

Editorial Foreword

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This issue of *Revista Română pentru Studii Baltice și Nordice* [The Romanian Journal of Baltic and Nordic Studies, RRSBN] crowns a year of steady progress in terms of number and quality of the programs and actions run by The Romanian Association for Baltic and Nordic Studies (ARSBN). The highlights of this year have been the first international conference for Baltic and Nordic Studies in Romania entitled *Romania and Lithuania in the Interwar International Relations: Bonds, Intersections and Encounters*, the opening of the exhibition dedicated to the 90th anniversary of the establishment of the Romanian-Finnish diplomatic relations (exhibition which has travelled since its first opening about 850 miles) and of the first Lithuanian exhibition displayed in a Romanian art gallery and the awarding of the title of Doctor Honoris Causa of Valahia University to Dr. Vladimir Jarmolenko, the Ambassador of Lithuania to Bucharest and Honorary Chairman of our Association. Besides, the members of the Association have been involved in research whose results have been disseminated in books, international and national conferences, thus contributing to the spreading of knowledge and the encouragement of debates on subjects close to its aims.

The second issue of RRSBN also brings a novelty in the meaning that 2010 is the first year when the journal is published biannually as it will appear henceforth. Having been projected at the end of 2008, its first volume was published in November 2009.

The articles published in this issue bring forth new documentary evidences and fresh interpretations upon a variety of topics regarding the history, the history of international relations or the history of commercial bonds of Baltic and Nordic European nations, in some cases in connection to the developments in the Black Sea area.

In spite of the array of topics, some sections can be however distinguished. The first one encompasses the two articles signed by Costel Coroban and Veniamin Ciobanu regarding the role of Sweden in the international relations at the beginning of the 18th and of the 19th centuries

when this power had to cope with its declining role in the international relations. After its defeat in the Battle of Poltava, Sweden gradually came to be regarded as the minor actor in the international diplomatic game in comparison with its more powerful neighbors of Britain, Russia or Napoleon's France. The first article describes how Sweden tried to rise again to the status of Great Power with the financial support of the Jacobites and what were the international implications of the plot in which Swedish emissaries have allowed themselves to be engaged in Britain. Integrating a number of nine important archival documents, the second article proves the wide interest of Sweden regarding the international circumstances leading to the downfall of Imperial France in its attempt to adopt a wise foreign policy to compensate through the annexation of Norway for the loss of Finland to Tsarist Russia in 1809. Thus, Sweden was also looking to the developments of the Eastern Question and to the policies of Britain, France and Russia with regard to the Ottoman Empire.

If the Napoleonic Wars caused havoc in Europe and finally ended in the defeat of France and in the setting up of a new European order, the First World War had an even bigger impact on the European states system. Big empires vanished overnight and new states emerged or were re-established. The consequences have been momentous and the researchers are still discussing them today. As a regenerated state in Central Europe, the Polish elites wanted to wipe out the history of more than a century when it was divided between the neighboring Great Powers and to regain its place among Europe's major actors. The memory of Polish drive towards the Black Sea was not forgotten. Taking into account also its 1921 alliance with Romania and the attempts to widen out the outlets of its merchandises, Poland pondered about the possibilities to ease its access to the Black Sea area. In the end, these projects had to be abandoned, as Florin Anghel proves, mainly due to the similarity of the export merchandises of Poland and Romania and to the low living standard of the Poles and Romanians which restricted their purchasing power.

It must not be overlooked the Soviet threat which was deeply felt by the two countries. At their eastern borders tens of millions of people were engaged in one of the most gigantic restructuring of a country's geography, economy and mentality that the history has ever witnessed: "the construction of Socialism" in an agrarian backward empire. The life experiences of one of the most intriguing groups of people engaged in this challenging strive, the 6,000 Finns emigrating from North America to Soviet Union, is described in Kitty Lam's article. Skilled workers initially welcomed as the vanguard of proletariat in the newly established Karelian Autonomous Republic, they will soon find themselves condemned as

enemies of the people. Basing her analysis on the letters and memoirs of those living through these experiences, the author discusses the extent to which the immigrants have integrated in a new ideological setting and how their rapidly deteriorating status has affected their life experiences and their identity. Olaf Mertelsmann also brings forth a research topic regarding a largely obscured subject when one thinks of Stalinism: the leisure in Estonian SSR. Following his archival, oral history and life stories research, the author argues that leisure was however “an important aspect of everyday life in Estonia under Stalin’s reign”. He identifies traits of continuity with the interwar patterns and concludes that the Leviathan’s attempts to control leisure and re-educate the population have failed to bear the expected fruits.

Another section of the journal covers international developments circumscribed to World War II. Silviu Miloiu studies the relations between Romania and Finland in the aftermath of the launching of the Barbarossa Campaign. In 1940 both states had been subjected to Soviet military or political aggression and lost territories in the east in favor of Soviet Union. Subsequently, Moscow continued to be regarded as menacing and therefore they were happy to use the opportunity of the German attack in order to recapture the lost territories and to remove the Russian threat. This new situation occasioned a steady progress in the Romanian-Finnish relations which grew as a result of a combination of balance of power and joint action. The main promoter of this progress was Romania, a country which was searching for more influence on the international arena in expectance of the peace conference to be open in the aftermath of the predictable Soviet debacle. Despite its huge losses, the Red Army survived to the German Blitzkrieg in 1941 and Stalin continued to hope that the spheres of influence that Hitler had recognized him in 1939 will be also acceded to by the Western Allies. Yet, the British-Soviet treaty of May 1942 contains no clause to this end and the discussions on this issue will linger on for two years. As Emanuel Plopeanu proves in his article, Germany was however interested in spreading the rumors through some Swedish newspapers that such a secret agreement was incorporated in the treaty, thus hoping to influence not only the public opinion in the neutral countries, but perhaps also to give its smaller allies new incentives to continue sending troops and resources to the eastern front.

Ironically, the German propaganda half-lies seemed to be confirmed by the post-war realities when the Baltic States, for instance, were re-annexed to Soviet Union. When they regained their independence in the early 1990s, the Baltic nations oriented themselves towards the West in which many of them saw a shield against the menacing eastern neighbor

and a path towards prosperity. Lithuania is a case in point. Elena Dragomir's article approaches Lithuania's EU membership by comparing the "return to Europe" speech of the politicians with the views of the public opinion as they resulted from a series of opinion polls. The conclusion of the author is that when compared, the two images almost overlap so that it can be said that the Lithuanian drive towards the EU integration has enjoyed the support of the public opinion.

The last section of the journal is dedicated to the awarding of the title of Doctor Honoris Causa to the Ambassador of Lithuania, one of signatories of the Act of Restoration of Independence of his country on March 11, 1990, has constituted not only a solemn recognition of a politician, diplomat and researcher's outstanding qualities, but has also marked a new step in the progress of the cultural relations between Romanian and Lithuanian higher education and research institutions. Consequently, we have chosen to integrate in this issue the speeches of the Rector of Valahia University of Targoviste, the laudatio and the other speeches of the commission established in order to grant the title and the reception speech of Dr. Vladimir Jarmolenko.

It is our hope that this issue of RRSBN will generate new academic debates with regard to the topics approached herein. It is also our aim to target not only the community of scholars with an interest in these topics in the light of their research interest, but also to answer the public interest not only in Romania but also abroad. In order to achieve these goals and to spread this journal throughout Romanian, European and North American libraries and institutions, an essential support came from the Romanian National Cultural Fund Administration [*Administrația Fondului Cultural Național*] to which we extend our gratitude.