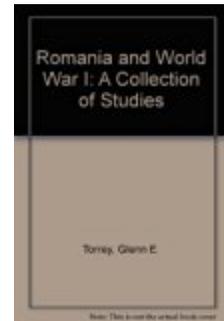


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in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Glenn E. Torrey. *Romania and World War I: A Collection of Studies*. Iasi/Oxford/Portland: Center for Romanian Studies, 1998. 392 pp. \$60.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-973-98391-6-7.

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Romania, World War I, and Glenn E. Torrey

Glenn E. Torrey completed his dissertation for the University of Oregon in 1960. His article "Rumania and the Belligerents, 1914-1916," published in the *Journal of Contemporary History* in 1966, became standard fare for innumerable students studying the origins of World War I when it was reprinted with the rest of the issue as part of *1914: The Coming of the First World War*, edited by Walter Laqueur and George Mosse. The article established him as a specialist in the field of Romanian and World War I diplomacy, which engaged him for the next thirty years. He is now a professor emeritus at Emporia State University in Kansas.

Book reviews are generally about books, not the authors who write the books. But it seems fitting to begin this one with the above comments, for in a sense *Romania and World War I: A Collection of Studies*, is a monument to those thirty years of Torrey's scholarship. The book is not new, for all the articles in it have been previously published in one place or another. But precisely because they have appeared in so many different places, both in periodicals and collections of essays in books, they run the risk of being effectively lost as a single corpus of work. In this one volume, they are not only made easily accessible; but, together, they provide the best coverage of Romanian diplomacy during the First World War in English that I know of. A collection focused on either Eastern Europe or World War I (or both) needs to include this book.

There are a total of nineteen articles in the book. In many ways, "Romania and the Belligerents" is still the

best, at least to the extent that it provides the most general coverage. It is the first in the collection and thus establishes the general context of the other, more specialized, studies. It argues, contrary to many views at the time, that Bratianu, the Romanian premier, decided at the beginning of the war to intervene on the side of the Entente powers. Actual Romanian entry into the conflict came two years later, not because Bratianu was competing for the best offer from each side, but merely because he was waiting for the most favorable moment to act—though he admittedly squeezed everything he could out of his prospective Entente allies.

The later articles reaffirm this interpretation of Bratianu's behavior in the first two years of the war. "Irredentism and Diplomacy" covers the relations of Germany and Austria-Hungary with Romania between August and November 1914, particularly the first German attempts to win Romania to the Central Powers through Austro-Hungarian concessions. Torrey agrees with contemporary Habsburg diplomats that Romania's position ultimately depended on the fortunes of war, not Hungarian Minister-President Tisza's relations with the Transylvanian Romanians or cessions of territory in the Bukovina. "Romania's Decision to Intervene: Bratianu and the Entente, June-July 1916" deals with the final timing of Romanian entry into the war. Torrey sees this as a combination of Bratianu's achieving his major demands from the Entente—assurances of timely military aid and an Entente offensive from Salonika to neutralize Bulgaria, as well as fulfillment of his territorial wishes—combined with a growing conviction that the Entente, particularly Russia,

was running out of patience with him after two years of sitting on the fence. Torrey finds little evidence that he was pressured into his decision by either more outspoken Romanian interventionists or the need to forestall internal social unrest.

The remaining two thirds of the book cover Romanian diplomatic and military activity during and immediately after the war. A number of articles are concerned with the issue of Romania's catastrophic showing in 1916, when it was rapidly overrun by the Central Powers' counteroffensive. Torrey finds a number of explanations for what happened, from the unpreparedness of the Romanian army to the strategic dilemmas of planning an offensive into Transylvania in the west while confronting the Bulgarians in the south (and ultimately botching operations on both fronts). Things might have been different, though, if the Entente had actually fulfilled the promises Bratianu extracted from it before the commencement of hostilities. Torrey notes that the Russians misled the Romanian leader about the actual numbers of soldiers they were prepared to send to Romania when hostilities began; and, equally fateful, the British and French, divided among themselves about what to do with their forces in Salonika, were less than candid about their offensive capabilities there. Romanians could well complain that they were left in the lurch by their new allies.

Despite the catastrophe of 1916, Romania was not immediately knocked out of the war. Its forces were reorganized in Moldavia and repulsed an enemy offensive in 1917. A significant role in this unexpected renaissance was played by the French military mission headed by Henri Berthelot, who became a major conduit of Franco-Romanian wartime relations (and whose memoirs have recently been edited by Torrey in a separate publication).[1] Berthelot's views were particularly important when Bessarabia broke away from the rest of Russia in 1917 and was finally occupied by Romanian troops; this nexus is explored in "Romania, France, and Bessarabia, 1917-1918." His activities in 1918 are covered in "General Henri Berthelot and the Army of the Danube, 1918-1919."

The collapse of the Russian front at the end of the year, though, forced Romania to end hostilities with the Central Powers. Torrey covers the major steps in the process, with articles on Romania's decision to sign an armistice; the actual armistice negotiations at Focsani; and the political career of Alexandru Marghiloman, the Conservative Party leader who replaced Bratianu to con-

clude the Treaty of Bucharest. The final articles involve the reopening of hostilities in 1918 and the Romanian intervention in Hungary in the following year.

The book also reprints "The Diplomatic Career of Charles J. Vopicka in Romania, 1913-1920," which provides an interesting take on Romanian wartime affairs from a rather idiosyncratic American perspective.

Torrey writes in clear, straightforward prose. His conclusions are based on work in the archival collections of Romania, Italy, France, Germany, and Austria. This is traditional top-down diplomatic history investigating the motives and actions of the major statesmen of the time, and Torrey does it well. If there is any problem with the book, it is in the editing, which is not up to the standard of the writing. I listed nearly two pages of misspellings and typos as I read the book, most minor but all unnecessary. Conrad's surname is spelled "Hoetzendorff" rather than "Hoetzendorf" throughout; his fellow Austrian, Oskar Hranilovic, for some reason becomes "Hranilovici." At least these usages are consistent. On the other hand, "Salonika" is sometimes "Thessalonika" (p. 217). "Dobrudja" and "Dobrugea" are used interchangeably, as are "Poklevsky" (p. 15) and "Poklevskii" (p. 58). Bratianu's first name, usually "Ion" in the various articles, is also "Ionel" (p. 139). There is even a footnote (p. 358, n. 50) which contains nothing but a single "?" –a rather unique way of citing a quotation. Finally, it seems to me it would not have taken much editing time to update some of the bibliographic references, such as that to "the present writer's forthcoming article" (p. 76, n. 8) which, in fact, is actually included elsewhere in the book.

The above shortcomings are minor irritants in a solid contribution to the World War I diplomatic history of Romania. It is certainly appropriate that these writings are now reassembled in a single publication so that readers like myself can finally enjoy easy access to them.

Note:

[1]. Henri-Mathias Berthelot, *General Henri Berthelot and Romania: Memoires et correspondance 1916-1919* (Boulder and New York: East European Monographs; Distributed by Columbia University Press, 1987).

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