

“An Excellent Friend Afflicted with Internal Difficulties”: The Image of Romania Conveyed by the Finnish Embassy in Bucharest, 1939-1945

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Abstract

How people perceive their environment has a crucial role in all decisions they make. This is true in the relations between nations and countries, too. It can also be argued that mental images as such form an important part in all human interaction. This paper analyzes the image of Romania that was created and conveyed by the Finnish embassy in Bucharest during the Second World War. The Second World War was a turning point in Finnish-Romanian relations. The Finnish embassy was established in Bucharest in late 1939, and as a consequence of the war Finland and Romania – as co-belligerents – clearly became more important to each other than ever before. Existing common knowledge of Romania was relatively scarce in Finland, so Finnish envoys had a good chance in affecting perceptions of Romania among leading Finnish political circles. This analysis focuses on the main elements of this image, as well as the overall image of Romania that was conveyed to Finland through diplomatic material created by the embassy in Bucharest. The main task in this analysis is to explain the composition of the image – why it was exactly as it was. It can be seen that the image of Romania was created not only on the basis of domestic features and bilateral factors but also on the basis of larger cultural and political views and aims.

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