A SOUTHEASTERN "OTHER" WITH DIVERSE CHALLENGES. ROMANIA IN FINNISH SCHOOLBOOKS

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study is to analyze what sorts of image Finnish schoolbooks have provided of Romania and why this image has been a certain kind. The analysis focuses on the key features of this image and the most pertinent factors that could explain it. It is apparent that the basic nature of this image has largely remained the same from generation to generation. The time period of the study begins with the birth of the modern Finnish school system to the modern day, or from the 1860s to the 2000s. Representations of foreign countries and other cultures in Finnish schoolbooks have been studied to some extent, but the image of Romania as part of this subject matter has so far been unexplored.

The content of Finnish schoolbooks reflects the view of Romania of those who created them, as well as their attitude towards the outside world and diversity. Although there are many permanent elements in these images, there are also changes in emphasis and tone. Based on the changes found in this analysis, development can be divided into four successive stages. The first period includes the last decades of the 1800s until approximately the end of the First World War. The second period extends from the early years of the 1920s to the 1950s. The third period extends from the 1960s to the 1980s and the fourth includes the last two decades.

Rezumat:

Obiectivul acestui studiu este acela de a analiza care a fost imaginea României în manualele școlare finlandeze și ce a generat această imagine. Analiza se concentrează asupra trăsăturilor fundamentale ale acestei imagini și asupra celor mai pertinente și factori care o explică. Este evident că elementele de bază ale acestei imagini au rămas în mare parte aceleași de la generație la generație. Perioada de studiu începe de la nașterea sistemului școlar modern din Finlanda până în prezent, sau de la 1860 la 2000. Reprezentările țărilor străine și ale altor culturi în manualele școlare finlandeze au fost studiate într-o oarecare măsură, dar imaginea României, ca parte a acestui subiect, a fost până acum neexplorată.

Conținutul manualelor finlandeze reflectă vederile despre România ale celor care le-au creat, precum și atitudinea lor față de străinătate și diversitate. Deși există multe

elemente permanente în aceste imagini, există, de asemenea, schimbări de accent și ton. Pe baza modificărilor găsite în această analiză, transformările pot fi împărțite în patru etape succesive. Prima perioadă include ultimele decenii ale anilor 1800 până aproximativ la sfârșitul Primului Război Mondial. A doua perioadă se întinde de la începutul anilor 1920 până la 1950. A treia perioadă cuprinde perioada de la 1960 la 1980 și a patra ultimele două decenii.

Keywords: Romania, Finland, stereotypes, imagology, schoolbooks, 20th century

Introduction

Relations between Finland and Romania are good and interaction in different areas has increased particularly since Romania joined the EU in 2007. In spite of this increase in interaction, absolute figures portraying this cooperation are still relatively low. For example, in the field of foreign commerce, trade from Finland to Romania and in the contrary direction in the last few years has been between 0.2-0.3 percent of the total volume of both countries. In the tourism sector, the situation is similar: a few thousand (tens of thousands at the maximum) Finns visit Romania annually with roughly the same or smaller number of Romanians visiting Finland, which is less than one percent of each country's tourist flow.¹ In the political and cultural arena, including the scientific community, cooperation is continuous but it affects a relatively small proportion of specialists in all these sectors. For example, the Finnish-Romanian Friendship Association has just over 100 members. This is relatively small a number if it is compared to the corresponding numbers of Hungary, the neighboring country. The membership of the Finnish-Hungarian Friendship Association is approximately 4,300.²

¹ "Maatiedosto Romania. Kahdenväliset suhteet." Suomen suurlähetystö Bukarest, <http://www.finland.ro/public/default.aspx?nodeid=41749&contentlan=1&culture=fi-FI> (updated 10.11.2011); "Romanian matkailusektori, viime vuosikymmenten kehitys ja tulevaisuuden tavoitteita". Suomen suurlähetystö 30.11.2007, <http://www.kauppapolitiikka.fi/public/download.aspx?ID=39533&GUID=%7Beb0d3cd1-79a6-4d2f-be9f-98fc4052becb%7D> (accessed 2.2.2013).

² Suomi-Romania-Seura ry. Esittely, <http://www.srs.suntuubi.com/?cat=12> (accessed 25.2.2013); Suomi-Unkari Seura. Tietoa yhdistyksestä, <http://suomiunkari.fi/tietoa-yhdistyksesta/> (accessed 25.2.2013).

In the last few years Romania has been featured in the Finnish media due to the Roma who have come to Finland to beg from Romania. The Roma issue has been present particularly in Finnish tabloids, but also more widely in the press, in the context of which Romania has emerged. On the other hand, this theme has appeared in papers fairly rarely and the absolute number of articles has been small.³ All in all, it can be estimated that in Finland, Romania is a relatively little-known country. Only a small portion of Finns have a personal experience of Romania, and the material provided by the media has traditionally been very scarce. Therefore, school education is likely the main source by which Finnish have attained material on which to base their views of Romania. School education regarding Romania and other European countries has already from the late 1800s provided all Finns with at least some basic information about European countries and their inhabitants.

Why, then, should the image of Romania presented by Finnish schoolbooks be analyzed, if relations between Finland and Romania have always been rather limited, and neither country has been of significance to the other? In this I am of the same opinion as Vesa Vares, who in 2011 has published an article concerning the perceptions Finnish diplomats regarding Eastern European countries in the interwar period. The fact that prior knowledge of Eastern European countries was relatively scarce and from the Finnish perspective, relevant political or economic interests were not under threat, gave diplomats an exceptionally great amount of freedom to define their position and bring it to light. The images presented by diplomats of their country of station were as a consequence very stereotypical and value laden and at the same time revealing of their general worldview and model of thought.⁴

From this perspective, Romania is a good example from which a broader examination of the Eastern European image in Finnish schoolbooks can be begun. Of Eastern European countries, Romania was the largest, most populous, and most diverse in its natural resources. With these features, in

³ Kari Alenius, 'Beggars, scammers, discriminated against by the whole of Europe: Romania's Roma in Finnish tabloids, 2008-2011', *The Romanian Journal for Baltic and Nordic Studies*, Vol. 4, Issue 2 (2012): 87-109.

⁴ Vesa Vares, "'Never satisfactory, according to the Finnish standards". From optimism and interest to disappointment and disillusion: Finnish views on the nations in Eastern Central Europe between the world wars', *The Romanian Journal for Baltic and Nordic Studies*, Vol. 3, Issue 2 (2011): 225-246, here 227-228 in particular.

spite of its distance and obscurity, from the Finnish perspective this was the most important country in its potential along with Poland and Hungary. In Finland, a slightly different perspective of Poland was taken, as Poland was regarded more as a Baltic country (along with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) than an actual Eastern European country. Because of its position, Poland had direct security-political significance, which was reflected in different alternatives of alliance particularly during the years 1919-1922. Finland had a special relationship with Hungary because of its linguistic kinship, which increased the value of Hungary in Finnish eyes more than the size and resources of the country would have indicated.⁵

Although the image of Romania portrayed in Finnish schoolbooks has not been examined earlier, the article by Vares mentioned above is worthy of attention when the goal is to examine the perceptions of Finns regarding Eastern European countries. If the conclusion of Vares regarding Romania is summarized in a few key points, Finnish diplomats saw Romania as a corrupt and backward country in which insufficiency and dishonesty prevailed. In comparison to Finland, Romania was strange, different, and inferior, and it did not meet the standards in the eyes of Finnish diplomats of what a developed, modern country should have been.⁶ By analyzing schoolbooks, the extent to which the conceptions of diplomats were similar or different to textbooks written in academic circles becomes clear, as well as how Romania appeared to ordinary Finns reading schoolbooks.

In the case of schoolbooks, Anu Kukkonen's study published in 2003 examining the image of Hungary in Finnish language schoolbooks serves as the best comparison to Romania.⁷ Marco Pribilla's article regarding the image of Hungary in Finnish literature during the interwar period is also notable, and its conclusions are very similar to those of Kukkonen.⁸ To Finns, particularly during the interwar period, Hungary appeared as an admirable kindred country. Public attitudes towards Hungarians and the Hungarian

⁵ Heikki Roiko-Jokela, *”Reaalipoliittiset edut vaativat rannikkomme eteläpuolelle ystäväallismielisen maan”*. Baltia Suomen lähialuepolitiikassa 1918-1996,” in *Virallista politiikkaa – epävirallista kanssakäymistä. Suomen ja Viron suhteiden käännekohtia 1860-1991*, ed. Heikki Roiko-Jokela (Jyväskylä: Atena Kustannus Oy, 1997), 74-76; Vares 2011: 231-234.

⁶ Vares 2011: 238-241.

⁷ Anu Kukkonen, *Pustalla ei ole polkua. Unkari-kuva äidinkielen oppikirjoissa* (Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto, 2003) (unpublished M.A. thesis).

⁸ Marco Pribilla, 'Window to Horthy's Hungary. Hungary's Political Image in Finnish Literature of the Interwar Period', *Valahian Journal of Historical Studies*, issue 1 (2004): 7-23.

state were completely positive and understanding of the goals of the Hungarian state (for example, in the case repealing the "shameful peace" of Trianon). On the other hand, Vares has found that hidden away from the public, diplomats saw minor things to criticize in Hungarian social life although in their eyes Hungary was a noticeably more positive destination than other Eastern European countries. Undemocratic characteristics were seen in Hungary's politics and Hungarians were regarded as being too impulsive and to some degree foreign in their mentality.⁹ Based on this, a comparison between non-public material and public material is an aspect that should be paid attention to in the analysis.

"Friendly in principle – but also dishonest and inefficient". Romania and the Romanians through Finnish eyes until the First World War

A permanent feature of Finnish school textbooks from the 1800s to the present has been that the history of Romania has been featured very little. On one hand, the teaching of history has always focused on domestic history, and on the other, on what have been considered the most important world developments and great powers. In European history, emphasis has been put on ancient history and Western European (Great Britain, France and Germany) history. None of these elements have favored Romania. In practice, Romania has only been briefly mentioned in the context of the world wars.

Well over ninety percent of the material in Finnish school books focusing on Romania can be found in geography textbooks, therefore in this study there is reason to focus on analyzing them. Geography textbooks have provided basic information on the natural conditions of each country, as well as the creation of each state. Information on social basics from the 1800s to the present day have consisted largely of four categories: the people (language, ethnic issues), the social system (form of government, governance), culture (religion, customs, mentality), and economy (livelihoods, industries, standard of living).

As the writers of Finnish schoolbooks begun to put Romania onto their "mental map" the first question of principle to be solved was to decide if Romania belonged to the Balkan area or not. The most common

⁹ Vares 2011: 241-243.

interpretation was that the Danube formed the natural northern border of the Balkan region, in which case Romania was left outside of the Balkans.¹⁰ However, in a few older books, this interpretation was the opposite.¹¹ The national guidelines that were provided by the First National Educational Textbook Committee drawn up in 1899 indirectly referred to the latter interpretation, as Southeast Europe was to be known as “Austria-Hungary” and “the Balkan Peninsula.”¹² However, the writers of Finnish geography textbooks stuck with the interpretation of geography from the early 1900s that considered natural geography, according to which Romania was not included in the Balkans but it was included as part of “the countries of the Danube in the region,” particularly Austria-Hungary.

Romania was therefore not a Balkan country in Finnish schoolbooks, and general descriptions and comments concerning the Balkan area were not directly relevant to Romania. On the other hand, during the whole period under analysis it has been apparent that in schoolbooks, Romania has been portrayed to a great extent in the same way as, for example, the neighboring southern country of Bulgaria or the western country Yugoslavia (or its predecessor and successor, Serbia). At the same time it can be said that in geography textbooks, images of Romania have differed in their portrayal quite significantly from those of Romania’s northern neighbor, Hungary. In this case, this difference between Romania and Hungary has been particularly great during the period from the 1920s to the 1950s.

Before the First World War, portrayals of Romania varied in their length from a few lines of text to about two pages. According to the directions given, until the 1980s, geography textbooks, like history textbooks, were recommended or even directed to focus on the most “important” countries in Europe and the world in addition to Finland. In addition, there were directions to place more attention on Finland's

¹⁰ J. E. Aro & J. E. Rosberg, *Koulun maantieto* (Helsinki: Otava, 1908), 90; O. A. Forsström, *Kansakoulun maantieto* (Helsinki: Weilin & Göös, 1901), 124-127; August Kanninen, *Kansakoulun maantieto* (Tampere: H. T. Bärlund, 1895), 48; Elis Lagerblad, *Lärobok i geografi* (Borgå: Werner Söderström, 1890), 113.

¹¹ Ed. Erslev, *Lärobok i geografin* (Wiborg: Clouberg, 1882), 131-135; A. E. Modeen, *Oppikirja maantieteessä* (Wiipuri: Clouberg ja kump., 1886), 136-141.

¹² *Suunnitelmia Suomen kansakoulujen Oppi- ja Lukukirjoja varten. Tarkoitusta varten asetetun komitean Mietintö* (Raahe: Rob. Rossander, 1899) (hereafter cited as *Suunnitelmia* 1899), 80.

neighboring areas than on further countries.¹³ These directions have never favored any focus on Romania.

At the end of the 1800s and beginning of the 1900s the goal of geography education was not only to describe the living conditions around the world, but also to serve as an encouraging example of how, through diligent work and inventiveness, people were able to control nature and survive in a wide range of environments and conditions.¹⁴ Thus, education served as a general civic education, in which the goal was to create good workers of students who were loyal to their homeland.

Books that depicted Romania most scarcely presented only the location of the country, its area, population, capital city, and some random information such as the mention of agriculture as the main source of livelihood or a short characterization of the natural conditions.¹⁵ In more extensive works, descriptions were more detailed, although in the 1800s and in the beginning of the 1900s this usually meant an increase in statistics and factual material. Books that took an evaluative stance on Romanian culture, politics and economy consisted of about half of the published textbooks before the interwar period. At the same time, some kind of general assessment as to the degree of development of agricultural and of industry in general was almost always provided. During the 1800s and beginning of the 1900s these general assessments were without exception always slightly negative.

On the basis of geography textbooks, the poor economic situation was caused by three factors. First, serfdom, which was abolished only in 1866, was seen to have hindered development. Serfdom stemmed from what was regarded as very high levels of inequality as peasants lived in poverty and the nobility (*bojars*) enjoyed an overabundance. The other factor explaining economic misery was a very low level of education. The third factor was the "nature" of the Romanian people. Romanians were seen to be very friendly in principle but at the same time lazy, faint-hearted, and prone to dishonesty. Combining these features with no education resulted in an

¹³ See, for instance *Suunnitelmia* 1899, 65-76; *Peruskoulun opetussuunnitelman perusteet* (Helsinki: Kouluhallitus, 1985), 131-143, 165-172.

¹⁴ *Suunnitelmia* 1899, 74.

¹⁵ Kanninen 1895, 48-49; Modeen 1886, 137-141.

unambitious approach to work, which did not favor enterprise and efficiency.¹⁶

The portrayal of Romania in schoolbooks largely resembled the way in which the other inhabitants of South and South-Eastern Europe were described. From the perspective of the north, the Mediterranean area and the Balkans were clearly the “Other”, to which one’s own society was compared and through which a positive identity of one’s own group was constructed.¹⁷ The writers of Finnish schoolbooks saw their own country as the opposite of that “Other”, in which a spirit of enterprise, reasonable discretion, integrity and planning abounded. Combined with the value put on education and a traditionally “free” society and thinking, as a result it produced prosperity, modernity, and rapid development. If on one hand Finland was barren and to some extent even poor in comparison to Scandinavian countries and the leading “Germanic” countries of Western Europe, such as Germany and Great Britain, Finland was nevertheless considered to belong to the same culture as the latter countries. It was desired and thought that the direction of Finland was towards a bright future and a greater similarity to the leading welfare states of the world.

“Romania still undeveloped – but possibly on its way towards a better future”. Finnish perceptions of Romania from the 1920s to the 1950s

The situation described above changed partly during the interwar period. The content of schoolbooks was directed by committee reports during the years 1925, 1933 and 1946, which made recommendations regarding the teaching of all subjects as had occurred in 1899. The basic starting points of the new guidelines were quite similar to those in 1899. School children were to be brought up in Christianity and moral thought that was based on this. Central in history were “history of the fatherland” and in geography, “geography of the fatherland”.¹⁸ Of objectives regarding the presentation of the rest of the world, the guidelines of 1925 stated the

¹⁶ Aro & Rosberg 1908, 123-124; Alfred Jotuni, *Kansakoulun maantiede* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1916), 191; Lagerblad 1890, 114.

¹⁷ For similar attitudes in the interwar period, see Vares 2011: 228-229.

¹⁸ *Maalaiskansakoulun opetussuunnitelma. Komiteamietintö* (Helsinki: Valtioneuvosto, 1925), 108-113, 140-146; *Oppikoulukomitean mietintö* (Helsinki: Valtioneuvosto, 1933), 319; *Kansakoulun opetussuunnitelmakomitean mietintö I* (Helsinki: Valtioneuvosto, 1946), 8.

following: "...[I]t must be shown how our country offers its own advantages and opportunities, which should not be looked down on alongside the rest of the world, when we are able to use them effectively in the same way as foreigners".¹⁹ The portrayal of other countries could fulfill these kinds of goals in two ways, by presenting either encouraging or warning examples from the world. In practice, and in geography textbooks as a whole, there was a step towards a more positive portrayal of other cultures and countries.

In the case of Romania as in that of several other European countries, this meant the exclusion of the supposed "national character" of the Romanians and the negative characterizations associated with this. Critical portrayals of the patterns of thought and behavior of nationalities and the innate and unchangeable "racial characteristics" that were thought to underlie them remained only in the descriptions of the peoples of Asia and Africa. In the case of Romania and many other Southern and Eastern European countries, from the 1920s to the 1950s, attention was constantly paid to the low level of education and it was linked to the poor development of the economy. Thus, Romania was seen to be less developed and inferior to Finland. On the other hand, there was a desire to maintain faith in progress and entrepreneurship in students, by describing that Romania had plenty of untapped natural resources and that the possibilities for economic development in the future were good.²⁰

If portrayals of Romania are compared to how positively Hungary was presented in schoolbooks from 1920 to 1950, the difference is very noticeable,²¹ although before the First World War the countries had been described in much the same way.²² The essential distinguishing feature was the specific thought attributed to kindred nationalities (in Finnish, *heimoaate*), which had a powerful influence, particularly among the Finnish nationalist intelligentsia. Almost without exception, the writers of schoolbooks belonged to this group. Finnish independence had elevated the construction

¹⁹ *Maalaikansakoulun opetussuunnitelma* 1925, 52, 149-150.

²⁰ J. E. Aro & J. E. Rosberg, *Koulun maantieto* (Helsinki: Otava, 1923), 110-111; Väino Auer & K. Merikoski, *Maantieto* (Helsinki: Otava, 1938), 163-166; A. Hakalehto & A. Salmela, *Isänmaa ja maailma* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1931), 182; I. Leiviskä, *Kansakoulun maantieto I* (Helsinki: Maalaikuntien liitto, 1926), 116-117; Viljo Tolvanen, *Kansakoulun maantieto I* (Helsinki: Otava, 1927), 151-153.

²¹ Aro & Rosberg 1923, 108-110; Auer & Merikoski 1938, 160-163; Hakalehto & Salmela 1931, 177-181; Leiviskä 1926, 114-116; Tolvanen 1927, 150-151.

²² Aro & Rosberg 1908, 116-119; Jotuni 1916, 96-98; Lagerblad 1890, 112-113.

of a state identity based on Finnish nationalism to the status of a half-official state ideology.²³ During the time of Russian rule until 1917 there was not the same kind of opportunity for this. After independence the only significant exceptions were the Swedish-speaking members of the intelligentsia, which a perceived relatedness and solidarity through Finnishness did not concern. It is striking that in Swedish language schoolbooks during the interwar period a targeted admiration of Hungary was absent,²⁴ which was predominant and distinct in the image portrayed of Hungary in Finnish language schoolbooks.

Second, if the image given of Romania in schoolbooks is compared to the image that Finnish diplomats inferred of Romania during the interwar period, both similarities and differences can be seen. In both, Romania was socially undeveloped, and in comparison to northern pedantry, disorganization and untidiness prevailed in the country. On the other hand, professionally, diplomats paid a lot of attention to the political culture of their country of station, portraying its numerous faults and the general corruptness of the country.²⁵ Such characterizations were lacking completely in schoolbooks. The choice of words in schoolbooks in portraying Romania and other Southern and Eastern European countries was noticeably more neutral than those in diplomatic reports.

The difference was no doubt due to the different uses of the texts and the degree of publicity. In diplomatic reports that were hidden from publicity it was possible to use language that was sharp and the authors of reports were able to present even their most negative thoughts without any particular balance, if they thought the situation warranted this. Schoolbooks were meant for the public in which case there was a lot more to deliberate what at the time was generally considered fit to be said openly. Schoolbooks could be accessed by everyone, even foreign representatives. The most negative diplomatic reports would have likely caused conflicts in foreign policy if they ended up in the public, and schoolbooks could not phrase things as harshly.

In this context it is not possible to determine the extent to which the true views of the writers of schoolbooks were presented in their text. There

²³ Kukkonen 2003, 24-50; Pribilla 2004: 21-22.

²⁴ Sigurd Sahlberg, *Lärobok i geografi II* (Nykarleby: Författarens förlag, 1931), 44-47; Sigurd Sahlberg, *Geografi för lärdomsskolor II* (Helsingfors: Söderströms, 1944), 100-105.

²⁵ Vares 2011: 231-243.

was no barrier to presenting a positive impression of foreign countries, as the cases of Hungary and Estonia illustrate.²⁶ Instead, the aforementioned limits relating to public discussion and the general guidelines of textbooks limited the presentation of negative views, at least in a very harsh form. Based on this, we can estimate that the perception of Romania and Romanians of the Finnish intelligentsia who contributed to schoolbooks was probably not significantly more positive than what the texts gave to understand. It could have been more negative, but there is insufficient documentary material to examine this matter.

"Progressive Romania". The depiction of socialist Romania during the Cold War and the era of increased cultural tolerance (from the 1960s to the end of the 1980s)

During the 1960s, there was a significant change in Western European attitudes towards other cultures, at least on a public and educational level. Other cultures began to be interpreted as equal with Western culture, and in school education, for example, instilling understanding and toleration of difference in children became a goal. The content of Finnish schoolbooks was changed in line with these ideals. New national guidelines were drawn up and supplemented several times between the years 1964 and 1985.²⁷ The change had a clear impact on the way Romania was described in Finnish school textbooks from the 1960s to the 1980s. In addition, the political effects of the Cold War were apparent in the content of schoolbooks.

During the Cold War Europe was conceptually split in two, into socialist Eastern Europe and non-socialist Western Europe. In Finnish schoolbooks of geography, Bulgaria, Albania and Yugoslavia, as well as Romania, which was now attached to them, were considered to belong to Southeastern Europe, which was part of Eastern Europe. Similarly, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland, as being more northern socialist countries,

²⁶ Kari Alenius, "'Small nations tied to Russia". Baltic identity conveyed by Finnish schoolbooks from the 1860s to the 2000s', *Faravid* 36 (2012), 108-110; Kukkonen 2003.

²⁷ *Kunnallisten kokeilukoulujen opetussuunnitelmakomitean mietintö* (Helsinki: Valtioneuvosto, 1965), 67; *Peruskoulun opetussuunnitelmakomitean mietintö II* (Helsinki: Valtioneuvosto, 1970), 216; *Lukion opetussuunnitelmakomitean mietintö 2 D* (Helsinki: Valtioneuvosto, 1977), 828, 840; *Peruskoulun opetussuunnitelman perusteet* 1985, 170.

constituted the central part of Eastern Europe, and the Soviet Union (indirectly, though) formed the Northern part in this context.

The educational planning committee report of 1970 which set out broad reforms in education strongly emphasized that in the case of Europe – but quite revealingly no other parts of the world – that “*There cannot be any simplified or negative views on any country or people*”²⁸ (italics in original). The emphasis of this perspective was likely related to the political balancing act of the Cold War. The political administration directing school education probably wanted to make sure that schoolbooks should not include anything that could be interpreted as a criticism of socialist ideology or socialist countries, especially the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union was in fact very keen in responding to any “anti-Soviet” phenomena that it interpreted in Finland.²⁹ In principle, these guidelines also prevented the criticism of “capitalist” countries, but criticisms in the direction of the West generally did not result in any foreign policy problems. Therefore, these guidelines must be interpreted as existing to pressure writers to avoid the negative characterization of socialist systems.

The general objective of tolerance as well as political prudence changed the imagery of Finnish schoolbooks in regard to Romania to one that was first neutral³⁰ or later positive beginning from the 1960s. The books provided the basics on the economy, culture, and social system of the country without commenting on any problems in any area of life. On the contrary, every now and then the books made reference to the rapid development of the countries and future opportunities.³¹ At the same time, problems in Western Europe were mentioned, such as environmental problems (erosion, pollution), differences in development between the countries, such as the poverty of Portugal and Southern Italy, and even political conflicts (the Basques).³² This kind of “one-sided equality” was no doubt the result of the aforementioned political directive.

²⁸ *Peruskoulun opetussuunnitelmakomitean mietintö* 1970, 199.

²⁹ ‘Juri Derjabin: Puhe Suomen ja Neuvostoliiton ystävydestä oli liturgiaa’, *Helsingin Sanomat* 28.10.2012.

³⁰ Väinö Auer & K. Merikoski, *Maantieto kansakouluja varten* (Helsinki: Otava, 1951), 187-189; Iivari Leiviskä, *Koulun maantieto* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1956), 163-164.

³¹ Harry Krogerus & Lennart Winqvist, *Vår värld åk 5b* (Borgå: Söderström et C:o, 1976), 45-49; Jorma Kytömäki et al., *Opi maantietoa 5* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1981), 108-109; Matti Leinonen et al., *Koulun maantieto 5* (Helsinki: Otava, 1984), 67-69.

³² Kytömäki et al. 1981, 75, 78, 88-90; Leinonen et al. 1984, 96-97, 103, 110.

The reorientation in education and politics after the Second World War was apparent, for example, in the geography textbook *Opi maantietoa* (Learn geography) published in 1981:

Romania is one of the largest producers of corn in Europe. Romania has less concern with energy intake than many other countries. Oil has been drilled near the Carpathian Mountains for decades. In addition to lignite and hard coal, a quite excellent natural gas has been found. Additionally, when Romania has a large number of ores, it is no wonder that it is becoming an industrialized country [--] The capital of the country is Bucharest, with a population of two million. As it is near oil and coal fields as well as some of the best agricultural areas, it has had a good opportunity to develop as a diversified industrial city.³³

"A Balkan country with various problems". Romania in Finnish schoolbooks in the post-Cold War era (1990s and 2000s)

In the 1990s and 2000s, the portrayal of Romania in Finnish schoolbooks has been to a considerable extent similar to what it was during the interwar period. Some of the details have been upgraded to reflect the realities of today, but in their tone, the descriptions are clearly different than during the Cold War, when political prudence determined the content of books. Romania is portrayed often in connection with Bulgaria and Moldova. The basic elements of the description are crystallized in few key points, for example as in the geography textbook *Avara Eurooppa* (Wide Europe) text from 2010:

1) A large portion of Europe's carnivores live in the forests of Romania, Bulgaria and Moldova. 2) Romania, Bulgaria and Moldova are some of the poorest countries in Europe. 3) Poverty has led to corruption and human trafficking. 4) The Roma are the most discriminated minority group. 5) The economies of Romania and Bulgaria develop as a result of tourism and industrial development.³⁴

The same things have been essentially repeated in other schoolbooks, thus the picture portrayed of Romania has been predominantly negative.

³³ Kytömäki et al. 1981, 108-109.

³⁴ Rita Keskitalo et al., *Avara Eurooppa* (Helsinki: WSOYpro OY, 2010), 102.

The only thing that has been regarded as positive is the development of the economy, albeit from a low starting point. Hindrances to development have often been stated as the “old-fashioned” quality of industry and its large-scale serious by-products.³⁵ The abundance of large carnivores as mentioned in the *Avara Eurooppa* text cannot be interpreted as a positive fact, although value in diversity is one of the current goals of school education. The mention of the abundance of beasts (but no other animals) could have strengthened the image of the area as “non-modern” and “wild”. The same text published two pictures of Romania, in which one presented a wild stray dog (Fig. 1) and the other the use of Dracula in a restaurant advertisement (Fig. 2). The other two pictures presented an “old-fashioned” countryside (Fig. 3) and a Roma beggar in Finland (Fig. 4).³⁶ Thus, the text and images have supported each other in creating a “dangerous”, “backwards”, and “problematic” impression in the *Avara Eurooppa* text as well as others in which pictures of Romania have been published. Images became more common in Finnish schoolbooks only from the 1960s, and typically one or two pictures have been published of Romania. Agricultural and industrial facilities have almost always been presented in the pictures, and sometimes individuals dressed in exotic national costumes.³⁷

Fig. 1 A wild stray dog in Romania (caricature)

³⁵ Jukka Arohonka et al., *Värikäs Eurooppa* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1997), 99-102; Hannele Cantell et al., *Matkalle Eurooppaan* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2002), 137-143; Keskitalo et al. 2010, 98-103; Matti Leinonen et al., *KM Eurooppa* (Helsinki: Otava 2007), 115-116.

³⁶ Keskitalo et al. 2010, 101-103.

³⁷ Cantell et al. 2002, 142; Krogerus & Winqvist 1976, 46; Kytömäki et al. 1981, 108-109; Leinonen et al. 1984, 69.

Fig. 2 Dracula in a restaurant advertisement

Fig. 3 "Old-fashioned" Romanian countryside

▲ Romaniasta tuli 2000-luvulla haluttu Hollywood-elokuvien kuvauskohde. Elokuvaohjaajille, jotka haluavat kuvata Amerikan sisällissodan aikaa 1800-luvun lopulla, maa tarjoaa mainiot puitteet, sillä tämän päivän Romania muistuttaa paljon silloista amerikkalaista maaseutua.

Fig. 4 A Roma beggar in Finland

During the last two decades, the showcasing of values based on the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights has gained a strong position in education in Finland and in many other countries. The objective has been that students would be instilled from an early age to actively support internationalization, multiculturalism and the acceptance of diversity. In the case of geography, this has even meant that the special status of one's own country, people and culture has been left out of the curriculum. Instead, emphasis has been put on respecting and appreciating (not only understanding and tolerating) other cultures.³⁸ These trends have in principle created favorable conditions in that the positive portrayal of Romania from the 1960s to the 1980s could have strengthened in a still more positive direction.

However, in the case of Southeastern Europe, cosmopolitan ideals have been left in the shade of a strong counterforce. The Yugoslav Wars widely shocked people outside the country, which have again brought to the

³⁸ *Peruskoulun opetussuunnitelman perusteet* (Helsinki: Opetushallitus, 1994), 8-14, 96; *Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet* (Helsinki: Opetushallitus, 2004), 12, 36-37, 174.

fore the stereotype of the Balkans as a nest of unrest and violence.³⁹ The end of the Cold War has also meant a freed atmosphere of dialogue, including that in schoolbooks. During the 1990s there has been more courage in abandoning a neutral stance towards and discussion of problems in former socialist countries.

In the 1990s and 2000s, the term Balkan has been expanded to include Romania, which has apparently been viewed as being more similar to the Balkan Peninsula than the Central Eastern European countries. The term Balkan has also been used to describe the basic nature of all of the states. The Yugoslav Wars have been called the "Balkan" wars, and all of the states in the region have been referred to as "the Balkans, which have experienced hardship". The latter has referred to the socialist past of the countries, of which the adverse effects have been brought up openly but with exaggeration. For example, the low standard of living and social problems have appeared to be the result of the recent past in schoolbooks.⁴⁰

Conclusions

During the 1990s and 2000s the image of Romania in Finnish schoolbooks has separated substantially from the neutrality of the 1960s to 1980s and begun to resemble that image that was predominant from the 1920s to 1950s, or even in the end of the 19th century. A harmful ethnic and cultural diversity, poverty and underdevelopment have been the key elements of the image. The fact that the image portrayed in schoolbooks has been in clear conflict with the formal objectives of education of the late 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century tells much about the strength of old stereotypes. As recent events in the Balkans, particularly the Yugoslav Wars, have created favorable conditions for the rise of old, simplified and largely negative images, this has occurred, although the general guidelines given to textbook writers regarding the portrayal of other states, peoples and cultures has been almost the opposite. Based on schoolbooks at least,

³⁹ Cf. Ivana Živančević-Sekeruš, "Balkans," in *Imagology. The cultural construction and literary representation of national characters. A critical survey*, ed. by Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 107.

⁴⁰ Arohonka et al. 1997, 99-102; Cantell et al. 2002, 137-143; Keskitalo et al. 2010, 98-103; Leinonen et al. 2007, 115-116.

“respect and appreciation” for the special cultural and social features of Romania or the rest Southeastern Europe has not been achieved.

On the other hand, it can be said that Romania has essentially been portrayed in the same way as other Eastern European countries – in neither a significantly negative or positive way. For example, the difference in comparison to Hungary, which was apparent most clearly from the 1920s to the 1950s, almost disappeared during the Cold War, during which the emphasis of the “kindred peoples” idea and the relation between Finland and Hungary was no longer politically trendy. Thus, in Finnish schoolbooks, along with other Eastern European countries, Romania has been seen predominantly as an “Other” to which one’s own country can be compared and utilized to construct a positive self-image. It could be that Finns, who have feared that Western Europe will connect them to a “backwards Eastern” reference group, have through time either consciously or unconsciously needed this kind of comparison group. By exaggerating and evaluating existing cultural and social differences, schoolbooks have shown Finns that, in comparison to many other countries, their own country is well developed and its citizenry civilized and otherwise adequate. It has not only improved self-confidence, but provided trust in the future.

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