

Alexandru Popescu and others, *Confluente româno-finlandeze. Trei secole de contacte, 85 de ani de relații diplomatice. Romanianais – Suomalaisia Yhtymäkobtia. 300 vuotta kosketuksia. 85 vuotta diplomaattisubteita. Romanian – Finnish confluences. Three centuries of connections. 85 years of diplomatic relationships* (București: Institutului Cultural Român, 2005), 310 pp.

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The years following the disruption of the Iron Curtain and the reunification of Europe have been propitious for investigating and sorting out the commonalities of the European nations, especially of those which for so long have been virtually separated from each other. This is also the case of Finland and Romania, countries which have continued a certain degree of relations at state level but very little at lower levels. This window of opportunity has provided also the study of the Finnish – Romanian relations with the tools for more thoroughly study of their past. Within this frame I would set the publication of the volume dedicated to the Finnish – Romanian confluences.

Confluences, the place where two or more things meet, represent a species of comparative studies (others being, for instance, *transfergeschichte*, *entangled history* or *histoire croisée*, to quote but a few) that have a long tradition in Romania. They privilege the common traits, especially of nations and states, particularly with regard to culture and cultural cooperation. It is also traditional in Romania that by this tool in the 19th century the French – Romanian, and after 1945 the Russian – Romanian relations have been investigated. To some extent, by stressing the similarities this kind of comparative studies contradict the fundamental principal of research that the common and different features of two or more historical entities are both equally evaluated. This is not surprising as they often reflect a political agenda and are edited under the guidance of some state institution such as the presidency, the government, the foreign ministry and so forth.

Despite their setbacks, this sort of publications do have also many advantages: they often publish official sources, gather specialists from two or more countries, offer official interpretations which are also meaningful to the historian and present useful appendices.

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The book edited by Alexandru Popescu, Stelian Obiziuc, Costin Ionescu, Nicolae Nicolescu, Cristian Tudorache, Ionela Anghel, and translated in Finnish by Matti Koskelo is an example of such a publication with all the positive sides and its intrinsic limitations. The book consists of five chapters and three appendices and is compiled by professional historians and archivists, a fact which contributes to its overall achievement.

The first chapter presents a short history of the Romanian – Finnish bonds from the first contacts to present (pp. 7-50). Although perhaps not all of the principal developments are included and some may have been allocated more or less space than deserved, the chapter guides the reader through some of the most significant stages in the slow and gradual evolution of these ties. The second chapter represents a continuation of this sketch by presenting a chronological history of the Romanian – Finnish relations (pp. 51-86). The third chapter includes an incomplete bibliography on the Romanian – Finnish relations, some sources and studies being left out from this list. Some misspellings also exist, especially in regard to Finnish names. The fourth chapter (pp. 98-132), the Romanians about the Finns, and the Finns about the Romanians is useful and interesting, allowing the reader to get a bit of taste on the perceptions of the two nations of each other, naturally with the balance tilting toward the good side of the coin. The last chapter (pp. 133-143) approaches the topic of translations from one language to the other and is also useful - though incomplete - to researchers and public alike.

The appendices of this volume, presenting the list of the chiefs of mission of the two countries to Helsinki, Bucharest respectively and especially the reproduction of selected facsimiled copies from the Romanian and Finnish archives are very useful and make of this volume an important springboard for further research.

Given the limitations imposed on historian by this kind of official publication, I consider that despite some misspellings, some minor mistakes and other time and research limitations, the volume coordinated by the gifted historian and diplomat Alexandru Popescu represents an achievement and a useful tool for further study of these little-known bonds between a Black Sea and a Baltic Sea mid-sized nations.