tion resorts, and other facilities; and benefits for victims of the Chornobyl' disaster.

Housing

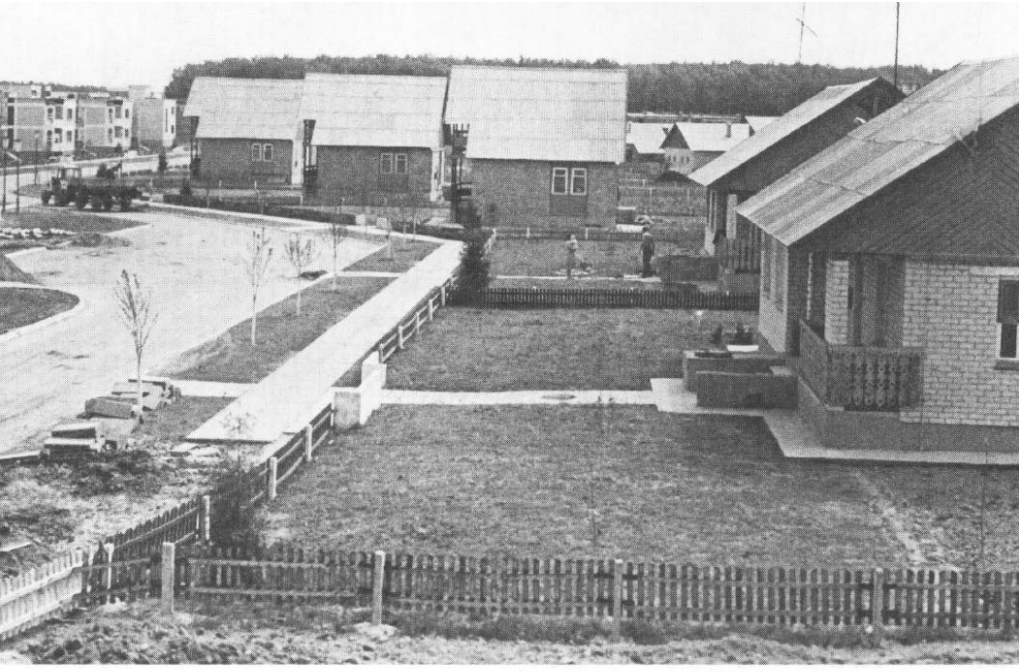
In Belarus about 75 percent of urban housing and many village homes were destroyed during World War II, forcing many people to live in makeshift huts and hovels while housing (along with industrial and public buildings) was reconstructed after the war. This chronic housing shortage was recently exacerbated by the need to resettle Chornobyl' victims. In 1993 per capita housing space was approximately nineteen square meters (slightly less in urban areas), small by Western standards. As is true for most of the former Soviet Union, much of Belarus's urban housing stock consists of drab multistory, prefabricated units. The norm for rural housing is individual homes, which tend to be of a higher quality.

In July 1992, the Law on Privatization of Housing was passed, but little progress was made until mid-1993, when amendments were made to the laws to reassess housing values. Plans called for citizens to receive housing vouchers, which could not be exchanged for cash. In 1993 private housing accounted for 49 percent of the housing stock in Belarus.

The Economy

Belarus is a graphic example of the problems created when an industrial "colony" becomes independent. The Belorussian SSR had imported the bulk of its raw materials, components, and energy from the Soviet Union and exported most of what it produced (much of it for the military-industrial complex) back to the Soviet Union. The country's economy, which had been integrated into that of the Soviet Union, found itself deprived of most of the essential components it needed to function independently when the Soviet system collapsed.

Independent Belarus's economy, like that of the Belorussian SSR, still relies on inefficient, state-supported, industrial facilities, which are increasingly hampered by their need for fuels whose prices are gradually reaching world levels. The economic recession in Belarus intensified in 1994, leading to Belarus's worst economic year to that point. In 1994 the net material product (NMP—see Glossary) had dropped by 21 percent from 1993 (down by more than one-third from its 1989 level), which was worse than in the two previous years; this



Typical modern rural housing in the village of Morach, Kletsk rayon
Courtesy Anatol Klashchuk
Modern urban housing, Maladzyechna
Courtesy John Mumford

decline was felt across the board. Agriculture now accounted for 36 percent of NMP, industry for 44 percent, transportation and communications for 3 percent, construction for 12 percent, and the remaining sectors for 5 percent.

Government Policy

Although the government's stated goals during the first years of independence included promoting a market economy, normalizing monetary circulation, and lowering the country's dependence on monopoly suppliers, these goals were not met. Inflation and depreciation in the exchange rate stemmed from the government's compensation for decreased living standards and lower industrial output through subsidies (rather than changes in the country's economic structure and adoption of market reforms).

The government's economic timidity was prompted not only by the wish to maintain the status quo but also by a fear of the social consequences. Years earlier, calls for political action did not stir the populace, but the populace reacted dramatically to sudden price increases. In April 1991, demonstrations occurred in Minsk, Orsha, and other cities, frightening the government into wage concessions, a slowdown of reforms, and promises not to neglect the "social protection net" so as to avoid a repeat of such economically motivated unrest.

As of mid-1995, the government continued to look for easy solutions to its economic problems. It neglected privatization and price liberalization, instead continuing to increase minimum wages to offset minor price increases and to prop up outdated factories.

Privatization

A conservative parliament and a lack of political will have slowed privatization in Belarus in comparison with other former Soviet republics. Although the Law on Privatization of State Property was approved in January 1993, the Supreme Soviet did not approve the 1993 State Program of Privatization and the Law on Privatization Checks (vouchers) until that summer. By the end of the year, less than 2 percent of all republic assets slated for privatization had actually been transferred to the private sector. To speed the pace of privatization, the State Committee on Privatization was converted into a ministry with an expanded staff in March 1994.

The State Program of Privatization calls for two-thirds of state enterprises (see Glossary) to be privatized during 1993–2000. Exemptions include defense-related industries, monopolies (such as utilities), and specialized enterprises working with gems and precious metals. Enterprises of strategic importance can be privatized only with the approval of the Cabinet of Ministers, and agricultural monopolies can be privatized only with the approval of the Anti-Monopoly Committee.

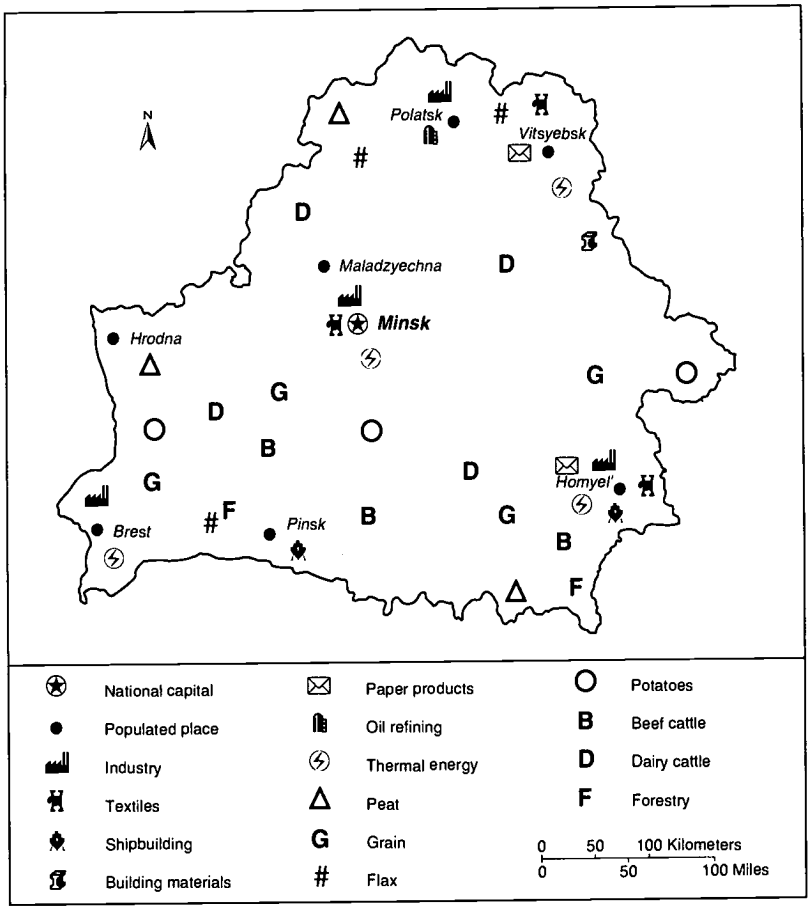
According to the privatization law, 50 percent of each entity slated for privatization will be distributed to the populace via vouchers, and 50 percent will be sold for cash; the prices of the entities will be adjusted for inflation. (There are separate vouchers for housing and property.) Every citizen was eligible to apply for privatization vouchers and to open a voucher account at the Savings Bank (Sbyerbank) as of April 1, 1994. The entitlement is twenty property vouchers per citizen plus one voucher for each year worked, with additional allocations for orphans, the disabled, and war veterans. All vouchers are scheduled to be distributed by January 1, 1996.

In 1995 the practice was quite different from the theory. Privatization of large firms, delayed by the government under various pretexts, had not even started. (Much resistance to privatization also came from factory managers and politicians, particularly at the local level.) At best, some 10 percent of state enterprises had been privatized. Privatization plans for 1995 call for another 500 state-owned enterprises (4 percent of the total) to be privatized.

Agriculture

In 1993 agriculture and forestry accounted for almost one-quarter of the gross domestic product (GDP—see Glossary) and almost 6 percent of the total agricultural output of the former Soviet Union (Belarus has 4 percent of the former Soviet labor force). Agriculture employed 20 percent of the labor force.

During the Soviet era, agriculture in Belarus consisted mainly of state and collective farms, with a sprinkling of small plots for private household use. In the early 1990s, the government based its agricultural policies on that legacy. Instead of disrupting the production of food for both domestic consumption and export, the authorities decided to maintain the large-scale farming for which they believed the existing equipment and capital stock were best suited. In 1994 the Ministry of Agri-



Source: Based on information from Lerner Publications Company, Geography Department, *Belarus*, Minneapolis, 1993, 46.

Figure 8. Economic Activity in Belarus, 1995

culture planned to transform collective and state farms (see Glossary) into joint-stock companies that would be agriculturally efficient and would keep providing most of the social services in rural areas.

In March 1993, Belarus added the Law on the Right to Land Ownership to its Land Lease Law (March 1990). The law on land ownership limited purchases to small parcels for housing and orchards, stated that farming would depend on leased land, and allowed private farmers to lease only up to fifty hectares on long-term leases. This law meant that Belarus would not develop a private farming sector and that farming would

stay in the hands of the government, which owned the collective and state farms.

In 1993 private agriculture accounted for 37 percent of all agricultural output, reflecting the increase in the number of private farms from eighty-four in 1990 to 2,730 in 1993. However, the average size of private farms remained small: twenty-one hectares in 1993, compared with 3,114 hectares on average for collective farms and 3,052 hectares for state farms. In addition, private plots on large farms in rural areas and garden plots in urban areas continue to provide a significant amount of food, just as they did in the Soviet era.

Belarus can be divided into three agricultural regions: north (growing mainly flax, fodder, grasses, and cattle), central (potatoes and pigs), and south (pastureland, hemp, and cattle). Belarus's cool climate and dense soil are well suited to fodder crops, which support herds of cattle and pigs, and temperate-zone crops (wheat, barley, oats, buckwheat, potatoes, flax, and sugar beets). Belarus's soils are generally fertile, especially in the river valleys, except in the southern marshy regions (see fig. 8).

Despite the progress made by the agricultural sector in 1993, it suffered a setback in 1994. A drought during the summer contributed to a decline of 19 percent in the Belarusian crop. Wheat production declined 35 percent from the previous year, while sugar beet production declined 31 percent and potato production declined 29 percent. Animal products declined 11 percent; the number of cows decreased 2 percent, and the number of sheep declined 30 percent.

The greatest changes in agriculture in the first half of the 1990s were a decline in the amount of land under cultivation and a significant shift from livestock to crop production—because crops had become much more profitable than before (see table 3, Appendix A). The sales price for crops generally increased more than production costs, while inputs for livestock (such as imported fodder) increased in price beyond livestock sales prices. Many private farms faced difficulties, caused partly by inflation, which wreaked havoc on preset contract prices, delayed payments, and budget subsidies.

In early 1993, Belarus's government replaced the system of "recommended" agricultural producer prices with "support" prices, which were intended as minimum guaranteed prices and could be adjusted in accord with price increases in agricultural inputs. Meat prices were deregulated in the summer of

1993, and direct budgetary subsidies were no longer provided to the agriculture sector at all.

Basic foods were watched closely, however, and sometimes "re-protected." For example, prices were reset on rationed sugar in February 1994 in response to a sharp increase in its market price. Another problem was lower food prices in Belarus than in neighboring countries; the government maintained subsidies on food to keep prices low for the people of Belarus. Nonetheless, these subsidies strained the budget while encouraging increased informal exports of food, or "food tourism," from neighboring countries.

Because the agricultural sector is in critical condition, partly the consequence of a drought in the summer of 1994 that reduced agricultural output by nearly 25 percent, the government gave agriculture a special place in the 1995 budget. President Lukashyenka gave collective and state farms credits totaling 520 million rubles to facilitate sowing and to purchase fertilizer. In addition, by implementing sizable price increases for dairy products, pork products, and beef, the government hoped to increase production of these commodities.

Forests cover nearly one-third of Belarus and are the source of raw materials for production of matches, pressboard, plywood, furniture, timbers for coal mines, paper, paperboard, and sections of prefabricated houses. However, during the Soviet era, Belarus's forests were poorly managed and were logged faster than they were replanted. In 1991 the country produced 6.7 million cubic meters of timber.

An ongoing problem facing agriculture is soil depletion, because of a severe fertilizer shortage, and a serious lack of equipment. For many farmers, the answer to the latter, as well as to the cost and shortage of fuel, is a return to horse-drawn ploughs.

The main enduring problem affecting the agricultural and forestry sector is the Chornobyl' disaster of 1986. Belarus absorbed the bulk of the radioactive fallout from the explosion because of weather conditions on the day of the disaster. Long-term radiation affects 18 percent of Belarus's most productive farmland and 20 percent of its forests. Despite the Chornobyl' accident, in 1993 Belarus was still a net exporter of meat, milk, eggs, flour, and potatoes to other former Soviet republics, although its exports were routinely tested for radioactive contamination.

An outdoor flower market at the train station, Minsk
Courtesy Jim Doran
Outdoor market for automobile parts, Minsk
Courtesy Anatol Klashchuk

Industry

In 1985, in the early days of *perestroika,* Belarus specialized mainly in machine building and instrument building (especially tractors, large trucks, machine tools, and automation equipment) and in agricultural production. Because of the vast devastation caused by World War II, the republic's industrial base was of postwar vintage, enabling it to maintain higher labor productivity than many other former republics of the Soviet Union, which were burdened with older, prewar equipment.

In 1992 industry in Belarus accounted for approximately 38 percent of GDP, down from 51 percent in 1991. This figure reflects a decline in the availability of imported inputs (especially crude oil and gas deliveries from Russia), a drop in investments, and decreased demand from Belarus's traditional export markets among the former Soviet republics. Belarus's economy has also been affected by decreased demand for military equipment, traditionally an important sector. Attempts to convert military production to civilian production were largely unsuccessful as of 1995.

By 1993 Belarus also produced petrochemicals, plastics, synthetic fibers, fertilizer, processed food, glass, and textiles (see table 4, Appendix A). Even though Belarus continued its production of electronic instruments and computers, specialties from the communist era, the quality of these goods restricted them mainly for export to former Soviet republics.

In 1994 gross industrial output declined by 19 percent. At the beginning of 1995, every industrial sector had decreased output, including fuel and energy extraction (down by 27 percent); chemical and oil refining (18 percent); ferrous metallurgy (13 percent); machine building and metal working (17 percent); truck production (31 percent); tractor production (48 percent); light industry (33 percent); wood, paper, and pulp production (14 percent); construction materials (32 percent); and consumer goods (16 percent).

Mining

Although not rich in minerals, Belarus has been found to have small deposits of iron ore, nonferrous metal ores, dolomite, potash (for fertilizer production), rock salt, phosphorites, refractory clay, molding sand, sand for glass production, and various building materials. Belarus also has deposits of

industrial diamonds, titanium, copper ore, lead, mercury, bauxite, nickel, vanadium, and amber, but little progress has been made in exploiting them.

Energy

Belarus's transition from communism to democracy proved to be more difficult than expected, economically as well as politically. What had once been a boon to industry in the Belorussian SSR—large volumes of inexpensive oil, natural gas, and electricity from the Russian Republic—quickly became a considerable problem for independent Belarus. Under the communist regime, industry had had no incentive to use fuels efficiently, modernize equipment, reduce pollution, maintain factories adequately, recycle, or allot energy resources efficiently. However, once Russian fuel prices began to approach world levels, Belarusian industry had to adjust in order to survive. Logic would seem to call for enterprises to improve their industrial efficiency, but the oil refineries at Navapolatsk (Novopolotsk in Russian) (capacity 22 million tons a year) and Mazyr (Mozyr' in Russian) (capacity 18 million tons a year), as well as many other enterprises, cut their output instead. The 30 percent drop in energy consumption between 1990 and 1993 was the result of a drop in demand for industrial goods produced in Belarus, partly because of the chaotic state of the Soviet economy in the last years of the Soviet Union's existence, and partly because the Soviet Union no longer needed so many goods for its military.

By mid-1993 Belarus's debt to Russia for oil and natural gas had reached US$450 million. After several warnings, Russia temporarily cut off Belarus's supply in August and threatened to do so again on at least two other occasions. In an attempt to head off a crisis, government authorities resorted to allocating energy to priority sectors in 1994.

Russia suspended fuel shipments to Belarus yet again in September 1994 over unpaid fuel bills. This was the impetus for Belarus to sign an agreement giving the Russian state gas company ownership of its Belarusian counterpart, Byeltransgaz, in exchange for the resumption of gas deliveries, but the agreement was not ratified by the Supreme Soviet of Belarus. Byeltransgaz made additional offers of means of repayment, and Russia countered with conditions of its own and hinted that failure to meet these conditions would result in Russia's

rerouting of pipelines to Western Europe through either Lithuania or Latvia—a blow to Belarus.

Because delivery of natural gas in 1995 at lower-than-world prices was made contingent on Belarus's timely payment of its bills, Belarus felt the need to diversify its sources of fuels. The government's long-term energy program, in place in early 1995, sought to diversify its sources of fuels from such countries as Poland, Australia, Turkmenistan, and Norway.

In 1993 Belarus imported some 90 percent of its fuel from Russia via the Druzhba (Friendship) oil pipeline and the Northern Lights natural gas pipeline, both of which pass through the country en route to Central Europe. Refineries at Polatsk and Mazyr process some of the crude oil for fuel, and the Polatsk refinery also provides raw material for fertilizer, plastics, and artificial fibers. In 1992 Belarus had 1,470 kilometers of pipeline carrying crude oil, 1,100 kilometers of pipeline carrying refined products, and 1,980 kilometers of pipeline carrying natural gas.

In January 1995, Russia and Belarus signed an agreement under which Russia was to deliver some 66 percent of Belarus's yearly required crude oil at prices that did not exceed domestic Russian prices (which were set to rise significantly over the course of the year). In exchange, Belarus would export products to Russia, although finding enough products that Russia wants could be a problem.

Although Belarus imports most of its fuels, it has small deposits of oil and natural gas close to the Polish border, as well as oil shale, coal, and lignite. Belarus's production of 13 percent (2 million tons) of its crude oil production and 2 percent (2.4 million tons) of its natural gas consumption was stable in 1994.

Belarus also has a large supply of peat (more than one-third of the total for the former Soviet Union), which is used to power industry, heat homes, and fuel boilers at electric power plants. In 1993 thirty-seven factories produced about 2 million tons of peat briquettes.

In 1994 Belarus's twenty-two thermal power plants had a production capacity of 7,033 megawatts and produced 31,400 million kilowatt-hours of electricity. Additional small power plants had a total capacity of 188 megawatts. There were also nine small hydroelectric power plants with a total installed capacity of some six megawatts. All but three plants produced heat as well as electricity.

Harvesting grain on a farm
Courtesy Anatol Klashchuk

The country's power grid is connected to the grids of Lithuania, Russia, Ukraine, and Poland. Most electricity imports come from Lithuania (the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant) and Russia (the Smolensk Nuclear Power Plant), but even here, Belarus has had problems in paying for its imports. In May 1995, Lithuania resumed electricity exports after more than two years; Belarus agreed to make payment in Russian natural gas.

During the Soviet era, nuclear energy was promoted as an inexpensive source of electricity, but after the Chornobyl' accident, many people in Belarus were opposed to nuclear power. A nuclear power plant was under construction near Minsk in the early 1990s, but the country had no nuclear generating capacity at that time.

Labor Force

The private sector attracted a growing portion of the labor force in 1994, but cooperatives and the state sector continued to account for the bulk of official employment in Belarus. The labor force numbered 4.8 million persons in 1994, or 48 percent of the total population.

A principal reason for Belarus's low official unemployment rate in 1994 (2.2 percent by the end of that year) was underemployment, which had been true during the Soviet era as well (thus keeping down the Soviet unemployment rate). Rather than lay off employees, enterprises often shortened work hours, reduced wages, and even forced employees to take leave without pay instead. Agreements signed by enterprises, labor unions, and the government in 1993 and 1994 called for avoiding declines in output and employment; in return for keeping the same level of employment, labor unions usually refrained from industrial disruptions. At a time when the cost of living was rising dramatically, the social benefits provided by enterprises also acted as a disincentive for voluntary separations: a low-paying job that provided access to clinics, day care, and inexpensive housing was better than cash unemployment benefits alone.

Banking and Finance

Under the communist regime, the currency of the Soviet Union was the Russian ruble, and the banking system was owned and managed by the central government. Gosbank (Gosudarstvennyy bank—State Bank) was the central bank of

the country and its only commercial bank as well. It handled all significant banking transactions, including the issuance and control of currency and credit, management of the gold reserve, and oversight of all transactions among economic enterprises. Gosbank had main offices in each of the republics, and, because the banking system was highly centralized, it played an important role in managing the economy.

After independence, Belarus restructured its banks into a two-tier system consisting of the National Bank of Belarus and thirty-six commercial banks (including seven specialized banks: Byelahraprambank, Byelpromstroybank, Byelarusbank, Byelbiznesbank, Priorbank, Byelvnyeshekonombank, and Sbyerbank) with a total of 525 branches in 1994. Of these banks, Sbyerbank is wholly state owned, another bank is owned by an individual, and the rest are organized as either limited liability companies or joint-stock companies.

Belarus's securities market was created at the end of 1992 and is licensed and controlled by the state inspectorate for securities and the stock exchange. The over-the-counter market dominates the securities market, with Russian corporate shares and bonds the most actively traded items. The country has five commodity and stock exchanges.

The Belarusian ruble was introduced in May 1992 in response to a shortage of Russian rubles with which to pay fuel and other debts to Russia. The *zaychyk* (hare), as the Belarusian ruble is known colloquially, was officially tied to the Russian ruble, but Russia would not accept the new unsecured currency in payment, forcing Belarus to dip into its hard-currency reserves. In September 1993, Belarus and five other CIS countries agreed to create a joint monetary system based on the Russian ruble.

Although Belarus and Russia continued to work at creating a monetary and economic union by signing an April 1994 treaty, only a customs union was actually realized. Moscow postponed implementation of the union itself, although it would have given Moscow significant control over the Belarusian economy, for fear of jeopardizing its own fragile economic reforms. Belarus's completely unreformed economy and accompanying high rate of inflation would have forced Russia to print large amounts of money to keep the Belarusian economy going, thereby fueling inflation in Russia.

In early 1995, Belarus's monetary policy was so loose that the National Bank of Belarus came under fire from the Inter-

national Monetary Fund (IMF—see Glossary) when it lowered the country's key financing rate despite the country's high level of inflation. Belarus was in danger of jeopardizing other IMF loans by its actions. Despite the logic of the IMF's reasoning, President Lukashyenka's view of these difficulties is that they were the result of the IMF's dislike of Belarus's close relationship with Russia.

In November 1994, the Supreme Soviet declared that the country's sole legal tender would be the Belarusian ruble as of January 1, 1995, when the Russian ruble could no longer be circulated. Although the *zaychyk* was convertible, the National Bank of Belarus used multiple exchange rates that depended on the nature of the transaction, thus setting limits on the convertibility of the *zaychyk*.

The government's lax monetary policy failed to support financial discipline, which caused the average monthly inflation rate in 1993 to increase to 45 percent in the last quarter. Even though monthly inflation was down to 10 percent by March 1994, it rose again in 1994 and frightened off investments from abroad, including Russia. The consumer price index rose by 1,070 percent in 1992, by 1,290 percent in 1993, and by 2,221 percent in 1994. In 1995 inflation seemed to abate somewhat, with the average monthly inflation rate of "only" 22 percent through April.

Transportation and Telecommunications

In the former Soviet Union, the central government owned and operated the transportation system of the Belorussian SSR and used it primarily to serve the economic needs of the entire country as determined by the CPSU. Because of the Belorussian SSR's generally flat landscape and its location, building a transportation system there did not entail the difficulties of building on rugged terrain, over permafrost, or in remote areas far from industrial centers.

Railroads were the premier mode of transportation in the Belorussian SSR. Minsk is a major railroad junction, located on the lines connecting the Baltic states with Ukraine to the south and the line connecting Moscow with Warsaw to the west (see fig. 9). In 1993 Belarus had a total of 5,488 kilometers of 1,520-millimeter-gauge railroads; of these, 873 kilometers were electrified. Minsk also has an underground Metro with eighteen stations on two lines (totaling seventeen kilometers).

Belarus's railroads accelerated industrial development and, in wartime, played a significant military role. Well developed compared with those in the other former Soviet republics, the country's railroads continued to play a major role in the early years of independent Belarus. They moved raw materials, manufactured goods, and passengers over long hauls, transporting 30 percent of the country's bulk cargo and 10 percent of its passengers in 1992.

Rail freight transport declined from 71.5 million tons in 1993 to 50.1 million tons in 1994 (see table 5, Appendix A). This drop approximated the decline in gross industrial output over the same period (unlike previous years, when it had been greater). As a result, experts believed that gross inefficiencies of the past had been eliminated and that railroad transportation would not be a bottleneck in the future when industrial output rose.

Because automotive transport is generally not used for long hauls, many roads outside urban areas have gravel or dirt surfaces, especially in the more remote rural areas. The lack of paved roads in these rural areas seriously hampers the movement of agricultural products and supplies. Privately owned automobiles are relatively few per capita and thus have been of limited importance in transportation, although this began to change slowly with the demise of communism. At the beginning of 1994, the country had 92,200 kilometers of roads, two-thirds of which were paved, and many of which were deteriorating. There were no expressways or major national highways. Truck transport of freight declined in 1994 by 41 percent to 122.8 million tons.

In 1994 Belarus received funds and promises of funds from the European Union (EU—see Glossary), Russia, Germany, and Poland to upgrade road and railroad links between Moscow and Berlin. A project funded jointly by Belarus and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) will upgrade segments of the highway that links Poland to Russia through Belarus.

Belarus has extensive and widely used canal and river systems, especially the Dnyapro River and its tributaries and the Dnyaprowska-Buhski Canal, which connects the Buh (Bug in Russian) and Prypyats' rivers. Homyel', Babruysk (Bobruysk in Russian), Barysaw (Borisov in Russian), and Pinsk are major river ports. In 1991 some 800,000 passengers and 18.6 million tons of freight were carried on the country's inland waterways.

Figure 9. Transportation System of Belarus, 1995

Although Belarus has no direct access to the sea, it is relatively close to Baltic Sea ports and has an agreement with Poland to transport Belarusian goods to the Polish port of Gdynia and to use the port itself. In addition, in 1995 Lithuanian officials were considering giving Belarus access to the Lithuanian port of Klaipeda.

Of Belarus's 124 airports, only fifty-five were usable in 1993, and only thirty-one had permanent-surface runways. Minsk has one airport, Minsk International Airport. In 1994 Belavia, the Belarusian state airline, planned to use US$80 million of a US$220 million credit from Switzerland to build an aircraft service center at the airport.

At the beginning of 1992, Belarus had 1.9 million telephone lines, or about eighteen lines per 100 persons; more than 700,000 applications for household telephones were still pending. Only about 15 percent of the telephone lines were switched automatically. Connections to other former Soviet republics are by landline or microwave, and connections to other countries are by means of a leased connection through the Moscow international gateway switch. An NMT–450 analog cellular telecommunications network was under construction in Minsk in the early 1990s, and approximately 300 kilometers of fiber-optic cable were being added to the city network. Progress in establishing an International Telecommunications Satellite Organization (Intelsat) earth station was slow.

In 1993 four television channels were available in Belarus: Belarus's single state-run television station (Byelaruskaye telyebachannye) and three Russian television stations—Televideniye Ostankino (Ostankino Television, Channel 1), Rossiyskoye televideniye (Russian Television), and Sankt-Peterburg TV (St. Petersburg TV). By 1994 there was one private television station, the Minsk Television Company; its license was suspended during the parliamentary elections of 1994. No cable television service was available. In 1992 an estimated 3.5 million televisions were in use in Belarus.

In 1994 Belarus's state-run radio (Byelaruskaye radyyo) broadcast two national programs, four Russian programs, and various regional programs over thirty-five AM radio stations in seventeen cities and over eighteen FM radio stations in eighteen cities. There was also a shared relay with Voice of Russia. International shortwave radio service broadcasts were in Belarusian, English, German, and Polish. In 1992 an estimated 3.1 million radios were in use in Belarus.

In 1995 the government continued to control television and radio broadcasting in Belarus. In April 1995, when opposition deputies to the Supreme Soviet clashed with President Lukashyenka over questions on the upcoming referendum, Lukashyenka cordoned off the national television and radio building (because of an alleged bomb threat). In the period before voting on both the referendum and parliamentary elections, discussion of the issues disappeared from the media.

Foreign Economic Relations

By mid-1995 Belarus still relied primarily on Russia and other members of the CIS as its primary trading partners (see

table 6, Appendix A). But it had started looking to expand its economic ties beyond the CIS. It turned to the EU, with which it signed an agreement with the goal of gradual economic integration of Belarus into the EU, as well as to markets in the east, where it was better able to compete. An example of the latter was Belarus's trade of farm machinery and chemical fibers for Iranian oil in March 1995.

Although the total volume of Belarus's foreign trade declined by nearly one-third in 1994, the proportion of its trade with non-CIS countries increased. Belarus's lack of domestic economic reform, however, has slowed down efforts to improve and expand its foreign economic relations.

In January 1995, Belarus signed a number of agreements in hopes that they would improve its access to foreign markets: trade barriers were lowered between Russia and Belarus, and Kazakhstan joined the agreement to create a free-trade area (however, implementation of the accord was slow). Belarus and the EU signed an agreement to create a free-trade zone between the EU and Belarus. Under its terms, all quantitative limits on imports from Belarus to the EU will be abolished.

Exports

Under communism, the Belorussian SSR had net industrial and agricultural export surpluses within the Soviet Union until 1990, thanks to the relatively high productivity of the Belorussian labor force. The Belorussian SSR shipped trucks, tractors, tractor trailers, elevators, lathes, bearings, electric motors, computer equipment, synthetic yarns and fibers, tires, linoleum, flax, textiles, carpets, potatoes, meat, dairy products, eggs, flour, and various consumer goods to the other republics.

Apart from Belarus's energy situation, little had changed in the direction of independent Belarus's trade from its previous centralized planning system. In 1994 Belarus's major trading partners were still former Soviet republics (mainly Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Lithuania, and Latvia), which accounted for 93 percent of its exports. Exports to these countries totaled approximately US$2.5 billion, a decrease of 36 percent by volume over the previous year. Exports included gasoline (198,000 tons), diesel fuel (147,000 tons), meat and meat products (53,000 tons), milk and milk products (256,000 tons), refrigerators, tractors, and trucks. Belarus had a trade deficit with CIS countries amounting to US$614 million in 1994.

Belarus's main non-CIS trading partners in 1994 were Germany (21 percent of non-CIS trade), Poland (9 percent), the United States (7 percent), Switzerland (4 percent), Austria (4 percent), Italy (3 percent), the Netherlands (3 percent), Hungary (3 percent), China (3 percent), Brazil (3 percent), Britain (2 percent), and Lithuania (2 percent). Exports to non-CIS countries consisted mainly of energy products and heavy machinery. Belarus had a trade surplus of US$434 million with non-CIS countries in 1994.

After independence and continuing into 1995, Belarus's trade deteriorated because import prices for energy and raw materials began to rise to world market levels, and demand for the country's exports by its major trading partners (especially Ukraine and Russia) declined. Payment problems within the former Soviet Union made the situation worse, and limited access to foreign financing caused the domestic economy to decline by further decreasing the volume of trade.

Restrictions on export quantities, imposed by the new government to prevent low-cost Belarusian goods from being sold abroad in large quantities to the detriment of the Belarusian consumer, were relaxed in March 1994, and only certain goods continued to be restricted: oil and gas, electricity, fertilizers, timber and wood products, nonferrous metals, cereals, pharmaceuticals, textiles, and leather. Exports of precious metals and gems had to be licensed by the State Committee on Precious Metals and Precious Stones, and an export ban applied to certain medicinal herbs, animals, and some artworks and antiques. An agreement between Belarus and the EU set export quotas on textiles.

As part of Belarus's pursuit of economic and monetary integration with Russia, interstate trade regulations and taxation were harmonized with those of Russia, and most export and import fees on mutual trade with Russia were abolished by June 1, 1994. In May 1995, Belarus and Russia eliminated customs checkpoints along their common border.

Imports

Both before and after independence, most of Belarus's imports came from Russia (64 percent in 1990) and Ukraine (19 percent in 1990). However, the foreign trade situation worsened for Belarus as the former Soviet Union continued to disintegrate economically. Imports from such countries as Germany, Poland, and the United States increased, so that by 1994

only 76 percent of Belarus's imports came from former Soviet republics. Belarus was now paying higher prices for goods it had previously imported cheaply from former Soviet republics. The greatest drain on its finances now consisted of imports of raw materials and oil, whose prices increased greatly in the early to mid-1990s.

In 1994 Belarus's imports from non-CIS countries decreased by nearly 13 percent from 1993 to US$534 million. Its imports from CIS countries were estimated at US$3.1 billion, a decrease of over 57 percent by volume from the previous year.

In the mid-1990s, Belarus imported oil, natural gas, coal, rolled ferrous metals, nonferrous metals, commercial lumber and sawed timber, chemical products, raw materials for the chemical industry, cement, cotton yarn, silk, machines and equipment, automobiles and buses, sewing machines and washing machines, paper, grain, forage, cooking oil, sugar, tea, fish and fish products, vegetables, and consumer goods. A few items were subject to restrictions for health and security reasons, including chemicals and industrial waste. An improved import tariff structure was introduced in October 1993, partly in line with World Bank (see Glossary) recommendations.

Joint Ventures

A number of foreign companies have set up joint ventures in Belarus to take advantage of its location, its educated (and relatively inexpensive) work force, and its lack of serious ethnic problems. By mid-1995 Belarus had 1,745 joint ventures registered, but only some 30 percent of these were active. Most partners came from Poland, Germany, North America, and Austria. These joint ventures produced only 2 percent of total Belarusian output and employed only 0.4 percent of the total workforce.

Government and Politics

Belarus's declaration of independence on August 25, 1991, did not stem from long-held political aspirations, but rather from reactions to domestic and foreign events. Moscow's slow response to the accident at the Chornobyl' power plant and to the discovery of mass graves of Stalin's victims at Kurapaty led to demands for government accountability and reform. Ukraine's declaration of independence on August 24, in particular, led the Belorussian SSR to realize that the Soviet Union

would not last long. Independence nonetheless brought little or no change in the country's political structure.

Prelude to Independence

The series of events that led to Belarus's independence began with the explosion at the Chornobyl' nuclear power plant on April 26, 1986. The foot-dragging of the government in Moscow in even announcing that the accident had occurred, let alone evacuating people from affected areas and providing funds for the cleanup, greatly angered the Belorussian people, most of whom had no political aspirations for independence.

In 1988 Zyanon Paznyak, an archaeologist who would later play a role in national politics, revealed the discovery of mass graves of some 250,000 of Stalin's victims at Kurapaty. Many Belorussians were deeply shaken by this news, and some demanded accountability from the central authorities in Moscow. Reformers created the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF) in October after several mass demonstrations and clashes with the authorities. Paznyak became the spokesman for the reform movement and nationalist aspirations, and he emerged as the BPF chairman.

The March 4, 1990, elections to the republic's Supreme Soviet gave the country a legislature that was little different from previous legislatures: only 10 percent of the deputies were members of the opposition. But for the most part, the populace seemed satisfied with the new deputies, and the BPF's calls for independence and efforts at nation-building failed to stir up the same strong emotions as movements in neighboring Ukraine and the Baltic republics. Although the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian SSR adopted the Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic on June 27, 1990 (some two weeks after Russia had declared its own sovereignty), the March 1991 referendum held throughout the Soviet Union showed that 83 percent of Belorussians wanted to preserve the Soviet Union.

Political change in the country came about only after the August 1991 coup d'état in Moscow and a display of satisfaction by the Central Committee of the CPB at the coup attempt—it never issued a condemnation of the coup plotters. Following the coup's collapse and declarations of independence by Estonia, Latvia, and Ukraine, Belarus declared its own independence on August 25 by giving its declaration of sovereignty the status of a constitutional document. On August 28, Belarus's

prime minister, Vyachaslaw Kyebich, declared that he and his entire cabinet had "suspended" their CPB membership. The next day, both the Russian and the Belarusian governments suspended the activities of the communist party.

Liberals and nationalist reformers used this period of political confusion to advance their cause. On September 18, the parliament dismissed its chairman, Mikalay Dzyemyantsyey, for siding with the coup and replaced him with his deputy, Stanislaw Shushkyevich. The next day, pressed by the small but vocal democratic opposition, the parliament changed the state's name from the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic to the Republic of Belarus. A new national flag (three horizontal stripes, white-red-white) was adopted, along with a new coat of arms (a mounted knight, St. George, patron saint of Belarus, with a drawn sword, the emblem of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Rus', and Samogitia). On December 8, Belarus joined Russia and Ukraine in signing the Minsk Agreement (see Appendix B) to form the CIS, which formally put an end to the Soviet Union. On December 21, Belarus signed the Alma-Ata Declaration (see Appendix C), which expanded the CIS membership from the original three signatories of the Minsk Agreement to eleven states. And it was agreed that the headquarters of the CIS was to be in Minsk, a move that the government of Belarus welcomed as a means of attracting international attention.

The democratic opposition in the Supreme Soviet, led by the twenty-seven-member BPF faction and some of its allies, continued pressing for a referendum on the dissolution of the Supreme Soviet and for new elections. The electorate seemed to be responsive. More than 442,000 signatures in support of the move were collected within three months, but the initiators had underestimated the conservatism of the Supreme Soviet.

Meeting in mid-October 1992 and encouraged by the electoral victory of former communists in Lithuania and growing resistance to President Boris N. Yeltsin's reforms in Russia, the Supreme Soviet solidly rejected the demand for a referendum. Claiming violations in the signature collection drive, 202 deputies voted against the referendum; only thirty-five deputies supported it, and another thirty-five abstained. In view of the fact that in May 1992 the Central Referendum Commission had validated 384,000 of the 442,000 signatures collected (exceeding the 350,000 signatures required by law), the BPF opposition accused the Supreme Soviet's conservative majority of an open

Interior of metro station, Institute of Belarusian Culture, Minsk
Courtesy Jim Doran

violation of the republic's constitution and of an attempt to retain power by illegal means. Nonetheless, the opposition won a small victory in this tug-of-war: the parliament agreed to shorten its five-year term by one year and scheduled the next elections for the spring of 1994.

The Belarusian government headed by Prime Minister Kyebich consisted of former CPB functionaries and took a very conservative approach to economic and political reforms. Kyebich himself characterized his policy as "traditional" and warned about taking "extreme" positions.

Belarus's conservative Supreme Soviet continued to put obstacles in the path of reform. A privatization law was passed in July 1993, but it allowed collective and state farms to continue to exist and operate. Privatization of state-owned enterprises had barely begun in mid-1995, despite earlier efforts by Shushkyevich, who was largely a figurehead, to move along reform efforts. Conservative Kyebich, who actually controlled the ministries, was a temporary victor when, in January 1994, he survived a no-confidence vote that ousted Shushkyevich and replaced him with a Kyebich crony, Myechyslaw Hryb.

In the meantime, the Supreme Soviet adopted a constitution that went into effect on March 30, 1994, and created the office of president, who would now be the head of government instead of the prime minister. A quickly organized election was held in June, and a runoff election between the two highest vote-getters was held in July; in a surprise result, Kyebich was soundly beaten by anticorruption crusader Alyaksandr Lukashyenka. Both Kyebich and Lukashyenka took pro-Russian stands on economic and political matters, and both supported a quick monetary union with Russia. Lukashyenka even called for outright unification with Russia, but it was his anticorruption stance that won him more than 80 percent of the vote.

After Lukashyenka achieved his victory, the BPF granted him a three-month grace period, during which it did not openly criticize his policies. Because his campaign promises had often been vague, he had great latitude within which to operate. And because Kyebich resigned after the election, taking his government with him, there were no problems in removing ministers.

Lukashyenka's presidency was one of contradictions from the start. His cabinet was composed of young, talented newcomers as well as Kyebich veterans who had not fully supported Kyebich. As a reward to the parliament for confirming his appointees, Lukashyenka supported the move to postpone the parliamentary elections until May 1995.

Lukashyenka's government was also plagued by corrupt members. Lukashyenka fired the minister of defense, the armed forces chief of staff, the head of the Border Guards, and the minister of forestry. Following resignations among reformists in Lukashyenka's cabinet, parliamentary deputy Syarhyey Antonchyk read a report in parliament on December 20, 1994, about corruption in the administration. Although Lukashyenka refused to accept the resignations that followed, the government attempted to censor the report, fueling opposition criticism of Lukashyenka.

Lukashyenka went to Russia in August 1994 on his first official visit abroad as head of state. There he came to realize that Russia would not make any unusual efforts to accommodate Belarus, especially its economic needs. Nevertheless, Lukashyenka kept trying; in February 1995, Belarus signed the Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation with Russia, making many concessions to Russia, such as allowing the stationing of Russian troops in Belarus, in hopes that Russia would return

the favor by charging Belarus lower prices for fuels. However, because the treaty included no such provision, there was little hope of realizing this objective.

Lukashyenka had several disputes with parliament, mainly over the limits of presidential power (such as whether the president has the right to dissolve parliament). A hunger strike by opposition deputies, led by Zyanon Paznyak, began on April 11, 1995, after Lukashyenka proposed four questions for a referendum and then stated that the referendum would be held regardless of parliament's vote. The protest ended when the striking deputies, forcibly evicted in the middle of the night during a search for an alleged bomb, found that the national television and radio building had been cordoned off as well because of another alleged bomb threat. After this incident, the parliament gave in on a number of matters, including the four referendum questions, because word of their strike now could not be publicized.

The parliamentary elections held in May 1995 were less than successful or democratic. The restrictions placed on the mass media and on the candidates' expenditures during the campaign led to a shortage of information about the candidates and almost no political debate before the elections. In several cases, no one candidate received the necessary majority of the votes in the May 14 elections, prompting another round on May 28. The main problem in the second round was the lack of voter turnout. After the second round, parliament was in limbo because it had only 120 elected deputies—it was still short of the 174 members necessary to seat a new legislature. Another round of elections was discussed, probably near the end of the year, but the government claimed to have no money to finance them.

Problems of Democratization

Of the 346 seats to the Belorussian Supreme Soviet elected in 1990, fourteen were still vacant three years later, owing to voter apathy. There was also widespread apathy toward the political process and disbelief that what were being advertised as democratic ways would improve the situation. This general political malaise was then, and continued to be in 1995, reflected in the feeble growth, small size, and low popularity of political parties.

Although the 1990 and 1995 parliamentary elections were far from democratic, the predominance of conservatives in the

legislature had deeper roots than just the lack of means for free expression and the strictures of the electoral procedure. A widely heard rhetorical question was, "What is more useful, sausage or freedom?" The conservative majority in parliament—largely managers, administrators, and representatives of such groups as war veterans and collective and state farm managers—had successfully slowed the pace of reforms, and the standard of living had decreased dramatically for most of the population.

In view of the tremendous economic difficulties that accompanied the post-Soviet period, the years before *perestroika* looked reasonably good to most citizens. The populace was frustrated by the misuse of a freedom whose benefits were measured predominantly in material terms. Nostalgia for the so-called good old days had been growing stronger ever since the country declared its independence, and the lack of political energy in the country hindered the growth of political parties not tied to the old ways.

An example of political inertia is the debate on relations between Russia and Belarus. This debate has proceeded rather noisily and has been couched in cultural and historical terms, rather than in terms of the state's interests. National interests and foreign affairs are still deemed to be beyond the average citizen's competence, and the idea that the party/government knows best is still prevalent in the popular mind.

The four-question referendum that had prompted the parliamentary hunger strike in April 1994 was held on May 15, 1995. The populace voted "yes" on all four questions: Russian as an official language, the return of a Soviet-era red and green flag, economic integration with Russia, and presidential power to dissolve the Supreme Soviet. The result hardly inspired confidence among aspiring democrats.

Government Structure

The Constitution

A new Belarusian constitution was submitted to the Supreme Soviet in three different versions before it was finally adopted on March 28, 1994, and went into effect on March 30, 1994. The new basic law declares the Republic of Belarus a democracy that operates on the basis of a diversity of political institutions, ideologies, and opinions, with all religions and creeds equal before the law. The official language is Belaru-

sian, although Russian is the language of interethnic communication. Belarus is declared a nuclear-free, neutral state. All persons are equal before the law and are to have their rights, legitimate interests, and freedom protected equally; suffrage is granted to citizens who have reached eighteen years of age. The state also pledges itself to create "the conditions for full employment."

National Government

With the exception of the new office of the president, the government structure of independent Belarus was changed little from that of the Belorussian SSR. Within the government, the communist-era mind-set also persisted, even though the names of office-holders were often different. Because Lukashyenka and the legislature were frequently at odds, there was little agreement on or initiative toward changing or improving the government.

The national government consists of three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial (see fig. 10). Under the constitution, the size of the Supreme Soviet (elected for a term of five years) was reduced from 360 to 260 members. It is the highest legislative body of state power. Its functions include calling national referenda; adopting, revising, and interpreting the constitution; scheduling parliamentary and presidential elections; electing members of high-level courts, the procurator general, and the chairman and members of the board of the National Bank of Belarus; determining guidelines for domestic and foreign policy; confirming the state budget; supervising currency issues; ratifying international treaties; and determining military policy. The role of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet was reduced to that of an agenda-setting and administrative body. The legislature's two subordinate state committees are the State Customs Committee and the State Security Committee.

Any Belarusian citizen who has the right to vote and is at least twenty-one years old is eligible to stand for election as a deputy. The parliament is elected by universal suffrage.

The president of the republic is elected by popular vote for a five-year term of office and is the head of state and head of the executive branch of government. He adopts measures to guard the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, appoints and dismisses the prime minister and the members of the Cabinet of Ministers, appoints judges, heads the country's

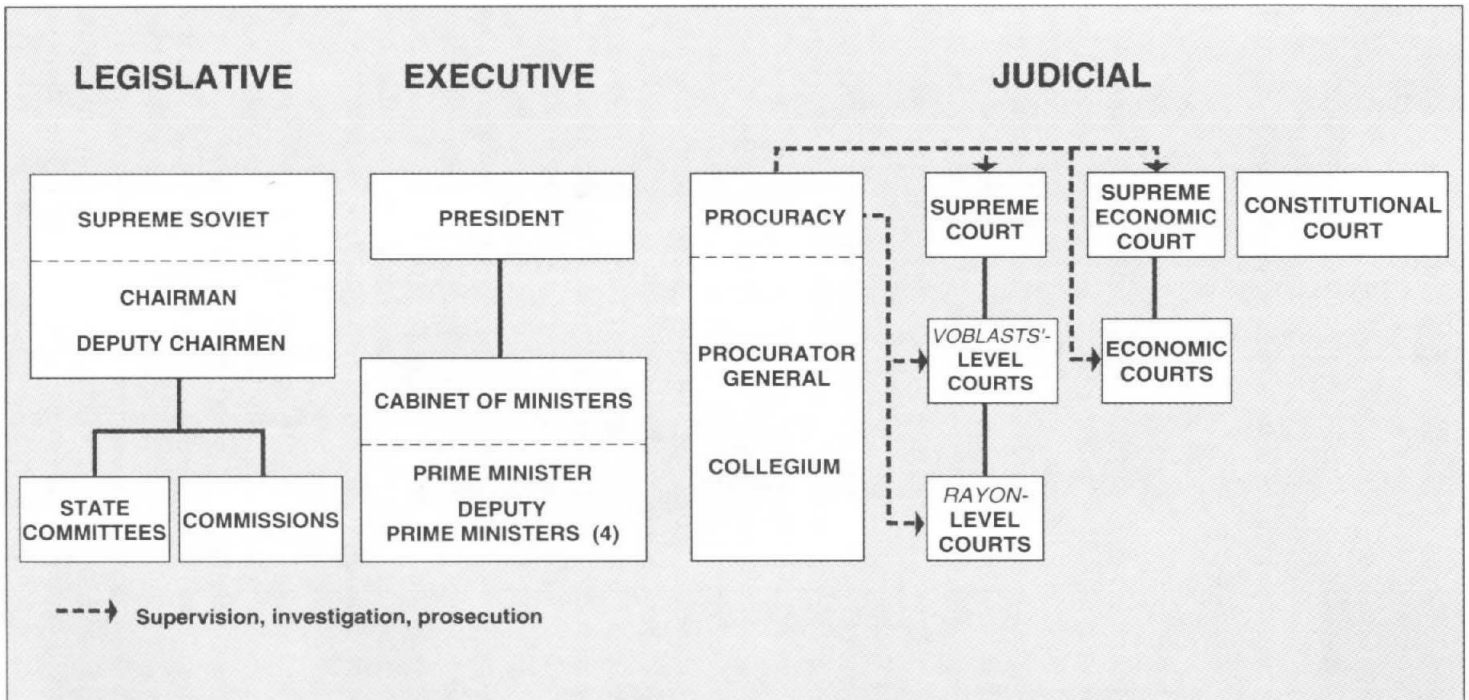


Figure 10. Government Organization of Belarus, 1995

National Security Council, and serves as commander in chief of the armed forces.

The president can be removed by a two-thirds vote in the parliament under certain circumstances, such as violating the constitution or committing a crime. However, the president cannot dismiss the parliament or other elected governing bodies, pending implementation of the referendum on this point.

The executive branch also includes the Cabinet of Ministers, composed of the heads of Belarus's twenty-six ministries: administration of state property and privatization; agriculture; architecture and construction; CIS matters; communications and information; culture and the press; defense; economy; education and science; emergency situations and the protection of the population from the aftermath of the Chornobyl' nuclear power station disaster; finance; foreign affairs; foreign economic relations; forestry; fuel and energy; health care; housing and municipal services; industry; internal affairs; justice; labor; natural resources and environmental protection; social protection; statistics and analyses; trade; and transportation and communications.

Judicial power is vested in a court system that consists of three courts. One court is the Constitutional Court, which consists of eleven judges who are nominated by the president and appointed by the Supreme Soviet. The Constitutional Court receives proposals from the president, the chairman of the Supreme Soviet, the state committees of the Supreme Soviet, at least seventy deputies of the Supreme Soviet, the Supreme Court, the Supreme Economic Court, or the procurator general to review the constitutionality of international agreements or obligations to which Belarus is a party. The Constitutional Court also reviews the constitutionality of domestic legal acts; presidential edicts; regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers; the constitution; laws; legal documents; and regulatory decisions of the Supreme Court, the Supreme Economic Court, and the Procuracy. The Constitutional Court's decisions are final and are not subject to appeal.

Another court is the Supreme Court and its lower-level courts, in which trials are open to all. Cases are first tried in a *rayon*-level court. Either party can then appeal a judicial decision, sentence, or other ruling in a *voblasts'*-level court; final appeal can be made to the Supreme Court. However, an appeal consists merely of a higher court's review of the protocol and

other documents of the original trial. In actual practice, decisions are rarely overturned.

The third court is the Supreme Economic Court and its lower-level courts, which have jurisdiction in cases involving economic matters. Such cases include relations between economic entities (such as collective farms) and anti-monopoly cases.

There is a separate system of military courts. Military judges are appointed directly by the president.

The Procuracy functions as a combination of a police investigative bureau and a public prosecutor's office. It investigates crimes, brings criminals to trial and prosecutes them, supervises courts and penal facilities within its jurisdiction, reviews all court decisions in both civil and criminal cases, supervises investigations conducted by other government agencies, and ensures the uniform application of law in the courts.

The Procuracy is headed by the procurator general, who is appointed by the Supreme Soviet. The procurator general then appoints each officer of the Procuracy, known as a procurator. The constitution states that the procurator general and his or her subordinate procurators are to function independently, yet the procurator general is accountable to the Supreme Soviet. Procurators are independent of regional and local government bodies because they derive their authority from the procurator general. Procurators are quite influential because they supervise all criminal investigations; courts are extremely deferential to the procurators' actions, petitions, and conclusions.

Local Government

In 1995 Belarus's local government was arranged in three tiers: six *voblastsi* (sing., *voblasts'*); 141 *rayony* (sing., *rayon*—see Glossary) and thirty-eight cities; and 112 towns and 1,480 villages and settlements (see fig. 11). Large cities were also divided into *rayony*.

Under Belarus's new constitution, local councils of deputies are to be elected by the citizens of their jurisdictions for four-year terms and are to have exclusive jurisdiction over economic and social development programs, local budgets and taxes, management and disposal of local government property, and the calling of referenda. In October 1994, Lukashyenka convinced the Supreme Soviet to amend the law on local self-government, much to the dismay of the opposition, who saw the country's administration come under his control in a single

stroke. The local councils in villages, towns, and city districts were to be disbanded and placed under the supervision of local administrations. The head of the regional executives was to be appointed by the president, and the local executives were to be nominated by the regional executives (and approved by the president). Thus, the chain of command would run from the top down, as it had in the days of the Belorussian SSR.

Political Parties

Stanislaw Shushkyevich observed at the beginning of 1993 that almost 60 percent of Belarusians did not support any political party, only 3.9 percent of the electorate backed the communist party, and only 3.8 percent favored the BPF. The influence of other parties was much lower.

In the Soviet era, the Communist Party of Belorussia (CPB), part of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), claimed to rule the Belorussian SSR in the name of the proletariat for the entire duration of the republic's existence. For most of this period, it sought to control all aspects of government and society and to infuse political, economic, and social policies with the correct ideological content. By the late 1980s, however, the party watched as Mikhail S. Gorbachev attempted to withdraw the CPSU from day-to-day economic affairs.

After the CPB was banned in the wake of the August 1991 coup d'état, Belarusian communists regrouped and renamed themselves the Party of Communists of Belarus (PCB), which became the umbrella organization for Belarus's communist parties and pro-Russian groups. The PCB was formally registered in December 1991. The Supreme Soviet lifted the ban on the CPB in February 1993. The CPB was subsequently merged with the PCB.

The most active and visible of the opposition political groups in Belarus in the first half of the 1990s was the Belarusian Popular Front (BPF), founded in October 1989 with Zyanon Paznyak as chairman. The BPF declared itself a movement open to any individual or party, including communists, provided that those who joined shared its basic goal of a fully independent and democratic Belarus. The BPF's critics, however, claimed that it was indeed a party, pointing out the movement's goal of seeking political power, having a "shadow cabinet," and being engaged in parliamentary politics.

The United Democratic Party of Belarus was founded in November 1990 and was the first political party in independent

Figure 11. Administrative Divisions of Belarus; 1995

Belarus other than the communist party. Its membership is composed of technical intelligentsia, professionals, workers, and peasants. It seeks an independent Belarus, democracy, freedom of ethnic expression, and a market economy.

The Belarusian Social Democratic Assembly (Hramada) emerged in March 1991. Its members include workers, peasants, students, military personnel, and urban and rural intelligentsia. Its program advocates an independent Belarus, although it does not rule out membership in the CIS, and a market economy with state regulation of certain sectors. The assembly cooperates with other parties and considers itself part of the worldwide social democratic movement.

The Belarusian Peasant Party, founded in February 1991, is headquartered in Minsk and has branches in most *voblastsi.* The party's goals include privatization of land, a free market, a democratic government, and support of Belarusian culture and humanism.

The Belarusian Christian Democratic Union, founded in June 1991, was a continuation of the Belarusian Christian Democratic Party, which was disbanded by the Polish authorities in western Belarus in the 1930s. Its membership consists mainly of the intelligentsia. It espouses Christian values, nonviolence, pluralism, private property, and peaceful relations among ethnic groups.

The "Belaya Rus'" Slavic Council was founded in June 1992 as a conservative Russophile group. It defends Russian interests in all spheres of social life, vociferously objects to the status of Belarusian as the republic's sole official language, and demands equal status for the Russian language.

In 1995 other parties included the Belarusian Ecological Party, the National Democratic Party of Belarus, the Party of People's Accord, the All-Belarusian Party of Popular Unity and Accord, the Belarusian United Agrarian Democratic Party, the Belarusian Scientific Industrial Congress, the Belarusian Green Party, the Belarusian Humanitarian Party, the Belarusian Party of Labor, the Belarusian Party of Labor and Justice, the Belarusian Socialist Party, the Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus, the Polish Democratic Union, and the Republican Party.

The Media

In late 1992, Belarus had 586 officially approved periodicals: 140 in Belarusian, 159 in Russian, and 241 in both Belarusian and Russian. Other publications combined Russian with another language or were published in English, Polish, or Ukrainian. The only daily newspaper published completely in Belarusian was *Zvyazda* (Star). Other dailies included *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* (Soviet Belorussia) and *Vechernyy Minsk* (Evening Minsk), published in Russian, and *Narodnaya hazyeta* (People's Newspaper), published in both Belarusian and Russian. Belarus's official news agency is BelTA (Belarusian News Agency), and the independent news agency is BELAPAN.

In the mid-1990s, Belarus had a high level of censorship, a carryover from the Soviet period (see Internal Security, this ch.). Works no longer had to be approved before publication, but all nonfiction materials had to be presented to the Inspec-

torate for the Protection of State Secrets, a small government department subordinate to the Ministry of Communications and Information, which once had been a branch of Glavlit, the Soviet censorship body. Most publishing houses in the country were funded and controlled by the ministry.

Foreign Relations

The United States recognized Belarus on December 26, 1991. By late 1992, more than 100 countries had recognized Belarus, and nearly seventy of them had established some level of diplomatic relations with it. Belarus had a limited number of embassies abroad because its diplomatic activities, as with all other phases of life, were severely constrained by economic hardships. There was also a shortage of experienced diplomats who were Belarusian citizens; international relations had been the purview of Moscow during the Soviet era and continued to be mainly the purview of ethnic Russians residing in, but not citizens of, Belarus.

In 1995 Belarus was a member of a number of international organizations, including the United Nations (UN) (of which it was a founding member), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE; until January 1995 known as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe—see Glossary), the North Atlantic Cooperation Council, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). Belarus also has observer status at the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and its successor, the World Trade Organization (WTO). However, the Council of Europe (see Glossary) in 1995 declared Belarus to be ineligible for membership in the council because of shortcomings in its elections and its election laws, including restrictions on mass media coverage of the spring 1995 parliamentary campaign and restrictions on candidates' campaign expenditures.

Belarusian authorities, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, have been trying to promote the widest possible contacts with Belarusians living abroad (and particularly in the West), with an eye to developing economic and cultural cooperation. The Belarusian domestic media have devoted an increasing amount of space to the life of émigrés, including their past and present activities. A number of cultural exchanges, conferences, and joint ventures took place during

the early 1990s; a World Reunion of Belarusians was held in the republic's capital in 1993.

But not everybody in the republic concurs with these initiatives. From the ultraconservatives came denunciations of the émigrés for their alleged collaboration with the Nazis during World War II and their employment by the United States Central Intelligence Agency. However, the democratic opposition groups, including the BPF, have engaged in their own cooperative efforts with Belarusian émigré organizations, through which they have reached out for contacts with Western politicians and governments.

Russia

Even though Belarus's new constitution declared that it is a neutral country, the reality at independence was that Russia was Belarus's neighbor, its military partner, and its largest economic partner. Belarus's heavy economic dependence on Russia, especially for critically needed fuels, has serious political consequences. Russia not only could bring political pressure on Belarus but could also bring the country to its knees economically by withholding oil and natural gas. And with some 1.5 million ethnic Russians living in Belarus and many of the officers in the Belarusian armed forces being ethnic Russians, Russia is in a position to influence Belarus in more subtle ways as well.

The opposition is aware that the government of Alyaksandr Lukashyenka, using economic difficulties as justification, could try to append Belarus to Russia, not only economically but also militarily and politically. Lukashyenka has made it clear from the start that he wants a "special relationship" with Moscow, which, in terms of national security, would mean relying on Russia to ensure Belarus's security and, perhaps, giving Russia a "right of supervision" over Belarusian foreign and security policy.

Some hard-liners have called for closer contacts not only with the CIS but also with Russia itself. Because Belarus is so dependent on Russia already, they argue, it would make sense to be allied with it militarily as well. The Russian troops and missiles still on Belarus's soil would seem to make this alliance the logical choice, but it runs counter to the Belarusian constitution's goal of neutrality. The public itself is divided on the issue.

Nevertheless, although Russia has strong security concerns regarding Belarus, it does not appear interested in taking Belarus under its wing economically. Russia has made a number of changes in its finances and its economy that Belarus has not replicated; many policymakers in Russia see Belarus as a continuing drain on Russia's own financial resources.

The most concrete efforts to date at a close relationship between the two countries lie in the economic and monetary spheres. By June 1, 1994, Belarus had harmonized its interstate trade regulations and taxation schemes with those of Russia; most export and import fees on mutual trade were abolished. In May 1995, Belarus and Russia signed a customs union that eliminated customs checkpoints along their joint border (effective July 15, 1995) and also signed an agreement on cooperation in maintaining state borders.

United States

The United States awarded Belarus most-favored-nation status (see Glossary) for trade on February 16, 1993, and dramatically increased aid (from US$8.3 million under previously signed agreements to US$100 million in January 1994) because of Belarus's agreement to approve the first Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START I) and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). But the good relations between the United States and Belarus had cooled by 1995, when the reforms and progress toward democracy that had been developing slowly under Stanislaw Shushkyevich were stopped and even reversed by Alyaksandr Lukashyenka. The United States has protested the violations of human rights and democratic reversals under the Lukashyenka administration (see Internal Security, this ch.).

Ukraine

In 1995 Belarus and Ukraine were on good terms and made no territorial claims on each other; nor have their respective minority groups voiced any complaints of discrimination. However, ties between the two countries are weak because of their different relationships with, and views of, Russia. Unlike Belarus, Ukraine is determined to be politically and militarily independent. Kiev complains that whenever Ukraine disagrees with Russia on an issue, Belarus backs the latter.

Perhaps the most important Ukrainian issue for Belarus is the Chornobyl' nuclear power plant. Because Belarus suffered

the effects of the 1986 disaster more than any other country, it had a strong interest in the shutdown of the plant. Belarus was therefore alarmed by the Ukrainian parliament's December 1993 vote to keep the plant running, despite the original plans that called for closing it at the end of 1993. Yet Supreme Soviet chairman Shushkyevich's appeals to Ukraine, which was in the midst of an energy crisis, made little difference.

Poland

Once Belarus declared its independence, it signed a number of agreements with Poland, including ones on establishing diplomatic relations and a consular convention, fighting crime, creating a commercial bank to finance bilateral trade, establishing new border-crossing points, and supporting investment opportunities in the two countries. Polish president Lech Walesa and Belarusian parliamentary chairman Stanislaw Shushkyevich signed a bilateral friendship and cooperation treaty during the latter's visit to Warsaw in June 1992. Military and economic agreements were signed in 1993.

In 1994 approximately 300,000 ethnic Belarusians lived in Poland, and 418,000 ethnic Poles lived in Belarus. In neither country are there any obstacles to the ethnic minority's participation in political life. In Belarus most ethnic Poles supported the drive for Belarusian independence and were not seen as a threat to Belarus; the government raised no obstacles to the Poles' acquisition of Belarusian citizenship. The ethnic Belarusians in Poland live mainly in the Bialystok region, one of the poorest areas of the country, but new economic cooperation between Belarus and Poland and specific obligations taken on by Poland are sure to effect changes, if only modestly.

The arena of most disagreements between Poles and Belarusians in the 1990s seemed to be religion. Accusations were made of ethnic Polish dominance of the Roman Catholic Church in Belarus. Polish priests sometimes served in parishes with little or no knowledge of the Belarusian language. But steps were being taken by the Roman Catholic archbishop to counter the more blatant use of Polish political symbols in the churches (see Religion, this ch.).

Lithuania

Although relations between Belarus and Lithuania were generally friendly in the early 1990s, various groups and individuals, and even some elements of the Belarusian government

and legislature, cited historical and sociological "facts" about language and ethnicity to claim some of Lithuania's territory, especially around the capital, Vilnius. The two countries signed a border agreement in December 1991 and over the next two years demarcated the previously unmarked border to prevent any further disputes.

During a February 1995 summit, Lithuanian president Algirdas Brazauskas and Belarusian president Lukashyenka signed a friendship and cooperation treaty that resolved all outstanding border issues. No problems were reported in connection with the minorities living in the other country.

Latvia

Belarus's relations with Latvia, one of its major trading partners, have been relatively free of problems. The border is unchanged from that established in 1940; as a result, marking it and establishing normal border controls (so that both countries could deal with smuggling and illegal immigration) were fairly straightforward. Neither the 120,000 ethnic Belarusians in Latvia nor the approximately 3,000 ethnic Latvians living in Belarus reported problems.

Belarus and Latvia have signed a number of agreements. An agreement signed in December 1991 covered respect for the rights of minorities and for national borders. Latvian president Guntis Ulmanis and Belarusian foreign minister Pyotr Krawchanka signed similar accords in August 1993. In May 1995, the transportation ministers of both countries signed an agreement on cooperation in rail transport and communications.

National Security

Belarus's national security interests are couched in conflict. On the one hand, there is the desire by some to protect Belarus's independence and its territory. On the other hand, there is the desire to appease and even actively to cooperate with Moscow, which supplies nearly all of Belarus's fuels and raw materials. Although Belarus's Supreme Soviet signed the CIS Treaty on Collective Security in April 1993, the government also joined the Partnership for Peace program of politico-military cooperation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in January 1995, but not before waiting to see what Russia would do.

The Armed Forces

Before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, 243,000 Soviet troops were stationed in the Belorussian SSR, with an additional 180,000 troops belonging to the local commands of the strategic rocket and air forces. This situation changed only in May 1992, when Belarus abolished the Belorussian Military District and subordinated all troops on its soil to its own Ministry of Defense.

The Belarusian armed forces officially came into existence on January 1, 1993, the day after all service personnel with Belarusian citizenship, which excluded the great majority of the officers, had taken an oath of loyalty to Belarus. Because there was no stipulation that only Belarusian citizens could serve in the armed forces, they were Belarusian forces in name only, and there was concern among groups such as the BPF that in time of crisis the loyalty of these forces might lie with Russia rather than with Belarus.

A component of this concern was the ethnic composition of the armed forces. At the end of 1992, ethnic Russians accounted for nearly half the Belarusian conscripts and some 80 percent of the officer corps. Since then, the ethnic composition of the officers has been changing gradually in favor of Belarusians as a result of legislative acts, but the process is slow. It will take years before the republic has its own Belarusian-led armed forces that are politically reliable and dedicated to Belarusian nationhood.

Another aspect of the nationality issue was that in 1993 some 40,000 Belarusian natives served as officers in the armed forces of other former Soviet republics. Many of them wished to return home for either patriotic or economic reasons, but such possibilities were limited because of the shortage of housing and the republic's scheduled military reductions in general. What concerned the Belarusian Ministry of Defense, which was dominated by Russians, was an announcement in the spring of 1992 by the Coordinating Council of the Union of Belarusian Soldiers that these officers were willing to fight against Russian military aggression in Belarus.

Because of Belarus's geopolitical importance and its absorption of troops withdrawn from the countries of the former Warsaw Pact (see Glossary), it was the most militarized republic of the former Soviet Union. Even in 1993, it had a ratio of one soldier to forty-three civilians, compared with one to ninety-eight in Ukraine and one to 634 in Russia. In real numbers, this

meant an estimated 243,000 troops. In addition, there was a serious imbalance in the officer-to-conscript ratio: three officers for every seven conscripts.

In accordance with its stated goal of becoming a neutral state and in accordance with its new defense doctrine, the government planned to decrease the number of its troops by some 60 percent, from 243,000 to 96,000 (including up to 22,000 officers) by the beginning of 1995. The armed forces employed 64,000 civilians. Further reductions were expected to reduce the total armed forces to a strength of 75,000 or even 60,000. Such a move, however, presents a difficult political problem because of a lack of housing and employment for demobilized service members, who, regardless of their present citizenship, are eligible to become Belarusian citizens and voters.

Women serve in the armed forces as well, although in much smaller numbers than men. They face the same physical and other testing requirements as men. In mid-1995 there were approximately 3,000 servicewomen, many of whom worked at headquarters as secretaries.

As of mid-1995, the armed forces were in the midst of adopting five main reforms. The first was a gradual move toward a goal of 50 percent professional soldiers. By mid-1995 there were 22,000 professional soldiers on contracts of five years or longer and another 9,000 soldiers on contracts of two to five years. These accounted for 32 percent of the uniformed establishment.

The second reform was to redivide the country into military territorial districts whose district commanders would be part of the structure of local government. The Ministry of Defense hoped that after implementing this system, recruits would be able to serve closer to home and that draft avoidance would decline.

The third reform was to create a mobile operational force. Such a force would likely be composed of three brigades: airmobile, helimobile, and airborne/special forces.

The fourth reform was the adoption of a new structure to permit maximum flexibility. The army's new post-Soviet structure, built on corps and brigades, suited Belarus's needs better than the Soviet-era divisions.

Last was the army's increased role in internal security. According to a presidential decree of January 1, 1995, entitled On Reinforcing the Fight Against Crime, troops have been transferred from the Ministry of Defense to the Ministry of

Honor guard at the World War II memorial, Minsk
Courtesy Michael E. Samojeden

Internal Affairs. Belarus's Border Guards are under the control of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. They numbered 8,000 in early 1995.

Ground Forces

In 1994 Belarus had ground forces of 52,500, organized into three corps headquarters, two motorized divisions, one airborne division, one artillery division, three mechanized divisions, one airborne brigade, three surface-to-surface missile brigades, two antitank brigades, one special duties brigade, and seven surface-to-air missile brigades. Equipment included 3,108 main battle tanks (seventy-nine T–54, 639 T–55, 291 T–62, 299 T–64, eight T–80, and 1,800 T–72), 419 medium-range launchers, sixty surface-to-surface missiles, and 350 surface-to-air missiles.

By January 1, 1995, the order of battle for the Belarusian army had changed. Ministry of Defense forces included the 103d Guards Air Assault Division and the 38th Separate Assault-Landing Brigade; the 28th Army Corps (Hrodna and Brest regions), composed of headquarters at Hrodna, the 6th Detached Mechanized Infantry Brigade, the 11th Detached

Mechanized Infantry Brigade, the 50th Detached Mechanized Infantry Brigade, the armament and equipment base, and corps units (missile troops, antiaircraft, chemical and engineer troops, signals, and rear services); the 65th Army Corps (Minsk and Vitsyebsk regions), composed of headquarters at Barysaw, three armament and equipment bases, and corps units; and the 5th Guards Army Corps (Minsk and Mahilyow regions) made up of headquarters at Babruysk, the 30th Detached Mechanized Infantry Brigade, two armament and equipment bases, and corps units.

Air Force

In mid-1994 the Belarusian air force operated two interceptor regiments with MiG–23, MiG–25, and MiG–29 aircraft; three strike regiments with MiG–27, Su–17, Su–24, and Su–25 aircraft; and one reconnaissance regiment with MiG–25 and Su–24 aircraft. Four regiments had 300 helicopters, and one transport regiment had more than forty helicopters. Personnel numbered 15,800.

Belarus also had an air defense force with 11,800 personnel and 200 SA–2, SA–3, SA–5, and SA–10 surface-to-air missiles. The system was being integrated into Russia's air defenses in 1994, owing to Belarus's lack of resources.

Manpower, Education, and Training

In 1995 conscription was for eighteen months, with alternative service available. In 1994 reserve forces numbered approximately 289,500 members, who had had military service in the previous five years.

In the early 1990s, an issue in the training of troops was the teaching and use of the Belarusian language. There was resistance in the Ministry of Defense and in the armed forces themselves to the idea of using the Belarusian language; officials claimed that the Belarusian armed forces were being "politicized." But little progress had been made in 1994 toward the use of Belarusian in the military, as called for by the draft law entitled About the Armed Forces of the Republic of Belarus, which stipulated the use of both the Belarusian and the Russian languages, with a gradual transition to Belarusian.

Expenditures

The defense budget for 1994 was estimated at 686.6 billion Belarusian rubles, accounting for 4.5 percent of GDP and

reflecting a slight increase in real terms over the previous few years. One reason for this was that Belarus had obligated itself in a treaty to cover a larger share of the costs in maintaining the army units of other former Soviet republics stationed on its soil. Another was that the government made large outlays in acquiring strategic stockpiles, mostly of fuel reserves.

Nuclear Weapons

When the Soviet Union dissolved, Belarus (along with Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan) technically became a nuclear power because of the eighty-one SS–25 intercontinental ballistic missiles on its soil, even though the republic's Declaration of State Sovereignty declared Belarus to be a nuclear-free state. In May 1992, Belarus signed the Lisbon Protocol to the NPT and, along with Ukraine and Kazakhstan, agreed to destroy or turn over to Russia all strategic nuclear warheads on its territory.

To achieve this objective, the Supreme Soviet had to ratify the START I treaty. For some time, however, the legislature stalled while seeking international guarantees of the republic's security and international funding to carry out the removal. Finally, on February 4, 1993, the START I treaty was ratified, and adherence to the NPT was approved. All tactical nuclear weapons were removed from Belarus by mid-1993, but although the country strove to remove the strategic nuclear weapons (based at Lida and Mazyr) by 1995, there was little hope of meeting this deadline. In February 1995, Lukashyenka decided to stop arms reductions called for by the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty (CFE Treaty—see Glossary), claiming NATO encroachments on Belarus's territory; in truth, his decision was a matter of finances. These remaining strategic nuclear weapons were tended by Russian troops who would continue to be stationed in Belarus until 2020, according to the customs union agreements reached with Russia in January and February 1995 (see Russian Troops, this ch.).

The Defense Industry

Belarus's large defense industry has been severely hit by the country's cutbacks in imports of fuels and raw materials as well as by decreased demand for military products across the former Soviet Union in general. Because Belarus is now paying higher prices for its fuels and raw materials, the cost of its products has increased, prompting a decrease in purchases not only by Russia but by other former Soviet republics as well. Conver-

sion to civilian industry has not been quick or successful, as is the case across the former Soviet bloc. Belarus is hopeful that its defense industry will get more business from Russia now that Belarus is paying some of the costs of maintaining Russian troops on Belarusian soil. Belarus has also tried to increase its arms markets. In mid-1995 arms deals with Iran and China were pending.

The Commonwealth of Independent States

Geopolitically, Belarus is as strategically important to Russia today as it was in the times of Napoleon Bonaparte and Adolf Hitler. Therefore, repeated invitations were extended to Minsk from the CIS to join in a military alliance. Shushkyevich refused to sign the CIS Treaty on Collective Security that six other CIS states had signed in May 1992. He believed such a move would contravene the Declaration of State Sovereignty, which defines Belarus as a neutral state, and that an independent Belarusian army was essential to maintaining the republic's independence from Russia. The Supreme Soviet in April 1993 nonetheless voted to sign the treaty and eventually took revenge on Shushkyevich for his views on the CIS security treaty by dismissing him in January 1994, officially on charges of corruption. At the same time, accords were also signed on closer economic cooperation with other CIS member states.

Although Belarus joined NATO's Partnership for Peace, it strongly supported Moscow's objections to NATO expansion in Central Europe. The opposition, which realized that Belarus's full membership in NATO would not come about, suggested a Baltic-to-Black Sea zone of economic and political cooperation encompassing Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova. Not only was this idea anathema to pro-Russian elements in Belarusian society, but Poland and the Baltic states would reject it as well if it threatened their prospects for full membership in NATO.

Russian Troops

The removal from Belarusian territory of both strategic nuclear arms and tens of thousands of Russian soldiers is a task as delicate and problematic as it is important if Belarus is to achieve its stated constitutional goal of neutrality.

In 1993 there were an estimated 40,000 troops of the Russian air force in Belarus, comprising one air division with 130 combat aircraft. This consisted of one regiment with thirty Su–

24 fighter-bombers, one heavy bomber division of four regiments with fifteen Tu–22M Backfire bombers and fifty Tu–22 medium-range bombers, and one regiment with twenty Tu–22M Backfire bombers and fifteen Tu–16 medium-range bombers.

Most of these troops were engaged in work related to the seventy-two strategic nuclear missiles based at Lida and Mazyr and were scheduled to leave Belarus in 1995, the anticipated deadline for transferring all nuclear weapons to Russia. This transfer, which depended greatly on housing being built for the troops in Russia, was viewed as unrealistic by mid-1995. An October 1994 announcement stated that two Russian nonnuclear military installations would remain in Belarus.

Despite the creation of a Belarusian army, Belarus had to contend with the fact that the bulk of its officer corps remained composed of ethnic Russians. However, the reduction of troops from 1993 to 1995 included a reduction in the number of officers, which meant fewer ethnic Russian generals.

Internal Security

As with many other Belarusian institutions, the internal security forces were inherited more or less intact when the Soviet Union was dissolved. The local assets of these institutions were transferred to the new government and continued functioning with basically the same policies and, very often, the same personnel. In 1995 the country's security service retained the name KGB.

The former communist, pro-Russian hard-liners still in charge of many of Belarus's institutions are determined to stay in power. One of their methods is censorship. They call newspaper editors in for "chats" about government policy and the subsidies that keep many periodicals afloat. They also enforced the media restrictions on coverage of the May 1995 parliamentary elections, which kept newspapers from publishing interviews with the candidates and stories about the campaign in general.

Crime

A drastic decline in living standards and the general breakdown in law and order throughout the former Soviet Union have contributed greatly to a dramatic rise in crime in Belarus. In the first half of 1993, Belarus's murder rate increased by almost 50 percent and muggings by almost 60 percent. Orga-

nized crime is present in Belarus as well. Independent Belarus has also become a transshipment point for illegal drugs intended for Western Europe; locally produced opium and cannabis supply Belarus's own populace.

One of the more public crimes in the republic is corruption in the government. Although Alyaksandr Lukashyenka campaigned on an anticorruption platform, accusations of corruption have stuck to his administration. In December 1994, Syarhyey Antonchyk read a report in the Supreme Soviet charging a number of high-level administration figures with corruption, which led a number of these figures to offer their resignations. Lukashyenka refused to accept the resignations and banned four independent newspapers from publishing the report. Such incidents are generally acknowledged to be just the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

Human Rights

Belarus's transition from the authoritarian institutions of the Soviet era to democratic ones has been spotty, and human rights abuses continue. The government, even before the election of Lukashyenka as president, continued to restrict freedom of speech, press, and peaceful assembly, among other rights.

Although the constitution provides for freedom of speech, this right is observed more in the breach. The government continues to use slander and defamation laws to suppress criticism of its policies and government officials. It also retains a virtual economic monopoly over the press through its ownership of nearly all printing and broadcasting facilities. This absence of independence encourages editors to censor themselves. In other cases, the government simply removes the editor of a publication, cancels a publication's contract for paper, eliminates a publication's government subsidy, or denies a publication access to state-owned printing facilities.

Freedom of assembly is also guaranteed by the constitution, but this too is enforced arbitrarily. Despite the law's explicit statement of procedures for obtaining permission for rallies or marches, officials still deny permission when it suits them or higher levels of the government.

There have been many reports of beatings of prisoners, mainly in the prison in Hrodna, by prison guards or with their complicity. Although such actions are against the law, it is rare for the government to punish perpetrators. Amnesty Interna-

tional has been denied access to the prison routinely, on grounds of security.

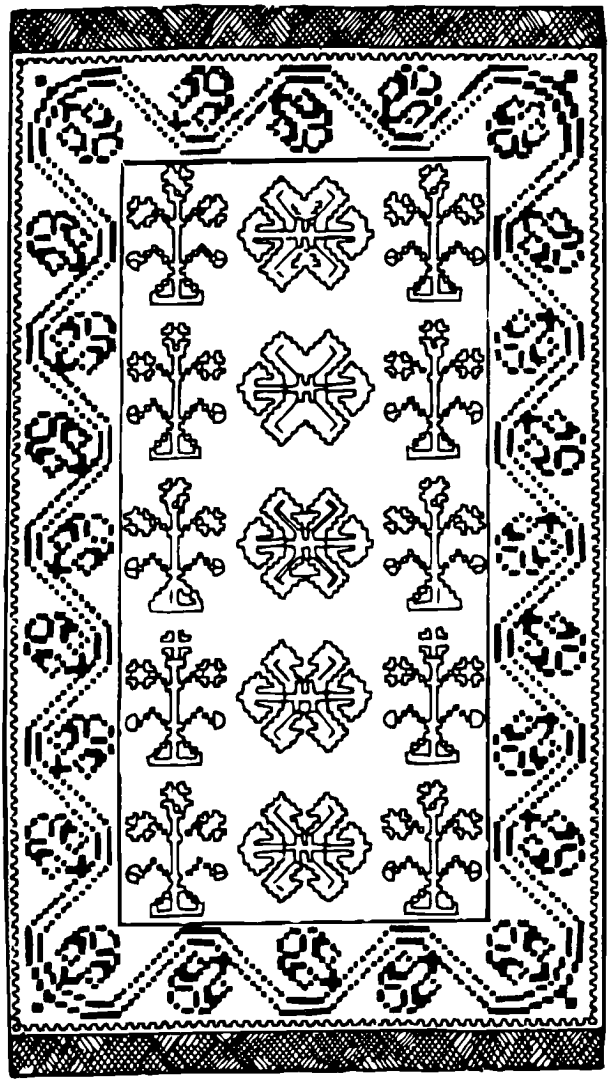
In July 1993, Belarus abolished its death penalty for four economic crimes. A revised criminal code under consideration by the parliament would reduce the number of offenses carrying a possible death sentence to eight: preparing and conducting an aggressive war, acts of terrorism against a representative of another state, international terrorism, genocide, premeditated murder, treason, sabotage, and terrorist acts and conspiracy to seize power.

* * *

Published materials dealing with Belarus are still somewhat scarce. A standard work, covering Belarus from its earliest history through the mid-1950s, is Nicholas P. Vakar's *Belorussia: The Making of a Nation*, which also covers many aspects of the culture. Another work, which briefly discusses earlier history, despite its title, is Ivan S. Lubachko's *Belorussia under Soviet Rule, 1917–1957*, which emphasizes the Soviet era. A more recent book is Jan Zaprudnik's *Belarus: At a Crossroads in History*. *Belarus*, an economic review by the International Monetary Fund, provides a picture of Belarus's economy after 1991 and includes tables on a variety of economic performance indicators in the Soviet and post-Soviet periods.

Current information on Belarus, with an emphasis on political, economic, and national security topics, is provided in the Foreign Broadcast Information Service's *Daily Report: Central Eurasia*. *Transition*, a new biweekly Open Media Research Institute (the successor organization to Radio Free Europe) publication begun in January 1995, tends to have one longer article on Belarus per issue. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

Chapter 2. Moldova



Antique Moldovan rug

Chronology of Important Events

Period	Description
SECOND–THIRD CENTURIES	
ca. 105–271	Rome occupies territory of future Romanian lands.
FOURTEENTH CENTURY	
1349	Prince Bogdan establishes Bogdania, later renamed Moldova, stretching from Carpathian Mountains to Nistru River.
SIXTEENTH CENTURY	
1512	Although Stephen the Great (1457–1504) achieves significant victories against Ottoman Empire, Moldova becomes tributary state of empire for 300 years.
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY	
First half	First Moldovan books appear.
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY	
1792	Ottoman Empire cedes all its holdings in Transnistria to Russian Empire under Treaty of Iasi.
NINETEENTH CENTURY	
1812	Bessarabia is incorporated into Russian Empire under Treaty of Bucharest after Russo-Turkish War (1806–12).
1858	Moldovan territory west of Prut River is united with Walachia. Alexandru Ioan Cuza is elected prince of the two regions the following year.
TWENTIETH CENTURY	
1917	February Revolution and Bolshevik Revolution bring down Russian Empire. Bessarabia's newly created National Council declares Bessarabia the independent Democratic Moldovan Republic, federated with Russia.
1918	Bessarabia declares its complete independence from Russia and votes to unite with Romania.
1924	Soviet government creates Moldavian Autonomous Oblast on east bank of Nistru River. Seven months later, oblast is upgraded to Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Moldavian ASSR)
1940 June	Bessarabia is occupied by Soviet forces as result of secret protocol attached to 1939 Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact.
August	Soviet government creates Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (Moldavian SSR) from most of Bessarabia and portion of Moldavian ASSR.
1941	Germany and Romania attack Moldavian SSR and Ukrainian SSR; Nazi Germany gives Bessarabia, northern Bukovina, and Transnistria to Romania.
1944	Soviet forces reoccupy Bessarabia and Transnistria.
1947	Bessarabia, northern Bukovina, and Transnistria are formally returned to Soviet Union by treaty.

Chronology of Important Events

Period		Description
1950–52		As first secretary of Communist Party of Moldavia, Leonid I. Brezhnev liquidates and deports thousands of ethnic Romanians from Moldavia and institutes forced collectivization.
1986		Mikhail S. Gorbachev announces policy of *perestroika* in Moscow at Twenty-Seventh Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.
1988		Yedinstvo-Unitatea Intermovement is formed by Slavs in Transnistria.
1989		Moldovan Popular Front is formed.
1990	February	Popular Front organizes "Republic's Voters Meeting," attended by more than 100,000 persons. First democratic elections are held for Supreme Soviet of Moldavian SSR. Runoff elections are held in March. Mircea Snegur is elected chairman of Supreme Soviet.
	June	Name of Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic is changed to Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova. Supreme Soviet adopts declaration of sovereignty.
	August	Gagauz declare independent "Gagauz Republic."
	September	Slavs in Transnistria proclaim independent "Dnestr Moldavian Republic." Snegur becomes president of Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova.
1991	May	Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova is renamed Republic of Moldova. Supreme Soviet changes its name to Moldovan Parliament.
	August	August coup d'état takes place in Moscow. Moldovan Parliament bans Communist Party of Moldavia. Moldova declares its complete independence from Soviet Union on August 27 and demands withdrawal of Soviet troops.
	October	President Snegur announces decision to organize Moldova's own national armed forces.
	December	Stepan Topal is elected president of "Gagauz Republic." Igor' N. Smirnov is elected president of "Dnestr Moldavian Republic." Minsk Agreement establishes Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). President Snegur signs Alma-Ata Declaration, which expands membership of CIS, but Moldovan Parliament refuses to ratify declaration. Soviet Union is dissolved. United States recognizes Moldova.
1992	March	Government of Moldova declares state of emergency in reaction to mounting violence.
	May	Armed resistance by separatists escalates to full-scale civil war in Transnistria.
	July	An agreement establishing a cease-fire in Moldova is signed by Moldovan president Snegur and Russian president Boris N. Yeltsin.
1993	January	Moldovan Parliament refuses to sign agreement strengthening CIS.
	February	Moldovan Popular Front is re-formed as Christian Democratic Popular Front.
	November	Moldova introduces its own currency, the leu.

Chronology of Important Events

Period		Description
1994	February	Parliamentary elections drastically change Moldovan government. Popular Front majority is gone, and compromises are made with nationalities on various issues.
	March	Public opinion poll is held. Populace votes overwhelmingly to retain independence.
	April	Moldova votes to join CIS.
	August	New Moldovan constitution goes into effect.
	October	Moldova and Russia sign agreement on withdrawal of Russian 14th Army from Transnistria and Tighina (Bendery or Bender in Russian), but only Moldovan government approves it.
1995	March	Students, intelligentsia, workers, and pensioners demonstrate in Chisinau over cultural and educational issues and the name of the language.
	June	Lieutenant General Aleksandr V. Lebed' resigns as commander of Russian 14th Army. Replaced by Major General Valeriy Yevnevich.
		Russian 14th Army is downgraded to an operational group.
		Moldova joins Council of Europe.

Country Profile

Country

Formal Name: Republic of Moldova (Republica Moldova).

Short Form: Moldova.

Term for Citizens: Moldovan(s).

Capital: Chisinau.

Date of Independence: August 27, 1991.

Geography

Size: Approximately 33,700 square kilometers.

Topography: Gently rolling, hilly plain in north; thick deciduous forests in center; numerous ravines and gullies in steppe zone in south. Highest point 430 meters.

Climate: Moderately continental. Average annual precipitation ranges from 400 millimeters in south to 600 millimeters in north.

Society

Population: 4,473,033 (July 1994 estimate), with an average annual growth rate of 0.38 percent.

Ethnic Groups: According to 1989 census, an estimated 65 percent Romanian, 14 percent Ukrainian, 13 percent Russian, 4 percent Gagauz, 2 percent Bulgarian, and remainder Jewish, Belorussian, Polish, Roma (Gypsy), and German.

Languages: Moldovan (a dialect of Romanian) is the official language. Russian retained as language of interethnic communication; areas of non-Romanian ethnic majority may also use local language as means of communication.

Religion: About 98.5 percent of population Orthodox (1991). Other denominations include Uniate, Jewish, Armenian Apostolic, Seventh-Day Adventist, Baptist, Pentecostal, and Molokan (a Russian Orthodox sect).

Education and Literacy: Compulsory school attendance ten years; literacy rate 96 percent (1992). Approximately half of students study in Romanian language and half in Russian language.

Health: Health care provided by state, mostly free of charge. Infant mortality rate 30.3 per 1,000 live births (1994). Life expectancy in 1994 sixty-five years for males and seventy-two years for females. Modern medical equipment and facilities in short supply. In 1990 about 129 hospital beds and forty doctors per 10,000 inhabitants.

Economy

General Character: Centralized. Government efforts to privatize and establish market economy slow.

Net Material Product (NMP): In 1991 about US$13.1 billion; real growth rate –11.9 percent in 1992. Agriculture accounted for 42 percent of NMP in 1991, followed by industry with 38 percent and other sectors with 24 percent.

Agriculture: State and collective farms from Soviet period transformed into joint-stock companies. Primary crops: fruits and berries, grains, grapes, tobacco, vegetables, sugar beets, potatoes, and sunflowers. Cattle, hogs, poultry, and sheep raised.

Industry: Food processing, machinery and metalworking, light industry, building materials, tractors, and wood products.

Minerals: No commercial mineral deposits.

Energy: Primary energy sources (minor hydroelectric and thermal power plants, and firewood) meet only 1 percent of domestic needs. Highly dependent on Russia for nearly all oil, gasoline, coal, and natural gas needed to fuel electric-power generation plants.

Foreign Trade: In 1994 nearly three-quarters of foreign trade with other members of Commonwealth of Independent States. Most imports and vast majority of exports still directed toward territories of former Soviet Union. Imports: industrial raw materials, fossil fuels, and manufactured goods. Exports: wine and spirits, processed foods, and clothing and textiles.

Fiscal Year: Calendar year.

Currency and Exchange Rate: The leu (pl., lei), introduced in November 1993. In January 1995, 4.27 lei per US$1.

Transportation and Telecommunications

Roads: In 1995 estimated at 20,100 kilometers, including 14,000 kilometers of paved surfaces.

Railroads: In 1995 estimated at 1,150 kilometers.

Airports: Major airport in Chisinau.

Inland Waterways: Main river, Nistru, navigable almost entire length, but water transport only of local importance. Only eight rivers extend more than 100 kilometers.

Telecommunications: In 1995 one private television channel and three state television channels: Moldovan, Romanian, and Russian. In 1994 nine AM radio stations in four cities and five FM stations in five cities, as well as a number of private radio stations.

Government and Politics

Government: Democracy, with president and unicameral legislature, Moldovan Parliament, both popularly elected. Government composed of president and Council of Ministers. General Prosecution Office headed by prosecutor general. New constitution went into effect August 27, 1994. Two self-proclaimed republics: "Gagauzia," recognized and granted autonomy; and "Dnestr Moldavian Republic," with an elected, extralegal separatist government.

Politics: Leading parties after 1994 parliamentary elections:

Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova, Christian Democratic Popular Front, Congress of Peasants and Intellectuals, Gagauz Halkî, and Yedinstvo/Socialist Bloc.

Foreign Relations: First recognized by Romania; as of early 1995, recognized by more than 170 states, including United States (December 25, 1991). Foreign diplomatic presence in Chisinau limited. Relations with Romania influenced by issue of reunification of the two countries. Relations with Ukraine improved as a result of less nationalistic Moldovan policies; presence of Russian 14th Army in Transnistria seen as a common threat. Relationship with Russia very tense.

International Agreements and Memberships: Member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (until January 1995 known as the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe), United Nations, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, North Atlantic Cooperation Council, and Community of Riparian Countries of the Black Sea. Observer at General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and World Trade Organization (successor to GATT). Alma-Ata Declaration, expanding membership of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), signed by president December 1991 but not ratified by Parliament until April 1994. Member of Commonwealth of Independent States as of that date.

National Security

Armed Forces: Armed forces under Ministry of Defense. In 1994 totaled approximately 11,100: ground forces (9,800, including army and Guard Battalion) and air force (1,300, including air defense). No navy. Reserves of 100,000 (those who had had military service in previous five years). Universal conscription, for up to eighteen months.

Major Military Units: In 1994 army consisted of three motor rifle brigades, one artillery brigade, and one reconnaissance assault battalion. Air force consisted of one fighter regiment, one helicopter squadron, and one missile brigade.

Military Equipment: Arms from former Soviet stocks and

undetermined quantities of arms from Romania.

Internal Security: In 1994 national police (10,000). Internal troops (2,500) and OPON riot police (900) under Ministry of Interior. Border Guards under Ministry of National Security. Local assets of former Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic KGB transferred to new government (along with personnel who wished to transfer) to form new Ministry of National Security.

Russian Troops: In 1994 Russian 14th Army (9,200). "Dnestr Moldavian Republic" forces (5,000) include Dnestr Battalion of Republic Guard and "Cossacks" (approximately 1,000).

Figure 12. Moldova, 1995

THE HISTORY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA is the history of two different regions that have been joined into one country, but not into one nation: Bessarabia and Transnistria. Bessarabia, the land between the Prut and Nistru rivers, is predominantly ethnic Romanian in population and constitutes the eastern half of a region historically known as Moldova or Moldavia (the Soviet-era Russian name). Transnistria is the Romanian-language name for the land on the east bank of the Nistru River; the majority of the population there is Slavic—ethnic Ukrainians and Russians—although Romanians are the single largest ethnic group .

To a great extent, Moldova's history has been shaped by the foreigners who came to stay and by those who merely passed through, including Greek colonists, invading Turks and Tatars, officials of the Russian Empire, German and Bulgarian colonists, communist apparatchiks (see Glossary) from the Soviet Union, soldiers from Nazi Germany, Romanians, and twentieth-century Russian and Ukrainian immigrants. Each group has left its own legacy, sometimes cultural and sometimes political, and often unwelcome.

Moldova's communist overlords, the most recent "foreigners," created the public life that exists in Moldova today. Independence has brought about changes in this public life, but often only on the surface. What further changes Moldova makes will depend partly on how much time it has before the next group of "foreigners" comes to call.

Historical Setting

Early History

Moldova's Latin origins can be traced to the period of Roman occupation of nearby Dacia (in present-day Romania, Bulgaria, and Serbia), ca. A.D. 105–271, when a culture was formed from the intermingling of Roman colonists and the local population. After the Roman Empire and its influence waned and its troops left the region in A.D. 271, a number of groups passed through the area, often violently: Huns, Ostrogoths, and Antes (who were Slavs). The Bulgarian Empire, the Magyars, the Pechenegs, and the Golden Horde (Mongols) also held sway temporarily. In the thirteenth cen-

tury, Hungary expanded into the area and established a line of fortifications in Moldova near the Siretul River (in present-day Romania) and beyond. The region came under Hungarian suzerainty until an independent Moldovan principality was established by Prince Bogdan in 1349. Originally called Bogdania, the principality stretched from the Carpathian Mountains to the Nistru River and was later renamed Moldova, after the Moldova River in present-day Romania.

During the second half of the fifteenth century, all of southeastern Europe came under increasing pressure from the Ottoman Empire, and despite significant military victories by Stephen the Great (Stefan cel Mare, 1457–1504), Moldova succumbed to Ottoman power in 1512 and was a tributary state of the empire for the next 300 years. In addition to paying tribute to the Ottoman Empire and later acceding to the selection of local rulers by Ottoman authorities, Moldova suffered repeated invasions by Turks, Crimean Tatars, and Russians.

In 1792 the Treaty of Iasi forced the Ottoman Empire to cede all of its holdings in what is now Transnistria to the Russian Empire. An expanded Bessarabia was annexed by, and incorporated into, the Russian Empire following the Russo-Turkish War of 1806–12 according to the terms of the Treaty of Bucharest of 1812 (see fig. 13). In 1858 Moldovan territory west of the Prut River was united with Walachia. And in the same year, Alexandru Ioan Cuza was elected prince of Walachia and the part of Moldova that lay west of the Prut River, laying the foundations of modern Romania. These two regions were united in 1861.

The Beginning of the Soviet Period

In 1917, during World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution, political leaders in Bessarabia created a National Council (Sfatul Tarii), which declared Bessarabia the independent Democratic Moldovan Republic, federated with Russia. In February 1918, the new republic declared its complete independence from Russia and, two months later, voted to unite with Romania, thus angering the Russian government.

After the creation of the Soviet Union (see Glossary) in December 1922, the Soviet government moved in 1924 to establish the Moldavian Autonomous Oblast on land east of the Nistru River in the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (Ukrainian SSR). The capital of the oblast was at Balta, in present-day Ukraine. Seven months later, the oblast was upgraded to the

Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Moldavian ASSR), even though its population was only 30 percent ethnic Romanian. The capital remained at Balta until 1929, when it was moved to Tiraspol (Tiraspol' in Russian) (see fig. 14).

In June 1940, Bessarabia was occupied by Soviet forces as a consequence of a secret protocol attached to the 1939 Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact (see Glossary). On August 2, 1940, the Soviet government created the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (Moldavian SSR), with its capital at Chisinau (Kishinĕv in Russian), by joining most of Bessarabia (see Glossary) with a portion of the Moldavian ASSR (the rest was returned to the Ukrainian SSR). Part of the far northern Moldavian ASSR (Herta—in present-day Ukraine), northern Bukovina (see Glossary), and southern Bessarabia (bordering on the Black Sea) were taken from Romania and incorporated into the Ukrainian SSR, leaving the Moldavian SSR landlocked.

Territorial Changes in World War II

In June 1941, German and Romanian troops attacked the Moldavian SSR and the Ukrainian SSR. Nazi Germany gave Romania, its ally, not only Bessarabia and northern Bukovina but also the land between the Nistru and Pivdennyy Buh (Yuzhnyy Bug in Russian) rivers, north to Bar in Ukraine, which Romania named and administered as Transnistria. This arrangement lasted until August 1944, when Soviet forces reoccupied Bessarabia and Transnistria. A 1947 treaty formally returned Bessarabia, northern Bukovina, and Transnistria to the Soviet Union, and the previous Soviet administrative divisions and Russian place-names were reimposed.

Postwar Reestablishment of Soviet Control

With the restoration of Soviet power in the Moldavian SSR, Joseph V. Stalin's government policy was to Russify (see Glossary) the population of the Moldavian SSR and destroy any remaining ties it had with Romania. Secret police struck at nationalist groups; the Cyrillic alphabet (see Glossary) was imposed on the "Moldavian" (see Glossary) language; and ethnic Russians and Ukrainians were encouraged to immigrate to the Moldavian SSR, especially to Transnistria. The government's policies—requisitioning large amounts of agricultural products despite a poor harvest—induced a famine following the catastrophic drought of 1945–47, and political, communist party, and academic positions were given to members of non-

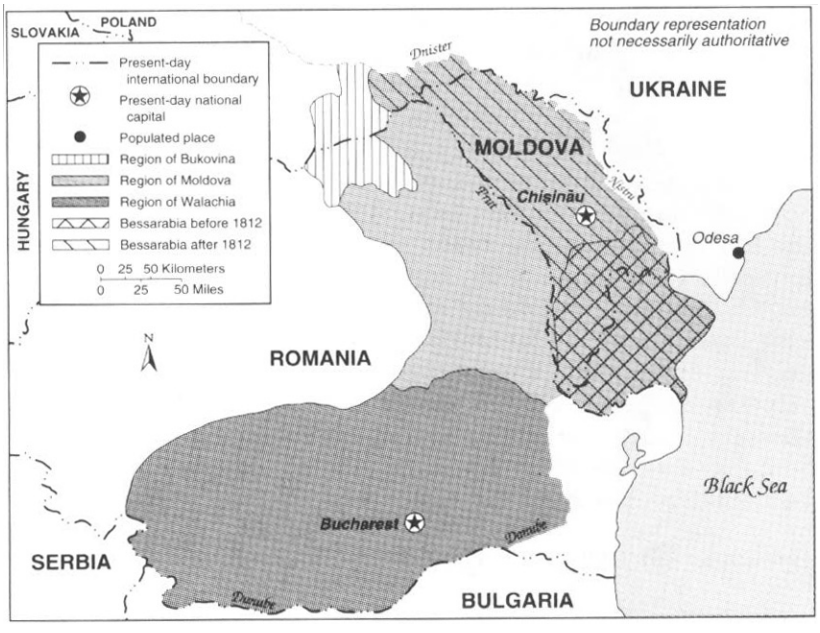


Figure 13. Historical Romanian-Speaking Regions in Southeastern Europe

Romanian ethnic groups (only 14 percent of the Moldavian SSR's political leaders were ethnic Romanians in 1946).

The conditions imposed during the reestablishment of Soviet rule became the basis of deep resentment toward Soviet authorities—a resentment that soon manifested itself. During Leonid I. Brezhnev's 1950–52 tenure as first secretary of the Communist Party of Moldavia (CPM), he put down a rebellion of ethnic Romanians by killing or deporting thousands of people and instituting forced collectivization (see Glossary). Although Brezhnev and other CPM first secretaries were largely successful in suppressing "Moldavian" nationalism, the hostility of "Moldavians" smoldered for another three decades, until after Mikhail S. Gorbachev came to power. His policies of *glasnost* (see Glossary) and *perestroika* (see Glossary) created conditions in which national feelings could be openly expressed and in which the Soviet republics could consider reforms.

Increasing Political Self-Expression

In this climate of openness, political self-assertion escalated

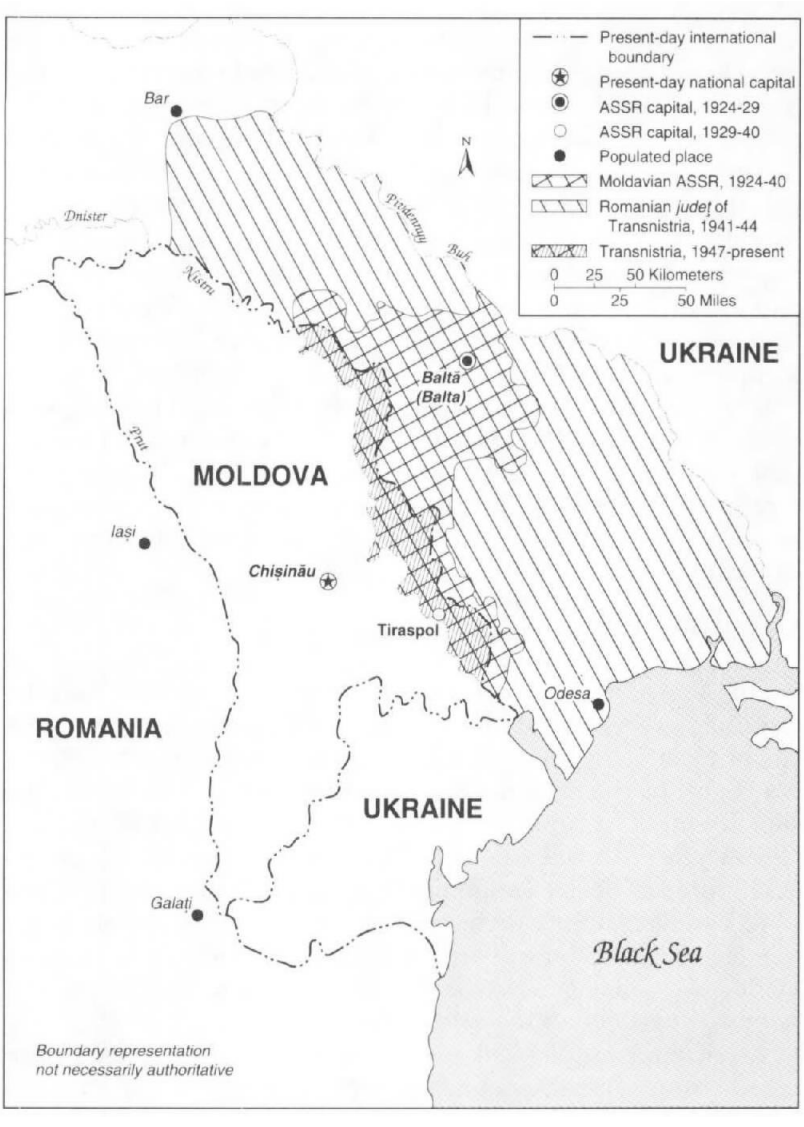


Figure 14. Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) and Transnistria, 1924–95

in the Moldavian SSR in 1988. The year 1989 saw the formation of the Moldovan Popular Front (commonly called the Popular Front), an association of independent cultural and political groups that had finally gained official recognition. Large demonstrations by ethnic Romanians led to the designation of Romanian as the official language and the replacement of the head of the CPM. However, opposition was growing to the

increasing influence of ethnic Romanians, especially in Transnistria, where the Yedinstvo-Unitatea (Unity) Intermovement had been formed in 1988 by the Slavic minorities, and in the south, where Gagauz Halkî (Gagauz People), formed in November 1989, came to represent the Gagauz, a Turkic-speaking minority there (see Ethnic Composition, this ch.).

The first democratic elections to the Moldavian SSR's Supreme Soviet (see Glossary) were held February 25, 1990, and runoff elections were held in March. The Popular Front won a majority of the votes. After the elections, Mircea Snegur, a communist, was elected chairman of the Supreme Soviet; in September he became president of the republic. The reformist government that took over in May 1990 made many changes that did not please the minorities, including changing the republic's name in June from the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic to the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova and declaring it sovereign the same month.

Secession of Gagauzia and Transnistria

In August 1990, the Gagauz declared a separate "Gagauz Republic" (Gagauz-Yeri in Gagauz) in the south, around the city of Comrat (Komrat in Russian). In September, Slavs on the east bank of the Nistru River proclaimed the "Dnestr Moldavian Republic" (commonly called the "Dnestr Republic"; see Glossary) in Transnistria, with its capital at Tiraspol. Although the Supreme Soviet immediately declared these declarations null, both "republics" went on to hold elections. Stepan Topal was elected president of the "Gagauz Republic" in December 1991, and Igor' N. Smirnov was elected president of the "Dnestr Republic" in the same month.

Approximately 50,000 armed Moldovan nationalist volunteers went to Transnistria, where widespread violence was temporarily averted by the intervention of the Russian 14th Army. (The Soviet 14th Army, now the Russian 14th Army, had been headquartered in Chisinau under the High Command of the Southwestern Theater of Military Operations since 1956.) Negotiations in Moscow among the Gagauz, the Transnistrian Slavs, and the government of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Moldova failed, and the government refused to join in further negotiations.

In May 1991, the country's official name was changed to the Republic of Moldova (Republica Moldova). The name of the Supreme Soviet also was changed, to the Moldovan Parliament.

Independence

During the 1991 August coup d'état (see Glossary) in Moscow, commanders of the Soviet Union's Southwestern Theater of Military Operations tried to impose a state of emergency in Moldova, but they were overruled by the Moldovan government, which declared its support for Russian president Boris N. Yeltsin. On August 27, 1991, following the coup's collapse, Moldova declared its independence from the Soviet Union (see Appendix D).

In October, Moldova began to organize its own armed forces. The Soviet Union was falling apart quickly, and Moldova had to rely on itself to prevent the spread of violence from the "Dnestr Republic" to the rest of the country. The December elections of Topal and Smirnov as presidents of their respective "republics," and the official dissolution of the Soviet Union at the end of the year, led to increased tensions in Moldova.

Violence again flared up in Transnistria in 1992. A cease-fire agreement was negotiated by presidents Snegur and Yeltsin in July. A demarcation line was to be maintained by a tripartite peacekeeping force (composed of Moldovan, Russian, and Transnistrian forces), and Moscow agreed to withdraw its 14th Army if a suitable constitutional provision were made for Transnistria. Also, Transnistria would have a special status within Moldova and would have the right to secede if Moldova decided to reunite with Romania.

Progress Toward Political Accommodation

New parliamentary elections were held in Moldova on February 27, 1994. Although the elections were described by international observers as free and fair, authorities in Transnistria refused to allow balloting there and made efforts to discourage the inhabitants from participating. Only some 7,500 inhabitants voted at specially established precincts in right-bank Moldova.

The results of a public opinion poll held on March 6 further reinforced the new Parliament's mandate to preserve Moldova's independence. Moldovans were asked if they wanted Moldova to remain an independent state, and the answer was a resounding—94.5 percent—"yes." Transnistrians did not participate.

The new Parliament, with its Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova majority, did not face the same gridlock that charac-

terized the old Parliament with its majority of Popular Front hard-line nationalists: legislation was passed, and changes were made. President Snegur signed the Partnership for Peace agreement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in March 1994, and in April Parliament approved Moldova's membership in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS—see Glossary) and in a CIS charter on economic union. On July 28, Parliament ratified a new constitution, which went into effect August 27, 1994, and provided substantial autonomy to Transnistria and to Gagauzia.

Russia and Moldova signed an agreement in October 1994 on the withdrawal of Russian troops from Transnistria and Tighina (Bendery or Bender in Russian), but the Russian government balked at ratifying it, and another stalemate ensued. Although the cease-fire was still in effect at the beginning of 1995 and further negotiations were to include the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE—see Glossary) and the United Nations, there was little hope for progress in the near future toward settling the dispute and getting the Russian troops to leave.

In March and April 1995, Moldovan college and secondary-school students staged a series of strikes and demonstrations in Chisinau to protest the government's cultural and educational policies. The students were joined by segments of the local intelligentsia and later by workers and pensioners who were protesting for economic reasons. The most emotional issue was that of the national language: should it be called Moldovan, as named in the 1994 constitution, or Romanian, given that most experts regard Moldovan as a dialect of Romanian (see Language, this ch.).

In an April 27 speech to Parliament, President Snegur asked it to amend the constitution and change the name of the language to Romanian. The final decision was postponed until the fall because of the stipulation that six months must pass before a proposed change to the constitution can be made. The student demonstrators declared a moratorium on further strikes until September 6.

In 1995 Moldova was still faced with substantial domestic social and economic problems, but it seemed to be on the road to making progress toward the ideal of a free-market democracy. The country's complex ethnic makeup and the political legacy of the Soviet period continued to contribute to the government's difficulties, but the fall from power of the extreme

nationalists in the 1994 parliamentary elections lowered ethnic tensions and allowed compromises to be made with the major ethnic groups. With Russia now a partner in negotiations on Transnistria and with pledges by the new government to respect the rights of the country's Russian-speaking populace, the threat of international hostilities has been greatly reduced.

Physical Environment

Located in southeastern Europe, Moldova is bordered on the west by Romania and on the north, south, and east by Ukraine. Most of its territory lies between the area's two main rivers, the Nistru and the Prut. The Nistru (Dnister in Ukrainian; Dnestr in Russian) forms a small part of Moldova's border with Ukraine in the northeast, but it mainly flows through the eastern part of the country, separating Bessarabia and Transnistria. The Prut River forms Moldova's entire western boundary with Romania.

Topography and Drainage

Most of Moldova's approximately 33,700 square kilometers of territory (about the size of Maryland) cover a hilly plain cut deeply by many streams and rivers. Geologically, Moldova lies primarily on deep sedimentary rock that gives way to harder crystalline outcroppings only in the north, where higher elevations are found on the margins of the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains.

The gently rolling Balti Plain (Stepa Balti in Romanian; Bel'tskaya ravnina in Russian) in northern Moldova (lying at ninety to 600 meters in elevation in the north) gives way to thick, deciduous forests in the Codri Hills (Podisul Codrilor in Romanian; Kodry in Russian), averaging 350 to 400 meters in elevation, where the most common trees are hornbeam, oak, linden, maple, wild pear, and wild cherry. The country's highest point, Mount Balanesti (Balaneshty in Russian), is located in the west-central portion of the country and reaches 430 meters.

The Bugeac Plain (Budzhak in Russian) in the south has numerous ravines and gullies. Transnistria has spurs of the Volyn-Podolian Upland (Podisul Podolie in Romanian; Volyno-Podil's'ka vysochyna in Ukrainian), which are cut into by tributaries of the Nistru River.

About 75 percent of Moldova is covered by a soil type called chernozem (see Glossary). In the northern highlands, more clay-textured soils are found; in the south, red-earth soil is predominant. The soil becomes less fertile toward the south but can still support grape and sunflower production. The uplands have woodland soils, while southern Moldova is in the steppe (see Glossary) zone, although most steppe areas today are cultivated. The lower reaches of the Prut River and the southern river valleys are saline marshes.

Drainage in Moldova is to the south, toward the Black Sea lowlands, and eventually into the Black Sea, but only eight rivers extend more than 100 kilometers. Moldova's main river, the Nistru, is navigable throughout almost the entire country, and in warmer winters it does not freeze over. The Prut River is a tributary of the Danube River, which it joins at the far southwestern tip of the country.

Climate

Moldova's climate is moderately continental: the summers are warm and long, with temperatures averaging about 20°C, and the winters are relatively mild and dry, with January temperatures averaging –4°C. Annual rainfall, which ranges from around 400 millimeters in the south to 600 millimeters in the north, can vary greatly; long dry spells are not unusual. The heaviest rainfall occurs in early summer and again in October; heavy showers and thunderstorms are common. Because of the irregular terrain, heavy summer rains often cause erosion and river silting.

Environmental Concerns

Moldova's communist-era environmental legacy, like that of many other former Soviet republics, is one of environmental degradation. Agricultural practices such as overuse of pesticides, herbicides, and artificial fertilizers were intended to increase agricultural output at all costs, without regard for the consequences. As a result, Moldova's soil and groundwater were contaminated by lingering chemicals, some of which (including DDT) have been banned in the West.

Such practices continue in Moldova to the present day. In the early 1990s, per hectare use of pesticides in Moldova averaged approximately twenty times that of other former Soviet republics and Western nations. In addition, poor farming methods, such as destruction of forests to plant vineyards, have

contributed to the extensive soil erosion to which the country's rugged topography is already prone.

Population and Ethnic Composition

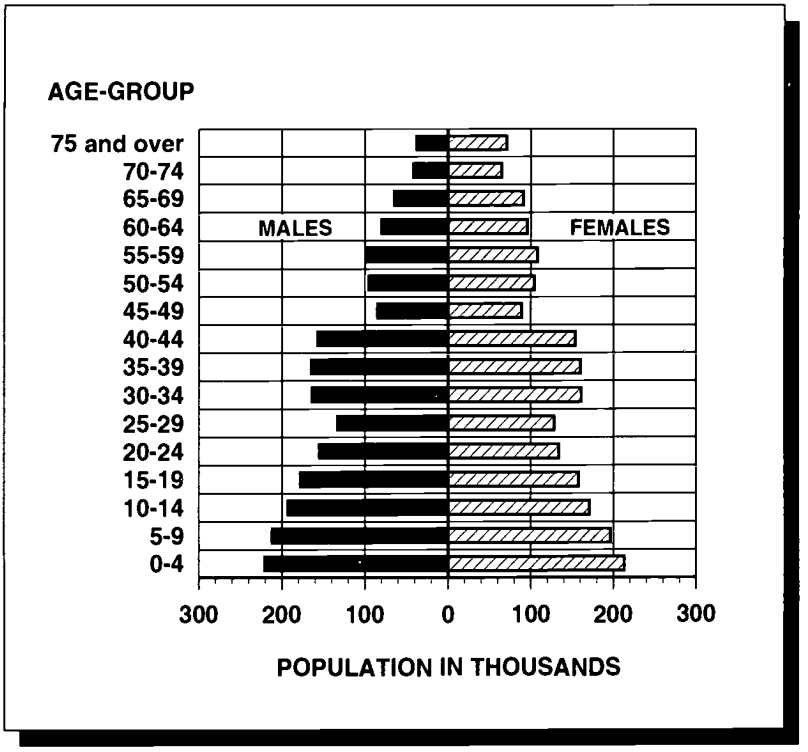
Population Characteristics

In July 1994, Moldova's population was estimated at 4,473,033, with an average annual growth rate of 0.38 percent. In 1992 the population's birth rate was 16.1 per 1,000 population (compared with Romania's fourteen per 1,000), the death rate was 10.2 per 1,000 (the same as Romania's), and the rate of natural population increase was 0.6 percent per year (0.9 percent for Romania) (see table 7, Appendix A). The instability that had occurred throughout the Soviet Union at the time of its dissolution had a significant impact on these figures, as is seen by comparing them with the figures for 1989. In 1989 the birth rate was 18.9 per 1,000 population, the death rate was 9.2 per 1,000, and the rate of natural population increase was 1.0 percent. In 1992 the infant mortality rate was thirty-five per 1,000 live births (compared with Romania's twenty-two per 1,000 live births). In 1989 the size of the average Moldovan family was 3.4 persons.

In 1991 about 28 percent of the population was under fifteen years of age, and almost 13 percent was over sixty-five years of age (see fig. 15). Life expectancy in 1994 was sixty-five years for males and seventy-two years for females.

Although Moldova is by far the most densely populated of the former Soviet republics (129 inhabitants per square kilometer in 1990, compared with thirteen inhabitants per square kilometer for the Soviet Union as a whole), it has few large cities. The largest and most important of these is Chisinau, the country's capital and its most important industrial center. Founded in 1420, Chisinau is located in the center of the republic, on the Bîc (Byk in Russian) River and in 1990 had a population of 676,000. The city's population is slightly more than 50 percent ethnic Romanian, with ethnic Russians constituting approximately 25 percent and ethnic Ukrainians 13 percent. The proportion of ethnic Russians and ethnic Ukrainians in the capital's population decreased in the years immediately after 1989 because of the emigration resulting from Moldavia's changing political situation and civil unrest.

The second largest city in the republic, Tiraspol, had a population of 184,000 in 1990. Located in Transnistria, Tiraspol



Source: Based on information from World Bank, *Statistical Handbook: States of the Former USSR*, Washington, 1992, 279; and United Nations, Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis, *Demographic Yearbook (Annuaire démographique), 1992*, New York, 1994, 184.

Figure 15. Population Distribution of Moldavia by Age and Gender, 1990

served as the capital of the Moldavian ASSR from 1929 to 1940. It has remained an important center of administration, transportation, and manufacturing. In contrast to Chisinau, Tiraspol had a population of only some 18 percent ethnic Romanians, with most of the remainder being ethnic Russians (41 percent) and ethnic Ukrainians (32 percent).

Other important cities include Balti (Bel'tsy in Russian), with a population of 162,000 in 1990, and Tighina, with a population of 132,000 in the same year. As in Tiraspol, ethnic Romanians are in the minority in both of these cities.

Traditionally a rural country, Moldova gradually began changing its character under Soviet rule (see table 8, Appendix A). As urban areas became the sites of new industrial jobs and

of amenities such as health clinics, the population of cities and towns grew. The new residents were not only ethnic Romanians who had moved from rural areas but also many ethnic Russians and Ukrainians who had been recruited to fill positions in industry and government (see Ethnic Composition, this ch.).

In 1990 Moldova's divorce rate of 3.0 divorces per 1,000 population had risen from the 1987 rate of 2.7 divorces per 1,000 population (see table 9, Appendix A). The usual stresses of marriage were exacerbated by a society in which women were expected to perform most of the housework in addition to their work outside the home. Compounding this were crowded housing conditions (with their resulting lack of privacy) and, no doubt, the growing political crisis, which added its own strains.

Ethnic Composition

One of Moldova's characteristic traits is its ethnic diversity. As early as the beginning of the eighteenth century, Moldovan prince and scholar Dimitrie Cantemir observed that he "didn't believe that there [existed] a single country of the size of Moldova in which so many and such diverse peoples meet."

At the time of the 1989 census, Moldova's total population was 4,335,360. The largest nationality in the republic, ethnic Romanians, numbered 2,795,000 persons, accounting for approximately 65 percent of the population. The other major nationalities were Ukrainians, about 600,000 (14 percent); Russians, about 562,000 (13 percent); Gagauz, about 153,000 (4 percent); and Bulgarians, about 88,000 (2 percent). The remaining population consisted of Jews, about 66,000, and smaller but appreciable numbers of Belorusssians, Poles, Roma (Gypsies), and Germans (see fig. 16). By contrast, in Transnistria ethnic Romanians accounted for only 40 percent of the population in 1989, followed by Ukrainians (28 percent), Russians (25 percent), Bulgarians (2 percent), and Gagauz (1 percent) (see fig. 17).

In the early 1990s, there was significant emigration from the republic, primarily from urban areas and primarily by Romanian minorities. In 1990 persons emigrating accounted for 6.8 percent of the population. This figure rose to 10 percent in 1991 before dropping sharply to 2 percent in 1992.

Ethnic Romanians made up a sizable proportion of the urban population in 1989 (about half the population of Chisinau, for example), as well as a large proportion of the rural

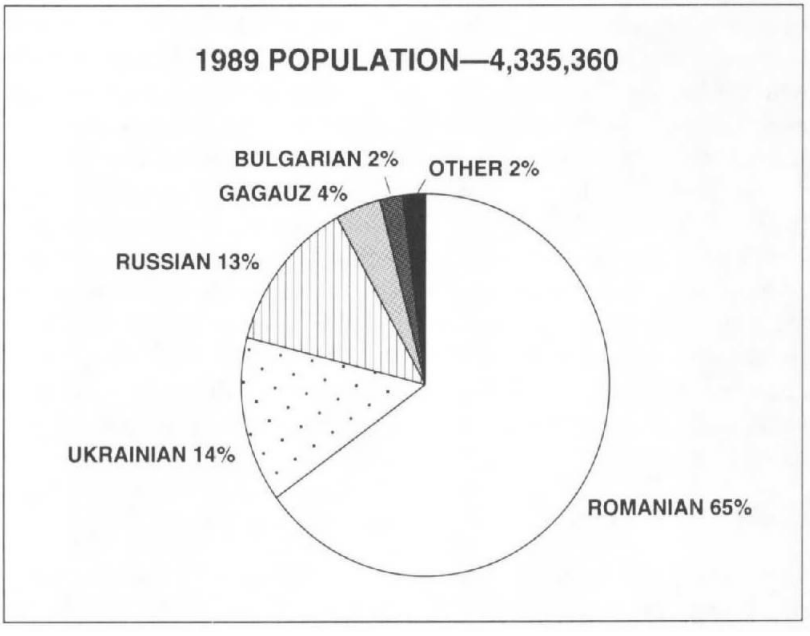
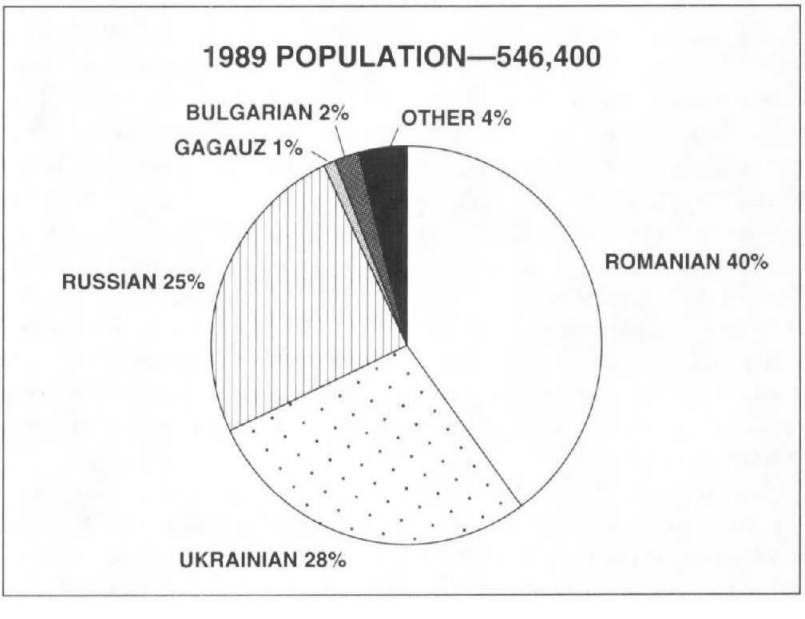


Figure 16. Estimated Population Distribution of Moldavia by Ethnic Group, 1989



Source: Based on information from Vasile Nedelciuc, *The Republic of Moldova*, Chisinau, June 1992, 23.

Figure 17. Estimated Population Distribution of Transnistria by Ethnic Group, 1989

population (80 percent), but only 23 percent of the ethnic Romanians lived in the republic's ten largest cities. Many ethnic Romanians emigrated to Romania at the end of World War II, and others had lost their lives during the war and in postwar Soviet purges. As a consequence of industrial growth and the Soviet government's policy of diluting and Russifying ethnic Romanians, there was significant immigration to the Moldavian SSR by other nationalities, especially ethnic Russians and Ukrainians.

Unlike ethnic Romanians, ethnic Russians tend to be urban dwellers in Moldova; more than 72 percent of them lived in the ten largest cities in 1989. Many of them came to the Moldavian SSR after it was annexed by the Soviet government in 1940; more arrived after World War II. Ostensibly, they came to alleviate the Moldavian SSR's postwar labor shortage (although thousands of ethnic Romanians were being deported to Central Asia at the time) and to fill leadership positions in industry and the government. The Russians settled mainly in Chisinau and Tighina and in the Transnistrian cities of Tiraspol and Dubasari (Dubossary in Russian). Only about 25 percent of Moldova's Russians lived in Transnistria in the early 1990s (see fig. 18).

Ethnic Ukrainians in Moldova are more evenly distributed between rural and urban areas. Forty-seven percent of them resided in large cities in 1989; others lived in long-settled villages dispersed throughout the region, but particularly in the north and in Transnistria.

The Gagauz, Turkic-speaking Orthodox Christians (unlike most Turks, who are Muslims), are concentrated in rural southern Moldova, mainly around the cities of Comrat, Ciadîr-Lunga (Chadyr-Lunga in Russian), and Vulcanesti (Vulkaneshty in Russian). Their ethnic origin is complex and still debated by scholars, but it is agreed that they migrated to Bessarabia from Bulgaria in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Shortly after Moldova declared its sovereignty, in August 1990 the Gagauz declared their own independent "Gagauz Republic" in the southern part of the country. The 1994 constitution accorded them a measure of autonomy, and a decree later that year officially established Gagauzia (Gagauz-Yeri in Gagauz).

Ethnic Bulgarians in Moldova live mainly in the southern part of the country. Most of them are descendants of eighteenth-century settlers who came to the region because of persecution by the Turks. Others came to Bessarabia when the

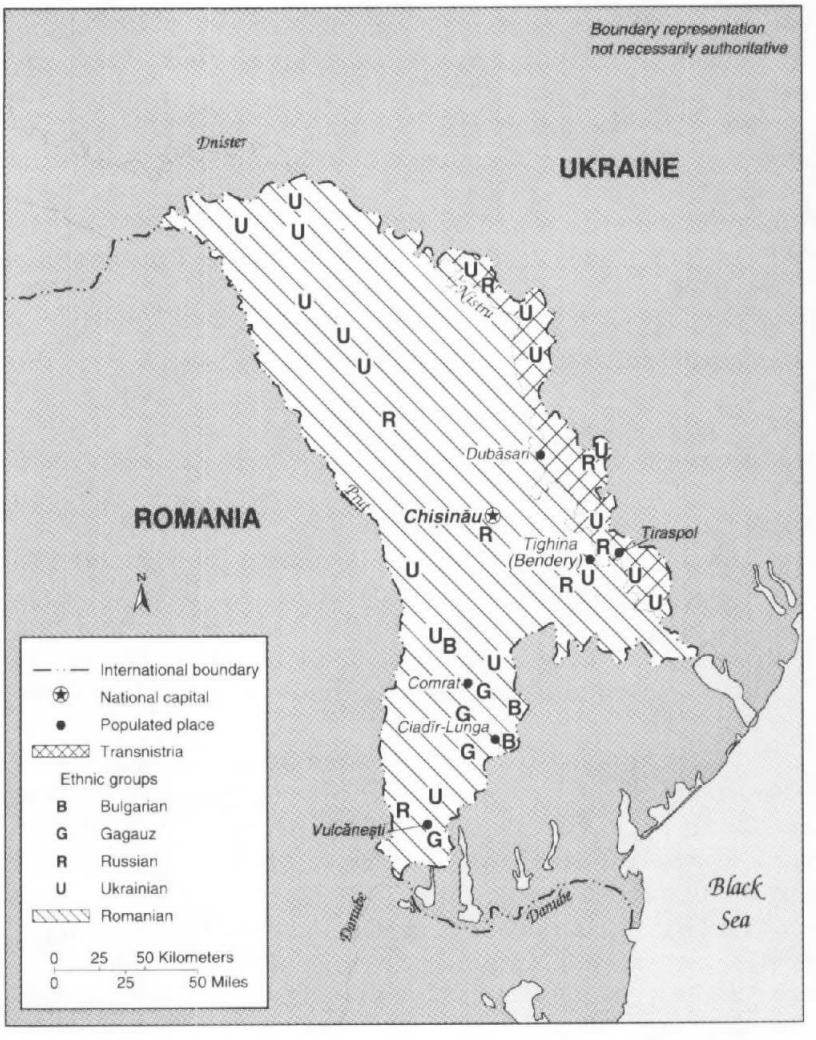


Figure 18. Ethnic Groups in Moldova

Russian Empire encouraged their emigration in the nineteenth century. Their numbers declined from 177,000 when the Moldavian SSR was formed in 1940 to 88,000 in the 1989 census.

Although considered a religious affiliation in the West, "Jewish" was considered a nationality by Soviet authorities, even though Judaism was suppressed as a religion. Although Jews had lived in Bessarabia and the region of Moldova for centuries

before Empress Catherine II of Russia established the Pale of Settlement, Jews in Russia were restricted to living and traveling solely within the Pale as of 1792. By the nineteenth century, the Pale included Russian Poland, Lithuania, Belorussia, most of Ukraine, Crimea, and Bessarabia. It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that exceptions were made and Jews were permitted to live outside the Pale.

Most of the prolonged military conflict of World War I and the Russian Civil War took place in the Pale, inflicting heavy losses of life and property on Jews. When it was created in 1940, the Moldavian SSR (mainly Chisinau) held more than 200,000 Jews. However, their numbers plummeted to only several thousand as a result of emigration. Their ranks increased again during the 1960s and 1970s, only to decline afterward, mainly the result of emigration.

In general, Jews in independent Moldova are not discriminated against. But problems in Transnistria (home to almost one-quarter of Moldova's Jews) and the anti-Semitic attitudes of the "Dnestr Republic" authorities have prompted many Transnistrian Jews to think of emigration.

Language, Religion, and Culture

Language

The Moldovan dialect of Romanian, a Romance language descended from Latin and spoken by the majority of the people of Bessarabia, was viewed by both the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union as an impediment to controlling the local populace. Under the tsars, Romanian-language education and the Romanian press were forbidden as part of a process of forced Russification.

Stalin justified the creation of the Moldavian SSR by claiming that a distinct "Moldavian" language was an indicator that "Moldavians" were a separate nationality from the Romanians in Romania. In order to give greater credence to this claim, in 1940 Stalin imposed the Cyrillic alphabet on "Moldavian" to make it look more like Russian and less like Romanian; archaic Romanian words of Slavic origin were imposed on "Moldavian"; Russian loanwords and phrases were added to "Moldavian"; and a new theory was advanced that "Moldavian" was at least partially Slavic in origin. In 1949 Moldavian citizens were publicly reprimanded in a journal for daring to express them-

selves in literary Romanian. The Soviet government continued this type of behavior for decades.

Proper names were subjected to Russianization (see Glossary) as well. Russian endings were added to purely Romanian names, and individuals were referred to in the Russian manner by using a patronymic (based on one's father's first name) together with a first name.

In 1989 members of most of the Moldavian SSR's nationalities claimed their national language as their mother tongue: Romanians (95 percent), Ukrainians (62 percent), Russians (99 percent), Gagauz (91 percent), Bulgarians (79 percent), and Roma (82 percent). The exceptions were Jews (26 percent citing Yiddish), Belorussians (43 percent), Germans (31 percent), and Poles (10 percent).

Although both Romanian written in the Cyrillic alphabet (that is, "Moldavian") and Russian were the official languages of the Moldavian SSR, only 62 percent of the total population claimed Romanian as their native language in 1979. If ethnic Romanians are subtracted from this number, the figure falls to just over 1 percent. Only 4 percent of the entire population claimed Romanian as a second language.

In 1979 Russian was claimed as a native language by a large proportion of Jews (66 percent) and ethnic Belorussians (62 percent) and by a significant proportion of ethnic Ukrainians (30 percent). Proportions of other nationalities naming Russian as a native language ranged from 17 percent of ethnic Bulgarians to 3 percent of ethnic Romanians (urban Romanians were more Russianized than rural Romanians). Russian was claimed as a second language by a sizable proportion of all the nationalities: Romanians (46 percent), Ukrainians (43 percent), Gagauz (68 percent), Jews (30 percent), Bulgarians (67 percent), Belorussians (34 percent), Germans (53 percent), Roma (36 percent), and Poles (24 percent).

On August 31, 1989, the Supreme Soviet of Moldavia passed the Law on State Language, which made Moldovan written in the Latin alphabet the state language of the Moldavian SSR. Because of pressure exerted by non-Romanian ethnic groups, Russian was retained as the language of interethnic communication. In areas where non-Romanian ethnic groups were the majority, the language of that majority could also be used as a means of communication. Because of strong objections raised by the non-Romanian nationalities, implementation of the law was delayed.

The new Moldovan constitution, adopted August 27, 1994, designates Moldovan written in the Latin script as the official language, but provisions are made for Russian and other languages to be used in areas of minority concentration. Russian is designated the language of interethnic communication.

On April 27, 1995, President Snegur asked Parliament to change the name of the language in the constitution, from Moldovan to Romanian, in response to demonstrations and strikes led by students. According to Moldovan law, it would be six months before a proposed change to the constitution could be made.

Religion

Most of Moldova's population are Orthodox Christians. In 1991 about 98.5 percent of the population belonged to this faith.

The Soviet government strictly limited the activities of the Orthodox Church (and all religions) and at times sought to exploit it, with the ultimate goal of destroying it and all religious activity. Most Orthodox churches and monasteries in Moldova were demolished or converted to other uses, such as warehouses, and clergy were sometimes punished for leading services. But many believers continued to practice their faith in secret.

In 1991 Moldova had 853 Orthodox churches and eleven Orthodox monasteries (four for monks and seven for nuns). In addition, the Old Russian Orthodox Church (Old Believers—see Glossary) had fourteen churches and one monastery in Moldova.

Before Soviet power was established in Moldova, the vast majority of ethnic Romanians belonged to the Romanian Orthodox Church (Bucharest Patriarchate), but today the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) has jurisdiction in Moldova. Russian, Romanian, and Turkic (Gagauz) liturgies are used in the church. After the recent revival of religious activity, most of the clergy and the faithful wanted to return to the Bucharest Patriarchate but were prevented from doing so. Because higher-level church authorities were unable to resolve the matter, Moldova now has two episcopates, one for each patriarchate. In late 1992, the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia issued a decree upgrading the Eparchy of Chisinau and Moldova to a metropolitan see (for definition of eparchy—see Glossary).

Moldova also has a Uniate minority, mainly among ethnic Ukrainians, although the Soviet government declared the Uniate Church (see Glossary) illegal in 1946 and forcibly united it with the Russian Orthodox Church. The Uniate Church survived underground, however, outlasting the Soviet Union itself.

Despite the Soviet government's suppression and ongoing harassment, Moldavia's Jews managed to retain their religious identity. About a dozen Jewish newspapers were started in the early 1990s, and religious leaders opened a synagogue in Chisinau; there were six Jewish communities of worship throughout the country. In addition, Moldova's government created the Department of Jewish Studies at Chisinau State University, mandated the opening of a Jewish high school in Chisinau, and introduced classes in Judaism in high schools in several cities. The government also provided financial support to the Society for Jewish Culture.

Other religious denominations in Moldova are the Armenian Apostolic Church, Seventh-Day Adventists, Baptists, Pentecostals, and Molokans (a Russian Orthodox sect).

Citizens in independent Moldova have much greater religious freedom than they did under the Soviet regime. Legislation passed in 1992 guaranteed religious freedom but did require that all religious groups be officially recognized by the government. In 1992 construction or restoration of 221 churches was under way, but clergy remained in short supply.

Culture

Moldova's cultural tradition has been influenced primarily by the Romanian origin of its majority population and cannot be understood outside of the development of classical Romanian culture, in which it played a significant role. The roots of Romanian culture reach back to the second century A.D., the period of Roman colonization in Dacia. During the centuries following the Roman withdrawal in A.D. 271, the population of the region was influenced by contact with the Byzantine Empire, with neighboring Slavic and Magyar populations, and later with the Ottoman Turks. Beginning in the nineteenth century, a strong West European (particularly French) influence was felt in Romanian literature and the arts. The resulting mélange has produced a rich cultural tradition. Although foreign contacts were an inevitable consequence of the region's geography, their influence only served to enhance a vital and resilient popular culture.

The regional population had come to identify itself widely as "Moldovan" by the fourteenth century but continued to maintain close cultural links with other Romanian groups. The eastern Moldovans, however, those inhabiting Bessarabia and Transnistria, were also influenced by Slavic culture from neighboring Ukraine. During the periods 1812–1917 and 1944–89, the eastern Moldovans were influenced by Russian and Soviet administrative control, as well and by ethnic Russian immigration.

Bessarabia was one of the least-developed and its population among the least-educated in the European regions of the Russian Empire and later of the Soviet Union. In 1930 its literacy rate was only 40 percent, according to a Romanian census. Although Soviet authorities promoted education (not the least to spread communist ideology), they also did everything they could to break the region's cultural ties with Romania. With many ethnic Romanian intellectuals either fleeing, being killed, or being deported both during and after World War II, Bessarabia's cultural and educational situation worsened.

To fill the gap, Soviet authorities developed urban cultural and scientific centers and institutions that were subsequently filled with Russians and with other non-Romanian ethnic groups, but this culture was superimposed and alien. Urban culture came from Moscow; the rural ethnic Romanian population was allowed to express itself only in folklore or folk art.

Although the folk arts flourished, similarities with Romanian culture were hidden. Music and dance, particularly encouraged by Soviet authorities, were made into a showcase but were subtly distorted to hide their Romanian origins. An example is the national folk costume, in which the traditional Romanian moccasin (*opinca*) was replaced by the Russian boot.

Moldova's folk culture is extremely rich, and the ancient folk ballad known as the "Miorita" plays a central role in the traditional culture. Folk traditions, including ceramics and weaving, continue to be practiced in rural areas. The folk culture tradition is promoted at the national level and is represented by, among other groups, the republic's dance company, Joc, and by the folk choir, Doina.

The first Moldovan books (religious texts) appeared in the first half of the seventeenth century. Prominent figures in Moldova's cultural development include prince and scholar Dimitrie Cantemir (1673–1723), historian and philologist Bog-

dan P. Hasdeu (1836–1907), author Ion Creanga (1837–89), and poet Mihai Eminescu (1850–89).

Prominent modern writers include Vladimir Besleaga, Pavel Botu, Aureliu Busioc, Nicolae Dabija, Ion Druta, and Grigore Vieru. In 1991 a total of 520 books were published in Moldova, of which 402 were in Romanian, 108 in Russian, eight in Gagauz, and two in Bulgarian.

In the early 1990s, Moldova had twelve professional theaters. All performed in Romanian except the A.P. Chekhov Russian Drama Theater in Chisinau and the Russian Drama and Comedy Theater in Tiraspol, both of which performed solely in Russian, and the Licurici Republic Puppet Theater (in Chisinau), which performed in both Romanian and Russian. Members of ethnic minorities managed a number of folklore groups and amateur theaters throughout the country.

Education, Health, and Welfare

Education

In the decades prior to independence, the Moldavian SSR's education system made substantial progress toward being available to all citizens. At the beginning of the twentieth century, illiteracy had been common among Moldova's rural population. But by 1992, the adult literacy rate had risen to 96 percent. In 1990 the mean duration of schooling was six years, and 30 percent of the population aged fifteen and older had completed general secondary education.

Under the Soviet education system, the Moldavian SSR had parallel systems of Romanian-language and Russian-language education through secondary school, although Russian was seen as the key to advancement. In 1990 a total of 614 preschools were taught in Romanian, 1,333 were taught in Russian, and 373 were taught in both Romanian and Russian. There were 1,025 Romanian-language primary and secondary schools with 399,200 students; 420 Russian-language schools with 239,100 students; and 129 mixed-language schools with 82,500 students studying in the Russian and Romanian languages (more than half of the students studied in Russian). Change occurred slowly at the university level, however, and 55 percent of students continued to study in the Russian language as of 1992.

Under Moldova's education system, ten years of basic education are compulsory, followed by either technical school or fur-

ther study leading to higher education. In the early 1990s, the Moldovan government restored the Romanian language in schools and added courses in Romanian literature and history to the curriculum. The governments of Romania and Moldova established strong ties between their education systems; several thousand Moldovan students attended school in Romania, and the Romanian government donated textbooks to Moldova to replace books from the Soviet era.

As Moldovan society became more industrialized and more complex under the Soviet regime, the role of higher education also expanded (although ethnic Russian and Ukrainian students were given preference in university admissions during the Soviet era). Although there were only ten students per 10,000 population enrolled in institutions of higher education in 1940, this number increased to 120 per 10,000 population in 1992. In early 1995, Moldova had ten institutions of higher education; four of these institutions had been established since independence. The republic also maintained institutes of agriculture, economics, engineering, medicine, the arts, pedagogy, and physical education.

Health

Although the Soviet government had built health care facilities in the Moldavian SSR, modern equipment and facilities were in short supply in the early 1990s. In 1990 there were 129 hospital beds and forty doctors per 10,000 inhabitants. The 1991 state budget allocated approximately 12 percent of the total budget to health care, most of which was provided to citizens free of charge.

The leading causes of death in Moldova are cardiovascular diseases, cancer, respiratory diseases, and accidents. Other major health problems are high levels of alcohol consumption and illnesses resulting from the extensive and indiscriminate use of herbicides and pesticides (see Environmental Concerns, this ch.).

Welfare

Although Moldavia's official standard of living had long been below the average for the Soviet Union, there were two mitigating factors. The rural character of the country accounted for many households receiving goods (mainly food) as well as cash wages. In addition, Moldavian industry was based on consumer goods (including textiles, consumer appli-

ances, and processed agricultural goods), making them relatively plentiful throughout the republic (see table 10, Appendix A).

The hostilities in Transnistria and the turmoil surrounding the demise of the Soviet Union were the major reasons for the falling standard of living in Moldova in the early 1990s. The outbreak of hostilities in Transnistria interrupted not only the flow of fuels and goods from former Soviet republics through Transnistria into right-bank Moldova but also cut off valuable inputs (for example, fertilizer) that were produced in Transnistria. These shortages of inputs, in turn, indirectly affected such indicators as food consumption, a sign that everyday life was affected (see table 11, Appendix A).

In 1991 Moldova set up the Social Assistance Fund (to provide assistance to the needy) and the Social Security Fund (SSF). The SSF is composed of the Pension Fund, the Social Insurance Fund, the Unemployment Fund, and the Reserve Fund. Funding for the SSF comes mainly from a payroll tax and from direct budget transfers.

The Pension Fund provides old-age pensions (age fifty-five for women who have worked at least twenty years, and age sixty for men who have worked for twenty-five years), pensions for invalids, pensions for women who have raised three or more children, military and special merit pensions, and pensions for people of retirement age or for people who receive disability pensions yet continue to work.

In early 1994, approximately 900,000 people (about 20 percent of the total population) received pensions. Legislation increased both benefits for dependent children and the minimum pension in 1992, and a law was passed to index benefits to inflation, but the law had not been fully implemented by the end of the year. Many felt that passage of this legislation would add significantly to the demands on an already overburdened budget.

Housing

Even before independence, much of Moldova's housing stock was in private hands because of the country's strong tradition of private home ownership, especially in rural areas. In 1994 some 90 percent of rural and 36 percent of urban apartments were held privately.

At the time of Moldova's independence, housing construction was hampered by severe shortages of building materials

and disruptions in deliveries. However, the housing stock continued to expand in both rural and urban areas. In 1990 private builders accounted for only 26 percent of construction in urban areas but for 95 percent of construction in rural areas. In 1990 per capita housing space averaged eighteen square meters (fourteen square meters in urban areas and twenty-one square meters in rural areas).

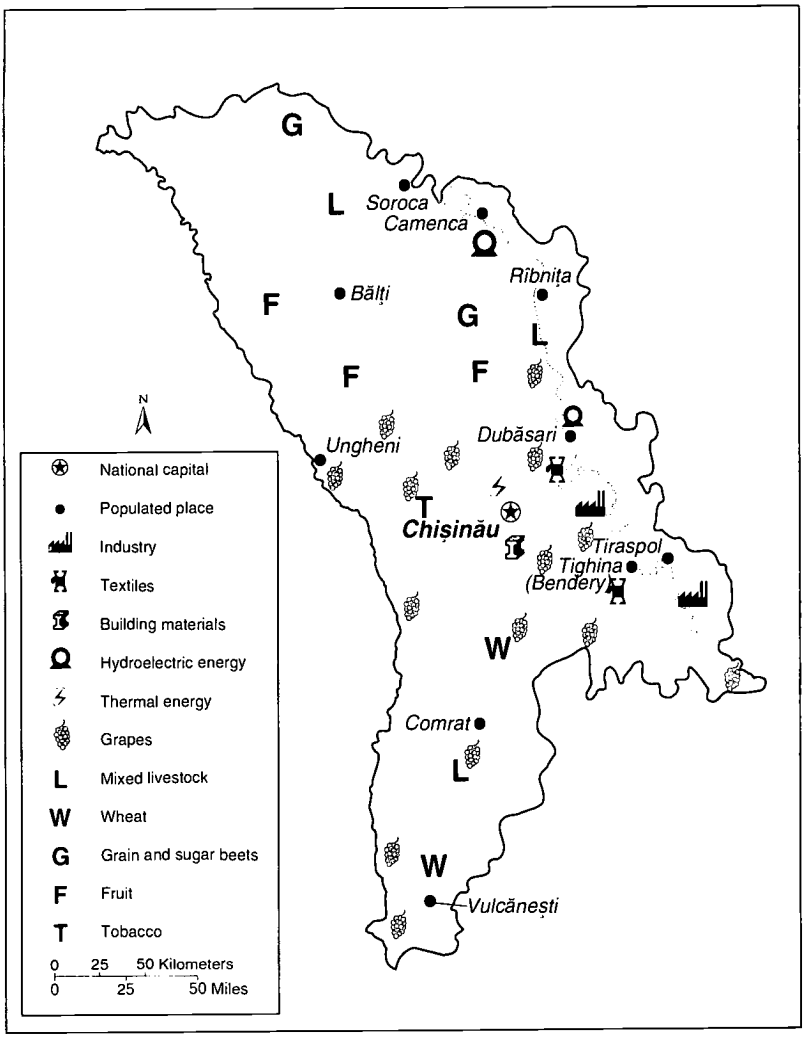
All state-owned housing was scheduled for privatization, in stages, beginning in May 1993 and using government-issued vouchers. Apartments that did not exceed state norms for per capita space utilization were to be turned over to their occupants free of charge. People living in apartments that exceeded space norms would have to pay the state a premium based on the average cost per square meter of housing construction. Privatization using vouchers was scheduled to be completed in the summer of 1995, at which time there would be an open housing market (see Postindependence Privatization and Other Reforms, this ch.).

The Economy

Historically, the region now encompassed by the Republic of Moldova was poorly developed. Economic activity was principally agricultural, rural poverty was endemic, and the urban economy, such as it was, was based almost entirely on commerce, food processing, and the production of consumer goods. Development prior to the mid-eighteenth century lagged for a variety of reasons, but principally because of limited resources and political instability. The region of Moldova was relatively backward in comparison with the rest of Romania.

The Economy in the Soviet Period

Under Soviet rule, the Moldavian ASSR (1924–40) experienced considerable industrial development between the two world wars, particularly in and around Tiraspol, the site of new manufacturing activity. After World War II, substantial industrialization occurred throughout the Moldavian SSR (1940–91), especially in Chisinau, but with a continuing focus on Transnistria as well. In addition to further developing the food-processing industry, the government introduced the textile, machine tool, and electronics industries (see fig. 19).



Source: Based on information from Lerner Publications Company, Geography Department, *Moldova*, Minneapolis, 1993, 44.

Figure 19. Economic Activity in Moldova, 1995

Until independence, Moldavia's economy was organized along standard Soviet lines: all industry was state owned, as were commerce and finance. Approximately one-third of all enterprises (see Glossary) were subordinate to the economic ministries of the Soviet Union, and two-thirds were subordinate to republic-level authorities. Agriculture was collectivized, and production was organized principally around state farms (see Glossary) and collective farms (see Glossary).

The Moldavian economy, robust in the 1970s, slowed down somewhat in the early 1980s and contracted sharply in 1985, mainly as a result of declining activity in the wine sector, a casualty of Gorbachev's anti-alcohol campaign. In the late 1980s, the economy briefly regained strength and grew faster than the economy of the Soviet Union as a whole.

Postindependence Privatization and Other Reforms

Once independence was achieved, Moldova's government undertook measures to begin privatization, which included passing a law mandating privatization and establishing the State Department for Privatization to direct the process. The overall reform policy was guided by the Draft Economic Reform Program of the Government of Moldova, a 1991 document calling for establishment of a market economy but permitting significant provisions for government intervention.

In late 1992, the government presented Parliament with a more market-oriented policy in its Program of Activity of the Government of Moldova for 1992–1995. Its goal was to form a new social pact as a basis for a new society and economy for Moldova. The two-part program would first aim at stabilizing the country and then provide for the economy's recovery and growth by such means as agrarian and trade reform, social protection, and a legal framework for a market economy. The direction of the new government was elaborated in the Program of Activity of the Government of the Republic of Moldova for 1994–1997, which was adopted by Parliament. The program focuses on restructuring the economy, reorganizing enterprises, privatizing small and medium-sized enterprises, promoting entrepreneurship, decreasing the budget deficit, implementing an efficient fiscal policy, and formulating new mechanisms to create a market economy. Another bill, the Program for Privatization for 1995–1996, was approved by Parliament in March 1995. It focuses on foreign investment, privatization of agricultural land, the introduction of cash auctions, mass privatization, and the development of capital markets. More than 1,450 state enterprises are to be auctioned off.

During 1992 enterprise privatization committees inventoried assets at each enterprise in the republic; the aggregate result of this inventory became the basis of calculations of Moldova's total industrial wealth. Each citizen was to be provided with patrimonial bonds (vouchers) in 1993, endowing him or her with a share of this total wealth based on years of

employment in the economy. Citizens would receive one voucher point per year of work in the republic. Enterprise employees were to be allowed to purchase up to 30 percent of the value of their enterprises at nominal value. By special arrangement, 40 percent of the value of enterprises in the food-processing sector was to be allocated to suppliers. The program was to be completed by the summer of 1995. As of the beginning of 1995, Moldova had 4,400 state and 57,000 private enterprises.

Employees of collective and state farms were also to be provided with vouchers based on the length of their employment in the agricultural sector. In January 1992, Moldova expanded the amount of free land that eligible families would receive from state farms to 0.5 hectare per family, with an additional 0.1 hectare to be added for fourth and subsequent family members up to a maximum of one hectare per family, on the condition that it not be resold before 2001 (although it could be bequeathed).

Collective and state farms were to be converted into joint-stock companies first, and the land and property were to be allocated later. In 1993 Moldova had 481 small private farms; by 1995 this number had increased to 13,958. In 1995 about 1.5 percent of agricultural land in Moldova was held by these small farmers. The reasons for slow privatization of the agricultural sector include slow privatization of large organizations, the use of outmoded production methods and equipment, poor accounting practices, and a shortage of processing facilities.

At the same time that privatization plans were under way, actual reform efforts were halting and relatively ineffectual, and Moldova's economy declined. A number of factors contributed to the decline, including the complicated political situation in the republic (which had seen several changes of leadership in its first years of existence) and the political and military conflict with Transnistria. Substantial industrial capacity is located in Transnistria, and the disruption of traditional economic ties with enterprises there has had a negative effect on the economy of right-bank Moldova.

Further, because Moldova's economy was firmly embedded in the broader economic structures of the former Soviet Union, it also suffered damage from the breakdown in interrepublic trade, abrupt increases in external prices, and inflation resulting from the Russian government's policy of printing large amounts of money. (Moldova retained the Russian ruble

as its currency until November 1993.) The consequence of all these factors has been a substantial economic downturn in both industry and agriculture, accompanied by increased unemployment and a decline in labor productivity. In 1991 Moldova's national income was only at 1985 levels. Moldova's industrial output in early 1995 was half that of 1990. Moldova's gross domestic product (GDP—see Glossary) declined by 30 percent in 1994 (and by 5 percent in 1993 and 28 percent in 1992), and its industrial output declined by 34 percent (and by 12 percent in 1993 and 27 percent in 1992).

Labor Force

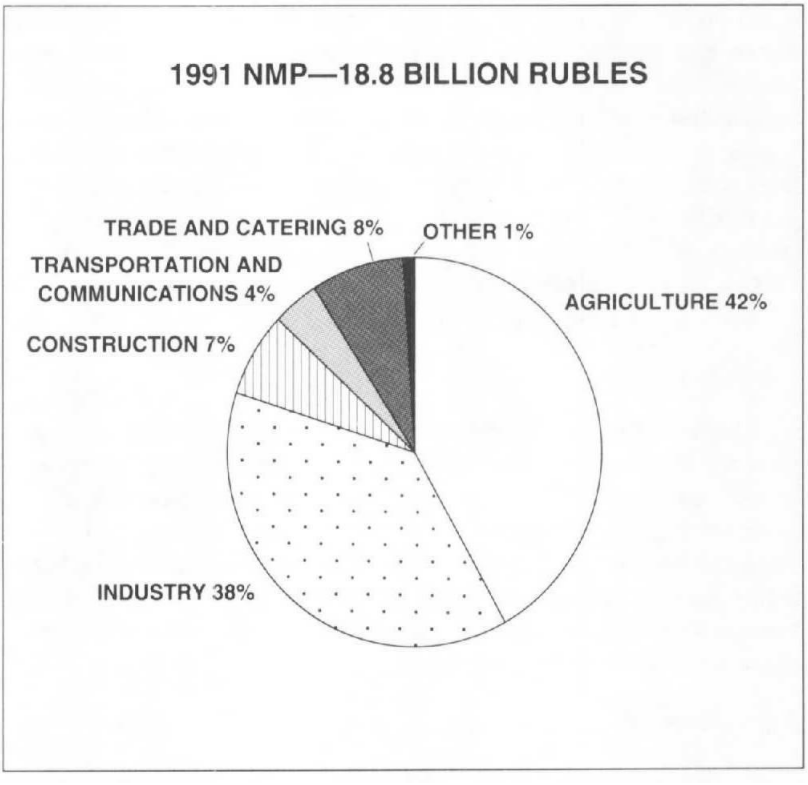
Moldova's labor force still reflects the structure of the economy under communism. In 1991 about 78 percent of the population who were employed outside the home worked in the state sector, 19 percent worked on collective farms, and 3 percent worked in the private sector. The private sector employed 9 percent of the workforce in 1995. In early 1995, the official unemployment rate was 1 percent, but experts put the real rate at between 10 and 15 percent.

Agriculture

At the time of Moldova's independence, agriculture continued to play a major role in the country's economy, as it had during the Soviet period. In 1991 agriculture accounted for 42 percent of the net material product (NMP—see Glossary) and employed 36 percent of the labor force (see fig. 20).

The organizational backbone of independent Moldova's agriculture continues to be its system of former state and collective farms, one-quarter of which were transformed into joint-stock companies by 1994 and are now owned in shares by the people who work them. In 1993 Moldova's 600 collective farms covered 16.2 million hectares of land and employed 401,300 persons; in the same year, its 389 state farms encompassed 600,500 hectares of land and employed 168,200 persons. Agricultural output from private farms increased from 18 percent in 1990 to 38 percent in 1994.

Moldova possesses substantial agricultural resources; its climate and fertile soils (1.7 million hectares of arable land in 1991) support a wide range of crops. The country is an important regional producer of grapes and grape products, and its orchards produce significant amounts of fruit, including plums, apricots, cherries, and peaches. Fruit production is con-



Source: Based on information from International Monetary Fund, *Moldova*, Washington, 1993, 31.

Figure 20. Net Material Product (NMP) of Moldova by Sector, 1991

centrated in the north, in the central region, and in the Nistru River area. Tobacco is also an important commercial crop. Sugar beets are grown throughout the republic and provide raw material for a substantial (although antiquated) sugar-refining industry, and sunflowers are grown for their oil. Cereal crops, including wheat, are grown widely (corn is the leading grain) and are used for domestic consumption, export, and animal feed.

Meat accounts for less than half of total agricultural production. In 1991 about half of total meat output was accounted for by pork (145,000 tons), followed by beef and veal (97,000 tons), chicken (56,000 tons), and lamb (5,000 tons). From 1990 to 1994, the amount of arable land used for livestock production decreased by some 25 percent; the number of livestock in 1994 was 400,000.

Probably the most widely known products of Moldova are its wines, sparkling wines, and brandies, which were recognized as among the finest in the former Soviet Union. In 1991 these accounted for 28 percent of the output of the food-processing sector, followed by meat processing with 22 percent of production, and fruit and vegetable processing (including the production of canned fruits and vegetables, jams, jellies, and fruit juices) with 15 percent. Moldova also produces sugar and sugar products, perfume, vegetable oils, and dairy products.

Approximately half of Moldova's agricultural and food production is sold to former Soviet republics. Traditional markets are Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus.

Agricultural production has been in serious decline since the late 1980s, both in terms of overall production levels and in terms of per-hectare production of most crops (see table 12, Appendix A). Overall agricultural output in 1991 was at 1970 levels. A number of factors contributed to the decline, including difficulties in providing necessary inputs and agricultural machinery, disruption of the transportation system, failures in the incentive system, difficulties related to political instability in Transnistria, Gorbachev's anti-alcohol campaign, and, not the least, Moldova's variable weather. In 1990 a drought resulted in a serious decline in production. On the heels of the drought, 1991 saw a spring freeze, severe summer flooding, and then the worst drought in some fifty years. Overall agricultural output in 1993 was down 15 percent from the previous year; grain production, one-third less than in 1991, was particularly affected (especially corn, which was down over 50 percent on average). The trend continued into 1994, when drought and storms with hurricane-force winds caused agricultural output to decline 58 percent from 1993 levels. Although Moldova was traditionally a wheat exporter, it had to import 100,000 to 200,000 tons of wheat as a result of a 1994 harvest that was 800,000 tons less than the harvest of 1993.

In fiscal year (FY—see Glossary) 1992, Moldova participated in the United States Department of Agriculture's P.L. 480 Title I program, which provided US$7 million in long-term credit for government-to-government concessional sales, offered repayment terms of ten to thirty years (with grace periods of up to seven years), and provided low interest rates. Moldova's line of credit was scheduled to increase to US$10 million in 1993.

By the beginning of 1994, total United States assistance to Moldova included approximately US$12 million in technical

assistance in support of Moldova's transition to a market economy and democracy and US$68 million in humanitarian assistance. In 1995 the United States was scheduled to provide US$22 million in technical assistance for economic restructuring and privatization. This amount brings total United States assistance to Moldova since 1992 to more than US$200 million.

Industry

In 1991 industry accounted for approximately 38 percent of NMP and employed 21 percent of the work force. Some of the main products of Moldova's industry include electrical motors and equipment, pumps for industrial and agricultural use, and agricultural equipment, including tractors and automobile parts. There is also a small chemical industry, which produces plastics, synthetic fibers, paint, and varnish, and a construction industry, which produces cement and prefabricated reinforced-concrete structures.

The Moldovan consumer goods industry in the early 1990s was faced with the same problems affecting the rest of the Moldovan economy. The supply of cheap fuels and raw materials, provided to Moldavia under the Soviet economic system (under which Moldavia specialized in consumer goods and agricultural products), dried up with the demise of the Soviet Union and the hostilities in Transnistria. Together with high inflation, the cost of goods went up tremendously, sometimes doubling in the course of one year.

In 1991 consumer goods accounted for 22 percent of Moldova's industrial output; the textile industry accounted for approximately 50 percent of this, and food processing accounted for 40 percent. Clothing manufacturing made up another 29 percent of total production.

In 1994 Moldova had eleven enterprises producing military goods. Attempts were being made to convert ten of them to civilian production. However, these facilities were operating at only 15 to 20 percent of capacity, as compared with the industry-wide average of 40 percent of capacity. As a result, conversion prospects were not bright.

Moldova's heavy industry is almost entirely the result of development during the Soviet period. Machine building predominates within heavy industry, accounting for 16 percent of total industrial production.

Sunday afternoon flower market, Chisinau
Courtesy Tom Skipper
Private housing under construction, Stauceni
Courtesy Charles King