

FINNISH-ROMANIAN CONFLUENCES. SEVERAL LANDMARKS

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ABSTRACT

It is generally thought that there are few connections between Finland and Romania. Nevertheless, a careful analysis can reveal substantial and pertinent proof of the political and cultural relationships and interactions of the two countries. The last three centuries offer conclusive evidence in this regard. The interactions generally refer to different involvements in armed conflicts, some foreign to their national interest and cause: *The Russo-Turkish War* of 1828-1829, which ended in the Treaty of Adrianople, *The Romanian War of Independence/ The Russo-Turkish War* of 1877-1878, the *First and Second World Wars*. The period surrounding 1848, interesting and decisive for the 'awakening of the national spirit' brought to public attention important names of these two spaces: Runeberg, Snellman, Topelius, Lönnrot, Maiorescu, Carp, Rosetti, Alecsandri. Later on, regarding diplomatic relations, Matila Ghyka, followed by Raoul Bossy extend to the highest level the already consolidated connections between the two countries. This study tries to illustrate the past, to the image which our contemporaries build on events, actions, feelings, ideas linked to possible common points between Romania and Finland. While writing this article, a key point consisted in researching a rather rich set of memoirs, letters, diaries, notes and writings of men who were part of the war. Out of these, it is worth mentioning those belonging to officers Carol Piper and Carl Gustaf Rehnskiöld of the Great Northern War (1700-1721). The information was gathered through the work of Nicolae Iorga, *Un ofiter român în oastea lui Carol al XII-lea. Câteva Note* (A Romanian Officer in Charles 12th's Army. Some Remarks), published in *The Annals of the Romanian Academy*, Bucharest in 1912. The memoirs about Romania of the Finnish colonel Gustaf Adolf Ramsay date back to the Russo-Turkish War (1828-1829). Other important documents refer to the correspondence between Charles I of Romania and Duke Nikolai from the time of the Romanian War of Independence (1877-1878). The original letters

are kept in the in the ‘Royal House’ section of the Central Historical National Archives. The diary of the Finnish Fieldmarshal Carl Gustav Emil Mannerheim *Jurnal de pe frontul românesc 1916-1917* (Diary from the Romanian Front 1916-1917), first published in 2000 and then in 2011 in Romania, have considerably broadened the literature of this research. The information in this journal is unique, and contains details on what we call ‘the backstage of history’. Apart from being the mirror of a turbulent history (the events of the Romanian front in the First World War), the document also offers the subjective perspective of its author, a perspective which is inherent to human nature. One might also state that according to how these interactions are intended to be explained, researching history (through this frontline journal as well) has opened a valuable field of investigation.

KEYWORDS

Finland, Romania, confluences, national identities, frontline diary.

Romania and Finland are two countries separated by a specific historical evolution. Nonetheless, the two peoples have enough common elements, as well as a historical route with several points of intersection. The Romanians and the Finnish are young nations that contoured their own national consciousness later than other European peoples. Entire tomes have been written about the insurrections, revolutions of the Finns and the Romanians against those that wished to conquer them. Throughout history, powerful countries such as Sweden and Russia have been interested in the territories inhabited by the Finns. Turkey, Russia and Austria yearned for the territories of today’s Romania. That is why we could say that the similarities between the two nations also concern their independence and the creation of their democratic state. Romania has been an independent nation since 1877, while the Finnish gained their independence in 1917. The evolution of Romanian and Finnish in the second half of the 19th century process of rebuilding their national identities had a major importance, which allows us to look at this aspect closely.

One of the leading experts in the history of Finnish-Romanian bilateral relations, Professor Lauri Lindgren, often referred to the similarities between the two peoples saying: ‘Romania and Finland are two countries quite far away from each other but their relations became closer in the last decades. What we have presented previously outlined a quite strange situation: The contact between Romanian and Finnish in the last centuries regards times of

crises and wars.’ (*Romanian-Finnish Confluences. 85 Years of Diplomatic Relations*, 2005, 36). This is fact. Romania and Finland were involved, throughout time, in successive military confrontations. These took place under the pressure of historical events that shaped the history of mankind: the Great Northern War at the beginning of the 18th century, the Russo-Turkish Wars (1877-1878), the first and second World Wars. As it has been seen, from a historical point of view, both countries had to fight for their national and cultural assertion in a tight corridor left by the strong and dominant states that surround them and all of these circumstances have influenced in a positive manner the current relations. Obviously, after winning its state independence, the Finnish-Romanian relations gained another dimension, now being of a cultural and spiritual nature. The definite European layout of the two countries started in the first decades of the 20th century. Therefore, in this article we shall try to analyse the existence of a continuity in the Finnish-Romanian relations from the first military incursions under the command of the Swedish king, Charles XII, up to the building of tight diplomatic and cultural relations in the 20th century.

1. FIRST POINTS OF INTERSECTION BETWEEN THE HISTORY OF FINLAND AND THAT OF ROMANIA. (THE 18TH CENTURY)

It seems that the first contacts about which we have precise information took place at the brink of the 18th century. While the territory of Finland at that time was under Swedish occupation, professional units of paid Romanian soldiers (known as mercenaries) fought alongside the Finnish troops during the Northern Wars. Nicolae Iorga’s article, *Un ofițer român în oastea lui Carol al XII-lea. Câteva Note* (A Romanian Officer in Charles XIIth Army. Some Notes (1912)) rendering an aspect of this matter, is very interesting. It is about the involvement of the Romanian soldier, Sandu Colțea, then in service of the king of Sweden, in the Northern Wars. ‘It was well-known that among Charles XII’s soldiers, the “unconquered lion” of Sweden, as well as among those of Peter the Great, there were Romanian soldiers, who, thusly found, in a great European battle, the ability to spend a valiant energy, of which their country had no need. He is not named Colțea in documents. The fact that in the list of names there is a reference to Koltza (the name coincidentally reminds us of the Colțea church from Bucharest, which is said to have been built by the Swedish) shows us that he and his regiment of ‘Wallachs are well-known.’ (Iorga, 1912: 2, our translation).

The information came to the great Romanian historian through a famous archivist in Stockholm, Teodor Westrin, who sent copies of Swedish documents for volume IX of the Hurmuzachi collection. The information concerning the merits brought to Sweden by the Romanian Colțea was edited by Mr Sörensson alongside a collection of letters of other two combatants,

Carol Piper and Carl Gustaf Rehnskiöld from the time of their captivity in Sweden. The authors of the memoirs display attractive demonstrations in terms of truthfulness and in the spirit of historic truth.

One of the events which must be remembered in this regard is the one in which, after defeating the heroic king Charles XII of Sweden (1682-1718) at Poltava (June 28, 1709), troops from the king's army sought refuge on the then-territory of Romania. An emblematic construction of the old Bucharest is linked to this temporal sequence. It is the impressive Tower of Fangs (Turnul Colțea). Historic sources of authority reveal that alongside Romanian builders, Swedish soldiers contributed to its construction. (The information also appears in the *Geschichte des transalpinischen Daciens* (The History of Transalpine Dacia) book, edited by Sulzer in Vienna in 1787, who says that Swedish soldiers worked on building the tower. Perhaps, this was an act of gratitude from the soldiers who could have been masons or stonemasons as civilians.)

The lavish decorations, in the Brâncovenesc style, with influences of western culture, as well as its spectacular banister with carved lions undoubtedly made this construction the pride of the city for many years. The shattering earthquake of 1802 destroyed large parts of the tower. The venerable vestige of the past built by Swedish soldiers was demolished in 1888, following a decision of the municipality of Bucharest. (Fortunately, in the small Lapidarium near the Stavropoleos church in Bucharest, today we can see several monolithic consoles and old decorations of the former Tower. We owe also admirable pictures of the construction and of Bucharest seen from its top to the Maltese painter Amadeo Preziosi.

In 1714, when the Tower of Fangs was supposed to have been finished, Charles XII, a true 'Napoleon of the North', according to Voltaire, managed to escape from Turkish captivity and to go across the whole of Europe. On his journey home (described in great detail by Voltaire, in his monograph, *The History of Charles XII, King of Sweden*), he crossed the Danube at Ruse, to reach the city of Pitești (Romania). The high guest was accompanied by decree of Prince Ștefan Cantacuzino (1714-1715), by the Grand Governor (Vornic) Radu Popescu the whole time while he was in Wallachia. Also a chronicler, he stated: '[...] and coming to Giurgiov, command was given by Lord Stefan to prepare grand abodes for him, until such a time that he will be taken to Ardeal.' (Păduraru, 2007: 1, our translation). It was perhaps the most outstanding personality we meet in this city in this period. Even though he should have crossed the Romanian country in seven days, the three-week stay of the Swedish king in Pitești was motivated by waiting for the 1500 Swedish soldiers led by General Axel Sparre. A memorial plaque at Budești (a locality close to Pitești) attests that: 'Charles XII of Sweden, chased by his enemies

hid and rested here. 1714' (Păduraru, 2007: 1, our translation). Some notes were sent from Pitești to the Prime Minister of France, Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Marquess of Torcy, by a French dignitary, which assured him that the King of Sweden had gone to Transylvania on the night of Thursday to Friday (18/19 November) disguised and wearing a brown wig. There are also accounts that on his way to the north-west he spent the night in Zalău (Sălaj County).

It should be reminded that while Charles, the 'untamed lion of Sweden' (Iorga, 1912: 2), as Iorga called him, was crossing Europe in an unrelenting march, Nicolae Mavrocordat (1680-1739) was reigning over Moldavia. The chronicles mention that, unlike the Prince Ștefan Cantacuzino, he did not approve of Swedish troops camping on his territory.

As a retort to the facts recounted so far, there is proof that Romanian troops had spent the winter in the far North in the first half of the 18th century.

Another interesting description related to the Romanian-Finnish connections pertains to Professor Lauri Lindgren from the University of Turku. The article *Oșteni români în nordul Europei în secolul al XVIII-lea* (Romanian Soldiers in the North of Europe in the 18th century) sheds light upon the presence of Romanian soldiers in the Russian troops that had invaded Finland in 1741. The troops commanded by Dimitrie Brânzescu had stopped in the commune settlement of Laihia. The document offers clear clues on the language, clothing and day-to-day lives of the Romanians who reached Septentrion. The study also presents in an objective manner the reflections of the priest and writer of Botnia, Israel Reinius, on the Romanian soldiers he met on this occasion, and who were stationed here: Upon arrival, the Moldavian regiment of 800 soldiers and servants were starving. The newcomers spoke a new language, yet unheard of, which made communication more difficult. Talking to the soldiers, the priest Reinius found out that Moldavia and Wallachia were their countries. Their language was neither Russian, nor Turkish or Tatar or Polish, but one derived from Latin (he makes note of some expressions: *undivinis mi frat* – where are you going, my brother / where are you coming from, my brother, the *parentenostru ci es in ciel* prayer – the Lord's Prayer). The soldiers were Orthodox; their priest was a Greek monk, who held a mass for them in Greek. The officers and the soldiers listened to the mass with respect. The priest Reinius stated that in the respects of food, they were more particular than the Russians and that while eating, they used plenty of pepper, vinegar and mustard. Some remembered Charles XII's stay at Bender, and that their parents were employed by Swedish groups at the time, according to Lindgren.

2. FINLAND AND ROMANIA IN ‘THE BIRTH-CENTURY OF NATIONS.’ (THE 19TH CENTURY)

A mirror of the first Romanian-Finnish contacts, the 18th century leaves us with a rather bitter feeling because of the effective involvement of the two countries in various armed conflicts, estranged from their cause. Starting with the beginning of the 19th century, this fact will change, with emphasis being put on supporting the spiritual and cultural potential of each nation. Reciprocal intellectual exchanges are paramount in this tempestuous century of forming identities, with a natural desire of promoting folklore and the past. But the acknowledgement, yearned for, before depending upon external factors (translations, cultural initiatives, contacts) was internally conditioned by the great production of masterpieces. Elias Lönnrot published the *Kanteletar*, a collection of traditional Finnish poetry (1840/1845), *Kalevala*, his most famous work, becoming Finland’s national epopee (1849) and *Suomen Kansan sananlaskuja* / Proverbs of the Finnish People (1842). Zacharias Topelius, journalist, historian, and rector of the University of Helsinki wrote novels related to Finnish history in Swedish. He published *Boken om vårt land* / Maamme-kirja / Book of Our Land (1875), *Vinterqvällar* / Talvi-iltain tarinoita / Winter Evening Stories (1881). Between 1848 and 1860, Runeberg, the national poet of Finland, wrote *Fänrik Ståls sägner* / Vänrikki Stoolin tarinat / The Tales of Ensign Stål (an epic poem which describes the events of the Finnish War 1808-1809). Aleksis Kivi publishes *Kullervo* (1864) and *Seitsemän veljestä* / Seven Brothers (1870), the latter being considered one of the masterpieces of Northern literature. Minna Canth, Finnish writer and social activist published *Hanna* (1886), *Työmiehen vaimo* / The Worker’s Wife (1885), *Kovan onnen lapsia* / The Children of Misfortune (1888). The activity of these pioneers is based upon their openness towards universality.

Information travels fast and, immediately after the publishing of the *Kalevala* in Finland, Romanian intellectuals such Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu wrote appreciative reviews of the literary productions in the North. They remarked their originality, the degree to which the long-disputed specificity had been crystallised and how far the Finnish had went in their natural desire to show their creative potential among the countries of the rest of Europe. Zacharias Topelius, a great historian and journalist, wrote about the 1848 Revolution in Wallachia and Transylvania. In 1894, a poem by Johan Ludwig Runeberg was published in Iași, and was translated by Gheorge Lazu and prefaced by A. D. Xenopol. Seemingly under a favourable star-sign of beginnings, many translations of Finnish authors began to be published in Romania. At the turn of the 20th century, *Carmen Sylva* waltz by Romanian composer Josif Ivanovici became popular in Finland.

Other events worthy to be followed researched in detail pinpoint to an episode from the Russo-Turkish War (1828-1830), which ended in the Treaty of Adrianople when thirty-six Finnish officers from the Russian army crossed the Romanian countries. Some of them (such as Colonel Gustaf Adolf Ramsay) wrote journals and letters. Frederik Nyberg remarked that in Bucharest, in bookstores they were able to find books, translations from different languages, which was quite extraordinary. (Popescu, 2009: 115-130).

In 1860 and 1864, in Romania, Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza founded the Universities of Iași and Bucharest, and in 1866 Karl von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen became, under the name Carol I, King of the Principality of Romania, which would later become the Kingdom of Romania. This event marks a new wave of westernization, as well as a reaction against the formerly prevalent cultural model, that of Enlightenment. Almost at the same time, in 1863, the *Junimea* literary society was founded in Iași. The last thirty years of the 19th century were culturally dominated in Romania by this important society. The Romanian philosophers had a new beginning and, for the first time, an international echo. The thinkers around *Junimea* were Titu Maiorescu, Alexandru Xenopol, Mihai Eminescu, Vasile Conta.

Eliel Aspelin-Haapkylä (1847-1917), Professor at the University of Helsinki, is linked by a destiny similar to that of the Romanian critic Titu Maiorescu (1840-1917). They were contemporaries and had similar concerns: aesthetics, literary critique, theatre, they were Professors at two important European universities, Helsinki and Iași. The indisputable influence the two had on young, promising writers makes us believe it was not mere random connection. Taking into account the fact that there is no comparative analysis of what the two meant for the cultural-political stage of the second half of the 19th century, the idea might be of interest for a detailed research.

With a background of a cultural, spiritual and national effervescence, we cannot ignore a major event which marked in blood the end of the 19th century. It is the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 / The War of Independence when, after the battles of Grivița, Plevna and Vidin, Romania won its state independence, and the Dobrogea region was returned to the mother land. The war resulted in the defeat of Osman Pasha and the surrender of the Ottoman troops. The international political context, the intensifying fights in the Balkan region for the freedom of the nations from under Ottoman domination had constituted the favourable moment for obtaining the objective the Romanians yearned for: gaining their state independence. Romania signed, on April 4th, 1877, in Bucharest, the Romanian-Russian convention which allowed Russian troops to go through Romania on their way to the Balkans, as long as they upheld Romania's territory integrity. The mobilisation of the army had been decreed. Russia

declared war on Turkey on April 12th/24th, 1877, and the Russian troops entered Romania on the newly-built bridge over the river Prut.

On May 9th, 1977, the Romanian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mihail Kogălniceanu proclaimed Romania's state independence in a memorable speech: 'Thus, deputies, I do not have the slightest doubt and fear in declaring before the National Assembly that we are a free and independent nation' (Adăniloiaie, 2001: 27, our translation). But the words had to be consecrated by action. Even if Romania was not involved, at that time, via any official treaty in the war, the Romanian troops and artillery were supporting the Russian ones in the siege on Nicopolis. The Russian troops were faced with difficulties on the front. The Grand Duke Nikolai of Russia and of the Grand Duchy of Finland (1831-1891) – the supreme commander of the Russian army in the Balkans – was forced to insistently ask for the intervention of the Romanian army south of the Danube. On July 19th 1877, he wrote an encrypted telegram to Prince Carol, asking him to cross the Danube as soon as possible: 'the Turks, gathering their highest numbers in Plevna, are destroying us. Please make fusion, demonstration and, if possible, cross the Danube with the army, wherever you wish, between Jiu and Corabia. This demonstration is imperious to ease my movements.' (according to documents at the National Archives of Romania).

The Romanian Government answered Duke Nikolai's request and the front of Plevna was placed under the command of Carol I. The directed Russo-Romanian attack on Plevna failed again in front of the powerful defensive system of the Ottomans. Thus, in the strategy convened upon by the Russian and Romanian parts, the Romanian army had to conquer the fort of Grivita, considered the element of resistance of the Plevna alignment. On August 30, 1877, on the Tsar's birthday, Major George Șonțu, under whose command was the first battalion of the 3rd Division which opened the attack undertook the first offensive actions. The lack of maps and of references regarding the structure of the Ottoman defensive system of the outskirts of Plevna and the bad weather made their mission harder and, as such, they failed. The conclusion of the war council of September 2nd, in which the Prince Carol I of Romania, the Tsar Alexander, the Grand Duke Nikolai, the Minister of War and several Russian generals took part, was that Plevna could not be conquered through a general assault. Thus, they decided that a siege must be instated, which would force the city to surrender.

Russia was going to bring new troops. The Finnish Guard of 1000 combatants was mobilised, which left from the Helsinki train-station on September 6, 1877 (and not from the harbour, as a famous national song states). The Guard of Finland was on a general training camp in the summer

of 1877 in Krasnoye Selo, and was sent back to Helsinki on August 2nd, 1877. The next day the guards received the order of mobilization. Immediately, prompt actions were taken, among which the recruitment of the Reserve company for reinforcements: ‘Already on the September 4th, 1877, an enthusiastic farewell party was given at the willing expense on the city of Helsinki in the brand-new indoor riding arena of the guards.’ (Suomen historia, 5: 261- 262, our translation).

An atmosphere of holiday took over the city of Helsinki in the morning of the day of September 5th, perhaps due to a great war-propaganda, tens of citizens coming to cheer the Guard on their way. Those who left for the front did not know that the war would prove to be so long and full of sacrifice. Its journey led through Saint Petersburg, the Baltic States, Poland and Ukraine across the Danube into Bulgaria. The Commander of the Finnish Guard was Victor Procopé. Volunteers were also numerous. From the city of Tampere alone there were almost 200 young men to leave from the very front of the building which today bears the name of ‘Plevna’. At that time, the Finnish Guard was ‘divided between the loyalty to the Russian tsar and army, and the awakening Finnish nationalism.’ (Laitila, 2003: 27, our translation). As this author stated, the worst fights were undertaken by the Finnish Guard at Gornyi Dubnjak. Following the Finnish Guard’s participation in this war, Finland (Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire) was given the right to have a national army.

After several days of fierce battle, the Plevna fortifications were conquered. This victory was only made possible by the participation of the Romanian and Finnish soldiers. As soon as the army surrounding Plevna was reinforced, the situation of the Ottoman troops became critical. After this moment, a succession of events followed, events which led to the unconditioned surrender of Osman Pasha to the Romanian colonel Mihail Cerchez. After the fall of Plevna, the Romanian army took part in the fights of Vidin in December 1877, but when the war ended, in the March 3rd/15th, 1878 San Stefano Peace Treaty between Russia and Turkey, the Russian Empire was unwilling to keep the promise it made in the treaty signed on April 4th, 1877. Romania lost the south of Basarabia, Cahul, Ismail and Bolgrad, which were part of Moldavia after the Crimean War. Prince Carol was deeply dissatisfied by the fact that he had to surrender these territories.

Mihai Eminescu, who was the editor-in-chief of the *Timpul* newspaper, wrote acid articles regarding this exchange. Otto von Bismarck, the German Chancellor managed to persuade the Prince Carol to accept this arrangement that offered Romania opportunities in regards to economy, due to its access to the Black Sea. Romania becoming independent is a significant moment in the process of modernizing the Romanian state, preparing the road to the

completion of the Romanians' national unity in 1918. Today a museum, the General Russia-Romania Headquarters House in Poradim (locality in northern Bulgaria) housed the victory dinner for the conquering of Plevna. It was here that battle plans were devised and, not surprisingly, where the two commanders, Tsar Alexander II and Charles I of Romania lived. 'Europe shall recognise the merits of Romania', said on the occasion Tsar Alexander.

3. FINLAND AND ROMANIA IN THE LIGHT OF HISTORICAL EVENTS THAT CONFIGURED THE 20TH CENTURY. DIPLOMATIC AND CULTURAL ASPECTS.

Four years before the great event, Ferdinand became King of Romania on October 10th 1914, following the death of his uncle, King Carol I. He ruled Romania during World War I, choosing to fight for the Entente against the Central Powers. The fact that he chose to fight for the aspirations of his people against their royal families, made him to be known in Romania as 'Ferdinand the Loyal'.

An increase of the mutual interest in the culture and traditions of the two countries can be observed in the interwar period. An intensification of the relations between the two countries took place from 1920 to 1923. Väinö Tanner (Finland's first Ambassador to Bucharest) meets King Ferdinand, presenting his letters of credentials for this official capacity. Alexandru Averescu and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Take Ionescu supported the idea of Romania becoming closer to Finland and the Baltic states during this entire period. Under these circumstances, in February 1921, Romania opened its first legateship in Helsinki, under the administration of Dimitrie Plesnilă, Minister Plenipotentiary. During that time, Finland's first elected president, Kaarlo Juho Ståhlberg was governor in Helsinki and Finland had a good impression of what was happening in Romania. During the Agricultural Reform on 1921, prepared by Ferdinand and based on the giving of land to millions of peasant families, Romania had reached a system which was similar to the Finnish one. This reform was stopped in 1929, when the Great Depression began in the USA.

In 1931, when King Carol II ascended to the throne, with the Romanian legateship in Helsinki being closed, Matila Ghyka (1881-1965) was named Romania's Minister Plenipotentiary in Stockholm. This involved, apart from representing his country in Sweden, maintaining diplomatic relations with Finland, Norway, The Netherlands and Denmark. Ghyka was assigned a short-term diplomatic mission in Stockholm. (In Sweden, as in almost all parts of Europe, Ghyka is better known for his work on aesthetics, *The Golden Number – Pythagorean Rites and Rhythms in the Development of Western Civilisations*, which was published in 1931, with a preface by Paul Valéry. It is a lesser known fact that Ghyka was a close friend to Salvador Dalí and many

of Dalí's works, like *Leda atomica* and *The Madonna of Port Lligat*, are based upon the mathematical theories of the aesthetician-diplomat in Stockholm. In fact, the formula Dalí wrote in the lower side of the paintings was one of Ghyka's.)

One cannot ignore the importance held by Marshal C. G. E. Mannerheim (1867-1951) in the Finnish-Romanian historiography. During World War I, Finland was part of the Tsarist Empire. Mannerheim was undoubtedly the most prominent personality of those times. His activity on the war front, as well as in politics, spread over than five decades. He began as an officer in the tsarist army. In 1891, Mannerheim was serving in the Chevalier Guards in St. Petersburg. In 1904, he was transferred to the 52nd Nezhin Dragoon Regiment in Manchuria. He fought in the Russo-Japanese War, and was promoted to Colonel for his bravery in the battle of Mukden. On returning from the war, Mannerheim spent time in Finland and Sweden (1905-1906). He led an expedition to China with the French scientist Paul Pelliot. It is also worth mentioning that during this time he also met the spiritual and temporal leader of Tibet at that time, the Dalai Lama. During World War I, he was a commander of cavalry on the Romanian and Austro-Hungarian fronts. In 1916 he was given command over a Russian division on the front in Dobrogea. Between December 11th, 1916 and January 7th, 1917, Mannerheim was in command of the Romanian-Russian unit, 'The Vrancea Group', comprised of four cavalry groups.

In his *Jurnal de pe frontul românesc 1916-1917* (Diary from the Romanian Front 1916-1917), Mannerheim declared that he had left the activity in the Transylvanian Alps with deep regret. The journal is a living testimony of his activity as grand commander of the 12th Russian cavalry division, but also of the fact that his relation with the Romanians (the friendship with General Alexandru Averescu) was not merely conjectural. The Romanian diplomat, Raoul Bossy, recounts that in a meeting in 1934, 'Mannerheim spoke in the superlative about the bravery and resistance of the Romanian soldiers during the World War I and also of his friendship with the general (later marshal) Averescu.' (Bossy, 1993: 147, our translation). The memoirs of marshal Mannerheim are proof of the fact that in the period to come, he will continue to keep an eye on the situation in Romania in the context of difficult circumstances in which Finland and the rest of Europe lay: as long as the Winter War lasted, the danger on Turkey and Romania – allies of Great Britain and France – was merely theoretical and the resistance of the Finns encouraged them to make common front, stated Mannerheim. He was a fierce opponent of the Bolshevik revolution, directly contributing to the removal of the *red* danger.

After the Finnish Civil War, Mannerheim resigned as Commander-in-Chief, dismayed at the increasing German influence in Finnish military and political affairs. The former officer of the army takes over the responsibility of governing the state in the difficult times after the declaration of independency, as a regent (1918-1919), as a marshal and later, as the president of the National Defence Council (1931) and supreme commander of the army. During the War of Lapland which ended in 1945 with the retreat of the German troops, Mannerheim was probably the only person capable of ruling a country that was in such a critical situation. He led the legendary resistance of Finnish troops against the soviet aggression (the Winter War of 1939-1940). The Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Helsinki contains a series of documents regarding Marshal Mannerheim's relations with Romania, in his quality of supreme commander of Finland's army during World War II. On November 1st, 1941, King Michael signs the decree of bestowing the "Mihai Viteazul" military order onto Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim. After receiving this order on December 21st, Mannerheim sent to the chief of Romanian diplomatic relations his homage, speaking in admiration of Romania. Finally, he was elected for the highest role in the state, that of president of the Republic of Finland (the sixth) in 1944-1946, a decisive period for the removal of the consequences of World War II and the definitive assertion of this country as a democratic state. As a brief conclusion, we might state that the Marshal had various types of contacts with Romania, in particular political contexts during World War I and World War II, when he manifested his support and sympathy for our people.

Important monographic volumes were published between 1935 and 1936, such as that of Professor Ion Simionescu about Finland and that of Professor V. J. Mansikka about Romanian folklore, while folk art exhibitions were organised in Helsinki and Bucharest. Väinö Tanner, a leading political figure, a Social Democrat and Prime Minister of Finland, wrote about Romania. At the end of the war, Romania had completed the implementation of the national state unifying Basarabia, Bucovina and Transylvania with the old kingdom. On October 15th 1922, in Alba Iulia, Ferdinand was crowned as the first King of Greater Romania: 'At that time, the translation of Romanian literature continued, Panait Istrati's novels having enjoyed a great success. In the context of numerous cultural events in Finland regarding the Romanian culture, such as book exhibitions, concerts, or mutual visits of journalist, a special moment turned out to be the inauguration of the Romanian language courses at the University of Helsinki.' (Popescu, 2009: 117). If we were to recall other events, we cannot ignore the providential moment of the meeting between Constantin Brâncuși, the patriarch of modern sculpture and Alvar

Aalto in New York, 1929. On that occasion, the two great artists representing the perfection in simplicity met.

The associations *Romania-Finland* and *Finland-Romania* were set up during World War II. Prominent political and cultural personalities of the two countries were among the founding members: 'In Romania the following volumes were published: *Finland. The Country of Cooperatives* written by Ioan Manof, *The Green Gold of Finland* edited by Romania-Finland Association, *Romania in Confusing Times* by Brita Wrede and *Romanian Issues. The Question of Transylvania* by the Swedish Gustaf Bolinder. In 1944, the volume *Romania. The Latin Island from South-Eastern Europe* was published in the Finnish language, edited by the Finland-Romania Association; it is a book comprising general information, as well as references to Romanian art, science and history.' (Popescu, 2009: 118).

Dinu Lipatti's concert in Helsinki should be remembered as well as the distribution of Romanian movies, translations into Romanian of significant Finnish writers such as Frans Eemil Sillanpää, laureate of the Noble Prize, and also the translation into the Finnish language of some volumes by Mihail Sadoveanu and Lucian Blaga. Even during the Cold War, culture and art were areas where further developments in the Romanian-Finnish relations took place. The cultural and scientific relations developed on the basis of the implementation programs of the 'Agreement of Cooperation in the fields of culture, science and other related fields' (April 29th, 1974). 'Programs concluded for a three-year period and renewed thereafter. In 1950, the Romanian-Finland Friendship Association is set up, which will organize in the course of time a lot of events regarding the cultural cooperation.' (Popescu, 2009: 119). Vertically articulated to history, modes of the cultural specific of Romania and of Finland, as well as elements of an ethnographic props; traditions, customs intersect with the landmarks of modernity.

It was not by chance that we have not yet mentioned one of the most important contributions on Finland's culture on Romanian soil so far. It is the first complete translation into Romanian of the *Kalevala*, done in 1942 by Barbu Brezianu, an effort for which there are always more words to say. From then on, a series of other editions of the Finnish epopee, the cornerstone of their identity, have been printed. In one of them, published in 1999 by the Cavallioti Publishing House in Bucharest, His Excellence, Mikko Heikinheimo, the Finnish Ambassador in Bucharest stated: 'Barbu Brezianu in as extraordinary person, who has a special role both in Romanian, as well as Finnish culture, both within and outside the two countries. In art, I would describe him as being a builder of bridges, a man who builds cathedrals. We respect him for his age, longevity, for the brightness, intelligence and vision he managed to keep intact. [...] Barbu Brezianu has helped me know and

understand Brâncuși better. For example, he made me see that the famous sculpture, *The Kiss*, is not merely the two faces you see from the front, but also two hands caressing. But for this to happen, one must go around the sculpture and look closely. I thank Barbu Brezianu for having taught me to look closely not only at Brâncuși, but also at the Kalevala.' (Brezianu, 1999: 2, our translation). In 1985, the book *Kanteletar. A Collection of Finnish Runes*, compiled by Elias Lönnrot was translated by Lauri Lindgren and Ion Stăvăruș and prefaced by Senni Timonen. *Kanteletar* was published in Turku, Finland. The following year, the bilingual edition of the volume *Anthology of Romanian Poetry* was published in Turku as well.

Many translations of works by renown Finnish authors were published in Romania even in the years of the 'obsessive decade': Aleksis Kivi (*Seitsemän veljestä / Seven Brothers*, the Publishing House for Literature, Bucharest, 1963); Mika Waltari (*Vieras mies tuli taloon / A Stranger Came to the Farm*, the Publishing House for Universal Literature, Bucharest, 1969, Translation and preface by George Sbârcea and Sinuhe *egyptiläinen / The Egyptian (Fifteen books Containing the Memoirs of Doctor Sinuhe: 1390-1335 BC)*, Univers Publishing House, Bucharest, 1999, translated by Teodor Palic, prefaced by Tytti Isohookana-Asunmaa), Sylvi Kekkonen (*Amalia*, the Publishing House for Universal Literature, 1970), Martti Larni, Johannes Linnankoski, Ilmari Kianto, Sally Salminen, Pietari Päivärinta, Edith Södergran, Veijo Meri.

In 1959, the epic *Kalevala* was for the first time translated in verse into Romanian by Iulian Vesper. The fourth complete version of the *Kalevala* epic by Kálmán Nagy (translated from Finnish into Hungarian language) was published in 1972. The first selection and translation of Mihai Eminescu's poetry was published in 1992, in Helsinki, by Liisa Ryömä. Nichita Stănescu, the Romanian poet, visited Finland, among several other countries. George Sbârcea published a volume on the life and work of the great Finnish composer, Jean Sibelius. In 1975, the Romanian lectureship within the Turku University and the Finnish chair in the University of Cluj-Napoca were inaugurated. Today, within the Department for Hungarian Studies in Cluj-Napoca, there is a Finnish Lectureship, run by Molnár Bodrogi Enikő. Since then, several Romanian-Finnish dictionaries and conversation guides have been published. (For example, in 2003, Molnár Bodrogi Enikő and Pályi Éva Ildikó published a *Conversational Dictionary in Finnish for Romanians*). The *Columna Magazine*, a publication of the Romanian lectureship at the University of Turku, appears. The magazine has published valuable studies and translations in the course of time, among which there is a wonderful translation of the Romanian fairy-tale, *Youth without old age and life without death*, a tale gathered by Petre Ispirescu in 1882 and published in *The Legends or Fairy-tales of the Romanians, gathered from the people*.

Alongside these, a certain number of volumes concerning Finland were published. In the same year, 1982, the *Secolul XX / 20th Century Magazine* had a special issue dedicated to Finland. We shall insert here a fragment, translated from Finnish, which appeared in *Helsingin Sanomat* on June 17th, 1981, describing the participation of Romanian writers (Andrei Brezianu having been one of them) at the reunion entitled ‘Literature and Myth’ from Mukkula: ‘There would have been no surprise in hearing polite phrases on the Kalevala when opening a conference on literature and myths held on Finnish soil. Alas, the International Writers Conference which opened yesterday in Mukkula, near Lahti, was not only about such homages. The Romanian writer and essayist, Andrei Brezianu, editor of the 20th Century Magazine, brought a new edition of the Romanian translation of the *Kalevala*, refurbishing the old edition, published by his father, Barbu Brezianu, in 1942. He spoke about a translation of the *Kalevala* in verse: it follows a certain metric pattern, thus partially sacrificing the absolute fidelity to the original. There are aspects of the richness of the work, in which the power and distribution of the stress remains a matter of taste.’ (Enescu, 1982, our translation). In his speech, after making a brilliant analysis of the universal dimensions of Romanian mythology, Brezianu showed how Finland’s national epopee stayed close to the Romanian reader and specialist. He pointed out that the mythic genius of the Finnish people, gathered by Lönnrot, the one who compiled the *Kalevala* in its written form, is a literary and artistic expression of an intensity of living which is unique throughout the history of Finnish literature. Andrei Brezianu, who had his debut ten years ago, as a translator of Swift’s satires, is a writer of fiction and essay. Characterising his own prose, Andrei Brezianu answered our questions by defining his style as pertaining to a species of fantastic realism in which symbols and allegory have their natural place; the myth is, in turn, close to these. Throughout the years, Marin Sorescu, Nicolae Manolescu, Ana Blandiana, Mircea Iorgulescu and others took part in the meetings in Mukkula.

The work of Professor Matti Klinge from the University of Helsinki, *Lyyhyt Suomen historia* (A View on Finland’s History) appeared in 2001, in Teodor Palic’s translation into Romanian. After two more years, new editions of *The Egyptian, Fifteen books Containing the Memoirs of Doctor Sinube* (1390-1335 BC) were published in Iași. A scientific article, written by Professor George Pântecan was published in 2010 in Romania. It gathers testimonials of the reciprocal influence the two countries had during the Middle Ages in an impressive number of pages (over 500). The premise of the book, which is the most interesting part of the work (how to explain an ancient Romanian toponym in the North of Europe?) describes an exciting character, Petrus of

Dacia (Peter of Dania), a Swedish monk who lived in the 13th century and received the Dominican order of the province.

Mika Sarlin's book, *Romanian Kielioppi* (Romanian Grammar), published in 2011, is an indispensable work-instrument both for students, as well as for teachers interested in the subtleties of the Romanian language. A very interesting work published recently by Paul Nanu gathers in a synthesis Romanian reflections about Finland, *Literatura și cultura finlandeză. O perspectivă românească* (Finnish Literature and Culture. A Romanian Perspective, Iași, 2015).

The Romanian Lectureship of Tampere was opened in 2012, with the support of Professor Jukka Havu and lead, at present, by Andra Bruciu-Cozlean from the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj Napoca. Professor Havu has contributed through his studies, his personal efforts in diversifying the resources needed for teaching Romanian in a northern university, the one in Tampere, directing the interest of students and researchers towards this. In 2014, the Romanian Lectureship of the University of Turku run by Romanian lecturer Paul Nanu, celebrated its 40th anniversary. A special event was organised, at which Romania's Embassy in Helsinki was represented by His Excellence, Cătălin Avramescu. Representatives of the Romanian Language Institute of Bucharest and Professors of the University of Tampere were also present. In the last decade alone, Romania's Embassy in Helsinki has organised many events that have contributed to a better visibility of Romania in the Finland. We would like to recall only the last great intercultural event: in May 3-15, 2015, the Romanian Cultural Institute in Stockholm, in cooperation with the Romanian Embassy in Finland organised the first edition of the Days of Romanian Culture. The Tampere Finland-Romania Association lead by Grațiela Știrbu organises attractive events, such as The day of the Mărțișor (the 1st of March) and The Transylvanian Evening.

CONCLUSIONS

This study cannot claim to be the exhaustive mirror of the vast system of confluences between the two countries, but only offers several considerations from the perspective of its author. History does not exclude, but implies cultural acquisitions, therefore this study makes references to cultural activities, to diverse and rich translations from Finnish into Romanian and vice-versa. History is a spiritual form through which a culture gives information about its past. History and culture cannot be separated, the former being the effigy of the latter. The hereby article was intended to emphasise the continuity of these historical, cultural and diplomatic connections, which were undertaken during nearly the entire three centuries.

One important fact to be highlighted is that the two countries had to survive and create within the narrow space that was left free between states and strong, often oppressive cultures. As far as intellectual exchanges are concerned, there will never be too much done to defeat and surpass the barrier of mentalities and the geo-political borders.

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