

Bessarabia in the Memoirs of the Russian Traveler V.L. Dedlov (XIXth Century)

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Abstract: *The Russian travelers' records about 19th century Bessarabia offer valuable information about the political, economic, demographic, religious and linguistic realities. In this article, we will analyze the travel notes of V. L. Dedlov (1856-1908) – a well-known publicist, writer and literary critic of the second half of the 19th century, who came to Bessarabia as a reporter (1880-1886) for the Неделя/Nedelja (The Week) journal. Even though V. Dedlov's memoirs are very useful for research, they cannot have an autonomous status. Regarding 19th century Bessarabia, the author often gives us a distorted image of the historical realities, especially in treating some topics related to the history of the Bessarabian Romanians.*

The Russian travelers' records about 19th century Bessarabia, though subjective and relative, offer valuable information about the political, economic, demographic, religious and linguistic realities, as well as about some particularities of the region concerning local traditions, beliefs, daily life and customs. However, we must mention the fact that few imperial travelers have come to the outskirts of the Russian Empire for the sake of a pilgrimage. Most of them – P. Sumarokov, A. Veltman, N. Nadejdin, A. Afanasev-Ciujbinski or A.I. Zasciuk – have come on “duty covered by orders”, as loyal observers of the tsarist regime, with special missions². This is the context in

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² P. Sumarokov, *Putešestvie po vsemu Krymu i Bessarabii v 1799 godu* [Travel all over the Crimea and Bessarabia in 1799], (Moscow: 1800), 140-160; D. Bantysh-Kamensky, *Putešestvie v Moldaviju, Valahiju i Serbiju* [Journey to Moldavia, Wallachia and Serbia], (Moscow: Gubernskaja Tipografija A. Reshetnikov, 1810), 7-100; A.F. Veltman, *Načertanie drevnej istorii Bessarabii* [Description of the Ancient History of Bessarabia], (Saint Petersburg: Tipografija Semena Selivanovskago, 1828), 10-30; F. F. Vigel, *Vospominanija* [Memoirs], part 6 (Moscow: Universitetskaja Tipografija, 1864-1865), 88-144; P.A. Nesterovsky, *Na severe Bessarabii: Putevye očerki* [In the North of Bessarabia: Travel Essays], (Warsaw: 1910), 106; A.S. Afanasyev-Chuzhbinsky, *Poezdka v Južnuju Rossiju, Č. II. Očerki Dnestra* [A trip to South Russia, Part II. Essays on the Dniester], (Saint Petersburg: 1863), 98-120; N.I. Nadezhdin, “Progulka po Bessarabii” [A walk in Bessarabia], in *Odessky Almanakh na 1840* [Odessa Almanac for 1840], part 2, (Odessa: 1840), 434-448; A.I. Zashchuk, *Materialy dlja geografii i statistiki Rossii, sobrannye oficerami general'nogo štaba. Bessarabskaja oblast'* [Materials for the Geography and Statistics of Russia, Collected by Officers of the General Staff. Bessarabia Region], (Saint Petersburg: 1862), 25-78; P. Batyushkov, *Istoričeskoe opisanie [posmertnyj vypusk istoričeskikh izdanij]* [Bessarabia. A Historical Description [Posthumous Edition of Historical Publications], (Saint Petersburg: 1892), 37-105.