

FABIEN THÉOFILAKIS, ed.

**Cote à côte: Berry-au-Bac  
dans la Première Guerre mondiale:  
Perspectives franco-allemandes  
sur les fronts de l’Aisne**

L’Allemagne dans les relations internationales. Deutschland in der internationalen Beziehungen 11

Bruxelles etc.: Peter Lang, 2017

**T**HE COMMEMORATION of the centenary of the First World War has led to the publication of some interesting books that bring to attention important events in the history of this moment, a huge editorial process of documentary restitution and a tremendous work of historians who offer a reinterpretation of sources or new approaches to already known events. Among the latest publications devoted to this topic, quite worthy of attention is the one edited in 2017 in both French and German by Fabien Théofilakis of Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne University (*Die Höhe 108 bei Berry-au-Bac im Ersten Weltkrieg: Die Fronten an der Aisne aus deutscher und französischer Sicht*).

It is difficult to classify this book as being part of a specific category, such as documentary restitution, historical research, or reference literature, because it features elements from each of these genres. It contains a presentation of documents, a well-done historiographical survey which helps the reader to understand who had written about this topic up to that moment and to see what were the most important contributions, but also interesting analyses dedicated to the battlefield of Berry-au-Bac, which saw some important battles between the French and German armies. As a com-

ponent of an interesting project involving researchers from important centres belonging to both aforementioned countries, the book presents the way in which professors from French and German universities have discovered and reconstructed, step by step, the battles that took place there and the atmosphere in the trenches.

Divided into six small parts and accompanied by a foreword signed by Annette Becker and an introduction by Fabien Théofilakis, the book provides in its first part (pp. 55–80) information about the context of the battles that took place at Berry-au-Bac and describes the units that fought there, showing relevant aspects of the conflagration, offering information about the commanders of these units and underlining other important elements pertaining to the matter. Then, in the second part (pp. 81–172), the rediscovery of the place blends with the reading of sources and the examination of photographs, in an attempt to describe the way in which the battles unfolded, to understand the strategies and the role of the ammunition used in the whole process. The third part (pp. 173–224), titled “Living the War, Saying the War, Recounting the War,” is focused on the memorials dedicated to the place, on their topic and relevance, while the following one (pp. 225–284) speaks about the alternation between fighting and quiet periods in the investigated space.

In the two texts belonging to the fifth section (pp. 285–310), the first signed by Pierre Le Dauphin and the second one by Stefan Schubert, after investigating empirical aspects related to the space and describing in detail the work of students, the authors decided to insert, at the end of the last section of the book (pp. 311–336), six interviews with archivists about various as-

pects of the First World War and especially of the Berry-au-Bac battles.

Wencke Meteling (pp. 337–353) of Marburg University is the author of the afterword, which highlights the contribution of the authors coordinated by Fabien Théofilakis to the understanding of the First World War and to the rediscovery of important spaces and sources that provide us with rich information about the way in which the conflagration took place.

As we have tried to show in our short presentation, the aforementioned book is not only an important historiographical contribution, but also a documentary book which brings to attention historical and practical information about the First World War and contributes to a better understanding of the battles fought at Berry-au-Bac.



IULIU-MARIUS MORARIU

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ADRIAN ONOFREIU and CORNELIA VLAȘIN, eds.

**Războiul din spatele tranșelor:  
Contribuții documentare referitoare  
la județul Bistrița-Năsăud**

(The war behind the trenches:

Documentary contributions related  
to Bistrița-Năsăud County)

Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2017

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**T**HE COMMEMORATION of the centenary of the First World War has led to the publication of important books, volumes of studies and relevant documents from or about that period. Many conferences, seminars, debates and other manifestations on this topic, or on topics linked to it, were held in order to highlight new aspects of the conflagration and to analyze in a different way aspects that are already known.

In Bistrița-Năsăud County, researchers from the local department of the National Archives, from the local museums, together with other specialists, published interesting texts in this field. Quite recent are the documents about the officer Albert Porkolab: Ion Cârja, Dan-Lucian Vaida, Loránd L. Mádly, and Dan Prähase, eds., *Un ardelean în Marele Război: Albert Porkolab (1880–1920)* (A Transylvanian in the Great War: Albert Porkolab, 1880–1920) (Cluj-Napoca, 2016), as well as many studies on the articles published in local magazines.

Another recent contribution to this subject is the documentary volume entitled *The War Behind the Trenches: Documentary Contributions Related to Bistrița-Năsăud County*. Its main editors are Mr. Adrian Onofreiu and Mrs. Cornelia Vlașin, who were helped by the historians Dorin Dologa, Nicoleta Preda, Andreea Salvan, Dana Văran, and Gabriela Molnar.

Its foreword (pp. 7–22) presents general aspects about the conflagration as well as particular elements about the investigated area and information related to the researched sources. Based on a comprehensive, albeit incomplete, bibliography, it may be considered a useful guide to the historiography of the First World War in Bistrița-Năsăud County and an instrument that highlights sources for future research in the field. The foreword is followed by a note on the edition (pp. 23–24), where the editors present the list of the documentary findings they used in their investigation and some technical aspects of their work, and by the list of 260 documents presented (pp. 25–45). After that, the reader is invited to discover a part of the correspondence from the battlefield, documents of the Church (episcopal form let-

ters, certificates, instructions for parishes, and so on), official school papers, lists of heroes of the conflagration from villages such as Rebrișoara (pp. 275–282) and Șieu (pp. 283–294), and even a play (pp. 295–303). The work introduces the reader to the complex universe of the war, highlighting the problems of the combatants, of the people who remained home, of the Church and of the schools, and facilitates a direct contact with the sources and with the testimonies of the people who suffered so much. Despite the censorship, some aspects that highlight the difficult life in the trenches, the hard life of the widows and of the lonely women from the county villages are still present in the letters sent to representative people like teacher Ioan Marcu. The latter is the source of many of the published documents.

Therefore, we can conclude that this book is an important contribution to the reconstruction of the image of the First World War and to its understanding, given the impressive number of primary sources offered and the novelty of the information they contain. Like with all important researches, there are some shortcomings that, however, do not diminish its value. Thus, for example, there is no index of places and names, very useful for any researcher who has no time to read the entire book and who is searching just for a name or a place, and there are no biographical notes on the important people mentioned. It would be surely very useful for a reader to find out, in a few words, who was Ioan Marcu, who left behind such a wealth of documents, or who was Liviu Păiuș, etc. On the other hand, there is an excessive preoccupation with explaining archaisms. For this reason, the editors are, from time to time, explaining even words that are

still in use in some regions of the county and of the country. In our opinion, such explanations are not necessary. For example, it would be better to replace these digressions with short biographies of the important local personalities mentioned in the documents.

Despite these minor shortcomings of the book, which surely can be amended in a future edition, the volume is an important contribution to contemporary historiography and to the investigation of the First World War and of its consequences in Bistrița-Năsăud County, one that should not be absent from the libraries of the researchers tackling this subject.

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IULIU-MARIUS MORARIU

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**HARALD HEPPNER, ed.**
**Umbruch mit Schlachtenlärm:**
**Siebenbürgen und der Erste Weltkrieg**

 Cologne–Weimar–Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, Siebenbürgisches Archiv, 44, 2017
 

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**W**ORLD WAR I had a tremendous impact upon Transylvania and its inhabitants, decisively changing the history of this region by causing its separation from Austria-Hungary and the subsequent union with Romania, in keeping with the desire of the majority population, democratically expressed in the autumn of 1918. In recent years, several conferences and a significant number of articles, individual and collective volumes have approached, from various and multidisciplinary perspectives, the impact of the war upon this province and the manner in which the people of that time remembered and recounted the experiences of those dreadful years. Thus, an-