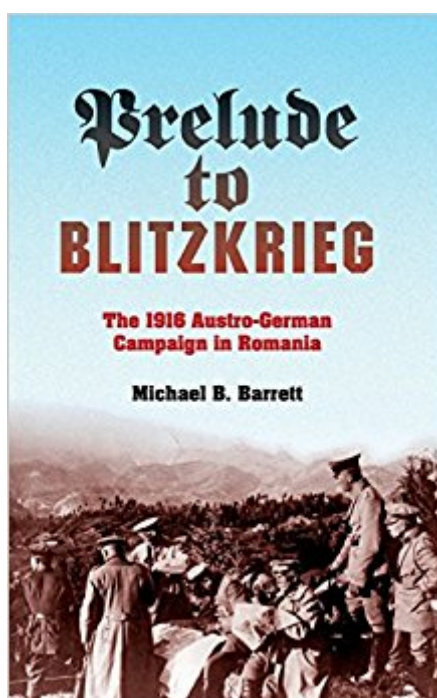


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Prelude To Blitzkrieg: The 1916 Austro-German Campaign In Romania (Twentieth-Century Battles)



Synopsis

In contrast to the trench-war deadlock on the Western Front, combat in Romania and Transylvania in 1916 foreshadowed the lightning warfare of WWII. When Romania joined the Allies and invaded Transylvania without warning, the Germans responded by unleashing a campaign of bold, rapid infantry movements, with cavalry providing cover or pursuing the crushed foe. Hitting where least expected and advancing before the Romanians could react – even bombing their capital from a Zeppelin soon after war was declared – the Germans and Austrians poured over the formidable Transylvanian Alps onto the plains of Walachia, rolling up the Romanian army from west to east, and driving the shattered remnants into Russia. Prelude to Blitzkrieg tells the story of this largely ignored campaign to determine why it did not devolve into the mud and misery of trench warfare, so ubiquitous elsewhere.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Michael Barrett's Prelude to Blitzkrieg is an important addition to First World War studies. Well researched and well written, Prelude to Blitzkrieg not only elucidates a thus far obscure First World War campaign, it also indicates the direction of tactics to come in the Second World War. Barrett effectively belies the traditional assumption that the First World War was slow and static and demonstrates that at least in the 1916 Romanian campaign it was a struggle of maneuver and speed. Utilizing sources from both sides of the conflict, Barrett skillfully covers the three main aspects of the Romanian campaign of 1916. These include the Romanian invasion of Transylvania,

the Bulgarian-German-Ottoman invasion of Dobrogea, and the Austro-German invasion of Romania." *Richard C. Hall, author of Balkan Breakthrough: The Battle of Dobro Pole 1918*"This is a well-researched book that very carefully explores the factors shaping command decisions and the consequences of those decisions on the battlefield." *Austrian History Yearbook*"Barrett's well-written and clearly argued book is traditional military history at its best. Aided by superb maps and consistent geographic terms, a reader will enjoy Barrett's analysis of the campaign and gain a fuller understanding of the swirling events on the Eastern Front."

Robert A. Doughty, author of Pyrrhic Victory: French Strategy and Operations in the Great War"Historians have given the Romanian front of World War I little attention. Michael Barrett works to correct this gap, comprehensively describing Romania's 1916 invasion of Hungary and the reaction of the Central Powers." *German Studies Review*"Michael Barrett's *Prelude to Blitzkrieg* presents detailed descriptions of the various battles during the Romanian campaigns in the First World War. It is a well-written, thoroughly researched contribution to WWI historiography. His portrayal of the interactions of all the participants is particularly interesting. A highly recommended read for military historians in general, WWI aficionados and those interested in the Eastern and Balkan fronts." *Graydon A. Tunstall, author of Blood on the Snow: The Carpathian Winter War of 1915*"Barnett's book is a valuable addition to the field. He writes well and with authority. He has been able to illuminate a little-known corner of the First World War and provide a state-of-the-art operational history combining detailed narrative with prescient analysis. It should be seen as a model for further research and one can only hope that it encourages other scholars to examine similar campaigns, particularly on the other lesser-known battlefields of the war in Russia, Poland, Turkey, and Armenia." *American Historical Review*"[Barrett's] treatment of the Central Powers is extensive, and his research in this regard can only be described as exhaustive. This work will stand as the definitive study of the Central Powers part of the campaign for some time to come." *Journal of Military History*

Michael B. Barrett was Professor of History at The Citadel for over thirty-five years, and is Brigadier General (ret.), U.S. Army Reserve. He is author of *Operation Albion: The German Conquest of the Baltic Islands* (IUP, 2008).

This book taken together with 'The Romanian Battlefront in World War I' by Glenn E. Torrey give a very clear picture of the campaign that resulted from Romania's entry into WWI. This book, gives an in depth account from the German/Austrian perspective of the response to the Romanian invasion

of Transylvania which precipitated its entry into the war on the side of the Entente. It gives very detailed insight into the collection, organization, command structure, and operations of the German and Austrian forces in Transylvania under the command of von Falkenhayn, 9th Army, and Arz, 1st Army and the cumbersome command structure in which OHL and AOK (German and Austrian High Command) competed with each other. In spite of the obstacles of mountainous terrain, convoluted command structure, technological primitiveness, logistical complexity, and personality shortcomings, the campaign of the 9th Army is argued to show the concepts and thinking of the early days of WWII blitzkrieg than a WWI 1916 operation. It also goes into great detail about the Central Powers forces (German, Austrian, Turkish, and Bulgarian) in Bulgaria under von Mackensen and their operations in the Dobrogea which were able to diffuse the Romanian drive into Transylvania by threatening the Romanian hinterland that had not been properly defended against such a strike. The book shows the weakness of the Romanian Army, the Romania war plan, the Romanian leadership and its suicidal opportunistic mismanagement. The "The Romanian Battlefront in WWI" book gives more insight into the Romanian operations and politics while still giving an excellent tactical military analysis while this book is more Central Powers centric. I highly recommend this book and "The Romanian Battlefront in WWI". I hope we see more about the war in the Balkans and the pre-WWI Balkan Wars.

With the coming of the one hundred year anniversary of the start of the Great War there are several new books on the market covering both the causes of the war and its battles, especially away from the Western Front. A good example is Edward Paice's *World War I: The African Front*. Paice goes into detail of the actions of the Germans and their adversaries but the reader still has a grasp of the overall situation and some idea of where everything is. That's not true with Barrett and his *Prelude to Blitzkrieg*. Here's an example: "The crisis in the Calimani mountains caused by the Romanian advance to Lunca Bradului (Palota) in the Mures Valley saw the unit reembark the following day for Prunda Bargalui, where it came under the temporary control of the 73rd Hunved Brigad, 1st Army Corps, of the adjacent 7th Army." Huh? Now Barrett does explain that over the last hundred years many names have changed as borders are adjusted in favor of victors. But still the eight or nine small maps in the book do little to help the general reader (me) in following the events of the Romanian Front. There's no doubt that the book is well researched, the same holds true for Paice's *African Front* offering, but for any reader who is not intimately familiar with East European place names the book becomes incomprehensible. Sorry, maybe I'm showing my own ignorance. Still, in my opinion, the book is not for the general audience. A part of the book I did enjoy regarded

General Falkenhayn and his demotion to the Romanian Front after he argued that an offensive war on the Western Front was impossible. In Romania he worked diligently to save his reputation, that's a good story in itself. One final note. The book is expensive with a \$45.00 retail price. That being noted, I was surprised at the very inexpensive binding that Indiana University Press used in publishing it. Again just a small, final note.

Barrett does an excellent job of covering the 1916 campaign by the Central Powers that knocked Romania out of World War One. There are excellent maps of the actions on an operational level. I suggest that a reader unfamiliar with the geography of eastern Europe, and the old Hungarian-Romanian border may wish to have a map at hand in order to follow the action. The book has two small failings, one being the insufficient attention paid to the diplomatic run-up to the Romanian declaration of war in August 1916, and the degree to which the Romanian desire to drive the best possible deal resulted in the campaign being launched as the Somme and Brusilov offensives were winding down. The other is the claim, not really justified, that the tactics and operational aspects of the campaign were a "prelude to blitzkrieg". The Gorlice-Tarnow offensive a year earlier, the Hundred Days in the West in 1918, all were significant victories using the same tactics and operational plans. But those small criticisms aside, I will enjoy using this as a reference in my World War One course scheduled for next fall.

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