„ION CREANGA" STATE PEDAGOGICAL UNIVERSITY IN CHISINAU

Manuscript title:
UDC: 94(478)"1944/1961":316.3(043.3)

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DAILY LIFE IN THE MOLDOVAN SSR IN THE CONTEXT OF POLITICAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATIONS (1944–1961)

Speciality: 611.02 – HISTORY OF THE ROMANIANS (by period)

Abstract of the Doctor habilitatus thesis in history

Chișinău, 2026

The thesis was prepared within the Department of History and Social Sciences and the Doctoral School "History. Cultural Heritage. Modernity" of the "Ion Creangă" State Pedagogical University" in Chișinău based on the scientific research project within the Postdoctoral Program (2024–2025) *"24.00208.0807.09/PD II 'Daily Life in the Moldavian SSR in the Context of Political, Social, and Economic Transformations (1944–1961)'"*

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The defense will take place on May 12, 2026, starting at 3:00 p.m., during the public session of the Public Defense Commission at the "Ion Creangă" State Pedagogical University (Chișinău, 1 Ion Creangă St., Bldg. 1, Room 303).

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The abstract of the habilitation thesis in history was sent on April 9, 2026.

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CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

The relevance and importance of researching daily life in the Moldavian SSR in the context of the political, social, and economic transformations of the period 1944–1961 stem from the urgent need to understand the Soviet legacy, which continues to exert a significant influence on Moldovan society. Nostalgia for the Soviet era, present in certain social segments, is fuelled not only by the crises facing society, which provoke discontent, but also by a selective and mythologising memory, in which the shortcomings of the past are minimised, and the perception of order, "security," and "solidarity" is exaggerated. Nostalgia for the totalitarian past is particularly pronounced and is also exploited politically; in Moldova's elections, far-left and/or pro-Russian parties have used these narratives in their campaigns, achieving significant electoral results: in the 2021 parliamentary elections, the Bloc of Communists and Socialists received 27.17% of the vote, the "Sor" Party – 5.74%, for a total of 32.91% (Alegeri, 2021); in the 2025 parliamentary elections, the "Patriotic Bloc of Socialists, Communists, Heart, and Future of Moldova" received 24.20%, the "Alternative" Bloc – 7.96%, for a total of 32.16% (Alegeri, 2025).

In this context, scientific research into everyday life becomes essential for demystifying this idealised image of the Soviet past, offering a balanced, documented, and critical perspective on the social realities of the Soviet era. Through the rigorous reconstruction of concrete experiences from the years 1944–1961, it is possible to construct a collective memory grounded in factual and documentary data, thereby overcoming perceptions distorted by time, propaganda, or idealisation. Studying the practices, routines, and coping mechanisms of that period facilitates a more nuanced understanding of the origins of current problems and the persistence of certain social behaviours that often prove counterproductive to democratic development. The Soviet communist regime did not operate solely through direct repression, but established a system of values, norms, and behaviours that it infiltrated into everyday life and passed down from generation to generation. Research into daily life during the Soviet period helps identify how these ideologies were internalised: loyalty to the state, distrust of individual initiative, social passivity, or the idealisation of the "order" imposed by the single-party system are traits that survive in various forms even today. Analysing these from the perspective of daily experiences will offer the opportunity to understand the causes of the perpetuation of totalitarian mentalities, which are barriers to authentic democracy.

This research has both documentary and academic value, and addresses pressing concerns regarding memory, identity, and the vulnerability of post-totalitarian societies in the face of the resurgence of authoritarian models. The resurgence of authoritarian tendencies in the region, accentuated by recent events such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the consolidation of undemocratic regimes, demonstrates the lack of an effective societal defence against dictatorial abuses. Studying daily life under the communist regime will allow for the identification of mechanisms of submission, adaptation, and tacit acceptance of state abuses, as well as the recognition of early signs of authoritarianism: control over private life, manipulation of information, the cultivation of an "external enemy," and the distortion of historical memory. Awareness

of these mechanisms is vital for preventing their recurrence, especially in the context of the new climate of insecurity generated by the threat of war. In the face of the real danger of a return to totalitarian rhetoric and practices, scientific research into daily life in the Moldavian SSR contributes to the construction of a critical collective memory, demystifying the past and shifting the focus from unfounded nostalgia to a deep understanding of collective trauma.

In a regime that sought to reshape identity and dissolve the private sphere in favour of the "new Soviet man," the study of private life–family, holidays, leisure–becomes crucial for understanding how private life survived in a context where the party deeply intervened in citizens' personal lives. An analysis of the period 1944–1961 reveals not only the effects of state policies, such as collectivisation, deportations, or industrialisation, but also the concrete ways in which these were internalised, adapted, or challenged at the family, community, and individual levels. Beyond official rhetoric, everyday reality involved adaptation, compromise, but also a remarkable capacity for resilience and inventiveness.

The study of everyday life becomes not only an academic necessity but also essential for the reconstruction of collective memory, a critical understanding of the Soviet legacy, and a nuanced interpretation of contemporary social and cultural phenomena. Thus, research into everyday life not only complements the political history of the Moldavian SSR but also humanises it and brings it closer to the reality experienced by millions of people. It reveals the continuities and ruptures between the traditional world, the communist system, and the post-Soviet transition, offering conceptual tools for critical reflection on the past, as well as for overcoming unfounded nostalgia and totalitarian myths.

The topic's place within international, national, and regional historiographical concerns. Research on daily life in the Moldavian SSR is today among the most dynamic and relevant directions in European and local historiography. Since the 1930s, beginning with the early studies of the founders *of the Annales School*, numerous historians and research centres have dedicated their work to the subject of daily life. In European Union countries, as well as in the post-Soviet space, the study of daily life across various historical periods remains a constant focus for many researchers. Daily life in socialist Romania has also been the subject of studies and articles. In the Republic of Moldova, research on the subject of daily life is in its early stages, and to date, there are no comprehensive works on daily life in the Moldavian SSR. Understanding this aspect of the past is important not only for reconstructing the daily lives of ordinary people but also for deciphering the underlying mechanisms through which the communist regime exercised control over society, shaping mentalities, behaviours, and collective identities. After the establishment of the Soviet regime, the local community underwent radical social, economic, and cultural transformations: collectivization, forced industrialization, repression, and changes in social status, as well as ideological propaganda and censorship in the fields of culture, science, and education, which had direct consequences on daily life–from how people obtained food and organized their homes to how they worked, communicated, and celebrated holidays. The study of daily life between 1944 and 1961, therefore, remains a timely and necessary endeavour both

for the academic community and for Moldovan society as a whole, which is still seeking a balance between memory, identity, and recent transformations. Integrating the dimension of childhood into this analytical framework allows for the reconstruction of the concrete experiences of generations raised under the Soviet regime and an understanding of the mechanisms of intergenerational transmission of values, behaviours, and mentalities that continue to shape contemporary society in the Republic of Moldova.

Motivation for choosing the topic. The choice of topic is driven by its relevance and the conflicting debates in society, as well as the mythologising, unscientific, and politically biased interpretations of various aspects of daily life in the Moldavian SSR, in the absence of a comprehensive monographic work that would elucidate daily life in a multifaceted and complex manner. The formation in contemporary society of erroneous opinions about totalitarian societies as a whole has a negative impact on the democratic development of the Republic of Moldova. This fact necessitates a multifaceted study of society and the communist regime in the Moldavian SSR.

The aim of the research is a comprehensive, interdisciplinary examination of the daily life of the population of the Moldavian SSR in the context of the political, social, and economic realities of the years 1944–1961, by investigating the impact of the totalitarian communist regime on the multiple dimensions of daily existence–material, social, cultural, and private.

To achieve the aim*, *the following general objectives were formulated:

✓ Researching the structures of daily life in the Moldavian SSR during the years 1944–1961.
✓ Analysis and valorisation of the historiography of daily life in the Moldavian SSR.
✓ To investigate the process of Sovietization of daily life in Soviet Moldova.
✓ To elucidate the social aspects of daily life in rural and urban areas.
✓ Investigation of the impact of political and ideological factors on the family and daily life.
✓ Analysis of the situation of children and identification of factors that influenced the daily life of the younger generation in the postwar political, ideological, and social context.

The research hypothesis is based on the premise that the Soviet totalitarian project implemented in the Moldavian SSR between 1944 and 1961 (totalitarian policies of Sovietization, repression, economic and administrative coercion, ideological indoctrination and ritualization, and intrusion into the private sphere) brought about a systemic, yet differentiated, transformation of the structures and dimensions of everyday life (material, social, symbolic, private, and generational), such that the degree of internalization of Soviet ideological norms varied depending on the social environment–rural or urban–one's position in the social hierarchy, and access to resources and privileges, while also being mediated by individual and collective strategies of adaptation, negotiation, and cultural resistance.

Summary of the research methodology and justification of the chosen research methods. In researching this topic, we employ a range of methods, with the historical method serving as the primary tool to reveal the essence of the historical process. This

involves the appropriate use of diverse historical sources and historiography. *The historical method,* combined with the *systemic* method, enables the historical reconstruction of daily life in Soviet society.

The analysis and synthesis of statistical data, events, and processes have made it possible to highlight findings regarding the standard of living, social changes, the impact of events on lifestyle, etc.; explanation and generalisation have enabled the identification and elucidation of phenomena specific to Soviet daily life based on regional data, yet applicable across the entire research area.

Particularly important in elucidating the subject is the interdisciplinary research method, grounded in *the theoretical concepts of the Annales School* regarding the study of daily life, which contributes to identifying key issues and the structures of daily life, and provides examples of interdisciplinary research and the application of methods. Lucien Febvre, Marc Bloch, Fernand Braudel, and Jacques Le Goff advocated for a "total history" that would incorporate not only institutions but also daily actions, perceptions of the world, and social relations over time and within the material environment. This direction was taken up and expanded by Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, who opened new horizons in the study of private life, childhood, intimacy, and the family. Applying the concepts and methodology *of the Annales School* to the Soviet space–in our case, the Moldavian SSR–facilitates the investigation of the specific nature of a society organised within a totalitarian system that permeated all layers of existence, including leisure time, food, clothing, family life, and even ways of thinking. The theoretical concepts of Philippe Ariès and Margaret Mead were applied to the study of the phenomenon of Soviet childhood. Mircea Eliade's concepts regarding myth, the sacred, and the profane were applied to the study of the impact of propaganda, Soviet myths, holidays, and ceremonies on the daily life of the population, and how these profoundly influenced the collective psyche and identity. To study daily life in the Moldavian SSR, we draw upon *the theory of the social construction of reality* presented in the work "The Social Construction of Reality" by P.L. Berger and T. Luckmann. This theory, fundamental to the sociology of knowledge, helps us understand how reality is socially constructed and how Soviet childhood became a social phenomenon under the complex influence of a network of formal and informal institutions. Furthermore, this theory helps explain how the daily lives of various social groups from different backgrounds were shaped by propaganda, socioeconomic, and political factors.

The Oral History Method is a valuable tool for researching daily life by drawing on participants' or eyewitnesses' memories through interviews for historical reconstruction. The main difference between *oral history* interviews and ethnological interviews or questionnaires is that the information provided by interviewees relates to the events, processes, and historical realities of the specific historical period. These interviews have the capacity to convey knowledge that does not merely pertain to material or spiritual cultural aspects, but which offers a detailed perspective on historical experience. The method contains theoretical aspects and particularities that must be taken into account.

The use *of visual anthropology methods*–in the case of the proposed topic, the use of photography as a historical source–was essential for illustrating the evolution of clothing, housing, and aspects related to participation in celebrations, events, and social,

economic, and political activities. These images provide a visual context of life and have helped document aspects not covered by historical documents.

Chronological and geographical scope. *The geographical scope of the research* encompasses the territory of the Moldavian SSR, established in 1940 following the annexation of Bessarabia by the Soviet Union through the unification of six counties in Bessarabia (Bălți, Tighina, Chișinău, Cahul, Orhei, and Soroca) and six other districts, out of 14, from the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Tiraspol, Grigoriopol, Dubăsari, Camenca, Râbnița, and Slobozia). The territory mentioned corresponds to the current territory of the Republic of Moldova.

The chronological scope of the study spans the years 1944 to 1961. The lower limit is determined by the restoration of Soviet power in Bessarabia, while the upper chronological limit marks the adoption of the Third Program of the CPSU in 1961, which declared that the stage of building socialism had been completed and that the transition to the stage of building communism had begun. This program had a significant influence on the social life and daily life of Soviet citizens, including those in the Moldavian SSR.

The novelty and originality of the work lie in the fact that the topic "Daily Life in the Moldavian SSR (1944–1961)" was researched in an interdisciplinary and multifaceted manner for the first time. Through its achieved objectives and explored topics, the work has outlined and scientifically substantiated three new directions for scientific research: *the history of daily life in the Moldavian SSR*, *the historical anthropology of "Sovietness" in the Republic of Moldova,* and *the history of childhood in the Moldavian SSR*. The topic of daily life in the Moldavian SSR had previously been addressed only fragmentarily in a few scholarly articles, but no comprehensive study or monograph on this subject existed before the present research. Most of the topics addressed in this project are new to the Republic of Moldova: the structures of Soviet daily life in the Moldavian SSR, official ideology and Soviet ceremonial in daily life, childhood within the educational, ideological, and institutional system, food in rural and public settings; food and industrial goods distribution through the ration card system, the phenomenon of speculation, social aspects of labour in collective farms, factories, and plants, the phenomenon of socialist competitions, etc.

The scientific novelty also lies in the utilisation and incorporation into the academic discourse of a significant volume of previously unpublished documents from the collections of the ANA, AAȘM, MNEIN, the "N. Bulat" Museum of History and Ethnography in Soroca, and the IPC's internal archives, which shed light on various aspects of daily life in the Moldavian SSR. The testimonies collected through the oral history method from people who lived and worked during the years 1944–1961– representatives of various occupations (collective farmers, workers, intellectuals, civil servants, students, Octoberists, Pioneers, and Komsomol members) – also represent a novelty, offering a vivid, unique perspective on personal experiences and the social context.

Scientific findings and the practical value of the research. The research demonstrated that daily life in the Moldavian SSR from 1944 to 1961 had not previously been studied as a distinct subject, and this work addressed the topic for the first time in

an interdisciplinary and multifaceted manner, initiating new scientific directions: *the history of daily life in the Moldavian SSR, the historical anthropology of Sovietism in the Republic of Moldova, and the study of Soviet childhood in the Moldavian SSR*.

The investigation revealed that the restoration of Soviet power in 1944 was accompanied by a climate of widespread terror, systematic looting, and violence against the civilian population. Repressive fiscal policy and the forced requisitioning of grain caused the famine of 1946–1947, and the ration card system dramatically worsened the population's food supply situation. The research demonstrated that poverty was not a consequence of systemic dysfunction but a deliberate instrument of social control, keeping the population dependent on the state for minimal vital resources.

The study shed light for the first time on the history of Soviet childhood as a distinct field of research, demonstrating that the forced schooling of 1944–1945 represented a turning point for the younger generation, subjected to ideological indoctrination through ideologised curricula and involvement in communist organisations. An analysis of the orphanage system revealed that the expansion of the network in the postwar period was due to the humanitarian crisis caused by the state itself through organised famine and repression. Inspections from 1952–1957 documented serious and persistent dysfunctions, including the economic exploitation of children under the pretext of education through labour.

The investigation demonstrated the fundamental contradiction between official rhetoric and material reality, which constituted the essence of the Moldovan Soviet experience. While propaganda promoted the construction of socialism, the population faced chronic malnutrition in the immediate postwar period, widespread poverty, and precarious living conditions. Colkhozniks, representing two-thirds of the population, were systematically disadvantaged by institutionalised mechanisms: the lack of regular wages until 1966, travel restrictions, and limited access to consumer goods.

The research highlighted that labour mobility constituted a deliberate tool of demographic engineering, with the recruitment of young Moldovans to work in other republics, coupled with the massive importation of workers, serving the purpose of demographic dilution and the deprofessionalization of the local population. The study revealed that gender and ethnic discrimination in industrial structures were common, and Stakhanovism served as a technique for psychosocial manipulation, transforming labour into an ideological spectacle.

An analysis of changes in the provision of housing for the population demonstrated that access to decent housing functioned as an instrument of social stratification, with the nomenclature benefiting from apartments under a privileged system. The Sovietization of the rural habitat involved a radical reconfiguration of the landscape through the imposition of standardised projects, but an analysis of period photographs and ethnographic reports has shown that this forced modernisation did not completely eradicate traditional culture, but rather generated a complex dynamic of adaptation and resistance.

An investigation into the processes of transformation in private and family life revealed the extent of the mechanisms through which the totalitarian regime penetrated the intimate structures of human existence. The high persistence of religiosity and the

impressive number of baptisms, weddings, and religious funerals demonstrated that the family functioned as a bastion for the preservation of traditional values and a space for passive resistance. The system of background checks and the practice of denunciation transformed mutual doubt and suspicion into the foundations of social relations, and the invasion of propaganda into the domestic sphere via wired radio receivers represented an extreme form of penetration into private space. Research has shown that the process of Sovietization was never linear, but rather a conflictual dynamic of adaptation, resistance, and negotiation between various social actors and between the regime's ideological imperatives and the economic and cultural realities of postwar Moldovan society.

Approval of scientific results. The research results are presented in 3 monographs on the research topic, a collection of documents with a scientific study; furthermore, the results have been published in 28 articles in scientific journals (9 articles in SCOPUS-indexed journals, 19 articles in journals, scientific collections, and proceedings of national and international conferences), 29 theses and abstracts of papers presented at scientific conferences in the country and abroad, and in a series of topics from 4 school textbooks. The research results were presented in the form of papers, including in plenary sessions, at over 40 national and international conferences organised by universities and research institutions in the Republic of Moldova and Romania.

Structure and length of the thesis. The thesis comprises 341 pages of main text (excluding the bibliography) and, in terms of structure, consists of: an introduction; 6 chapters, divided into subsections; general conclusions and recommendations; a bibliography; the author's CV; and a statement of authenticity. The work also contains *annotations in Romanian, English, and Russian*.

Keywords: Moldavian SSR, daily life, communist regime, Sovietization, collectivisation, industrialisation, clothing, housing, food, Soviet childhood, communist education, Soviet identity, Soviet man, food ration cards, Soviet fiscal policy, kolkhoz, orphanage, kindergarten, school, Soviet holidays, totalitarian myths.

THESIS CONTENTS

The Introduction presents the relevance and importance of the topic, the chronological framework, the geographical scope, the research methodology, the topic's place within international, regional, and national research, the thesis's aims and objectives, the hypothesis, the rationale for choosing the topic, the scientific novelty of the findings, and the theoretical significance of the thesis.

Chapter 1–*Theoretical and Historiographical Foundations and Sources of Research on Daily Life in the Moldavian SSR*–elaborates and justifies the theoretical and methodological framework for research on daily life in the Moldavian SSR, analyses the historiography of the issue, and presents the research sources.

The theoretical foundation of research on daily life in the Moldavian SSR draws on the legacy *of the Annales School* and builds upon recent historiographical approaches within the scientific field *of the historical anthropology of Sovietism*. The main theorists of *the Annales School* whose works have been utilised are Lucien Febvre, Marc Bloch, Fernand Braudel, Jacques Le Goff, Philippe Ariès, and Georges Duby. L. Febvre argued

that the study of history must go beyond major events and famous figures, focusing on the daily lives of ordinary people, exploring the influence of the natural environment on human behaviour, and demonstrating how geographical and economic conditions determine social and cultural structures (Febvre, 1946). M. Bloch emphasised the importance of everyday life for understanding social and cultural structures, analysing how the interdependencies between social classes shaped daily interactions and agricultural practices (Bloch, 1996; Bloch, 1998). F. Braudel conceptualised history as a succession of long- e periods, including the everyday component, defining the everyday as a sphere of human life characterised by stability and repetitiveness, encompassing material structures, social rituals, and the basic economy (Braudel, 1984, pp. 11–16). J. Le Goff, a proponent of the history of mentalities, analysed how people's thinking and perceptions influence everyday behaviours, exploring how medieval mentalities, religious beliefs, and cultural norms shaped daily life (Le Goff, 1970). The series *History of Private Life*, edited by Ph. Ariès and G. Duby and published between 1985 and 1997 in 10 volumes, addresses the evolution of private life in the West from Antiquity to the 20th century, describing daily life as a field of research centered on everyday experiences and the structures that influence them, with private life considered a distinct dimension contrasting with public life (Ariès, Duby, 1994–1997). Henri Lefebvre explored the concept of daily life, understanding it as a complex space of social, economic, and cultural interactions, and introduced the concept of social space to understand how daily life is shaped by its geographical and historical context (Lefebvre, 1971).

Mircea Eliade approached everyday life from an interdisciplinary perspective, combining history, religion, mythology, and philosophy to explore the meaning of human existence and the interconnection between everyday experiences and the sacred dimension of life. In *A History of Religious Beliefs and Ideas*, Eliade views the everyday as a space where the sacred can be discovered, arguing that modern man, though living in a world dominated by rationalism, cannot ignore the need for transcendence (Eliade, 2000, p. 11). Eliade's work becomes relevant for understanding communist societies through the analysis of myths, ideologies, and invented traditions, as totalitarian regimes sought to control the perception of reality by constructing alternative narratives, replacing the religious meanings of sacredness with ideological ones (Eliade, 1990, pp. 139–151). The desacralization imposed by communist regimes was superficial and took other forms, since the sacred is an element in the structure of consciousness, and the desacralization characteristic of contemporary societies represents rather a camouflaging of the sacred within the profane (Eliade, 2017, p. 29).

The historical anthropology of Sovietism as a research direction was argued by V. Tishkov in his paper *"The Anthropology of Transformations in Russia,"* presented at the 3rd Congress of Russian Ethnographers and Anthropologists in 1999 (Тишков, 2000, pp. 319). The scientific field of *the ethnology of Sovietness* developed primarily within the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, with M. Guboglo producing important studies of theoretical argumentation (Губогло, 2017, p. 13). Researcher E. Zubkova has devoted a series of studies to investigations of Soviet society; her monograph *Postwar Soviet Society* offers an in-

depth analysis of the social life of the Soviet individual (Зубкова, 1999). The term *"Sovietness"* has been in frequent use since the 1990s. In Russian, it is *советкость*, and in English, *sovietness* (Orlov, 2022, pp. 597–607). Timothy Johnston defines *Sovietness* as the official Soviet identity, actively promoted by the state through the press, films, music, and propaganda, which articulates the USSR's position in diplomatic and cultural relations with the outside world, being a supranational identity accessible to all Soviet citizens and constructed in contrast to the West (Johnston, 2011).

We consider *Sovietness* to be a complex social, cultural, and identity phenomenon produced by the totalitarian regime in the USSR, which denotes the specific Soviet sociocultural universe of values, behavioural norms, daily practices, rituals, and symbols through which the totalitarian state sought to reshape the collective and individual identities of people, transforming the fulfilment of natural human needs (family, personal fulfilment, solidarity) into forms and expressions subject to communist ideological imperatives. The term is used for the first time in the scientific literature of the Republic of Moldova, referring to research on daily life in the Moldavian SSR.

The ethnology of Sovietism focuses on the Soviet social, cultural, and identity phenomena, as well as the directed transformation of traditional material and spiritual culture into a new material and spiritual culture, established as a new revolutionary tradition. The transformation of traditional culture through its "modernisation"/Sovietization and through the policy of establishing a new, distinct culture represented an important component of the policy of shaping the Soviet man and building communism. In regions where social engineering intersected with the construction of new ethnic identities, the processes of adaptation to the realities constructed by the system took on certain particularities generated by the negation of cultural tradition, becoming not only phenomena contrary to the revolutionary tradition but also evolving into a cultural substrate that would have determined centrifugal national movements within the Soviet state. Due to the predominance of historical sources in research *on Sovietism*, we consider the term *"historical anthropology of Sovietism"* to be more appropriate, as it includes the history of everyday life in the Moldavian SSR as a research direction (See: Dolghi, 2025a, pp. 42–50).

The history of childhood is part of *the history of everyday life*, as childhood is a crucial stage of life that lays the foundation for one's entire existence and is closely linked to the social, cultural, and family aspects that define daily life. Those who study childhood in contemporary societies primarily use ethnological methods to collect empirical data through questionnaires, interviews, and direct observation, as M. Mead did in her works (Mead, 1928, 1930, 1955). However, those who aim to study the phenomenon of childhood in a historical era more or less distant from their own lifetime apply the historical method, researching archives and sources that illustrate the culture of childhood during the corresponding period. The two approaches are not mutually exclusive; rather, they complement each other in certain respects. For research on childhood in the Moldavian SSR, we consider Ph. Ariès's work *Childhood and Family Life under the Old Regime* (Ariès, 1960) to be more relevant, since we are referring to a past society that we study primarily based on historical sources. Nevertheless, Soviet

childhood can be elucidated by combining the two aforementioned approaches, given that the bearers and/or experts of "Soviet culture" are our contemporaries and we can apply ethnological methods to them.

The use *of the theory of the social construction of reality* in the study of everyday life contributes to an understanding of social processes in the Moldavian SSR and the study of everyday life from a social perspective. Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, in their work *The Social Construction of Reality*, argue that primary socialisation plays an essential role in shaping the individual's perception of everyday reality, internalising norms and values that become an integral part of identity (Berger, Luckmann, 2008, pp. 181). *The theory of the social construction of reality* provides an analytical framework for understanding the transformations that marked everyday life in the Moldavian SSR, as the implementation of communist policies redefined social norms and cultural values, promoting the concept of the "new socialist man" through education, the mass media, and community activities.

Drawing on theoretical and historiographical perspectives on everyday life, we define ***everyday life*** as the totality of the material, socio-economic, - economic, cultural, private, and identity-related structures of everyday human existence–the ensemble of activities, practices, interactions, and experiences through which individuals and communities construct, reproduce, and negotiate their existence within specific political, economic, and ideological constraints. Daily life includes *the material dimension,* which encompasses the concrete conditions of life–housing, food, clothing, access to goods, and the infrastructure of daily consumption; *the socio-economic dimension,* defined by the culture of work, productive practices, forms of collective organization, and informal economies; *the private dimension,* which includes the family, the individual's biological and social cycles (birth, marriage, death), leisure time, and festive practices; *the dimension of socialization and identity formation,* operationalized through educational institutions, collective organizations, and mechanisms for transmitting norms; and *the ideological-identity dimension,* through which value systems, symbols, rituals, and behavioural norms shape individual and group consciousness and identity.

Soviet historiography on daily life in the USSR addressed the issue in a fragmented and biased manner, placing the main emphasis on the conscious labour of Soviet workers in building a bright future, constructing cities and factories, and the joy of participating in this process (Сенявский, 1973; Дьячков, 1968; Гордон, Клопов, 1974; Маейр, 1977). The historiography of the 1960s and 1970s was characterised by adherence to historiographical templates regarding the construction of communism, with the problems of daily life linked to the struggle against old remnants in everyday life, violations of the principles of socialism, and the capitalist environment (Поляков, Писаренко, 1978). In the second half of the 1970s and the 1980s, researchers concluded that the standard of living and material security of the population were directly dependent on the domestic and foreign policies promoted by the governing bodies of the USSR.

Soviet historiography in the Moldavian SSR dedicated to everyday life functioned as an instrument of ideological legitimisation, not as an objective reconstruction of

social reality. The works produced during this period followed the patterns imposed by the directives of the Communist Party of Moldova, extolling the role of the Communist Party in all spheres of social and economic life.

On the subject of welfare and living standards, P. Petric (1974) argued that the people's prosperity was based on Leninist principles of labour, while I. Bodiul (1967) and A. Țulimov (1961) presented the rise in living standards in villages and cities exclusively as the party's achievement. The collectivisation of agriculture was treated by Bodiul and Gr. Entelis (1969) as a progressive revolutionary process, and A. Zavtur (1972) analysed the transformations of urban and rural social structures through the same apologetic lens. The collective volume edited by D. Ursul, A. Roșca, V. Corbu, A. Zavtur, and Gr. Entelis (1984) proclaimed the establishment of a "superior Soviet way of life," presenting socialism as the natural culmination of historical evolution. The omissions were just as significant as the assertions. F. Doroganici (1970) argued that the fiscal burden of collectivisation fell only on the "kulaks," glossing over the fact that work on the kolkhoz was unpaid until 1965. M. Sîtnic (1976) described the "fraternal aid" provided by the USSR in 1945–1946 without mentioning the famine that decimated the population of the Moldavian SSR, and the deportations and "liquidation of the kulaks" were justified by the "intensification of the class struggle."

Regarding industrialisation, L. Repida (1980) and V. Barbulat (1969) described the formation of the Soviet working class while ignoring the actual living conditions and the coercive nature of the process. Socialist competitions were presented by E. Kosionova (1982) and I. Burlacu (1980, 1982) as the engine of economic progress, while A. Konstantinov (1966) praised Chișinău's infrastructure in exclusively laudatory terms, placing the blame for any difficulties on the "Romanian occupation" and the effects of the war. These works are today documents of ideology, not of history–sources for understanding the mechanisms of manipulation of collective memory.

Post-Soviet Russian historiography has continued to explore the issue of daily life in the USSR, moving away from Marxist-Leninist and Soviet ideological frameworks that glorified the improvement of the population's well-being and the construction of socialism. Of particular importance in this regard is E. Zubkova's work *Postwar Soviet Society*, which reflects on numerous aspects of daily life in the Soviet Union regarding working conditions, survival under difficult postwar conditions, famine, and mortality (Зубкова, 1999). The volume *Soviet Social Policy in the 1920s–1930s: Ideology and Everyday Life*, edited by P. Romanov and E. Iarskaia-Smirnova, is part of a new trend in post-Soviet Russian historiography that places social history and the study of everyday life at the centre of attention, marking a methodological break from traditional approaches (Романов, Ярская-Смирнова, 2007). M. Fedchenko's book *The Daily Life of the Soviet Man (1945–1991)* offers a detailed and well-documented analysis of the daily lives of ordinary people in the USSR from 1945 to 1991 (Федченко, 2009).

In her work *Soviet Daily Life: Norms and Abnormalities*, N. Lebina elucidated the transformation of Bolshevik policies in the areas of food and housing, fashion and leisure, religiosity and sexuality, as well as the changing attitude toward traditional deviations: drunkenness, suicide, and prostitution (Lebina, 2015). The study *Passengers on the Salami Train* consists of essays describing a range of aspects of the daily life of

the Soviet city dweller: food, entertainment, clothing choices, intimate life, marriage, funeral rituals, etc. (Лебина, 2019). L. Belovinski's book *The Daily Life of People in the Soviet Era* analyses daily life in the Soviet Union, focusing on essential aspects of existence such as work, living conditions, leisure, and children's education (Беловинский, 2017, pp. 5–8).

Western historiography on daily life in the Soviet Union includes important works that explore the concept of daily life, highlighting how everyday life was affected by the totalitarian regime and fluctuating economic conditions. K. Eaton's monograph *Daily Life in the Soviet Union* offers a detailed analysis of the routine activities and social interactions of individuals within a society, including mundane aspects such as work, education, and recreation, as well as how state policy influenced these activities (Eaton, 2004). Sh. Fitzpatrick, in *Everyday Stalinism*, explores the concept of daily life in the Soviet Union of the 1930s, focusing on how ordinary people lived and adapted within the context of a totalitarian regime, highlighting the interactions between personal life and state policies (Fitzpatrick, 2016, pp. 14–16). T. Johnston, in *Soviet Identity, Rumours, and Everyday Life under Stalin 1939–1953,* analyses daily life in the USSR during the late Stalinist period through the lens of ordinary citizens' subtle survival tactics, exploring these strategies through diverse sources such as oral rumours, jokes, hairstyles, musical tastes, and political campaigns (Johnston, 2011).

Romanian historiography on daily life in communist societies includes the volume edited by A. Neculau, *Daily Life under Communism*, which is significant for the study of daily life from a theoretical and methodological perspective, addressing aspects of daily life in Romania during the communist era, yet elucidating aspects similar to those in the postwar Soviet space (Neculau, 2004, p. 11). V. Vasile's work, *The Daily Life of Romanians between 1941 and 1965*, offers an insight into the complexity of Romanians' daily lives, seeking to decipher the everyday structures that, though seemingly mundane, define the essence of an era's existence (Vasile, 2014). M. Mureșan's work *Between Rural and Urban* offers a detailed analysis of daily life during the communist period, focusing on the Gherla area as a case study and examining the effects of collectivisation and industrialisation on rural and urban communities (Mureșan, 2021).

In the historiography of the Republic of Moldova, daily life in the Moldavian SSR has been addressed only tangentially in works focused on other research topics. Professor B. Vizer, in his work *The Economy and Social Condition of the Population of Moldova*, analysed the socio-economic evolution of Soviet Moldova and its direct impact on living standards and conditions, noting that the producer's lack of property had fatal consequences for every member of society (Vizer, 2012, p. 251). In V. Tsaranov's work, *Aspects of the Socio-Economic Development of Moldova*, the country's socio-economic development, the famine of 1946–1947, collectivisation, and deportations are analysed (Tsaranov, 2011). V. Pasat's work, *The Moldovan SSR in the Stalinist Era*, details the process of Sovietization of Moldovan villages, including the collectivization of agriculture, discussing how this process led to the destruction of the traditional structures of rural communities and the formation of new social relations based on the socialist model (Pasat, 2011, pp. 5, 12, 295–371, 626–632). In the work *The Orthodox Church and Soviet Power in the Moldavian SSR (1940–1991)*, V. Pasat

elucidates how the daily life of the population of the Moldavian SSR was influenced by the religious policies and repression of the Soviet state (Pasat, 2019).

The work *Cultural Policy in the Moldavian SSR*, published by V. Ursu, although it has a different subject of study, elucidates certain aspects that reflect the impact of Soviet cultural policy on daily life in the Moldavian SSR (Ursu, 2013, pp. 170–185). In Al. Memei's work, *Communist Terror in the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (1924–1940) and the Moldavian SSR (1944–1947)*, numerous dramatic aspects of daily life are described; the research reveals a deeply traumatized society, subjected to violent transformations, where daily life was dominated by survival, fear, and the hope for change (Memei, 2014). The work *The Class Enemy: Political Repression, Violence, and Resistance in the Moldovan SSR, 1924–1956* by Ig. Cașu offers a detailed analysis of political repression and its impact on the population (Cașu, 2015).

The collection of studies *Epidemics and Measures to Counter Them in the Moldavian SSR*, edited by I. Șișcanu, offers an insight into strategies for managing epidemiological and social crises in the postwar period of the Moldavian SSR, highlighting the lessons history offers for understanding and combating contemporary crises (Șișcanu, 2021). Also important for understanding social and everyday realities are the works: *Anti-Communist Resistance in the Moldavian SSR* (Șevcenco, 2022), *National and Social Engineering in Higher Education in the Moldavian SSR* (Rotaru, 2025).

Ethnological and interdisciplinary research on daily life in the Moldavian SSR includes works by Moldavian ethnologists who have shed light on various aspects of material and spiritual culture during the Soviet period, viewing these changes as a natural part of society's evolution toward a new social formation: communist society. Among the most important works is that of V. Zelenciuc and L. Loskutova*, New Holidays, Customs, and Rituals* (Zelenciuc, Loskutova, 1986). Alongside valuable scholarly works by ethnographers from the Moldavian SSR, historiography also includes those aligned with the pro-Soviet current, where the identity policies promoted by the Soviets are scientifically justified. An overview of daily life in the Moldavian SSR during its final two decades is provided by L. Prisac and N. Grădinaru in the article *"Dimensions of Soviet Daily Life in the Moldavian SSR*," with an emphasis on describing and analysing ceremonial manifestations from the Soviet period within the context of family customs (Prisac, Grădinaru 2019, pp. 703–723). Other researchers have investigated various themes concerning the impact of policies promoted in the Moldavian SSR on traditions, festivities, and daily life, publishing works on topics such as the Sovietization of daily life in the Moldavian SSR, the activities of children's organizations, the values of Soviet childhood, the registration of marriages and births in the Moldavian SSR, the role of teaching materials in the formation of Soviet identity, and daily life in the Moldavian SSR as seen through photography as a historical document (Șișcanu, E., 2009, pp. 409–421, Reșetnic, 2020, pp. 177–184, Dolghi, 2022, p. 515).

Studies on Soviet childhood have seen significant development since 1991, with numerous works highlighting various aspects of Soviet childhood authored by

researchers from the former Soviet space and the West. Relevant to research on Soviet childhood is the study *Childhood Training* by the English researcher Geoffrey Gorer, which highlights a series of issues concerning childhood in the early decades of Soviet rule in Russia (Gorer 2001). Sheila Fitzpatrick, in her work *Everyday Stalinism*, addresses several aspects of children's lives, covering topics such as neglected children, homeless children, juvenile delinquents, parent-child relationships, the concept of "blameable childhood," and children's legal liability for their parents' actions. Catriona Kelly has dedicated a series of works to Soviet childhood, in which she examines the daily lives of children in the school environment and certain aspects of gender relations (Келли 2003a; Келли 2003b; Келли 2004). Researcher A. Salnikova's book *Childhood in Russia in the 20th Century* offers a comprehensive overview, covering aspects of history and gender relations, social values, and symbolism, with the author examining official and unofficial documents, as well as children's texts steeped in *Soviet ideology* (Salnikova, 2007).

In her book *Țară, țară, vrem ostași! Despre copilărie, în comunism (Country, Country, We Want Soldiers! About Childhood Under Communism),* examines the daily lives of children in Socialist Romania from two complementary perspectives: the reconstruction of the ideological and institutional framework of childhood and the capture of concrete experiences through memoirs and oral history (Dumănescu, 2015). T. Smirnova, in her work *Children of the Land of the Soviets: From State Policy to the Realities of Daily Life*, addresses important issues of Soviet childhood from 1918 to 1941, analysing the alignment of the Soviet state's policy on the protection of motherhood and children with the realities of the time (Смирнова, 2015). The study *Childhood in Soviet Moldova: (1924–1961): A Historical-Anthropological Investigation of Childhood on the Periphery of the Empire* represents a reconstruction of childhood affected by Sovietization in the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) and the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) during the years 1924–1961, examining the Soviet child and childhood from a historical-anthropological perspective within the context of socio-economic, political, and cultural realities (Dolghi, 2022).

The research on daily life in the Moldavian SSR during the years 1944–1961 was based on a wide and varied range of sources: *unpublished archival documents, published documents, collections of statistical and sociological data, contemporary press, memoirs, oral history research, unpublished visual sources from archives, museums, and field collections, and objects of material culture preserved* in national, regional, and local museums in the Republic of Moldova.

The fonds F. A-7, A-12, A-278, F. A-31, A-49, F. A-51, R-2848, R-2854, R-2857, R-2991, R-2993, 3033, R-3087 of the National Archives Agency comprise a rich collection of documents reflecting daily life in the Moldavian SSR across various localities and social environments, including official documents, complaints, reports, letters, etc., offering a comprehensive perspective on social, economic, and administrative conditions. *The collections* of *the Archives of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova* and those of *the IPC's internal archives* include a significant volume of documents and reports resulting from ethnographic field expeditions conducted by ethnographers in the

postwar period, containing detailed information on material and spiritual culture, rural life, the functioning of collective farms, as well as the new Soviet holidays. A series of documents and photographs preserved in *the archives of the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History and the Museum of History and Ethnography in the city of Soroca* have rounded out the picture of the researched topics.

Of enormous importance are *the collections of documents* illustrating the Soviet state's policies in the areas of the national economy, social life, education, and children's and youth organisations (Государственно-правовые акты МССР, 1963; Декреты Советской власти, 1957; КПСС в резолюциях, 1953; Культура Молдавии, 1975; Культура Молдавии, 1976; Культура Молдавии, 1984; Хронологическое собрание законов Молдавской ССР, 1960). *Collections of documents* published in the years following the proclamation of the Republic of Moldova's independence represent important sources for researching various aspects of daily life. The volumes *Orthodoxy in Moldova: Power, the Church, the Faithful* contain documents illustrating aspects of daily life in the Moldavian SSR, policy toward the Church, society's relationship with the Church, and the religiosity of the population (Пасат, 2009; Пасат, 2010). The volume *Letters to Stalin or the Confessions of the Occupied* contains letters addressed to Stalin by peasants who described their social status, daily problems, etc. (Ţăranu, M., 2014). The volume of documents *Famine in Soviet Moldova* represents an essential historical source for understanding one of the most dramatic episodes in the contemporary history of Bessarabia (Ţăranu, A., 2017). The documents included in the volume *Soviet Purgatory in Bessarabia: Directives, Orders, and Instructions of the NKGB-MGB, 1944–1946* reflect a daily life dominated by political control and constant fear (Malacenco, Rotaru, 2022). The collection *Daily Life in the Moldavian SSR: (1944–1961)* contains 193 documents selected from the ANA archives that depict daily life (Dolghi, 2024). *Collections of statistical and sociological data* in research on daily life in the Moldavian SSR are tools that structure and validate historical reconstruction. The most relevant statistical compilations used are *The Moldavian SSR in statistics* (Молдавская ССР в цифрах, 1974) and *the National Economy of the Moldavian SSR* (Народное хозяйство МССР, 1956, 1957, 1961, 1965, 1975, 1978).

Memoirs are an important category of sources that provide insight into aspects not reflected in official documents. I. Bodiul's memoirs address specific aspects of rural and urban life, including the hardships of poverty, the effects of collectivisation, peasant resistance, and Soviet education and culture in the Moldavian SSR (Бодюл, 2001). M. Snegur's memoirs offer a personal perspective on aspects that defined the lives of the population, especially in rural areas, shedding light on village life (Snegur, 2007). B. Vasiliev's memoirs provide sad details about childhood and daily life in the Moldavian SSR (Vasiliev, 2012). *Oral history research* encompasses various interview methods and structures, aimed at revealing objective aspects of historical processes as well as subjective attitudes toward them. *The book of The Famine* contains information about aspects of life in Bessarabian society, including that of children, during the famine (Turea, 2008). The *Arhivele Memoriei* series comprises interviews and testimonies that bring to the forefront the personal experiences of victims of political repression (Arhivele memoriei, 2016, 2019).

The periodicals of the Moldavian SSR from 1944 to 1961 offer a complex and nuanced picture of daily life in the Moldavian SSR, capturing ideological propaganda, people's hardships, the effects of the famine, repressions, and working conditions. The magazine *Femeia Moldovei* contains numerous articles on women's activities in various organisations and enterprises, on civic engagement, families, and children's education. *Moldova Socialistă* and *Советская Молдавия* served as important sources for understanding local and national events. The magazine *Scânteia Leninistă* was intended for pioneers and reflects their daily activities during the period under study, as well as the ideological impact on the younger generation.

Unpublished visual sources from archives, museums, and field collections constitute an essential research tool, playing a significant role in documenting and visualising reality. The photographs used in research on daily life fall into two categories: official photographs found in archives and museums, and photographs from personal and family archives (Dolghi, 2025). *The universe of material objects* constitutes a source for research on daily life in the Moldavian SSR. The material culture of everyday Soviet life in the Moldavian SSR during the period 1944–1961 represents an essential source for reconstructing daily life, with museum artefacts reflecting social upheavals, material shortages, and the population's adaptation to a centrally controlled system.

Chapter 2–*Daily Life in the Context* of *the Sovietization of Society*–examines the complex impact of the Sovietization process on the daily lives of the population, including the following aspects: the realities of daily life during the reestablishment of Soviet power, the consequences of fiscal policy; the rationing of food and consumer goods through the ration card system and the process of collectivization.

Sovietization had certain characteristics, being implemented through various mechanisms and agents. The Sovietization of daily life unfolded through multiple key mechanisms: the implementation of Soviet legislation on the territory of the Moldavian SSR, the establishment of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks) in Moldova and the recruitment of the population into its structures, the creation of a Soviet-style administration, the replacement of the education system with a Soviet-style one, the establishment of a command economy through the nationalization of enterprises, the collectivization of agricultural enterprises, repression and deportations as instruments of social engineering, as well as propaganda promoting the construction of communism according to ideological templates.

The nomenclature (state and party officials) played a key role in the process of Sovietization of Moldovan society, serving as a decisive instrument in the establishment and consolidation of Soviet power. Documents show that the Sovietization of the Moldavian SSR was carried out primarily through the use of non-native populations, "specialists," and party and state officials from other union republics–a policy intended to weaken the potential resistance of the local population and ensure the unconditional implementation of directives from the centre. In 1944, after the restoration of Soviet power, 4,418 officials and specialists returned to the republic from evacuation, and the Cadres Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of the Soviet Union had sent 558 people to the disposal of the Communist Party

(Bolsheviks) of Moldova by February 1, 1945 (Pasat, 2019, p. 104). The CP(b)M experienced rapid expansion, with membership rising from 5,649 on January 1, 1945, to 17,207 on January 1, 1947, primarily through the transfer of Communist cadres from the USSR. Ethnically, the composition of the PC(b)M as of July 1, 1948, reflected a profound imbalance: Russians accounted for 55.4% of party members and 47.1% of candidates, Ukrainians constituted 22.1% and 21.4%, respectively, while Moldovans, despite being on their own territory, constituted only 7.1% of party members and 13.0% of alternate members (Memei, 2014, pp. 697–698). Statistical data from July 1, 1948, show that Moldovans accounted for only 32.9% of all officials in the local nomenclature, although they constituted 68.8% of the population of the Moldavian SSR in 1941 (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 7, d. 256, f. 3–67). This discrepancy reflected the Soviet authorities' distrust of the local population, considered suspect because it "had been under German-Romanian occupation for 22 years," and the deliberate policy of marginalising the native population from the structures of power. Officials from other regions of the USSR were unfamiliar with the language, culture, and traditions of the local population, and in the context of an acute shortage of specialised personnel, unsuitable individuals without adequate training were appointed to positions, exhibiting degrading and abusive behaviour.

The immediate impact of the restoration of Soviet power on the lives and living conditions of the population of the Moldavian SSR was dramatic. The entry of the Red Army into Bessarabia and the restoration of Soviet power had immediate and dramatic consequences for the civilian population. In the first half of 1944, Bessarabia was traversed by armies and military units of the 2nd Ukrainian Front, and the military troops met their needs for food and industrial goods at the expense of the civilian population, committing numerous abuses, looting, illegal confiscations, and destruction of property. In Soroca County, in May 1944, Soviet troops, including NKVD and NKGB officers, committed numerous abuses against the local population, confiscating personal property without issuing receipts or following any formal procedure (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 2, d. 40, f. 7–11).

In 1944, the NKVD and NKGB carried out intense repressive activities against the Romanian population of the Moldavian SSR to consolidate Soviet control and eliminate any form of opposition. The NKGB directives of May 1944 provided for the recruitment of agents "with care" and "after a detailed check," the arrest of "anti-Soviet elements" suspected of terrorism and sabotage, as well as the confiscation of any "anti-Soviet" literature (Malacenco, Rotaru, 2022, pp. 40–43, 47–49, 53–54). In addition to direct violence, the population was subjected to forced resettlement: in the context of the Iași–Chișinău operation in the summer of 1944, Soviet authorities initiated a large-scale process of relocating over 256,000 residents from the central districts of the Moldavian SSR to the northern districts of the Moldavian SSR, a process in which between 40% and 60% of their property was confiscated or stolen (Șevcenco, 2022, p. 10). In Moldavian SSR localities located near the Red Army units' routes, there were numerous cases of looting, plundering, and hooliganism. Documents attest to systematic thefts of food, livestock, and wine, as well as acts of violence committed by Soviet soldiers, including instances where fire was opened on the civilian population (ANA, F. A-51,

inv. 2. d. 40, f. 31–39). The Commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Moldova, which investigated in August 1944 the looting and destruction committed by soldiers of the 2nd Ukrainian Front in the evacuated villages of the Bălți and Orhei counties, found that in the village of Lucăceni, Sculeni district, approximately 90% of the residential houses had been vandalized, windows and window sills removed, doors and floors broken, and the belongings left behind by the peasants had been stolen (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 2, d. 40, f. 47–52). Schools and churches were not spared; in the villages of Horești and Bocșa, churches were looted and desecrated by soldiers, icons were torn from the walls, the altar was defiled, and the crypts were opened. The commission concluded that the command staff of the 2nd Ukrainian Front had failed to protect the peasants' property.

Survival, adaptation, and resilience among the rural population affected by fiscal policy were central aspects of daily life in the Moldavian SSR. The population of the Moldavian SSR, in the postwar years, was subject to the Soviet tax system, with residents forced to pay excessive taxes in kind and in cash, and methods of confiscation relying on coercion and forced requisitioning (Țăranu, M., 2018, pp. 91–97). On April 17, 1944, the Central Committee of the Moldavian SSR adopted Resolution No. 7 "On the mandatory surrender to the state of wheat, corn, sunflowers, and soybeans in the liberated districts and counties of the Moldavian SSR from the 1943 harvest," establishing differentiated quotas based on the size of the farm (ANA, F. R-2848 inv. 11 d. 19, f. 41–43). The document required every "kolkhoz farm" and every individual peasant household to deliver meat and eggs to the state, regardless of whether they owned livestock or poultry, milk if they had a cow, and wool if they had sheep and goats, with delivery deadlines staggered throughout the agricultural season (ANA, F. R-2848 inv. 11 d. 19, f. 49–53). Collective farmers, peasants, and other citizens who failed to fulfill their delivery obligations within the established terms were held accountable in accordance with Resolution No. 1882 of November 34, 1942, which provided for the imposition of a fine of up to double the value of the undelivered products and the confiscation in kind of the unpaid portion of the obligation (Resolution, 1942).

The requisitioning process was organised by local authorities through the republican office of ZAGOTZERNO and district representatives, and was marked by significant organisational shortcomings, cases of embezzlement, and inefficient management (ANA, F. A-12, inv. 1, d. 172, f. 7–19). Collection methods involved intimidation, searches, and arrests of peasants. For example, in the villages of Cunicea and Ursoaia, serious abuses were reported regarding the forced delivery of grain to the state, with peasants being compelled to surrender nearly their entire harvest, leaving them without food for their families (Țăranu, M., 2014, pp. 84–85). In the Glodeni district, the district representative of the Ministry of Collection and the propagandist of the District Party Committee resorted to coercive and violent methods to ensure the fulfilment of the plans, including illegal searches, confiscation of property, and arbitrary arrests (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 5, d. 152, f. 263–265). The forced and illegal requisitioning of grain was carried out by special brigades composed of representatives of the district administration and local activists. The first cases occurred between 1945 and early 1946 in the counties of Chișinău, Orhei, and Cahul, with the phenomenon intensifying

massively from the summer of 1946. In Bender County, the first secretary of the Olănești District Committee, Șarapov, organised raids in August 1946 in the villages of Tudora and Slobozia, where Komsomol members searched households and even confiscated food prepared for consumption, with the victims being both wealthy and poor peasants, including the families of those who had fallen at the front (Cașu, 2015, pp. 201–202). These abuses provoked resistance from the peasants, who in some localities attacked the activists involved, even resorting to firearms against the requisitioning brigades.

In the summer and fall of 1946, the authorities of the Moldavian SSR did not prioritise saving the population from famine, but rather fulfilling the grain collection plans at any cost. The resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of the USSR dated November 30, 1946, regarding grain collections in the Moldavian SSR imposed drastic measures, prompting local authorities to intensify pressure on village officials, who, in turn, stepped up searches of peasant households. As a result, the number of households sued for failure to meet mandatory quotas increased significantly, reaching 5,121 in 1946, with most peasant families being completely deprived of food reserves (Țaranu, A., 2016, pp. 117–125). The fiscal and repressive pressure on the population became unbearable. In the fall of 1947, peasants from the village of Gherman, Sculeni District, Bălți County, sent a complaint to the leadership of the Communist Party of Moldova (PC(b)), denouncing the abuses and violence of local officials who, under the influence of alcohol, roamed the villages intimidating and mistreating the population, locking up those who could not meet the established quotas in the cellars of the village Soviet ( ), where they were subjected to torture (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 5, d. 155, f. 50). The activities of the ZAGOTZERNO offices in the Cotiujeni district in 1947 were characterized by the exclusive use of coercive and violent methods, with villages organized into sectors led by chiefs who handled requisitioning, and peasants were summoned at night and subjected to intense pressure to hand over their quotas of agricultural and food products (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 5, d. 181, f. 102–108). In 1948, the Soviet authorities instituted a rigid system of compulsory deliveries, with the plan stipulating the delivery of meat, milk, eggs, and other products with differentiated quotas for collective farms and individual households (ANA, F. R-2848, inv. 11, d. 200, 33–36). In 1947–1948, the Soviet authorities carried out an abusive process of identifying and taxing agricultural households, using arbitrary criteria to classify them as "kulaks."

Peasants expressed their dissatisfaction with excessive taxation in letters to the leadership of the Moldavian SSR and to Stalin himself, accounts that demonstrate that the tax burden did not take into account economic realities or their ability to pay. NKGB officers interpreted the peasants' expressions of discontent as sabotage and opposition, undertaking actions to repress "hostile elements" and engaging in the enforcement of tax payments through repressive methods (Malacenco, Rotaru, pp. 112, 412). The collectivisation process proceeded slowly between 1944 and 1948, took on a mass character in 1949 following the deportations of July 6–9, when the rate reached about 80%, and by 1951 it was complete, so that the mandatory deliveries to the state beginning in 1949 pertained primarily to kolkhozes. After the September 1953 Plenum

of the Central Committee of the CPSU, the mandatory quotas for the delivery of agricultural products were reduced for kolkhozes, and in 1958, mandatory deliveries were completely abolished and replaced with state purchases against payment.

The supply of food and consumer goods through the ration card system played a special role. On May 10, 1944, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) instructed the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Moldova to introduce the ration card system in the Moldavian SSR, under which residents of cities and district centres purchased bread and other food products daily: workers were provided with 500 grams of bread per day, civil servants with 400 grams, persons unable to work who were dependents, children, and mothers with children up to 8 years of age with 300 grams (Țăranu, M., 2018). The food ration card system was implemented as a measure to control food distribution during times of scarcity; the cards were used to regulate access to basic goods such as bread, meat, milk, and other essential foods, as well as to certain essential industrial goods. The ration cards were issued by the municipal or district ration card distribution office. Ration cards were documents granting the right to purchase certain quantities of goods at regulated prices, known as "ration prices," issued only to those working in the state sector, excluding peasants and individuals without political rights, which excluded over 80% of the population (Молдавская ССР в цифрах, 1974, p. 16). The system was intended to prevent waste and ensure equitable distribution, but documents attest to the unequal or fraudulent distribution of ration cards. In May 1945, Soviet authorities identified fraud in the distribution of special food ration cards within GOSPLAN, leading to the adoption of a resolution that mandated the sanctioning of those responsible and required institutional leaders to strictly adhere to the issuance regulations (ANA, F. R-2857, inv. 1, d. 2, f. 194). Inspections uncovered cases where ration card offices had unjustifiably increased the number of food ration cards; between March and September 1946, the number was increased by 21,054 in villages (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 5, d. 594, f. 25–29).

Members of the nomenclature and management personnel received special food ration cards called "letter cards" of Category I (Letter "A"), Category II (Letter "B"), and Category III (Letter "V"), which differed in the quantity and quality of the products, the range of products including delicacies of the time and scarce foodstuffs purchased at state-set prices. According to provisions issued by the CCP, management personnel were entitled to hot meals served in closed-type canteens intended exclusively for them; Category I nomenclature members received meals three times a day, while those in lower categories received hot meals twice a day (ANA, F. R-2848 inv. 11 d. 30, f. 1). The top nomenclature received a food package that included meat, fish, fats, sugar, and other consumer goods distributed according to category; for those in Category I, the supply norms included 33 kg of meat per month, 38.5 kg of bread, and 13 kg of sugar, for a total of 19 types of products (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 4, d. 427, f. 1).

Restricting and limiting access to food through the ration card system exacerbated the situation of the population not employed by state organisations and institutions, who, lacking access to ration cards for bread or other products, suffered from malnutrition and hunger. A key factor in triggering and exacerbating the famine of 1946–1947 in the Moldavian SSR was that access to food distributed via ration cards was restricted, being

intended only for the urban population and those employed by state institutions and organisations, and not for the rural population as a whole. Even in institutions and enterprises where employees received food ration cards, the rations for workers were small, which is why they too suffered from malnutrition; for example, at Printing House No. 1 in Chișinău, out of 223 workers, 60 people were "thin and emaciated," requiring supplementary food and "commercial bread" (ANA, F. A-12. inv. 1. d. 282, f. 15–20). V. F. Zima estimates that approximately 100 million people suffered as a result of the postwar famine in the USSR, and that in total, between 1946 and 1948, approximately 2 million people died of famine and related illnesses throughout the USSR (Zima, 1996, p. 11), in the Moldavian SSR, according to data from the Commission for the Condemnation of Communist Crimes, approximately 350,000 people died during the famine (Analytical Report of the Commission, 2010). The abolition of the ration card system was initially planned for the end of 1946, but was postponed. On December 14, 1947, the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of the entire Union "On the Implementation of Monetary Reform and the Abolition of Food and Industrial Ration Cards" was published, according to which prices for most goods remained at the same level, but prices for bread, flour, cereals, and pasta were reduced by 10–12%, while prices for milk, tea, fruit, eggs, and certain industrial goods were increased (Беловинский, 2015, pp. 312–313). Campaigns were conducted to explain the decision, and concerns regarding the cancellation of ration cards and monetary reform were mitigated; in the first weeks and months, there was a severe shortage of goods, and sellers continued to distribute them via ration lists (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 5, d. 181, f. 143–145).

The transformation of rural daily life in the Moldavian SSR under the impact of collectivisation constituted a large-scale attempt at social engineering initiated by the Communist Party; this process marked not only a change in the rural economic structure but also the beginning of the mass terror characteristic of the Stalinist regime, with a major impact on daily life. On August 15, 1940, the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union adopted the Decree "On the Restoration of the Validity of Soviet Laws on Land Nationalisation in the Territory of Bessarabia," declaring the entire land fund of Bessarabia the property of the Soviet state (Șișcanu, 2019, pp. 567–581). The first kolkhozes in the Moldavian SSR were organised on agricultural lands that had previously belonged to German settlers, and by June 19, 1941, 120 kolkhozes were already operating in the villages of Bessarabia's six counties, encompassing 16,244 households; however, the process was interrupted on June 22, 1941. After the reoccupation of Bessarabia and the restoration of the Moldavian SSR, the kolkhozes were reestablished only in the territories on the left bank of the Dniester. As of January 1, 1946, there were 227 collective farms comprising 45,300 households, representing approximately 9% of the peasant households in the entire republic, and 56 state farms. In the spring of 1946, several collective farms were reestablished and newly established, and by the end of 1946, there were 93 agricultural cooperatives in the districts on the right bank of the Dniester, of which 45 were reestablished and 48 were created from

scratch, bringing together 11,800 peasant households, representing 2.6% of the total (История народного хозяйства Молдавской ССР, 1974, p. 257).

The collectivisation process accelerated in the fall of 1946. The procedure for joining a kolkhoz involved writing an application addressed to the kolkhoz administration, in which the applicant requested acceptance and listed the assets he was offering to the agricultural cooperative: arable land, draft animals, cattle, and agricultural tools (Soroca Museum, Materials, 1947, f. 3). Applications were reviewed at the kolkhoz General Assembly, which voted on whether to admit the peasant into the ranks of the kolkhoz members; a member of the presidium could criticize the applicant, accusing them of being a kulak or of employing day laborers–acts that could constitute grounds for refusal. Fear was the decisive factor that led peasants to surrender their property and join the kolkhoz, because alongside the launch of the collectivisation process, propaganda was carried out through all means regarding the class struggle against exploiters and capitalist elements–the kulaks–a struggle that entailed repressive actions against those labelled as such and their deportation. The fiscal, administrative, psychological, and physical pressures exerted on peasants to force them to join the kolkhoz are evidenced by numerous testimonies and documents. In the fall of 1947, a group of peasants from the village of Gherman filed a complaint with the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (Bolsheviks), denouncing the pressure exerted on peasants to join the collective farm, noting that local officials were forcing them to make a choice: either they accepted collectivization, or they were forced to hand over their entire agricultural production, after which they were detained in cellars for 2–3 days (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 5, d. 155, f. 50). Among the coercive methods were the arbitrary labeling of peasant households as "kulaks," which entailed the loss of the right to join a kolkhoz, or expulsion from the kolkhoz if they had already joined, and the imposition of enormous taxes that made economic survival impossible (Ţăranu M., 2014, pp. 108–109). The documents contain numerous such cases reflecting the general state of affairs in the Moldavian SSR.

Following the decisions taken at the 17th Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Moldova (Bolsheviks) in, November 2–4, 1948, propaganda for the establishment of collective farms intensified, and by March 1949, 858 households considered kulaks had been excluded from the agricultural artels. The Second Congress of the Communist Party of Moldova (Bolsheviks) in February 1949 reaffirmed the policy of socialist restructuring of agriculture, acknowledging shortcomings in the organisation of collective farms and calling for intensified propaganda and a more resolute fight against the resistance of the wealthy peasantry. On April 6, 1949, the Resolution of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of the USSR regarding deportation from the Moldavian SSR was adopted, and on June 28, 1949, the Council of Ministers adopted the Resolution regarding the deportation of kulaks, former landowners, major merchants, and their families. The deportation took place on the night of July 5–6, 1949, with 11,281 families being "de-kulakized," the total number of forcibly displaced persons amounting to 35,796, including 11,889 children, 14,033 women, and 9,864 men. During 1949, the percentage of households that joined the kolkhoz rose from

19.8% to 80.8% by January 1, 1950, and to 97.5% by January 1, 1951 (История народного хозяйства Молдавской ССР, 1974, p. 272). In a very short time, literally in just a few days, the number of collective farms and cooperative farmers increased significantly (Pasat, 2011, p. 348). By 1950, the collectivisation process in the Moldavian SSR was largely complete, with agriculture becoming almost entirely collectivised. As of January 1, 1951, 1,636 kolkhozes were operating in the Moldavian SSR, comprising 468,422 peasant households, with approximately 228,000 able-bodied men, 466,000 women, and 125,000 adolescents integrated into them. As of November 1, 1951, there were officially 863 non-collectivised individual peasant households registered in 50 districts on the right bank of the Dniester, on which an increased agricultural tax averaging 676 Rubles was imposed (Pasat V, 2011, p. 362). Forced to join the kolkhozes, the peasants displayed a negligent attitude toward work, and participation in communal labour was low in 1950 (Vizer, 2012, p.114).

The rapid pace of collectivisation in 1949–1950 and the massive participation of peasants in kolkhozes were largely driven by fear; the severe repression inflicted on villagers discouraged Moldovan peasants from resisting and compelled them to join in the hope of protecting their families. The completion of collectivisation meant the establishment of new socio-economic relations in rural areas, the establishment of collective–in fact, state–ownership of land and the means of production, with these processes bringing about fundamental changes in the daily lives of the population.

In **Chapter 3**–***Everyday Social Space in the Context of Postwar Economic and Political Realities***–the mechanisms through which the Soviet regime reshaped everyday social space were investigated, analysing the complex interconnections between totalitarian economic policies, demographic transformations, and their impact on the daily lives of the population. Furthermore, the complexity of everyday life in the Moldavian SSR in the postwar years was reconstructed.

Social and demographic changes in the Moldavian SSR during the period under study reveal three distinct phases. Starting at 2.47 million inhabitants in 1940, the population declined dramatically by 1946, reaching 2.18 million–a loss of approximately 284,000 people. This sharp demographic contraction was a direct consequence of the devastation of World War II and the famine of 1946–1947. After 1947, the population entered a phase of gradual recovery, reaching 3.04 million in 1961, representing a 39% increase from the postwar low.

Urbanisation in the Moldavian SSR was characterised by two fundamental features: the steady absolute growth of the urban population and the persistence of a structural gap relative to the Soviet average. In numerical terms, the urban population doubled, from 331,500 in 1940 to 724,700 in 1961. However, in percentage terms, the increase was much more modest, from 13% to 24% of the urban population in 1961, with a difference of only 11% over the course of two decades. Compared to the Soviet Union's overall trend, where urbanisation rose from 32.5% in 1940 to 49.8% in 1961, the Moldavian SSR consistently lagged behind this trend by approximately 25–26% (Dolghi, 2025a, p. 148). In 1961, while the Soviet Union was approaching the symbolic threshold of a predominantly urban society, the Moldavian SSR remained a predominantly rural region, with three-quarters of the population living in villages. This

modest growth can be explained by the fact that the industrialisation of the Moldavian SSR was primarily oriented toward the processing of agricultural products, and the republic's cities absorbed a large number of migrants from other republics, particularly from the Russian SFSR and the Ukrainian SSR. During this period, the Moldavian SSR represented an agrarian periphery within the Soviet economy, supplying agricultural products but remaining outside the main wave of industrialisation and urbanisation occurring in other republics.

The increase in the total number of workers and civil servants in the Moldavian SSR from 95,500 in 1940 to 298,300 in 1952 was driven by the mechanisms of the planned economy, characterised by accelerated industrialisation and the expansion of the bureaucratic apparatus, the redistribution of the labour force, and centralised control. In the construction sector, there was an increase in the number of workers, from 1,200 in 1940 to 28,300 in 1958. This increase was driven by the need to build industrial and urban infrastructure, as well as by major state projects imposed from the centre. The use of a forcibly recruited workforce underscored the coercive nature of the Soviet economy's development. The sector of state administration and economic organisations saw growth, with the number of civil servants rising to 20,400 in 1952 and then falling to 12,300 in 1958. This phenomenon can be interpreted as an attempt to streamline the administrative apparatus following the postwar period of institutional consolidation. Education and health care underwent significant expansion, with increases in staff to 50,800 in education and 32,200 in health care by 1958.

According to the 1959 Census, the overwhelming majority of the working population consisted of collective farmers, accounting for 67.5% of the total. Industrial workers accounted for 21.9% of the population, and civil servants for only 10.1%. Looking specifically at urban areas, the picture is almost entirely reversed. Workers made up over half of the urban working-age population, 59.5%, reflecting the concentration of factories, workshops, and industrial facilities. Civil servants accounted for 29.2% of the urban working-age population, a figure that underscores the central role of the bureaucratic apparatus, educational and cultural institutions, and service sectors in urban life. Colkhozniks in urban areas were a minority, accounting for only 10.7%. The traditional core of the Moldavian SSR was found in rural areas: kolkhozniks accounted for 83.7% of the rural population, reflecting not only their numerical predominance but also the local economy's dependence on collective agricultural labour. Workers accounted for only 11.2% of the rural population, and civil servants for 4.7%, figures that reflected the lack of industrial infrastructure and extensive administrative institutions outside the cities (История народного хозяйства Молдавской ССР, 1974, p. 63).

The Moldavian SSR was severely affected by the destruction caused by World War II. Rural areas were devastated, and industrial infrastructure was virtually non-existent. During this period, the economy of the Moldavian SSR was reorganised along Soviet lines, but the reconstruction process was slow and insufficient to meet the needs of the population. The population of the Moldavian SSR lived in conditions of extreme poverty, caused by the repressive economic policies of the Soviet regime. The violence and looting by Soviet occupation troops, the implementation of the ration card system,

and the organised famine of 1946–1947 resulted in the impoverishment of the population, daily difficulties in securing necessities, and the inability to meet vital needs for food, clothing, housing, and living conditions. Over the years, the standard of living of the population of the Moldavian SSR within the USSR, although it was gradually increasing to some extent, remained low, a fact confirmed by statistical documents, various publications, and testimonies from high-ranking leaders. I. Bodiul emphasised this reality by stating that "the people lived poorly, that the USSR's economy had been militarised to the extreme, and that the inadequate resolution of social problems had a negative impact not only on the population's standard of living but also on the economy as a whole. This effect was felt, above all, in our republic, where Group B enterprises–light industry, food processing, manufacturing, and agriculture–predominated" (Vizer, 2012, p. 86; Бодюл, 2001, pp. 183–184, 223). I. Bodiul noted that in the Moldavian SSR, the economy was dominated by sectors considered non-priority in the USSR's economic strategy, which led to underdevelopment, low incomes, and, consequently, a low standard of living.

In 1946–1947, the population of the Moldavian SSR suffered from a chronic food shortage. In some villages, people ate weeds, potato peels, and bran just to survive. Bread, the staple food, was in short supply even for those who received rations through the ration card system, and many did not even have access to those. Food prices were exorbitant, with a kilogram of bread costing as much as 80 Rubles (Turea, 2008, p. 241). Residents of cities and villages lived in squalid conditions. Clothing was worn out and insufficient, and footwear was often lacking. In cities, stores and markets offered only basic goods, and many of these were inaccessible to the majority of the population due to high prices. Many families sold their personal belongings to secure their daily food, and the economy relied on barter and rudimentary exchanges (Turea, 2008, pp. 247–248). Children, the elderly, and the intellectuals of the villages were among those most affected by poverty. Some intellectuals had come to live in unsanitary conditions, sharing overcrowded rooms without even the bare minimum of living resources. Many children were malnourished, which led to serious health problems and high infant mortality (Turea, 2008, pp. 432–442, 382–383, 399). The testimonies sent to the Soviet leader reflect the desperation of people who no longer had the means to feed their families, often being unable to meet the obligations imposed by the state. Dora Belaia of Chișinău described a dramatic situation in 1947: "Our working people are starving to death; we see only what slips through our fingers. Here, all the working people have died; there is no one left to sow..." (Țăranu M., 2014, p. 58). Instead of receiving aid, peasants were forced to hand over their last reserves to the state, leaving their families without food. P. Pușcașu from the village of Măcărești, Nisporeni district, wrote to Stalin in 1950, informing him that his family and children were starving, and that the authorities were forbidding them from harvesting the crop (Țăranu, M., 2014, pp. 398–399). The testimony highlighted the absurdity of Soviet agricultural policies that prevented the population from obtaining food, while their grain was confiscated for export or distribution to other regions of the USSR. Excessive taxation affected not only those considered kulaks, but also the elderly and widows, who could not pay the taxes without selling their last possessions.

Between 1950 and 1958, the standard of living of the population of the Moldavian SSR was characterised by a gradual relative improvement, driven by economic progress, but also by significant inequalities, poverty, and difficulties in ensuring a decent standard of living for the majority of citizens. Industrial production saw considerable growth during this period, with the volume of gross output per capita reaching 133% of the 1950 level by 1958 (История народного хозяйства Молдавской ССР, 1974, pp. 299). However, this growth was not evenly distributed, and collective farmers continued to face precarious living conditions. In 1958, the average per capita consumption of flour and bread was 198.6 kg for industrial workers, compared to just 126.8 kg for collective farmers. Consumption of milk and dairy products was 268.1 kg for industrial workers, compared to 120.2 kg for collective farmers (История народного хозяйства Молдавской ССР, 1974, p. 358). These data suggest that, despite the general increase in production, collective farmers did not enjoy the same living conditions as urban workers, highlighting inequalities in access to food resources. The incomes of collective farmers were significantly lower than those of industrial workers. In 1953, the annual income of a kolkhoz family was 939 Rubles, compared to 1,278 Rubles for workers and civil servants (Vizer, 2012, p. 144). Per capita income in rural areas was far below that of urban dwellers, indicating a disparity between rural and urban areas. The supply and trade system was particularly inefficient in villages. Cooperative stores failed to meet the demand for basic goods, and food and household goods were difficult to obtain. Despite the increase in the number of stores in the Moldavian SSR, from 4,053 in 1950 to 5,996 in 1960, shortages persisted, and many products were available only in cities. The housing of collective farm workers was generally of poor quality, and rural infrastructure remained underdeveloped.

The Culture of Socialist Labour. The daily lives of factory and plant workers in the Moldavian SSR during the postwar years reflected difficult realities, yet were marked by sustained efforts toward reconstruction. Following the massive destruction of the war in 1944, workers became the main pillars of economic recovery. The cities of Chișinău, Bălți, Tiraspol, and Bender were home to the largest number of factories and plants producing food, clothing, footwear, and other goods needed by the Soviet Union. The leadership of the USSR and the Moldovan Communist Party sent tens and hundreds of thousands of workers to Moldova from the Russian SFSR, the Ukrainian SSR, and other regions of the USSR, but especially demobilized Russian and Ukrainian soldiers, as well as rural populations from Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, whose hometowns had been destroyed during the war (Moraru, 1995, p. 417). This composition of the workforce created difficulties in adapting to the new work environment, which resulted in low efficiency and poor quality of work.

Working conditions were often precarious. Inspection reports attest that production areas were poorly ventilated, dirty, and lacked protective equipment. At industrial enterprises, workers faced piles of waste and a lack of sanitation facilities. Low wages, combined with the ration card system, caused major hardships. Workers received insufficient food, and among industrial workers, cases of dystrophy were reported in 1946–1947. Workers' living conditions were often poor. Many lived in rented housing or in overcrowded dormitories, where hygiene was a major problem. In workers'

dormitories, the situation was often unbearable, with a lack of space and essential resources, such as hot water and fuel for heating. Various examples have been documented. In 1947, workers at Printing Plant No. 1 faced extremely difficult living conditions; the plant had no cafeteria, and food was provided through ration cards distributed at a buffet; at the stores assigned to the workers, essential industrial goods such as soap and matches were almost completely absent, and sanitary conditions in the dormitories and at the enterprise were alarming: of 223 workers, 60 suffered from dystrophy and required supplementary nutrition, 23 were at nutrition stations for recuperation, 2 were hospitalized, and one person had died. The financial situation was deplorable, especially for 44% of the employees with low wages, who did not receive other forms of assistance and lacked auxiliary households. Housing conditions were inadequate: most workers lived in rented accommodations, and some were forced to live in rooms within the printing plant, which were considered unsuitable (ANA, F. A-12. inv. 1. d. 282, f. 15–20). Low wages and poor conditions led many workers to return to agricultural work, maintaining close ties with their home villages, which resulted in high labour turnover and a significant outflow of population from urban areas (Pasat, 2011, pp. 392–393). In 1948, out of a total of 2,278 young workers employed in the republic, 1,552, or 68.1%, left their jobs, and in the first three months of 1949, an additional 292 workers, representing 11.1% of the workforce available as of January 1, 1949, quit their jobs (ANA, ANA, F. R-2848 inv. 11 d. 267, f. 14–18).

The situation of female workers at the "Serghei Lazo" Shoe Factory in Chișinău during 1950–1951 reveals a complex picture of their involvement in the postwar Soviet industrial sector, highlighting both their remarkable contributions and the profound contradictions of the Soviet socioeconomic system. In 1950, the factory had 1,384 employees, of whom 741 were women, representing 53.5% of the total. The ethnic distribution of the female workers at the " " highlights the minority status of Moldovan women: Jewish women accounted for 29.1%, Russian women for 28.2%, Moldovan women for only 25.1%, Ukrainian women for 5.9%, and other ethnic groups for 2.2%. This demographic structure reflected the policy of mass recruitment of people from other regions of the Soviet Union at the expense of the local Moldovan population (ANA, F. A-12, inv. 3, d. 55, f. 95–100). Although women constituted a significant majority of the workforce, their access to leadership positions was extremely limited. Of 71 administrative positions, only 20 were held by women, and all-female brigades were virtually non-existent. Female workers were dissatisfied that, although 53.5% of employees were women, there were no all-female brigades, and that there were cases where brigades were composed entirely of women but the brigade leaders were men. The situation reflected structural inequalities perpetuated even under a regime that proclaimed gender equality. In 1950, only 21 women were promoted to management positions, six of whom were Moldovan (ANA, F. A-12, inv. 3, d. 55, f. 95–100).

One of the factory's greatest shortcomings was the inadequate working conditions and the lack of support for the social lives of working women. Many essential facilities were completely absent: a nursing room, heated restrooms, a hygiene room, showers, a cafeteria, or a canteen. Factory management had not built a departmental kindergarten or daycare centre, even though mothers of 410 preschool-aged children worked at the

factory. Among the employees, there were frequent discussions about discrimination against Moldovan women who were not promoted or sent to training courses to advance their careers. In 1950, of the 741 women employed, only 81, or 10.7%, had completed technical training. In the new year of 1951, no training circles were in operation, which meant that the female workers could not improve their qualifications. The lack of childcare facilities placed an additional burden on women, limiting their ability to perform well at work or advance professionally (ANA, F. A-12, inv. 3, d. 55, f. 95–100).

Relations between Soviet authorities and collective farmers in the Moldavian SSR were based on labour obligations and administrative constraints in the absence of real material incentives. The duties of collective farmers were numerous and complex: working in the collective fields, caring for animals owned by the collective, tending to their own animals, and cultivating their personal plots outside of working hours, for which they had to pay taxes and make mandatory deliveries of produce to the state. This aggressive fiscal policy was strictly enforced between 1944 and 1951. Other obligations included road maintenance, the construction of farm buildings, logging, the support of teaching and administrative staff, military service, and participation in collective activities (Колхозная жизнь, 2006, pp. 9–10).

To prevent evasion of these duties, kolkhoz members were deprived of the right to free movement. After the introduction of the passport system in 1934–1935 throughout the Soviet Union, leaving the village was possible only with the permission of the village soviet (Колхозная жизнь, 2006, pp. 9–10). Attempts to evade these obligations were punished with escalating repressive measures, ranging from fines and additional taxes to mass repression. In the Moldavian SSR, repression reached a particularly brutal intensity in the years 1944–1951, culminating in the organised famine and mass deportations of 1949 and 1951.

The incomes of kolkhozniks were considerably lower than those of any other segment of the population. Peasants constituted the poorest and most materially disadvantaged social class. The living conditions of the collective peasantry were determined by their humiliating legal status in society. Kolkhozniks had no annual leave, received no sick pay, there was no paid maternity leave for kolkhoz women, and almost no kolkhoznik received a pension until 1964 (Колхозная жизнь, 2006, pp. 12–13).

The system of remuneration for labour in the Soviet Union's kolkhozes, in effect until 1966, was based on *workdays (trudozile)*, a form of payment in kind used to evaluate and account for the work of kolkhoz peasants. This was established by the Model Statute of the Agricultural Artel, adopted at the Second All-Union Congress of Collective Farmers and approved by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party on February 17, 1935 (Decisions of the Party and the Government, Vol. 2, pp. 519–530). In 1942, a minimum of 100 *workdays* was approved for most kolkhozes, and in some districts this figure reached up to 150 *workdays*. This meant that to avoid legal liability, peasants had to work a certain number of days. Kolkhoz members were paid for their work in kind, most often in the form of grain. However, in 1946, following a poor harvest and the forced requisitioning of bread, many kolkhoz members received nothing

for their labour. Across the USSR in 1946, 75.8% of kolkhozes paid less than 1 kg of grain per *workday*, and 7.7% paid nothing at all (Cf: Zubkova, 1999).

Inspection reports from the Cahul District Executive Committee highlighted systemic deficiencies in the operation of the newly established kolkhozes, reflecting the difficulties of adapting to the Soviet collectivist system. At the "Malenkov" collective farm, inspectors found a lack of production quotas for brigades and work teams, irresponsible management of draft animals and inventory, and weeding work was carried out "in a haphazard manner," disorganised and inefficient. When recording *work hours*, equalisation was practised, and foremen did not fill out the attendance sheets. Of 83 households, 25 held plots 0.5 hectares larger than the permitted norm. Of 144 able-bodied persons, 49 did not meet the minimum work quota, and 6 did not participate at all, two without a valid reason (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 7, d. 357, f. 16–45).

In the spring of 1948, the collective farms in the Ceadâr-Lunga district were facing a severe food and demographic crisis that had brought agricultural activity to a standstill. In the "Kotovski," "30 Years of October," and "Budionny" collective farms in the villages of Gaidar, Tomai, and Beşghioz, agricultural work could not begin due to the inability to provide public food supplies for the exhausted and malnourished peasants (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 7, d. 58, f. 67). According to the "Memorandum on the Acute Need for Food," sent to the Central Committee of the Communist Party on May 1, 1948, the labour force was insufficient because many able-bodied peasants were employed in other sectors. Mechanised tractor brigades were at risk of ceasing operations due to a lack of food, and the number of people suffering from severe malnutrition and dystrophy was rising alarmingly (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 7, d. 58, f. 67).

Collectivisation deprived peasants of the means of production, forcing them to work on kolkhoz lands without direct benefits. The remuneration system was deficient; payment *for workdays* was delayed for months, and abuses by kolkhoz chairmen and foremen–who favoured relatives and discriminated against a significant portion of the members–were frequent (ANA, F. A-12, inv. 3, d. 156, f. 1-9). A 1951 inspection of the collective farms in the Chişinău suburbs identified over 258 cases of illegal occupation of public land, totalling over 58 hectares. The collective farm leadership concealed these irregularities and violated the Statute of Agricultural Artels. Theft was rampant, as peasants sought resources for their families amid conditions of poverty. In 1951, approximately 12–13% of the fruit and grape harvest was stolen from the "Stalin" collective farm; 12 people were prosecuted and 11 were fined (ANA, F. A-12, inv. 3, d. 156, f. 1–9). Work discipline remained low: 78 people failed to meet their minimum *work quotas*, and 16 did not participate at all. In the "25 Years of the Moldavian SSR" collective farm, nearly a quarter of the collective farmers, 24.3%, failed to fulfil their obligations in the second half of the year. An analysis of these situations reveals that the record-keeping and remuneration system in the kolkhozes had serious deficiencies that affected not only transparency and accounting accuracy but also morale and work discipline.

On March 6, 1956, the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Council of Ministers of the USSR adopted a resolution on monthly advance payments and additional remuneration in collective farms (Решения партии и правительства, Т. 4, 1968, p.

92). The decision acknowledged the serious dysfunctions of the collectivised system, in which the distribution of income only at the end of the agricultural year demotivated labour and undermined productivity. The resolution recommended the monthly granting of an advance of at least 25% of the income collected and 50% of the funds received as advances on compulsory delivery contracts. It was not until May 16, 1966, through a resolution of the Central Committee of the CPSU and the Council of Ministers of the USSR, that the introduction, effective July 1, 1966, of a guaranteed payment for the work of kolkhoz workers was provided for, both in cash and in-kind, set-in relation to the corresponding rates for workers in state farms (Решения партии и правительства, T. 4, 1968, p. 125).

Socialist competitions constituted a complex tool for propaganda and labour mobilisation in the Soviet system, aimed at fostering workers' self-sacrifice and demonstrating the superiority of socialism. Initiated by V. Lenin in his work "How to Organise Competition," these contests became a central tenet of communist propaganda. The system operated based on socialist commitments adopted annually at the workers' initiative, inspired by party bodies, involving competitions among individuals, brigades, workshops, and enterprises. Winners received the title of "leader," transferable banners, red flags, and were placed on the honour board (Беловинский, 2015, p. 720).

Work organisation was strictly hierarchical, with centralised planning that often imposed unrealistic production quotas. The Stakhanovite system, exemplified by the legendary figure of Alexei Stakhanov, rewarded workers who significantly exceeded quotas, promoting an exhausting work pace (Fitzpatrick, 2016, pp. 152, 154). Incentives included bonuses, awards, free vacations, and preferential access to scarce goods, while absenteeism and negligence were severely punished with fines, dismissals, or imprisonment. In December 1938, the Stalinist regime established the title of *Hero of Socialist Labour* and the medals *For Bravery in Labour* and *For Outstanding Merits in Labour*, forming a devoted class of Stakhanovite leaders (Рябикин, 1997, 205–206).

In the Moldavian SSR, between 1944 and 1961, socialist competitions were also an important mechanism for mobilising workers and boosting productivity in various economic sectors. On October 18, 1944, the Central Committee of the Moldavian SSR established *the Republican Honour Roll of Agricultural Leaders*. This board, established by a resolution of the CCP of the Moldavian SSR and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Moldova, included the leaders of district and county party and state organizations, requisition organizations, collective farm chairmen, village soviets, and SMT directors, following the submission of proposals by the district and county committees (ANA, F. R-2848 inv. 11 d. 24, f. 1). On May 25, 1944, during the Red Army's reoccupation of Bessarabia and the establishment of communist leadership in Soroca, the first republican socialist competition in the Moldavian SSR was launched. After its conclusion, on November 5, 1944, the CCP of the Moldavian SSR and the CC of the Communist Party of Moldova issued a Resolution on awarding the leaders in agriculture, winners of the socialist competition. The Maramonovca Village Soviet, Târnova District, Soroca County, was nominated as a candidate for *the Transmissible*

Red Banner of the CCP of the Moldavian SSR and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Moldova (ANA, F. R-2848 inv. 11 d. 25, f. 35–37).

To emphasise the commitments made to increase productivity, appeals were drafted and signed, addressed to the leadership of the Soviet Union, specifically to Stalin, viewing this as the ultimate demonstration of loyalty and a surefire method of mobilising the workers' collectives. In parallel with socialist competitions and activities glorifying labour, numerous irregularities were recorded at enterprises that hindered the fulfilment of production plans; efforts were also made to discipline workers (ANA, F. A-12, inv. 1, d. 248, f. 5-6). In practice, socialist competitions were often merely formal, without any real involvement of the workers. There was criticism regarding the lack of transparency in performance evaluations and the fact that not all teams had equal access to the resources needed to compete effectively. Sometimes, commitments were made that were difficult to achieve or unrealistic, which led to ridiculous situations and the modification of plans during implementation or the falsification of results. Documents regarding the activity of industrial enterprises demonstrate that socialist competitions, focusing on the quantity of goods produced, overshadowed quality.

The phenomenon of speculation and the fight against it. The construction of a classless society in the Soviet Union entailed the complete elimination of capitalist elements, transforming any form of free trade into an illegal activity labelled as speculation. The Soviet legal framework defined speculation as the purchase and resale of agricultural products and consumer goods for the purpose of making a profit, this activity being considered a crime that violated the principles of socialist trade, undermined the state monopoly, and harmed consumer interests (Criminal Code of the RSFSR, 1935, p. 43; Criminal Code of the MSSR, 1961; Belovinsky, 2017, p. 455). The official aim of combating speculation was to control price increases and regulate the population's access to certain products. The chronic shortage of consumer goods and the lack of quality products created the conditions for the development of the black market in the MSSR. The planned economic system failed to meet the population's actual demand, generating a large discrepancy between available supply and consumer needs. Administratively set prices, often substantially below the actual value of goods, inevitably stimulated the emergence of a parallel trade with higher prices. The objects of speculation were frequently goods stolen or obtained illegally from state institutions, industrial enterprises, or commercial entities. Practices included the purchase and resale of agricultural and industrial products and livestock, the purchase of grain and flour at reduced prices from collective farms, and the sale of bread at inflated prices in markets (Dolghi 2024, pp. 38–39).

On May 11, 1945, during a meeting of the Organisation and Instruction Section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Moldova (Bolsheviks), the issue of combating food speculation in the markets of Chișinău was discussed. Speakers noted that in 1945, in the Moldavian SSR, speculation was extremely widespread, constituting a major problem both economically and ideologically. According to the transcript, speculation was well-organised through extensive networks of middlemen who controlled the markets and prevented agricultural producers from selling their products directly. Private trade, tolerated within certain limits, allowed large merchants to

accumulate considerable profits. Soviet authorities acknowledged the difficulty of distinguishing between legitimate merchants and speculators, and control mechanisms, including the tax system, proved ineffective (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 3. d. 120, f. 1-21). To combat speculation, special teams of militiamen patrolled the markets daily, attempting to identify and detain sellers who charged prices higher than those officially set. Those caught were arrested on the spot and subjected to rapid interrogations, and the confiscated goods were redistributed through state-run stores as a deterrent. In addition to physical surveillance, the authorities employed administrative methods to curb the phenomenon. Private trade had been drastically restricted, and obtaining permits to sell goods had become a complicated and strictly controlled process. Despite these measures, speculation could not be eliminated due to product shortages; the black market continued to exist, with sellers adapting by concealing their activities and creating clandestine networks (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 3. d. 120, f. 1-21).

The abolition of the ration card system in December 1947 undermined the basis for large-scale speculation, but did not eliminate it. A significant change occurred in 1953, when the USSR Government's decision of April 1 reduced prices for food, clothing, fuel, and construction materials, a measure that curbed the phenomenon of speculation. The adoption of the program to increase the production of consumer goods in August 1953 had an even greater impact (Pyzhikov, 1999, p. 39; Popov, 2000, p. 9). Between 1953 and 1961, the objects of speculation became predominantly scarce or high-quality clothing items brought in from other Soviet regions. Article 154 of the 1961 Criminal Code of the Moldavian SSR provided for severe penalties for speculation, defined as the purchase and resale of goods for profit (Spalatu, Andronic, 2010, pp. 24–28). Penalties ranged from imprisonment for up to two years, with or without confiscation of property, to corrective labour for up to one year and fines of up to 300 Rubles; in cases where speculation was a permanent occupation or involved large quantities, it was punishable by imprisonment for 2 to 7 years with confiscation of property (Уголовный кодекс МССР, 1961).

Chapter 4 – ***Structures of Soviet Daily Life in the Moldavian SSR*** –examines housing provision and living conditions in urban and rural areas, changes in clothing in the context of industrialisation and rapid urbanisation, aspects of daily nutrition in rural areas, the organisation of the public food system, and alcohol consumption as a social phenomenon with profound consequences.

The reoccupation of Bessarabia in 1944 revealed a dire situation regarding the housing stock. Following the withdrawal of Romanian forces from Bessarabia, the destruction caused by the war was massive. On April 10, 1945, the Central Committee of the Moldovan SSR and the Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of Moldova adopted a resolution stating that over 60% of the housing stock and public buildings in Chișinău had been destroyed by German-Romanian forces (ANA, F. A-12, inv. 1, d. 102, f. 32, 20). To remedy this situation, the authorities decided to "densify" housing, limiting the standard to 7 m^2 per person, with some exceptions. Ministries and public institutions were required to restore housing for their staff and provide housing for workers and engineers. A privileged group of individuals was entitled to additional living space: People's Commissars, heads of departments within

the CCP, the First Secretary of the City Party Committee, the Chairman of the City Executive Committee, and other representatives of the nomenclature (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 4, d. 105, ff. 115, 112, 120).

Many people from other Soviet republics were drawn to the opportunity to come to the Moldavian SSR as specialists, to receive preferential treatment in employment and housing, thereby improving their social situation and advancing their careers. However, the number of people who came to the Moldavian SSR in 1944–1946 far exceeded the number of available housing units, and the newcomers often lived in overcrowded or inadequate conditions. Party authorities were forced to reject some applicants' requests, explaining in letters that there was a lack of decent living conditions and vacant positions. The situation worsened in 1947 due to administrative reorganisations that led to the dissolution of counties and an increase in the number of employees in republican institutions, without providing the necessary housing (ANA, F. A-12, inv. 3, d. 55, f. 101–107). Dramatic cases illustrate the abuses committed during this period, including forced evictions and the unlawful seizure of living spaces (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 4, d. 105, ff. 115, 112, 120), and the allocation of housing unfit for habitation (ANA, F. A-12, inv. 3, d. 103, f. 78–80). Between 1944 and 1961, construction proceeded at an uneven pace. Between 1950 and 1954, Chișinău faced serious problems in the construction sector. Only 67% of the 21·000 m^2 plan was completed, leaving approximately 1,000 residents without adequate housing. The technological revolution in construction began in 1948 in Moscow, when the first building made of large panels reduced construction time by 3 to 4 times. Apartment sizes were standardised: 18–22 m² for studios, 24–32 m² for two-bedroom units, and 33–47 m² for three-bedroom units, excluding the kitchen and utility spaces. The industrial method allowed construction time to be reduced to 3–6 months for 4–5-story buildings and approximately one year for those with 8–9 stories (Pilipenko, 2021, pp. 581–582). Between 1949 and 1961, industrial enterprises built workers' neighbourhoods, partially alleviating the housing crisis; however, insufficient resources and poor organisation kept the problem acute. The paradigm shift occurred on November 4, 1955, through Resolution 1871 of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Moldova regarding the elimination of excesses in design and construction, which criticised architects' excessive concern for exterior appearance at the expense of functionality and economic efficiency (Ursu, 2011, p. 168). The Khrushchev administration promoted a housing revolution based on mass production using standardised designs. Auxiliary spaces were reduced to a bare minimum, ceilings were lowered, and costly elements were eliminated. These measures reduced construction time by 75% and costs by 25% (Горлов, 2009, pp. 6–10). Urban development proceeded from the centre toward the periphery. Neighbourhoods such as Botanica, Râșcani, Telecentru, Buiucani, Sculeni, and Muncești were populated with 5-story blocks characterised by structural simplicity, popularly called "boxes" due to their uniform appearance, with the only variation being the colour of the balconies (Nesterova, 2016, p. 97).

The Sovietization of the built environment entailed a radical reconfiguration of the rural landscape through the imposition of standardised designs and the redesign of villages according to the principles of socialist planning. Ethnographic expeditions in

1948 and 1953 documented the transition from traditional houses with haphazard layouts and flexible interior arrangements to standardised dwellings, arranged in orderly rows, with simple facades, large windows uniformly oriented toward the south, and gabled roofs. The complete relocation of some settlements in the Dniester Valley due to the planning of the Dubăsari hydroelectric plant exemplifies the radical nature of these transformations (AAȘM, F. 3, inv. 1, d.102, f. 1–47). In the summer of 1948, a group of ethnographers documented the evolution of construction in the village of Jura and noted the transition from 2-3 room houses to 4-6 room dwellings (AAȘM, F.3, inv.1, d.38, f.1). Building materials evolved from traditional adobe and reed roofs to the intensive use of soft stone (cotileț), slate, and concrete, while the internal layout of dwellings underwent significant changes with the introduction of separate kitchens, improved stoves, and spaces arranged according to urban models. New elements appearing inside homes included Soviet-style furniture, gradually electric lighting, floors painted with industrial paint, industrial furniture, radios, alarm clocks, mirrors, and portraits of I. Stalin and V. Molotov (AAȘM, F. 3, inv. 1, d. 102, f.12). This forced modernisation did not completely eradicate traditional culture, but rather generated a complex dynamic of adaptation and resistance. Peasants retained elements of the traditional organisation of interior space, with handwoven rugs, wooden furniture, and Orthodox icons coexisting alongside portraits of Soviet leaders and radios, reflecting a process of indirect negotiation between old and new social structures rather than a complete replacement.

In the postwar years, the light industry in the Moldavian SSR–which included the production of clothing and footwear–was underdeveloped, and available resources were limited. By the late 1940s, the population faced severe shortages, and access to quality clothing was extremely restricted. Trade and distribution were state-controlled, and the products made available were often of inferior quality. The ration card system, which was extended to include clothing items, further exacerbated the shortage of clothes and shoes. In July 1945, Rîndin, director of the Chișinău Bread Combine, appealed to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Moldova (B) for assistance in purchasing clothing and footwear for his family and furnishing his apartment. The Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Moldova ordered the secretary for trade to verify his living conditions. It was found that the petitioner's financial situation was good and that, in the first half of 1945, he had already been granted several items from the gifts of the American people: a pair of boots, a jacket, a pair of trousers, a women's dress, children's clothing, and from the stores of the City Trade Department, he was issued a pair of boots, a women's dress, and 8 meters of cotton fabric (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 3, d. 412, f. 107). The dire situation regarding clothing in 1947 is evident in a letter addressed to Stalin by teachers Ignatieva, Pronin, and Lebedeva from the Moldavian SSR, who complained about the lack of adequate clothing and footwear for teachers and denounced abuses by retail officials (Țăranu M., 2014, p. 57). In urban areas, the population had access to a greater variety of clothing compared to rural areas. State-run stores offered clothing items, although their quality and variety were often limited. Urban fashion was characterised by a limited aesthetic, influenced by propaganda and communist ideals. Clothes were often simple and functional, made of cotton, wool, and silk. Starting in 1948, the principle of centralised organisation in the production of

fashionable clothing was imposed on the socialist countries of Eastern Europe through political means. It was claimed that socialist clothing–functional and simple, devoid of class distinctions–would be created based on scientific and technical data. In reality, the clothing available in stores was of poor quality, with an unsatisfactory and outdated appearance. Economists at the Ministry of State Planning calculated the rational consumption norm. According to their calculations, all Soviet citizens were supposed to consume the same amount of clothing and footwear until they were completely worn out, that is, without the influence of fashion (Zakharova, 2007, p. 59). The fashion style of the second half of the 1950s was characterised by a uniform aesthetic, with an emphasis on simplicity and practicality. Women wore long dresses, often with a high waist, while men among the intellectuals and civil servants opted for simple suits with ties. The predominant colour was often dark, and the designs were simple, without embellishments.

Reports from ethnographic expeditions document changes in the clothing of the rural population. Hand-woven linen garments had almost completely disappeared by the eve of World War II. They were replaced by modern clothing made from industrially produced fabrics, such as cotton, wool, silk, and broadcloth. As for footwear, opinci were rarely seen, being worn mainly by the elderly during work. In contrast, calos became more widespread among the population, having previously been accessible only to the wealthiest (AAȘM, fonds 3, inventory 1, file 38, f. 2–3). In 1957, researchers who conducted expeditions in the central and northern districts of the republic–Orhei District (the villages of Trebujeni, Mașcăuți, and Butuceni), Brătușeni District (the village of Zăicani), and Camenca District (the villages of Podoima and Podoimița) – observed that "traditional Moldovan" attire, for both men and women, had undergone notable changes, with many elements disappearing or being replaced by modern clothing. Traditional men's attire, characterised by a white shirt worn on the outside and white trousers, had almost completely disappeared. In women's attire, the *catrința*, a traditional woollen skirt once widespread throughout all districts of Bessarabia, was already on the verge of extinction by the 1950s, being found mainly in the northern districts. The skirts worn were, as a rule, very wide, gathered in pleats: tight skirts get in the way of work, the locals explained (Zelenciuc, 1957, f. 3). Modern-style clothing has retained many national features. Clothing sewn in the village retained many characteristics of traditional tailoring. Among these features is a design element such as *the platka*. This was sewn onto dresses, blouses, and even men's shirts. Traditional features continue to exist in skirt designs. The most common skirt in villages is the one with 4, 6, or 8 panels, gathered at the waist. A characteristic detail is the coloured ribbons sewn onto the hem. The most popular are red and green ribbons, but other colours were also common. Girls and young women often wore *stambă* headscarves and aprons over their skirts. Girls had blouses, skirts, and dresses sewn by seamstresses, and then embroidered decorations on them themselves (Zelenciuc, 1957, pp. 20–28). The clothing depicted in period photographs shows that, in most cases, men and women wore garments produced industrially or made from industrial textiles.

Forced collectivisation and policies of mandatory requisitioning of agricultural products caused a violent rupture in the continuity of traditional production and

consumption practices. The famine of 1946–1947 radically transformed dietary habits, reducing meals to survival substitutes that tested the limits of human endurance. The descriptions in survivors' testimonies are dramatic, documenting how people fed themselves with whatever they could find in the forests and fields: tree leaves, grass, ground acorns, pigweed, plant roots, and other plant resources that under normal conditions were not part of their diet. In this state of utter despair, people consumed anything that was not directly toxic: bran, ground corn cobs, ground cattail stalks, and tree bark turned into a bitter substance that filled the stomach without providing real nourishment (Turea, 2008, passim). The process of preparing food during the famine reflected the population's absolute desperation in the face of extreme crisis. They would add salted water and the little flour available, boil it, and consume the resulting mixture simply to create the illusion of satiety in an empty stomach. Peasants baked flatbreads, porridges made from amaranth, or made porridge from bran with various additives to mask the lack of any nutritious ingredients. Families who had managed to keep a cow or a few sheep were in a relatively privileged position, as the milk and meat from these animals played a decisive role in their survival (Turea, 2008, pp. 21, 27, 278; Archives of Memory, Vol. 1, Book 1, pp. 92, 151, 252). The quality of the available food was often deplorable, reflecting both a lack of resources and the inefficiency of the distribution and quality control system. Bread, which constituted the staple food for the majority of the population, was heavy, impure, gritty, and dark in colour, made from a mixture of wheat with other grains or even with substitutes consisting of often inedible substances. Testimonies from survivors of the 1946–1947 famine describe how the black rye bread contained other impurities, being so hard and moist that it caused bleeding gums in those who consumed it (Arhivele Memoriei, 2019, Vol. 1, Tom. 2, pp. 73-74). In Order No. 209 of the Minister of Food Industry dated May 22, 1946, the production of a large quantity of substandard bread was noted; the documents noted that it was of such poor quality that it was undercooked, sticky, with a crust that peeled off, containing impurities, and often completely inedible (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 4, d. 354, f. 138).

Starting in the fall of 1947, the food supply situation began to improve slowly, but it remained far from what was considered satisfactory. The authorities continued their policies of requisitioning agricultural products, keeping the population in a permanent state of chronic malnutrition. Mass collectivisation fundamentally changed traditional methods of food preparation and consumption. In the kolkhozes, people no longer had autonomy over their own labour or their own food. Nevertheless, the authorities allowed peasants to cultivate the plots near their homes, a measure that provided them with a minimal degree of food autonomy. These small but intensively farmed plots became indispensable for survival, allowing the cultivation of potatoes, beets, cabbage, onions, beans, and various greens. The plots near the house, though modest in size, played a decisive role in providing the necessary food for peasant families (Dolghi, 2025a, pp. 99, 211). Potatoes continued to be the staple food for peasants in the villages of the Moldavian SSR throughout the period. In a typical autumn, a family would prepare for winter by harvesting and storing large quantities of potatoes, the main source of food during the winter months. Daily meals frequently consisted of boiled potatoes with a

minimal amount of sour milk or potatoes with pickled vegetables. Meat remained a rarity, reserved for holidays, and animal fat was used sparingly. Onions and garlic from the gardens supplemented the monotonous diet, with housewives preserving their knowledge of food preservation. Preserved vegetables, especially sauerkraut and beets in brine, were common on the winter table, offering at least a change of flavour from the monotony of boiled potatoes. Bread, polenta, and various simple dishes were made from rye and corn flour. Sugar remained a luxury that few could afford (AAȘM, F. 3, inv. 1, d. 38, f. 97–104).

Starting in 1951, the magazine *Femeia Moldovei* featured a *"Culinary"* section, which included various recipes and cooking tips for women, both for everyday meals and for holidays (FM, 1951, no. 1, p. 23; no. 5, p. 26). The magazine promoted the concept of socialist food but preserved traditional elements, encouraging women to be creative in providing for their families.

The Soviet public food system "Obșcepit" was conceived as an instrument of social and economic transformation after the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia in 1917, but also as a means of emancipating people from domestic slavery and the chains of the kitchen. In May 1944, the CCP issued a resolution to improve public catering in the cities of Soroca, Bălți, and Chișinău, targeting in particular party and state officials as well as newly arrived NKVD and NKGB officers, measures included repairing canteens within ten days, using seasonal produce, training staff, and opening a canteen for military personnel in Soroca (ANA, F. R-2848, inv. 11, d. 19, f. 120–121). In October 1944, the authorities established their own supply base for railway workers, organizing four sovkhozes on the lands of former German landowners and settlers (ANA, F. R-2848, inv. 11, d. 24, f. 167–168). To ensure food supplies, the authorities ordered the establishment of auxiliary farms attached to various institutions, including the CCP Chancellery, intended to supply the republic's party and state leadership (ANA, F. R-2848 inv. 11 d. 20, f. 233).

The public food system in the Moldavian SSR was organized according to the standardized Soviet model, being subordinate to the Commissariat for Trade, later transformed into a Ministry, with the network structured hierarchically and comprising commercial units: *restaurants, canteens, taverns, snack bars*, and *tea rooms*, organized into specialized trusts that served workers and employees in various industries (ANA, F. R-3087, inv. 1, d. 6, f. 38-39). The evolution of the system between 1940–1941 and 1944–1960 reflects the economic and social changes of the period; in 1940 there were 855 commercial units, with the war causing a dramatic decline to 256 commercial units in 1945, after which the system recovered rapidly, reaching over 1,100 establishments in 1950, with over 50% in rural areas, indicating the expansion of public food services into rural areas (Народное хозяйство МССР, 1961, p. 255).

The Ministry established quarterly supply plans, food rations, and quality standards, and conducted regular inspections; authorities were required to provide workers with three meals a day, in accordance with nutritional standards, and to ensure a minimum daily selection that included cold snacks, two options for the first course, two options for the second course, and hot beverages. The quality of food products in public catering was a serious problem, with reports indicating major non-compliance regarding the

condition and shelf life of products, adherence to portioning standards, and the presentation of dishes (ANA, F. R-3087, inv. 1, d. 6, f. 38–39). In practice, the menus were often meagre and monotonous, with traditional dishes being rare and served in small quantities (ANA, F. 3087, inv. 1, d. 154, f. 27). Inspection reports repeatedly highlighted serious unsanitary conditions in public food establishments in Chișinău, including even places considered models, such as the canteen of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Moldova (PC(b)M). Inspections conducted starting in September 1947 by the Department of Commerce and the State Sanitary Inspection revealed major problems: the exteriors were dilapidated, the windows were dirty, food was unprotected, and poor hygiene in dishwashing, kitchens being insufficiently ventilated, lacking lighting equipment and refrigerators, and serving areas infested with cockroaches and other harmful insects (ANA, F. R-3087, inv. 1, d. 6, f. 59-60).

Starting in the 1950s, the system underwent considerable expansion, evident in the development of workers' canteens and the establishment of new restaurants and cafeterias in major administrative centres; a 1957 report highlighted the opening of 12 canteens, 2 restaurants, and 8 cafeterias in Chișinău alone, with a total serving capacity exceeding 10,000 people daily (ANA, F. R-3087, inv. 1, d. 204, f. 56–59). The supply policy was strictly planned through the annual and quarterly development of plans by the Ministry of Commerce, in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, prioritizing workers, students, the sick, and retirees (ANA, F. 3087, inv. 1, d. 144, f. 25). Archival documents reveal the profound discrepancies between the Soviet system's declared principles and a reality marked by privileges for the elite, endemic corruption, and administrative inefficiency, with the CC of the PCM Canteen exemplifying these contradictions through abuses of power, influence peddling, and poor sanitary conditions, with the system's fundamental contradictions remaining unresolved despite the authorities' efforts to correct these dysfunctions through administrative measures.

From the very first days of the Red Army's entry into Bessarabia, the population felt the consequences of the aggressive behaviour of Soviet soldiers and security officers under the influence of alcohol. Alcohol consumption in the Red Army was tolerated and encouraged by the military leadership to boost soldiers' morale. They received a daily official ration of one hundred grams of vodka, popularly known as "Voroshilov's hundred grams," considered a necessary stimulant to cope with the extreme conditions at the front. In 1944–1945, on the territory of the Moldavian SSR, Red Army officers and soldiers frequently stole wine and other goods from the local population; got drunk, and committed acts of violence and hooliganism, causing casualties and property damage; numerous cases were documented in villages near the front line (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 8, d. 96, f. 269–270). Furthermore, in the postwar period, Soviet authorities encouraged controlled alcohol consumption as part of their social and economic strategy. A resolution of June 9, 1945, by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) required the People's Commissariat of Food Industry of the USSR to allocate funds for the sale of vodka and tobacco to workers in the Moldavian SSR, allocating in the second quarter of 1945 – 600 decilitres of vodka and tobacco worth 100,000 Rubles, and in the third quarter – 1,500 decilitres of vodka and tobacco worth 200,000 Rubles (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 20, d. 315, ff. 53–60).

Excessive alcohol consumption in the Moldavian SSR led to violent incidents both in the kolkhozes and among the party nomenclature, reflecting social tensions and disciplinary problems. Furthermore, numerous cases of alcoholism are documented (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 8, d. 96, f. 269–270). In the late 1940s and early 1950s, following numerous complaints from the Moldavian SSR, workers of the Central Committee of the CPSU drafted a memorandum criticising the incompetent leadership and low morale of the republic's leaders, emphasising that many officials, from vice-chairmen of the Council of Ministers to secretaries of district committees, had been promoted without regard to professional or moral criteria. Among the shortcomings listed were frequent cases of drunkenness and moral degradation, as well as the lack of necessary criticism within the structures of power (Pasat, 2011, p. 183). Thus, alcohol consumption and associated behaviours were widespread phenomena at the top of the political hierarchy, seriously affecting the efficiency and prestige of the republic's leadership. In the final years of the period under study, the authorities implemented measures to combat the phenomenon. According to a report by KGB collaborator Sorokin to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Moldovan Communist Party dated December 30, 1959, the main problem remained drunkenness and the illegal production of plum brandy, a phenomenon deeply rooted as an ancient tradition. Producers of "samogon" were identified and publicly shamed through reprimands at community meetings and caricatures in the wall newspaper *Crocodilul*; social pressure compelled them to abandon this activity. Regular patrols by the People's Guards monitored locals with alcohol problems, intervening in cases of domestic violence, theft under the influence of alcohol, or absenteeism from work. The document notes that, although the phenomenon was not completely eradicated, measures of public admonishment and massive community involvement led to a decrease in incidents in areas with active patrols (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 20, d. 315, ff. 53–60).

Chapter 5 – *Family and Private Life in the Moldavian SSR* – analyses in detail: the implementation of Soviet policies regarding the family, the registration of births, marriages, and deaths, aspects of party organs' interference in private life; propaganda in daily life; and ideological control over leisure and rest time.

The legacy of family policy, implemented in the Moldavian SSR starting in 1940, and then from 1944, consisted of a set of ideological theses and legislative acts developed during the interwar period in the USSR, which were alien to the sociocultural values of the population of Bessarabia, which was largely a traditional rural society where marriage and family relations were regulated in accordance with Christian and customary values. On December 14, 1940, the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR decreed the temporary use in the Moldavian SSR of the Code on Family, Guardianship, Marriage, and Civil Status Acts of the Ukrainian SSR, adopted in 1926, which was applied in the Moldavian SSR until December 26, 1969. According to the document, only civil marriages were recognised as legal, and it became mandatory to register marriages at state civil registry offices. Religious marriage ceremonies had no legal force and could not serve as proof of marriage (Code of Laws, 1954, pp. 23–24). On September 13, 1940, Resolution No. 142a of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Bessarabia (PC(b)M) was issued *regarding the confiscation of*

parish registers from the clergy of all religions and religious sects (Pasat, 2009, p. 97). The majority of the population of Bessarabia (over 90%) was declared Christian during the interwar period. Marriage and the family, according to their view, were sacred institutions, founded within the Church and required to live in accordance with Christian teachings.

The radical restructuring of family life among the peasantry in the republic took place alongside the collectivisation of agriculture. Collectivisation, by undermining the economic role of the family, was intended to modernise the family as well by reducing the economic role and economic dependence between spouses. Thus, the family's dependence on the spouses' workplace, on the new collective enterprises–sovkhozes and kolkhozes–and, de facto, on the state and its political and socio-economic organisations in the region was established. Despite the efforts of the authorities–anti-religious and atheist campaigns, the closure of churches, and the confiscation of church property–the level of religiosity among the population of the Moldavian SSR remained quite high. In the postwar years, nearly all residents of the western districts attended church and observed religious rituals: fasting, baptism, marriage, and funerals (Pasat, 2011, p. 584; Pasat, 2009, p. 329).

In the Moldavian SSR, new family celebrations and customs began to be promoted as an alternative to traditional rituals: Komsomol weddings, newborn celebrations, and civil funeral rites, which were widely implemented in other union republics but were a novelty for the population of the Moldavian SSR. The procedures and institutions for registering civil status records also changed. By the end of 1956, the authority to register civil status records had been withdrawn from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and transferred to the executive authorities, the executive committees of the local Soviets. The idea emerged to build Palaces of Happiness, later called wedding palaces, where ceremonies were held in a solemn manner (Zhidkova, 2012, p. 417). In rural areas, such festivities were held primarily within village councils or at cultural centres, where "Halls of Happiness" were set up. Ethnographic materials collected in the 1950s and 1960s demonstrate that during this period, old traditions were preserved within family customs. In the postwar years, ethnographers noted that in villages on both the left and right banks of the Dniester, collective farm families had not yet broken free from a series of archaic and religious traditions; in rural areas, religious weddings, baptisms upon the birth of children, as well as "old wives' customs: incantations, ritual bathing" (AAȘM, F. 24, inv. 2, d. 3, f. 3; AAȘM, F. 24, inv. 3, d. 3, f. 3).

Practical guides for conducting ceremonies suggested that the ritual should be expressive. It was recommended to use original traditional elements, as they emphasised the importance and festivity of the event and also allowed ritual participants to express their individual feelings. New ritual symbols and attributes, used in the festive civil ceremony, were included in the wedding ritual: the commemorative badge, various medals, the special ritual bread, the torch, the ritual mat, and flowers. It was recommended that the decoration of ceremony halls and palaces take into account the traditions of the given locality; traditional ritual attributes should be used: two crossed rings, a symbol of family unity; ritual towels; wedding wreaths; ears of wheat; wheat grains; vases made of ceramic, wood, or glass; a tray; and other objects (Zelenciuc,

Loskutova, 1986, pp. 8–9). Society developed a dual attitude: often, party members or Komsomol members, after the civil registration and the Komsomol wedding, would go to church for the religious wedding. Identified cases where party members or candidates for party or Komsomol membership had a religious wedding were discussed at organisational meetings. Those found guilty were reprimanded, warned, and sometimes expelled from the Komsomol or the party.

In the drafts of the new civil ritual, the funeral was the most vulnerable area. In the postwar years, funeral rituals in the Moldavian SSR underwent a complex process of adaptation, situated at the intersection of folk traditions and the ideological requirements of the Soviet regime. Although Soviet authorities attempted to impose a new way of life, the community's need to organise a solemn farewell ceremony for the deceased remained deeply rooted. Most elements of funeral and memorial ceremonies were conservative and did not align with the official spirit of the Soviet era, which is why these rites underwent slow changes, much slower than other family rites, such as those related to birth or marriage. The funerals of heroes who fell in revolutionary movements, the Civil War, and World War II played an important role in shaping the new funeral ritual. In these cases, the traditional religious ritual was replaced or combined with Soviet elements: the procession was accompanied by a military band, red flags were carried, farewell speeches were delivered at mourning rallies, gun salutes were fired, and wreaths were laid at the grave. Later, these practices were adopted for ordinary people as well. Over time, the basic features of the " " of the civil funeral ritual took shape: a procession accompanied by a brass band, farewell speeches at the grave, the erection of a pedestal, often with a red star, the laying of wreaths, and the organization of a memorial meal (Zelenciuc, Popovici, Loskutova, 1977, pp. 96–98). However, these practices failed to eliminate traditional elements, especially in rural areas. Communists were regularly punished and reprimanded at meetings for their mistake of conducting funeral rituals according to religious canons. But in exchange for renouncing religious symbols–no priests, no icons, no prayers, no funeral services–nothing was offered. The question of how a communist should behave when devout parents die and have left a will to be buried with a religious ceremony was a frequent one, to which the authorities responded with confusion. We observe a struggle for influence over the family, waged between the state and the church, as well as by these two entities against tradition. The state succeeded only partially in excluding the church from family life by transferring the obligation to register marriages and other civil status documents to specialised civil authorities. However, a significant portion of the population continued to hold religious beliefs, practice religious rituals and family customs, and attend church, even though the sociocultural and political conditions were not conducive to such practices.

The communist regime in the Moldavian SSR exercised strict and pervasive control over the private lives of its citizens, as well as their religious and social behaviour, penetrating family and intimate relationships through state institutions. The Soviet authorities intervened in marital and family relationships, promoting collectivist values and strictly controlling citizens' individual choices. In addition to the mandatory registration of marriages at civil registry offices and the holding of so-called Komsomol

weddings, party members were required to choose partners, husbands, or wives from trustworthy backgrounds who had no ties to foreign agents, had not collaborated with Romanian authorities, and had not compromised themselves socially. The documents highlight cases in which individuals were forced to divorce due to their partners' "problematic past," such as relationships with foreign agents or with people from religious or bourgeois backgrounds (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 7, d. 58, f. 4–5). This strict control over personal relationships was complemented by the imposition of Komsomol weddings, public ceremonies intended to replace the religious rite of marriage and reinforce communist ideology. Private life and the privacy of the home were closely monitored. Overcrowded communal apartments, in which several families shared small spaces, became the norm by the mid-1950s. The influence of the PC(b)M and primary party organizations on the private lives of citizens in the Moldavian SSR manifested itself in several ways: the party exercised strict control over social and political activities, which led to constant surveillance of individuals' private lives; party organizations were tasked with monitoring the behaviour of party members and citizens, ensuring that they adhered to communist norms and values; the admission of new members to the party or the ULCTM was based on an investigation of their background, career, whereabouts during the evacuation of Soviet forces from the Moldavian SSR in 1941–1944, social origin, marital status, and social behaviour.

The party's bureaucratic apparatus operated through a complex network of denunciations, surveillance, and reports. The culture of denunciation was an essential aspect of the totalitarian state, where people were encouraged to report their colleagues, neighbours, or leaders for any behaviour deemed inappropriate or hostile to the regime.

The Party organised activities to mobilise the population, including through the Komsomol, which was tasked with educating and socialising youth in the spirit of communist ideology. By making participation in study groups, seminars, and other political-propaganda activities mandatory, social and political control over youth was established. An important aspect of ideological engagement concerned the training of Soviet activists. The ongoing seminars for the chairpersons and secretaries of village soviets were resumed, emphasising their crucial role in spreading communist ideology at the local level. These seminars, conducted by agitators, were organised systematically. The actions undertaken aimed to train and expand the network of activists and party organisations in all localities, institutions, and enterprises within the district. Through these measures, the communist regime implemented a system of ideological control that penetrated the most intimate spheres of citizens' lives. Education was used as a tool of manipulation to create a uniform society, loyal and submissive to communist doctrine. In the postwar years, literacy campaigns were carried out not only to improve the population's educational level but also to ensure that citizens could absorb the regime's ideological messages. An illiterate population was considered immune to communist propaganda, which is why literacy was a priority. Numerous study circles and political seminars were organised, where citizens were exposed to propaganda messages promoting the superiority of the Soviet system. In every kolkhoz, propaganda centres–known as *"Red Huts"*–were established, where kolkhoz members were systematically gathered to attend lectures, have newspapers

read to them, or listen to the radio, which broadcast ideologically oriented programs (Dolghi, 2025, pp. 158–166). Propaganda mobilisation against internal enemies generated a constant atmosphere of suspicion and fear in Soviet society, which intensified during ideological campaigns. In organisations and enterprises, agitation meetings and readings of party documents were organised to control public opinion. The mood of the population in the early 1950s is vividly illustrated by the reaction to the arrest of L. Beria, an event that triggered an intense campaign in all union republics, including the Moldavian SSR. In December 1953, in the Balatina district, 142 rallies were held in institutions, collective farms, and Machine and Tractor Stations to discuss and condemn the acts attributed to Beria (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 12, d. 263, f. 40–41).

In parallel with the political, economic, and cultural transformations that began in 1944 in the Moldavian SSR, a new system of official holidays was implemented, integrated into the local calendar. Ideological indoctrination, communist propaganda, and the promotion of the new order contributed to the establishment of revolutionary holidays intended to replace old traditions. Soviet ethnographers observed a gradual disappearance of folk customs and traditions considered archaic and incompatible with the new way of life, alongside the introduction into daily life of new holidays intended to reflect and consolidate the new socialist culture (Зеленчук, Лоскутова, 1986, p. 4).

The Soviet authorities waged an intense propaganda campaign aimed at gradually replacing traditions with secular alternatives aligned with the official ideology. Secular ceremonies incorporated certain elements from religious rituals, giving them a new form acceptable within the new social order. Official holidays became a fundamental tool in strengthening the relationship between the state and its citizens. Through collective participation in these events, the population was drawn into a process of social integration, and the commemorated events cemented in the public consciousness moments considered essential to the Soviet state. The Soviet calendar, including that of the Moldavian SSR, at the beginning of 1947, included the following holidays: November 7–the anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution; April 22–V. Lenin's birthday; February 23–Red Army Day; March 8 – International Women's Day; May 1 – International Workers' Day; May 19 – Pioneers' Day; October 7 – Constitution Day of the USSR. In addition to these were celebrations organised to mark the anniversaries of certain events and figures, as well as some local holidays.

Party propaganda constantly emphasised the harm that religious traditions allegedly caused to socialist society, arguing that they hindered the formation of communist consciousness and negatively affected economic productivity. A telling example was the way in which the mourning associated with traditional funeral rituals was labelled as harmful, being perceived as a form of cultural resistance to Soviet ideology. In the same vein, Christmas celebrations were condemned for the enormous damage they caused to the national economy, due to the alleged days of drunkenness and absenteeism. Easter, in turn, was considered a harmful holiday because it instilled submission to God, and the practice of kissing the cross was deemed to have unsanitary implications.

Soviet propaganda literature noted that citizens' assemblies were organised in villages and cities, during which it was decided to abandon religious holidays and

establish new forms of celebration, such as spring, harvest, or winter events. According to this logic, a series of Soviet holidays was intended to replace traditional festivities: thus, May 1 was to replace Easter; the registration of a newborn was to replace baptism; the Komsomol wedding–the religious wedding; the "new home" ceremony–the house blessing; and the birthday celebration–the name day or angel's day. This strategy of substitution was largely implemented in the urban public sphere, while in rural areas, the process was only partially carried out. New Year's became one of the most important holidays promoted by the Soviet authorities in the Moldavian SSR, taking on an official festive format that combined traditional elements with the regime's atheist propaganda. The Christmas tree, although rooted in Christian traditions, was adopted as a symbol of the New Year's holiday, without any reference to religion. Elements of pre-Christian traditions were modified to reflect communist ideology, giving rise to characters such as Moș Gerilă in place of Santa Claus and the "Ploughmen's Brotherhood" in place of carolling groups. New Year's had become a socialist holiday, on the eve of which the results of socialist competitions, sectoral achievements, and the fulfilment of the five-year plan were tallied (AAȘM, F. 24, d. 23, f. 1-50).

In the postwar period in the Moldavian SSR, International Women's Day on March 8 became a holiday deeply tied to the ideology of the Soviet regime, promoting the ideal of equality between women and men within the totalitarian system. Official events symbolically marked women's emancipation through the "Socialist Revolution" (Moldova Socialistă, 1945, no. 48, p. 2). The regime emphasised the idea of women's complete emancipation through social and economic policies that theoretically guaranteed equal rights, including equality in the workplace, equal pay for equal work, and the protection of rights within the family and regarding motherhood. May 1 was transformed into a celebration of international workers' solidarity, taking on a strong ideological character intended to celebrate the regime's achievements and promote socialist and communist ideals. In the Moldavian SSR, this day was marked by grand parades in which workers from industry, agricultural units, and the public sector marched through the streets of Chișinău and other cities, carrying slogans in support of the Communist Party and Soviet achievements (Zelenciuc, Popovici, Loskutova, 1977, pp. 14–15). The communist regime promoted an atheist ideology and regarded religion as a relic of the bourgeois past that had to be replaced with holidays reflecting the regime's social and economic values.

In the Moldavian SSR, against the backdrop of accelerating social secularisation and the imposition of an atheistic ideological model, traditional funeral rituals underwent a major restructuring, replacing or diminishing the religious component with secular elements borrowed from state ceremonies. A decisive role in the crystallisation of new forms of funeral ceremony was played by the funerals of "heroes" who fell during the Russian Civil War of 1917–1921, as well as those of combatants from the Civil War and World War II. For these individuals, the authorities instituted rituals inspired by Soviet practices: the funeral procession was accompanied by a military band and red flags, farewell speeches were delivered at mourning rallies, gun salutes were fired to honour the deceased, and wreaths were laid at the grave.

The Communist Party, through its organisations, exercised strict control over recreational activities, ensuring that they were in line with communist ideology. Party and Komsomol organisations promoted activities designed to strengthen political consciousness and mobilise the population around communist values. These activities included rallies, artistic performances, readings of party materials, and educational events. Official holidays – May 1, October Revolution Day, or the birthdays of Soviet leaders Lenin and Stalin–were important occasions for organising dances, games, and performances. These events served a dual purpose: on the one hand, to promote unity and loyalty to the Communist Party, and on the other, to provide the population with a form of controlled entertainment.

The clubs and cultural centres in each district served as hubs for ideological socialisation. Here, activities such as political discussions, screenings of propaganda films, and artistic events took place. The themes of these activities were carefully selected to promote Soviet values and consolidate ideological control over the population. Despite strict control, the population found ways to express their individual freedom. Within families and local communities, people organised their free time according to personal preferences. Religious holidays, although not tolerated by the regime, continued to be celebrated, and some families even skipped work on major holidays. This indicated a certain resistance to ideological pressures.

Another new factor influencing daily and private life at home and at work was the wired radio. These radios were connected to a centralised network and could be found on the streets, in factories, and in dormitories. In the second half of the 1950s, transistor radios became widespread; these received radio signals and produced higher-quality sound. The radios could tune in to multiple stations with different frequencies. Transistor radios, record players, vinyl record players, radio-cassette players, and radios equipped with record players were, at the time, a symbol of prosperity; they partly filled the population's leisure time but also served as a tool for ideological propaganda, which thus reached people's homes.

In the postwar years, movie theatres in the Moldavian SSR became major attractions for leisure activities, more accessible than theatres. Movie theatres were not only a source of entertainment but also essential tools for political and ideological education. Soviet propaganda used documentary and feature films to spread communist values and consolidate control over public thought. The films promoted socialist ideals and the regime's achievements, shaping the collective consciousness. Between October and December 1951, the two main cinemas in Chișinău, "Biruința" and "Patria," attracted 1,450,460 viewers. The films screened included titles such as *Lenin in October, Lenin in 1918, Chepaev, The Oath, The Deputy from the Baltic, We Are from Kronstadt, The Maxim Trilogy, Peter the Great, Alexander Nevsky, Minin and Pozharsky*, *A Member of the Government*, and *Valery Chikalov*, intended to glorify the regime's achievements and promote Soviet ideology (ANA, F. A-12, inv. 3, d. 223, f. 68–72). Cultural activities served as tools for promoting communist values, not merely as forms of entertainment; artistic and themed evenings, as well as excursions, were coordinated with political themes to shape an ideologically committed generation.

Chapter 6–***Childhood in Soviet Moldova***–examines the complexity of the educational and social system for children in the postwar period, highlighting the constant tension between the propagandistic discourse of "happy childhood" and the precarious material realities that marked the daily lives of young people in the Moldavian SSR.

The daily lives of preschool children in early childhood education institutions were shaped by a political and legal framework that reflected the ideological priorities of the communist regime. The system of kindergartens and nurseries was established as a tool for the emancipation of women and the liberation of the female workforce for the Soviet economy (Crăciun, 1951, pp. 169–170). The 1941 Constitution of the Moldavian SSR guaranteed equal rights for women, including through the creation of a vast network of maternity hospitals, nurseries, and kindergartens. The 1944 kindergarten statute established that these were state institutions for children aged 3–7, to provide mothers the opportunity to participate in economic and political life. According to official data, there were only eight kindergartens in Bessarabia until 1940. In 1941, there were 58 kindergartens serving 2,900 children. By the end of 1946, there were 84 kindergartens with 4,155 children. By 1960, the number of permanent preschool institutions had reached 442, attended by 28,600 children (Dolghi, 2022, pp. 130–165).

An alternative to permanent kindergartens were *the medeans (seasonal kindergartens)* in the Moldavian SSR, which did not require as much expenditure and resources, since they did not operate during the cold season but only during the agricultural work period. In 1946, 116 such institutions were in operation, serving 7,653 children. In 1959, 13,117 children attended permanent kindergartens, and 134,410 attended seasonal ones; of the total number of children attending both types of institutions, only 9% attended permanent kindergartens. Inspections revealed serious and chronic deficiencies. In 1945, infant mortality was extremely high–in the Călărași district, 42% of newborns died. The institutions lacked adequate supplies: in Kindergarten No. 2 in Chișinău, there were only 30 beds for 94 children. The problems persisted into the 1950s. The facilities were inadequate–in Kindergarten No. 6 in Chișinău, each child had only 1.15 m² of space instead of the recommended 4 m². Nutrition was insufficient: over seven months, 15 institutions failed to provide children with 26,111 litres of milk, 1,876 kg of cheese, and 32,549 eggs. Seasonal kindergartens operated under even more precarious conditions, lacking teaching materials, toys, and basic sanitary facilities. In many of these, the food was monotonous and low in calories.

In accordance with the Soviet government's first decrees on public education, kindergartens and nurseries were incorporated into the state system of public education as the initial stage, and N. Krupskaya emphasized the need to include children from an early age in the public education system, believing that the habits and behaviours characteristic of Soviet people should be formed as early as preschool age (Crăciun, 1951, pp. 169–170). The educational process was heavily ideologised. Children learned poems about Stalin and Lenin, celebrated Soviet holidays, and were educated in the spirit of Soviet patriotism. A portrait of Stalin was considered a mandatory element of kindergarten decor. Teaching materials had to align with the goals of communist education. The magazine *Femeia Moldovei (Woman of Moldova)* vigorously promoted

the idea of a "happy childhood" in contrast to the situation in capitalist states, presenting kindergartens as instruments of the Soviet Party and state's care for children (Dolghi, 2022, pp. 130–165).

Children in the social and ideological school environment were subjected to an educational system whose essential mission was the formation of the communist "New Man." The 1944–1945 school year marked a turning point for the younger generation in the Moldavian SSR, when the situation of children within educational institutions was contradictory and full of contrasts. Children's schooling was compulsory, driven by the Soviet authorities' interest in establishing administrative and political-ideological control over the younger generation under precarious conditions. The school network was insufficient; by the end of the school year, 1,778 schools were operating with 9,961 classes and 305,852 students, of which 1,280 schools taught in "Moldovan," 427 in Russian, and 71 in Ukrainian. The dropout rate was devastating; throughout the year, 30,000 children left school for various reasons, and the average attendance rate stood at just 80%. The poor material conditions worsened over the course of the year, with most schools failing to provide even one daily meal to students. The situation improved slowly in the following years, although problems persisted; in the 1946–1947 school year, 89,900 children were not enrolled in school, and in the 1947–1948 school year, 30,839 children remained outside the educational system, during that same year, 13,453 students dropped out of school due to difficult financial circumstances in their families, work at home and in factories, prolonged illness, and a lack of clothing and footwear. According to the plan, 436,200 children were to be enrolled in school in the 1950–1951 school year, but at the start of the school year, there were 406,420 children in schools; during the year, 38,218 children dropped out, and by the end of the year, 389,011 students were attending school (Dolghi, 2022, pp. 189–208).

The schooling of children meant their inclusion in the ideological and political system of the Soviet state through the October Children and Pioneers organisations. According to the official definition, the October Children represented the youngest group within the system of children's and youth organisations in the USSR, serving as a preparatory step toward Pioneer status and comprising students in grades 1–3. The October Children groups were part of the Pioneer detachments. Each October Child had a specific role within the group, namely commander, flower caretaker, librarian, physical education instructor, or medic (Бушуева, 2018, pp. 111–114). The Pioneer Organisation operated based on a well-defined hierarchical structure; at the school level, a Pioneer unit (druzhina) was formed, which was divided into detachments, and these, in turn, into teams (zvenos). The symbols and attributes introduced into the Pioneer organisation included the Pioneer flag, the team pennant, the bugle and drum, the Young Pioneers' uniform, and distinctive insignia such as the Pioneer tie, the Pioneer badge, the Pioneer salute, and the Pioneer motto (Simbolica, 1947, p. 15). In 1948, Minister of Education A. Lazarev approved the Regulations on the Activities of Pioneer Houses or Palaces, which established the organization of mass political work through assemblies, bonfires, political discussions, scientific reports, and meetings with prominent figures, alongside extracurricular educational and sports activities (ANA, F. R-2991, inv. 4, d. 43, f. 74–79). During the 1950–1951 school year, Pioneers and Komsomol members

contributed to agricultural work, with students labouring on school lands and in collective farms, producing over 9,720 q of grain in 1959–1960 and generating revenues of approximately 800,000 Rubles (ANA, F. A-278, inv. 3, d. 1153, f. 1).

Children in orphanages and boarding schools constituted a vulnerable group subjected to particularly difficult living conditions. The trends in the number of orphanages and orphaned children in the Moldavian SSR reflect dramatic changes driven by the context of war and totalitarian policies. In Bessarabia, there were 6 orphanages during the interwar period, and in 1940, there were 3 children's homes in the Moldavian SSR with a total of 900 children. Due to the war, poverty, and high mortality rates, the number of orphaned and homeless children rose dramatically; by January 1, 1944, there were 6 children's homes in the Moldavian SSR. As of October 20, 1944, there were 3,475 registered orphaned children, of whom 1,200 were to be placed in orphanages, while the remaining 2,275 were to be placed in foster care (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 2, d. 149, f. 2). The situation worsened in the context of the famine of 1946–1947, when the number of vagrant children increased exponentially; in the first quarter of 1947, 13,777 children were detained, and in the second quarter - 7,351, with the children most often detained in serious condition, sick, exhausted, hungry, dressed in rags, and barefoot (Pasat, 2011, p. 284). According to information from the prosecutor of the Moldavian SSR addressed to the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Moldova (Bolsheviks) on June 16, 1947, the 124 existing orphanages, designed to accommodate 18,000 people, housed 18,654 people (Țăranu A., 2017, p. 749), and by September 1, 1947, 21,553 people were already being cared for in 124 orphanages. Since the authorities could not provide the orphanages with food, the Government of the Moldavian SSR decided on August 26, 1947, to reduce the network of orphanages to a capacity of 15,000 places, with some of the children being sent to live with relatives and over a thousand adolescents being placed in industrial enterprises and on farms.

Living conditions in the orphanages of the Moldavian SSR in 1944–1947 were deplorable, with daily life marked by poor sanitary and hygienic conditions and insufficient supplies of food and clothing. The orphanages lacked beds and other necessities; as of March 1, there were only 1,500 beds for 2,683 children, and there was a near-total lack of tables, chairs, and basic furniture; for 2,683 children, there were 3,350 sheets, 1,876 blankets, and only 4,400 pieces of underwear (ANA, F. R-2991, inv. 6, d. 8, f. 50). Medical care and sanitary conditions in the orphanages of Ceadâr-Lunga, Camenca, Chișinău, Pârjota, and Cricova were poor; these orphanages were dirty, and cases of lice and scabies were detected. The children's diet in the orphanages of the Moldavian SSR during the years 1944–1947 was a serious and constant problem, as the orphanage directors failed to provide the children with adequate nutrition; the required food items were not systematically supplied, with milk, dairy products, eggs, and fresh vegetables being particularly lacking. Inspections conducted at Orphanage No. 2 in the village of Cupcini in 1952 revealed serious irregularities that endangered the children's health and development, as living conditions at the institution were completely inadequate (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 11, d. 335, f. 15–16, 17). More seriously, numerous

cases of physical violence, confinement in separate rooms, and other forms of abuse were documented.

Daily life in orphanages and boarding schools in the 1950s was regulated by the Statute of Orphanages Subordinate to the Ministry of Education of the Moldavian SSR, approved on June 19, 1954. Under the pretext of education through labour and communist indoctrination, children were subjected to intensive economic exploitation, as orphanages developed extensive auxiliary farms where minors performed agricultural and construction work, generating substantial income for the institutions (ANA, F. R-2991, inv. 6, d. 103, f. 125). After 1956, in accordance with the guidelines of the 20th Congress of the CPSU, a reform was initiated through the gradual replacement of orphanages with boarding schools, this transition reflecting a partial conceptual shift, as boarding schools allowed for maintaining ties with the family, accepted children from functional families facing economic difficulties, and extended the period of institutionalisation until age 18. By the end of the 1960–1961 school year, there were 21 boarding schools in the Moldavian SSR with a total of 7,000 students, of whom 4,227 were in grades I–IV, 2,143 in grades V–VII, and 630 in grades VIII–X (ANA, F. A-51, inv. 21, d. 277, f. 37).

Children's literature and press served as an essential tool in the communist education of the younger generation in the Moldavian SSR. Postwar propaganda promoted the myth of a happy childhood in the Soviet state, contrasting with the alleged suffering and exploitation of children in interwar Bessarabia. The educational system was instrumentalised through schools and urban libraries filled with ideological literature. The children's press–*Murzilka, Kostior, Pionerskaia pravda* in Russian, and *Scânteia leninistă, Tânărul leninist* in "Moldovan"–served as a propaganda organ for the Pioneer Organisation and the ULCTM. Images of Lenin and Stalin represented state paternalism, transforming the child into a member of the "great Soviet family."

The authorities manipulated children's minds through games and objects that conformed to party directives, instilling a belief in a bright communist future. Children were taught "values" such as class hatred, intolerance toward dissenting opinions, and preparation for heroic deeds. Soviet pedagogy employed "training, methods of terrorising children" (Geller 1985: 174). A systematic love for Lenin and Stalin was instilled as early as kindergarten, and primers opened with portraits of the leaders, the first words read being "Lenin and Stalin" alongside "mom and dad" (Primer 1945, pp. 73–74). Propaganda created the image of the collective father–Comrade Stalin–who had given children a "happy childhood" and demanded absolute devotion to the motherland.

After the formation of the Moldavian SSR in 1940, the communist press increased its circulation to over 200,000 copies. The magazine *Scânteia leninistă* and the newspaper *Tânărul leninist* became the main propaganda tools for children. Anti-Romanian rhetoric was constant, and capitalism was constantly criticised. Propaganda claimed that the USSR allocated 10 times more funds to education than America. In the postwar period, propaganda adopted a less aggressive tone, focusing on educational development through heroic role models such as Timur and his team. Pioneer ceremonies and symbols were frequently explained, with pledges of dedication to the

homeland being part of the pioneer ritual. The model pioneer was disciplined, persistent, ready to defend the homeland and sacrifice his life (Dolghi, 2022, pp. 107–126).

The magazine *Femeia Moldovei* guided mothers in communist education, with the objectives being to increase labour productivity, foster a love of work, strengthen communal property, and develop collectivism. Pavlik Morozov was presented as a model hero, with mothers being instructed to raise children ready to fight for communism and to expose enemies of the people. Pedagogical advice was combined with atheist education through dialogues that mocked religious beliefs. The magazine *Femeia Moldovei* served multiple functions: informative, ideological, communicative, and educational, guiding women to raise "the future builders of communism" and contribute to the formation of devoted Soviet citizens (Dolghi, 2022, pp. 80–89).

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aimed to elucidate the complexity of daily life in the Moldavian SSR during the years 1944–1961, a period of radical transformations generated by the implementation of the Soviet totalitarian project. The investigation addresses a pressing academic and social need to demystify nostalgia for the Soviet- e past and to build a collective memory grounded in factual and documentary evidence, which is essential for the consolidation of democracy in the Republic of Moldova.

A review of the historiography has revealed the absence of a comprehensive monographic work on the subject *of the history of daily life in the Moldavian SSR*, although several works addressing various important aspects of the history of the Moldavian SSR were published during both the Soviet and post-Soviet periods. In this work, and in those upon which it is based, *the history of daily life in the Moldavian SSR during the years 1944–1961* is examined for the first time in an interdisciplinary and multifaceted manner. The research direction of *the Historical Anthropology of Sovietism in the Republic of Moldova* has proven indispensable for identifying the mechanisms through which the totalitarian regime invented new traditions, manipulated symbols, and instituted rituals and holidays with a political-ideological function, transforming authentic traditional culture into an instrument of social control. In the Moldavian SSR, where the process of Sovietization unfolded in parallel with the artificial construction of a Moldovan identity distinct from the Romanian one, these mechanisms took on particularly complex dimensions, revealing the interplay between repression, adaptation, resistance, and identity transformation–which confirms the hypothesis that the degree of internalization of ideological norms was not uniform, but mediated by individual and collective strategies of cultural negotiation. *The history of Soviet childhood in the Moldavian SSR* represents a distinct strand of this research, as children constituted a priority target of communist social engineering, being perceived as malleable material for the formation *of the new Soviet man* and representing, in the Soviet ideological imagination, a stage in the becoming of adult communists.

Overall, the research and conclusions confirm the hypothesis that the Soviet totalitarian project implemented in the Moldavian SSR (1944–1961)–through Sovietization, repression, economic and administrative coercion, indoctrination and ideological ritualization, as well as intrusion into the private sphere–produced a

systemic, yet differentiated, transformation of everyday life (material, social, symbolic, private, and generational). The degree of internalisation of Soviet ideological norms varied depending on rural/urban setting, position in the social hierarchy, and access to resources/privileges, and was mediated by strategies of adaptation, negotiation, and cultural resistance.

The conclusions also reflect the impact of social, economic, and political transformations on daily life in the Moldavian SSR during the years 1944–1961:

1. The restoration of Soviet rule in 1944 was accompanied by the imposition of a climate of terror and a lack of rights for the inhabitants of the Moldavian SSR. Soviet troops and security agencies, such as the NKVD and NKGB, created a climate of insecurity and fear, imposing a regime of systematic looting, abusive confiscations, and acts of violence against the civilian population, which led to a rapid deterioration of living conditions.

2. The state and party nomenclature played a decisive role in the Sovietization of the Moldavian SSR, implementing totalitarian policies: requisitions, collectivisation, repressions, etc.

3. The Soviet state's fiscal policy–the requisitioning of grain and agricultural products–served as an instrument of repression and control, had a dramatic impact on the rural population, causing the famine of 1946–1947, and the implementation of the ration card system (1944–1947) was part of the totalitarian policies applied in the Moldavian SSR alongside the forced requisitioning of grain, which restricted and limited access to food for many people, a fact that exacerbated the famine of 1946–1947, while party and state officials benefited from a privileged supply regime through special ration cards.

4. Collectivisation affected the daily lives of peasants and the entire rural population, as the kolkhoz became the primary economic unit in villages, replacing individual peasant households.

5. The promoters of this new way of life were cadres brought in by the authorities from other regions of the Soviet Union, who often overstepped their authority, displayed excessive zeal, and committed abuses and injustices against the locals. Both the totalitarian regime and the local enforcers of its policies fundamentally transformed Bessarabian society through repression, famine, deportations, and collectivisation. The myth of a bright future served as a smokescreen behind which the widespread poverty of the postwar years in the Moldavian SSR was concealed; propaganda and the lack of accurate information led the population to believe they were part of a progressive society building communism.

6. Forced modernisation and the impoverishment of the population constitute the central paradox of Soviet development in the Moldavian SSR. Although statistical data illustrate an increase in the number of workers in industrial enterprises and in production, they mask a reality of widespread poverty, chronic malnutrition, and precarious living conditions. Systemic economic violence manifested itself through multiple simultaneous channels: grain confiscations during famines, excessive and arbitrary taxation, the inequitable ration card system, and low wages. Documents demonstrate that poverty was an instrument of social control, keeping the population in

a state of dependence on the state for minimal vital resources. Soviet social stratification created profound inequalities between social categories. Collective farmers, representing two-thirds of the population, were systematically disadvantaged compared to industrial workers, civil servants, and intellectuals through institutionalised mechanisms: the lack of regular wages until 1966, travel restrictions, and limited access to consumer goods.

7. The policy of shaping the "Soviet man" entailed the unification of the holiday system and the construction of a socialist system of holidays and rituals designed to dilute local distinctiveness. Despite the atheist propaganda of the "new way of life," launched in the early years of Soviet rule, the population retained a strong attachment to traditional local holidays, customs, and old superstitions. The rural population, especially those who were not part of the party or state apparatus or the intelligentsia, typically observed both the new Soviet holidays and the Orthodox ones.

8. Collective farmers were systematically deprived of fundamental rights: freedom of movement through the denial of passports until 1974, the right to rest due to the absence of vacations, sick pay, and pensions until 1964, and uncertain pay through the *workdays* system. Delayed and underpaid wages turned the peasants' labour into unpaid drudgery.

9. The lack of decent working conditions in industrial enterprises, the regime's priorities, and the nature of work tasks reflect a systemic disregard for human dignity. During the period under study, gender and ethnic discrimination were quite common in industrial settings. Stakhanovism served as a tool of psychosocial manipulation, turning labour into an ideological spectacle. Socialist competitions were profoundly anti-democratic in nature, as they excluded any genuine form of negotiation, representation, or worker autonomy. All decisions and plans were dictated from above, and the actual involvement of employees was minimal, being replaced by formal rituals and demonstrative loyalty to the party leadership. Socialist competitions helped mobilise broad segments of the population, including the Komsomol youth, and created a certain degree of social cohesion, at least on the surface.

10. The fight against speculation in the Moldavian SSR involved a combination of administrative measures, community mobilisation, sanctions against speculators, and efforts to improve supply. However, economic and social challenges meant that the measures were often insufficient, even though the phenomenon persisted. The criminalisation of entrepreneurial activity generated a negative attitude toward private initiative and market mechanisms that has persisted over time and represents a totalitarian remnant in the population's mindset, with an impact on contemporary economic life.

11. The transformations imposed on housing, clothing, food, and the consumption of goods reflected not only forced modernisation but also the perpetuation of social inequalities under the guise of communist egalitarianism. Documents show that access to decent housing functioned as a tool of social stratification, with the nomenclature and newcomers from other Soviet republics benefiting from apartments under a privileged system. To obtain housing, people relied on both the legal framework and informal connections and corruption, as well as abuses by officials. Mass construction also

brought some benefits, such as partially resolving the housing shortage. Khrushchev's policy promoted the rapid and efficient construction of housing, but this led to the standardisation of buildings and the use of less durable materials. Communal apartments and dormitories were solutions adopted during this period, where several families lived together in a single space.

12. The Sovietization of the built environment involved a radical reconfiguration of the rural landscape through the imposition of model projects and the redesign of villages according to the principles of socialist planning. Ethnographic expeditions conducted between 1948 and 1953 documented the transition from traditional houses with haphazard layouts and flexible interior arrangements to standardised dwellings, arranged in orderly rows, with simple facades, large windows uniformly oriented toward the south, and gabled roofs. Building materials evolved from traditional adobe and reed roofs to the intensive use of soft stone (cotileț), slate, and concrete, and the internal layout of dwellings underwent fundamental changes with the introduction of separate kitchens, improved stoves, and spaces arranged according to urban models. However, an analysis of period photographs and ethnographic reports demonstrates that this forced modernisation did not completely eradicate traditional culture. Peasants retained elements of the traditional organisation of interior space, with handwoven rugs, wooden furniture, and Orthodox icons coexisting with portraits of Soviet leaders and radios, reflecting a process of indirect negotiation between old and new social structures rather than a complete replacement.

13. In the immediate postwar years, the population faced a severe shortage of clothing and footwear, with the rationing system in place from 1944 to 1947 exacerbating the shortage of clothing. Gradual industrialisation led to an increase in the quantity of manufactured goods, but the quality and diversity of products often fell short of expectations due to outdated equipment, a lack of skilled personnel, and rigid planning focused on quantitative indicators. Traditional clothing was gradually replaced by industrial products, reflecting a transition from local traditions to external influences and modern consumer standards. This change was not uniform: while some traditional elements disappeared, others adapted and were reinterpreted. Collectivisation had a major impact on clothing styles, as women's employment in collective farm work led them to stop weaving and making traditional garments and instead use industrially produced textiles, resulting in a rapid shift in textile and tailoring preferences. Reports from ethnographic expeditions emphasise that handmade garments were almost completely replaced by industrially produced clothing, such as cotton and wool items. This transition was perceived as a sign of socialist progress, but it also led to the loss of certain cultural traditions. Despite pressure from the Soviet regime, traditional clothing continued to play an important role in social life, especially during the calendar and family holidays. These garments reflected national identity and cultural resistance in the face of standardisation. Folk costumes were worn by the general population and by folk ensembles during holidays, cultural events, and Soviet celebrations; these were largely kitsch and fit into the concept of a culture that was "national in form and socialist in content."

14. Daily nutrition in the Moldavian SSR during the postwar years underwent a dramatic transformation, characterised by three distinct phases: extreme survival in 1944–1947, chronic malnutrition in 1948–1953, and a slight improvement in 1953–1961. Organised famine, followed by forced collectivisation, dismantled the traditional food system, transforming the rural population's modes of production and consumption. Home gardens became indispensable for survival. These small plots allowed for the cultivation of potatoes, cabbage, onions, and beans–the only space where families still had control over their own food supply. Traditional preservation methods (sauerkraut, pickled beets, dried onions, dried fruits) ensured a minimal variety during the winter. It is remarkable that, despite systemic oppression, housewives preserved their traditional culinary knowledge. *Mamaliga* (*Polenta), pies, pastries, and coliva* continued to be prepared from limited resources. Religious holidays–especially Christmas and Easter, though officially discouraged–remained moments of cultural reaffirmation.

15. The public food system constituted an important component of social organisation, reflecting the profound contradictions between the official egalitarian ideology and concrete social stratification. Documents show that, in practice, this system perpetuated the privileges of the nomenclature, with high-ranking officials having priority access to special canteens with high-quality products, while workers' canteens suffered from severe shortages, monotonous menus, and poor sanitary conditions. The quality of products and services in public catering was a serious problem throughout the entire period studied, with inspection reports repeatedly documenting severe unsanitary conditions, failure to comply with portioning standards, an extremely limited selection, and poor work discipline.

16. Alcohol consumption in the Moldavian SSR was a complex social phenomenon with serious consequences at all levels of society. Documents show that numerous soldiers and NKVD officers in 1944–1945 committed numerous acts of violence and hooliganism under the influence of alcohol, and the party and state leadership was plagued by chronic alcoholism. In the postwar years, many state and party officials engaged in abuse of office under the influence of alcohol, with drunkenness severely affecting the functioning of state institutions. The phenomenon was widespread across all social and professional circles. The strategy implemented in 1959 to combat drunkenness by mobilising the People's Militia and applying collective social pressure achieved only partial results, with the phenomenon remaining deeply rooted as a structural problem of Soviet society in the Moldavian SSR.

17. Soviet power systematically sought to transform the family from a religiously sanctified institution into a secularised construct, ideologically subordinate to the state. The process of Sovietization of the family institution unfolded through a complex strategy of dismantling and reconstructing the axiological foundations upon which the traditional family was based. The high persistence of religiosity among the population of the Moldavian SSR highlights the deep resilience of traditional mental structures in the face of Soviet ideological pressure. The impressive number of baptisms, weddings, and religious funerals performed in the postwar period, even in the face of intense atheist propaganda and the social risks associated with the practice of religious rituals, demonstrates that the family in the Moldavian SSR functioned as a bastion of the

preservation of traditional values, a space of passive resistance to attempts at total ideological reform.

18. The creation of alternative Soviet rituals demonstrates the contradictions inherent in the communist project to build a new civilisation. Attempts to replace religious rituals with secular equivalents proved problematic precisely because the new ceremonies lacked the symbolic depth and transcendent dimension that gave meaning to traditional rituals. The persistence of religious practices in the context of intense ideological persecution and associated social risks demonstrates that the family succeeded in functioning as a space for the intergenerational transmission of traditional values, resisting the pressures of the totalitarian state.

19. The system for vetting the background, social origins, and moral conduct of party members and candidates for admission into communist organisations created a stratified society in which personal biography became a determining factor in one's social destiny. The practice of denunciation, systematically promoted by rewarding informants and punishing those who failed to report their colleagues' transgressions, transformed mutual distrust and suspicion into the foundations of social relations. Public discussion of private matters, including intimate relationships and moral- al conduct, during party meetings turned privacy into a subject of collective debate and political judgment.

20. The Soviet state made no distinction between public and private spheres. The extensive system of political education, with study circles, party schools, and mandatory seminars, transformed citizens' free time into a tool for continuous indoctrination. Participation in these activities was not merely a formal obligation but a constant demonstration of political loyalty; absence or disinterest was interpreted as a sign of a hostile attitude toward the regime. Literacy, though with obvious positive effects, was conceived as a prerequisite for receiving propaganda messages. The invasion of propaganda into the domestic sphere, through radios broadcasting ideological messages, represented an extreme form of penetration into private space. These devices transformed the home into an extension of the public propaganda space, making it impossible to create a refuge completely isolated from official discourse. The systematic organisation of supervised leisure time through clubs, cultural centres, movie theatres, recreational activities, etc., represented an attempt to eliminate any form of spontaneous and uncontrolled social interaction. Official holidays, transformed into occasions for demonstrating political loyalty, had lost their authentic communal significance, becoming ritual spectacles in which the population played the role of an enthusiastic crowd glorifying the regime. However, the persistence of clandestine celebrations of religious holidays and absenteeism from work on these days demonstrates that the traditional calendar continued to structurally shape the daily lives of many people.

21. The Sovietization of childhood began with changes in the procedures for registering births and marriages, following the implementation of communist ideology and Soviet legislation in the Moldavian SSR. Childhood was understood as a "nursery" for raising communists and represented, in the Soviet imagination, a stage in the development of adult communists. Early childhood education and school institutions played a decisive role within this system. Schooling in the early postwar years was

compulsory, driven by the Soviet authorities' interest in establishing administrative and political-ideological control over the younger generation, which began to undergo ideological indoctrination through ideologised curricula and participation in communist children's and youth organisations that encompassed nearly all students. Universal schooling was a particularly important step in the development of society. At the same time, the ideologization and politicisation of the school system, and its subordination to the political objectives of the Communist Party, narrowed development prospects to only certain directions.

22. The expansion of the network of orphanages in the postwar period in the Moldavian SSR was due to the social policy of reducing the number of vagrant and orphaned children suffering from dystrophy and malnutrition, to reduce child mortality. The number of orphanages increased during the famine and began to decline in the early 1950s. The Soviet state, on the one hand, caused the humanitarian crisis in the Moldavian SSR through organised famine, the policy of requisitioning agricultural products, and repressive policies; on the other hand, it presented itself as "humane" by organising an extensive network of orphanages intended to save the children. The orphanage system suffered from serious and persistent structural dysfunctions, and under the pretext of education through labour and communist indoctrination, children were subjected to intensive economic exploitation. Starting in 1956, orphanages were gradually replaced by boarding schools. However, the model remained based on the same system of education through labour and ideological indoctrination, with relative improvements in material conditions.

Recommendations:

✓ Research into daily life in the Moldavian SSR requires an interdisciplinary approach that integrates the tools of social history, cultural anthropology, the sociology of knowledge, and memory studies.

✓ Once the particularities and generalities of daily life in the Moldavian SSR have been elucidated, it is necessary to continue research in a comparative context with other union republics.

✓ Incorporating knowledge about daily life in the Moldavian SSR into school textbooks will help create an objective view of the totalitarian communist regime, combat Soviet myths, and de-Sovietize society.

✓ It is necessary to develop and implement special courses and seminars on daily life and the social and economic realities of the Moldavian SSR at universities in the Republic of Moldova.

✓ The physical and digital collection and preservation of the photographic heritage from the Soviet period will safeguard documentary material that will continue to serve as a resource for research and understanding of the daily, social, economic, and political realities of the Moldavian SSR.

✓ Establishment of a thematic exhibition on Soviet society in the Moldavian SSR at a museum in the Republic of Moldova. The exhibition will also be expanded into the virtual space and made accessible online.

✓ Initiating a series of roundtables and collections of studies on communism in the Moldavian SSR, within which researchers will discuss topics and issues related to the

manifestations of communist totalitarianism in the Moldavian SSR, daily life, repression, culture, etc. The series of events and collections of studies will strengthen the community of researchers engaged in the study of totalitarianism, further develop existing research directions, and foster new ones.

✓ It is necessary to organise public lectures and classes in educational institutions for students, as well as in public libraries for the general public, on topics related to the communist regime, daily life, and social life in the Moldavian SSR.

✓ Given the impact of the media on society, it is necessary to produce radio and TV programs on the topic of daily life, so that information and knowledge based on facts, documents, and evidence can be known and understood. This will contribute to raising awareness of historical truth.

✓ Compiling all research findings on daily life and social, economic, political, and cultural realities into an online platform titled "The Virtual Museum of Communism in the Moldavian SSR" will amplify the social impact of these findings.

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ADNOTARE

Autor: Adrian Dolghi
Tema: Viața cotidiană în RSS Moldovenească în contextul transformărilor politice, sociale și economice (1944-1961). Teză de doctor habilitat în istorie, Chișinău, 2026.
Domeniul de studiu: specialitatea 611.02 – Istoria Românilor (pe perioade).
Cuvinte-cheie: RSSM, regim comunist, viață cotidiană, violență, ideologizare, propagandă, PCM; **Structura tezei:** lista abrevierilor, introducere, 6 capitole a câte 4-8 subcapitole, concluzii generale și recomandări, bibliografie cu 591 titluri, 341 pagini (până la bibliografie), declarația privind asumarea răspunderii și CV-ul autorului.
Scopul cercetării: Elucidarea complexă a vieții cotidiene a populației RSSM în contextul transformărilor politice, sociale și economice din anii 1944-1961 prin analiza impactului regimului totalitar comunist asupra dimensiunilor vieții de zi cu zi: materiale, sociale, culturale și private. **Obiectivele tezei:** Cercetarea structurilor vieții cotidiene în RSSM în anii 1944-1961; Analiza și valorificarea istoriografiei vieții cotidiene în RSSM; Cercetarea procesului de sovietizare a vieții cotidiene; Elucidarea aspectelor sociale ale vieții cotidiene în mediul rural și urban; Investigarea impactului factorilor politici și ideologici asupra familiei și vieții cotidiene; Analiza situației copiilor și identificarea factorilor care au influențat viața cotidiană a tinerei generații în contextul politico-ideologic și social postbelic.
Noutatea și originalitatea științifică a prezentei cercetări constau în abordarea, pentru prima dată, interdisciplinară și multiaspectuală a vieții cotidiene din RSSM în anii 1944-1961. Studiul inaugurează noi direcții de cercetare în istoriografia din Republica Moldova: *istoria vieții cotidiene în RSSM*, *Antropologia istorică a „sovieticității" din Republica Moldova și Istoria copilăriei sovietice din RSSM*. Pentru prima dată au fost identificate și elucidate structuri și dimensiuni ale cotidianului sovietic din RSSM necercetate anterior; au fost valorificate și incluse în circuitul științific un volum important de documente inedite și mărturii culese de la martori oculari la temă.
Rezultatele obținute: A fost realizată o cercetare interdisciplinară de sinteză, documentată asupra istoriei vieții cotidiene în RSSM. Investigația a demonstrat că sărăcia, foametea din 1946-1947 și sistemul represiv n-au fost disfuncționalități ale regimului, ci instrumente de control social, menținând populația în dependență totală față de stat. Studiul a elucidat mecanismele de îndoctrinare a copilăriei prin școlarizare forțată și sistemul de orfelinate, relevând exploatarea economică intensivă a minorilor sub pretextul educației comuniste.

Analiza a evidențiat contradicția dintre propaganda oficială și realitatea materială, demonstrând că modernizarea forțată în domeniile locuirii, industrializării și mobilității forței de muncă a servit scopuri de stratificare socială, inginerie demografică și denaturare a componenței etnice. Cercetarea a relevat că procesul de sovietizare nu a fost liniar, ci o dinamică conflictuală în care familia și cultura tradițională au funcționat ca spații de rezistență pasivă, persistența religiozității și a ritualurilor tradiționale demonstrând incapacitatea regimului de a controla complet intimitatea existenței umane. **Semnificația teoretică:** În lucrare sunt dezvoltate teorii și metodologii de cercetare, precum și trei direcții de cercetare noi; au fost identificate structuri și dimensiuni ale cotidianului sovietic în RSSM necercetate anterior; au fost formulate concluzii cu privire la impactul regimului politic, ideologiei și propagandei comuniste asupra vieții de zi cu zi a populației RSSM.
Valoarea aplicativă: cercetarea a inițiat direcții științifice noi: *Istoria vieții cotidiene în RSSM, Antropologia istorică a „sovieticității" din Republica Moldova și Istoria copilăriei sovietice din RSSM*. Au fost elucidate structuri și dimensiuni ale cotidianului din RSSM necercetate anterior care vor putea fi dezvoltate ca teme științifice distincte. Rezultatele cercetării vor servi la elaborarea cursurilor, manualelor școlare și universitare, emisiunilor Radio și TV despre regimul totalitar din RSSM, de asemenea vor contribui la *desovietizarea* societății – combaterea miturilor totalitare. **Implementarea rezultatelor științifice** a avut loc prin publicarea unei culegeri de documente inedite, a 3 monografii, 28 de articole științifice, cca 40 de comunicări la conferințe științifice naționale și internaționale, inclusiv în ședințe plenare.

ANNOTATION

Author: Adrian Dolghi
Theme: Everyday Life in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic in the Context of Political, Social and Economic Transformations (1944-1961). Habilitation thesis in history, Chișinău, 2026; **Field of Study:** Speciality 611.02 – History of Romanians (by periods).
Keywords: MSSR, communist regime, everyday life, violence, ideologization, propaganda, PCM. **Thesis Structure:** list of abbreviations, introduction, six chapters with 4-8 subsections each, general conclusions and recommendations, bibliography with 591 titles, 341 pages (excluding bibliography), declaration of assumption of responsibility and author's CV.
Research Objective: The comprehensive elucidation of the everyday life of the MSSR population in the context of political, social and economic transformations during 1944-1961, through analysis of the impact of the totalitarian communist regime on dimensions of daily life: material, social, cultural and private. **Thesis Objectives:** Researching the structures of daily life in the Moldavian SSR during the years 1944–1961; Analysis and valorization of historiography of everyday life in MSSR; Research of the process of Sovietization of everyday life; Elucidation of social aspects of everyday life in rural and urban environments; Investigation of the impact of political and ideological factors on family and everyday life; Analysis of the situation of children and identification of factors that influenced the everyday life of the younger generation in the post-war politico-ideological and social context.
The novelty and scientific originality of this study lie in its interdisciplinary and multifaceted approach–the first of its kind–to daily life in the Moldavian SSR during the years 1944–1961. The study opens up new directions for research in the historiography of the Republic of Moldova: the history of daily life in the Moldavian SSR, the historical anthropology of "Sovietness" in the Republic of Moldova, and the history of Soviet childhood in the Moldavian SSR. For the first time, previously unexplored structures and dimensions of Soviet daily life in the Moldavian SSR have been identified and elucidated; a significant

volume of unpublished documents and testimonies collected from eyewitnesses on the subject has been evaluated and incorporated into the scholarly discourse.
Results Obtained: A meticulously documented synthesis regarding the history of everyday life in MSSR has been accomplished. The investigation demonstrated that poverty, the famine of 1946-1947 and the repressive system were not dysfunctions of the regime, but instruments of social control, maintaining the population in total dependence on the state. The study elucidated the mechanisms of indoctrination of childhood through forced schooling and the orphanage system, revealing the intensive economic exploitation of minors under the pretext of communist education. The analysis highlighted the contradiction between official propaganda and material reality, demonstrating that forced modernisation in the domains of housing, industrialisation, and labour mobility served purposes of social stratification, demographic engineering and distortion of ethnic composition. The research revealed that the process of Sovietization was not linear, but a conflictual dynamic in which family and traditional culture functioned as spaces of passive resistance, with the persistence of religiosity and traditional rituals demonstrating the regime's incapacity to completely control the intimacy of human existence. **Theoretical Significance:** The work develops research theories and methodologies, as well as three new research directions; previously unstudied structures and dimensions of Soviet everyday life in MSSR have been identified; conclusions have been formulated regarding the impact of the political regime, ideology and communist propaganda on the daily life of the MSSR population. **Practical Value:** The research has initiated new scientific directions: History of Everyday Life in MSSR, Historical Anthropology of "Sovietness" in the Republic of Moldova and History of Soviet Childhood in MSSR. Structures and dimensions of everyday life in MSSR, previously unstudied, have been elucidated, which can be developed into distinct scientific themes. The research results will serve in the development of courses, school and university textbooks, Radio and TV broadcasts about the totalitarian regime in MSSR, and will also contribute to the desovietization of society – combating totalitarian myths. **The implementation of the scientific results** was carried out through the publication of a collection of previously unpublished documents, three monographs, a study on history and visual anthropology, 28 scientific articles, and approximately 40 presentations at national and international scientific conferences, including plenary sessions.

АННОТАЦИЯ

Автор: Адриан Долгий; **Тема:** Повседневная жизнь в Молдавской ССР в контексте политических, социальных и экономических преобразований (1944-1961). Диссертация на соискание степени доктора хабилитат истории, Кишинев, 2026. **Область исследования:** специальность 611.02 – История румын (по периодам). **Ключевые слова:** МССР, коммунистический режим, повседневная жизнь, насилие, идеологизация, пропаганда, КПМ; **Структура диссертации:** список сокращений, введение, шесть глав с 4-8 подразделами каждая, общие выводы и рекомендации, библиография с 591 названиями, 341 страниц (до библиографии), декларация об ответственности и автобиография автора. **Цель исследования** состоит в комплексном освещении повседневной жизни населения МССР в контексте политических, социальных и экономических преобразований 1944-1961 годов путем анализа воздействия коммунистического тоталитарного режима на различные аспекты повседневного существования: материальные, социальные, культурные и приватные. **Задачи диссертации:** Исследование структур повседневной жизни в МССР в 1944-1961 годах; Исследование процесса советизации повседневной жизни; Выяснение социальных аспектов повседневной жизни в сельской и городской среде; Изучение

влияния политических и идеологических факторов на семью и повседневную жизнь; Анализ положения детей и выявление факторов, которые влияли на повседневную жизнь молодого поколения в послевоенном политико-идеологическом и социальном контексте. **Научная новизна и оригинальность** настоящего исследования заключаются в том, что в нем впервые применяется междисциплинарный и многоаспектный подход к изучению повседневной жизни в МССР в 1944–1961 годах. Исследование открывает новые направления в историографии Республики Молдова: история повседневной жизни в МССР, историческая антропология «советскости» в Республике Молдова и история советского детства в МССР. Впервые были выявлены и проанализированы ранее неисследованные структуры и аспекты повседневной жизни в МССР; был изучен и включен в научный оборот значительный объем неизданных документов и свидетельств, полученных от очевидцев. **Полученные результаты:** Была создана документированная синтезирующая работа по истории повседневной жизни в МССР. Исследование доказало, что бедность, голод 1946-1947 годов и репрессивная система были не дисфункциональностями режима, а инструментами социального контроля, удерживая население в состоянии полной зависимости от государства. Исследование раскрыло механизмы идеологизации детства через принудительное школьное обучение и систему детских домов, выявив интенсивную экономическую эксплуатацию несовершеннолетних под предлогом коммунистического воспитания. Анализ выявил противоречие между официальной пропагандой и материальной реальностью, доказав, что форсированная модернизация в сферах жилищного строительства, индустриализации и мобильности рабочей силы служила целям социальной стратификации, демографической инженерии и искажения этнического состава. Исследование показало, что процесс советизации был не линейным, а представлял собой конфликтную динамику, в которой семья и традиционная культура функционировали как пространства пассивного сопротивления, при этом сохранение религиозности и традиционных обрядов свидетельствовало о неспособности режима полностью контролировать интимную сферу человеческого существования. **Теоретическое значение:** В диссертации разработаны теории и методологии исследования, а также определены три новых направления исследований; выявлены ранее не изученные структуры и измерения советской повседневности в МССР; сформулированы выводы относительно воздействия политического режима, идеологии и коммунистической пропаганды на повседневную жизнь населения МССР. **Практическое значение:** Исследование инициировало новые научные направления: история повседневной жизни в МССР, историческая антропология «советскости» в Республике Молдова и история советского детства в МССР. Были освещены ранее не изученные структуры и измерения повседневной жизни в МССР, которые могут быть развиты в качестве отдельных научных тем. Результаты исследования могут быть использованы при разработке учебных курсов, школьных и университетских учебников, радио- и телепередач о тоталитарном режиме в МССР, а также будут способствовать десоветизации общества – борьбе с тоталитарными мифами. **Внедрение научных результатов** состоялось путем публикации сборника ранее не изданных документов, издания 3 монографий, 28 научных статей, представления около 40 докладов на национальных и международных научных конференциях, в том числе на пленарных заседаниях.

DOLGHI ADRIAN
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Specialisation: 611.02 – HISTORY OF THE ROMANIANS (by period)
Abstract of the habilitation thesis in history

The printing of the abstract of the habilitation thesis in history was funded under project no. 24. 00208. 0807. 09/PD II "Daily Life in the Moldavian SSR in the Context of Political, Social, and Economic Transformations (1944–1961)"

Approved for printing: 31.03.2026 | Paper size 60x84 1/16
Offset paper. Offset printing. | Print run: 14 copies
Print sheets: 4.4 | Order No. 1

UPS "Ion Creangă" Publishing and Printing Centre in Chișinău
Chișinău, 1 Ion Creangă St., Block 4, MD-2069
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