

January 30, 1990

USSR: Potential for Unrest Growing in Moldavia□□□

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Summary:

An analysis of movements for autonomy in Moldavia and growing concern in Moscow.

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[redacted]

6.2(d)

NR Record

USSR: Potential for Unrest Growing in Moldavia

The influence of events in Romania and the Baltic region and the explosive issue of possible reunification with Romania are making Moldavia a growing concern for Soviet leaders. During the past six months, the Moldavian Popular Front has used a series of demonstrations to push for greater political and economic autonomy, official status for the Moldavian language, and more open political institutions. New language laws have increased Russian residents' sense of cultural isolation; the Russian-speaking city of Tiraspol recently voted to become an independent territory rather than be bound by the new law, and some Russians reportedly are considering moving out of Moldavia. Moldavian nationalist organizations reportedly are setting up shop in Romania, and there has been talk of a Romanian consulate in the republic capital, Kishinev. [redacted]

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Comment: Moldavians have close contacts with nationalists in the Baltic republics and appear likely to copy the Baltic pattern; Moscow appears to be responding in kind, allowing nationalists fairly wide latitude as long as their activities remain peaceful and stressing the benefits of a revamped federal structure. The leadership may take some comfort in the demographics because only some 60 percent of the republic's population are ethnic Moldavians. The situation in Romania may also serve as a brake if the emerging political order is less open and democratic than hoped for. [redacted]

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