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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Moldova Seeks Recall of Ambassador

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CHISINAU, Moldova — Moldova's acting president said he would seek the recall of the country's ambassador from Russia for expressing support for a Communist call to boycott a referendum that eventually flopped.

The Sept. 5 vote, called to decide whether the president should be elected by popular vote or by parliament as it is now, collapsed when it failed to muster the required 33 percent turnout.

The outcome was a humiliation for the ruling four-party Alliance for European Integration, which needed a vote for a direct presidential election to consolidate its power, and a victory for Moldova's Communists, who had appealed to people to stay at home.

Mihai Ghimpu, an Alliance leader who has been acting president since September 2009, on Friday criticized Moldova's ambassador to Moscow, Andrei Neguta, whom he said had backed the Communists' boycott call in interviews with Russian media.

"Ambassadors should carry out policies of state and not advance party interests abroad as Neguta did in Russia," Ghimpu said on Moldova-1 television. "The duty of ambassadors is to attract investment into the country."

He said he was seeking support from the government to take steps to recall Neguta from Moscow.

Ghimpu, who heads a center-right party advocating union between the small former Soviet republic and EU member Romania, angered the Kremlin in June by proclaiming June 28 as "Soviet Occupation Day."

Russia subsequently banned imports of Moldovan wine, an important export commodity, and has restricted imports by most of Moldova's fruit and vegetable firms.

The failure of the referendum means that now a parliamentary election will be held, most likely on Nov. 21. The November elections will be the third since April 2009.

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