

Dinu C. GIURESCU, Rudolf DINU, Laurențiu CONSTANTINIU, *Romanian Diplomacy – An Illustrated History. 1862–1947*, Bucharest, Monitorul Oficial S.A., 2010, 343 p.

Just a couple of years ago, personnel in the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was still having a hard time completing the portraits gallery of the withholders of this office. The present book intends to fill such an information gap and manifests the growing interest shown nowadays by the Romanian historiography in a long ignored subject. The work is reviewing the diplomatic progress over time of the Romanian state, since its origins till the abolition of the monarchy, when it was included in the Soviet power zone. The book is a sequel of the first two volumes gathering the documentation on the organization of that ministry, which were published by Fundația Europeană Titulescu (*Organizarea instituțională a Ministerului Afacerilor Externe. Acte și documente. Volumul I. 1859–1919*, by Ion Mamina, Gheorghe Neacșu, George G. Potra, editors, Bucharest, 2004; *Organizarea instituțională a Ministerului Afacerilor Externe. Acte și documente, Volumul II. 1920–1947*, by Ion Mamina, George G. Potra, Gheorghe Neacșu, Nicolae Nicolescu, editors, Bucharest, 2006). The book is therefore answering to some recent developments in the historiography of South-Eastern Europe. One should record several publications dealing with the diplomatic history of the Balkan modern states like Елена Стателова, Радослав Попов, Василка Танкова, *История на българската дипломация. 1879–1913 г.*, София, 1994; Radoslav M. Rasporović, *Diplomatija Crne Gore. 1711–1918*, Podgorica-Beograd, 1996; Богдан Љ. Поповић, *Дипломатска историја Србије*, Београд, 2010.

It is not by chance that two of this book's authors, Rudolf Dinu and Laurențiu Constantiniu, belong to the panel of experts that have been painstakingly putting together the collection *Documente Diplomatice Românești* (Romanian Diplomatic Documents). The purpose of this book, printed under the patronage of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is to provide a personalized account of the past Romanian diplomacy that had been neglected for ideological reasons. To redress this injustice a strenuous rummaging through archives and private collections was required and it paid off handsomely, as many of the book's illustrations haven't been published before. A whole diplomatic world is vividly brought back to life with its habits, actors and inner workings, with its grandeur and vanities, and with its aristocratic traditions and practices, at least until 1918. It would be wrong to believe that the management of a diplomatic mission was just a sequence of frivolous or funny incidents, like the story told about the politician Nicolae Fleva who, being sent at the Romanian legation in Rome, was naïve enough to ask his minister to appoint him as ambassador, which title was at that time exclusively reserved to the representatives of Great Powers. Rudolf Dinu's study on the Old Kingdom's diplomacy (pp. 63–187) not only paints a vivid fresco of the diplomatic world, but brings compelling conclusions on matters still sensitive in the Romanian historiography. Case in point: the lack of concern for the country's long-term security interests shown in 1914–1916 by the Romanian decision-makers who, being obsessed by the national project, failed to seriously consider the consequences of a collapse of the security system created after Independence. In other words, going out from the Austro-German *glacis*, of which Romania had been part for more than thirty years. Without a viable security provider in the post-1918 power vacuum of Central and Eastern Europe, Romania ended up, twenty-five years later, in the Soviet strategic *glacis*.

This is an enticing work, containing information that the interested historians will surely find useful: the list of the ministers of Foreign Affairs serving in the period under review (pp. 315–317), the list of the heads of Romanian diplomatic missions (pp. 318–331) or of the personnel in the Romanian diplomatic corps since 1908 (p. 75). A valuable contribution to the history of modern diplomacy in South-Eastern Europe.

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