hire former Soviet specialists who had proficient knowledge of the sugar factory.

Former members of the all-Union Communist Party became "loyal servants" of the Romanian administration. For instance, Ivan Lepota, the former secretary of the party

²⁴⁶ AOSPRM, F.51, inv.11, d.103, ff. 87-88.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

cell at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory turned into Ioan Lipota, "a loyal Moldavian servant of the Romanian state." A former secretary of the party cell, Lepota, was dismissed in 1935 because he allegedly cooperated with the deputy director, who was a kulak. Lepota survived the Great Terror and was employed by the Romanian administration.

After the war, the Soviet struggle against "the fascist aggressors" moved from the trenches to Soviet institutions. Long before the end of the war, the Soviets started to evaluate the consequences of the Nazi invasion for Soviet society. In the former occupied territories, the Soviets also evaluated the behavior of Soviet citizens during the occupation. The returning Soviet administration organized a series of postwar purges in order to examine the loyalty of each individual to the Soviet state.

In Soviet Moldavia, the NKVD tribunals convicted genuine war criminals, like former Romanian policeman, Pavel Sergienko, who participated in mass executions of Jews in Rezina. Soviet prosecutors also convicted all of the Jewish leadership of the Rybnitsa ghetto. According to the proceedings of the trials, the administrators of the Rybnitsa ghetto were convicted "for their collaboration with the Romanian authorities." Soviet prosecutors did not make a distinction between the victims of the Holocaust and the perpetrators. Both groups were prosecuted for disloyalty to the Soviet Union. Even if the leaders of the Jewish ghettos were victims of the Romanian occupation, they were accused of collaboration with their oppressors.

The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory served as a new battleground where the war veterans continued their struggle against the alleged collaborators of the Romanian administration and the Soviet prisoners of war had to prove their loyalty to the Soviet state. The

participants of these struggles wrote numerous denunciations to the party leadership. In these denunciations, they accused each other of collaboration with the enemy.

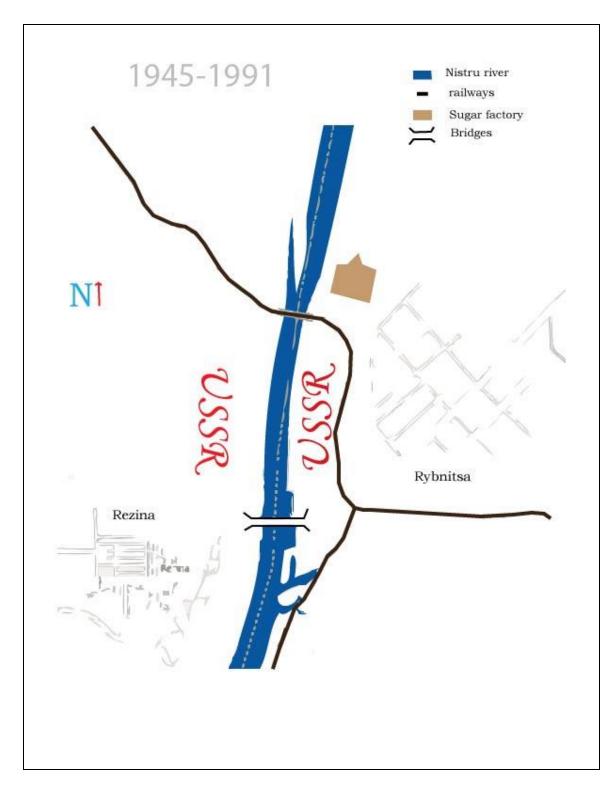


Figure 8 Map of the Transnistrian Borderlands (1945-1991)

CHAPTER 3: ASSEMBLING THE ENEMY'S LINE: A CASE STUDY OF THE POSTWAR TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFER IN SOVIET MOLDAVIA (1944-1952)

Soviet troops entered Rybnitsa on March 30, 1944. Shortly after their arrival to Rybnitsa, local authorities started to gather information on war losses. On May 27, 1944, the chief engineer of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory made a general evaluation of the sugar factory. The chief engineer specified that the main building of the factory, along with the administrative office, the mechanic workshops, some storage facilities and the stable avoided severe damages during the war. At the same time, he mentioned that the building of the gas-furnace was fully destroyed and one storage facility was partly destroyed.

In the same report, the engineer made a complete inventory of the factory's equipment.²⁴⁹ According to this inventory, the Soviets managed to evacuate some of the equipment during the first weeks of the war. They evacuated the central steam engine and an electric generator to Voronezh, in the rear of the Eastern Front. At the same time, the report emphasized the war damage inflicted by the retreating Romanian troops. The engineer mentioned that the Romanian authorities removed 22 diffusion cells, four carbonation boilers, and four heaters of the diffusion-juice.

²⁴⁸ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.685, ff.16-17.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

Despite these war damages, the chief engineer argued for the restoration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory.²⁵⁰ In his opinion, the factory still preserved most of its basic equipment and it could benefit from the abundance of sugar beets in the neighborhood. In addition, the engineer reported that the factory employed 65 people, including 18 qualified workers.

The engineer recommended that the factory be restored in two stages. The first stage would last six or seven months.²⁵¹ During this stage, if a diffusion battery were installed, the sugar factory would reach the capacity to process three or four thousand centners²⁵² of sugar beets per day. The second stage would follow immediately after the first stage, and it involved a gradual improvement of the technological scheme, with a subsequent increase in the processing capacity.

As proof of his commitment to the restoration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, the chief engineer noted that from May 10 to May 27, the factory's workers had cleaned the factory and its existing equipment.²⁵³ They classified the equipment according to its use. Finally, the engineer claimed that the local specialists had already started to draw the general plan of the sugar factory.

On August 9, 1944, Obirenko, a party functionary in Chisinau, reported to Salogor, the first secretary of the Central Committee of the CPM, that the Rybnitsa Sugar

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵² A centner is equivalent to one hundred kilograms.

²⁵³ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.685, ff. 5-6.

Factory was destroyed by the Romanians, and it would not be restored in 1944.²⁵⁴
According to him, the Kirovohrad Sugar Beet Trust had given orders to dismantle the existing Rybnitsa Sugar Factory equipment and transfer it to another sugar factory. In the meantime, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory would function only as a supplier of sugar beets for the other sugar factories.

Following the capitulation of Romanian troops on August 23, 1944, Soviet authorities demanded war reparations. The defeat of Romania marked the beginning of a new stage in the reconstruction of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. Soviet authorities sought to rebuild the factory with equipment seized as war reparations, and plans were soon afoot to restart the production of sugar in Rybnitsa with relocated reparations equipment.

On September 22, 1944, Salogor sent a letter to R. I. Malinovskii, the Commander of the Second Ukrainian Front.²⁵⁵ In this letter, Salogor claimed that the Romanians destroyed the Moldavian food industry, which represented 80-85% of the total industrial potential of Soviet Moldavia. He called for the rapid restoration of the Moldavian food industry through the dismantling and evacuation of Romanian factories to Soviet Moldavia.

Concerning the sugar industry in particular, Salogor requested the evacuation of a sugar factory from the town of Roman that had the capacity to process 6,000-8,000 centners of sugar beets per day. Accordingly, the Roman Sugar Factory would be

²⁵⁴AOSPRM, F.51, inv.2, d.75, ff.17-21.

²⁵⁵ AOSPRM, F.51, inv.2, d.161, f.88.

dismantled and evacuated to Rybnitsa with all the electric equipment and a boiler room. ²⁵⁶

Soon, though, they saw and seized upon what seemed an even better opportunity. Once Soviet troops reached Berlin, Moldavian authorities abandoned the evacuation of a Romanian sugar factory in favor of a fully mechanized and electrified German sugar factory as the most suitable replacement for the Soviet sugar factory in Rybnitsa. On April 9, 1946, the Soviet Council of Ministers approved the evacuation of Zuckerfabrik GmbH at Zörbig in Saxony-Anhalt to Rybnitsa. 257

The German sugar factory was completely different from the factory it had to replace in Rybnitsa. Before the war, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory processed an average of 7,000 centners of sugar beets per day. Zörbig Sugar Factory nearly doubled that, producing 13,600 centners of sugar beets per day. Zörbig achieved this higher production capacity through a more thorough mechanization and electrification than the Rybnitsa factory it was slated to replace.²⁵⁸

Yet, replacing the Soviet factory with a German one would prove far less easy than it first appeared to Soviet authorities. They hoped not only to replace Soviet losses through the seizure of reparations equipment but also to bring Soviet technology up to date through the adoption of German equipment and processes. However, could a German factory simply serve as a replacement for a Soviet factory? Would the Soviets be

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ AOSPRM, F.51, inv.4, d.351, ff.35-38.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

able to appropriate the German equipment for the Soviet technical imagination? Was it enough to encounter and relocate the foreign technology in order to improve economic results?

Models of Technological Transfer

Ruttan and Hayami provide a theoretical model for international technology transfer. ²⁵⁹ The model consists of three phases: material transfer, design transfer, and capacity transfer. The first two phases represent direct purchases of equipment or the replication of the foreign design without the assistance of the foreign designers. The third phase of capacity transfer implies the assistance of foreign specialists for the local adaptation and production of foreign equipment.

Ruttan and Hayami claim that if the developing countries rely only on the first two phases of technological transfer then they will continue to be dependent on foreign technologies. ²⁶⁰ Instead, international technological transfer could be successful if the developing countries imported not only the necessary technologies but also the human capital for the replication and production of foreign equipment.

Nathan Rosenberg specifies that "modern technology has a long umbilical cord." Technological change is not an abrupt change, but rather a series of small responses to specific local challenges. The technologies of the developed countries

²⁵⁹ V. W.Ruttan and Yujiro Hayami, "Technology Transfer and Agricultural Development," *Technology and Culture* 14, no. 2 (April 1, 1973): 124.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Nathan Rosenberg, "Economic Development and the Transfer of Technology: Some Historical Perspectives," *Technology and Culture* 11, no. 4 (October 1, 1970): 569-570.

emerged as minor adjustments to local conditions, and they could not be transferred to developing countries without the transfer of a support network. A successful technological transfer could be achieved only with the development of the capital goods industries in developing countries. The local capital goods industries would be able to adapt the foreign equipment to the local environment.

Anthony Sutton emphasizes the technological backwardness of the Soviet Union in comparison with the Western countries. He claims that the Soviets failed to innovate, because they based their extensive model of economic development on an intensive borrowing of Western technology. In particular, Sutton compares the innovative potential of the tsarist and Soviet sugar industries. According to him, the Russian Empire was one of the pioneers of beet sugar refining and one of the main innovators in this field. Some of the Russian innovations such as the method of purifying sugar in steam powered centrifuges, also known as "Russian sugar washing", became worldwide standards in the sugar industry. By contrast, Sutton argues that the Soviet sugar industry failed to innovate, even though the Soviet sugar industry had the largest productive capacity in the world.

He writes:

It may be seen from comparison of individual pieces of equipment within sugar manufacturing plants in the Soviet Union with similar pieces of equipment in the West that, first, there is very little if any Soviet

²⁶² Antony C. Sutton, *Western technology and Soviet economic development* (Stanford: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University, 1968), 378.

²⁶³ Ibid., 335.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 347.

innovation; and second, by and large Soviet equipment more or less exactly replicates Western equipment. It is also obvious that much thought, preparation, and investigation have gone into examination of Western processes to choose the most suitable process and equipment for Soviet conditions.²⁶⁵

Sutton is skeptical of the Soviet capacity to innovate but at the same time he shows that the Soviets had to find the appropriate equipment for the Soviet context. Accordingly, the borrowing party was not just an automatic receiver of a certain technology, but it was an active participant in the technological transfer. By adapting the foreign equipment to the Soviet context, Soviet engineers participated in the technological innovation.

Kendall Bailes claims that the ideological factor played a key role in the transfer of American technologies to the Soviet Union. ²⁶⁶ If the market-oriented economies were driven mainly by the profitability of new technological transfers, then the Soviet planned economy evaluated a series of political, economic, or ideological factors before proceeding to the borrowing of certain Western technologies. Bailes points to the fact that the Soviets were very selective in their borrowing of Western technologies. Referring to the Soviet rejection of certain Western technologies, Bailes notes that: "Sometimes what they refused is as revealing as what they borrowed."²⁶⁷

While Sutton claims that the Soviet Union was backward because it mostly borrowed technologies, George Holliday shows examples of developed countries that

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Kendall E. Bailes, "The American Connection: Ideology and the Transfer of American Technology to the Soviet Union, 1917–1941," Comparative Studies in Society and History 23, no. 3 (1981): 421–48.

²⁶⁷Ibid., 440.

based their technological success on the efficient borrowing of foreign technologies.²⁶⁸ In fact, he argues that the technologically developed countries are also the most successful borrowers of technologies. Yet, both Sutton and Holliday evaluate the success or failure of Soviet attempts to borrow some of the Western technologies—a model in which the West provided technologies, while the Soviet Union assimilated them.

In the last decade, scholars have started to question this asymmetrical model of technology transfer, revealing importers of technology as more than simply passive recipients.²⁶⁹ Scholars have paid more attention to the intermediaries in technological transactions. Intermediaries were not only means of transportation for the technologies. They also translated and adapted foreign technology to the local environment.

In his analysis of technological transfers between American and European automobile companies, Steven Tolliday shows how some French automobile companies surpassed their American counterparts in the "Americanization" of the French car market after the World War II.²⁷⁰

As Renault and Citroen were familiar with the local car market, they borrowed some American technologies and adapted them to the French market in a more efficient way than the American companies, which still delivered big cars even when local

²⁶⁸ George D Holliday, *Technology Transfer to the USSR*, 1928-1937 and 1966-1975: the Role of Western Technology in Soviet Economic Development (Boulder: Colorado Westview Press, 1979), 174.

²⁶⁹ Liliane Hilaire-Perez and Catherine Verna, "Dissemination of Technical Knowledge in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Era: New Approaches and Methodological Issues," *Technology and Culture* 47, no. 3 (July 1, 2006): 537–538.

²⁷⁰ Steven Tolliday, "Transplanting the American model? US automobile companies and the transfer of technology and management to Britain, France, and Germany, 1928-1962" in *Americanization and Its Limits: Reworking US Technology and Management in Post-War Europe and Japan*, ed. Jonathan Zeitlin and Gary Herrigel (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 76-122.

customers required smaller cars. In this way, the intermediaries of technological transactions question the very idea of a single model, which should be implemented in "the best way." In their attempt to transfer useful elements from various technological models, they become agents of cross-fertilization.

At the same time, numerous local case studies have examined the role of the periphery in technological dissemination. As a result of these studies, the periphery emerged as an active participant in technological exchange. For example, in medieval studies, towns are no longer perceived as centers of technological diffusion.²⁷¹

Technological dissemination is now understood more as a circulatory process, which equally involved the countryside and the town. Thus, all technology is circulatory and the concept of "indigenous technology" is increasingly obsolete.

Cohen and Lin are skeptical of any evaluation regarding the success or failure of technological borrowings.²⁷² For them, it is important to show how ideas or objects change in the process of circulation and how they are seized by local practices. Cohen and Lin argue that until recently, scholars paid more attention to diffusion studies, but during the last fifteen years they have reconsidered the value of reception studies. In particular, designers and historians of technology have paid more attention to the impact of local practices on the assimilated objects.

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²⁷¹ Liliane Hilaire-Perez and Catherine Verna, "Dissemination of Technical Knowledge in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Era: New Approaches and Methodological Issues," *Technology and Culture* 47, no. 3 (July 1, 2006):557.

²⁷² Yves Cohen and Stephanie Lin, "Circulatory Localities: The Example of Stalinism in the 1930s," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 11, no. 1 (2010): 11–45.

Cohen and Lin focus on the manufacture of American tractors at Soviet factories.²⁷³ Soviets sought to manufacture Fordson tractors at the Putilov mechanics factory.²⁷⁴The Putilov factory was an old factory, which was not tailored for the mass production of tractors. Still, the Soviet engineers drew the design of each part, while the workers assembled the tractors. The Soviets were able to reproduce the image of American tractors, but they could not reproduce the parts of the tractor in all the details. Cohen and Lin show how Soviet management practices affected and reconstituted the foreign equipment at the Putilov factory.

Similarly, during the post-war reconstruction of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, local practices transformed the equipment of a German sugar factory, which had to be assimilated in Rybnitsa. After the war, Rybnitsa was not a new host for a sugar factory. In the interwar period, the sugar industry had a major role in the local economy. The removed German factory had to replace another sugar factory, which was affected by the war.

The Soviets had to adapt the German equipment to the local traditions of the sugar industry. In the following, I will show how the Soviets shaped the German equipment and how the local practices shaped the foreign equipment in this case study of the technological transfer at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory.

²⁷³ Ibid., 25-31.

²⁷⁴ Dana G. Dalrymple, "The American Tractor Comes to Soviet Agriculture: The Transfer of a Technology," *Technology and Culture* 5, no. 2 (1964): 191–214.

Bringing a German Sugar Factory to the Soviet Periphery

From the founding of the Soviet Union, Soviet leadership never denied the supremacy of Western technology. They did not hide their intentions to borrow the best of Western practices to overcome Soviet backwardness. They believed that once the Soviet Union reached the same level of technological development as Western countries, the superiority of the socialist form of economy would show through.²⁷⁵

Even in the wake of the war, Soviet authorities continued the process of technological borrowing, and in the Soviet sugar industry, they focused on borrowing German technologies. Pronin, the Deputy Minister of the Food Industry ordered the chief engineer of Glavsakhar to submit detailed information on the new types of production, technological schemes, models, pictures and other materials, which the Soviet engineers found at the German sugar factories by September 1, 1945,.²⁷⁶

Already on August 1, 1945, a group of Soviet engineers submitted their report "On the use of the technological experience of the German sugar industry." In this report, they suggested a list of 17 technological innovations, which could be useful for the Soviet sugar industry. Their report repeatedly asserted the technological superiority of the German sugar industry over the Soviet sugar industry.

²⁷⁵ Loren Graham "The Fits and Starts of Russian and Soviet Technology" in *Technology, Culture, and Development: The Experience of the Soviet Model*, ed. Loren R. Graham and James P. Scanlan (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1992), 3-24.

²⁷⁶ RGAE, F.8715, op. 2, d.1608, 1.28.

²⁷⁷ RGAE, F.8715, op. 2, d.1608, ll. 37-42.

The report confirmed that German sugar factories wasted fewer raw materials for the same amount of manufactured sugar. Soviet sugar factories required the use of a higher quality coal than their German counterparts. In the Soviet Union, residual water was wasted while in Germany it was used repeatedly, because it was prohibited to dump the water in rivers. The report praised the fact that the Germans extracted sugar from molasses, while the Soviets only processed molasses into alcohol. In addition, the German sugar factories produced a larger assortment of auxiliary goods, such as dried pulp and artificial honey.²⁷⁸

At the same time, German sugar factories displayed a higher rate of mechanization and were more efficient than the Soviet sugar factories. Soviet engineers suggested the implementation of some measures to improve the mechanization of the Soviet sugar factories. First of all, they argued for the replacement of Robert diffusers with continuous diffusers. According to them, Robert diffusers caused numerous breaks in the production process, and they also caused a waste of water and labor power. Secondly, the Soviets sought to adopt automated centrifugals. Finally, the Soviet engineers proposed the mechanization of the filter presses, because they required extensive use of labor power.²⁷⁹

Yet in spite of all this interest in Western technology, Soviet specialists also noted that a wholesale transfer of the German sugar refining process would be unwise, as "the capitalist organization of production was based on irrational principles" and was

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

therefore unfavorable to the development of new technologies. ²⁸⁰These "irrational principles" of the capitalist sugar industry included:

- 1) In Germany, sugar beets were processed over a very short 50-60 day time period, whereas the Soviets extended this period to have a longer production season. Soviet authorities believed that sugar factories had a primary role in the establishment of a working class in the Soviet countryside. If German sugar factories sought mainly to increase their financial profits, then Soviet sugar factories sought to consolidate the positions of Soviet power in villages. Soviet sugar experts considered that Soviet power became stronger, as the sugar factories extended their production season.
- 2) Instead of processing all the sugar beets for sugar production, German sugar factories used 15% of the beets exclusively for fodder. The Soviet Five Year Plans constantly increased the pressure on the Soviet sugar factories to produce more sugar. Since they had to fulfill their production plans, Soviet sugar factories focused on the extraction of sugar and neglected the diversification of the sugar production.
- 3) Most German factories produced raw sugar, while only a few completed the process of refined sugar production, despite the fact that most German factories had the technology to transform the raw sugar into refined sugar. Soviet bureaucratic economy was an economy of shortage. Thus, Soviet specialists claimed that Soviet factories had to limit their dependence on the outside supplies and to maintain a full production cycle.

Soviet specialists regarded German technology as superior to Soviet technology, but at the same time they believed that the Soviet planned economy was more rational

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

than the capitalist economy. According to them, the Soviet Union could win the competition with the West by combining advanced Western technology with "the rational principles" of the Soviet economy.

In the same way, the Soviets hoped that at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, "the rational principles of the Soviet economy" would be able to assimilate advanced German technology. Before World War II, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was neither fully mechanized nor even fully electrified. After the war, Soviet authorities excitedly sought to expropriate, transfer, and reassemble a fully mechanized and electrified German sugar factory to post-war Rybnitsa. They believed that German technology in combination with the Soviet model of a planned economy would restore the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in record time and would double its production capacity.

On April 10, 1946, the head of the Soviet delegation in Zörbig, lieutenant colonel Ivan Alekseevich Molokov reported on the dismantling of the Zörbig Sugar Factory in a telegram to Antosiak, the Deputy Head of the Moldavian Council of Ministers. He noted that two military units with seven hundred Soviet soldiers and three hundred German civilians were involved in the dismantling operation. Molokov added that the equipment of the factory included an electric power plant and the total weight of the equipment was over five thousand tons. In conclusion, he mentioned that along with dismantling the equipment, the Soviet delegation prepared the technical documentation and the equipment inventory.

²⁸¹ ANRM, F.R. 2848, inv. 12, d.8, f.2.

²⁸² Ibid.

In a report "On the restoration and building of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory",

D'iachenko, the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory wrote to the Rybnitsa District

Party Committee that from August 30 through December 31, 1946, the Rybnitsa Sugar

Factory received 360 railway cars, representing 45% of the Zörbig equipment. 283 The

equipment usually arrived in separate shipments of 2 to 25 railway cars and it was loaded

and unloaded two or three times during its trip to Rybnitsa. According to D'iachenko, this

caused severe damage to the technical state of the equipment, and some equipment

already needed a major overhaul.

Beyond the visible equipment damage, D'iachenko pointed to the chaotic dispersal of different parts of the same equipment. ²⁸⁴That is, often, the various component parts of individual units of equipment were disassembled and arrived in different shipments, and it was quite difficult to match up the pieces again once they arrived in Rybnitsa. D'iachenko found that it was common for one box of equipment to contain component parts of several different units of equipment. In addition, these component parts lacked any technical documentation. It was as if the military personnel who disassembled and shipped the equipment wanted to test the ability of Soviet engineers to reassemble the German equipment in Rybnitsa.

Finally, D'iachenko claimed that the most valuable parts of the equipment, including the electric equipment, were stolen, because the shipments were not

²⁸³ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.774, ff.40-46.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

accompanied by any security personnel. D'iachenko estimated that 36 units of the equipment with a total weight of 11500 kg never arrived in Rybnitsa.

Nonetheless, D'iachenko maintained an official optimism that the restoration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory would be completed in 1947. He claimed that if another 400 railway cars arrived as scheduled in January 1947, the reconstruction would be completed by year's end. He insisted that the Rybnitsa District Party Committee had to put all its effort into the transformation of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory into "a people's endeavor," so as to involve the whole of the population of Soviet Moldavia in the factory's restoration. Despite D'iachenko's optimism, the reconstruction of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was not completed by the end of 1947, and it took several more years until the local and central Soviet authorities found a formula to assimilate the German equipment into the Rybnitsa landscape.

The Traces of a Vanished Border: How Soviet Border Guards Guarded Their Land

In order for the relocation of the Zörbig Sugar Factory to be successful, it was not enough to disassemble the equipment and to send it to the destination. In Rybnitsa, local Soviet authorities had to prepare the ground for the equipment's installation. Local geopolitical conditions had changed and would impact that process, for the creation of the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1940 ended Rybnitsa's status as a border town.

The Soviet-Romanian border moved to the West, and the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was no longer on the Soviet international border. Before the establishment of Soviet

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²⁸⁵ Ibid.

Moldavia, the Soviet-Romanian border always played a role in the administration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. The fact that the factory was situated in the highly guarded border zone affected the productivity of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, because Soviet authorities always granted priority to security issues over economic concerns.

While security concerns were less pressing with Rybnitsa's new position further from the international boundary, the legacy of the border persisted. The Soviet-Romanian border had moved further to the west of Rybnitsa, but much of the institutional border power mechanisms remained. Soviet Moldavia was still a Soviet republic on the western border of the Soviet Union, and Rybnitsa still hosted many Red Army soldiers. For Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, the ongoing operation of a local military base as its immediate neighbor continued to exert a significant impact on the factory's activities.

On February 1, 1947, D'iachenko reported to the Central Committee of the CPM that since the restored factory was projected to have double the pre-war production facilities, it would need additional space. ²⁸⁶ He specified that the restored sugar factory would include a power plant, additional storage facilities, mechanic workshops, and several dormitories for workers, and the current 25 hectares was insufficient for the restored and expanded Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. D'iachenko suggested that the only solution for the deficit of space was to claim more land from the military base, located on the north side of the sugar factory. ²⁸⁷ To the south, the factory bordered the town, and to

²⁸⁶ AOSPRM, F. 51, inv.5, d. 557, ff.19-26.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

the east or west it had natural obstacles. So, D'iachenko argued that the Moldavian party authorities had to discuss this issue with the military officials.

On March 15, 1947, Rud', the Head of the Moldavian Council of Ministers sent a letter to Mikoian, the Deputy Head of the Soviet Council of Ministers. ²⁸⁸ In this letter, Rud' described the importance of the prospective sugar factory not only for the district of Rybnitsa, but also for the whole Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic. He mentioned that the prospective factory would have a power plant with the capacity to generate 3500 kV, providing electricity not only for the factory but also for Rybnitsa and nearby villages. Further, Rud' claimed that they needed to build a small town with 130 apartments and a cattle farm to attract and support an expanded workforce for the factory.

Rud' estimated that the restored Rybnitsa Sugar Factory would increase the supply of sugar for the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic such that the republic would no longer need sugar supplies from other Soviet republics.²⁸⁹ The Moldavian Council of Ministers argued for the relocation of the military base from the factory's neighborhood and for the distribution of 50 hectares to the sugar factory. Rud' concluded that the restoration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory could not truly start without the allocation of this land.

Far from completing the factory's restoration by the end of 1947, Antosiak, the deputy head of the Moldavian Council of Ministers, was forced to submit a rather pessimistic report to Mikoian on December 8, 1947. First, he reported that the land

²⁸⁸ AOSPRM, F.51, inv.7, d.444, ff.53-54.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

problem was still not solved. As a result, the restoration of the factory had not even begun and the Zörbig equipment was rusting on the ground. In addition, Antosiak complained that Glavsakhar had distributed some of Rybnitsa's new equipment to other sugar factories. ²⁹⁰

By November 1, 1947, Glavsakhar had shipped 138 pieces of equipment, including 49 electrical engines, over 1600 meters of cable, and all the equipment of the chemical laboratory from Rybnitsa to other sugar factories. In conclusion, Antosiak regretted that some units of equipment lost their technical integrity during the shipping process and this fact would negatively affect the restoration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory.²⁹¹

At the end of 1947, the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, Loskot, and the chief engineer, Kopytko, reported to the Central Committee of the CPM on the impact of the land problem on the delayed restoration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. According to them, 454 railway cars with 75% of the foreign equipment had arrived in Rybnitsa by September 27, 1947. Yet they could still do little more than insist that the restoration of the factory had to start in 1947, because the plan was to finish it in 1949 for the 25th anniversary of the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. Yet here they were at the end of 1947 and the restoration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory could not even begin because of the land issue.

²⁹⁰ ANRM, FR 2848, inv. 12, d.51, ff. 29-30.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² AOSPRM, F.51, inv.7, d.444, ff.44-48.

In the same report to the Central Committee of CPM, Loskot and Kopytko noted that Mikoian had put the Minister of Food Industry, Zotov, and the Deputy Minister of Defense, A.V. Khrulev, in charge of solving the land problem.²⁹³ Initially, Khrulev refused to relocate the military base and to grant the 50 hectares of land to the sugar factory. Zotov reduced the request, asking for the allocation of at least 20 hectares of land from the military base.

The administration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was frustrated that the future of their factory depended on an agreement between these two Moscow ministries. Loskot and Kopytko accused the Defense Ministry of "narrow interests." They insisted that the military base had not always occupied the territory in the neighborhood of the sugar factory, as it had belonged to the agricultural school until 1937. Furthermore, they complained that even a compromise allocation of 20 hectares to the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory would be insufficient and only a half measure.

Military officials asserted their right to maintain control over the military base, arguing against the sugar factory. A representative of the Odessa Military District laid out their claims in a letter to the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory that asserted their continued right to occupy the Rybnitsa military base on the 148 hectares of land allotted to the Ministry of Defense before the war.²⁹⁵

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ ANRM, F.R. 2848, inv.12, d.228, ff.102-103.

In 1948, the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of the Food Industry formed a joint commission to solve the dispute.²⁹⁶ This commission agreed to distribute 21 hectares of land to the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory: 12 hectares to the West of the military base and 9 hectares to the East. In exchange for the land, the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory promised to build some amenities on the territory of the military base, including storage facilities and housing for the soldiers. Yet, they would fail to follow through.²⁹⁷

Instead, they started to build houses for the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory on the land that the factory received from the military base. On May 25, 1950, Petrov, the commander of the military base, declared at a meeting of the Rybnitsa District Party Committee that he could grant the land to the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, only if the administration of the factory would keep its promise and build amenities for soldiers.²⁹⁸ He declared that the administration of the factory accused him of sabotaging the restoration of the sugar factory, but he was only obeying the orders of his superiors.

On August 2, 1951, A. Kroviakov, the secretary of the Rybnitsa District Party Committee, wrote a letter to Leonid Brezhnev, who was the first secretary of the Central Committee of the CPM.²⁹⁹ In this letter, Kroviakov mentioned that the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory received 22 hectares of land from the military base. He claimed that the

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.875, ff.72-77.

²⁹⁹ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d. 908, ff.93-94.

administration of the sugar factory already managed to build a railway line and storage facilities on this territory. The next step for the restoration of the sugar factory was to build housing for workers. However, Kroviakov accused the military administration of sabotaging the building of housing for the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory.

Further, Kroviakov write that Loskot, the former director of the sugar factory, had signed an "illegal agreement" with the commander of the military base. According to this agreement, Loskot agreed to build some amenities for the military base in exchange for the 22 hectares of land. Kroviakov acknowledged that the administration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had not built all the military facilities, but, at the same time, he claimed that the military base had negatively affected the industry of the Rybnitsa District.

The commander of the military base appointed soldiers to guard the disputed territory. Since this territory was also used for the transit of grapes to the local wine factory, Kroviakov argued that the military administration had a negative impact on the industry of the whole Rybnitsa district. In conclusion, he considered that the military administration had to give up on the disputed land and after four years of partial solutions, it was finally an appropriate moment to find a definitive solution for this problem.

The definitive solution to this problem was found only one year later. It had been six years since the arrival of the first equipment from Germany. On July 10, 1952, Kroviakov mentioned in a telegram to the all-Union Ministry of the Food Industry that

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

the military base no longer blocked access to the disputed territory.³⁰² As a consequence, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was prepared to build the housing facilities for the workers and it asked the Ministry to allocate the necessary resources.

Mapping the Territory, Designing the Equipment: The Assimilation of German Equipment in Rybnitsa

The fact that the prospective factory had to be built on an uncertain territory created a puzzling situation for both central authorities and for the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. On the one hand, the administration of the factory and the local party bureaucrats had to fulfill the plan and to build the factory according to the schedule adopted by the center. They did not have the time to wait until a final resolution of the land problem. So, sometimes they acted without specific authorization, then seeking central approval of their actions after the fact.

On the other hand, the center had to adjust the architectural drawings of the factory to the evolution of the land dispute in Rybnitsa. Already in 1947, Loskot, the director of the sugar factory, asserted that the architectural documentation of the factory had been changed three times, because the land problem remained unsolved.³⁰³

Glavsakhar planned to remove a fully mechanized and electrified Zörbig Sugar Factory and to assemble it in Rybnitsa. The new factory was larger than the previous Soviet factory. For its relocation to Rybnitsa, local Soviet authorities would have to find

³⁰² AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.956, f.102.

³⁰³ AOSPRM, F.51, inv. 7, d.444, f.44.

additional territory. Instead of finding the required 50 hectares of land, they were able to secure only 22 hectares from the neighboring military base.

Initially, the engineers from Glavsakhar included the whole territory of the military base in their design for the restoration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. Then, they had to change the architectural drawings of the sugar factory in light of the actions, which the administration of the factory took on the ground. As a result, each time the designers from Glavsakhar submitted a technical drawing to Rybnitsa, locals could not implement it, because it did not reflect the actions that the local administration adopted in the meantime.

At the same time, Glavsakhar lacked detailed information about the foreign equipment, which laid on the ground in Rybnitsa. With some equipment missing, some destroyed, and some disintegrating due to the passage of time, Soviet engineers were forced to attempt to come to terms with what foreign equipment actually existed and was in working condition and to integrate that equipment inventory into their technical documentation. They needed a detailed graphical description of the foreign equipment in Rybnitsa, and obtaining this was a daunting prospect.

On January 21, 1949, a delegation from Gosplan (The Soviet Planning Agency) complained to Moscow that "the administration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory did not prepare any technical documentation for the foreign equipment, even when this equipment was received three years ago." In addition, Gosplan mentioned that this equipment was stocked outside and exposed to rust.

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³⁰⁴ RGAE, F. 8715, op.2, d.2109, ll.41-50.

In 1948-1949, the administration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory sought to create a technical bureau, which would provide the technical documentation for foreign equipment. However, these attempts failed, because there was a shortage of technically-competent cadres. On July 20, 1949, Cherkasov, the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, reported that there were only three engineers at the factory: a chief engineer, a building engineer and a chief mechanic. These specialists did not have time to draw the foreign equipment, because they had to supervise the construction works and to correct the errors in the technical documentation.

So, the foreign equipment laid on the ground of the factory waiting to be included in the Soviet engineers' plans. On the one end of the assembly line there was the German equipment and, on the other end, there were the Soviet engineers, who would not only have to redesign the German equipment, but they also had to become specialists in the sugar industry.

Despite the fact that the central authorities could not integrate the foreign equipment into their design of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, local authorities used parts of this equipment in the restoration of the factory. In his report on the reconstruction of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory during the first half of 1948, the director of the building contractor SMU-1 (Building and Restoration Administration No. 1) declared that his organization repaired some of the German equipment, even though this equipment had no technical documentation.³⁰⁶ He specified that SMU-1 repaired the following equipment:

³⁰⁵ ANRM F.R. 2848, inv.12, d.165, ff.78-87.

³⁰⁶ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.825, f.14.

one mixer, three boilers, one power-saw bench, one pump, and all the machines from mechanical workshops.

On October 25, 1949, the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, Cherkasov, reported to the Moldavian authorities that the overhaul of the foreign equipment was almost finished.³⁰⁷ According to him, the contractor finished the restoration of the two Steinmüller steam boilers. The first boiler was already installed while the second boiler was prepared for installation. In addition, Cherkasov mentioned that the factory had a deficit of electric engines.

In June 1950, A. Rogov, the special correspondent of *Sovetskaia Moldaviia*, mentioned the same problems with the technical documentation in a critical article about the reconstruction of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. ³⁰⁸ He criticized the administration of the sugar factory, the local party bureaucrats, and Glavsakhar for the fact that they failed to provide the necessary documentation for the reconstruction of the factory. According to him, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was "the forgotten child of Glavsakhar" and local authorities did not put all their efforts into the reconstruction of the factory.

The general plan for the restoration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was designed by the engineers of Glavsakhar in Kyiv. 309 Rogov argued that the reconstruction of the factory according to this plan was a waste of material resources. He mentioned that a control commission recognized that the buildings and the foundations of the sugar factory

³⁰⁷ ANRM, F.R. 2848, inv.12, d.166, ff.38-42.

³⁰⁸ A. Rogov, "Opekunov mnogo, a nastoiashchei zaboty net," *Sovetskaia Moldaviia*, June 10, 1950, 3.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

were unwieldy and expensive. The commission also acknowledged that the project did not respect the quality standards and it should be changed in order to cut expenses. In the following, Rogov noted that, despite all these recommendations, the authors of the project did not take into account the observations of the control commission.

In the same article, Rogov specified that the building contractor finished the reconstruction and installed all the equipment in the main building of the sugar factory. The sugar factory had a deficit of steam boilers in the boiler room. Rogov claimed that the boiler room was "the heart of the sugar factory," and the factory had some heart problems. According to the project of the sugar factory, the boiler room needed five steam boilers, but it only had two.

Rogov criticized Glavpishchemash (The General Administration of Machine Building for the Food Industry) for the fact that it could not deliver two additional boilers to the sugar factory even though the reconstruction of the factory started three years ago.³¹¹ In the meantime, the contractors proceeded with the building of the boiler room, but in order to accommodate the prospective installation of the additional boilers, they left a hole in the building of the boiler room.

Replying to Rogov's criticism, Nevskii, the Deputy Minister of Food Industry, enumerated a series of urgent actions, which were performed by the Soviet Ministry of the Food Industry, in order to complete the reconstruction of the factory.³¹² Nevskii

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹² RGAE, F.8543, op.1, d.1760, ll.24-25.

specified that until 1949, the Soviet sugar factories were supplied with boilers from the German war reparations. In 1949, the stock of boilers from the German factories was exhausted. As a consequence, Nevskii stated that the Ministry must start the manufacture of boilers at its own production facilities. In 1949, the Ministry designed and started to manufacture UKB boilers. In March 1950, UKB boilers passed technical tests, and the Ministry began their serial production.

On July 29, 1950, the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, Cherkasov wrote in a letter to the Rybnitsa District Party Committee, that the Moscow Machine-Building Plant would soon finish the manufacture of two 16/25 UKB boilers for the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. 313 Cherkasov estimated that with the arrival of these two boilers the factory would be able to finish the reconstruction works before the start of the production season in October.

In July 1950, the chief engineer of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory provided a list of the basic equipment missing from the construction site.³¹⁴ In addition to the steam boilers, the engineer referred to the three electric engines for the centrifugals and to one electric generator for the power plant, which were supposed to be delivered by September 1950. He also mentioned that there were no funds for the mechanization of the transportation of the beet supply from the field to the factory.

Despite these shortcomings, the sugar factory finally restarted its activity in October 1950. On October 8, 1950, A. Vershinin, the head of the trade unions at the

³¹³ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.888, f.130.

³¹⁴ RGAE, F. 8715, op.2, d.2109, l.43.

sugar factory, was proud to report in the local newspaper that "despite the destructions of the Nazi invasion, the sugar factory will finally start its production season in the coming days." According to him, the capacity of the new factory was twice as big as the capacity of the old factory. Further, he claimed that the restored factory had the newest equipment and all the production, from the transportation of the sugar beets to the packing of sugar, was mechanized.

At the same time, on October 25, 1950, Cherkasov declared that the factory already lost 1 million rubles due to the inadequate technology of sugar refining. He claimed that the factory failed to reach the daily production target because it had only two boilers. Already, in 1951, Ostromogilskii, the new director of the factory, asked for additional funds, because the administration of the factory planned to finish the construction of the storehouse and of the power plant. 317

He mentioned that these funds were to be used for the second stage of the reconstruction works and for the correction of technological errors. After the completion of all the reconstruction works, Ostromogilskii promised that the factory would improve the quality of the sugar and increase the production of sugar twofold compared to the previous year. So, the Soviet Council of Ministers provided an additional three million rubles, in order to finish the second stage of the reconstruction works and to bring the capacity of the factory to the planned level.

³¹⁵A. Vershinin, "Sakharnyi zavod pushchen v eksploatatsiiu," *Sotsialisticeskii put'*, October 8, 1950, 1.

³¹⁶ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.36, d.14, ff.66-69.

³¹⁷ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d. 908, ff.75-77.

A control commission established that at the end of the production season 1951-1952, the factory processed only 8,000 centners instead of the planned 12,000 centners of sugar beets. The same commission claimed that the constant breakdown of the equipment affected the technological process. As a consequence, the factory lost 25,562 centners of sugar or 4 million rubles. Finally, the commission mentioned that the power plant was built with major errors and the factory increased its fuel consumption by 21%.

On March 28, 1952, the local party members gathered at the factory to discuss the results of the 1951-1952 production season.³¹⁹ During the discussions, the chemist, P. Khomenko noted that during the previous production season, the factory tested the new UKB steam boilers. He added that there were many breaks in the technological process, because the factory's personnel were not familiar with these new boilers. Thus, the factory needed a second stage of post-war reconstruction to correct the errors of the first stage and to train a new generation of workers in the sugar industry.

Conclusion

After the capitulation of Nazi Germany, the USSR removed whole factories from Germany to the Soviet Union. The evacuation of a German factory and its relocation to the Soviet Union was not only a logistic problem. A factory is more than a sum of buildings and technologies. It directly affects and is affected by the social, cultural, economic, political and natural environments.

318 AOSPRM, F.51, inv.11, d.386, ff. 13-17.

³¹⁹ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.36, d.18, ff.18-26.

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The removal of a factory from one place to another shapes both places, and the local cultural practices structure the evacuation and assimilation of a factory. Initially, Soviet authorities sought to remove a whole sugar factory from Zörbig to Rybnitsa. They intended to assemble a fully mechanized and electrified German sugar factory in a small town on the Soviet periphery.

Before the war, Rybnitsa hosted a different sugar factory. That factory was not fully mechanized or fully electrified but it was better integrated into the local network. After the war, the Soviets hoped that along with the removal of a German sugar factory to Rybnitsa, they would be able to develop another network for the support of a new sugar factory. Nevertheless, the old network still influenced the postwar development of a restored sugar factory.

For the relocation of the Zörbig Sugar Factory to Rybnitsa, local authorities had to provide additional land to the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. From 1937, the factory shared its neighborhood with a military base. Being a former border town, Rybnitsa still hosted numerous soldiers. After the war, the Soviet-Romanian border moved to the West but the infrastructure of the border still had a major impact on the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory.

The military personnel played a crucial role in a land dispute with the administration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. The fact that the Soviets couldn't find a solution to the land problem had considerably delayed the reconstruction of the sugar factory. In the meantime, most of the German equipment was either lost or stolen. As a consequence, Soviet specialists had to shape the equipment of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory into a hybrid structure of German and Soviet components.

In the end, the relocation of the Zörbig Sugar Factory to Rybnitsa was like putting together a jigsaw puzzle without the picture on the box. Some of the important pieces were missing because they were stolen or lost on the road. Participants were trying to assemble the puzzle, but they had to replace the lost or stolen pieces with pieces of their own making. In addition, they were trying to assemble the puzzle on a table that was only half the size of the complete puzzle.

CHAPTER 4: THE ROLE OF THE RYBNITSA SUGAR FACTORY IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE MOLDAVIAN SUGAR INDUSTRY (1945-1972)

After World War II, the Soviet Union started a massive campaign for the Sovietization of its newly acquired Western borderlands. Using the example of Lviv, Tarik Cyril Amar shows the inherent tensions of the Sovietization policies in Western Ukraine. The Soviets perceived the Sovietization of the Western borderlands as "a civilizing mission." On the one hand, they were energized by a sense of ideological superiority over their Western neighbors. On the other hand, they were frustrated that most of these regions were more prosperous than the Soviet Union. Amar concludes that these tensions could not be resolved until the end of Soviet rule.

In Soviet Moldavia, the party bureaucracy experienced different kinds of tensions. Early in his career, Leonid Brezhnev, the future Soviet leader, was appointed the first secretary of the Communist Party of Moldavia (CPM). He lived in Soviet Moldavia from July 1950 to October 1952. Referring to the particularities of Sovietization in postwar Soviet Moldavia, Brezhnev recounts that:

This was one of the youngest Soviet republics. The right bank of Nistru did not attend the grand school of Soviet building, along with all the Country. In a few years, it had to go through all the Five Year Plans or even decades of Soviet building. All the processes that developed in other republics during a longer period of time, had to be developed in Soviet

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³²⁰ Tarik Cyril Amar, "Sovietization as a Civilizing Mission in the West," in *The Sovietization of Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on the Postwar Period*, ed. Balazs Apor, Peter Apor, and E. A. Rees (Washington, DC: New Academia Publishing, LLC, 2008), 29-46.

Moldavia during a shorter period of time. The backward districts from the right bank of Nistru had to achieve socialism on the shortest path.³²¹

Soviet Moldavia consisted of two very distinct entities: a part of the former Romanian province of Bessarabia on the right bank of Nistru, and a few Sovietized districts of the former Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic on the left bank of Nistru. To mark the distinct character of these two parts, Charles King argues that from its creation in 1940 to its disappearance in 1991, the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic evolved as "two republics in one." 322

The population and the territory of the Bessarabian part of the MSSR were considerably larger than those of the few Sovietized districts on the left bank of the Nistru River. Charles King shows that the eastern districts of the MSSR represented only a fraction of the republic's territory and population, but they played a crucial role in the Sovietization of Soviet Moldavia. 323

The specialists from the eastern districts assumed a leading role in the socialist reconstruction of the MSSR, because they were accustomed to the workings of the Soviet system. The cadres from the MASSR were delegated to Bessarabia in order to help with the Sovietization of the local administration. At the same time, Bessarabians were delegated to the left bank of Nistru in order to learn "the Soviet civilization."

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³²¹ Leonid Il'ich Brezhnev, *Vospominaniia*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1983), 141.

³²² Charles King, *The Moldovans: Romania, Russia, and the Politics of Culture* (Stanford, Calif: Hoover Institution Press, 2000), 100.

³²³ Ibid.,134.

By contrast with other regions from the Western borderlands, the Sovietization of Bessarabia coincided with the establishment of the MSSR as a new constituent republic of the Soviet Union. Western Ukraine was integrated into the existing Soviet Ukraine—one of the largest and most important constituent republics of the Soviet Union. The Baltic States lost their statehood and became Soviet republics after their annexation by the Soviet Union. Soviet Moldavia emerged as an absolutely new territorial formation.

Along with the establishment of Soviet Moldavia as a new union republic, Soviet authorities had to create a new institutional framework for the administration of the local sugar industry. In 1944, there were two sugar factories in Soviet Moldavia: the Balti Sugar Factory on the right bank of the Nistru River, and the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in the Sovietized districts of the former MASSR. At the end of the 1980s, the Moldavian sugar industry displayed ten sugar factories: nine sugar factories on the right bank of Nistru and the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, as the only sugar factory on the left bank of Nistru.

The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was the only Moldavian sugar factory to experience the October Revolution, the Civil War and the radical transformations of the First Five Year Plan. For this reason, it became a model for the Sovietization of other Moldavian sugar factories. Rybnitsa was a training ground for the employers of the other Moldavian sugar factories and the engineers from Rybnitsa participated in the building of other Moldavian sugar factories.

Already in 1947, the entire population of Soviet Moldavia was called to participate in the reconstruction of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. 324 The director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory promised to finish the reconstruction of the factory by the end of the year if the Central Committee of the Moldavian Communist Party would mobilize the whole population of the MSSR. He declared that the reconstruction of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had to become "a republic-wide endeavor" ("vsenarodnaia stroika") and "all the people of MSSR should participate in the reconstruction of this giant."³²⁵

Bessarabian workers came to Rybnitsa in order to help with the reconstruction of the factory. The reconstruction site became a training ground for the professional and political education of these workers. Throughout the reconstruction period, the primary concern of the local party organization was the weak political education of the Bessarabian workers.

At a raikom meeting in 1948, Loskot, the director of the sugar factory, mentioned that he was particularly concerned with the mass political education of the workers from the right bank of Nistru. 326 Loskot argued that the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had to play a more active role in the political education of the Bessarabians.

Before World War II, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was subordinated to various Ukrainian trusts (subdivisions) of the General Administration of the Sugar Industry (Glavsakhar-Glavnoe Upravlenie Sakharnoi Promyshlennosti) at the all-Union

325 Ibid.

³²⁴ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.774, ff.40-46.

³²⁶ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.1, d.9, f.4.

Commissariat of the Food Industry. It was a minor sugar factory, which played a marginal role in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

After the war, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory became a model sugar factory, which had a prominent role in the establishment of the Moldavian sugar industry. Due to some ideological and geopolitical factors, the former peasant-workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory became the experts of the Moldavian sugar industry.

The Concept of "Technopolitical Regimes"

In order to explain the interdependence of technology and politics, Gabrielle Hecht introduces the concept of "technopolitical regimes." Hecht argues that:

They [technopolitical regimes] consisted of linked sets of individuals, engineering and industrial practices, technological artifacts, political programs, and institutional ideologies acting together to govern technological development and pursue *technopolitics* (a term that describes the strategic practice of designing or using technology to constitute, embody, or enact political goals).³²⁸

This definition describes how a very technological sphere of human activity uses expertise to gain political and national capital. Hecht shows that technological solutions to technological problems are not merely technological. They are also political. There is no single best technology. The adoption of one or another technology is based on a choice, which in its turn depends on many variables. Technologists did not detach from their political options when they designed certain technologies. On the contrary, they included their political, social or cultural views in the technological design.

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³²⁷ Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1998), 55-90.

³²⁸ Ibid., 56.

In Hecht's narrative, a group of French nuclear experts were raised to national prominence by restoring "the radiance of France." After the humiliation of World War II, France needed a new success story. Due to the effort of the nuclear engineers, postwar France became a leader in the exploration of nuclear power for energy production. They also designed nuclear reactors, which combined the civil and the military potential of the atomic industry. So, France emerged among the few countries with nuclear weapons.

In Soviet Moldavia, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory sought to benefit from the postwar conjuncture in order to emerge from a marginal Ukrainian sugar factory into the founding factory of the Moldavian sugar industry. In 1947, D'iachenko, the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, proposed the establishment of the Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust. This was the first attempt to provide a separate institutional setting for the organization of a Moldavian sugar industry. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was at the center of the debate between the Moldavian and all-Union specialists regarding the by-products of the sugar industry.

On the one hand, Moldavian specialists argued in favor of a localized sugar industry, which had to adapt its technological process to the demands of the republican economy. In their opinion, sugar factories should not only focus on increasing sugar production, but they should also focus on the production of fodder or alcohol, which benefited other branches of the Moldavian economy.

On the other hand, specialists from Moscow claimed that the Moldavian sugar industry had to direct all its resources toward the increase of sugar production. They

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³²⁹ Ibid.

insisted that instead of producing more alcohol, Moldavian sugar factories had to extract more sugar from molasses. If Moscow was interested in increasing sugar production, then Chisinau was more concerned with the diversification of the sugar industry.

In the Soviet Union, the technopolitical regimes operated in "a centrally managed economy," where the resources and the output were allocated by the center through the mechanism of "direct bureaucratic control." However, János Kornai claims that even in the highly centralized Soviet system, the elaboration of the plan was a result of complex bargaining between the different levels of the bureaucratic mechanism. ³³¹

In this negotiation, the upper level institutions sought to force the lower level bodies to accept lower investment rates and higher production quotas. In their turn, the lower level bodies sought to persuade the upper level institutions to accept higher investment rates and lower production quotas. Moreover, as the example of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory will illustrate, the lower level institutions could not only negotiate the terms imposed by the upper level institutions, but they could also change the terms of the negotiation.

In this chapter, I will use the concept of "technopolitical regimes" to show how the community of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory maneuvered through the intricacies of the Soviet bureaucratic economy, in order to establish a distinct technopolitical regime in the Moldavian sugar industry. In this context, I will answer the following questions: How did the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory both reflect and shape a new technopolitial regime in Soviet

³³⁰ János Kornai, *The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 98-117.

³³¹ Ibid.

Moldavia? How did the wider social, economical, cultural and political contexts interact with this new technopolitical regime? What role did invoking the local interests play in the development of the distinct technopolitical regime in the Moldavian sugar industry?

The Establishment of the Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust

János Kornai argues that in contrast with a demand-constrained capitalist economy, the Soviet economy of shortage emerged as a resource-constrained economy. In a classic model of a capitalist economy, firms have to balance their budgets because they can go bankrupt. By contrast, in a classic model of a socialist economy, firms could constantly exceed their budgets because the state would save them from bankruptcy. Thus, capitalist firms have hard budget constraints, while socialist firms have soft budget constraints.

Kornai shows that paternalism is a systemic feature of the socialist economy. 333 In this economy, the state acted as a parent and the firms acted as children. Kornai distinguishes five degrees of economic paternalism: from the total financial dependence of the firm (degree 4) to the total financial independence of the firm (degree 0). In a classic socialist economy, the most common was the third degree of paternalism when the state allocated the resources, but it also took into consideration the wishes of the firm during the plan bargaining.

The interest of each firm was "to pump" more resources from the state. This pumping mechanism operated on each level of the socialist economy: from the ministry

³³² János Kornai, *Economics of Shortage*, vol. A (Amsterdam: North-Holland Pub. Co.,1980), 27.

³³³ Ibid., 561-571.

to the factory. The state, as an allocator of the resources, could not satisfy all the demands. Each claimant had to compete with many others for limited resources. This competition occurred at all the levels of the distribution mechanism. Apart from this universal competition for resources, there was also a sense of solidarity between the firms and their direct superior authorities.³³⁴ The lower-level allocators defended the interests of the firms in front of the medium-and upper-level allocators.

During the interwar period, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was integrated in the distribution system of the Ukrainian SSR. Then, it pumped all its resources through the Ukrainian subdivisions of Glavsakhar. Soviet authorities made several attempts to structure the administration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory under the umbrella of the Ukrainian sugar trusts. The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was initially managed by the Odessa Sugar Trust and then by the Uman' Sugar Trust.

In 1944, both Moldavian sugar factories were subordinated to Ukrainian sugar trusts. The Balti Sugar Factory was managed by the Lviv Sugar Trust and the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was administered by the Kirovohrad Sugar Trust. As these two factories were situated in Soviet Moldavia, the Central Committee of CPM was also responsible for their administration. Moldavian authorities sought to adjust the local institutional setting with the status of the union republic. So, one would expect that they demanded the establishment of a separate trust for the administration of the Moldavian sugar industry.

However, they did not want to assume responsibility for the postwar reconstruction of the sugar factories. Both Moldavian sugar factories needed considerable

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³³⁴ Ibid., 205.

investments for their postwar rehabilitation. Since the investments were assigned from Moscow, local party bureaucrats sent several requests to Moscow asking for the direct subordination of the Moldavian sugar factories to Glavsakhar.

On November 19, 1945, Kashnikov, the Secretary of the Central Committee of CPM, wrote to Zotov V. P., the all-Union Commissar of the Food Industry, that:

the arbitrary affiliation of the Moldavian sugar factories with two Ukrainian sugar trusts had significantly complicated the administration of these factories. As a result, Moldavian sugar factories did not receive from the trusts the material and technical aid, which was necessary for the establishment of a solid base of raw materials, the preparation of the factories for the production season, and further development of these factories. In order to improve the administration of these factories, the Central Committee of CPM requests that both sugar factories change their subordination from the Ukrainian sugar trusts to the direct affiliation with Glavsakhar.335

On December 25, 1945, Zotov replied to Kashnikov that the direct subordination of the Moldavian sugar factories to Glavsakhar would not improve their administration, because both factories were far from the main office of Glavsakhar in Moscow. 336 As an alternative, Zotov proposed that "a more rational solution" would be for both sugar factories to be affiliated with the Kirovohrad Trust, because Balti and Rybnitsa were closer to Kirovohrad than to Moscow. On February 5, 1946, Kashnikov complied with Zotov's proposal and requested the affiliation of the Balti Sugar Factory to the Kirovohrad Sugar Trust. 337

³³⁵ AOSPRM, F.51, inv.3, d.372, f.76.

³³⁶ AOSPRM, F.51, inv.4, d.357, f.1.

³³⁷ Ibid., f.4.

On August 9, 1947, the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, D'iachenko, used the same geographical argument that the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was far from Kirovohrad and proposed the creation of Moldsakhsveklotrest (the Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust) in Chisinau. ³³⁸ In a letter to Gerasim Iakovlevich Rud', the Head of the Moldavian Council of Ministers, D'iachenko mentioned that Glavsakhar distributed the resources to the Kirovohrad Sugar Trust, but they did not reach the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory because the party authorities in Kirovohrad distributed them exclusively among the sugar factories in the Kirovohrad region. D'iachenko acknowledged that the Moldavian party authorities paid special attention to the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, but they could not help with the reconstruction of the factory since all the resources were distributed by the Kirovohrad Sugar Trust.

In order to solve these problems, D'iachenko suggested a solution, which was radically different from the solution of the Moldavian party bureaucracy. He argued that instead of bringing the sugar factories under the direct management of Moscow, it would be much easier to supervise them from Chisinau, which was only 100 kilometers away from Rybnitsa. He claimed that the establishment of the Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust in Chisinau would bring the administration of the sugar industry closer to the factories and would take into account the local conditions and demands of the factories, which were situated on the territory of the MSSR.³³⁹

In addition to the two Moldavian sugar factories, D'iachenko included four factories from the Ukrainian SSR on the list of the factories, which could become

³³⁸ ANRM, F.R 2848, inv.12, d.51, ff.33-34.

³³⁹ Ibid.

members of the Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust. He argued that these Ukrainian factories would benefit from the Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust because they were situated closer to Chisinau than to their sugar trusts. As proof, D'iachenko provided a comparative chart with the distances between the factories, the Ukrainian sugar trusts and Chisinau. 340

This chart illustrated that the two Moldavian sugar factories were considerably closer to Chisinau, than the four Ukrainian sugar factories. From the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory it was 105 km to Chisinau, and from the Balti Sugar Factory it was 120 km. In two cases, the distance between the Ukrainian sugar factories and Chisinau was not much shorter than the distance between them and the Ukrainian sugar trusts. For instance, two factories from the Chernivtsi region were situated at a distance of 360 km from the Lviv Sugar Trust, and 350 km from Chisinau.³⁴¹

D'iachenko deliberately chose to include the Ukrainian sugar factories in the Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust, because with the Ukrainian sugar factories the bargaining capacity of the Moldavian authorities would be stronger. The Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust could provide more resources, which it could direct for the investments in the Moldavian sugar factories. If the Ukrainian sugar trusts were allocators, which favored the Ukrainian sugar factories, D'iachenko hoped that with the establishment of the Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory would get a friendly direct superior allocator, which would favor the Moldavian sugar factories.

Contrary to D'iachenko's proposal, Rud' did not accept the idea of a Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust. Instead, Rud' preferred to put the Moldavian sugar factories under the

340 Ibid

³⁴¹ Ibid.

direct supervision of Moscow. On August 19, 1947, Rud' sent a note to Anastas

Ivanovich Mikoian, the Deputy Head of the all-Union Council of Ministers, repeating the request for the direct subordination of both Moldavian sugar factories to Glavsakhar.³⁴²

Rud' stated that the large distances between the Moldavian sugar factories and the Kirovohrad Sugar Trust had a negative impact on the communication of the factories with the Trust. As a consequence, all the resources provided by Glavsakhar to the Kirovohrad Sugar Trust were distributed mostly among the factories of the Kirovohrad district.³⁴³

Rud' argued that Moldavian sugar factories would get a more efficient administration and a better procurement of necessary resources if they were directly subordinated to Glavsakhar. In response, Moscow rejected the idea of the direct subordination of the Moldavian sugar factories to Glavsakhar, and proposed the affiliation of these factories with another Ukrainian sugar trust in Vinnytsia.

The republican leadership in Chisinau sought to get the Moldavian sugar factories under the direct management of Moscow. By contrast, D'iachenko, the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, proposed the establishment of a Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust. Applying Kornai's model to this institutional conundrum, it might be the case that the Moldavian leadership did not accept the idea of a Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust, because it did not want to assume responsibility for the administration of the four Ukrainian sugar factories. However, Moldavian authorities would return to the idea of a Moldavian Sugar

³⁴² ANRM, F.R. 2848, inv.12 d.51, ff.31-32.

³⁴³ Ibid.

Beet Trust once the demands of the Ukrainian sugar trusts hindered the development of the Moldavian sugar industry.

The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory produced its first postwar sugar in October 1950.

During postwar reconstruction, the factory served only as the provider of sugar beets for the other sugar factories. Local personnel gathered the sugar beets from the neighboring collective farms and transported them to other sugar factories. This organization of production had to change when the factory started to process its own sugar beets and to produce sugar.

Along with the production of sugar, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory faced a double challenge: on the one hand, it had to process a certain amount of sugar beets and to produce a certain amount of sugar, but on the other hand, it had to deliver a certain amount of sugar beets to the neighboring sugar factories. As some of the sugar was lost during the storage of the sugar beets, the administration of the factory sought to preserve more sugar beets for processing, in case the losses of sugar would be higher than usual.

In August 1950, The General Administration of Sugar Industry of Ukrainian SSR at the all-Union Ministry of Food Industry (Ukrglavsakhar- Glavnoe Upravlenie Sakharnoi Promyshlennosti Ukrainskoi SSR v Ministerstve Pishchevoi Promyshlennosti SSSR)³⁴⁴ decreed that, during the following production season the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had to deliver 452,000 centners of sugar beets to the Ukrainian sugar factories.³⁴⁵

³⁴⁴ In order to acknowledge the special place of the Ukrainian sugar industry in the Soviet Union, Soviet authorities established Ukglavsakhar in 1949 as a separate subdivision of the all-Union Ministry of Food Industry. Ukrglavsakhar was in charge of the sugar industry in the Ukrainian SSR and the Moldavian SSR, while Glavsakhar managed the sugar factories in all the other Soviet republics.

³⁴⁵ANRM, FR 2848, inv.12, d.228, f.38.

At the same time, the production plan prescribed that the factory had to process 693,000 centners of sugar beets at its own facilities.

In a note to Ukrglavsakhar, Cherkasov, the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, mentioned that the total harvest of sugar beets was expected to be approximately 860,000 centners. Taking into consideration the production plan and the possible losses, Cherkasov claimed that the factory could deliver only 142,000 centners to the Ukrainian sugar factories. ³⁴⁶

In the same note, Cherkasov reported that Leonid Brezhnev, the Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPM, did not agree to deliver the sugar beets to the Ukrainian sugar factories. Instead of transporting the sugar beets outside Soviet Moldavia, Brezhnev proposed that all the sugar beets had to be processed at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory.³⁴⁷

This strategy of the republican leadership was part of a wider plan to develop a Moldavian food industry and a working class. In retrospect, Brezhnev recalled in his memoirs that:

It was life itself that dictated the need to focus on the development of the food industry in Moldavia. We understood that by developing the food industry, we could solve two issues: to create our own facilities for the processing of the growing quantity of raw materials and to consolidate the working class, by hiring more people. At that time, the consolidation of collective farms and the mechanization of agriculture provided a surplus of labor force in the villages. And it was clear that the multilateral and harmonious development of the new, socialist Moldavian nation, was unthinkable without a strong working class. ³⁴⁸

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Leonid Il'ich Brezhnev, *Vospominaniia*, 2nd ed. (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1983), 156.

In his reply to Cherkasov, Krivets, the Deputy Director of Ukrglavsakhar, urged Cherkasov to deliver the surplus of 142,000 centners, before requesting the revision of the initial supply plan.³⁴⁹ Krivets stated that:

Ukrglavsakhar obliges you to enforce the delivery of the sugar beets to the sugar factories of the Vinnitsa Sugar Trust. We recommend that the issue of processing of all the sugar beets at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory should not be raised, until you deliver all the 142 thousand centners of sugar beets.³⁵⁰

The same argument against the transportation of Moldavian sugar beets outside the MSSR was used by the Moldavian leadership to argue for the building of new sugar factories in the MSSR. On September 21, 1951, Rud' mentioned in a letter to Mikoian that the MSSR was expected to harvest 15 million centners of sugar beets.³⁵¹

Rud' specified that this amount of sugar beets was several times higher than the production capacity of the two Moldavian sugar factories. For this reason, most of the sugar beets were transported outside the MSSR. As a consequence, the Moldavian collective farms were left without the sugar beet pulp, which was an important source of fodder for the cattle. Thus, Rud' proposed the building of new sugar factories in Soviet Moldavia.³⁵²

In 1950, two Moldavian sugar factories were able to process only 30% of all the Moldavian sugar beets, while 70% of the sugar beets were sent to Ukrainian sugar

³⁴⁹ ANRM, FR 2848, inv.12, d.228, f. 39.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

³⁵¹ RGAE, F.8543, op.1, d.1997, ll.306-309.

³⁵² Ibid.

factories. ³⁵³ Moldavian sugar factories had to pay the transportation expenses and Moldavian collective farmers lost an important source of fodder. In order to bridge this gap between the processing facilities and the sugar beet plantations, the government decided to build more sugar factories in Moldavia.

On February 19, 1952, the all-Union Ministry of Food Industry issued a decree "On the development of the food industry in MSSR," which approved the building of four sugar factories in the MSSR.³⁵⁴ On this occasion, the secretary of the Central Committee of the CPM, Gladkii, and the head of the Moldavian Council of Ministers, Rud' sent a note to Mikoian with the request to establish a Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust.³⁵⁵

The republican leadership argued that the Moldavian sugar factories experienced a constant deficit of materials and a lack of attention because they were affiliated with the Vinnitsa Sugar Trust of the Ukrglavsakhar, which was 450 km away from Chisinau and 250-300 km from the sugar beet plantations. In their argumentation, the Moldavian leadership introduced the distance between the sugar trust and Chisinau, while previously they referred only to the distance between the trust and the sugar factories. In conclusion, Gladkii and Rud' asked for the permission to organize a Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust on January 1, 1953.

³⁵³ V.I. Donets, "Razvitie Sakharnoi promyshlennosti Moldavskoi SSR," *Sakharnaia Promyshlennost'*, no.1 (January 1961): 6-8.

³⁵⁴ ANRM, F.R 2848, inv.12, d.369, ff.8-9.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

On January 3, 1953, the all-Union Ministry of Food and Light Industries established the Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust, which was directly affiliated with Glavsakhar. The Moldavian sugar factories were no longer affiliated with Ukrglavsakhar. They would be affiliated with the Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust, which became the main supporter of the Moldavian sugar industry in front of the upper level allocators of resources.

Initially, D'iachenko, the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, proposed the establishment of the Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust in 1947. He suggested that the Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust should include two Moldavian sugar factories and four Ukrainian sugar factories. The Moldavian leadership did not accept his proposal. Instead, Moldavian authorities requested the direct subordination of both Moldavian sugar factories to Glavsakhar in Moscow. Contrary to D'iachenko's geographical argument, Moldavian leaders relied on the bureaucratic argument that efficient administration depended on the elimination of the intermediary layers and the direct supervision of the factory by the center.

According to the republican leadership, the administration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory suffered from the long distance between Rybnitsa and Kirovohrad. Since the distance between Chisinau and Rybnitsa is smaller than the distance between Rybnitsa and Kirovohrad, it was likely that the republican leadership would consent to the creation of a Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust in Chisinau.

Nevertheless, the Moldavian bureaucracy suggested the subordination of Moldavian sugar factories to Glavsakhar, which was more than one thousand kilometers

away in Moscow. Glavsakhar did not consent to these proposals and left the Moldavian sugar factories under the administration of the Ukrainian trusts.

The Moldavian leadership accepted the idea of a Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust only in 1952, along with the building of additional sugar factories in Soviet Moldavia. It might have been the case that CPM hesitated in 1947 because it didn't want to assume the responsibility for the administration of two Moldavian and four Ukrainian sugar factories. Only when the center agreed to build additional sugar factories in Soviet Moldavia did Moldavian authorities demand the establishment of the Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust.

Molasses into Alcohol or Sugar: A Case Study of the Local Technopolitics

Among many other reforms, Nikita Khrushchev is credited with the decentralization of Soviet industrial administration. ³⁵⁶ The decentralization reforms started in 1954-1955. The main principle of these reforms was to increase the role of local authorities in the industrial administration. Thus, many factories were detached from the central ministries and affiliated with the union republics.

On July 4, 1955, N. A. Bulganin, the head of the all-Union Council of Ministers, referred to the perspectives of the decentralization in his address to the Plenum of the Central Committee.³⁵⁷ He argued that industrial performance would improve if the administrative bodies would get closer to production. Bulganin specified that the centralized administration of many factories did not provide flexible responses to many immediate challenges. At the same time, the increased centralization decreased the

³⁵⁶ R. W. Davies, "The Reappraisal of Industry," *Soviet Studies* 7, no. 3 (January 1, 1956): 316-317.

³⁵⁷ N.A. Bulganin, "O zadachakh po dal'neishemu pod'omu promyshlennosti, tekhnicheskomu progressu i uluchsheniiu organizatsii proizvodstva," *Pravda*, July 17, 1955, 4.

responsibility of the union republics. As a consequence, the administration of many factories should be transferred from the center to the union republics.

In 1953, the Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust became affiliated with Glavsakhar, which was a subdivision of the all-Union Ministry of Food Industry. On February 27, 1956, the Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust was removed from Glavsakhar and placed under the authority of the Ministry of Food Industry of the MSSR. In February 1957, the Regional Economic Councils (Sovnarkhozy) replaced the ministries in the administration of the Soviet economy. 358

The ministries were dismantled and the administration of the Soviet factories was delegated to the regional economic councils. In Soviet Moldavia, the Ministry of Food Industry was dismantled and the Regional Economic Council of Soviet Moldavia (Sovnarkhoz MSSR) took control of the Moldavian sugar industry. The Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust was reorganized into the Trust of the Sugar Industry, which became a subdivision of the Sovnarkhoz.

János Kornai claims that these reforms were inefficient because they did not change the basic pillars of the system: the party's monopoly of power and the lack of private property.³⁵⁹ In his opinion, these pseudo-reforms are representative of a larger series of cosmetic changes applied by the socialist governments in order to perfect the workings of the bureaucratic distribution mechanism. According to this logic, the

³⁵⁸ Donald Filtzer, *The Khrushchev Era: De-Stalinisation and the Limits of Reform in the USSR*, 1953-1964 (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993), 67.

³⁵⁹ János Kornai, *The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 397-398.

replacement of a bureaucratic institution with another institution did not affect the nature of the system.

Contrary to Kornai's theory, the decentralization reform had a significant impact on the development of the Moldavian sugar industry. An important outcome of the decentralization reform was the decision of the Moldavian authorities to prioritize the development of some technological processes over the demands of the central authorities. The central institutions insisted that the Soviet sugar industry had to direct all its efforts towards the increase of sugar production. By contrast, the Moldavian specialists sought to adapt the sugar technology to the demands of the Moldavian economy.

On December 15, 1954, the all-Union Ministry of State Control sent a report "On the delays in the adoption of some measures for the extraction of sugar from the by-products of the sugar industry" to the Central Committee of the all-Union Communist Party. ³⁶⁰ The report claimed that the Soviet Union failed to use a wide variety of possibilities to increase the production of sugar from by-products of the sugar industry.

In particular, the Soviet sugar industry wasted large amounts of sugar because it did not extract sugar from molasses. The Ministry noticed that most of the molasses was used to manufacture ethanol, and 26% of Soviet ethanol was produced from molasses.

Instead of wasting molasses for the production of ethanol, the report insisted that all the Soviet sugar factories had to extract sugar from molasses.³⁶¹

³⁶⁰ RGANI, F.5, op.43, d.7, ll. 119-123.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

The separation of sugar from molasses was not a new technological process. In the Russian Empire, 22 sugar factories used lime to separate sugar from molasses. ³⁶²

This method, also known as the Steffen process, was widespread in the US. The report noted that in the Soviet Union, only one factory extracted sugar from molasses. In conclusion, the Ministry of the State Control recommended that all Soviet sugar factories had to be able to extract sugar from molasses during the next two years.

Pavel Mikhailovich Silin, professor at the Moscow Technological Institute of Food Industry, and a leading Soviet specialist on the sugar industry, argued that "from the national-economy viewpoint it would be most reasonable to utilize molasses for sugar recovery instead of other purposes." 363

He suggested that molasses should be used only for the production of sugar, while for the production of alcohol, it was more efficient to use potatoes or other non-edible raw materials such as wood shavings, hulls, straw. As sugar beets were difficult to grow, Silin also insisted that the Soviet collective farmers had to stop feeding them to cattle and replace them with hay or oilseed meals.³⁶⁴

By contrast, the authorities in Soviet Moldavia used various economic models to prove that the extraction of sugar from molasses was not profitable. In his study "Spravka o sravnenii ekonomicheskoi effektivnosti pererabotki sveklovichnoi patoki na sakhar i na kormovye drozhzhi" (On the comparison of economic efficiency of processing molasses

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ P. M. Silin, *Technology of Beet-Sugar Production and Refining* (Jerusalem: Israel Program for Scientific Translations, 1964), 388-389.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

into sugar and fodder yeast), N. Cherniavskii, the Director of the State Committee for Science and Technology at the Moldavian Council of Ministers, argued that it was more profitable to process molasses into fodder yeast, than to extract sugar from molasses.³⁶⁵ According to him, the extraction of sugar from molasses required large investments and minor profits, whereas the production of yeast was cheaper and it would contribute to the development of livestock farming in the MSSR.

G. N. Singur, a researcher at the Moldavian Academy of Sciences, supported the wider utilization of sugar by-products for the economic development of Soviet Moldavia. He argued that the local sugar factories had to combine the production of sugar with the production of canned goods or alcohol. By combining more production activities, sugar factories would contribute to the development of other industries in the MSSR.

For instance, Singur referred to the increasing deficit of ethanol in Soviet Moldavia. This deficit of ethanol emerged along with the accelerated development of the Moldavian wine industry.³⁶⁷ According to him, the internal production covered only 25% of the republican demand for ethanol, while the rest was brought from Ukraine.

At the same time, the sugar factories had constantly increased the production of molasses. Singur estimated that from 1960 until 1965, the local sugar factories would increase their output of molasses by 60%. Moreover, Singur asserted his opposition

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³⁶⁵ ANRM, FR 2848, inv.12, d.499, ff.97-99.

³⁶⁶ G.N. Singur, Kombinirovanie proizvodstv i ego effektivnost' (Kishinev: Shtiintsa, 1962).

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 37-39.

against the technological extraction of sugar from molasses and recommended the processing of molasses into alcohol.³⁶⁸

On June 7, 1961, N. Shchelokov, the Deputy Head of the Moldavian Council of Ministers, observed that the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was going through a complex reconstruction with the aim to raise the processing capacity from 19,000 to 25,000 centners of sugar beets per day. 369 Along with this reconstruction, Moldavian authorities planned to build a new section for the production of ethanol from molasses at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory.

In 1961, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory inaugurated its new section for the extraction of ethanol from molasses.³⁷⁰ On this occasion, the factory changed its name from Rybnitskii Sakhzavod (Rybnitsa Sugar Factory) to Rybnitskii Sakhspirtkombinat (Rybnitsa Sugar and Ethanol Factory). From the production of sugar, the factory would gradually shift to the production of alcohol. At the same time, the factory produced fodder for cattle from the by-products of alcohol fermentation. Thus, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was inscribed into the local technopolitics.

The new section of ethanol production provided raw materials for the Moldavian wine industry. Ethanol resulted from the fermentation of molasses at 20-25 °C. 371 Carbon dioxide was another product which resulted from the fermentation of molasses. In 1961,

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ ANRM, FR 2848, inv.12, d.499, f.207.

³⁷⁰ AOSPRM, F.3, inv.36, d. 33, f.13.

³⁷¹ P. M. Silin, Technology of Beet-Sugar Production and Refining (Jerusalem: Israel Program for Scientific Translations, 1964), 385.

the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory produced ethanol and wasted the carbon dioxide in the production process. It was not earlier than 1972 that the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory developed a section to capture the carbon dioxide.

On March 27, 1972, V. Gerbst, the head of Glavsnab (The Procurement Agency of the MSSR) discovered that the republic needed 4,000 tons of carbon dioxide per year, but it produced only 1,600 tons.³⁷² As a result, it had to bring the rest of the carbon dioxide from outside the republic. Gerbst pointed to the fact that all the transportation expenses were higher than the cost of the imported carbon dioxide.

In addition, Gerbst referred to the rising demand for carbon dioxide in the framework of the anti-alcoholic campaign, which promoted the production of non-alcoholic beverages. By increasing the production of non-alcoholic beverages, Soviet authorities sought to decrease the consumption of alcohol. The carbon dioxide was used for the production of non-alcoholic beverages. Thus, Gerbst proposed the building of a new section for the production of carbon dioxide at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory.

On December 18, 1972, the new section for the production of carbon dioxide was inaugurated at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. ³⁷³ It employed 28 people and had a capacity to produce 4,500 tons of carbon dioxide per year. For the production of carbon dioxide, the section used the by-products of the alcohol extraction from molasses. Thus, the factory produced alcohol from molasses, and carbon dioxide from the by-products of alcohol extraction. If alcohol was used in the wine industry then carbon dioxide was used for the production of non-alcoholic drinks.

³⁷² AOSPRM, F.51, inv.33, d.159, ff. 19-23.

³⁷³ ANRM, F.2696, inv.1, d.178, ff.140-143.

Conclusion

After World War II, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory became the founding member of the Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust. Before the establishment of this Trust in 1953, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was affiliated with the various Ukrainian sugar trusts. As a consequence of this affiliation, it played a marginal role in the Ukrainian sugar industry and it did not receive the necessary resources from the Ukrainian sugar trusts.

Along with the establishment of the Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory became the embodiment of a new technopolitical regime. Local experts had to reconcile the requirements of central planning with the specific needs of Soviet Moldavia. The central authorities demanded more sugar, while the local experts sought to provide more by-products of sugar production as raw materials for the local economy.

In Soviet Moldavia, molasses was at the center of this debate over the by-products of the sugar industry. The central authorities promoted the extraction of sugar from molasses while the Moldavian specialists argued for the fermentation of molasses into ethanol. In 1961, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory inaugurated a new section for the production of ethanol. The inauguration of this section marked an important moment in the history of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. Until 1961, the factory produced only sugar. After 1961, it started to diversify its production.

The fermentation of molasses into ethanol generated carbon dioxide, which was another missing product in the Moldavian industry. The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory started to capture the carbon dioxide in 1972, along with the beginning of the Soviet campaign to raise the production of non-alcoholic beverages and to reduce the consumption of

alcohol. Thus, the anti-alcohol campaign in Soviet Moldavia depended on the capacity of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory to capture carbon dioxide from the molasses fermentation into ethanol.

CHAPTER 5: "WE WERE HERE FROM THE BEGINNING": THE SYMBOLIC VALUE OF RYBNITSA SUGAR FACTORY IN SOVIET MOLDAVIA

In April 1967, Vladimir Ivanovich Gritsiuk, the head of the General Administration of the Sugar Industry at the Moldavian Ministry of Food Industry, drafted a report, "On the Development of Sugar Industry in Soviet Moldavia." In the report, Gritsiuk argued that the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had a special place in the history of the Moldavian sugar industry because it was the first Moldavian sugar factory.

Gritsiuk specified that at its founding in 1898, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was a tiny factory with old equipment and a very low productivity rate. Gritsiuk claimed that despite the low performance of the sugar factory, the former owner of the factory, Gepner, managed to extract high profits by the fierce exploitation of the local workers. At that time, workers used to say that: "We extract juice from the beets and the owner extracts juice from us." 375

In the same report, Gritsiuk argued that along with the establishment of Soviet power, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory and the Moldavian sugar industry entered a new stage of development. After the Civil War, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was restored and started a new production season in 1926. According to Gritsiuk, the production season of 1926-1927 was the first production season of the Moldavian sugar industry. Referring to the

³⁷⁴ ANRM, F.2696, inv.1, d.258, ff.19-27.

³⁷⁵ Ibid.

interwar development of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, Gritsiuk noticed that the factory increased its productivity rate, but it still played only a minor role in the Soviet sugar industry.³⁷⁶

After World War II, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory increased its importance in the Soviet sugar industry. Gritsiuk described how the new sugar factory emerged from the ruins of the war in 1950. In the next years, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory laid the foundations of the Moldavian sugar industry. In 1926, the only Moldavian sugar factory had a capacity to process 4,700 centners of sugar beets per day. In 1966, there were 8 sugar factories in Soviet Moldavia with a capacity to process 157,000 centners of sugar beets per day. As a result, Soviet Moldavia became the third largest producer of sugar in the Soviet Union, after the Ukrainian SSR and the Russian SFSR.³⁷⁷

Catherine Alexander points to the important role of the Turkish Sugar Corporation (TSC) in the state building efforts of the Turkish authorities. Turkish sugar factory, which was built in Uşak, a small town to the West of Ankara, to the latest sugar factories, these "Atatürk's minarets", as she calls them, were among the first industrial buildings in the Turkish countryside.

According to Catherine Alexander, the significance of the Uşak Factory "lies in the fact that it was the first, rather than the best factory." From its founding in 1923,

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

³⁷⁷ Ibid.

³⁷⁸ Catherine Alexander, "The Factory Fabricating the State," *Journal of Material Culture* 5, no. 2 (July 1, 2000): 177–95.

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 177

the Uşak Factory has become one of the least efficient Turkish sugar factories, and its symbolic value has outweighed its efficiency. Catherine Alexander claims that the Uşak Factory, along with other factories where profit is secondary, can be regarded as "social" or "political" factories.

Throughout the twentieth century, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was mostly a "social" or a "political" factory. As in the case of the Uşak Factory, the social and political importance of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory took precedence over its technological performance. In 1924, the Soviets established the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic as part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. The MASSR emerged as one of the most agricultural regions of the Soviet Union and the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had to lay the basis of the local industry.

Along with the production of sugar, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had to produce a Moldavian working class. The sugar industry is a seasonal production and the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory produced sugar during the production season. If the factory could stop the production of sugar, it could not stop the production of a Moldavian working class. At the end of the production season, the factory ceased the production of sugar but it continued to be a cultural or social center for the nascent Moldavian proletariat.

After World War II, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory played a crucial role in the establishment of a sugar industry in Soviet Moldavia. Being the oldest sugar factory in Soviet Moldavia, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was the only Moldavian sugar factory that witnessed the October Revolution, the Civil War and the First Five Year Plan. The most Soviet sugar factory in Soviet Moldavia delegated its leading cadres to participate in the

Sovietization of other Moldavian sugar factories. Thus, the former peasant-workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory became the founders and the experts of the Moldavian sugar industry.

The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory occupied a special place in the Moldavian sugar industry, not because of its technological performances, but merely because of its participation in the foundational events of Soviet history. Similarly, the experts of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory were praised for their revolutionary merits, rather than for their technological skills. The community of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory inscribed the Moldavian sugar industry on the Soviet revolutionary timeline.

Stephen E. Hanson argues that the Soviet Union institutionalized a charismatic-rational view of time as an alternative to the capitalist perception of rational time. 380 According to Hanson, the Soviet polity sought to reconcile the rational understanding of time as a collection of measurable units with a belief in the charismatic capacity of human societies to transcend time. This charismatic-rational view of time was embodied by the Leninist party of "professional revolutionaries" and the Stalinist economy of "planned heroism."

The Bolshevik Party, as a party of professional revolutionaries, had to evaluate the nature of time and to lead the Soviet people through the charismatic transcendence of time. ³⁸¹ Joseph Stalin initiated the First Five Year Plan as an attempt of the Soviet state to transcend the backwardness of the Soviet society through "planned heroism." At the

³⁸⁰ Stephen E. Hanson, *Time and Revolution: Marxism and the Design of Soviet Institutions* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

³⁸¹ Ibid., 143.

same time, the Stalinist economy was not based on reckless heroism. The ideal Soviet industrial manager had to know when to transcend time through disciplined action.

The Soviet representation of the charismatic-rational idea of time favored the celebration of past achievements. Katerina Clark claims that in the grand scheme of things, Soviet millennial thinking granted special importance to revolutionary events and neglected the problems of daily life as minor intermissions between the major revolutions. Soviet socialist realist novels were structured as rites of passage from the mundane problems of ordinary life to the extraordinary importance of revolutionary events.

Revolutionary heroes were not just abstract characters in socialist realist novels.

Jochen Hellbeck shows that numerous Soviet citizens sought to emulate the behavior of revolutionary heroes in their everyday struggle "to inscribe their life into a larger narrative of the revolutionary cause." Soviet citizens from different social backgrounds kept diaries and strove to change their own selves from an ordinary self to a revolutionary one.

Starting with the First Five Year Plan, revolutionary heroes would descend from the pages of socialist realist novels into Soviet newspapers.³⁸⁴ Participants in the major revolutionary events were brought to the attention of the public as heroes who

³⁸² Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 175-79.

³⁸³ Jochen Hellbeck, *Revolution on My Mind: Writing a Diary Under Stalin* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006).

³⁸⁴ Matthew E. Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses Stalinist Culture, Social Revolution, and Soviet Newspapers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).

transcended time and transformed the Soviet landscape. Rather than functioning as information sources for the broader public, Soviet newspapers became agents for the mobilization of the Soviet party cadres in the service of various Soviet causes. In their articles, Soviet journalists provided numerous examples of labor or war heroes as models to be emulated by ordinary party members.

In the Soviet Union, the official newspaper of the Rybnitsa District dedicated extensive coverage to the representation of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory as the bastion of Soviet power in Soviet Moldavia. In different periods of Soviet history, the newspaper used different strategies to write about the sugar factory. In the 1930s, it adopted a militaristic tone to mobilize the local party activists for the ambitious tasks of the First Five Year Plan. In the same context, local Stakhanovites were represented as pioneers of the Stalinist economy of planned heroism.

After World War II, the leading cadres of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had to become the founders of the Moldavian sugar industry. The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was the only Moldavian sugar factory with a revolutionary legacy. In this context, the newspaper gradually reduced the number of articles about the production routine at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, and switched its attention to the representation of local workers as revolutionary heroes. The peak of this narrative was reached in the 1960s, when the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory even emerged at the forefront of the Soviet aid to the Cuban revolutionary government.

After rising to the heights of the global revolutionary stage, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory would spend the last decades of Soviet power celebrating its past achievements

and contemplating the crisis of the Soviet planned economy. The district newspaper would reduce the coverage of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, and in the spirit of Brezhnev era it would dedicate whole pages to the factory only during anniversaries. This Soviet tradition of providing extensive coverage to the anniversary of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory would continue into the post-Soviet period, when in 1998, the district newspaper dedicated a whole page to the centennial of the sugar factory.

The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in the Stalinist Economy

Matthew Lenoe argues that Soviet newspapers had two basic functions: agitation and propaganda. During the NEP, Soviet journalists embarked on a mass enlightenment project to raise the revolutionary consciousness of all the Soviet populace. They wrote extensive articles and tried to explain the party policies in minor details. Lenoe ties this kind of didactic style to the propaganda function of Soviet journalism.

During the First Five Year Plan, Soviet newspapers abandoned their mass enlightenment project and focused on agitation among party members. The newspaper articles became shorter and their title acquired a militaristic tone. Tracing a parallel with the Civil War, Soviet newspapers urged all the party members to have the same heroic behavior during the industrialization drive. Soviet journalists called on the party members to fight against the saboteurs of the industrialization drive, in the same way as they fought against the White forces in the Civil War.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁵ Ibid. 12.

If central Soviet newspapers mobilized party members for the industrialization drive, in Rybnitsa, *Drumul Socialist*, the official Soviet newspaper of the Rybnitsa district, adopted the same militaristic tone to mobilize party members for the sugar beet harvest. In the 1930s, *Drumul Socialist* devoted numerous articles to the production process of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. Published on the front page of the newspaper, these articles were usually written by ordinary party members who used short sentences and an imperative tone to criticize the slow pace of the sugar beet harvest and to engage all the party members into the harvest campaign.

Lenoe argues that during the First Five Year Plan central Soviet newspapers started to use more visuals.³⁸⁷ In the context of the Soviet industrialization campaign, Soviet journalists preferred to replace long texts with illustrations and photographs. They assumed that Soviet people didn't have time to read long articles because of the urgency of the industrialization campaign. Thus, the newspapers would prefer to publish short articles accompanied by visual materials.

Similarly, *Drumul Socialist* used calendars to monitor the daily productivity of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. During the production season, the newspaper published a calendar to illustrate the daily productivity of the sugar factory. For the viewer to compare the productivity of the sugar factory with the plan targets, the calendar also represented the average productivity rate assigned by the central planning authorities. Below, you can see a production calendar, which was published on December 3, 1931.

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³⁸⁷ Ibid., 44.



Figure 9 A typical production calendar

The newspaper used the Soviet version of the Moldavian language, written in Cyrillic script. The title "Calendar of the sugar factory" was written in capital letters on the upper side of the table. On the left side and on the right side, the calendar pointed to the fact that the factory had to produce 920 centners of sugar per day. Then, it showed that from November 21 to November 25, the daily production of sugar did not reach the goal of the production plan.

Despite the fact that the daily production of sugar varied from 660 to 776 centners of sugar per day, the calendar did not make a visual distinction between the increase or the decrease of sugar production. All the squares of the daily production were at the same level, whereas the plan target was situated on a visibly higher level. Thus, the calendar suggested that all the production numbers did not matter unless they reached the goal of the production plan.

The newspaper used the same imperative tone to promote labor heroism at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. In 1936, the newspaper started an active campaign to promote

the Stakhanovite movement at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. Stakhanovites were represented as labor visionaries who could transcend the limits of rational time and emerge into charismatic figures of planned heroism. Like all mythological heroes, Stakhanovites had to confront a series of malevolent forces before they could claim the status of labor heroes.

On February 21, 1936, Prostak, the leading Stakhanovite of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, wrote an editorial "Ce ne impiedica in lucrul" (Obstacles that we have to face) on the first page of *Drumul Socialist*.³⁸⁸ In the article, he claimed that the main obstacle in the way of the Stakhanovite movement was the passive attitude of the local engineers. For instance, the engineers Kamenchiuk, Tkachenko and Pashkovskii preferred to organize a drinking party rather than discuss the state of the sugar factory at a party meeting. Prostak concluded that ordinary workers would embrace the Stakhanovite movement if the local engineers provided a good example.

In another editorial, Prostak criticized the party cell of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory for failing to confront the class enemies who allegedly opposed the Stakhanovite movement. Prostak reported that Sozykin, a prominent Stakhanovite, was beaten by a group of class enemies, which included Boiko, Glimbovski and Klishchevskii. As a consequence, Prostak argued that the party cell had to intensify its struggle against the class enemies.

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³⁸⁸ Prostak, "Ce ne impiedica in lucrul," *Drumul Socialist*, February 21, 1936, 1.

³⁸⁹ Prostak, "Miscarea stahanovista se ignoreaza si mai departe," *Drumul Socialist*, March 26, 1936, 1.



Figure 10"Stahanovistul zavodului de zahar din Rimnita, tov. Prostac cu familia sa dupa ziua de lucru, cetesc" (Comrade Prostak, the Stakhanovite of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, with his family reading after the workday), Drumul Socialist, 4 May 1936, p.1.

In August 1936, Rapoport, the secretary of the local party cell, pledged to intensify the struggle against the class enemies at the sugar factory. On August 17, 1936, he wrote in the editorial "La impuscare pe dusmanii de clasa" (Class enemies to be shot) that "the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory were revolted by the deadly conspiracy

of the Trotskyite-Zinovievite counterrevolutionaries against the Soviet leadership and requested their execution."³⁹⁰ On this occasion, local workers pledged to raise their awareness against the class enemies.

In another editorial, Rapoport expressed the satisfaction of the local workers that, in Moscow, the Supreme Tribunal gave a death sentence to the Trotskyite-Zinovievite counterrevolutionaries, who allegedly planned to assassinate the Soviet leadership.³⁹¹
Rapoport noted that:

The workers and administrative personnel of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory are fully content with the death sentence for the filthy assassins, who plotted against the beloved leader of the people, Stalin, but they also request the execution of all the other enemies of the people, who assassinated comrade Kirov and prepared the assassination of comrade Stalin and other Soviet leaders.³⁹²

In December 1936, Sozykin was delegated by the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory to discuss the new Stalinist Constitution at the 7th Extraordinary Congress of the Soviets in the MASSR. In an editorial for *Drumul Socialist*, he claimed that the Stalinist Constitution enshrined all "the miracles of the Soviet society." Sozykin reported that these miracles were performed by ordinary Soviet people who spoke at the Congress.

³⁹⁰ Rapoport, "La impuscare pe dusmanii de clasa," *Drumul Socialist*, August 17, 1936, 1.

³⁹¹ Rapoport, "Muncitorii de la zavodul de zahar din Ribnita saluta sentinta Tribunalului Suprem", *Drumul Socialist*, August 28, 1936, 1.

³⁹² Ibid.

³⁹³ Sozykin, "Dreptul la invatat este fapt de o insemnatate istorica," *Drumul Socialist*, December 18, 1936, 1.

Thus, he declared that "one is astonished by the miracles performed by the people of the Stalinist era." 394

For instance, he specified that only in Soviet society could collective farmers harvest 114 centners of corn per hectare or 600-700-800 centners of sugar beets per hectare. In the same way, Sozykin claimed that the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory would be able to perform miracles only when they would acknowledge that the factory belonged to the people and not to the capitalist owners.³⁹⁵

In the same article, Sozykin praised the Stalinist Constitution for guaranteeing the right to education for all Soviet people. He contrasted his childhood experience in the tsarist religious schools with the Soviet schools. According to Sozykin, once he was excluded from the school because he asked the priest to answer a question about God. Afterwards, he was denied any right to education. By contrast, Sozykin mentioned that "the right to education is established in the Stalinist Constitution, which is not just advertisement, like the constitutions of the capitalist countries."

The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory as the Cradle of the Moldavian Working Class

Along with the establishment of Soviet Moldavia as a union republic, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was reinvented as the cradle of the Moldavian working class. From its restoration in 1950, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory and its workers had to embody the revolutionary consciousness of the Moldavian workers. On various Soviet holidays,

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

local workers were constantly celebrated in the district newspaper as participants in the main events of the revolutionary timeline: "the October Revolution", "the Civil War", "Stalin's revolution from above" and "the Great Patriotic War."

On October 8, 1950, A. Vershinin, the head of the trade unions at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, praised the contribution of hundreds of people from the Rybnitsa district who donated many hours of their free time for the reconstruction of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. Vershinin declared that the "Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was the pride of all the Soviet Moldavia, and in particular of the workers from the Rybnitsa district."

On the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution, the district newspaper published a series of articles by the contemporaries of the Revolution from the Rybnitsa district. V. Baranskii, the caster of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, claimed that during those 43 years that he worked at the sugar factory, he witnessed the enormous changes that occurred since the Revolution.³⁹⁹

Baranskii claimed that those who knew life before the Revolution could truly appreciate the radical transformation that came with the Revolution. Before the Revolution, workers received 20 kopeks per day and Baranskii recollected that he could not always afford to buy bread. At that time, workers lived in dark and humid huts. By contrast, Baranskii suggested that Soviet workers had radios and libraries in their

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³⁹⁷ A. Vershinin, "Sakharnyi zavod pushchen v eksploatatsiu," *Sotsialisticheskii Put'*, October 8, 1950, 1.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ V.Baranskii, "Svetlaia dolia rabochego," *Sotsialisticheskii put*', November 7, 1957, 2.

households.⁴⁰⁰ Moreover, he added that the children of workers felt the care of the Soviet state and they could attend schools. If before the Revolution there was only one primary school in Rybnitsa, then after the Revolution, there were 5 general schools.

On February 5, 1958, the district newspaper celebrated Mark Lavrent'evich Sedletskii, a mechanic who worked at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory for more than 40 years. 401 Sedletskii was 14 when he came to the sugar factory as an unskilled worker. E. Kirsta, the author of the article, asserted that after decades of work experience, Sedletskii knew each detail of the sugar factory like his five fingers. He trained thirty mechanics and most of them worked at the sugar factory. Also, his two sons and a granddaughter were employed at the sugar factory.

Kirsta pointed out that Sedletskii had always followed one purpose in life: to move forward and to regard each achievement as a new step uphill. In the same article, Sedletskii drew attention to the fact that he was rewarded with eight trips to sanatoriums and three honorary diplomas. Sedletskii wondered: "Could a worker in a capitalist country dream about this kind of life?"⁴⁰²

On May 1, 1958, M. Chernega published the article "Eto bylo 40 let nazad" (This was 40 years ago) to celebrate the International Workers' Day. 403 The article recounted the story of the 40th anniversary of the May Day parade, which apparently took place at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in 1918. At that time, the factory was occupied by Austro-

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⁴⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁰¹ E.Kirsta, "Veteran sakharnogo zavoda," *Sotsialisticheskii put'*, February 5, 1958, 2.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ M.Chernega, "Eto bylo 40 let nazad," *Sotsialisticheskii put'*, May 1, 1958, 2.

Hungarian troops. According to Chernega, former capitalists and landowners made use of the Austro-Hungarian occupation and returned to Rybnitsa in order to resume their repression against the labor organizations.

Chernega described the May Day parade in 1918 as the heroic attempt of the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory to resist against the foreign occupation. 404

According to him, on that day a group of workers gathered in front of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory and started their march towards the center of the town. Despite the explicit orders of the Austro-Hungarian authorities to cancel their demonstration, they continued their march while holding red flags and singing revolutionary songs. Chernega claimed that as a reprisal, the Austro-Hungarians executed some of the participants and arrested others.

The story of the 1918 May Day parade had to prove that the Moldavian working class was a mature working class with a clear revolutionary consciousness. Chernega placed the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory at the forefront of the Moldavian working class. Thus, he declared that: "the May Day parade was a glorious page in the revolutionary struggle of the Moldavian people." In addition, Chernega pointed to the multinational background of the participants at the legendary May Day parade. In the same way that the Soviet and the Moldavian people were represented as a harmonious family of many nationalities, the participants of that May Day parade spoke Russian, Moldavian, Polish, Ukrainian and Yiddish.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

Reaching the Global Stage

At the beginning of the 1960s, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory emerged at the forefront of the global revolutionary movement. Along with other Soviet factories, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory participated in the Soviet policy of assistance to socialist countries. On the International Workers' Day in 1960, the district newspaper published an exchange of letters between the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory and the workers of the Banat Sugar Factory in Timisoara, Socialist Republic of Romania. 406

In their letter to the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, Romanian workers specified that they started this correspondence because they needed the advice of Soviet experts in the sugar industry. 407 The objective of the Romanian sugar industry was to increase the production of sugar until Romania would not need to import any sugar. In 1959, the Banat Sugar Factory had a very big harvest of sugar beets. Local specialists encountered some problems with the storage of sugar beets. As a consequence, the Banat Sugar Factory lost a part of the harvest. Thus, Romanian workers asked their Soviet counterparts to share their experience with the storage of sugar beets.

In their reply, workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory explained that only during the last two years had their factory increased its productivity rate from 15,000 to 18,000

^{406 &}quot;Perepiska druzei," Sotsialisticheskii put', May 1, 1960, 3.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

centners of sugar beets per day. 408 In addition, they argued that in the next few years the productivity rate of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory would reach 25,000 centners per day.

Soviet workers explained these results by the implementation of new methods for the storage of sugar beets. 409 For instance, they referred to the efficiency of the full mechanization of the storage facilities. As a result, Soviet workers proposed to celebrate the 43rd anniversary of the October Revolution by organizing a socialist competition for the successful completion of the future production season.

On the other side of the globe, the Cuban revolutionary government nationalized all the sugar factories and needed assistance for the reorganization of its sugar industry. 410 The Soviet government delegated its experts to Cuba in order to help with the building of new Cuban sugar factories.

On June 26, 1961, the deputy director of the all-Union Committee for External Economic Cooperation, D. Degtiar', wrote to N. A. Shchelokov, the first deputy head of the Moldavian Council of Ministers, that the Cuban government needed two highly qualified mechanical engineers in order to help with the building of the Cuban sugar factories. As a consequence, Degtiar' requested that Moldavian authorities select these two engineers from among the specialists of the Moldavian sugar factories and send them to Cuba for one year.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁰ Jorge Pérez-López, *The Economics of Cuban Sugar* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991), 157.

⁴¹¹ ANRM, FR 2848, inv.12, d.499, f.221.

In his request, Degtiar' provided a brief overview of the Cuban sugar industry. 412

He mentioned that Cuba had a strong sugar industry, which could provide seven million tons of sugar per year. Before the establishment of the revolutionary government, most of the Cuban sugar factories belonged to American companies. Afterwards, all the sugar factories were nationalized by the state and American specialists left Cuba along with their companies. Thus, Cuban sugar factories had an acute deficit of specialists.

In 1961, the Soviet Union became the main destination for the export of Cuban sugar. Sugar represented 84% of all the Cuban exports to the Soviet market. In the context of the Soviet aid to Cuba, the Soviet government established unprecedented high prices for the imported Cuban sugar and maintained these prices until the end of the 1980's. Upon its arrival in the Soviet Union, Cuban raw sugar was distributed among the Soviet sugar factories for further processing into refined sugar.

On September 7, 1961, the district newspaper reported that "at the end of August 1961, for the first time in the long history of this oldest factory in Soviet Moldavia, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory received the first shipment of the Cuban raw sugar." The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had to receive 2,500 tons of Cuban raw sugar until the end of September. In order to process the Cuban raw sugar, the technical council of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory developed a special technological scheme. This scheme facilitated the

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Jorge Pérez-López, *The Economics of Cuban Sugar* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1991), 157.

⁴¹⁴"Adres Otpravitelia- Kuba," *Sotsialisticheskii Put'*, September 7, 1961, 1.

simultaneous production of refined sugar from both the local sugar beets and from the Cuban raw sugar.

The newspaper declared that:

The workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory realized that their work was important for the fate of the Cuban Revolution and they would continue to be faithful to the rich revolutionary traditions of their collective, by processing the Cuban raw sugar in an exemplary way.⁴¹⁵

On September 12, 1962, the main Soviet newspaper, *Pravda*, published an official declaration of the Soviet government against "the provocative policy of the American government in Cuba." The declaration drew a parallel between the American attempts to return Cuba into the American sphere of influence and the Civil War in the Soviet Union. The Soviet government claimed that in the same way that the capitalist states encircled Soviet Russia after the October Revolution, the United States encircled Cuba and sought to extinguish the Cuban revolution. The only difference was that in 1962, there were several nuclear powers and a new war could turn into a nuclear war.

In support of this declaration of the Soviet government, on September 13, 1962, N. Vorob'ev, one of the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory and a deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, published the editorial "Ruki proch' ot Kuby: Gnevnyi golos rybnitskikh sakharovarov" (Get your hands off Cuba: The angry voice of

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⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

⁴¹⁶ "Pokonchit' s politikoi provokatsii-Zaiavlenie TASS," *Pravda*, September 12, 1962, 1.

the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory) in the newspaper of the Kolkhoz Union of the Rybnitsa district, *Dnestrovskii Maiak*. 417

At the beginning of the article, Vorob'ev declared that:

The shameless and provocative actions of the American aggressors, which were denounced in the declaration of the Soviet government, provoked the anger and indignation in the hearts of all the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, the oldest sugar factory in Soviet Moldavia. Our collective is renowned for its revolutionary and work traditions, and it managed to restore the sugar factory after two destructive wars, which were provoked by the imperialists. Thus, we don't want to witness again our factory in ruins or people shedding their blood.⁴¹⁸

At the same time, Vorob'ev asserted that the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory could not accept the defeat of the Cuban Revolution because they were tied to the Cuban people. These ties started a year ago, when the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory received the first shipment of Cuban raw sugar. Vorob'ev declared that local workers pledged to continue their support for the Cuban people in their struggle against imperialism.⁴¹⁹

From the Global to the Local: How the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory Became an Imagined Place

The fate of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory changed along with the transformation of Rybnitsa into a major industrial center of Soviet Moldavia. On February 7, 1963, *Sovetskaia Moldaviia*, the official newspaper of Soviet Moldavia, published the article "Sud'ba odnogo goroda" (The fate of one town) by V. Pravdin. 420 In the article, Pravdin

 $^{^{417}}$ N. Vorob'ev, "Ruki proch' ot Kuby: Gnevnyi golos rybnitskikh sakharovarov,
" $\it Dnestrovskii~Maiak,$ September 13, 1962, 1.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid.

⁴¹⁹ Ibid.

⁴²⁰ V. Pravdin, "Sud'ba odnogo goroda," *Sovetskaia Moldaviia*, February 7, 1963, 3.

described the evolution of Rybnitsa from a small village on the outskirts of the Russian Empire to an industrial town in the Soviet Union.

Pravdin specified that, along with the building of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in 1898, this small village would become the cradle of the Moldavian working class. 421 Pravdin claimed that only after the October Revolution, Rybnitsa became a prosperous town. For instance, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, the oldest sugar factory in Soviet Moldavia, considerably increased its productivity rate and started to produce ethanol, which was another strategic product for Soviet Union. According to Pravdin, after a series of restorations, the sugar factory became younger and stronger.

At the same time, Soviet power founded other industrial enterprises in Rybnitsa. In 1934, local authorities inaugurated the Rybnitsa Wine Factory. After World War II, in 1946 the Rybnitsa Pump Factory started to produce water pumping equipment. Finally, in 1961, the Rybnitsa Cement Plant became the first Moldavian cement plant. Based on these developments, Pravdin showed his conviction that "Rybnitsa had a bright future." 422

Rybnitsa might have had a bright future, but the future of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was not going to be so bright. Along with the multiplication of the other factories in Rybnitsa, Moldavian newspapers would grant less attention to the activity of the local sugar factory. Instead, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory would fade in the background as a mythical place. Only during its anniversaries would the newspapers devote entire pages to the historical importance of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory.

⁴²¹ Ibid.

⁴²² Ibid.

On October 20, 1968, the front page of the district newspaper, *Leninskoe Znamia*, celebrated the 70th anniversary of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory with the article "Stareishii v Moldavii: 70-letie Rybnitskogo sakharno-spirtovogo kombinata" ("The oldest in Moldavia: on the 70th anniversary of the Rybnitsa Sugar and Ethanol Factory"). The article announced that the importance of this anniversary went beyond the limits of the sugar factory, since the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had a very important role in the transformation of Rybnitsa from a backward village into a town and into the cradle of the Moldavian working class. Also, the newspaper emphasized that the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was the core of the prospective industrial town.

Referring to the founding of the sugar factory at the end of the nineteenth century, the anniversary article included that:

Since the founding of the sugar factory, Nistru carried a lot of water but the factory still stood on the banks of the river. But "stood" is not the right word to describe the evolution of the factory throughout its history. The destiny of the factory prescribed that, twice in its history, the factory had to be restored from ruins. Both times, it was restored by the diligent hands of the collective, which followed its patriotic traditions. 424

The whole second page of the newspaper was dedicated to anniversary articles written by the leading personnel of the sugar factory. In his article, the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, A. Bordovitsyn, compared the progress of the sugar factory after the October Revolution with "the backwardness" of the tsarist period. 425 Bordovitsyn

⁴²³ "Stareishii v Moldavii: 70-letie Rybnitskogo sakharno-spirtovogo kombinata," *Leninskoe Znamia*, October 20, 1968, 1.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ A. Bordovitsyn, "Stupeni rosta," *Leninskoe Znamia*, October 20, 1968, 2.

explained that unlike the tsarist regime, which exploited the workforce with long working hours and primitive equipment, Soviet authorities modernized the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory and turned it into a highly mechanized sugar factory with a productivity rate of 27,000 centners of sugar beets per day.

In another article, the secretary of the party cell, M. Bur'ian, referred to the role of the local party cell in the establishment of the communist organizations in Soviet Moldavia. ⁴²⁶ He argued that the party cell of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was the oldest party cell in Rybnitsa and one of the oldest party cells in Soviet Moldavia. Bur'ian provided a heroic account of the participation of the local party members in the Civil War and in the Great Patriotic War. Local communists were represented as leaders of all the progressive forces at the sugar factory.

In the same context, Bur'ian pointed to the growth of the party cell from 20-25 members in the 1920's, to 90 party members at the 70th anniversary of the factory. He mentioned that the quality of the party members grew along with their number. A growing number of the party members became qualified specialists after graduating from various educational institutions. For instance, the fitter V. V. Monastyrskii became an engineer while the welder E. A. Den'govskii became a shift foreman.

In order to convey a sense of community to the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, the anniversary issue of *Leninskoe Znamia* featured articles like "V rodnom dome" ("At home") and "Druzhnoi Sem'ei" ("In a friendly family") by the two leading

⁴²⁶ M. Bur'ian, "Communisty vsegda vperedi," *Leninskoe Znamia*, October 20, 1968, 2.

⁴²⁷ Ibid.

workers of the factory, V. Sherpa and M. Pavlova. 428 Both articles drew parallels between the successful evolution of the factory and the ascending professional development of the workers. They also had to convey a sense of continuity between the current and the former generations of workers.

In his article, the mechanic V. Sherpa proudly declared that:

The biggest and the happiest moment in my life happened to me this year. I was accepted as a candidate to become a party member. I will do my best to become a good communist, who is worthy of becoming a model for others. Like all the other workers from our brigade I am proud to be a worker. We will continue to work for the building of our communist future. 429

On its 75th anniversary, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory would rise to new historical heights. On October 16, 1973, *Leninskoe Znamia* published a one page article "Stareishii v Moldavii: istoriko-kraevedcheskii ocherk, k 75-letiiu sakharno-spirtovogo kombinata imeni M. V. Frunze" ("The oldest in Moldavia: a historical and ethnographical sketch on the 75th anniversary of the Rybnitsa Sugar and Ethanol Factory") by Vladimir Pravdin. 430

The 70th anniversary of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was framed as a family celebration. The most exemplary members of the working collective wrote about their individual transformation from ordinary human beings into heroic workers. By contrast, on the 75th anniversary, Pravdin recounted the history of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory as a single epic story with a scientific title.

Benniskoe Bhama, Getobel 20, 1700, 2.

⁴²⁸ Leninskoe Znamia, October 20, 1968, 2.

⁴²⁹ V.Sherpa, "V rodnom dome," *Leninskoe Znamia*, October 20, 1968, 2.

⁴³⁰ Vl. Pravdin, "Stareishii v Moldavii: istoriko-kraevedcheskii ocherk," *Leninskoe Znamia*, October 16, 1973, 3.

Pravdin constructed the narrative of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory as a revolutionary saga, in which local workers overcame all the obstacles on the revolutionary timeline and emerged as victorious heroes who deserved to live in a communist society. First of all, local workers were represented as the loyal supporters of the October Revolution.

Pravdin cited from an interview with Semen Tikhonovich Shapovalov, who worked at the factory during the October Revolution. According to Shapovalov:

All my life I remembered the moment when I heard about the Revolution in Petrograd. How could one forget such a moment? When the October Revolution came, we, the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, somehow immediately felt that we became the owners of the factory. 431

Secondly, Pravdin continued with the portrayal of the local workers as partisans in the Civil War. The main focus of the story is on the permanent presence of the underground Soviet activists, who allegedly resisted against all the internal and external enemies of the October Revolution. According to Pravdin, "during the Civil War, the sugar factory was a bastion of Soviet power." As proof, he also described how the workers organized and how the Austro-Hungarian army suppressed the May Day demonstration in 1918.

Thirdly, Pravdin pointed to the positive changes that came to the sugar factory along with the coming of Soviet power. Here, Pravdin mentioned that during the interwar period, the factory increased its productivity rate and the workers achieved better standards of living. All these developments were interrupted by the Nazi invasion,

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Ibid.

which put a stop to the activity of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. As in the case of the Civil War, Praydin claimed that during World War II, the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory served as the bastion of Soviet resistance against Nazi aggression.

Finally, Pravdin described the achievements of the local workers after the postwar restoration of the sugar factory in 1950. According to him, the administration of the factory almost solved the housing problem for all the local workers. Thus, workers had access to all the social facilities, which were not accessible before the establishment of Soviet power. In addition, Pravdin pointed to the important impact of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory on the establishment of the Moldavian sugar industry. According to him,

Nowadays in Moldavia there are nine sugar factories, and the tenth factory is emerging. This is one of the leading spheres of the republic's food industry. But Rybnitsa Sugar Factory is the forerunner of all the other Moldavian sugar factories. It is here in Rybnitsa, that all the collectives of the other Moldavian sugar factories learned their skills. 434

"Hypernormalized Language" and Continuity in the Post-Soviet Context

Alexei Yurchak claims that during the last decades of the Soviet Union, the official Soviet discourse became "a hypernormalized language." 435 He shows how the language of Soviet officials became routinized as official speeches used more verbs in passive voice and past tense. Soviet bureaucrats tried to hide their voice and to act as transmission belts between various historical periods and characters. Yurchak argues that

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

⁴³⁵ Alexei Yurchak, Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation (Princeton University Press, 2005), 75.

in this way, "they converted their voices from that of the producer of new knowledge to that of the mediator of preexisting knowledge." 436

Similarly, the officials of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory started to rely on this "hypernormalized language" in the writing of their speeches for the anniversaries of the factory. At the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory this hypernormalized language emerged along with the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the factory in the district newspaper. The article which marked the 75th anniversary of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory served as a textual base or as a template for the following anniversaries of the sugar factory.

On October 14, 1978, *Leninskoe Znamia* marked the 80th anniversary of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory with the article "Zhivye traditsii: K 80-ti letiiu sakharnospirtovogo kombinata im. Frunze" (The lively traditions: On the 80th anniversary of the Rybnitsa Sugar and Ethanol Factory) by M. Gulinskaia. As if to show the fading of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory from the local industrial landscape, the article occupied the bottom of the second page.

In terms of content, the article was just a shorter version of Pravdin's article.

Gulinskaia summarized the same epic tale about the revolutionary merits of the local workers, who managed to restore the sugar factory several times and to bring prosperity to Rybnitsa. She emphasized that:

During the first five year plans, when we only started to establish the base of socialism, people started to develop a new attitude toward their work and to become Soviet people. Now, when we are preparing for the 61st

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⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ M.Gulinskaia, "Zhivye traditsii: K 80-ti letiiu sakharno-spirtovogo kombinata im. Frunze," *Leninskoe Znamia*, October 14, 1978, 2.

anniversary of the Soviet power, we can fully appreciate the transformative power of the new social relations, which consolidated themselves in our country and in the consciousness of the Soviet people. These new social relations became one of the main sources for the important changes, which occurred at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory during the Soviet rule. 438

On October 20, 1988, M. Gulinskaia published another article in *Leninskoe*Znamia, to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. 439 The article had a generic title "Zavod" (The Factory) and was published under the heading "Stranitsy Istorii" ("The Pages of History"). All the previous anniversary articles had a subtitle, which announced the anniversary of the sugar factory. By contrast, the article about the 90th anniversary had a generic title, as if to show the archetypal value of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory for all the other Moldavian sugar factories.

In order to emphasize this generic value of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory,

Gulinskaia mentioned that the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was "at the origins of the

Moldavian sugar industry." The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory supplied cadres for all the

other Moldavian sugar factories. I. G. Ovchenko and V. A. Babinskii, two of the former

specialists of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, became the directors of the two newly built

Moldavian sugar factories. Some of the leading cadres of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory,

such as V. E. Martyniuk, A. A. Ivashkevich, V. V. Ryshanovskii and A. A. Muntean held

leading posts in the administration of the Moldavian sugar industry.

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ M. Gulinskaia, "Zavod," *Leninskoe Znamia*, October 20, 1988, 2.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid.

On the 90th anniversary of the sugar factory, Gulinskaia made a short summary of all the previous anniversary articles dedicated to the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. 441 She emphasized the survival and the renewal of the sugar factory after each of the major wars of the twentieth century. According to M. Gulinskaia, the best workers went to the front, but those who remained at the factory didn't want to collaborate with the occupying armies. During peacetime, the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory turned from heroes of war into heroes of labor. They became the forerunners of the Stakhanovite movement in the 1930s and of other competitions between the workers.

On the same 90th anniversary of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, the director of the factory, Nikolai Solovov, asserted all the merits of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in a letter to the Moldavian leadership. In this letter, Solovov stated that:

To mark the 90th anniversary of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, and considering the important contribution of the local working class to the revolutionary movement, the creation of the first party cell, the emergence of the first collective farms in the district of Rybnitsa, and the important role of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in the development of the Moldavian sugar industry, the administration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory considers that the collective has deserved a reward.⁴⁴²

After the dissolution of the USSR, the local newspaper along with the administration of the sugar factory continued to use the late Soviet hypernormalized language at the anniversaries of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. Only this time, they used the Soviet language not to inscribe themselves on the Soviet revolutionary timeline, but merely as a mechanism to cope with the problems of the post-Soviet economy.

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⁴⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴⁴² A Letter from N.G. Solovov, the Director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory to V.A. Protsenko, the Head of the State Committee of Food Industry in the MSSR.

In 1998, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory marked its hundredth anniversary. On the eve of the anniversary, the local newspaper *Novosti* dedicated a whole page to the celebration of the factory. As in Soviet times, the main protagonists of the anniversary edition were the most experienced workers or the former party bureaucrats. The difference was that in the Soviet newspapers, the workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory sought to inscribe themselves on the Soviet revolutionary line, whereas in the post-Soviet newspapers, they recounted the faded Soviet glory of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory and regretted the post-Soviet problems of the factory.

G. Storozhuk, the head of the water treatment facilities, declared that he had worked at the sugar factory for 43 years. ⁴⁴⁴ In the Soviet period, he used to be the head of the trade unions and the secretary of the party cell. Referring to the prospects of the sugar factory, G. Storozhuk was convinced that the collective of the factory would overcome the crisis like all the previous generations who managed to survive after three wars and several famines.

In her turn, P. Man'kovkaia, the head of the factory's planning office, enumerated the economic challenges of the post-Soviet economy. Instead of reporting on the annual fulfillment of the production plan, Man'kovskaia mentioned that the sugar factory and the collective farms had accumulated numerous debts because they had to pay the

443 "Put' dlinnoiu v 100 let," *Novosti*, December 23, 1998, 2.

⁴⁴⁴ G. Storozhuk, "Kollektiv, stavshyi rodnym," *Novosti*, December 23, 1998, 2.

⁴⁴⁵ P. Man'kovskaya, "Peremenam k luchshemu byt'," *Novosti*, December 23, 1998, 2.

market prices for raw materials. In addition, they had to bring these raw materials from abroad and deal with the customs procedures.

Man'kovskaia concluded that in order to gain any profit, the factory should process 350,000 tons of sugar beets per year. In 1998 the factory suffered considerable losses because it processed only 80,000 tons. 446 Despite these problems, Man'kovskaia concluded that the factory would get through the difficult times in the same way that it dealt with previous troubles.

Conclusion

Throughout the Soviet period, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was mostly a social or a political factory. Soviet power needed an industrial bastion to start its offensive in the predominantly agricultural Soviet Moldavia. Despite all the costs, Soviet authorities shaped the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory into a progressive artifact, which had to promote the Soviet idea of a charismatic-rational time in this region dominated by the traditional concept of time.

The official newspaper of the Rybnitsa district celebrated the revolutionary legacy of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. On the revolutionary timeline of Soviet history, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory emerged as: the bastion of the October Revolution during the Civil War; the cradle of the Moldavian working class during the first five year plans; the base of the partisan movement during World War II; and the founder of the Moldavian sugar industry during the post-War period.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid

In the 1960s, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory even reached the global stage. It embraced the Soviet aid mission to the Cuban revolutionary government. Local workers participated in the Soviet subsidization of the Cuban sugar industry. They pledged to support the Cuban people by refining Cuban raw sugar. On the ideological level, they made a parallel between the capitalist encirclement of the Soviet Union during the Civil War and the American attempts to suppress the Cuban revolutionary government.

Along with the building of other industrial enterprises in Rybnitsa, the district newspaper dedicated less attention to the local sugar factory. During the last decades of Soviet power, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory would appear less as a productive facility and more as an imagined place, which embodied all the heroic achievements of the Moldavian working class.

The canon of this heroic narrative was established on the 75th anniversary of the sugar factory, when the district newspaper celebrated the main achievements of the local working class on the revolutionary timeline. The district newspaper reproduced this canonic image at all the subsequent anniversaries of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. Even after the fall of the Soviet Union, the district newspaper continued to use the same hypernormalized language for the centennial celebration of the sugar factory.

CHAPTER 6: RYBNITSA SUGAR FACTORY AND THE (IL)LICIT FLOWS IN THE TRANSNISTRIAN BORDERLANDS (1996-2015)

In 2010, Evgenii Timoshenko, a former employee of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, took the pseudonym Aber Shellenberg, and published *Ispoved' Kontrabandista* (*Confessions of a Smuggler*), on a Russian literary website.⁴⁴⁷ Referring to the documentary character of his prose, Timoshenko writes that:

This book tells the story of real events, which took place on the banks of Nistru River. It is a story about love, hatred, betrayal, money and power, all that things which accompany our life. The author of this story, Aber Shellenberg (Timoshenko E.), was born and raised in those places. According to the will of the author, the surnames of some participants are changed, but certain random coincidences are also possible.⁴⁴⁸

Aber Shellenberg is the narrator and the main character of his story. His account starts with a short recollection of his Soviet childhood and youth. Being born in Rybnitsa in 1966, he graduated from the local general school, and sought to continue his career in the Soviet Army. In 1982, he was admitted to The Higher School of Military Engineering in the Ukrainian town of Kamyanets-Podilsky. However, he could not continue his military career because of some health problems. As a result, he was admitted to Kishinevskii Stroitel'nyi Tekhnikum (Chisinau Technical School for Construction Workers). In 1988, he graduated from the technical school and returned to Rybnitsa.

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⁴⁴⁷ Aber Shellenberg, *Ispoved' Kontrabandista*, http://www.proza.ru/avtor/shellenberg08&s=0 (accessed June 13, 2010).

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., "Author's Note"

On his return to Rybnitsa, Aber noticed that his town went through significant changes. Along with the building of the Moldavskii Metallurgicheskii Zavod (MMZ-Moldova Steel Works) in the mid-1980s, the Soviets added new districts to the town. Local authorities focused all their attention on the building of these new residential areas and neglected the infrastructure of the older districts in the neighborhood of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. In Aber's words, "The district of the steel workers was growing like yeast, while our district, the district of the sugar factory, was decaying in front of our eyes."

Aber noticed that "at the end of 1991, the Soviet state was decaying, and we were decaying along with it." Along with the Soviet decay, Soviet Moldavia 452, a former Soviet republic, disintegrated into two parts: the Bessarabian side on the right bank of the Nistru River emerged as the internationally recognized Republic of Moldova, while the more industrialized and predominantly Russian speaking eastern districts of Soviet Moldavia proclaimed the establishment of a de facto state, Pridnestrovskaia Moldavskaia Respublika (PMR), or Transnistria, as it is better known to the English speaking public.

In her ethnographic study of Transnistrian statehood, Rebecca Chamberlain-Creanga claims that the so-called "aristocracy of labor" became the main supporter of Transnistria. 453 According to Chamberlain-Creanga, this aristocracy of labor consisted

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 12.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid.

⁴⁵² Throughout this chapter I will use "Moldavian" in relation to the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic and "Moldovan" in relation to the post-Soviet Republic of Moldova.

⁴⁵³ Rebecca Chamberlain-Creanga, "The 'Transnistrian People'? Citizenship and Imaginings of 'the State' in an Unrecognized Country," *Ab Imperio* no. 4 (2006): 386-387.

mainly of well-paid Russian speaking workers who were employed by the large industrial enterprises. They were the winners of the Transnistrian de facto statehood, and they strongly opposed any integration of Transnistria into the Republic of Moldova.

The MMZ Steel Plant (Moldavskii metallurgicheskii zavod or Metallurg) from Rybnitsa is particularly important for the state-building efforts of the Transnistrian authorities. Chamberlain-Creanga asserts that "the Metallurg as such lies at the TMR's social and economic heart, buttressing its ideology of a socialist-like paternalistic state." The MMZ has been one of the main taxpayers and the main exporter in Transnistria. Moreover, it participates in social programs, supporting the veterans of various wars and retired workers.

In the same article, Chamberlain-Creanga mentions that another reason for the workers to be loyal to Transnistria is that the symbols of the state are omnipresent in all the local factories. From the fact that the Transnistrian army has guarded the premises of the MMZ, to the portrait of the Transnistrian leader in the administrative building of the Rybnitsa Cement Works (Rybnitskii tsementnyi kombinat), the workers encountered the language of the state and were supposed to speak it.

The fact that the working class was the main supporter of Transnistrian statehood did not preclude the Transnistrian state authorities to use the local factories for their own enrichment. In the early 2000s, Transnistrian authorities adopted a particular model of monetary privatization, which implied the selling of large industrial enterprises to particular investors. According to Margarita Balmaceda, these transactions allowed few

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 384-385.

local Transnistrian players to enrich themselves by acquiring the enterprises at lower prices and reselling them mostly to Russian investors. 456

Formally, Transnistria is part of the Republic of Moldova, but de facto, it has all the attributes of a sovereign state, with the exception of international recognition. The fact that Transnistria doesn't have a clear international status directly affects its international trade. From the perspective of the Moldovan authorities, any goods that cross the Moldovan border without coordination with the Moldovan customs authorities are considered smuggled goods. At the same time, Transnistrian authorities claim that they have the right to conduct international trade as a sovereign state. As a result, they perceive any attempt of Moldovan customs to regulate the Transnistrian trade as a blockade.

Many international observers assume that since Transnistria does not have a clear international status, it became a convenient hub for smuggling drugs, arms, ethanol etc. For instance, a European Commission's report from 2002 stated that "the area has become a ground for illegal arms dealing and organized crime" while a report by the British Department for International Development claimed that "PMR is a smuggling company masquerading as a state." 457

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⁴⁵⁶ Margarita M. Balmaceda, "Privatization and Elite Defection in de Facto States: The Case of Transnistria, 1991–2012," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 46, no. 4 (December 2013): 445–54.

⁴⁵⁷ Mark Galeotti, "The Transdnistrian Connection: Big Problems from a Small Pseudo-State," *Global Crime* 6, no. 3–4 (August 1, 2004): 398-399.

Mark Galeotti argues that smuggling was the main economic activity in Transnistria. According to him, smuggling was not practiced only by criminal organizations. Often, criminal organizations were patronized by the Transnistrian authorities, who provided a legal framework for the illegal activities. As proof, Galeotti points to the fact that Igor Smirnov, the Transnistrian President, appointed his son Vladimir Smirnov, as the Head of the Transnistrian Customs Committee.

By nominating his son as the Head of the Transnistrian Customs Committee,

Smirnov sought to transform Transnistria into a regional hub for the re-export of various goods into Ukraine or Moldova. The annual trade between Transnistria and the Ukrainian port of Odessa was estimated at approximately two billion USD. Many observers pointed to the fact that Transnistria imported more goods than it could consume. As a result, they suspected that a part of the Transnistrian import was either smuggled back into Ukraine or sold on the right bank of the Nistru River. Under the leadership of Vladimir Smirnov, Transnistrian customs authorities were accomplices in all these transnational transactions. 459

Charles King shows that the post-Soviet unrecognized states also serve as revenue sources for some business and political actors from both the secessionist state and from the patron state. 460 King argues that both Moldovan and Transnistrian actors profit from various trading schemes in such goods as: cigarettes, poultry products and alcohol. In

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

459 Ibid., 402.

⁴⁶⁰ Charles King, "The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia's Unrecognized States," *World Politics* 53, no. 4 (July 1, 2001): 525.

fact, King claims that this is the main reason why these conflicts have stayed frozen after more than two decades of negotiations and occasional escalations.

Confessions of a Smuggler provides a perfect illustration of the image of Transnistria as "a black hole." Referring to the usage of Transnistria as a smuggling hub, Aber claims that: "After the breakdown of Soviet Moldavia, Transnistria emerged as a crack, which absorbed everything in these rough times." Throughout the novel, Aber Shellenberg describes how he used the unclear status of Transnistria in order to smuggle ethanol from the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory to Ukraine and Moldova. In collaboration with the administration of the sugar factory and with several criminal groups, Aber turned the former glory of the Moldavian sugar industry into a local hub for smuggling ethanol.

Smuggling vs. (II)licit Flows

Janine Wedel argues that after the fall of the Soviet Union, Western observers exported their own definition of crime to the post-Communist Eastern Europe. The West started to spend massive funds on combating crime in Eastern Europe, while ignoring the realities on the ground. Sometimes, in this saga against crime, the West referred to some informal activities, such as small trade on the streets as being criminal activities, while locals regarded them as survival strategies. Thus, the war against crime could also close some economic opportunities for impoverished families.

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⁴⁶¹ Aber Shellenberg, *Ispoved' Kontrabandista*, 19.

⁴⁶² Janine R. Wedel, "Chapter 9. Mafia without Malfeasance, Clans without Crime: The Criminality Conundrum in Post-Communist Europe", in *Crime's Power*, ed. Philip C. Parnell and Stephanie C Kane (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 221.

This omnipresence of criminal activities in Eastern Europe was also conveyed by the widespread usage of the term "mafia" in the post-Communist countries. Wedel states that in Eastern Europe, "the allegation of being mafia can be heard in reference to a wide variety of groups and activities, from officials who accept bribes and former *nomenklatura* (communist) managers who acquired state factories at fire sale prices to common street criminals and ex-convicts with their own armed police forces."⁴⁶³

For post-Soviet citizens, the mafia was not only an esoteric organization that operated in the global underground. Rather, it was part of their daily lives. In the early 1990s, when Soviet institutions collapsed and the new post-Soviet states were at the beginning of their statehood, people turned to criminal organizations hoping that they would fulfill the functions of the weak state institutions. If the state could not protect the property of its citizens or enforce the legal decisions, then criminal groups started to offer these services in exchange for a fixed tax.

Vadim Volkov claims that in the 1990's, the Russian state was so weak that the situation in Russia was closer to the state of anarchy. He argues that the state was acting like a private protection company, which competed with others on the market of "violent entrepreneurship." Throughout the 90's, the state lost the competition with the criminal organizations. Moreover, some businessmen valued the services of the criminal groups more than the services of the state. If the state was represented by numerous

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 223.

⁴⁶⁴ Vadim Volkov, *Violent Entrepreneurs: The Use of Force in the Making of Russian Capitalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 26.

authorities, who requested bribes, then the criminal groups offered their services for a monthly fee. To a certain extent, the mafia offered more stability than the state.

Contrary to Timoshenko's efforts to depict Aber as an outstanding character, to many post-Soviet citizens Aber would look very familiar. Along with the decay of the Soviet industry, many former workers turned into smugglers. The former Soviet Union disintegrated into separate states, and it would take a long time for each state to build a coherent customs legislation. Thus, many post-Soviet citizens sought to profit from the gaps in legislation and to move various goods across the borders.

Abel Polese and Peter Rodgers argue that smuggling could also represent an "informal economic practice." They point to the fact that the informal economic practices are also known as "non-official", "hidden", "non-organized", "black", "a-legal", "shadow", "non-visible" or "irregular" practices. Finally, they define informal employment as "the production and sale of goods and services that are licit in every sense other than that they are unregistered by or hidden from, the state for tax, benefit and/or labor law purposes."

Many former industrial employees embark on a transnational journey in order to make a living from selling various goods. In the case of Transnistria, the train Chisinau-Odessa is an emblematic example of the ways in which the citizens of the post-Soviet

⁴⁶⁵ Abel Polese and Peter Rodgers, "Surviving post-socialism: the role of informal economic practices," *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 31, no. 11 (2011): 612 - 618.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 613-614.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

space instrumentalize borders for their own survival.⁴⁶⁸ According to Polese, in the situation when the state is captured by corrupt politicians, citizens are entitled to "tradesmuggling" in order to support themselves and their families.

To avoid the narrow criminal interpretation of smuggling, some authors prefer to substitute the concept of "smuggling" with a broader concept of "illicit flows."⁴⁶⁹ They argue that the criminalization of smuggling could be related to the inability of the modern state to control its borders. For this reason, in many cases the international community perceives each individual who is engaged in these illegal flows as being a member of transnational crime groups. According to van Schendel,

When states attempt to interdict clandestine border crossings and unauthorized access to markets beyond the border, they highlight that they are waging war against transnational crime lords. But what is often forgotten is that they are also joining battle with borderland societies, their projects of scalar structuration, and their sense of social justice. 470

Referring to the organized character of international crime, van Schendel claims that the number of transnational criminal organizations is inflated.⁴⁷¹ He argues that the institutional approach is less useful for understanding illegal flows. Instead, he states that the analysis of the commodity chains would shed new light on the issue of illegal flows.

⁴⁶⁸ Abel Polese, "Border-Crossing as a Strategy of Daily Survival: The Odessa-Chisinau Elektrichka," *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 24, no. 1 (2006): 28–37.

⁴⁶⁹ Willem van Schendel and Itty Abraham, *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders, and the Other Side of Globalization* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

⁴⁷⁰ Willem van Schendel, "Chapter 1, Spaces of Engagement: How Borderlands, Illegal Flows, and Territorial States Interlock" in *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders, and the Other Side of Globalization*, ed. Willem van Schendel and Itty Abraham (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 62

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 51.

The commodity chains are in constant transformation. This transformation occurs not only through the exchange or consumption of commodities. The simple movement of a commodity across the border could change its status from illegal to legal and vice versa. Thus the main question for van Schendel is: "When people, goods, capital, and ideas flow across borders, what happens to them and to those borders?" 472

Willem van Schendel applies his methodology to the study of the internationally recognized borderlands. He evaluates the circulation of the (il)legal flows at the international border between two states. What happens to the (il)legal flows when they pass through the borders of a de facto state? From the perspective of a licit state, any commodities that pass through the customs of an illicit state become illegal commodities. At the same time, the illicit state has its customs authorities and its own criteria to define the legality of commodities.

Transnistria is an ideal borderland for the study of (il)legal flows. One doesn't need the participation of criminal figures in order to find some (il)legal elements in the Transnistrian borderlands. The very existence of a de facto state in a legal vacuum provided ground for suspicions. As Transnistria was established on the Moldovan-Ukrainian border, Moldovan authorities don't control most of the eastern border with Ukraine. Instead, it is monitored by the Transnistrian customs.

Consequently, any commercial transactions, which are considered legal by the Transnistrian custom authorities, would be considered illegal by the Moldovan authorities. Any goods that are imported through Transnistrian customs would be

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⁴⁷² Ibid., 46.

considered illegal goods or smuggling by the Moldovan customs. Thus, an entrepreneur who fully respects the Transnistrian legislation would automatically be considered a smuggler by the Moldovan authorities.

At the same time, Transnistrian authorities established a border with Moldova on the Nistru River. They installed customs control and consider Nistru an international border between Moldova and Transnistria. By contrast, Moldovan authorities have not recognized Transnistria, and they do not recognize this border as an international border.

After Transnistria declared its de facto statehood, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory became a Transnistrian factory on the Moldovan-Transnistrian border. Even if this border was not visible on the map of the internationally recognized countries, it had a considerable impact on the activity of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. The factory was an integral part of the border infrastructure and of the (il)legal flows, which circulated through the border. In this chapter, I will examine how the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory adapted the (il)legal flows in the Transnistrian borderlands to its productive activities.

The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in the Post-Soviet Economy

In *Confessions of a Smuggler*, Aber recalls that in the mid-1990s he had a conversation with the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, Andrei Ivashkevich. ⁴⁷³ The director acknowledged that after the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was in a very difficult situation. After the establishment of Transnistria, the factory accumulated numerous debts for the delivery of sugar beets by the Transnistrian

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⁴⁷³ Aber Shellenberg, *Ispoved' Kontrabandista*, 19-20.

and Moldovan farmers. As a consequence, farmers reduced the supply of sugar beets to the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory and the factory had a deficit of sugar beets.

The deficit of sugar beets generated most of the problems that the sugar factory encountered in the post-Soviet economy. In "The Analysis of the Productive Activity of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in 1997", L. M. Gontar', the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, and L. V. Mikhalevskaia, the chief accountant, stated that during its centennial history the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory became a major enterprise with vital importance for the Transnistrian population and economy. However, they emphasized that the fall of the Soviet Union put the sugar factory to a vitality test.

In the de facto state of Transnistria, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory became a state enterprise, which was managed by the Ministry of Agriculture. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the administration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory would have to confront the realities of the global market. Gontar' and Mikhalevskaia mentioned that "along with the implementation of the market relations, the economy of the sugar factory reached a critical condition."

First of all, they pointed to the fact that the prices of raw materials had a higher rate of growth in comparison to the prices of processed goods. ⁴⁷⁶ Secondly, Transnistrian manufacturers pointed to the high taxes and the instability of the Transnistrian currency.

⁴⁷⁴ L.M. Gontar' and L.V. Mikhalevskaia, "Analiz proizvodstvenno-khoziastvennoi deiatel'nosti AOZT Rybnitskii sakhspirtkombinat za 1997 god" (The Analysis of the Productive Activity of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in 1997).

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid.

Thirdly, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had an old technological infrastructure with 94.5% of the equipment in need of replacement or capital repairs. Finally, the factory had an acute deficit of sugar beets because the surface of sugar beet farms was decreasing each year. In addition, the complicated customs procedures did not encourage the import of sugar beets from the neighboring regions.

In 1997, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory employed 648 workers, and during the season this number reached 860 employees. ⁴⁷⁷ Since the technological equipment was outdated, the factory relied mostly on manual labor. It had to keep a labor force comparable to that of the Soviet period. At the same time, the factory constantly diminished its productivity. So, the administration of the factory had to decide whether to keep the labor force and to wait for better times, or to fire some of the workers.

The administration of the sugar factory pointed out that the factory needed massive investments for the modernization of its technological scheme. As the equipment of the factory was old, most of the investments would be used for the replacement of the equipment. At the same time, the factory needed resources to prepare for the production season and procure the raw materials. The administration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory concluded that the factory could not find these resources without the help of the state.

Similarly, reviewing the results of the 1997-1998 production season, V. Ivanov, the agronomist of the factory, requested the assistance of the state officials in order to

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid.

support the development of sugar beet farming.⁴⁷⁸ He noticed that the harvest of sugar beets was constantly decreasing because the Transnistrian Government neglected the development of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, which was the only sugar factory in Transnistria.

Ivanov noticed that the sugar factory procured sugar beets from the five districts in Transnistria. As the Transnistrian farms did not provide enough sugar beets, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory brought sugar beets from the three Moldovan districts across the Nistru River. In 1997-1998, the factory procured sugar beets from 6,782 hectares in Transnistria, and from 1,141 hectares on the right bank of Nistru River.

Referring to the procurement of sugar beets from the three Moldovan districts, Ivanov mentioned that Moldovan farms considerably reduced the supply of sugar beets to the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. He explained that the Transnistrian customs did not encourage the shipment of Moldovan sugar beets to Transnistria. Transnistrian authorities imposed high import taxes on the Moldovan sugar beets. As a result, the Moldovan farms preferred to deliver the sugar beets to Moldovan sugar factories in Cupcini and Ghindesti.

In addition, Ivanov evaluated the Moldovan sugar factories as more efficient than the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. 481 Moldovan farms preferred to ship their sugar beets to the Moldovan sugar factories, because Moldovan sugar factories extracted more sugar than

⁴⁷⁸ V. Ivanov, "Ob'iasnitel'naia zapiska k zakliuchitel'nomu otchetu o priemke, khraneniiu i sdache v pererabotku sakharnoi svekly urozhaia 1997 goda po AOZT RSSK za proizvodstvo 1997 g." (Explanatory note on the results of the 1997-1998 production season).

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁸¹ Ibid.

the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. Thus, by supplying sugar beets to Moldovan sugar factories, Moldovan farms could receive more sugar for the same amount of supplied sugar beets and they didn't have to deal with the Transnistrian customs authorities.

Summarizing the results of the factory's activity on its hundredth anniversary, the director, N. Solovov, and the chief accountant, A. Chekoltan, argued that the main reason for the increasing inefficiency of sugar production was the shortage of sugar beets. On the one hand, Transnistrian farms produced less sugar beets, because the cultivation of sugar beets required extensive resources.

On the other hand, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory imported 16% of the sugar beets from the neighboring regions of Moldova and the Transnistrian customs imposed complicated customs regulations, which did not facilitate the import of sugar beets. In addition, Transnistrian farmers lost 4% of the total harvest of sugar beets because they did not have enough fuel to harvest all the sugar beets.

In conclusion, Solovov and Chekoltan emphasized that sugar production brought significant losses to the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. ⁴⁸³ The factory produced sugar at the cost of 570 USD per ton, but it sold sugar at the price of 401 USD. Since the price of sugar on the international markets was 235 USD per ton, the factory faced difficulties in finding a market for its sugar.

The costs of sugar production were considerably higher at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory than the price of sugar on the international markets. The factory could not find

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⁴⁸² Ibid.

⁴⁸³ N. Solovov and A. Chekoltan, "Ob'iasnitel'naia zapiska k godovomu otchetu za 1998 g." (A Note on the Productivity of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in 1998), February 18, 1999.

many customers who would pay above the market value for sugar. As a consequence, most of the production of the factory was used in barter transactions in exchange for the raw materials or for other services.

Barter as the Survival Strategy

In the same dialogue with Ivashkevich, Aber asked the director if he could be of any help to the sugar factory. ⁴⁸⁴ In reply, Ivashkevich suggested that Aber could supply molasses to the factory. In exchange for molasses, he would receive ethanol. Resuming the terms of their agreement, Ivashkevich declared that: "You bring molasses to the factory. In exchange you get ethanol. What will you do with ethanol is not my business."

In this short dialogue, Ivashkevich provided a short formula for the main activity of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory during the post-Soviet period. The sugar factory received the raw materials (sugar beets or molasses) from third parties and processed them into sugar or ethanol. As a result of this scheme, the factory received some amount of sugar or ethanol as compensation for its services, while the rest of the products were shipped to the suppliers of raw materials.

In 1996, I.I. Tsynnik, the Deputy Prime Minister of Transnistria and the Minister of Agriculture, issued a regulation "On the manufacture of ethanol from molasses at the

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⁴⁸⁴ Aber Shellenberg, *Ispoved' Kontrabandista*, 19.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

Rybnitsa Sugar Factory."⁴⁸⁶ This document provided the legal framework for the barter exchange between the suppliers of molasses and the sugar factory.

The factory had to sign contracts with each supplier of molasses. According to these contracts, the factory did not buy the molasses, but just offered its manufacturing services to the suppliers. In exchange for the processing of molasses into ethanol, the factory would receive half of the ethanol. The supplier of ethanol would keep the other half of ethanol. The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory would use its share of ethanol to prepare for the production season and to buy sugar beets from the collective farms.

The document specified that only the collective farms, which cultivated sugar beets, and the small state enterprises, could be the suppliers of molasses to the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. At the same time, it mentioned that "considering the big processing capacity of the ethanol production unit, in exceptional cases, the factory can sign contracts with other suppliers." 487

The main supplier of molasses in Transnistria was the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. It received sugar beets from the collective farms and provided sugar or molasses in exchange for sugar beets. Afterwards, the collective farms could supply molasses to the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in exchange for ethanol. As the collective farms supplied less sugar beets to the sugar factory, they received less molasses from the factory. Consequently, they could supply less molasses to the sugar factory.

⁴⁸⁶ I.I. Tsynnik, "Polozhenie o poriadke pererabotki patoki na spirt na daval'cheskikh usloviiakh Rybnitskim sakhspirtkombinatom" (On the manufacture of ethanol from molasses at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory), 1996.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

The document issued by the Minister of Agriculture specified that only the collective farms and the small state enterprises could be the main suppliers of molasses to the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. 488 The Minister of Agriculture drafted the document in 1996, when the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had a stable supply of sugar beets from the collective farms. In the following years, the collective farms would constantly decrease the supply of sugar beets to the sugar factory.

As a result, they would receive less molasses for their services and they would not be able to supply molasses to the sugar factory. Instead, the administration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory would have to rely mostly on the supplies of molasses from outside Transnistria. Thus, Transnistrian authorities would have to accept that what was an exception became a rule.

At the end of the 1990's-beginning of the 2000's, the administration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory signed numerous barter contracts with the enterprises from Moldova, Ukraine and offshore companies from the USA or Ireland. Most of them were contracts for the manufacture of ethanol from molasses. Thus, the former glory of the Soviet sugar industry became a regional hub for the manufacture of ethanol.

The big share of barter operations in the economy of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory attracted the attention of the Transnistrian authorities. In order to avoid tax evasion, Transnistrian authorities sought to reduce the amount of barter operations in the local economy. On January 31, 2001, Oxana Ionova, the Transnistrian Minister of Revenues, affirmed in a letter to all the public authorities, that on January 15, 2001, Igor Smirnov,

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid.

the president of Transnistria, created the Commission of Barter Operations.⁴⁸⁹ The Commission had to propose measures for diminishing the share of barter operations in the Transnistrian economy.

The Commission would have monthly meetings. During these meetings, the Commission would impose fines on the enterprises, which did not conform to the legislation, or cancel the fines for struggling enterprises. On March 14, 2001, A. Ganskii, the director of the factory, sent a letter to Oxana Ionova, who was also the head of the barter commission. ⁴⁹⁰ In the letter, Ganskii asked the Commission of Barter Operations to allow the factory to conduct 80% of its transactions as barter operations.

In his request, Ganskii pointed to the difficult financial situation of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory.⁴⁹¹ He argued that if the Commission did not accept his request, then the sugar factory could stop its production activity. At the same time, Ganskii specified that if the Commission accepted his request, then the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory would be able to prepare for the new production season.

Transnistrian Customs and the (II)legal Flows

The increasing share of the transnational barter operations brought the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory to the attention of the Transnistrian customs authorities. The import of raw materials to the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was legally processed by the Ukrainian and Transnistrian customs authorities. Moldovan customs did not participate in the

⁴⁸⁹ Oxana Ionova, The Minister of Revenues, A Letter to all the Public Authorities on the Establishment of the Commission for Barter Operations, January 31, 2001.

⁴⁹⁰ A Letter from the Director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, A. Ganskii to Oxana Ionova, the Head of the Commission of Barter Operations, March 14, 2001.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

transactions of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. Consequently, all the raw materials that reached the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory through the Ukrainian-Transnistrian customs would be considered smuggling by the Moldovan customs.

At the same time, the administration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory would have to coordinate its activities with the Transnistrian customs. Each time it imported raw materials or shipped sugar or ethanol as compensation for the supply of raw materials, the administration of the sugar factory had to declare the status of the commodities at the Transnistrian customs.

According to Chapter 9 and 10 of the Transnistrian Customs Code, some Transnistrian enterprises can get licenses to manufacture goods under a special customs control. 492 If a Transnistrian enterprise receives such a license then it will be exempted from the payment of any import taxes on any raw materials that it will use in the production process. At the same time, it will be exempted from the payment of export taxes when it will ship the manufactured products to the supplier of the raw materials.

Basically, during these transactions, both partners benefit from a tax free regime. The supplier of raw materials commissions the manufacture of products on Transnistrian territory without paying any import or export taxes, while the Transnistrian manufacturer pays taxes only from the value of the manufacturing services. In this way, the supplier of raw materials uses the Transnistrian territory as a transit point, in which the raw materials are transformed into manufactured products without paying any import or export taxes.

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⁴⁹² Tamozhennyi Kodeks PMR, http://pravo.pmr-online.com/View.aspx?id=Lrn57%2Fc110V7yQuFciEHZQ%3D%3D (accessed July 4, 2015).

Chapter 12 of the Transnistrian Customs Code stipulates that if a Transnistrian manufacturer cannot process its raw materials in Transnistria, then it could ship the raw materials to a foreign manufacturer. The Transnistrian enterprise could be exempted from the payment of any customs taxes if it declares the manufactured goods. In this case, it could bring the manufactured goods to Transnistria without paying any import taxes.

The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory and its partners used both customs regimes in their transnational transactions. On February 10, 2003, the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, B. Kirsta, wrote a letter to the head of the Transnistrian Customs Committee, V. Smirnov. In the letter, Kirsta argued that in 2002, the harvest of sugar beets was extremely low and the sugar factory could not start the production of sugar. Thus, the administration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory decided to ship the existing amount of sugar beets outside Transnistria.

According to Chapter 12 of the Transnistrian Customs Code, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory signed a contract with the Ghindesti Sugar Factory, for the manufacture of sugar outside the Transnistrian territory. On November 20, 2002, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory supplied 3,078 tons of sugar beets to Ghindesti Sugar Factory, in the Republic of Moldova. According to Kirsta, the shipment of sugar beets was coordinated with the

⁴⁹³ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁴ A Letter from the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, B.Kirsta to the head of the Transnistrian Customs Committee, V. Smirnov, February 10, 2003.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

Rybnitsa Customs Office. The Ghindesti Sugar Factory manufactured sugar and shipped 192 tons of sugar to Rybnitsa.

At the same time, Kirsta mentions that the Rybnitsa Customs Office imposed a fine on the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory for the violation of customs regulations. As compensation for the manufacture of sugar, the Ghindesti Sugar Factory received a share of sugar and all the by-products of sugar production. According to the customs office, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory violated the customs regulations because it did not declare the beet pulp and molasses, which resulted after the processing of sugar beets at the Ghindesti Sugar Factory. The Rybnitsa Customs Office insisted that the beet pulp and molasses had to be declared as "exports."

In his turn, Kirsta claimed that these goods could not be declared as "exports" because they didn't leave the Transnistrian territory and it was impossible to get any technical documentation for goods that "never were on the Transnistrian territory." Kirsta pointed to the fact that the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was a state enterprise and by applying the fine, another state instutition, the Rybnitsa Customs Office, did not improve the difficult financial situation of the sugar factory. Therefore, Kirsta requested that the Transnistrian Customs Committee had to waiver the fine.

In reply, on February 21, 2003, V. Smirnov, the head of the Transnistrian

Customs Committee and the son of the Transnistrian president, insisted that the fine was

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

legitimate and that the factory didn't respect the border regime. Smirnov argued that according to customs regulations, any goods that are received by a foreign manufacturer as compensation for manufacturing services, had to be declared as exported goods. Thus, Smirnov did not waive the fine from the account of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory.

On April 1, 2003, Kirsta repeated his request in another letter to V. Smirnov. 499

This time, Kirsta acknowledged that the factory violated customs regulations, but he argued that these regulations were very complicated and that the factory violated them only once. So, the Transnistrian Customs Committee had to waive the fine. In his request, Kirsta explained that the sugar factory had to ship the sugar beets to the Ghindesti Sugar Factory, because otherwise they would be lost for the Transnistrian economy. In addition, Kirsta claimed that the factory needed large financial resources for the production of ethanol.

In *Confessions of a Smuggler*, Aber Shellenberg argues that he invented a perfectly legal transnational scheme to derive profits from the sugar factory. ⁵⁰⁰ The scheme would involve two firms and two factories. A Ukrainian firm would supply molasses and fuel to Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. The sugar factory would manufacture ethanol from molasses.

Afterwards, the sugar factory would ship the ethanol to the Rybnitsa Wine Factory. The wine factory would turn the ethanol into an antifreeze solution "Morozko."

⁴⁹⁸ A Letter from the head of the Transnistrian Customs Committee, V. Smirnov to the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, B.Kirsta, February 21, 2003.

⁴⁹⁹ A Letter from the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, B.Kirsta to the head of the Transnistrian Customs Committee, V. Smirnov, April 1, 2003.

⁵⁰⁰ Aber Shellenberg, *Ispoved' Kontrabandista*, 52-69.

A Moldovan firm would then buy the antifreeze solution and get it out of PMR. Finally, through certain technological procedures, the Moldovan firm could transform this antifreeze solution into ethanol.

In my research for this chapter, I could not find any traces of Morozko at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. Still, Aber's description is an approximation of other schemes that were used at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in order to avoid taxes. On March 3, 2003, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory signed a contract with Frontmark LLC, an American limited liability company with an office in Wilmington, Delaware. According to the contract, Frontmark LLC had to supply thirty thousand tons of molasses to the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. The sugar factory would receive two million and four hundred thousand USD for the manufacture of ethanol from molasses, while Frontmark LLC would receive 8,689,91 decalitres of ethanol.

On March 18, 2003, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory received a license to manufacture goods under a special customs control. The license was issued for one year and was supposed to expire on April 1, 2004. According to the license, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had the right to manufacture ethanol from thirty thousand tons of molasses. Consequently, it could bring thirty thousand tons of molasses into Transnistria without paying any import taxes. Also, after the manufacture of ethanol it could ship the ethanol outside Transnistria without paying export taxes.

⁵⁰¹ A Letter from the director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, B. Kirsta to the Minister of Agriculture, Brizitskii, March 4, 2003.

⁵⁰² 1 decalitre = 10 litres.

⁵⁰³ "Litsenzia nr.0029 na pererabotku tovarov pod tamozhennym kontrolem", March 18, 2003.

Frontmark LLC would buy molasses from Severnyi Al'ians, a Ukrainian company with an office in Kyiv. ⁵⁰⁴ On June 4, 2003, the first 480 tons of molasses reached Rybnitsa through the Transnistrian segment of the Ukrainian-Moldovan border. The shipment passed through the inspection of the Ukrainian and Transnistrian customs, without the authorization of the Moldovan customs authorities. Thus, from the perspective of the Moldovan authorities, this shipment of molasses would be smuggling.

At the same time, Transnistrian customs authorities did not apply any import or export taxes on this shipment, because the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had a license for the manufacture of goods under the special customs control. After the manufacture of ethanol, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory shipped this ethanol outside Transnistria. By shipping it outside Transnistria, the factory was exempted from the payment of export taxes.

Often, the administration of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory shipped the ethanol to the right side of Nistru. Since Moldovan authorities did not recognize the existence of the Transnistrian-Moldovan border, they did not install customs offices on this de facto border. By shipping ethanol to the right bank of the Nistru River, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory closed the chain of smuggled goods in the Republic of Moldova. Thus, by combining licit and illicit means, transnational entrepreneurs could smuggle ethanol into the Republic of Moldova and shape the Transnistrian borderlands.

⁵⁰⁴ Director R. Davidov, Frontmark LLC, "Invoice nr.1-08", June 4, 2003.

The End of Transnistrian Sugar

On March 1, 2002, Igor Smirnov, the President of Transnistria signed a decree to introduce the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory on the list of historical and architectural monuments of Transnistria. ⁵⁰⁵ In the same year, the factory had its last season of sugar production. According to I. Platonov, the Chair of the Rybnitsa District Administration, in 2003 the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory received only 4,300 tons of sugar beets. ⁵⁰⁶ As the factory had the capacity to process three thousand tons of sugar beets per day, it did not start the production of sugar.

Referring to the prospects of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, Platonov claimed that the factory needed large investments and the Transnistrian budget could not provide such investments. As a consequence, Platonov argued that the sugar factory had to be privatized. He specified that the Transnistrian Ministry of Economy proposed the privatization of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory until the end of 2006.

Transnistrian authorities regarded the privatization of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory as a miraculous remedy for its economic problems. During a meeting with the workers, the director of the factory, Anatolii Ganskii, argued that the privatization of the sugar

⁵⁰⁵ O proekte postanovleniia Verkhovnogo Soveta PMR "Ob utverzhdenii Gosudarstvennogo Reestra Pamiatnikov respublikanskogo i mestnogo znacheniia PMR", Rasporiazhenie, Prezident PMR, March 1, 2002, http://zakon-pmr.com/DetailDoc.aspx?document=52138 (accessed July 6, 2015).

⁵⁰⁶ "Gosudarstvennyi interes protiv gosudarstvennoi biurokratii," *Pravda Pridnestrov'ia*, October 19, 2006, 4-5.

⁵⁰⁷ Ibid.

factory is in the workers' interest because after privatization, the factory would be able to pay their wages, which they did not receive from 2005.⁵⁰⁸

In the same context, the head of the parliamentary committee on the industry and natural resources, Efim Koval', declared that after the privatization of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory the surface of the sugar beet farms would increase to six thousand hectares. At the same time, the rehabilitation of the sugar factory would create new jobs for the local population. Finally, Koval' presumed that "after privatization, the factory will supply our state with its products and will pay taxes." ⁵⁰⁹

The workers of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory did not share the enthusiasm of the Transnistrian administration. With the support of the Transnistrian Communist Party, a group of workers from the sugar factory created a protest committee. They organized a series of demonstrations in Rybnitsa supporting the rehabilitation of the sugar factory. The protesters requested the exclusion of the sugar factory from the privatization program and the adoption of a state program to support the production of the local Transnistrian sugar.

In a series of articles published in the second half of 2006, *Pravda Pridnestrov'ia*, the newspaper of the Transnistrian Communist Party, blamed the chair of the Rybnitsa District administration, Platonov, and the central authorities in Tiraspol for the deliberate bankruptcy of the sugar factory. According to the newspaper some business and political

⁵⁰⁸ "Rybnitskii sakharno-spirtovoi kombinat nadeetsia na privatizatsiiu kak na put' k vozrozhdeniiu", *Novyi Region*, March 16, 2009, http://nr2.ru/economy/224468.html/print/ (site discontinued).

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁵¹⁰ "Rabochie ustali prosit'-oni trebuiut," *Pravda Pridnestrov'ia*, October 12, 2006.

circles were interested in the disappearance of the factory, because they sought to make profits from the import of sugar into Transnistria.⁵¹¹ In addition, they intended to privatize the factory in order to sell the equipment.

Contrary to their hopes, Transnistrian authorities could not find any investors who were interested in the privatization of the sugar factory. Considering the fact that the sugar factory had a debt of 5.5 million USD, it was not surprising that the Transnistrian authorities could not find any investors. ⁵¹² Still, the authorities included the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory on the list of the factories to be privatized in 2009-2010.

Despite the populist promises of the Transnistrian authorities, in September 2010, the official newspaper *Pridnestrov'e* announced that the arrested assets of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory would be sold at an open auction.⁵¹³ The announcement stated that the auction would take place on November 1 and that the assets represented old buildings of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory.

A year later, in October 2011, The Arbitration Tribunal of Transnistria established that the factory had to pay 15,718,417 USD to Promstroibank as interest rates and penalties on a credit of 49,649 USD, which the factory took in December 2001.⁵¹⁴

According to the terms of the contract, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had until December 2002 to return the credit and to pay an interest rate of 25% per year. As a result, in 2011

⁵¹¹ "Gosudarstvennyi interes protiv gosudarstvennoi biurokratii," *Pravda Pridnestrov'ia*, October 19, 2006, 4-5.

⁵¹² "Rybnitskii sakharno-spirtovoi kombinat nadeetsia na privatizatsiiu kak na put' k vozrozhdeniiu", *Novyi Region*, 16 March 2009, http://nr2.ru/economy/224468.html/print/ (site discontinued).

⁵¹³ "Provedenie Otkrytykh Torgov," *Pridnestrov'e*, September 29, 2010, 4.

⁵¹⁴ "Delo o vzyskanii zadolzhennosti po kreditu," Arbitrazhnyi Sud PMR, Sud'ia Luka E.V., last modified October 5, 2011, http://arbitr-pmr.org/main/767-1202-11-02.html (accessed July 6, 2015).

the factory had to pay a sum, which was three times higher than the initial amount of the credit. Still, the factory could not pay the debt because its assets were arrested by other creditors.

Regarding the future of the sugar factory, both the Communist Party and the Transnistrian administration adopted populist slogans, instead of proposing concrete steps for the rehabilitation of the enterprise. Transnistrian authorities hoped for a miraculous privatization of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory. The interest of the Communist Party for the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory vanished after the presidential elections of 2006 and reappeared only on the verge of the presidential elections in 2011. 515

In the meantime, the Transnistrian Business Directory for 2015 refers to the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory as a factory "which used to produce sugar and ethanol, a long time ago." The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory stopped its sugar production in 2002. There are only 13 years between 2015 and 2002. By transporting the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory to "a long time ago", the Transnistrian business community probably showed more of its skeptical attitude towards the future of the sugar factory, than its praise for the historical importance of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory.

Conclusion

After the fall of the Soviet Union, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory became the only sugar factory in the de facto state of Transnistria. Many observers pointed to the fact that

⁵¹⁵ "V Rybnitse proshel Plenum raionnogo komiteta PKP", Pridnestrovskaia Kommunisticheskaia Partiia, http://www.kp-pmr.ru/news/2011-07-26-1955 (accessed July 7, 2015).

http://www.pmr.md/c0119eadc737bb44102ee2dbd86fc7f7/ribnitskiy_sahspirtkombinat_gup.html (accessed July 7, 2015).

⁵¹⁶ Biznes-spravochnik Pridnestrov'e-2015,

Transnistria is "a black hole," because it became a convenient hub for the smuggling of (il)licit goods.

At the same time, other observers note that the number of the international criminal groups is inflated and often in their war against smuggling, states attack the borderlands societies on the assumption that they participate in the international criminal groups. Many individuals from the borderlands are involved in the transportation of commodities across the state borders. Rather than being members of international crime groups, these individuals sell various goods for survival.

The fact that Transnistria is not recognized by the international community makes it an easy target for smuggling allegations. At the same time, Transnistria is a de facto state, which has all the state institutions, including customs and border control. The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, like many other Transnistrian enterprises, had to work according to the de facto laws of Transnistria.

During the post-Soviet period, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had to adjust to the market economy. As the production of sugar required multiple resources, the factory focused on the production of ethanol. According to the production scheme, the factory provided the manufacturing services to the supplier of molasses. It did not buy the molasses. Instead, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory received the molasses from the supplier and took a share of ethanol as compensation for its manufacturing services.

At the end of the 1990s-beginning of the 2000s, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory signed numerous barter contracts with the enterprises from Moldova, Ukraine and the USA. The enterprises supplied molasses and the factory extracted ethanol from molasses.

According to the Moldovan authorities, these transactions were illegal and the flow of commodities was a scheme for smuggling goods across the Moldovan borders.

From the perspective of the Transnistrian authorities, these transactions were perfectly legal. The Transnistrian Customs Code allowed enterprises to receive licenses for the manufacture of goods under the customs control. Once a Transnistrian enterprise received such a license, it could manufacture goods on the Transnistrian territory without paying any import or export taxes.

The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory received such a license in March 2003. Under the terms of the license, the factory signed a contract with Frontmark LLC, an American company from Delaware. According to the contract, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory brought molasses through the Transnistrian segment of the Moldovan-Ukrainian territory and manufactured ethanol. Afterwards, the sugar factory shipped the ethanol across the de facto Moldovan-Transnistrian border.

The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory adapted its productive activity to the (il)legal flows of commodities in the Transnistrian borderlands. Its production process was not based just on smuggling. Through the manipulations of the various (il)legal frameworks, the sugar factory managed to transform the (il)legal flows of commodities in the Transnistrian borderlands. In the commodity chain of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, the legal goods became smuggled goods when they entered the Transnistrian territory, and finally they became perfectly legal goods by crossing the de facto Moldovan-Transnistrian border.

CONCLUSION

In 1898, a group of entrepreneurs founded the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in the Podol'sk Province of the Russian Empire. In addition to the fact that the sugar industry was one of the most profitable industries in the Russian Empire, the founders of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory sought to profit from the convenient transportation facilities and from the cheap labor force in this region.

They shared a variety of ethnic identities and were representatives of several countries. By establishing a sugar factory they didn't mean to engage in some major ideological battles or to pursue any social or political objectives. Their goal was to produce sugar and to extract profit from this activity. However, World War I would put an end to their profit-oriented activity.

As a matter of fact, 1913 was the last year when the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory produced sugar for economic profit. After World War I, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory would increasingly abandon the production of sugar for economic profit, and instead it would pursue a variety of political or social goals. The production of sugar would cease to become an end in itself. It became a means for achieving various ends.

In the interwar period, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had to become the crucible of a Moldavian working class. In 1924, the Soviets established the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic. As the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was the only major enterprise in

the newly established territorial entity, it had to fulfill an almost impossible task: to shape a working class in a region that didn't have any other industries.

The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory organized its production process according to the seasonal character of the sugar industry. The factory processed sugar during the production season, and recruited most of its labor force from the villages in the neighborhood of the factory. To mark the ambiguous status of these seasonal workers, Soviet authorities defined them as peasant-workers. The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory had to shape these peasant-workers into workers.

If the production of sugar was a seasonal production, then the production of a Moldavian working class had to continue all year round. Obviously, Soviet authorities couldn't count on the fact that a Moldavian working class would emerge only from the production activities on the factory floor, especially when the factory was always criticized for its low productivity.

Even the central leadership made reference to the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, when it pointed to the problems of the Soviet sugar industry. For instance, in the mid-1930s, Anastas Mikoian, the Head of the People's Commissariat of the Food Industry, criticized the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory for its low productivity and for the weak development of the Stakhanovite movement.

In this context, Soviet authorities shaped the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory into a cultural, social and political center for the education of the Moldavian peasant-workers into workers. While the production process lasted for several months, the factory didn't stop its social and cultural functions outside of the season. The Moldavian working class

would emerge more from the factory's cultural activities than from its production facilities.

During World War II, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was occupied by the Romanian authorities, who established a separate Government of Transnistria. Pavel Avram, the new Romanian director of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, had to turn the factory into a supplier of sugar for the Romanian war effort. At the beginning of the war, the factory suffered severe damages and Avram had to supervise its restoration.

At the same time, Avram launched a campaign to convert the former Soviet workers of the sugar factory into loyal servants of the Romanian state. In this campaign, he favored the employment of ethnic Romanians/Moldavians, at the expense of the other nationalities, whom he suspected of being sympathizers of the Soviet Union. Some former party members changed their ethnic identification in order to match the new selection criteria. For instance, a former member of the local party cell, Ivan Lepota, who identified himself as Ukrainian in the Soviet Union, changed his name to Ioan Lipota, and proclaimed that, as an ethnic Moldavian, he was a loyal servant of the Romanian state.

In 1944, Soviet authorities returned to Rybnitsa and started a series of trials against the alleged collaborators with the Romanian administration. The Soviets had a broad definition of collaboration. All of the people that couldn't prove their active resistance against the Romanian administration were suspected of collaboration. The Soviets placed both the participants in the mass executions and the inmates of the ghettos and concentration camps in the category of collaborators. Often, they received the same sentence of 10 or 15 years detention in Soviet labor camps.

In parallel with the purges of the alleged wartime collaborators, Moscow sought to restore the factories, which were destroyed during the war. After the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II, Soviet authorities relocated numerous German factories to the Soviet territory. They claimed that the advanced German technologies, together with the superior organization of the Soviet economy, would place the Soviet Union at the forefront of the global economy.

According to the same logic, Soviet authorities decided to relocate a fully mechanized and fully electrified Zörbig Sugar Factory to Rybnitsa. They expected that the modern German sugar factory would change the old Soviet patterns of sugar production in Rybnitsa. Instead, the example of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory shows that the relocation of a German factory to the Soviet Union was not as smooth as the Soviet leadership expected.

Contrary to the expectations of the Soviet experts, that the relocation of the Zörbig Sugar Factory to Rybnitsa would reveal the superiority of the Soviet economic model, it revealed the problems of the Soviet bureaucratic economy. Soviet bureaucracy was not a unified whole. Each Soviet institution had its own interests. Glavsakhar sought to modernize the Soviet sugar industry by relocating German sugar factories to the Soviet Union. At the same time, these sugar factories were not relocated just on paper.

In Rybnitsa, the new sugar factory was expected to be twice as large as the previous sugar factory. Local authorities needed to extend the area of the sugar factory on account of the land from the neighboring military base. The administration of the military

base did not agree to provide additional land. As a result, the relocation of the Zörbig Sugar Factory to Rybnitsa took years to complete.

In the process, many expensive units of equipment were stolen or disappeared, while the Soviet engineers had to replace them with Soviet equipment. Thus, what was initially intended as the replacement of a Soviet sugar factory with a German one, turned into the replacement of a Soviet sugar factory with a technological hybrid between the German and Soviet equipment.

In 1950, this German-Soviet technological hybrid started its first production season after World War II. Despite the fact that the restored Rybnitsa Sugar Factory suffered from low productivity, local specialists became the founders of a Moldavian sugar industry. The Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was engaged by the central Soviet authorities in the building of other sugar factories in Soviet Moldavia.

The experts of the Moldavian sugar industry were chosen not because of their technological skills, but because of their ascribed revolutionary merits. As the factory was the only Moldavian sugar factory which witnessed the October Revolution, the Civil War and the First Five Year Plan, local workers were shaped into revolutionary heroes and model workers for the other sugar factories. Thus, the peasant-workers from the interwar period became the experts of the Moldavian sugar industry.

After the establishment of the Moldavian Sugar Beet Trust in 1953, the experts of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory became the leading experts of the Moldavian sugar industry. In the Soviet planned economy, the central planning authorities sought to maximize the output of each industry. The administration of the union republics did not always act in

agreement with the central directives. Sometimes, local interests prevailed over the demands of the Soviet center.

At the end of the 1950s-beginning of the 1960s, the Soviet center sought to increase sugar production by extracting sugar from molasses. At the same time, Moldavian specialists disagreed with the arguments of the center and argued for the fermentation of molasses into ethanol. Moldavian experts argued that by increasing the production of ethanol, the Moldavian sugar industry would benefit the Moldavian wine industry. Thus, they established a separate unit for the production of ethanol at the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory.

In 1961, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory turned into the Rybnitsa Sugar and Ethanol Factory. The transformation of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory into the Rybnitsa Sugar and Ethanol Factory marked the establishment of a separate technopolitical regime in the Moldavian sugar industry. From a marginal sugar factory in the interwar period, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory became the pillar of the Moldavian sugar beet industry.

The production of ethanol from molasses generates carbon dioxide as a byproduct. In 1972, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory began the production of carbon dioxide.

The fact that the Moldavian sugar industry managed to shape a specific technopolitical regime and to adapt it to the interests of the Moldavian economy shows that the Soviet economy did not function like a unitary whole. Contrary to the usual description of a Soviet economy as a planning monolith, the Soviet economy consisted of numerous interest groups, which defended their own interests.

During the final decades of the Soviet Union, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory faded into the background of the Moldavian sugar industry. Before the 1970s, its activities were constantly reflected by the regional newspaper of the Rybnitsa district. Starting with its 75th anniversary, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory appeared in the newspaper only during its anniversaries. In fact, all the anniversary articles used the same ritualized language to celebrate the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory as the only Moldavian sugar factory, which witnessed the Bolshevik Revolution and the Civil War.

After the Soviet collapse, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory became the only sugar factory in the de facto state of Transnistria. Some voices in Transnistria regarded the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory as the only factory that could produce Transnistrian sugar. As a result, they insisted that the Transnistrian leadership had to support the factory, irrespective of the costs.

On the other hand, Transnistrian authorities argued that they didn't have the necessary resources to support the sugar factory. They proposed the privatization of the factory as a miraculous solution for the post-Soviet economic problems. In the meantime, the factory accumulated numerous debts and ceased the production of sugar in 2002.

During most of its history, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was a social or political factory, which was heavily subsidized by various governments. At the moment when a government no longer intended to use it as a social or political factory, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory turned into a pile of scrap metal.

NOTE ON SOURCES

For most of its history, the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory was part of the Soviet Union. As the Soviet state was highly centralized, it is impossible to trace any local history without following policies up the chain to Moscow. In Moscow, I worked with documents from the Soviet period held in four archives—the Russian State Archive of Economics (RGAE), the Russian State Archive of Social-Political History (RGASPI), the State Archive of the Russian Federation (GARF) and the Russian State Archive of Recent History (RGANI).

RGASPI holds the records of the Central Committee of the Soviet era Communist Party (1903-1991) (F.17).⁵¹⁷ In addition, RGASPI contains documents covering the geographical area of my project, including: the Special Representative of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union for the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (April-July 1941; 1945-1949) (F. 573).

At RGAE I used the documents of the State Administration of the Sugar Industry (Sakharotrest) (1921-1930) (F.1576), the Soviet Ministry of Food Industry (1934-1953) (F.8543) and other agencies which dealt with the sugar industry (F.8715; 1926-1957) (F.

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⁵¹⁷ F.(Fond) represents a collection of documents. Each fond comprises *opisi* (op.) or indexes, which are subdivided into *dela* (d.) or files. Each delo is subdivided into *listy* (ll.) or pages.

6967; 1917-1922). These documents reveal the place of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory in the ideological and political context of the Soviet sugar industry.

At the same time, the documents from the Central Committee of the Workers Union for the Sugar Industry at GARF (F.5463; 1917-1953) reveal details about the everyday lives of workers. This collection consists of various reports on the social, cultural and political activities of the workers unions at the sugar factories. They also provide sources about the wages of the different professional categories.

RGANI holds the records of the All-Union Communist Party from 1952 to 1991. Since it is dealing with a more recent chronological period, most of the materials at this archive are still classified. Nevertheless, the documents which refer to the food industry are declassified. These are mostly located in the collection of the Central Committee of the all-Union Communist Party (F.5; 1952-1991).

In the Russian Empire, Rybnitsa was part of Podol'sk province. Documents on the local production and consumption of sugar were stored in the provincial center, Kamianets-Podilskyi. In the Soviet era, these documents were transferred to the State Archive of Khmel'nyts'ky Region in Khmel'nyts'ky, Ukraine.

In Khmel'nits'ky, I found out that most of the documents in the collection of the local Treasury Chamber (F.226; 1795-1919), including the reports of the sugar factories, had been burned during a fire at the local archive. So, in tracing the origins of the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory, I rely on the *The Yearbook of the Sugar Industry of the Russian Empire*, which was a periodical publication of the Imperial Technical Society of the Russian Empire.

In Ukraine, I also went to the State Archive of Odessa Region, which houses the records of the Romanian administration in Transnistria (F. 2264;1941-1944). The documents from this collection shed light on the occupational policies of the Romanian authorities in Transnistria. In Washington DC, I visited The US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, where I consulted the documents of the Moldovan Service of Security and Information (former KGB) Archive, (RG-54.003). These documents consist of reports from the post-war trials, which were initiated by the returning Soviet authorities in Soviet Moldavia. They describe the ideological portrait of the post-war Soviet administration and provide some details about the Holocaust in Transnistria.

The Moldovan Archive of Socio-Political Organizations (AOSPRM) holds republic (F. 49; F.51), city and district level (F. 3; 1924-1991) records of the Soviet era Communist Party. In F. 3, I have reviewed sixty files covering the Rybnitsa Sugar Factory's post-war party cell. These files document the main questions discussed at monthly factory Party meetings. The Party made all major decisions related to the hiring of administrative personnel, and these documents reveal the complex nature of interactions between party bureaucrats at different levels of the Soviet system.

In the State Archive of the Republic of Moldova (ANRM), I have reviewed records from the collection of the Council of Ministers (F.R. 2848; 1940-1991). While the Communist Party set the ideological course and made political decisions, the state apparatus and ministries provided technocratic expertise. These documents reveal how technocrats sought to carry out the ideological and political demands of the Party.

At the National Library of Moldova, I have reviewed *Sovetskaia Moldaviia*, the official paper of the Moldavian Soviet Government, and *Drumul Socialist*, the official paper of the Rybnitsa District Party Committee. Unfortunately, the National Library of Moldova did not hold all the issues of these newspapers. So, I was able to review some of the missing issues at the National Book Chamber of the Republic of Moldova, which holds an important collection of Soviet and post-Soviet newspapers.

Despite the overwhelming censorship, newspapers regularly devoted an entire page to the publication of letters from ordinary Soviet citizens. In these letters, Soviet citizens expressed their grievances and concerns about the inappropriate behavior of particular Soviet functionaries. Even if these letters were certainly subject to censorship, their publication still reveals a great deal about problems in Soviet Moldavia, including a sense of the limits of allowable criticism of the Party and state.

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- AOSPRM- Moldovan Archive of Socio-Political Organizations (*Arhiva Organizatilor Social-Politice din Republica Moldova*), Chisinau, Moldova.
- DAOO- State Archive of Odessa Region. (*Derzhavnyi arkhiv Odes'koi oblasti*), Odessa, Ukraine.
- GARF- State Archive of the Russian Federation (Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii), Moscow, Russia.
- RGAE- Russian State Archive of Economics (Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Ekonomiki), Moscow, Russia.
- RGANI- Russian State Archive of Recent History (*Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv noveishei istorii*), Moscow, Russia.

RGASPI- Russian State Archive of Social-Political History (*Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial 'no-politicheskoi istorii*), Moscow, Russia.

USHMM- The US Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington DC, USA.

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Periodical Literature:

Dnestrovskii Maiak

Drumul Socialist

Kommunist Moldavii

Leninskoe Znamia

Plugarul Rosh

Molodezh' Moldavii

Novosti

Pravda

Pridnestrov'e

Pravda Pridnestrov'ia

Sakharnaia Promyshlennost'

Sotsialisticheskii Put'

Sovetskaia Moldaviia

BIOGRAPHY

Alexandru Lesanu graduated from Vasile Alecsandri High School (Chisinau, Republic of Moldova) in 1999. He received his Bachelor of Arts from Low Danube University (Galati, Romania) in 2003. He was employed as a lecturer at the Free International University of Moldova and received his Master of Arts in History from Central European University (Budapest, Hungary) in 2005.