

# Editorial Foreword

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*Revista Română pentru Studii Baltice și Nordice / The Romanian Journal of Baltic and Nordic Studies (RRSBN)* gathers in this issue contributions based on new documentary sources and interpretations concerning the area it investigates, i.e. the Baltic and Nordic Sea area, and the relations and contacts between this region and its Black Sea match. The fascinating ethnic and cultural diversity of the area, the contacts between distant European lands, the perceptions of “the other” are topics approached from different angles and brought before the judgment of the public and the community of fellow researchers.

Diversity is, indeed, one of the characteristics of an area with a distinctive cultural richness understood in the largest meaning. To this accounts the article which opens this issue of the journal bearing the signature of *Ádám Németh* and *Guntis Šolks*. The article tackles diversity by an innovative use of probability theory which stood behind the Simpson’s Diversity Index processed by modern GIS software in order to meet its main research question: where, when, why and how has the Ethnic Diversity and Ethnic Segregation Index changed in Latvia during the first and second independence periods. The outcome of the study is revealing for the importance of the theme: Latvia has one of the most diverse population in Europe, and while homogenization occurred during the two periods of Latvian independence, Riga and the towns of Latgale showed throughout the entire period a high degree of ethnic heterogeneity. While the segregation indexes of the ethnic groups altered slightly during periods of independence, it undertook dramatic changes at the time of Soviet occupation.

The following article included in this issue evokes an episode of the earliest contacts between Sweden and Romania, namely the Swedish attempts to appoint a vice-consul in the capital of Valahia, Bucharest. This occurred at a time when Swedish and Norwegian commercial fleet was registering a remarkable upswing and Sweden sought to pave the way to

trade expansion by concluding commercial conventions with the European nations. The Romanian Principalities had economic potential and a strategic position which an expanding commercial nation could not ignore, and as Professor Veniamin Ciobanu argues, this stood behind the Swedish attempts of 1834-1835 to appoint a vice-consul in Bucharest. The cultural clash and the lack of mutual knowledge made what seemed a banal search for a person possessing the moral and intellectual qualities to represent Sweden in Valahia into an Odyssey.

Although the article dedicated to the Scottish Women's Hospitals organization in the Balkans during World War I exceeds the geographical area this journal encompasses, we have included it in this issue in order to better understanding the complexity of human contacts between the North, understood in a wider sense, and the Balkans. Moreover, the activity of Scottish Women's Hospitals in the Balkans represents a meaningful page in the development of an international mindset of the relief activities: help must be provided not only to compatriots, but according to the Hippocrates principles to all those in need, was the philosophy of Dr. Elsie Inglis and her followers.

The last study included in this issue deals with the Nobel Prizes for Science and Literature and the Romanian relatively low degree of success in winning such outstanding international recognition. Although the author does not undertake an in-depth analysis of some of the most prestigious Romanian candidates for the Noble Prize which failed to be awarded the honor, it provides a valuable overview and raises some fundamental questions regarding the reasons of this failure.

The Norwegian Film Days in Iași (May 27-29, 2012) coordinated by Dr. Crina Leon represented a significant cultural event designed to make Norwegian cinema better accessible to the Romanian public. While the domination of American cinema seems bound to continue, Scandinavian cinematography proves to be capable to fill a vital niche of public interest based as it is on the rich cultural and social heritage of the North while also showing the vitality and capacity to constantly renewing with fresh themes and ways of transmitting the message its capacity of expression. The interview with Mr. Jan Erik Holst, executive editor at the Norwegian Film Institute, is a gripping insight into the new wave of Norwegian cinema.

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The first half of 2012 witnessed an expansion of the activities of the



Romanian Association for Baltic and Nordic Studies. One of the most important for the future development of the programs and activities of the Association is the opening of the RoBaltNord, the Small Library for Baltic and Nordic Studies. The library was opened on 25 May 2012 with the occasion of the start of the third international conference

on Baltic and Nordic studies in a location endowed by the Royal Court Museums Complex of Targoviste. It enjoyed the generous support of Niro Investment Group and Microsoft Corporation and benefitted from donations from the embassies of Finland, Lithuania and Norway, the Historical Association of Northern Finland, the University of Oulu, the Cetatea de Scaun Publishing House and of private persons. The goal of the association is to achieve a number of 1,000 titles by 2021, and it is hoped that the system of acquisitions, exchanges and donations will ensure that readers will enjoy the access to a rich resource of knowledge essential in bridging Romania and the Baltic Sea region.