

GAGAUZIA

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Summary

We propose a text and/or photos story made in January, February and May 2017 on the rarely documented situation of Gagauzia, an autonomous territory of Moldova. This territory, inhabited by a turkic and christian population, not speaking Moldavian and strongly turned towards Russia and Turkey is today a major obstacle on the Moldova's way to Europe ...

Synopsis

Moldova has two obstacles on its way to European integration. The first, the best known, is Transnistria, a pro-Russian region, which for nearly 25 years has been an independent *de facto* State that lives outside the Moldovan authority. The second, more unknown, is Gagauzia, an autonomous territory within the Moldovan Republic, split up, and pro-Russia, which has tried for three years the separatist path before having to renounce to it due to a lack of support and local resources. Recently Gagouzs confirmed by referendum that they refuse any rapprochement with the EU and prefer to join the Eurasian Custom Office (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia).

The population of 160,000 is one of the minorities in Moldova, the poorest country in Europe, stuck between Ukraine and Romania and fluctuating between pro-European and pro-Russian governments. The Gagauzs are Christians of Turkic origin whose language mixes the Turkish of Anatolia and a bit of Bulgarian. At the fall of the USSR, the fear of the Gagauzs, as for inhabitants of Transnistria, was a union between Moldova and Romania and the risk for those two Russian-speaking populations to be "lost" in a Romanian-speaking country. Even today, very few Gagauzs speak Moldavian, and use Russian or Gagauz. Unlike Transnistria, they did not obtain their independence after their uprising. Their ephemeral and self-proclaimed Republic in 1991 had to drop flag after three years. But since 1994, they officially have a very strong autonomous status in the Moldovan State. In this respect, Gagauzia could be an example of successful reintegration for the unrecognized States that flourished throughout the former Soviet area.

However, little by little, the Gagauz autonomy is nibbled and reduced to a symbolic portion. A reality that the Gagauzs are not at all ready to accept ...

PHOTOS

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TEXT

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UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Beshgioz - A shepherd and his cows.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Beshgioz - Kolia, a shepherd preparing his horse before working.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Beshgioz - Micha (45 years old), a shepherd with his sheeps before departing to the fields.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Beshgioz - Micha (45 years old), a shepherd with his sheeps arriving to a lake close to Beshgioz.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Beshgioz - A shepherd shearing a sheep.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Beshgiuz - A shepherd and his cows.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Beshgioz - Workers from a farm are milking the sheeps and the goats at the end of the day.

UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Avdarma - Ivan Vladimirovic Angelov is 80 years old, he’s a survivor from the 1946 famine, he was considered dead until being saved by his aunt.





UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Ceadir-Lunga - In Konstantin Kelesh stud farm, a man takes care of one of the horses after its training



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Ceadir-Lunga - In Konstantin Kelesh stud farm, workers during a “coffee and cigarettes break”.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Ceadir-Lunga - In Konstantin Kelesh stud farm, a man play with one of the horses of the stud farm.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Ceadir-Lunga - In Konstantin Kelesh stud farm, Konstantin’s son trains a horse early in the morning.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Dholtaï - Daily street scene. A lot of adults leave permanently or occasionally to work in Russia, leaving kids and elderly persons in the village.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Ceadir-Lunga - During the yearly Hederlez horse races, Nicolaï, a participant, prepares his horse Lipitune before the race with his wife Irina.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Besalma - Vasilissa Kease is a member of a traditional folk group who sing old songs and “perform” Gagauz traditions as on this photo (washing face in the dew the morning of Hederlez)



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Beshgioz - A men brings back his horse from the field.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Ceadir-Lunga - During the yearly Hederlez horse races, a spectator leave after the races.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Comrat - Piotr Moyse is one of the very few local poets writing in Gagauz. His poems talk about love, exile, and traditional Gagauz stories



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Avdarma - (left) Maria, 82 years old, is survivor from the 1946 famine. (right) The portrait of her dead husband in her house.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Besalma - Inside the house of Elena Ivanovna Voiko.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Ceadir-Lunga - Konstantin Kelesh personal “museum”. Konstantin is a horse breeder, the 4th generation of Kelesh family. His horses (Orlov trotters) are the pride of Gagauzs.



UTA ("Unitate teritoriala autonoma", Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Ceadir-Lunga - Konstantin Kelesh is a horse breeder, the 4th generation of Kelesh family. His horses (Orlov trotters) are the pride of Gagauzs. He's also painting (not staged, when we arrived to meet him he was painting)



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Djoltaï - A woman sings traditionnal old Gagauz songs with some friends.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Djoltai - Women are working in the vineyards owned by the former chief of the Kolkhoz. The salary is very bad and the work very hard but due to the lack of work they don't have any other choice...



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UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Besalma - Elena Ivanovna Voiko is 78 years old. She has worked 17 years in construction, 10 years in tobacco industry and 15 years in the fields. She sings beautiful old gagauz songs *“when i’m sad, and then i feel better”*, for instance when she thinks about her dead son.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Ceadir-Lunga - In front of the House of Culture, a renovated statue of Lenine.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Ceadir-Lunga - In the main church of the town. Gagauzs are a unique case of Turkic christian people.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Besalma - In the church of Avdarma, the morning of Hederlez celebrations.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Ceadir-Lunga - In the monastery of the city.



UTA ("Unitate teritoriala autonoma", Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Ceadir-Lunga - The priest before the baptism of three newborns.



UTA ("Unitate teritoriala autonoma", Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Ceadir-Lunga - The baptism of Kiril.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Ceadir-Lunga - In the main church of the town. Gagauzs are a unique case of Turkic christian people.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Comrat - Vitali Manjul, singer, in his studio of the House of Culture. He mixes pop and hip-hop styles with old traditional Gagauz songs.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Ceadir-Lunga - In the theater of Ceadir-Lunga, the first one which has performed Gagauz drama.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Ceadir-Lunga - In the House of Culture, youngsters are trying on traditional Gagauz clothes made by Lidia Todieva, the costume designer of Ceadir-Lunga theater.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Djoltaï - Preparation of the meal after the baptism of Kiril.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Djoltaï - Some greenery drying in a house.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Djoltaï - A young boy and his brother after the baptism of the latter.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Ceadir-Lunga - In the main bus station where buses leave to Moldova, Russia, Transnistria, etc



UTA ("Unitate teritoriala autonoma", Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Ceadir-Lunga - Evgenia Duloglu teaches violin to the young Arina in the House of Culture.



UTA ("Unitate teritoriala autonoma", Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Ceadir-Lunga - Class of music culture in the House of Culture.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Avdarma - Wrestling lesson in the village school/high school.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Ceadir-Lunga - A young boy waits for the beginning of the boxing lesson.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Avadarma - Class of Gagauz language which is strongly linked to Turkish language.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Ceadir-Lunga - The day before Hederlez, youngsters party in their high-school.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Avdarma - In the kindergarden of the village.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Fishermen dig holes during winter on the frozen Ialpug channel in the Copceac raion.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - A former hydroelectric plant on the Ialpug channel.



UTA (“Unitate teritoriala autonoma”, Autonomous Territorial Unity) of Gagauzia, Moldova - Besalma - Iura, a sheperd, comes from Burlaceni, a village which was part of Gagauzia but is not anymore in the UTA.

