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NEWSLETTER

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Synthesis and Foreign Policy Debates

TOPICS OF THE EDITION:

1. Evolutions within the Transnistrian conflict regulation process as viewed by the Head of the OSCE Mission to the Republic of Moldova, **Jennifer Brush**, the American ambassador to Chisinau, **William Moser**, and the Chisinau main negotiator, **Eugen Carpov**.
2. Editorial by **Victor Chirilă**: Can Transnistria be reintegrated?
3. On both banks of the river Nistru a new generation has grown up with no experience of common living. The expert **Daniel Vodă** is speaking about how this communication hiatus could be overcome.

The latest political developments in the Republic of Moldova:



On May 23rd and 24th, in Odessa, the second round of negotiations in the 5+2 format within the Transnistrian conflict regulation process took place under the OSCE Ukrainian presidency. The participants have signed a formal decision on the dismantling of a cable car over the river Nistru. The meeting, however, has yielded no results on the political and security issues. On Tuesday, May 28th, the heads of the negotiators' teams, Eugen Carpov and Nina Stanski, discussed at a bilateral meeting about the tensed situation in the Nistru security zone.



During a private visit to Chisinau on May 18th and 19th, the European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, Stefan Füle, launched on one hand a conciliation message for the political class and on the other hand, a message of tolerance for the Moldovan society. The visit took place on the occasion of the Europe Days in Chisinau. Stefan Füle gave a public speech and held separate meetings with the leaders of the former ruling coalition during which he has called for the rebuilding of the democratic governance in Chisinau and continuation of the European course of the Republic of Moldova. During his second visit, the European Commissioner welcomed the participants in the sexual minorities' march which took place in Chisinau.



The political forces in Chisinau have been advised to cooperate with a view to forming a new Government and not missing the chance of signing the Republic of Moldova- European Union Association Agreement this year. The address has been formulated by the Euro parliamentarians Jacek Protasiewicz and Libor Roucek, who paid a visit to Chisinau just several days before the designated prime-minister, the liberal-democrat Iurie Leanca, came in the parliament to ask for the vote of investiture for his cabinet.



In the evening of the May 30th, in a meeting which took place until midnight, the Parliament from Chisinau succeeded in granting investiture vote to the Leanca Government. The government investiture procedure has been preceded by the formation of a Pro-European Government Coalition, composed of 58 MPs from the Liberal-Democratic Party, Democratic Party and a self-called reformatory group from the Liberal Party. Each MP personally signed the coalition establishment Agreement. The same evening, with the vote of the new majority, the MP Igor Corman was elected speaker of Parliament. The democrat Adrian Candu and the representative of the Liberal Party reformatory group Oleg Bodrug, have been elected vice-speakers of Parliament.

Investiture of the Leanca Government has been welcomed by the European officials of which the High EU Representative Catherine Ashton, the European Commissioner for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy Stefan Füle, the Swedish foreign minister Carl Bildt and the General Secretary of the Council of Europe Torbjørn Jagland. The two big political groups of the European Parliament – the European Popular Party and the Socialists and Democrats Group – have welcomed the creation of a new pro-European government in Chisinau. The Romanian foreign minister has stated Romania would support the European aspirations of the Leanca Government and the objectives it sets in the perspective of the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius.



Jennifer Brush: We have difficult times in the negotiations, because people have to make difficult decisions



On 23rd and 24th of May, in Odessa, the second round of the negotiations in the 5+2 format took place under the Ukrainian presidency of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). At the end of the two-day discussions, an official decision was signed on the dismantling of the cable

car between Ribnita and Rezina which was built in the soviet period and which at present is a threat to the security of the population in the region. The meeting seemed to have been rather tensed or at least this has been reported by the Ukrainian press. The Transnistrian delegation threatened with boycotting

of the meeting if issues regarding the security zone and peacemaking mission are addressed. The main Transnistrian negotiator, Nina Stanaschi, had declared that the 5+2 format is not acceptable for discussing such problems.

I have asked the head of the OSCE mission to Chisinau, Jennifer Brush, if despite the existing tensions the meeting had any results.

Jennifer Brush: I think it was a good meeting. We have difficult times in the negotiations, because people have to make difficult decisions and where is at this time this year there was some type of euphoria about a new leadership in Transnistria and perhaps an euphoria that the political crisis in Moldova was finally over. Now we do not have those two ingredients any more. We've got a political crisis in Moldova and we've come to know our friends in Transnistria a little bit better and found out more about their goals and objectives. Now that we all know each other a little bit better, it's more difficult to find common ground. We have a variety of issues that have been in front of the negotiators for quite some time.

So we've had a number of issues that we've been discussing for a number of months and we've been making progress on these decisions and these draft protocols, I have to say. But we've just have not been able to break through the remaining objections to be able to sign protocols and really start moving on addressing the issues that improve people's lives on both sides of the river. So, what I think I am planning to do now, is provide both sides the space they need to be able to consider these protocols that are on the table and find a way forward. We need to give them some space do that they can bring along the various stakeholders on both sides of the river and that they can begin to find a common ground to be able to work together. They need some space in order to do that-physical space, time space. They need to be able to look at the recommendations that are on the table, talk to the various stakeholders involved and be able to come up with a position that will hopefully be on common ground between the two sides.

We did get an agreement from the latest round of 5+2 about for taking down the funicular between Rezina and Ribnita. You might consider that maybe a technical issue



that could be solved by the mayors of Varnita and Ribnita instead of the high ranking delegation that was there in Odessa. But still any achievement that we have between the two sides for us is progress. But still, I am proud of that protocol because actually it is a protocol that when we implement it will in fact visibly improve the physical safety of people in the region. So, I am proud of any type of agreement that I can help facilitate that will actually make people's life safer.

Of course, I am disappointed that we were not able to talk about the security zone because I think none of us wants to see tensions in the security zone raised any higher. And we were hoping that a discussion of the events in the security zone would lower tensions and be able to find some type of understanding about the events that are occurring in the security zone. And I am very disappointed that discussion did not happen in Odessa. For example, we still don't know the real circumstances behind the event in Varnita a few weeks ago that brought people out in the streets and could have resulted in violence.

But we are very relieved that the two main negotiators – Eugen Carpov and Nina Stanski – who met several days after the negotiations round in Odessa, will be able to talk about the events in the security zone and find a common way forward to be able to defuse

the tensions and not have the fear that something could escalate into violence there, which is something that nobody needs or wants.

I repeat to you what I said to Eugen Carpov and Nina Stanski themselves at the Odessa round that the two of them hold in their hands the ability to open up the Gura Bicului bridge. The two of them at that meeting, right then and there, could have decided on the conditions to have the bridge opened. I told Nina that they could open the bridge within a month. There was no technical or physical reason not to open the bridge. And I told her I had agreed to take on freedom of movement as a complex of issues acknowledging that there were problems with the freedom of movement that existed on the Transnistrian side. So that opening of this bridge I can consider as a complex of issues I agreed with her that I would do that. And I told Mr. Carpov that the remaining issues that are unresolved in the draft protocols are issues that I felt that the Moldovan side could address and should address in order to get the bridge opened.

Opening up of this bridge is not just symbolic. It is not just so that the villages on both sides of the bridge could use vehicles instead of bicycles to transport bags of flowers, but it's also to assist the industries on both sides of the river to better transport their goods and

services throughout Moldova, throughout the region. But that bridge is also important for opening up the entire Black Sea region for commerce and trade. So it goes from the basic level of helping the people live on both sides, to helping the economy of Moldova, to also increasing the economic potential of this entire region. That's why it is so important. And we are tantalizingly close.

Lina Grâu: I have asked the head of the OSCE mission in the Republic of Moldova why the bridge from Gura Bacului does not open, since everybody agrees that this can only bring benefits?

Jennifer Brush: As I said before, there is no physical or financial reason not to. The Transnistrian side could open it within a month if they want these other issues resolved. And the other issue getting resolved presents political challenges for the Moldovan side. And my job is to try to convince the Moldovan side that they can overcome these challenges and not having any threat for the territorial integrity of sovereignty of Moldova and still get the bridge opened. And I will give you a few examples.

One of the examples, one of the proposals in the protocol is to form a database covering mutual license plates that will be issued to Transnistrian commercial vehicles. The Moldovan side is insisting that these vehicles be registered in the Moldovan database. The Transnistrian side is insisting that a separate database be established. And my question would be to the Moldovan political elite: "What do they think special status means?" It's going to mean devolving competencies to authorities in Tiraspol and that I don't think that establishing the commercial database for vehicles is a very dramatic move. Nobody wants to hear about America but we have 50 separate databases for each state and the states agreed to cooperate with each other but not give up their databases.

The other issue is the commitment not to use the bridge for military purposes. I do not think there is anybody in this region who would like to use that bridge for military purposes. So why not agree not to use this bridge for military purposes if you have no intention to do so? But I am not a Moldovan politician and I don't have to live with the

pressures that Moldovan politicians have to live with from other political parties, from their own political parties and from the public. So it is very easy for me to give this kind of advice. And I fully respect the pressures that Moldovan politicians are under in normal times much less now.

Lina Grâu: How do you think the political situation in Chisinau influences the atmosphere and the negotiations results?

Jennifer Brush: First of all, I have to tell you that I really do not understand the political conflict that brought this crisis in Moldova. I think it's for local commentators and local analysts to understand the dynamics among the politicians who were involved in that crisis. But I can just say that we are all very disappointed that instead of looking towards the goals of this government whether it's European integration or whether it's solving the Transnistrian conflict.

And it seems to allow the Transnistrians perhaps more freedom to be able to say more provocative things, such as moving the Parliament, the Supreme Soviet, to Bender or some of the other things that they have been talking about.

But more important than that is that Moldovan politicians themselves have told me that Moldova needs to be attractive for Transnistria. So they need to get the government together in order to present an attractive goal for Transnistria. This type of political chaos publicly does not seem very attractive right now. So I wish acting prime-minister Leanca all the best for putting the government together this week and putting the government back on the track that the people elected them to do.

Lina Grâu: I think you are right when you say that the interminable political crises in Chisinau seem to distract the politicians' attention from the Transnistrian regulation. Even at the society level there exists the opinion that the battle for Transnistria has been lost, at least in medium term. What is your response to this point of view?

Jennifer Brush: There are various theoretical approaches to mediation and I think we've talked a little bit about this last time but one of the classic approaches is

what they call "game theory" and maybe game makes some things simple but actually it's more of a framework for how the negotiations can proceed. And when you look at this theory, you don't look in terms of just one step. You look at one step, the reactions to that step and what step you need to take following that. So I frequently hear here in Moldova: "The game is lost". As you said: "We've lost Transnistria". And people seem to be content with that solution "It's lost". But then, what? What does that mean "it's lost"? What do you do about to be sorrow? What about Bender? What about the hundreds of thousands of people who live in Transnistria and who consider themselves Moldovan citizens? I do not see the next step after people saying "It's lost". It's lost and then what? You still have the same problem

Likewise for the Transnistrian side, they think they've solved their problem by saying they are independent. But then, what if nobody recognizes you? What difference does it make it when you say you are independent when you do not have recognition and when you do not have access to international institutions?

So, I understand that these alternatives are very popular among the public, but how do you implement it, what is the next step. It feels good to say but how do you actually live in that kind of situations when things are certainly not solved and your lives are still in limbo. And I've never heard anybody explain to me what the next step would be.

Lina Grâu: I have asked the ambassador Jennifer Brush, the head of the OSCE in the Republic of Moldova, what are in this case the concrete steps in order to reach what the international community thinks the solution for the Transnistrian regulation should be – a special status for Transnistria in conditions of territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova.

Jennifer Brush: You want me to still talk about the baskets and I am happy to talk about the baskets. I talk about the baskets in my sleep. The baskets involve confidence building measures and building trust. I've only been here a year, so, I haven't seen the situation that existed before when there apparently was some trust between

the two sides which meant that you could immediately go into the settlement of the final status. I don't believe we are at that stage right now. I believe there is very little trust between the two sides.

To prove to the people that things can be done together, so that's why the cable car becomes an important visible sign –that the two sides can actually accomplish something together, something that will improve people's lives. I've said already why the bridge is important.

We also do other things that build confidence between the two sides, such as removal of the radioactive sources and removal of pesticides. So maybe these things do not sound exciting and sexy to the people who are listening to your radio show, but they are the building blocks of the confidence that needs to be rebuilt between the two sides. And these things that happen on an everyday basis between the populations of the two sides that nobody remarks about but the contacts and cooperation and the daily basic issues happen regularly. So people are communicating with each other. It's not complete isolation.

Lina Grâu: One year and a half ago when the change happened in Transnistria everybody had big hopes towards the new team and expectations that it would be more flexible and more open for dialogue. Have these expectations been met?

Jennifer Brush: I wasn't here and I've never witnessed what happened under Mr Smirnov. All I can personally refer to is my working relationship with Mr Sevchiuk and Ms Stanski. Yes, I think there are certainly more things they could have done to make the process easier. I've already said what the Moldovan side could have done.

But the political situation in Transnistria is also very complicated. And let's not forget that it was a surprise that Mr. Sevchiuk won. So there still considerable political opposition to him and his party. And if you read the Transnistrian press, he has a number of problems with Transnistrian businesses. So it's a difficult political climate for him too. And now there is a whole generation of young people who have grown up who know nothing but the idea that they live in

an independent Transnistria and do not have any memory of living with Moldova.

That is why I think they oppose the discussions on the Transnistria status which is part of the third basket. But we have the Dublin Declaration from 2012, adopted by all the 57 OSCE member states, which is about a special status for Transnistria, observing the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova. The declaration states also that the negotiation process should include all the three baskets.

Lina Grâu: This month, they have announced that the Tiraspol administration decided to shut down certain Internet portals, which means that de facto, the authorities there are trying to impose a control on the Internet. OSCE has a component which has to do with the freedom of the press. How do you see these evolutions in the Transnistrian region?

Jennifer Brush: We've raised this issue in Transnistria with Transnistrian authorities and expressed our concern. The portals that you've described that have been shut down, I think they are called "forums". I do not think I've ever participated in a forum on the internet and I do not think that I will, but I understand that for many people, especially of younger generations, that's how they include themselves in the political process. And I understand that one of the key features of these forums is anonymity and that seems what's bothering the Transnistrian authorities that anybody can participate without revealing their identity. Their point of view seems to be that Transnistria is an open enough society, with enough access to Government officials, that people should be able to express their opinion openly to anyone in the Transnistrian structures and reveal their names without covering up their identity. But if people prefer to participate in these forums unanimously that speaks to a certain preference of people to be able to participate without revealing their identities.

So, yes, it is concerning. I think that it is particularly concerning too because you talked about the new authorities being young and coming from a different generation and certainly when they came into office, they use social media.

Lina Grâu: I have asked the head of the OSCE mission in the Republic of Moldova, based on her experience of more than one year since she has been in the post, what are the positive and negative sides of Chisinau and Tiraspol.

Jennifer Brush: I think the negative in the first place has been the unfortunate history of this region. Unfortunately, the more I look at the history of this region, it is a history of great suffering. And perhaps it is difficult to imagine a life that's better. Philosophers for centuries have tried to figure out what is the good life – is it health, is it prosperity, is it love? But I think all these conditions could be vastly improved in this region. And that's what makes me sad about the region as I do not see a type of vision to live a better life or to live even the good life.

On the other hand, I think there is a reason why Moldova seems to lack some type of definition and that's because of the history. So many civilizations have come through here because in fact it is the center of civilization.

So to turn a negative into a positive, there is a reason that has been a lack of definition because so many empires have claimed to this part of the world, called the crossroad of the civilization. And that's why the roads are so important. Moldova needs to become a transportation hub, whether it's a sea port, the river port at Giurgiulesti, whether it's M14, Corridor 9, whether it's Chisinau airport, to be able to navigate the Nistru river. But Moldova is important because you need it for transportation. So I'd like to see the local population benefit from being at the crossroads rather than suffer from being at the crossroad.

Lina Grâu: Where do you see the key of the Transnistrian conflict resolution? Some say it is in Moscow, others in Brussels, in Chisinau or Tiraspol.

Jennifer Brush: The key is in Chisinau, it's in your country. And I would like to see that Chisinau provides some type of a vision for what resolution of this conflict is.

William Moser: The key to the Transnistrian regulation consists in the compromise between the two sides

The American ambassador William Moser participated in the 5+2 negotiations in Odessa. The USA alongside the European Union is an observer in the Transnistrian regulation process. William Moser says that if the Republic of Moldova succeeds to grow its economy, the country reintegration will be easier. The diplomat says that the negotiations may take long and make the impression they do not change anything, but it is important the dialogue between Chisinau and Tiraspol is continuing and at a certain point things may change like it was with the reunification of Germany.

I have asked the American ambassador to Chisinau William Moser under what conditions the Transnistrian conflict regulation is possible and if the so-called "battle" for Transnistria has not been lost.

■ **William Moser:** I know that this is of concern to Moldovans that the current situation and instability may affect the negotiations. I've heard many times people in Chisinau saying that the negotiations will never conclude anything and nothing will ever change. But every time, I am telling them about my experience.

I was a young diplomat in Bonn, West Germany, when Bonn was the capital of the West Germany, in 1986 and 1987 and at that time people thought that the Berlin wall was forever and that did change. And things can change for the Republic of Moldova as well.

So, I always urged people to remember that despite the fact that the negotiations may be long and plodding, and sometimes it seems that there is no progress, at the same time it is a good thing that at least the two sides are talking. As long as the negotiations are continuing, I think people should be hopeful that eventually this can lead to some kind of settlement agreement.

The other thing I would like to point out that is very important for your listeners to understand, is they really need to stay focus on what the OSCE foreign ministers said in



December of last year. The said very clearly in a statement agreed upon unanimously by all the OSCE members- by Russia, by Ukraine, by the United States, by Germany, by France, all of the countries, that essentially Transnistria will have a special status but it will be incorporated into the territory of the Republic of Moldova. This means that the international community is of one mind of what the final solution will be. And yes, we have to have negotiations in order to get to that final stage, but I think that even though the path forward may not be completely clear, we know what the in-result should be.

■ **Lina Grău:** Where is the key to the solution of the Transnistrian conflict?

■ **William Moser:** The key for the settlement is very clear- it is going to mean compromise on both sides- compromise for the Transnistrians to be a part of greater Moldova and compromise on the part of the current government leaders in Chisinau, to welcome the Transnistrians into a new Moldova that will restore Moldova to its original territory.

■ **Lina Grău:** From the geographical point of view, they continue saying that the key to the regulation would be either in Moscow, or Brussels, or even elsewhere...

■ **William Moser:** Well, I know many people in Moldova talk about geographical balance but I think the truth will show that the true controllers of Moldova's fate are the Moldovan people and if Moldovans on the whole territory of Moldova show willingness to settle this conflict, it can be settled.

■ **Lina Grău:** Regarding the people on the two sides of the Nistru – you had the occasion to meet both. Do you think there are more similarities or differences at the level of ordinary people? Is there any conflict between them?

■ **William Moser:** Well, you know, I met people on both sides and I think that the differences between them are far less than the similarities that they share.

You know, one of the assistance programmes that we have been actively working on in Transnistria - the transition to high-value agriculture. And

what we find is that the Moldovan farmers in the Transnistrian area have the same problems about making a transition to high-value agriculture that the Moldovans on this side of the Nistru river have. And similarly, we work with certain Transnistrian companies in the light manufacturing area and we are doing the same things with them that we are with the light manufacturing companies on this side of the river – we are helping them develop foreign markets, learning how to market their product better, learning how

to position themselves so that they offer competitive products on the international markets.

And I think that this leads to what really the point of the discussion should actually be- is that if Moldova grows its economy and is more successful in its economic growth, it will make the integration process easier.

Eugen Carpov: If the Transnistrian partners find it important that the transport in the region moves, they would need to put the politics aside

The main negotiator from Chisinau, vice prime-minister for Reintegration, Eugen Carpov, says the Transnistrian conflict regulation does not jeopardize in any way the European course – the two processes are complementary and when the population feels the benefits of the European integration to the full, the people in the Transnistrian region will also like to be part of this process.

■ **Eugen Carpov:** For the Odessa round, the OSCE presidency –the Ukrainian part– has prepared a draft agenda. The draft was a comprehensive one and contained very many issues from all those conventional baskets which form part of the general agenda of the talks in the 5+2 format. The first part of the meeting was dedicated to the discussions on the content of the agenda. Those from Tiraspol shared the opinion that the agenda should be approved first and that only the issues the parties agree upon should form part of the agenda. On the other hand, Chisinau which was supported by the rest of the delegates, held the position that according to the documents regulating the activity in the 5+2 format, the agenda cannot be approved. The latter is presented by the presidency following consultation of the parties -Chisinau and Tiraspol- and the approval procedure is not provided for.

After the first day of discussions, the presidency came up with a final agenda



which was not subject to negotiations any longer. It contained issues from all the baskets. A common decision was taken regarding the negative developments in the security zone, that at the first stage, the

talks will be carried out by the Chisinau and Tiraspol representatives in order to start the dialogue on this subject. One of the results of the Odessa meeting was the adoption of the formal decision

on the dismantling of the cable car which connects Rezina and Ribnita – a construction from the USSR times which connected the cement plant from the right and left banks of the Nistru. This technological line has not been used for more than 20 years. In the meantime, residential buildings have been built under it while the cable car has technically degraded and is a real threat to the population. Both on the right and left banks of the river wagons weighing hundreds of kg are suspended at a considerable height and can fall down any time. The Ukrainian presidency has to look for funds and technological support so that this line is dismantled.

We have also discussed about the freedom of movement. Many discussions are about the possibility of opening the bridge in Gura Bacului, movement of people from both banks and the circulation of transport for goods and passengers from the Transnistrian region in the international traffic. At present, there is a draft document presented by the OSCE which includes all the three issues in one document. The discussions have advanced substantially and a big part of the articles of this document have been agreed upon though the principles still remain to be agreed.

The principles reside in the need to observe the international standards for all the mechanisms and procedures that we are developing. If is to refer to the auto transport, there exist bilateral agreements with the states in the region and we are a party to the Vienna Convention on Road Traffic from 1968 which stipulates very clearly the way the automobiles are registered, the kind of the car registration plates are given to the transportation units and to the drivers in order to be able to move. All these requirements are mandatory for Transnistria as well in case we agree that the transportation units from Transnistria circulate in CIS and European Union.

■ **Lina Grâu:** To my knowledge, the Transnistrian side insists on having a

separate database in Tiraspol, while Chisinau opposes this idea because of its international commitments.

■ **Eugen Carpov:** Chisinau does not oppose this. Chisinau quotes the articles from the Vienna Convention above-mentioned, which stipulates very clearly that the contracting parties to this Convention are responsible for the registration procedure, for keeping the database and for issuing the documents and registration plates. The Republic of Moldova being a party to this Convention, cannot accept that these procedures take place without participation of the Moldovan authorities. Our position was flexible enough – we have suggested that these procedures be realized together, which means that certain things can be done in Tiraspol or in the Transnistrian region by the structures there, while the registration itself, authorization of the car plates and keeping of the database take place in Chisinau, so that those from Tiraspol have access to the database which will register the Transnistrian transport units without having the right to modify, introduce or delete data.

Thus, in our opinion, there are ways of solving the problem if there were no political ambitions or other interests. I think that if our partners from the Transnistrian region find it important that the transport units circulate, people have jobs and transportation companies have benefits, they should put the politics aside. We should focus on the technical and legal aspects based on which I am pretty sure we will set up the necessary mechanisms.

A very good example I can bring is the decision from the last year on the circulation of trains on the railway segment via the Transnistrian region. We have had a perfect agreement. We have identified the mechanisms and committed together with the Transnistrian side to observe the existent international commitments. This mechanism works and not long ago it got extended for another 12 months. And at present, there are practically no impediments in its implementation.

■ **Lina Grâu:** One of the aspects on which the Transnistrian side insists with regard to this bridge is a provision forbidding the use of the bridge for military purposes. And I know that some mediators and observers are supportive of this.

■ **Eugen Carpov:** From my point of view, today we have all the necessary elements which make it impossible to use the bridge for military purposes. First of all, this bridge is located in the security zone. The security zone is governed by rules set up by the Agreement from 1992. The responsibility for security in this zone is with the Unified Control Commission and the Unified Military Command. Moreover, even when the bridge is not functional, both on the right and left banks there are non-stop peacemakers' posts near this infrastructure object.

Thus, the discussions about new arrangements which would guarantee the non-use of the military methods by one side against the other only creates the impression that today, there would exist interests when someone could apply the force. I have stated with all the responsibility and I continue saying that we consider that such conditions do not exist. The Republic of Moldova has no interest other than the political dialogue, negotiations instruments and no force instruments could be applied. I want to believe that the same point of view is shared by our partners from the Transnistrian region. Thus, we cannot accept discussions about aspects that do not correspond to the reality.

■ **Lina Grâu:** Mr. Carpov, in the meantime, after the meeting in Odessa, you had a meeting with the main negotiator from Tiraspol, Nina Stanski, which was dedicated to the problems that exist in the security zone. How does Chisinau view the solution of these problems?

■ **Eugen Carpov:** In Odessa, we had a common agreement to hold a meeting in the nearest future between the Chisinau and Tiraspol representatives. This meeting took place at the OSCE Mission office.

First of all, it was a necessary discussion with consultations on the events happening in the security zone. I have paid special attention to the situation of the cooperation between the structures dealing with fighting criminality – this is about the activity of the Moldovan police in the town of Bender. We spoke about the actions undertaken against the police. Evidently, we cannot agree to unilateral actions.

Our position is that there have to be preliminary consultations prior to taking actions, so as to be able to avoid consequences which could aggravate the situation in the region and generate conflicts. Sure, the instruments in place have to be used – the Unified Control Commission. As long as the Unified Control Commission is responsible for the situation in the region, especially for the situation in Bender, no pressure can be exercised on the police structures or on the Moldovan authorities.

We have agreed to have a dialogue both in Chisinau and Tiraspol with the delegations of Chisinau and Tiraspol within the Unified Control Commission and try to orient the delegations towards an internal dialogue and review primarily the existing documents regulating the presence and the cooperation of both Chisinau and Tiraspol in the security zone.

The second aspect that we have agreed upon is the creation of a neutral expert group which will analyse the de facto situation on the ground in order to see what the infringements are, what the recommendations would be in order to reach normality. We have also agreed to abstain from actions which would further tense the situation.

In the nearest future, we will give instructions to the sectorial working groups within the 5+2 talks which deal with fighting criminality, so that they

meet and discuss the possibility of signing protocols which would register the first steps in the dialogue between the respective structures.

At the meeting in Odessa, the OSCE representatives have presented a draft protocol which establishes the first communication elements between the parties in the given area. I think it is a platform that we should use. We are trying to agree upon a first protocol of joint actions in fighting criminality in areas which allow for such cooperation today. There are areas in which Moldova has international commitments, for instance, the obligation of protecting personal data or non-transmission of its citizens to other unrecognised structures. It is evident that in the respective areas the cooperation cannot advance other than in parallel with the Transnistrian regulation and with the identification of the legal status for Transnistria, which would be recognised. Until then, there exist areas which could be discussed without affecting these commitments. For instance, the cooperation in identifying the stolen cars and the return of the cars found on the right and left banks to their owners. At the same time, we could cooperate in cases of identification of bodies as a result of crimes of high gravity.

■ **Lina Grâu:** I would like to discuss with you the political crisis in Chisinau. How do you as negotiator see the impact of this crisis on the negotiations? Does it not weaken your and the Chisinau position in the talks?

■ **Eugen Carpov:** It is evident that no political or constitutional crisis can contribute to progress in the negotiations no matter what they are. I would like to tell you though, that during the meetings that we are having, the topics related to the internal processes in Chisinau have not been discussed. My capacity as negotiator in the Transnistrian conflict regulation

process did not change and no questions from the dialogue partners appeared.

■ **Lina Grâu:** How can we ensure that the Transnistrian problem does not affect the European course of the Republic of Moldova? Isn't Transnistria a lost battle? I am asking you these questions because more and more people are of the opinion that the Republic of Moldova could get closer to the EU without the Transnistrian region.

■ **Eugen Carpov:** The Chisinau position is that the Transnistrian conflict regulation should not jeopardise in any way the European course of the Republic of Moldova. On the contrary, the European integration process should bring benefits to the state of the Republic of Moldova and its citizens. It should bring about stability and economic development. Thus, the quality of life on the right bank should increase. And I am convinced that this cannot but have a positive impact on the Transnistrian conflict regulation. When the situation of the population on both banks is difficult, - the material and economic situation – it is very hard to motivate our citizens to be more combative and more interested in having the conflict regulated in a short period of time.

We should demonstrate the positive practical effects of the European integration and not only the economic aspects but also from the point of view of the society democratization, of the human rights protection and of the certainty in the future and in the institutions. We should bring the European Union in our home. We should implement the standards and principles observed by the EU member states and implement them here. Then, the adherence moment to EU will be closer and this process would facilitate the Transnistrian conflict regulation.

Editorial

Reintegration of Transnistria with a special status within the Republic of Moldova is one of the fundamental priorities of the Moldovan constitutional authorities. In order to attain this objective, the Government of the Republic of Moldova undertook to plead for withdrawal of the Russian military forces from the territory of the country and for their replacement with a civil international mission, and for the solution of the conflict in the 5+2 format, observing the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of the country.

It its turn, the secessionist administration from Tiraspol rejects ab-initio any discussion or negotiations on the Transnistrian region reintegration with



Can Transnistria be reintegrated?

a special status within the Republic of Moldova. The power transfer produced in the region in December 2011, did not change anything with this regard. The new Transnistrian leader Evghenii Sevchiuk rejects as intransigently as his predecessor Igor Smirnov the idea of reintegration.

Compare to his predecessor, Evghenii Sevciuk and his team are doing this in a clever way, appealing to diplomacy, dialogue with external partners, and making use of the new communication and information dissemination instruments offered by the Internet and exploiting ingeniously the civil society capacity of promoting/replacing the arguments, opinions and interests of the Transnistrian region in the western capitals etc.

The Moldovan authorities hope the European integration will make Moldova more attractive to its citizens in the Transnistrian region. Their hopes are contradicted not only by the actual political crisis in Chisinau, but also by a number of political, economic and social adverse realities in the region.

The Transnistrian political elite is preoccupied first of all by its own security and protection of its present political and economic privileges. The present status-quo sponsored politically, financially and militarily by the Russian Federation, ensures the political elite the optimum conditions for defending its interests and the separatism survival.

Tiraspol and Moscow consider that Transnistria has realised itself as a separate political entity and at present has to realise itself as a distinct and self-sufficient economic entity.

The Transnistrian administration led by Evghenii Sevchiuk is planning to attain this objective, including, through the small step policy of „normalising the good neighbourhood relations” with the Republic of Moldova, what in reality means assurance of its exclusive control on the commercial-economic activity with the external partners, excluding the Chisinau authorities.

The present Tiraspol administration also denies the integration processes promoted by EU, as well as the participation in the free deep and comprehensive trade zone with EU, pleading instead for Euro-Asian integration and harmonisation of the region legislation with that of the Russian Federation, declared as strategic vector in consolidating the Transnistrian statehood.

Is the Republic of Moldova able to change this reality? Under the present conditions, it is next to impossible. The small step policy promoted by Chisinau

suffers from a number of deficiencies which makes it less and less credible both on the left and right bank of the Nistru, such as: the lack of a conceptualised policy and of a long and medium term action plan; limited political support; scarce financial resources; lack of an information and communication strategy; and reduced institutional and coordination capacities.

What is the solution? There is only one solution – to regain the confidence of our citizens in the Transnistrian region. The small step policy as it is at the moment is incapable and insufficient to realise this desideratum. This is exclusively based on the dialogue, negotiations and interaction with the central administration from Tiraspol, while the communication with ordinary citizens, business community and civil society in the Transnistrian region is controlled or reduced to the minimum by the same administration.

Given these sad realities, there is need to develop an ample long-term reintegration policy which would encompass all the areas of activity and would be directed towards supporting the ordinary citizens, the business community, the culture people, academia and civil society. This policy should have a pro-active approach and be implemented in parallel with the negotiations in the 5+2 format, aiming to attain the following objectives:

- To involve all the state institutions, the most important mass-media resources, the business community and the civil society within a joint and constant effort, coordinated by the communication/cooperation with our citizens from the left bank of the Nistru;
- Equip the Moldovan government with credible instruments to defend our citizens' interests, as well as to project and influence its messages in the Transnistria region;
- Identify the incentives and the economic, commercial, financial and tax optimum resources in order to encourage the business community in the Transnistrian region to take part in the deep and comprehensive free trade area with the EU;
- Create a Reintegration National Fund whose resources will be earmarked to support the socially vulnerable groups in the Transnistrian region as well as the business community, academia, students, journalists, the civil society etc.;
- Establish independent multidimensional communication bridges with the society in the Transnistrian region.
- Are the Moldovan authorities able to develop such a policy? Do they have vision and political will to do this? These are the key questions that have no definite answer.

Daniel Vodă: Sometimes I have the impression Ukraine is more interested in promoting an active dialogue on Transnistria than Chisinau

In the last 20 years, a new generation of youth has grown up with the idea that they are citizens of an independent state even if unrecognised, and that the Republic of Moldova is a threat to this so-called state. And in Chisinau, the new youth generation is more oriented towards the European values. I have asked one of these young people, Daniel Vodă, a student at the International Relations Faculty of the Moldovan State University how he sees the situation around the Transnistrian regulation and what solutions the new expert generation come up with.

Daniel Vodă: Sometimes, I have the impression that our neighbours from Ukraine are more interested in an active dialogue on the Transnistrian regulation than Chisinau. Unfortunately, in Chisinau, the enthusiasm from the times of Vlad Filat as prime-minister is decreasing. The negotiations within the small step policy which has been trumpeted by Chisinau, seem to have brought more tension in the Transnistrian issue, a relevant example being the altercation which happened in Varnita, which proved that Tiraspol has ambitions and is not ready to discuss on the key issues, including on the demilitarisation issue.

The frequent visits to Tiraspol of the Russian officials through which the separatism on the left bank of the Nistru is being encouraged, have generated more powerful ambitions not only on the part of the Transnistrian leaders, but also of the population which feels that there is a Russian enclave which is close to being recognised. I would like to remind you that a draft law on the recognition of Transnistria has reappeared on the agenda of the Russian Duma.

So far, because of the conflicts in Chisinau between „the two Vlads”, the country had to lose as far as the strategic issues are concerned. And it is not only about the European integration, but also about the Transnistrian issue where we lose on very many aspects.

Unfortunately, I have to note that our negotiators try to propel through OSCE and European partners an agenda which would ensure a victory to Chisinau in positioning against Tiraspol; yet, we are losing because of interminable crises which make us look ridiculous sometimes in the eyes of the public opinion and of the partners involved in the 5+2 format. In this situation, neither the



politicians in Chisinau nor the Moldova's strategy on the secessionist region are convincing enough.

I would like to believe that the politicians will become aware of the fact that the Transnistrian issue should come first on the agenda because its solution would guarantee to our country the opening of more strategic doors, including the European integration element. In the long run, nobody accepts us divided in the EU as we are at present.

Another aspect that I would like to mention is the personality of the negotiators. Eugen Carpov has done excellent diplomatic studies in Romania at schools with traditions like SNSPA, while Nina Stanski has passed through the Russian diplomatic school. These two schools and mentalities seem to clash in a very interesting negotiations theatre. Unfortunately, I have to admit that the charisma of the „iron lady” from Tiraspol adds certain value to the Transnistrian side. I am afraid to use the word „side” as I would not treat Tiraspol equally to Chisinau in this process. I would like to believe though that the mobilisation will still allow Mr. Carpov to be more insistent in the negotiations. Because what we see is that Ms Stanski is more active and more present in the communication and dissemination of the negotiations' results. This creates the impression that Chisinau loses in this aspect.

Lina Grău: Daniel Vodă, you are part of the generation that was born after the independence and who want a European change. At the same time, in the Transnistrian region, there is a generation of this age who grew up with the

mentality and conception of an independent state and who has no history of a common living with the Republic of Moldova. How do you see the possibility of overcoming this hiatus which seems to increase as time goes by?

Daniel Vodă: I am terrified by this, as these are generations which think totally different. If our parents had a common living and a common approach to many issues, we are practically a totally divided generation in each aspect. On the two banks of the Nistru a generation in growing up which hates one another – in some moments it is a mutual hatred and in other- the hatred is unilateral. A generation is growing up which think that some are occupants and others are liberators. This is the main problem – nothing is more callous and dishonest in such a conflict than a massive propaganda. Unfortunately, Tiraspol has used all the instruments, including media, educational, social and any other instruments in order to infiltrate and poison the public opinion, and especially the youth mentality.

We are growing up with a generation which might not forgive us and it is a big shame. I have not been educated to hate nor have I felt this pressure and hostile attitude on the right bank towards the left bank. My generation and I have been taught to respect, including those from the left bank of the Nistru.

It is a very big problem which can be overcome only in time. I think we should already initiate common activities. Unfortunately, I have to remark the Government does not invest any money in this. And we need money for common

activities and events in which to discuss our common problems and which would make us forget about our common reproaches. While the European states which are not just the ones to be the first interested in the solution of this problem spend millions of euro for the unification of the two banks, I am asking myself what the priorities of the Republic of Moldova are in this case?

I am aware of the fact that the budget of the Republic of Moldova is not just expandable and there is no money for all our needs. But if we want to win and bring the two bank closer together, we should invest very much in common projects- educational, exchange programmes- in order to show the generations which grew up on the left bank of the Nistru that Chisinau has a viable offer and that it can offer a future where they can realise themselves. We should show that we are not aggressors but those who can guarantee a home. We should start from this condition otherwise there is no way we can be in the running. If no urgent measures are taken, I think this conflict will turn into a real war of propagandistic images on both banks of the river Nistru.

Lina Grău: One year and a half ago, in Tiraspol, as a result of the elections, a new team came to power which we believed is more open to dialogue and more flexible just because it is younger and that it used massively the social networks in order to come to power. Do you think this team is able to meet the expectations and the favorable opinion it was credited with in the beginning?

Daniel Vodă: It is a very good question with a deja-vu smell. Because I remember there also were elections three years ago in Chisinau in which big promises have been made but which have not been kept. As a result, yes, new faces appeared on TV, but the same old people remained in all the state structures who should have implemented the new ideas. In fact, I think, the same thing happened in Tiraspol.

Though a new and more ambitious team came to power, yet, as organisational structure, even if certain changes have been operated, in essence, it failed to change the actions of the old regime. It continues in the same way as the old regime in dragging the negotiations of small steps which are being intensely promoted by all partners involved

in the solution of the Transnistrian conflict. I have the impression it is only a war of declarations and the new team in Tiraspol is handling much more qualitatively the PR element and that of the promotion of a negotiations' stimulation image.

I think that the most evident changes which happened in Tiraspol are the change of the separatist leader and of the main negotiator. It is about Evghenii Sevchiuk and Nina Stanski, the so-called foreign minister in Tiraspol. Unfortunately, their youth does not offer them a different thinking. The people there do not feel essential changes and this is the first sign. But, attention please, no separatist region has ever kept a good house.

I think we should discuss more about the fact that the politicians in Chisinau should assume big responsibilities in this region of the country which is unfortunately a secessionist one. We are the poorest country in Europe and the state which provides a black hole for smuggling, crimes and colour discussions which are not at all favorable to our country because of this region. And if we want to put an end to this, we should have a coherent and clear policy. And I am wondering why Chisinau did not get involved in the so-called elections in the Transnistrian region through the levers it had? Why did it not try to favour or lose face of those people who were not fully agreeable to Chisinau? If you are involved in backstage games, you should play until the end. Or a wish to only simulate the discussion process is at issue?

There are very many questions but I want to believe that this case – Transnistria – will be solved very quickly as the number of its victims is growing day in, day out. And it is not only about people from the right or left bank of the river. It is about the citizens of the Republic of Moldova who suffer and who simply do not feel safely in their own state.

Lina Grău: Where do you see the key to the solution of the Transnistrian conflict? Some say the key would be in Moscow, others – in Brussels or other capitals...

Daniel Vodă: The key is definitely not in the pocket of Chisinau. It is like a situation when the owner lost its key and somebody found it and does not want to give it back. This

symbolic answer is very eloquent. The key to the Transnistrian conflict is in Moscow, in Kiev, in Tiraspol, in Chisinau, in Bucharest and in the European Union or USA. Any issue regarding a separatist region is not only that of the parties involved – it is a big regional or even international problem. And in this case we should not look for „the magic key” but simply build another door, a door which could be entered by all the citizens of the Republic of Moldova and be happy.

Of course, the most important decisions should be taken in Chisinau and Tiraspol. If there is no wish from the parties directly involved to do it, you cannot solve the issue. I mean here financial investments as well. How can you initiate talks about reintegration when you are not willing to spend any money on this, when you do not really want to reintegrate this region? And then there is need for many investments which we do not have in our pocket and which we should ask from our western partners.

And this could be the key- that our entire region finds itself in a joint economic project and only then we could succeed.

I would not like to neglect the essential role which is being played by our neighbour state Ukraine as the biggest border, actually the entire border with the separatist region lies along Ukraine. Thus, the Kiev actions have proved that through common activities with the Republic of Moldova, they can implement policies in order to stop separatism, force the note and change direction. But Ukraine, unfortunately, depends itself on another „friend” of the Republic of Moldova – the Russian Federation, which for a good while has an army on the territory of the Republic of Moldova.

The geostrategic games have always been very complicated. But the will of all the parties involved is needed. You cannot impose a certain position by force and we have regional scenarios which have proven that. Therefore, the solution for a peaceful people such as the population of the Republic of Moldova, is to find an ideal political will which does not change depending on internal and external political circumstances and only this way, the Transnistrian problem could be solved.