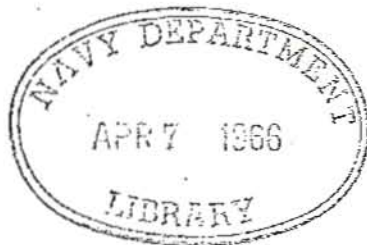


THE AMERICAN NAVAL MISSION IN THE ADRIATIC, 1918-1921

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The little known occupation of central Dalmatia by United States naval forces for a period of thirty-five months is in some ways unique in American experience. Begun in November, 1918, this occupation of more than one hundred miles of Dalmatian coastline did not end until September, 1921. It represents a considerable operation, whether the criterion be time or territorial extent, and in addition, it offers an interesting study of unusual political and military complications caused largely by Italian aspirations in the Adriatic.

The most striking feature of the occupation which calls for notice is the fact that the so-called American zone in Dalmatia constituted in reality territory claimed by the sovereign state of Yugoslavia, and the justice of this claim was officially recognized by the United States.¹ Serbia was one of the associated powers during the war and, since it formed the nucleus of the new succession state, Yugoslavia itself attained the same allied status. Hence the United States found itself in the curious position of occupying with naval forces the province of an associated power. Motivation sprang from political grounds. The United States extended naval control over Dalmatia partially to check Italian territorial aggrandizement in that region, and to strengthen

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1. For the sake of brevity the term Yugoslavia will be employed throughout, although it was not until 1929 that the cumbersome title, Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was dropped by the Belgrade government.
 2. Only after the bitter opposition of Italy was exhausted. The United States, on February 5, 1919, was first among the great powers to recognize Yugoslavia. German recognition came on May 1, 1919; French and British, at the beginning of June. Italy and the other powers recognized Yugoslavia when their representatives signed the Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919, for Yugoslavia was a signatory to the Treaty.

Jugoslavia's vigorous diplomatic combat against the numerous Italian intrigues and encroachments on Yugoslav soil. Italy, however, was also a friendly country associated with America in the war. Thus the United States occupied the territory of one associated power to thwart the pretensions of a second associated power against the first. The situation was, and still remains unique in American annals.

Although ultimate control in the occupied region was vested in an American admiral, Serb troops garrisoned the zone, and the admiral exerted his influence through the legally constituted local governments both provincial and municipal. A regiment of American infantry which had been detailed to the Italian command in the summer of 1918 participated in the occupation of several points along the eastern Adriatic seaboard under Italian orders immediately following the conclusion of the Austrian armistice. When President Wilson discovered that Italy was employing these troops to further her political aims against Jugoslavia, he ordered the regiment back to the United States. This interesting sidelight, which will be discussed on subsequent pages, probably explains why the Dalmatian occupation remained entirely a naval operation.

It may be remarked here, parenthetically, that the presence of American naval units in the Adriatic engaged in the Dalmatian mission contributed indirectly but none the less materially to the maintenance of Wilson's inflexible policy toward Italy, an attitude that in April, 1919 threatened to disrupt the Peace Conference. The numerous reports sent to Paris by United States navy officers in the Adriatic region while the Peace Conference

was in session described in detail Italian machinations and oppression of the Yugoslav populace. Undoubtedly the President read a substantial proportion of these communications, for many of them to this day bear his marginal and interlinear comments. It cannot reasonably be supposed that such unfavorable observations on Italian activities did not influence a mind already disposed to consider the Italian imperialist program with unconcealed alarm and disapproval. In this limited sense the Dalmatian occupation was at once a result of Wilson's effort to circumscribe with justice and severity Italy's expanding ambitions, as well as a contributing factor to his unshaken determination not to yield on this most controversial issue of the peace settlement.

By no means the least interesting phase of this occupation is the curious legal structure that provided a basis for the mission. The American zone fell outside the area to be evacuated by the enemy and occupied by interallied forces under article three of the Austrian armistice. In article four, however, the Allies reserved the right to "occupy such strategic points in Austria-Hungary at such times as they may deem necessary...to maintain order"; that is, to take over Austrian territory beyond the armistice line if conditions warranted. Central Dalmatia, which in November 1918 became the American zone, was most emphatically a strategic point, in fact the key strategic position in the Adriatic upon which Italian imperialists cast covetous eyes. Its occupation was undertaken by the United States on the basis of enabling powers granted

3. Woodrow Wilson Collection, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress.

in article four, but American authority rapidly expanded far beyond the limits set in that clause, namely, the maintenance of order.

The naval occupation of Dalmatia provides an exceptional illustration of adaptation of form to mission. In the initial stages it was regarded simply as a routine process in the execution of armistice naval terms, nothing more than a rather unusual naval function. As projects of Italian aggrandizement reached the notice of the State Department the American mission acquired political features, the principal objectives of which, as have already been indicated, were to check Italian expansion in the Adriatic at the expense of the then amorphous Yugoslavia, and to support the new state in conformity with Wilson's principle of national self-determination. The form of occupation was adapted to these conditioning factors, and to the mission entrusted to the American admiral. It might be worth noting that this form is unique. For his administration the admiral depended upon Yugoslav provincial and local governments; for his police force he relied on Yugoslav garrisons supplemented by occasional landings of American sailors and a daily shore patrol. This form of government was singularly well adapted to the desired objectives. It served the purpose of assisting Yugoslavia to develop self-government in Dalmatia; it reinforced the international position of Yugoslavia, and all this was accomplished without alienating Italy irreparably.

If, however, the naval occupation of central Dalmatia may be termed unusual, and in some features even unique, it was no more so than the chaotic conditions in the Adriatic which followed

the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire in November, 1918. An examination of these developments and of the Yugoslav movement for national unification is essential to an adequate comprehension of the American occupation and its implications. For this reason stress is laid throughout the chapter on the dynamic political background which vitally, continuously, affected the naval mission in Dalmatia.

DISSOLUTION OF AUSTRIA-HUNGARY

The outlook appeared very gloomy for the central powers by September, 1918. Relentless allied pressure in the west which had begun with the reduction of the Marne salient in June was steadily rolling the German armies back toward the Rhine, and the economic consequences of the naval blockade contributed to the steady deterioration of national morale. In Austria-Hungary war-weariness and the upsurge of discontented subject nationalities made highly dubious the continued existence of the empire.

Concessions by the government of Charles VI which were intended to placate the Poles, Czechs, and Yugoslavs had the effect of encouraging their political activities which aimed at nothing short of independence, and hence the destruction of the ancient Hapsburg empire. When in mid-September Franchot d'Esperrey's Army of the

5. The dissolution of Austria-Hungary is simply outlined here. Studies of the problem may be found in E. von Clause-Horstenau, The Collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, trs. New York, 1930; D. Strong, Austria, October 1918 - March 1919, New York, 1939; P.H. Michel, La Question de l'Adriatique, Paris, 1938; O. Jassi, The Dissolution of the Hapsburg Monarchy, Chicago, 1929.

Orient launched an offensive on the Macedonian front and shortly achieved a break-through, Bulgarian resistance was finally and utterly crushed. Bulgaria capitulated on September 28, and two days later signed an armistice at Salonika on terms which amounted to unconditional surrender. The way now lay open for an allied advance against Austria-Hungary from the southeast.

Austria, however, was in no condition to continue the struggle; the imperial armies were too exhausted, and the friction of nationalities threatened the immediate breakdown of the home front. Her cause was lost. Back in the middle of September, 1918 Austria had displayed her attenuation before the world by addressing a peace note to the United States, but, suspecting chicanery, Wilson rejected it summarily. When in the first days of October Germany in desperation requested an immediate armistice, and peace on the basis of the Fourteen Points, Austria willingly associated herself with the move. Wilson's reply to Austria, dated October 18, did not reach Vienna until three days later, and its contents doomed the empire. The President, having already recognized the Czech National Council as a de facto belligerent government as well as the justice of Yugoslav national aspirations,⁶ was compelled to repudiate clause X of the Fourteen Points and declare that mere autonomy of the subject nationalities was no longer a basis for peace. By its overt encouragement to the Poles,

6. Point X. "The peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development."
C. Seymour, Intimate Papers of Colonel House, (New York, 1928), III, 336-37.

Czechs, and Jugoslavs this note virtually dissolved the dual empire, and central authority rapidly disintegrated, its fragments falling into the hands of irregular national councils and committees in the imperial provinces. The armies, too, were infected by the nationalist movements, and no longer could be relied upon as effective instruments of imperial policy.

In this period of crisis when the Hapsburg edifice was crumbling in ruins General Diaz, Italian chief of staff, on October 23 gave the signal which began the carefully prepared general offensive against the Austrian lines. It is an astonishing fact that the Austrian forces, although compelled slowly to withdraw, continued for several days to offer vigorous resistance when a government which could sustain them no longer existed. By October 27 however, Italian and allied troops had crossed the Piave, and smashed the Austrian front. That same day Vienna despatched through a neutral source an answer to Wilson's note of October 18 which agreed to accept the President's conditions without reservation; offered to conclude a separate peace, and sued for an immediate armistice. It was too late. The desperate situation at home and on the front was such that Austria could not afford to indulge in leisurely diplomatic exchanges at a time when an immediate cessation of hostilities was imperative. It became clear that only an armistice on the field could accomplish this.

In Paris, whither he had traveled in great haste from Rome to attend the conferences of the Supreme War Council, Premier Orlando on October 30 announced to Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and Colonel House that a commission of Austrian officers bearing the

white flag had crossed the Italian lines and requested terms.⁷

At the instance of their political chiefs, allied military and naval advisors quickly drafted armistice clauses which were approved by the Supreme Council the next day, and that same evening they were wired in abbreviated form to General Diaz while a courier hurried to Italy with the complete text in his pouch. At 3 p.m.

on November 3, the Austrian commission signed the armistice of Villa Giusti together with a supplement appended by General

Pietro Badoglio at the last minute which, among other things, set the time for cessation of hostilities twenty-four hours after the signature.⁸

The Austrian high command at Baden was not informed of this supplement, and consequently ordered the imperial armies to lay down their arms immediately after 3 p.m., November 3, in the belief that the armistice would enter into effect at that time.

This act was not unjustified because the armistice terms, minus the supplement, called for an immediate cessation of hostilities.

However, Italian troops continued their advance against the unresisting enemy for twenty-four hours longer, taking some 300,000 prisoners and an enormous booty.⁹ While it may be interpreted as

7. G. Seymour, Intimate Papers, IV, 104.

8. Since the supplement was unauthorized, and because it so obviously favored Italian interests at the expense of her allies, the Supreme Council later repudiated it. See below, p. 23. Copies of this supplement which threatened a breach among the allies are to be found in the Yale House Collection, and the Naval Records, Navy Department. It has been published in H. Temperley (ed.), A History of the Peace Conference of Paris, 6 vols., London, 1920-24, I, 487 ff. Hereafter cited Peace Conference.

9. D. Strong, Austria, October 1918 - March 1919, has partially uncovered the history of this interesting episode. Some mention of it is also made in E. von Glaise-Horsteneu, Collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

a fitting climax to the singular Italian drive of Vittorio Veneto, it was nevertheless a base and treacherous act which forms yet another stain on Italian arms.

JUGOSLAV UNIFICATION

While these momentous events culminating in the armistice of Villa Giusti were in progress, the Jugoslavs of the Austro-Hungarian empire directed their energies toward outlining the shape of a new national state. The Yugoslav inhabitants of the Dual Monarchy were distributed among ten different provinces. Under Austria, but possessing varying degrees of home rule, were Carinthia, Styria, Carniola, Gorizia-Gradisca, Istria and Dalmatia. Hungary controlled Slovenia and Croatia. Bosnia and Herzegovina, annexed in 1909, were under joint Austro-Hungarian administration. Two independent kingdoms, overrun by Austrian troops during the war, were also inhabited by Jugoslavs, namely, Serbia and Montenegro. United by blood, language, and to a certain extent by national tradition these various territories were divided by government, but since the early years of the war the Jugoslavs had conducted an active propoganda aimed at ultimate unification.

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10. Details of the Yugoslav movement for unification lie outside the province of this chapter. Consult R. Albrecht-Carrió, Italy at the Paris Peace Conference, (New York, 1958), p. 47 ff. for a brief but incisive account. H. Temperley, Peace Conference, IV and V, passim, is still useful, as is E.J. and C.G. Woodhouse, Italy and the Jugoslavs, Boston, 1920. Also see C. Beard and G. Radin, The Balkan Pivot: Jugoslavia, New York, 1929, and J. Buchan (ed.), Jugoslavia, London, 1923.

The movement for national self-determination stemmed from three distinct sources, nor was it completed until these three effected a junction. First of these elements was the Yugoslav National Committee organized in London during the early war months by Dr. Trumbitch, an émigré Dalmatian lawyer,¹¹ who kept the Yugoslav issue alive and burning with the aid of British subsidies. The second source consisted of the exiled Serbian government, an ally of the great powers, astutely controlled by Mr. Pasitch, its premier and foreign minister. Although Pasitch considered unification in terms of a Greater Serbia he and Trumbitch signed the Pact of Corfu on July 20, 1917, thereby agreeing on the union of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in a single independent kingdom on a constitutional and democratic basis under the¹² Serb house of Karageorgevitch. The final element in this tripartite movement for unification was the National Council of Zagreb.

11. Trumbitch was once mayor of Spalato, capital of Dalmatia; was subsequently elected to the Austrian Reichsrat from that province, and eventually became the first foreign minister of Yugoslavia during the years 1919-20.

12. Italy accepted the Corfu agreement in the Pact of Rome signed in April 1918 by Trumbitch and Mr. Torre on behalf of a large Italian parliamentary committee. Orlando approved, perhaps in good faith, but primarily as a war measure to promote allied solidarity. Subsequent Italian intrigues to forestall Yugoslav unity bear out this interpretation. Compare R. Albrecht-Carrié, Italy at the Paris Peace Conference, pp. 46-47.

When it appeared that the Dual Monarchy would not survive the war politically intact, Dr. Korosec, Slovene president of the Croatian parliament, invited the political leaders of all Yugoslav parties within the empire to assemble in congress at Zagreb on October 5, 1918, to form a national council. After Wilson in his note of October 18 to Vienna "recognized in the fullest manner the justice of the nationalistic aspirations of the Yugoslavs for freedom",¹³ the national council was encouraged to convene again at Zagreb, and to renounce any connection between the Yugoslav provinces and Austria-Hungary, and to declare their union with the state of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes as expressed in the Pact of Corfu. Paced by its president, Dr. Korosec, the congress transformed itself into the National Council of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, and assumed complete authority over all Yugoslavs within the defunct empire. At the same time it recalled Yugoslav troops from the Italian front in a manifesto which announced the neutrality of Yugoslav territory. Punctilious to the last gasp, Emperor Charles shortly thereafter recognized the new situation, and simultaneously transferred the imperial navy to the National Council. In view of the fact that Italy expected a substantial portion of that fleet as war spoil, her government vehemently denounced this latter act as a perfidious Austrian trick, but actually Charles VI only acquiesced in a fait accompli, since a mutiny in the navy on October 30 had raised the Croat flag to the mastsheads. Nevertheless, transfer of the fleet to the National Council of Zagreb caused no

13. H. Temperley, Peace Conference, IV, 105.

little confusion among the allies when the time arrived to enforce
 the Austrian naval armistice terms. ¹⁴

By the end of October, 1918, the form of the Yugoslav state had become more distinct. The next obvious step was to bring together the signatories of the Pact of Corfu and the National Council of Zagreb. For this purpose Trumbitch, Pasitch, and Korosec assembled in Geneva together with their aides on November 6, and five days later issued the so-called Pact of Geneva. This document designed the succession state along lines laid down by the Pact of Corfu. It pronounced the National Council of Zagreb the provisional government of Yugoslavia, and announced the formation of a joint ministry to organize affairs pending enactment of a constitution to be drafted by a constituent assembly. Unfortunately Pasitch still nourished the Pan-Serb idea and, apprehensive lest the Yugoslav provinces overshadow Serbia in the new state, treacher-
 ously hamstrung the Geneva Pact behind the backs of his colleagues. ¹⁵
 Common fear of Italy, however, provided the strongest inducement for reconciliation, and after a flurried interval of negotiation the National Council of Zagreb eventually offered Prince Alexander of Serbia the regency over all Jugoslavs. He accepted on December 1, 1918. Then the National Council proclaimed the Kingdom of the

14. Discussed below, p. 18 ff.

15. Minister in Switzerland Stovall to Colonel/House, November 30, 1918. Foreign Relations of the United States, 1919; The Paris Peace Conference, (Washington, D.C., 2 vols., 1942), II, 317-18. Hereafter cited For. Rel., Paris Peace Conference.

Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, that is to say, Yugoslavia, and on December 16, a joint session of the National Council of Zagreb and the Serbian Skupshtina ratified this action. When Montenegro entered the union several days later it completed the unification of the Yugoslavs.
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This movement for national self-determination which attracted the profoundest sympathy and extensive moral support of the United States was not accomplished without intrigue, disorder, and bloodshed, nor did the mere fact of union automatically solve the numerous problems facing the recently established provisional government. There existed the question of future boundaries complicated by the Treaty of London¹⁷ in which document France and Britain had approved Italy's claim to Gorizia-Gradisca, Istria, northern Dalmatia, as well as the Quarnero and Dalmatian islands. These regions constituted Italy's price for entering the war on the allied side, but in all these bartered provinces the vast bulk of the population was Yugoslav. Consequently, territorial issues produced an inevitable clash between Italy and Yugoslavia. To obtain foreign recognition for Yugoslavia proved a formidable task because of adamant Italian opposition. The new state also labored under serious internal problems as well, foremost of which were the establishment of law and order, revictualling of devastated areas, and organization of a permanent constitutional and democratic government. There remained also the delicate questions

16. French Ambassador to the United States, Jusserand, to Secretary of State Lansing, Paris, January 9, 1919. For. Rel., Paris Peace Conference, II, 345-46.

17. Signed April 26, 1915.



arising from the application of the armistice terms to those Yugoslav areas which had shortly before belonged to Austria-Hungary.

Now it is highly significant that the United States consistently sustained Yugoslavia in her efforts to find a solution for these grave problems. Such support assumed moral, financial, and diplomatic forms, but as important as any of these was the American occupation of Dalmatia which can correctly be interpreted as direct physical intervention on behalf of Yugoslavia, and a tactful show of force against Italy. Having sketchily surveyed the political background against which the Dalmatian occupation must be viewed, we turn now to events connected with the Austrian armistice which step by step lead to the assumption of American control in Dalmatia.

ARMISTICE OF VILLA GIUSTI AND ITS ENFORCEMENT

It is a notable fact that the armistice of Villa Giusti, even without the supplement already mentioned, was an overwhelmingly Italian document that provided for Italian rather than inter-¹⁸ allied requirements on the Austro-Hungarian front. The military clauses demanded immediate demobilization of the imperial armies, and the surrender of half their equipment such as machine guns and artillery. Under article three Austria undertook to evacuate all

18. After the breakdown of the empire, Hungary maintained that the armistice of Villa Giusti did not apply to her. Therefore representatives of General d'Espercy and the Hungarian Government signed at Belgrade, on November 13, 1918, a "military convention regulating the conditions under which the armistice, signed between the allies and Austria-Hungary is to be applied in Hungary." Texts of the armistice of Villa Giusti and of the Belgrade military convention are conveniently printed in H. Temperley, Peace Conference, IV, 499-511.

Districts invaded since the beginning of the war, and beyond that to withdraw her troops from specified national territory in the South Tyrol, and from regions about the headwaters and eastern littoral of the Adriatic extending south to Cape Planka, as well as from the numerous islands off the coast. The area to be evacuated traced by this armistice line coincided exactly with the Austrian territory promised to Italy by the allies in the Treaty of London back in April 1915. However, this same clause explicitly stated that "all territories thus evacuated will be occupied by Allied and American troops", and article six entrusted the provisional administration of these territories "to local authorities under Allied and associated armies of occupation".

In the light of what subsequently occurred it is doubtful whether Italy even at this early date intended to permit allied troops to associate with her own in the occupation of these evacuated regions because she regarded them as good as annexed by right of conquest, and by guarantees in the Treaty of London. Article four of the armistice allowed allied armies to "occupy such strategic points in Austria-Hungary at such times as they deem necessary to enable them to conduct military operations or to maintain order." It was under this mandate that Italy thrust naval and military units beyond the armistice line into coastal areas from Cape Planka to Albania on the heels of departing Austrian troops, and under this same elastic clause that the United States occupied Dalmatia.

The naval conditions of the armistice obligated Austria to surrender to the allies and the United States fifteen submarines, three battleships, three light cruisers, nine destroyers, and twelve

torpedo boats in addition to several smaller vessels. All other naval units were to be concentrated in designated Austro-Hungarian ports, disarmed, decommissioned, and placed under allied surveillance. Blockade conditions specifically remained unaltered by the terms, and article eight granted the allies the right to occupy the great naval base at Pola together with its fortifications, dockyards, and arsenals. These conditions completely prostrated the Austro-Hungarian navy, which at that time stood eighth in the world naval hierarchy.

In the supplement appended at the instance of the Italian high command the stipulations were such that they interpreted the armistice almost entirely in favor of Italy. For instance, ships marked for surrender were required to proceed to the Italian base at Venice, nor can it be ascribed to coincidence that the supplement named vessels which the Italian naval authorities notoriously claimed as reparations for war losses to their fleet. After November 3, it remained for the allies to carry out and enforce the military and naval terms of armistice, an apparently routine operation whose simplicity was shortly belied by numerous difficulties and complications.

On November 5, 1918 the Allied Naval Council in Paris convened "to consider the manner in which the naval terms of the armistice should be carried out." ¹⁹ The Council agreed to appoint

19. Memorandum on the Adriatic, written by Admiral A.P. Niblack. No date but by internal evidence after September 1919. Naval Records, Navy Department, File VA.

The bulk of official naval material emanating from the several branches of the Navy Department and open to investigators is deposited in two places. The first of these is the Office of Naval Records and Library in the Navy Annex, Arlington, Virginia. Citations from this collection will hereafter read, Naval Records. The other depository of naval material is in the National Archives, Naval Archives Division. Citations from this source will read, Naval Archives. This will bear the distinction also

a committee consisting of four naval officers, American, British, French, and Italian, to meet in Venice and take all necessary steps to execute the naval clauses. Two days later Admiral W.S. Sims on the authority of Admiral W.S. Benson, Chief of Naval Operations, ordered Rear Admiral W.H. Bullard to the Adriatic as naval delegate of the United States to act in concert with British, French, and Italian naval representatives to enforce the armistice. Bullard's mission was strictly defined; he was to collaborate with his colleagues in overseeing the surrender of the forty-two Austrian vessels mentioned in the armistice, but specifically enumerated by the Allied Naval Council only on November 5. These units were to be concentrated at Pola,²⁰ the remainder of the fleet to be decommissioned in Austrian bases chosen at the discretion of the Committee. It was a naval mission with no political coloration whatever at this time.

As Admiral Bullard sailed from Corfu toward the upper Adriatic he was aware that a grave problem confronted the allies, namely, the disposal of the Austrian fleet. On October 31, before Austria signed the armistice, the Emperor had delivered the imperial navy together with dockyards and arsenals to the National Council of Zagreb. Since the armistice occurred on November 3, Austria was apparently no longer in a position to dispose of the navy, since it constituted Yugoslav property. Would the allies, Italy particularly, recognize the legality of the transfer and waive pertinent clauses

20. Note that the unauthorized Italian supplement to the armistice obligated the ships therein designated for surrender to return to Venice. The supplement and interallied decisions, as represented by the Allied Naval Council, also conflicted on the matter of specific ships named for surrender.

of the armistice or would the allies treat the fleet as if it were Austrian? This thorny problem set the allied statesmen chafing about in great mental agitation seeking a proper solution.

The first inkling the allied prime ministers and Colonel House received of the transfer came on November 1, at the morning meeting of the Supreme War Council.²¹ Here Lloyd George read an intercepted Yugoslav wireless from Pola appraising them of the unforeseen development. Although Premier Orlando stated flatly that the armistice terms as wired to General Diaz the preceding night must stand regardless of who held the fleet, it was later agreed by the Supreme War Council to inform the Yugoslav authorities by wireless to hoist the white flag on the ex-Austrian naval units and proceed to Corfu.²² What action was to take place there was never determined, since the allies reached no decision on that point, and because the expected vessels never did reach Corfu although the Yugoslavs had acknowledged the allied invitation to sail. The

21. Aldrovandi Marescotti, Guerra Diplomatica, (Milan, 1937), p.200. It can be proved that the Italian naval command knew of the transfer on October 31, that is, some twenty-four hours earlier. (U.S. naval attache Rome, to Naval Intelligence, November 3, 1918. Naval Records, File VA.). This knowledge did not deter the Italians from forcing the harbor of Pola on the night of October 31 by means of a special torpedo-like apparatus called the Mignatta, and sinking the flagship of the ex-Austrian navy -- the Viribus Unitis -- together with a large transport. The incident is worth noting here because it shows that the action, unanimously hailed as brilliant by all naval historians who touched upon the matter, was neither honorable nor brilliant. It was certainly no feat to force a harbor held by Yugoslavs who had relaxed all vigilance because for them the war was over.

22. Admiral Benson to Sims, November 2, 1918. Naval Records, File VA.

confusion can more readily be appreciated if it is remembered that the Italian supplement to the armistice directed the ships to Venice, but that the allied statesmen decided that the entire navy in Yugoslav possession should proceed to Corfu, and to cap it all, the Allied Naval Council, having no knowledge of the supplement or the ministerial decision, ordered the same units to Pola.

As soon as House learned of the naval transfer he cabled the news to President Wilson and awaited instructions.²³ That same day Wilson replied, advising "the most liberal possible concurrence in [the] transfer of actual armed force to Yugoslav authorities as the best possible proof of our utter good faith towards them."²⁴ Had the disputed fleet reached Corfu it is possible that the President might have intervened strenuously in favor of the Yugoslavs, but as early as November 3 a series of intercepted messages from Pola reiterated the refrain that the Yugoslavs were "unable to put to sea with the ex-Austrian navy"²⁵ because adequate personnel was unavailable.

23. House to Wilson, Paris to Washington, November 1, 1918. Yale House Collection, Sterling Library, Yale University.

24. Wilson to House, Washington to Paris, November 1, 1918. Woodrow Wilson Collection, File VIII, Box 5, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress. A portion of this note is printed in R.S. Baker, Woodrow Wilson: life and letters, (8 vols., N.Y., 1927-39), VIII, 542. The copy of this note in the House Collection is inaccurate due to garbled transmission.

25. U.S. naval attache, Rome, to Office of Naval Intelligence, November 3, 1918. Naval Records, File VA.

The situation remained obscure for several days, and is remarkable for the number of frantic appeals sent by various Yugoslav committees to the allies singly and collectively, principally pleading²⁶ for the exclusion of Jugoslavia from the Austrian armistice terms. When it became evident that the Yugoslavs were reluctant to deliver their navy at Corfu, and were unable to do so had they wished, and after the French Minister of Marine had already directed his admiral at Corfu to intern under allied supervision all elements of the ex-Austrian navy stationed at Cattaro,²⁷ the statesmen in Paris on November 10, reached a belated decision. Although Paris remained uncertain as to the actual location of the navy, it was agreed to intern all warships flying the Yugoslav flag in Adriatic ports where allied surveillance could be maintained.²⁸ The vessels were to be placed to the allied account, and the Peace Conference charged with their ultimate disposal. In reality this meant that Italian opposition to Yugoslav ownership of the navy had triumphed; that all ex-Austrian naval units were demanded for surrender instead of the

26. For example, Note du Conseil National de Zagreb aux Gouvernements de l'Entente, November 3, 1918, printed in P.H. Michel, La Question de l'Adriatique, (Paris, 1933), p.285. The Otter Cliffs station in Maine picked up a Yugoslav appeal addressed directly to President Wilson. Dated November 3, it requested American aid against Italy. (Woodrow Wilson Collection, File II-A, Box 46.)
27. French Minister of Marine to Admiral Provence, Paris to Corfu, November 8, 1918. Yale House Collection
Cattaro, second largest of the Austrian naval bases, lay about 300 miles south of Pola. At this time Cattaro contained three battleships, nine cruisers, twenty-six torpedo boats, seven submarines, and some thirty auxiliaries. (Bullard to Benson, November 9, 1918. Yale House Collection.)
28. Clemenceau to French Ambassador in Rome, for Orlando; November 10, 1918. Yale House Collection.

several named in the armistice. Obviously such a policy entailed allied acceptance of the Italian position that Yugoslavia, being then an unrecognized state, could legally own no navy, and hence the Austrian transfer was void.

Completely ignorant of the decision reached by his political superiors, Admiral Bullard arrived at the naval base of Pola on November 13, and found that Italian naval and military forces had assumed full control there nine days before. The city together with harbor works and fortifications lay in Italian hands, and from the trucks of the "Jugoslav navy" flew the Italian flag.²⁹ Naval officers representing France and Britain were already on the scene and, without more ado, Bullard met with them aboard the Italian flagship lying in the roads in a series of conferences under the presidency of the Italian vice-admiral in charge of the occupation. These meetings to organize the enforcement of the naval armistice terms occupied a period of two days.³⁰ Apparently still unnotified of the decision taken in Paris by their political chiefs to treat the Jugoslav navy as if it were Austrian, the committee of admirals on its own initiative tentatively adopted a similar viewpoint, and brushed aside the protests of the Jugoslav admiral present. The committee agreed that all Jugoslav naval and military personnel in the area should be demobilized by November 20, and that the United States would be given charge of the ex-Austrian battleships Radetzky and

29. Acting for France, Britain, and the United States, Clemenceau without result protested the Italian usurpation of the ex-Austrian navy anchored at Pola, calling it an "act contrary to the engagements entered into." (Clemenceau to Orlando, November 6, 1918. Yale House Collection).

30. A full, although colored account of the proceedings may be found in a report submitted by Vice Admiral Cagni, commander at Pola, to Admiral Di Revel, Italian chief of naval staff and dated November 15, 1918. (Naval Records, File VA 1)

Zrinyi which, together with two torpedo boats, were to be taken to Spalato for internment by American naval crews. Then the discussions foundered on an exceedingly sharp snag; the supplement which Italy had slipped into the armistice. Admiral Cagni attempted to organize the armistice along the lines of the supplement, but his colleagues on the committee, particularly Bullard, refused "to recognize the delegation of power"³¹ which that document assumed. Having reached an impasse, Cagni adjourned the conference and the American, British, and French admirals hastened to Venice where another series of meetings opened on November 16, this time under the presidency of the Italian chief of naval staff, Admiral Di Revel.

Here the admirals organized themselves into the Naval Committee for the Adriatic, in accord with the directive issued by the Allied Naval Council in Paris on November 5, and by an act of courtesy elected Di Revel chairman.³² Discussion at first centered about the supplement, but had to be postponed because no compromise was in sight. The surcharged atmosphere dissipated somewhat when a message from the allied political chiefs in Paris directed the meetings into different channels. This despatch ordered the Committee to make no distinction "between those ships designated in the armistice to be surrendered, and those to be disarmed;"³³ that is, to take over the entire ex-Austrian navy in the name of the allies. It thus required almost a week to bring the Supreme Council's decision

31. Admiral Cagni to Di Revel, November 15, 1918. Naval Records, File VA.

32. Admiral Niblack, Memorandum on the Adriatic, n.d. Naval Records, File VA.

33. Admiral Benson to Secretary of the Navy Daniels, January 2, 1919. Naval Records, File C-56-20.

of November 10 to fruition.³⁴ After issuing instructions to their naval subordinates "to disarm immediately and make immobile all the late Austro-Hungarian ships,"³⁵ the Committee was adjourned by Di Revel to gather ten days later in Rome.

In the ancient Roman capital the admirals convened on November 26, and held conferences for three days.³⁶ They reached a consensus on a number of important points. First came the settlement of the problem associated with the Italian supplement to the armistice. A directive from the Allied Naval Council in Paris resolved the issue by ordering the supplement annulled, and Orlando so informed Di Revel to the latter's obvious chagrin.³⁷ This did not mean that the Jugoslavs would regain possession of the fleet, but repudiation of the protocol did limit Italy's exclusive policy toward the hotly contested naval units.

34. See above, p. 20

35. Admiral Beason to Daniels, January 2, 1919. Naval Records, File C-56-20.

36. On November 25, four Japanese destroyers arrived in the Adriatic to assist in the execution of the armistice terms. Although a Japanese naval officer was present at the Rome meetings he was not given a chair on the Committee and, finding themselves studiously ignored, the Japanese subsequently left. [Memorandum of Adriatic Committee, November 30, 1918. Naval Records, File VA.].

37. Clemenceau had already informed the Italian government that "the allies did not designate [Italian] plenipotentiaries [to sign the armistice] and a protocol which was never communicated to them is nonexistent." [Foreign Minister Pichon to Orlando, undated, but about November 8. Yale House Collection.].

The most significant step taken by the Committee was the division of the eastern Adriatic littoral into four occupation zones under authority derived from articles three and four of the armistice.³⁸ These provinces were to be held in the name of the allies until the Peace Conference determined their future sovereignty and traced post-war boundaries. Britain received the northernmost area with the city of Fiume; to the south Italy had already established an impregnable position in northern Dalmatia by virtue of the Treaty of London, and the Committee, faced by a fait accompli, confirmed this area as Italy's zone. The American zone of occupation consisted of central Dalmatia together with the numerous islands off its coast. On the north, at Cape Planka, the Italian zone was its boundary; some one hundred miles to the south, at the island of Sipan, the French zone began and extended to the Albanian frontier. Sebenice, Spalato, and Cattaro were the centers respectively of the Italian, American, and French occupation zones. It is worth noting that the Committee acted here on its own initiative, and the determination to divide the eastern Adriatic seaboard into allied zones of occupation came at an important time, because the region was in a chaotic state politically, and disorder there rampant. Allied military authorities had discussed the same problem without reaching a solution; in fact they were still arguing the matter late in December 1918,³⁹ long after the decision of the naval committee had been ratified by the statesmen in Paris. A zone

38. The proceedings of the Rome sessions have been pieced together chiefly from three documents: Admiral Niblack, Memorandum on the Adriatic, n.d.; Memorandum of Adriatic Committee, November 30, 1918; Progress Report, Benson to Daniels, January 2, 1919. All are to be found in the Naval Records, the first two File VA; the third, C-36-20.

39. See For. Rel., Paris Peace Conference, II, 211-216.

system may not have been the best possible solution, but the Committee acted swiftly in a time of crisis and tightened up the loose situation in the eastern Adriatic in the interests of stability and order. It is significant that the zone assigned to the United States coincided with the area marked out for expansion by Italy. Division of the Dalmatian seacoast into allied zones undoubtedly ⁴⁰ "prevented a complete Italian control of the coast."

The Adriatic Committee then proceeded to apportion the erstwhile Yugoslav navy among the allies on the basis that the naval units and materiel were enemy property. All vessels in the Italian zone were to be assembled at Pola; those in the French zone at Cattaro, and the American representative agreed that the two battleships and two torpedoboats allotted to the United States should be concentrated at Spalato. The ships, assembled in three different ports, were to remain under surveillance and control of the nation in whose zone of occupation they were located, but the other allies represented on the Committee could station officers aboard if they so desired. All these ex-Austrian men-of-war were to be held in trust for the allies pending final disposal by the Peace Conference.

It should be remarked that the British delegate, Rear Admiral Kiddle, refused a share of the Austrian ships, asserting that "the British Admiralty desires no occupation either of large ships or of groups of small ones." ⁴¹ While it is indisputable that the Admiralty was sufficiently busy in the North Sea supervising the

40. H. Temperley (ed.), Peace Conference, V, 123.

41. Memorandum of Adriatic Committee, Naval Records, File VA.

surrender of the German navy to wish no additional naval obligations elsewhere, evidence exists which seems to indicate that the British and Italians at this time were toying with the idea of a power play which would squeeze France and America out of the Adriatic.⁴² The basis of this contemplated diplomatic maneuver derived from shrewdly calculated national self-interest. It envisaged mutual Italo-British support to exclude the United States and France insofar as possible from naval arrangements in the Adriatic and North Sea. What happened falls outside the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to state that this informal, uncrystallized understanding between the British and Italian naval ministries helps explain why the Admiralty refused a portion of the ex-Austrian fleet, and why Britain later -- a strangely docile lion indeed -- meekly retreated from her zone at Fiume in the face of Italian aggressiveness.

Before concluding its sittings the Adriatic Committee conferred on the important question of allied administration in areas along the Adriatic littoral evacuated by Austro-Hungarian forces, and where irregular Yugoslav committees already exercised

42. For example the following: "I am aware...that the Italians were perfectly willing to accept any proposal of the British for a solution of the naval questions in the North Sea, so long as the British continued their policy of complete accord with the Italian views and methods in the Adriatic." (Admiral Benson to Admiral Sims, Paris to London, December 17, 1918. Naval Records, File U-UB). Admiral Benson, Chief of Naval Operations, had previously informed G.R. Train, U.S. naval attaché at Rome of an Italian proposal to the British Admiralty offering unobstructed passage to British warships to the northern Adriatic on the condition that French and American ships be denied transit rights. Benson and the French "took a very positive stand," and so this particular deal fell through. (Benson to Train, Paris to Rome, November 30, 1918. Naval Records, File U-UB.). Also see Sims to Benson, London to Paris, November 15, 1918, (Naval Records, File VD.) for British acquiescence in Italian military occupation beyond the Armistice line.

such civil and military authority as could be exerted under conditions of deplorable disorganization and disorder. The Committee opined that articles four and six ⁴³ of the armistice terms provided a requisite mandate for the establishment of allied naval governments in such territories. Having previously divided the eastern Adriatic coastline into zones of occupation, the distribution of naval governorships proved a simple matter. The naval officer commanding in the zone would also act as its governor, but local Yugoslav authorities would continue their functions subject to his control.

When the Committee disbanded on November 29, the mission of the allied naval representatives in the Adriatic had been defined as follows:

"...to take charge of all Austro-Hungarian floating material, preserve order, preserve the blockade, and see that the terms of the armistice were carried out, it being understood that the administration of the evacuated territories should be entrusted to the local authorities under the control of the Senior Naval Officer Present [in each zone]...." ⁴⁴

Recollecting the limited initial instructions received by Bullard when he embarked for the Adriatic it becomes readily apparent that after the Rome sessions the original mission expanded to embrace political objectives in the sense that naval administration of civil affairs constitutes political activity. However, it should be emphasized that at the end of November, 1918, military and political duties of the allied naval delegates in the Adriatic rested on an

43. See above, p.15

44. Admiral Niblack, Memorandum on the Adriatic.

interallied plans; that despite some divergence of opinion regarding ends and means among the Committee members they worked as a synchronized unit. The mission in which the United States participated as a full partner was strictly interallied at this point. Not until the following month, and then because of incontrovertible information testifying to Italy's sly and ruthless imperialism in the Adriatic, did the American concept of mission alter. It became in effect two missions; one interallied, the other purely American, designed to check Italy's advance at the expense of Jugoslavia. In a sense the two missions were antithetical, yet ample room existed, as will be seen, for interallied coöperation in political as well as naval affairs, and the vehicle for such important and indispensable coördination throughout remained the Adriatic Committee.

After the Rome sessions terminated on November 29, the allied admirals, with the exception of Di Revel, proceeded to their respective zones to begin the discharge of their duties as naval governors. Admiral Bullard journeyed first to Venice where he was piped aboard the U.S.S. Birmingham; then, on December 2, he took

43. It is worth recording that American policy in the Adriatic was conducted principally by the navy during November and December 1918. Admiral Bullard was its executor on the spot; his instructions were issued by Admiral Benson who maintained close contact with Colonel House in Paris. In turn, Colonel House kept in touch with the State Department and President Wilson. This arrangement by-passed Thomas N. Page, American Ambassador to Rome. Late in November, 1918, he complained to Secretary of State Robert Lansing that "no information is sent to me here as to our policy..." (Page to Lansing, Rome to Washington, November 26, 1918. For. Rel., Paris Peace Conference, II, 318.) This irregular situation shortly returned to normal as conditions became more stabilized.

46. Bullard had previously hoisted his flag on the Birmingham at Venice on November 30, 1918. (Admiral Benson's Notebooks, Naval Records, File U-VI.)

passage for Spalato, the capital of Dalmatia and the nerve center of the American zone of occupation. Scarcely had Bullard -- and for that matter his fellow delegates on the Adriatic Committee -- assumed charge of civil administration in Dalmatia when a despatch from Paris instructed him to collaborate with his colleagues in investigating allied violations of the armistice. In non-diplomatic language it meant scrutinizing Italian activities, a fact which Bullard shortly perceived. It is, therefore, the tense Adriatic situation, partially fomented and undeniably complicated by ill-considered Italian conduct, that we must next examine, because the results of the investigation determined the final evolution of the American mission in the Adriatic.

ADRIATIC DEVELOPMENTS, NOVEMBER - DECEMBER, 1918

No sooner had the armistice of Villa Giusti been signed than Italy began forcing naval and military units into the eastern Adriatic in the wake of departing Austrian armies. Italy proposed to entrench herself strongly in former Austrian territories as a safeguard against Yugoslav nationalism, and to fortify her diplomatic position at the peace table. From the Italian viewpoint of sacro egoismo it is comprehensible that fear and jealousy of Yugoslavia should exist. For years Austria had been the hereditary enemy and rival in the Adriatic; ⁴⁷ was Italy to relax supinely and

47. A significant commentary on the deep-seated hostility which existed between Italy and Austria is the fact that during all the years they were partners with Germany in the Triple Alliance, Austria consistently refused to permit Italian ships to visit Dalmatian ports. (Admiral Hiplack to Chief of Naval Operations, London, 20 October 1918. Naval Archives. File 1001 10 1)

watch a new competing power arise from the imperial collapse which Italian treasure and manpower had helped precipitate? That was far from her intention.⁴⁸ Even during the war anti-Yugoslav propaganda had circulated in Italy, and upon the conclusion of hostilities it expanded in volume and intensity under official direction. The Croats were "a brutal people"; the Yugoslavs as a whole were "composed of undesirable elements";⁴⁹ and there was a "civilization still semi-barbaric"⁵⁰ ran the refrain. Goaded on by imperialist dreams, and a fervent, understandable, desire to check a possible new rival, Italy started to infiltrate along the eastern Adriatic littoral waving, under the guise of policeman of the Adriatic, the armistice text as her warrant.

48. In the Italian Senate, Premier Orlando declared on December 14, 1918, that Italy could not demobilize, but must maintain her naval and military establishments in readiness. He added that the armistice had not diminished, but increased difficulties. (E.J. and C.B. Woodhouse, Italy and the Yugoslavs, Boston, 1920, pp. 171-72.)

49. C.R. Train, U.S. naval attache, Rome to Admiral Benson, November 25, 1918. Naval Records, File U-UB. Train quoted Admiral Di Revel, Italian Chief of Naval Staff.

50. Official Italian statement of Adriatic claims prepared by the Italian Naval Staff, handed to Lansing on January 9, 1919. For. Rel., Paris Peace Conference, I, 476 ff. As early as 1916 Commander Roncagli, an Italian naval spokesman wrote, "For Italy, in the Adriatic, there can be no half-measures: either dominate or be dominated." (The military problem of the Adriatic, Rome, 1916.). Sonnino's paper, the imperialist Giornale d'Italia took up this theme after the armistice, and denounced the Yugoslavs. (Intelligence Report, December 14, 1918. Naval Records, File C-10-h.).

The chaotic state of affairs in Yugoslavia facilitated Italian designs. Yugoslavia was but a name; none of the great powers seriously entertained repeated requests for early recognition. No strong central Yugoslav authority existed which could unaided offer effective resistance to Italy. The numerous irregular assemblies which mushroomed throughout the provinces as Austrian local government collapsed could not successfully cope even with immediate problems of revictualling, policing, and the like, nor could Serb troops and Yugoslav units of Austria's shattered armies, rationally think of resisting Italy's well-equipped battalions. No real unity existed in November and early December 1918 among the various Yugoslav committees. Instead, factional bickering erupted constantly, and a strong peasant party in Croatia seemed determined to frustrate national unification by insisting upon separate, independent statehood for that province. The terrific ravages of war, the uprooted people seeking employment when none was obtainable, and sustaining themselves with food in many regions procurable only by looting, added to the disorders and confusion produced by divided councils and weak authority. In many instances Yugoslav troops broke discipline and indulged in pillage. Such conditions were perhaps unavoidable under the circumstances, but they invited aggression; Yugoslavia in its formative period seemed likely to yield parts of its national territory to Italy. Yugoslav political leaders, and masses of the articulate population heartily distrusted and disliked Italy, not on traditional grounds of sentiment alone, but because Italy threatened their movement for national self-determination. A contemporary observer commented that their

feeling towards Italy was "uniformly bitter and contemptuous everywhere," and they regarded the Italians "as utterly and entirely commercial in their demands."⁵¹ So upon this nexus of fears, pretensions, and hatreds was predicated the real possibility of a disastrous conflict between imperialism and nationalism in the Adriatic.

Drunk with the victory which appeared so inconceivable after the rout of Caporetto in 1917, Italy following the armistice resented the interference of any third power in Adriatic waters which she regarded as an Italian lake. The naval command early in November, 1918, hastily despatched warships to occupy the strategic ex-Austrian islands lying off the Croatian and Dalmatian^{coasts}, and Italian troops were conveyed there during the course of the same month.⁵² Italy displayed an aggressive temper in the southern Adriatic. Ignoring Yugoslav protests Italian authorities rushed naval and military contingents to the important Montenegrin ports of Antivari and Dulcigno before the armistice was many days old. Their activities at Cattaro, site of the great Austrian naval base, were so extraordinary as to invite closer attention here, particularly since American forces were involved. As it noted that Cattaro, Antivari, and Dulcigno⁵³ were about two hundred miles south of Cape Planka,

51. Memorandum of an interview between Ambassador T.M. Page and Major Roger Perkins, February 18, 1918. Yale House Collection.

52. Ambassador Nelson Page to Lansing, December 8, 1918. For. Rel. Paris Peace Conference, I, 461.

53. These cities were eventually assigned to the French when the Adriatic Committee drew zones of occupation in the Rome meetings of November 26-29.

the southernmost limit of the armistice line, and hence legally outside the sphere of Italian occupation except for participation in operations clearly interallied in character. But legality apparently did not weigh too heavily with Italy in the circumstances.

On November 10, 1918, French, British, and Italian warships arrived at Cattaro, and the next day Unit "J", consisting of three American submarine chasers under Lieutenant-Commander Loftin, anchored in the harbor.⁵⁴ The French Admiral Gaubet, senior officer present, took possession of Cattaro in the name of the allies, but the Italians almost immediately undertook to squeeze out their allies by thrusting large numbers of Italian troops into the area. On November 15, they prepared to land two battalions at Cattaro. The Jugoslavs protested repeatedly that they were in no way hostile to a joint landing of allied forces, but they did object, and would resist if Italy acted alone.⁵⁵ The American and French naval commanders requested the Italians not to put troops ashore in view of the expressed misgivings of the inhabitants. This appeal was refused, and in the end the allies were forced to detail some sailors to

54. A. Thomasi, La Guerre Navale dans l'Adriatique, Paris, 1925, p. 204.

55. Special Agent Dodge, Corfu, to Lansing, (For. Rel., Paris Peace Conference, II, 288 f2)^{FOIA b7C}, Jugoslav sentiments on allied and Italian occupations in general, with no reference to the Cattaro landings which had not yet occurred. So dynamic and fluid was the situation in the southern Adriatic about the middle of November that Dodge added, "Events are moving on so fast that it seems useless to report them by mail."

disembark with the Italian battalions to give the appearance of an interallied landing and thereby pacify the Jugoslavs. In this way the French, British, and Americans yielded to Italian stubbornness, but tastfully avoided what might have developed into a pitched battle between Italians and Jugoslavs.⁵⁶ Only five days later Italian transports stood into Cattaro with three thousand additional troops aboard, together with an American battalion.⁵⁷ The Italians sent their troops ashore to the unconcealed chagrin of the French, under the specious pretense that the occupation was interallied. The use of American soldiers whom the Jugoslavs trusted was simply an Italian device on this and other occasions to saturate some Jugoslav area with Italian forces in the hope of driving out the allies or at least reducing their influence in that region.

56. Progress Report, Admiral Benson to Secretary of the Navy Daniels, January 2, 1919. Naval Records, File C-56-20. Special Agent Dodge reported on November 14, that the situation at Cattaro was "critical, as the Italians insist upon landing -- and that [the] Yugo-slavs will probably resist unless [the] other allies of the United States forces also land." (Special Agent Dodge, Corfu, to Lansing, November 14, 1918. FOR. REL. PARIS Peace Conference, II, 294.)

Allied representatives went ashore to observe the landing, and personally to reassure the populace that it did not mean an Italian occupation. The colonel in charge of Italian troops was requested, at Admiral Gaubet's instance, to march off his units in small groups, and to avoid any demonstration. Instead, the Italians indulged in considerable ceremony and paraded their colors while their band played the Italian national anthem. Allied protests evoked an apology from the Italian Admiral Mola, but that did not erase the impression received by the Jugoslavs. (Memorandum, Office of Naval Records and Library to A.C.D., August 16, 1943).

57. Progress Report, Benson to Daniels, Paris to Washington, January 2, 1919. Naval Records, File C-56-20.

By what dispensation could Italy order about and employ American troops for the advancement of her own selfish ends? To explain this situation it is necessary to digress a bit. In response to urgent Italian solicitations after the crushing defeat at Caporetto, the War Department detailed the 332nd infantry, 83rd division, with attached medical and supply units to the Italian front in July, 1918.⁵⁸ The regiment was placed at the disposal of the Italian high command which could direct its movements through Chief of the American mission to Italy, Major General Charles Treat at Rome, and Colonel Wallace who retained tactical command of the American troops. It was a generous gesture on the part of the United States to place a contingent of its forces under the command of a weaker ally than in desperate straits. Among the principal missions of the regiment were those of elevating Italian morale and depressing that of the enemy by building up the illusion that large American units had arrived in Italy and were preparing to enter the line.⁵⁹ This mission was achieved by breaking up the regiment into its

58. American Battle Monuments Commission, American Armies and Battlefields in Europe, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1933, p. 439.

59. As an indication of success, the American naval forces hundreds of miles to the south on the Otrante Barrage had heard vague rumors at this time that as many as five American divisions, that is, about 100,000 men, were on the Italian front. (R. Hill Holland, The Splinter Fleet of the Otrante Barrage, N.Y., 1936, p. 254).

constituent battalions and marching the men about in exposed positions behind the Piave river front with different articles of uniform and equipment. Thus it appeared to uninformed friend and foe alike that numerous contingents of American infantry, artillery, machine-gunners and the like were stationed immediately to the rear of the Italian forward positions. Of fighting the regiment experienced little, for it contacted the enemy on the day the armistice was signed.⁶⁰ Italy continued to command the regiment during the armistice period; it was under this arrangement that she ordered the second battalion to embark for Cattaro and participate in the Italian landing.

No sooner had the Italians established themselves at Cattaro than they proposed to push troops inland across the frontier into Montenegro and occupy Cettigne, the capital of that kingdom. Italy's objective was to support the king of Montenegro who rejected the idea of union with Jugoslavia against the wishes of a substantial portion of his subjects currently under the sway of Jugoslav nationalists. It was just part of the Italian program to hinder Jugoslav unification; to promote the establishment of several small independent states instead of a large nation, and in this manner dominate the Jugoslavs in the future with no danger whatever to Italy's own interests. Serbian⁶¹

60. American Armies and Battlefields in Europe, pp. 430-31.

61. Special Agent Dodge, Corfu, to Lansing, November 14, 1918, (For. Rel. Paris Peace Conference, II, 294), unseasonably exposed the Italian plans more than a week before they attempted to occupy Cettigne.

forces had garrisoned Cattigne and other strategic points in Montenegro early in November, 1918, and Serb officers as well as Montenegrin civil authorities warned the Italians in the middle of that month that they would resist aggression. Consequently, Italy dared not move and so to precipitate hostilities, for her allies, particularly the French, were observing the situation closely. Instead, the Italians decided to employ American troops then at Cattaro, and everywhere welcomed by Jugoslavs, to effect an occupation of the Montenegrin capital. So on November 23, they ordered two American companies to march towards Cattigne in column with two similar Italian units. ⁶² En route, some Serb officials approached Major Scanlon, commanding officer of the American companies, and explained the political circumstances surrounding the Italian putsch. Thereupon the major disregarded Italian instructions, and promptly returned his

62. The American battalion was garrisoned aboard the Italian hospital ship Argentina, it being the vessel which had transported them to Cattaro. Italian orders to the American officer commanding the unit were to report to the senior Italian officer at that port. It so happened that Admiral Mola was senior officer, hence the American battalion came under Italian naval command, and this was certainly a peculiar situation when it is remembered that the American regiment had originally been detailed not to the Italian navy, but to the army. Now it is significant that Mola refused to permit the American soldiers to disembark when they reached Cattaro on November 20, but three days later, taking advantage of the absence of the battalion's commanding officer, the Italian admiral suddenly ordered two companies off the ship to march forward to Cattigne. (Memorandum, Office of Naval Records and Library to A.C.B., August 16, 1943).

men to Cattaro. The Italian infantry managed to reach the frontier, but discouraged by the gunfire which greeted them, followed the Americans back to their base. Anxious to recoup their lost prestige, the Italians planned further excursions against Cattaro, but were eventually dissuaded by the allied officers at Cattaro. Hence, this particular Italian effort to use American troops as a political weapon failed, but the second battalion was not withdrawn from Cattaro.⁶³

Italian aggressiveness at Cattaro, and their obvious attempt to eliminate the allies from that point resulted in a sharp verbal collision between Admiral Di Revel and Admiral Batye of the French navy at the Rome meetings (November 26-29) of the Adriatic Committee described on previous pages. Charges and counter-charges of bad faith hurtled back and forth, and when it became evident that no agreement was in sight, the Committee referred the matter to the Supreme Council in Paris. After a discussion among the political chiefs, Sonnino found it expedient to order the withdrawal of all Italian forces from

63. The above account of the Cattaro expedition has been collated principally from two reports which do not entirely agree on the facts. They are: Charge in Serbia, Dodge, to the Acting Secretary of State, Polk, Belgrade to Washington, December 18, 1918, (For. Rel., Paris Peace Conference, II, 356-58.), and Ambassador Nelson Page to Lansing, November 29, 1918, Rome to Washington, (ibid, 316-17). In alluding to this incident, H. Temperley, Peace Conference, IV, 202, states that "The facts are exceedingly obscure, and it is doubtful if they are known to any living persons." Passions certainly ran high on the Montenegrin frontier, and it may be that the author is correct.

64

Gattaro on December 2, 1918. Although the order was later modified to permit some Italian troops to remain, no evidence has been discovered to indicate that they subsequently tried to oust the French from the zone assigned them by the Adriatic Committee.
65

It was not only at Gattaro that Italians demonstrated their imperialist and uncooperative attitude. When the American submarine chaser No. 342 put in at Port Lesina, Lesina island, the Italian port officer instructed the American commander to keep his men aboard ship. The "342" intended to remain only overnight, December 5/6, 1918, but during that night three different Italian officers arrived to hint that the Americans
66
leave immediately. To cap it all the island did not even

64. Nelson Page to Lansing, Rome to Washington, December 4, 1918, For. Rel., Paris Peace Conference, II, 320-21. On the threshold of his career as a publicist Virginia Gayda expressed extreme Italian anti-French sentiments in "The Adriatic problem and the peace conference," Fortnightly Review, March, 1919, pp. 473-91.

65. Ensign H. W. Blumenthal, Commanding officer of the U.S. chaser No. 80 was instructed by Admiral Bullard on December 1, 1918, to assume the duties of Senior U.S. naval officer at Gattaro, (Naval Archives, File 28766-165). His mission was to assist the allied forces in carrying out the naval armistice terms.

66. C.W. Esham, Commanding Officer U.S.S.C. 342 to Admiral Bullard, December 6, 1918. Naval Records, File VA.

Raymond Millholland offers an inaccurate version of this incident in The Splinter Fleet, pp. 256-57. Millholland was Chief Machinist Mate on the S.C. 225 which for some obscure reason he calls the S.C. IX4 in his book. Although the S.C. 225 was not at Lesina at this time, Millholland confidently places it there with himself aboard on December 5, 1918, and states that upon Italian instructions to leave, the chaser cleared for action. The situation actually was not quite so desperate.

belong to Italy, but Italian warships rode in the harbor, and troops were on duty ashore. Not long after this incident a flotilla of American submarine chasers together with the mother ship U.S.S. Leonidas, all under the command of Captain Nelson, stopped off at the island of Curzola on the afternoon of December 15. The Americans received a great ovation from the inhabitants who paraded the quay with their band, waving Serbian and American flags. This demonstration was entirely friendly, and leave was granted American officers and men to go ashore. Just as the liberty parties landed, ubiquitous Italian troops seized the banners, and, in riot formation dispersed the crowd, composed mostly of women and children, at the point of the bayonet. Wishing to avoid trouble, Captain Nelson ordered his ships to up anchor and proceed elsewhere without delay. ⁶⁷ In this way Italians broke up a demonstration given in honor of Americans, apparently because such enthusiastic manifestations might quickly spread, and before long assume a political significance which would make it more difficult for Italy to annex desirable regions in Dalmatia. Like Lesina, the island of Curzola was not under permanent Italian sovereignty, but only temporarily and unilaterally occupied by them. Such incidents, which need not be multiplied here, illustrate the exclusive policy which the Italian naval and military commands undertook to follow, and how discourteous and inconsiderate was their attitude towards the

67. Memorandum, Office of Naval Records and Library to A.C.D., August 16, 1943.

ally that in the final analysis had made an Adriatic victory possible.

Aggressive and unscrupulous as were the Italians in the south, their conduct was even more so in the north Adriatic in this early post-armistice period. Italian warships occupied Trieste on November 3,⁶⁸ a day before the armistice went into effect. A naval squadron under Admiral Cagni occupied the city and naval base of Pola two days later, and, following a policy of ruthless Italianization, deported, beat, and discriminated against the Slav inhabitants of the province of Istria in a calculated movement which shortly reached the proportions of a reign of terror. It is, however, to Italian activities in Fiume -- concerning which so much ink has been spilt -- that we now turn for an example of Italian conduct and the further embroilment of American troops.

Fiume had been annexed by Hungary in the Ausgleich of 1868, but was assigned to Croatia in the Treaty of London of 1915. Hungary sedulously nursed Italian sentiments in Fiume during the time the city was under its sovereignty to counteract Croat nationalism, and throughout the war a Hungarian garrison was stationed there. Towards the end of October, 1918, some Croat troops appeared to disarm the garrison and hoist the Croat

68. The Italian Navy in the World War, 1915-1918, Appendix, Chart No. 2. Published by the Historical Section of the Office of the Chief of Staff of the Royal Italian Navy, Rome, 1927.

national flag. ⁶⁹ On November 4, an Italian naval squadron under Admiral Rainer stood into Fiume harbor ⁷⁰ seeking to occupy the city but was prevented from doing so by the Croats. A conflict now developed between Italian and Croat, that is to say Yugoslav, elements within the city. The former appealed to Italy for annexation, but the Yugoslavs requested the presence of a British cruiser to act as mediator. Racial feeling ran high on both sides; finally Admiral Rainer ordered marine detachments ashore on the night of November 9, in an effort to dislodge the Croat troops and support the Italians inside the city. The marines were followed by an Italian infantry battalion on November 11, which proceeded to disarm the Croat forces. ⁷¹ Four days later a Serb battalion appeared on the scene, and the resulting tension between Italians and Serbs expressed itself in "many incidents of violence." ⁷² Admiral Rainer demanded the immediate evacuation of Fiume by Yugoslav forces, but his ultimatum was rejected. Negotiations followed, and on November 17, the Yugoslav units withdrew to an outlying district upon Rainer's promise not to land additional troops in the city for

69. J. Buchan (ed.), Yugoslavia, London, 1923, pp. 240-41.

70. The Italian Navy in the World War, 1915-18. Appendix, Chart No. 2.

71. Nelson Page to Lansing, Rome to Washington, November 18, 1918; For. Rel., Paris Peace Conference, II, 296-97.

72. Nelson Page to Lansing, Rome to Washington, November 16, 1918; ibid., II, 339-40.

three days. ⁷³ No sooner had the Yugoslavs departed than the Italian general in the vicinity, Marzano, repudiated Rainex's agreement, and marched considerable numbers of Italian soldiers into Fiume. ⁷⁴ This dishonorable act naturally increased the bitterness, and created an electric atmosphere. Rioting mounted in the city. ⁷⁵ In order to calm the excited Yugoslavs, and speciously to grace the occupation with an interallied character the Italian command ordered the third battalion of the American 332nd regiment to Fiume where it entered on November 19. ⁷⁶

In this way did Fiume pass under Italian control, nor did Italy later make any gesture at recalling her troops when the British were assigned Fiume as their occupation zone by the Adriatic Committee late in the month of November. For their part, the British on the spot appeared willing enough to retire from Fiume whatever the attitude of London, and allow the Italians to dominate the city and its environs. Italy employed American troops at Fiume to advance her own political interests just as she did at Cattaro, and at the time of the abortive expedition to Cattigne. When the French government protested

73. Admiral Bullard to Admiral Benson, Fiume to Paris, December 25, 1918; *ibid.*, II, 339-40.

74. *Ibid.* Also see J. Buchan (ed.), *Jugoslavia*, p. 241, and the general account in R. Albrecht-Garré, *Italy at the Paris Peace Conference*, p. 51.

75. For the acute situation in Fiume at this time see Fox, *Poland. Paris Peace Conference*, II, 296-97, 303, 331-32.

76. Admiral Bullard to Benson, Venice to Paris, undated, *ibid.*, p. 340-41.

against unilateral Italian action in Fiume, Premier Orlando in rebuttal solemnly observed that American contingents had accompanied the Italian troops, hence the operation was a legitimate interallied occupation. ⁷⁷ It was deception transparently simple that the Italians were endeavoring to put over on the United States and the other allies.

However, the American and French delegates in the Adriatic keenly scrutinized Italian methods and aims, nor did they neglect to report them in detail to their political superiors in Paris and Washington. A despatch sent by Admiral Bullard which was promptly transmitted to President Wilson late in November, 1918, bluntly stated that:

"Italian authorities have gone much farther than necessary preserving life and property or than demanded by the terms of [the] armistice and Fiume has [the] appearance [of a] permanent Italian occupation. It appears [that] American troops are being used to promote rather than curb Italian activities and our army representative probably has not definite instructions. Army officials are dominated by Italians."⁷⁸

This report to the President precipitated a major crisis in connection with the American regiment, and therefore merits closer examination.

77. Colonel Edward House to Lansing, Paris to Washington, November 20, 1918, For. Rel., Paris Peace Conference, IX, 303-04.

78. Admiral Bullard to Benson, Rome to Paris, November 26, 1918. Woodrow Wilson Collection, Peace Conference Material.

On November 18, 1918, Dr. Korosec, president of the Yugoslav National Council of Zagreb appealed to Colonel House for American troops "to occupy strategic points, and points where trouble was feared because of the want of sympathy between Yugoslavs and occupying Italian troops."⁷⁹ Less than a week previously Premier Orlando had made an identical request asking for additional American units to reinforce the 332nd regiment. Thus Yugoslavs and Italians alike sought American soldiers, each, of course, for different reasons. Colonel House forwarded Dr. Korosec's appeal to President Wilson on November 18, with the recommendation that it be approved. The next day Wilson cabled his acquiescence stating that the presence of American soldiers in the disputed areas seemed to him "essential to a peaceful settlement."⁸⁰ House himself was anxious to see American troops along the Adriatic littoral because he felt they would exercise a moderating and stabilizing influence.⁸¹

79. House to Lansing for President Wilson, November 18, 1918; Woodrow Wilson Collection, File IX, Box 4.

80. President Wilson to House, Washington to Paris, November 19, 1918, *ibid.*

81. Early in November, 1918, House had protested to Orlando the occupation by Italy of Yugoslav territory along the London Treaty line and consented "only upon the explicit promise that this territory should have the same status as the territory to be occupied under the terms of the German armistice." (House to Lansing for President Wilson, Paris to Washington, November 11, 1918, For. Rel., Paris Peace Conference, II, 287.). The Italians were one step ahead of the Colonel. They had drafted the armistice terms so that the armistice line coincided with the London Treaty line. Consequently it was legal for them to occupy all such territories within the line, and no protest, however strong, could alter the technical correctness of their legal position. The Yugoslavs simply wasted time in similar protests. (See *ibid.*, p. 291).

Colonel House next approached the French and British governments to inquire whether they would object if American troops engaged in occupation duties in the Adriatic. Foreign minister Pichon enthusiastically approved the mission on November 23,⁸² and House cabled the President to that effect the next day, having some twenty-four hours previously informed Wilson of Britain's affirmative reply.⁸³ Meanwhile Colonel House had invited General Pershing to present his views regarding the transportation of American units to the Adriatic. Although not fully cognizant of the situation Pershing opposed the step, but thought "that the troops already in Italy [the 332nd] might be used for occupying the discussed territory."⁸⁴ The Italians, however, did not wait for the completion of House's elaborate diplomatic exercise, but, as already described, had rushed an American battalion to Fiume on November 19, and another to Cattaro the following day. As pointed out in previous pages the Italians did not employ the American soldiers along lines which President

82. Pichon to House, November 23, 1918. Yale House Collection.

83. House to Lansing for President Wilson, Paris to Washington, November 24, 1918. Woodrow Wilson Collection, File IX, Box 5. In his letter to house, Pichon stated that the French government "can only regard with pleasure the despatch of American troops to the [ex-Austro-Hungarian] territories where they will find French detachments beside them." France was Italy's rival in the Mediterranean, and was eager to take any reasonable step, and some perhaps not so reasonable, to limit Italian power.

84. House to Lansing, for President Wilson, Paris to Washington, December 2, 1918, For. Rel., Paris Peace Conference, II, 319.

Wilson or Colonel House would have approved, but used them to further their own particular interests, and the Yugoslavs, in requesting House for American troops, unwittingly played into Italy's hands.

Scarcely had the flurry of diplomatic activity connected with the American regiment subsided when Admiral Bullard's despatch of November 26⁸⁵ describing Italy's political use of the troops arrived in Paris. This dropped a bombshell into all previous arrangements. Forthwith communicated to President Wilson the message produced an immediate reaction, for on November 28, Secretary of War Newton Baker ordered General Pershing to recall the American regiment to his command.⁸⁶ Knowing the culpability of their activities, the Italians apparently anticipated some such American move, because on the very day (November 26) that Admiral Bullard sent his despatch the Italian government officially requested the United States not to recall the American regiment, and stated that "such a withdrawal would have [a] bad political effect upon [the] Yugoslav situation from [the] Italian standpoint."⁸⁷ How true that was the Italians

85. Quoted above, p. 44

86. The order appears in House to Lansing for President Wilson, Paris to Washington, December 2, 1918. Woodrow Wilson Collection, File IX-A, Box 5.

87. Ambassador Page to Lansing, Rome to Washington, November 26, 1918, For. Rel., Paris Peace Conference, IX, 314. On November 27, Foreign Minister Sonnino again requested Page to forward to the American government an appeal for the retention of the regiment. Sonnino at this time asked for even more troops. (Ibid.: Same to same, November 27, 1918.)

fully realized, but it was the usual double-talk designed to create a favorable impression in American circles while the real motive lay concealed. Unaware of this Italian byplay Pershing obeyed his instructions from Baker, and had in fact directed General Treat to assemble the troops at an Italian port preparatory to their embarkation for the United States when Colonel House intervened. In a cable marked "secret for the President," House on December 2, 1918, advised Wilson to reverse his position and countermand the order recalling the regiment because it "might create an unfortunate impression in Italy".⁸⁸ Having assured himself that only the one regiment was involved,⁸⁹ the President, after weighing House's recommendation, decided to cancel his directive to the War Department in the interests of interallied unity. So Italy gained the laurels of a minor diplomatic victory, and the American regiment remained on the Adriatic station for the time being.

Although Colonel House had advised the President to reconsider his directive recalling the regiment, he did not underestimate Admiral Bullard's information of November 26, and he remained by no means satisfied with the peculiar situation in the Adriatic. Through Admiral Benson he caused Captain Gherardi, U.S.N., to be sent to Paris from the United States, and contemplated

88. House to Lansing, secret for the President, Paris to Washington, December 2, 1918. Woodrow Wilson Collection, File IX-A, Box 5.

89. General Payton March, Chief of Staff, to President Wilson, November 30, 1918. Ibid, File II-A, Box 87.

entrusting him with a confidential mission into that agitated
 sea.⁹⁰ Circumstances favored this plan. French naval and
 diplomatic representatives had throughout the month of November
 reported on Italian Adriatic activities to their government.
 When the allied premiers met in London together with their
 foreign ministers for a series of pre-peace conference discussions
 on December 2,⁹¹ the French charged the Italians with bad faith
 in the Adriatic, and enumerated a specific list of accusations.
 The Italians were compelled to agree to the establishment of
 a "special commission of four admirals to inquire and make a
 report to the allied Governments showing clearly what is [the]
 existing situation [in the Adriatic] and what measures it is
 necessary to take to safeguard against disagreement or trouble
 in any territories of [the] Adriatic occupied or to be occupied
 by Allied forces...."⁹² Apprized of this resolution, Colonel
 House readily concurred in it, since an investigating commission
 neatly blended into his own plans. During the morning of December
 7, he held a conference with Admiral Benson and Captain Gherardi,
 and here House and Benson charged Gherardi to proceed to the
 Adriatic, confer with Bullard, survey the situation, and report

90. House Diary. (Unpublished). Entry for December 7, 1918. Yale House Collection.

91. Colonel House did not attend because of illness.

92. Foreign Secretary Balfour to British Embassy, London to Washington, December 2, 1918. Yale House Collection.

93

back to Paris in person. Captain Gherardi was not a member of the investigating commission, for Benson appointed Bullard to that post; his mission was to conduct an independent American investigation while the interallied one was in progress.

On December 10, 1918, Gherardi reached Spalato in the American Zone where he met Admiral Bullard, lately returned from the Rome sessions of the Adriatic committee (November 26-29), and just beginning to concern himself with matters of civil administration in Dalmatia. From Gherardi, Bullard received brief written and oral instructions sent by Admiral Benson outlining his duties as investigator. By December 10, the allies had named representatives to the investigation commission; Admiral Kiddle for the British, Admiral Retze for the French, and Admiral Mola (substituting for Di Revel) for the Italians. Together with Bullard these delegates composed the already discussed Adriatic Committee, hence, in addition to their previous functions they were now charged with surveying conditions in the Adriatic. The Adriatic Committee, therefore, operated in a dual capacity. Aboard the U.S.S. Birmingham, Bullard and Gherardi on December 11, steamed to the north Adriatic; Bullard to meet with his colleagues, Gherardi to scrutinize developments on his own initiative.

The Adriatic Committee assembled first at Fiume where the tension remained unabated. Bullard and Gherardi arrived there

93. House Diary. Entry for December 7, 1918. Yale House Collection Wrote House: "Gherardi is one of the most intelligent and trustworthy men I know."

94

from Venice on the U.S.S. Gregory at sunset, December 14, and after looking over affairs for less than two days, Admiral Bullard was so unfavorably impressed with Italian conduct that in a report to Benson on December 16, he stated that although his instructions were general and contained "no details whatsoever" he believed none were necessary.⁹⁵ Bullard realized that his superior had not drafted a detailed directive because it was aimed at Italy, an associated power of the United States, but that he, Bullard, was expected to read between the lines. The Adriatic Committee found Fiume under the military governorship of General Gradioli, and completely dominated by the Italians who employed coercion and resorted to all kinds of propaganda. Food sent from Zagreb to needy Yugoslavs in the Fiume area was requisitioned for Italians, and the schools closed to house Italian troops. Minor street fighting occasionally flared into serious riots. The Italians had barracked the officers of the American battalion in luxurious quarters aboard an Austrian steamer "to keep them under obligation in every way."⁹⁶ Ashore, however, the American flag did not fly

94. The Birmingham remained in Venice to take on coal, and later proceeded to Fiume under Bullard's orders.

95. Admiral Bullard to Benson, Fiume to Paris, December 16, 1918. For. Rel. Paris Peace Conference, II, 352-33.

96. Admiral Bullard to Benson, Fiume to Paris, December 16, 1918. Ibid., -327-31.

above the barracks which garrisoned American soldiers, so Bullard instructed Colonel Wallace to hoist the stars and stripes.

Wrote Bullard:

"Twelve thousand Italian troops, and a battalion of American troops may compose an Inter-allied army, but it looks to me as though it was a real Italian army."⁹⁷

The Adriatic Committee continued its inspection of the Fiume region until the latter part of December, when it removed to Venice where witnesses were called for interrogation. During this time the Italians did what they could to hinder the investigation, but they were unable to forestall the preparation of a report which, strongly influenced by the French and American point of view, condemned Italian activities in Fiume. This document not unreasonably insisted that Fiume, being the British zone of occupation, "must cease to be the object of the continued domination of the Italians," and urged that Italy evacuate her forces except for two battalions, to be reinforced by one battalion each of American, French, British, and Jugoslav troops. Admiral Mola as well as Admiral Di Revel retired from the Committee rather than sign the report, but it was nevertheless forwarded to the Supreme Council in Paris over the signatures of

97. Admiral Bullard to Benson, Fiume to Paris, December 16, 1918. For. Rel., Paris Peace Conference, II, 332-33. Actually one British and two French battalions were also in the vicinity, but were completely overshadowed by the mass of Italian troops.

the American, French, and British delegates. In Paris, Orlando and Sonnino apparently succeeded in tabling the report, because Italy continued to force troops into Fiume, and in early March, 1919, Clemenceau declared that "he had the worst recollections of a commission of four Admirals sent to Fiume some three months ago," and since the "Italian Admiral had refused to submit to the views of the majority...nothing had been achieved." Italian refusal to act in concert with her allies in effect eliminated the commission of inquiry which in its brief lifetime had proved it would be a source of embarrassment to Italy and her schemes. This may be counted as another minor diplomatic victory for Italy. However, before its complete demise, the investigation commission performed another inspection which will be considered in another connection. It must be emphasized that Italy did not succeed in destroying the effectiveness of the Adriatic Committee which remained the organ of interallied naval cooperation, but only in removing from it the additional function of investigation and report.

Obviously the interallied examination into conditions at Fiume accomplished nothing, but the independent American mission entrusted to Captain Gherardi produced significant results. Immediately upon his return to Paris, Gherardi presented a

98. Information concerning the contents of the report was obtained from Admiral Niblack, Memorandum on the Adriatic. The chairmanship of the Adriatic Committee fell to the Italian Admiral Rombo after Di Revel's resignation, but Rombo did not sign the condemnatory report.

99. Minutes, Council of Ten, March 7, 1919. Yale House Collection.

statement containing his observations to the American Peace Mission. Later that same day, December 23, General Tasker Bliss despatched the substance of Gherardi's comments to President Wilson.

"It is the unanimous opinion of the American Peace Mission that....the American troops are being used to further a policy of occupation and penetration.... It seems that the policy governing the use of this regiment has been to ensure the scattering of it so that at no time does it come, as a unit, under the control of its commander.... The result appears to be that the regiment is being employed not for legitimate military purposes but to further political aims." 100

Bliss recommended that for political reasons it would be inexpedient to withdraw the regiment, but that the President should issue a directive through General Pershing governing its use. President Wilson approved this advice, but no evidence has been found indicating that he ever drafted such a directive. Further reports of Italian intrigue reached the President through diplomatic channels ¹⁰¹ and, in apparent dismay, he wrote on January 9 that the situation "concerns matters unhappily accumulating with which I confess I do not know how to deal." ¹⁰² All this testimony served in the end to crystallize Wilson's

100. General Tasker Bliss to the President, December 23, 1918. For. Rel., Paris Peace Conference, II, 337-38.

101. For example see *ibid.*, II, 344-45.

102. *Ibid.*, II, 345.

attitude inflexibly against Italy, and before long he ordered
 American troops to withdraw from Fiume. ¹⁰³ In March, 1919,
 the entire regiment assembled at Genoa, and its last units
 embarked for the United States on April 3, 1919. ¹⁰⁴

The recall of the regiment was one result of Captain Gherardi's investigation. It concluded the serious and vexing problem of the political use of American soldiers by Italy to encroach upon Yugoslav territory. This entire episode strongly suggests why the occupation of Dalmatia was undertaken and carried out by American naval forces alone with no assistance from the army.

The reports on Italian Adriatic activities submitted by Admiral Bullard and Captain Gherardi to the American peace negotiators in Paris produced another important result. Due in large measure to that information the American mission in the Adriatic appreciably altered in character. It assumed a definite political color, and an American orientation which at times conflicted with its interallied aspects. During the initial phases of the Fiume inquiry Admiral Benson further defined the policy which Bullard was to follow in the Adriatic.

"In dealing with questions which arise as a result of [Yugoslav] efforts be guided by the general principles laid

103. Admiral Niblack, Memorandum on the Adriatic.

104. American Battle Monuments Commission, American Armies and Battlefields in Europe, p. 431.

down by the President. It is desired that our good offices be used to maintain order and assist local governments as necessary in adjusting matters local and international as they arise." 105

The "general principles" referred to Wilson's policy of national self-determination, and assistance to local governments meant aid to the Yugoslavs. This directive Benson couched in general terms because it was directed against Italy, a power friendly to the United States. Bullard, therefore, was to pursue an American program in addition to the interallied mission. It involved support to Jugoslavia against Italian attempts to prevent national unification, and consequently the United States acted not as a mediator since that presupposes neutrality on an issue, but as a Yugoslav partisan. Further confirmation of Italy's imperialist policy by Bullard and Gherardi, as already noted, reinforced the American attitude, and it is a significant fact that whereas Italian troops overran the British occupation zone and were present in the French, Admiral Bullard and his successors prevented, by a show of force when necessary, the landing of a single Italian soldier in the American zone of occupation. A statement made by President Wilson to Orlando and Sonnino on April 19, 1919, in the presence of Clemenceau and Lloyd George reaffirmed the position of the United States. Said Wilson, "If Italy had possessions in the

105. Admiral Benson to Bullard, Paris to Fiume, December 16, 1918. Naval Records, File VA.

Eastern Adriatic it would be a threat to world peace."

American policy, one of its instruments being the naval mission in the Adriatic, sought frankly to exclude Italy from that region in the interests of international stability.

Admiral Bullard had not long returned to Spalato from his duties of investigation at Fiume when he was relieved by Rear Admiral A.F. Niblack as commander of the United States Naval Detachment in the Adriatic and delegate on the Adriatic Committee. This occurred on January 22, 1919. Niblack's stay on the Adriatic station was of short duration; Rear Admiral Philip Andrews succeeded him on March 26, 1919, and retained the command until April 28, 1921, at which time the Adriatic Detachment was discontinued. Although Admiral Niblack performed commendably during his brief tour of duty at Spalato, and Bullard accomplished the arduous preliminary tasks that laid the foundations of the American mission in the Adriatic, it is with Admiral Andrews' name that the Dalmatian occupation is most intimately associated. For twenty-five months he pushed forward the American objectives with a steady display of acumen, imagination, and idealism ---- all necessary ingredients in the compound of successful mission. However, before considering the work of the American naval delegates in the exercise of control in Dalmatia it is essential first to pause for a brief description of Dalmatia and the American Zone.

106. Alrovandi Marescotti, Guerra Diplomatica, see pp. 221-39.

DALMATIA

Geologic processes have produced some curious phenomena, and Dalmatia furnishes us an interesting example. The province consists of a narrow coastal strip some 240 miles long and only thirty-five miles across at its broadest point (near Spalato), then it narrows southward to about one mile at Cattaro. Excluding the fringe of numerous islands its area is 4,956 square miles, more than a third of which lay within the American zone. Dalmatia is uniformly hilly, and in some places the elevation rises sufficiently to justify employment of the adjective mountainous. It is no exaggeration to state that the rugged, barren, Karst limestone terrain completely dominates the region. On the north, Dalmatia is bounded by the Velebit range which stretches from the coast fifty miles in a southeasterly direction to merge with the Dinaric Alps. The latter chain extends about 180 miles in the same general direction to form the contiguous eastern frontier between Bosnia and Dalmatia and then joins the rocky highlands on the shore a few miles south of Cattaro. So the general shape of Dalmatia is roughly triangular; its apex lying in the south, and the irregular base situated on the north, with the mountains to the east and the Adriatic on the west being its elongated sides. The interior is Karst upland country, broken and denuded, although a number of small fertile valleys slash the mountains at right angles. Along the sea

² The following geographic description of Dalmatia has been obtained from T. Jackson, Dalmatia, the Quarnero, and Istria, (3 vols., Oxford, 1887), which still remains a monumental and standard work. Supplementary material was taken from O.H. Ball, Dalmatia, London, 1932; J. Buchan (ed.), Yugoslavia, London, 1923, and H.D. Harrison, The Soul of Yugoslavia, London, 1941.

runs a coastal plain of varying width, but at some points, notably at Cattaro, the hills march right to the surf where they constitute inaccessible cliffs of considerable height.

In some remote geologic age the land mass in the eastern Adriatic sank; this phenomenon created the present thousand or more islands large and small which guard the approaches to the indented shore. These islands, being submerged crests now altered by erosion, share the same geographic features of the mainland with the exception that, whereas the latter is barren and its soil poor, they and the coastal plain are fertile and agriculturally productive. The province is drained by a number of unnavigable streams which rise in the Dinaric Alps and swiftly flow by circuitous routes westward to the sea. In the American zone the largest of such rivers was the Cetina which debouches near Spalato. In summer and winter the climate is characterized by extremes of heat and cold, although the mean temperature is about sixty degrees. The dry, frigid Bora sweeps in from the sea sometimes with sufficient velocity to derail trains. Summer is the season of the prevailing arid Sirocco accompanied by unsupportable heat which frequently causes droughts, although generally the average annual rainfall of twenty-eight inches is adequate. It is a strange land, varying from near-arctic to semi-tropical, from sterile limestone hills to luxuriant valleys.

If dependent upon its own resources Dalmatia could not support a large population. According to the Austrian census of 1910, 635,000 inhabitants lived in the province, but Yugoslav

figures for 1921 indicate an increase of fifteen thousand.¹⁰⁸

Of the total, 274,000 resided in the Italian occupation zone in Dalmatia; about two thirds of the remainder were domiciled in the American, and the rest in the French zone. Italians formed a small minority in Dalmatia; thirty thousand according to Italian estimates, and only eighteen thousand if Yugoslav statistics are valid. Both claims are tendencious, but whichever correct, it is a fact that although the Italian elements concentrated in the coastal cities they formed a racial majority only at Zara which was situated in the Italian zone. It is instructive to note that only fourteen thousand Italians were contained in that portion of Dalmatia assigned to Italy by the Treaty of London, and which region became her zone of occupation in November, 1918, yet Italy shamelessly abused ethnographic arguments to forward her annexionist program.

The overwhelming majority of the people, over ninety-five per cent, derived from Yugoslav stock, but that does not imply they were of similar nationality, because a heterogeneous condition existed. Represented in Dalmatia were Serbs, Croats, Bosnians, Slovenes, and hardy Lika mountaineers who resemble the Montenegrins and come from the Lika Mountains which surround Spalato. In northern Dalmatia, the Italian zone, Croats predominated; in the American zone

¹⁰⁸ Statistics and information on the Dalmatian population has been obtained from the sources cited in note . In addition to those works the following were used. G.W. Prothero, (ed.), The Yugoslav Movement, No. 14 of Handbooks prepared under the direction of the historical section of the Foreign Office, London, 1920. No. 11 of this series, Dalmatia contains more detailed material. C.A. Beard and G. Radin, The Balkan Pivot: Jugoslavia, New York, 1929, treats population from an economic standpoint. The Yugoslav viewpoints and statistics are found in the memorandum of claims presented to the peace conference on February 18, 1919. (Yale Collection)

the mixture was very great, but chiefly Serbs and Croats. Towards the south, in the French zone, the proportion of Serbs and Bosnians increased. The language commonly used in the province was Serbo-Croat, and past generations had adapted it to various dialects. Religious differences were important; Croats and Slovenes professed the Roman Catholic faith; the Serbs and Lika mountaineers adhered to the Orthodox Greek, and the Bosnians were Moslems. Of the entire Dalmatian population, eighty-three per cent was Roman Catholic, sixteen per cent Orthodox, and the remainder Moslem. Denominational belief accounted for preference as to alphabets which were constantly a source of minor disagreement; the Catholic elements used the Latin, whereas Orthodox followers employed the Cyrillic alphabet. In spite of all these differences a conscious feeling of unity obtained, inspired by similarities of spoken tongue and common historical tradition.

Dalmatia was backward not only because Austria had expended little effort on its development, but also, and perhaps primarily, because the region suffered from a paucity of natural resources which could be readily transformed into foodstuffs and consumers goods without sizable capital expenditure. ¹⁰⁹ The soil being poor in quality, eighty-three per cent of the population engaged in agriculture to procure a living, yet considerable annual imports of grain were required to provide nourishment for all. Remnants of feudal landlordism survived which subjected tenants to the *corvée* and other disagreeable duties, but it was on the wane in 1918,

¹⁰⁹ Most useful for economic aspects are A. Mousset, Le Royaume des Serbes, Croates, et Slovenes, Paris, 1921; Beard and Radin, The Balkan Pivot: Yugoslavia, and J. Buchan (ed.), Yugoslavia.

and small proprietorship correspondingly on the increase. Dalmatians were, therefore, predominantly rural dwellers; eighty to ninety per cent living in towns of less than ten thousand, and only about seventeen per cent of the total population was engaged in occupations other than agricultural. No more than twelve per cent of the land in the interior was arable, hence most of the crops were grown on the coastal plain and on the islands offshore. Apart from garden vegetables, Dalmatia produced grapes and olives, wine and oil being the two principal exports. Grains and semi-tropical fruits grown for local consumption, figs particularly, exhaust the list. Paradoxically enough, thirty per cent of the province was classed as forest, yet the region processed no timber because it was mostly scrub of thicket attempting without success to surmount the obstacles of an ungenerous soil and the ubiquitous goat. Similarly, statistics describe forty-five per cent of the Dalmatian mainland as pasturo, but other than large herds of sheep producing inferior wool, and numerous goats yielding little milk, the cattle and pig industry was negligible.

Manufacturing and the factory system had achieved small progress in Dalmatia; most industries were in the domestic stage, and whatever staples could not be processed locally were necessarily imported. Spalato was the chief seaport of the province, and the seat of such rudimentary industry as existed. Important as shipping was to the community in the carrying trade and fisheries, for the Dalmatians were outstanding seamen and had for years supplied the Austro-Hungarian navy with its best personnel, it had not developed commensurate with native talent because Austria had placed

restrictions on Dalmatian commerce in order to encourage that industry at Trieste. However, Spalato could boast of harbor works, cement, candle, and tanning factories, and a packing house processing native sardines and olive oil for export. A few miles northeast of Spalato at Dznich and Sinj lay extensive marble quarries containing an excellent stone which was hewed, finished roughly, and transported to Spalato by narrow gauge railway for shipment abroad. These quarries employed a considerable amount of labor.

Lack of capital, Austrian lethargy, and the forbidding topography of Dalmatia prevented an extension of communication facilities which would have stimulated industry. The common beast of burden was not an engine, but a donkey which could successfully negotiate the tortuous, twisting mountain trails. Even on the coastal plain paved roads were unusual, and they uniformly yielded to primitive dirt surfaces in the interior. The entire province contained only some 160 miles of railroad track. From Spalato a line ran to Sinj; another northwest to Sebenico (in the Italian zone) with a spur to Knin. A projected track from Knin to Zagreb, and from Sinj to Sarajevo which if completed would have probably transformed Spalato into an important port remained in the blueprint stage in harmony with Austria's policy of divide and rule. To service an entire province of almost five thousand square miles Austria had maintained only about 217 post offices in Dalmatia and approximately 153 telegraph stations. The census of 1910 listed 438 public elementary schools with an enrollment of 58,600 pupils. Institutions of higher learning were limited to five gymnasia and

three realschulen. Although school attendance was compulsory between the ages of six and thirteen, the authorities never enforced the ruling strictly; consequently almost three fourths of the population was illiterate. However, a cultivated, literary and professional society congregated in the coastal towns. Perhaps the region could not have supported more amenities, because Dalmatia and its inhabitants were not affluent; pre-war tax receipts and the annual budget averaged about one million dollars.

The province, however, offered certain attractive resources out of character with its actual poverty, and it is partly because of this economic potential that Italy claimed northern Dalmatia and displayed such avidity to annex as much more of its territory as she could. In Dalmatia lay enormous bauxite beds, and abundant water power in the falls of the rivers Krka and Cetina waited to be harnessed. That combination conjured up images of humming plants turning out aluminum. Fertilizers and chemicals could also be manufactured, as indeed they later were, by utilizing hydro-electric power. In addition to valuable Dalmatian asphalt and rock salt deposits, the region near Sebenico produced coal, a fact of which the Italian government was not unaware.¹¹⁰ More important than Dalmatian resources were the iron, copper, and coal fields of Bosnia which lay to the east beyond the Dinaric Alps. Should Italy have acquired Dalmatia, especially the ports of Sebenico and Spalato, located as they were on excellent harbor sites and constituting the centers of railways which ran eastward, Italian

¹¹⁰ Ambassador Page to House, Rome to Paris, June 11, 1919. Yale House Collection.

capital could have easily extended the railroads and exploited Bosnian minerals for the benefit of the Italian industrial machine. With economic prizes of such magnitude at stake it is not surprising that Orlando should have remarked to Clemenceau and Lloyd George, "For the Italians, the Jugoslavs are what the beches are for you."¹¹¹

It has been intimated on previous pages how strategic was the position which Dalmatia occupied with reference to the naval control of the Adriatic. Her coastline, more deeply indented than any in Mediterranean waters with the exception of Greece, forms a series of excellent natural harbors. The islands are a protective barrier providing shelter from the waves and winds. If fortified astutely these harbors and islands would become virtually impregnable, and could readily accommodate sizable fleets which could steam out, attack the Italian coast at will, and withdraw to safety at the approach of presumably superior Italian squadrons. Because the east coast of Italy contains no adequate harbor between Brindisi and Venice, hostile naval units based on Dalmatian ports, even if inferior, could inflict considerable damage on Italian shipping and installations. Were Dalmatia under Italian sovereignty, however, absolute maritime control of the Adriatic would pass to Italy. Dalmatia, therefore, was the key to naval power in the Adriatic, and on this ground Italian naval and political delegates at Paris strenuously urged the allies to countenance Italian annexation.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Aldrovandi Mareseotti, Guerra diplomazia, p. 352. Meeting of the Big Four, President Wilson being absent, April 21, 1919.

¹¹² Orlando advanced this argument at a meeting of the Big Four in Paris on April 19, 1919. Aldrovandi Mareseotti, Guerra diplomazia, pp. 221-29. Also see the account of a conversation between the publicist Mr. Maffei and Admiral Di Revel in Maffei Maffei, La vittoria in Adriatico, Rome, 1919, pp. 171-73.

Spalato, an ancient and thriving city of more than 32,000 inhabitants, was the administrative capital of Dalmatia as well as its industrial and shipping center. Centuries ago the emperor Diocletian had constructed there a magnificent palace in which he luxuriated until 313, and the intelligent, cultivated citizens of Spalato pointed to that traditional imperial link with pride, but no less than to its tangible remnants -- the palace ruins -- which constituted an integral part of the city. For years the people of Spalato and its environs had been active politically. Under Austrian rule they, like all other Dalmatians, enjoyed manhood suffrage, and were well represented in the eleven delegates which Dalmatia returned to the Imperial Diet. Before the World War, the locally elected provincial Diet sat regularly at Spalato with power to act on local matters, or to bring up business in the Imperial Diet through the Dalmatian delegates. Spalato, in common with other Dalmatian towns, elected a municipal council and mayor, but in 1912, local sympathies having been vociferously expressed in favor of the Balkan allies, Austria suppressed the Dalmatian press and the municipal liberties of Sebenico and Spalato. Early in the course of the World War the Austrian government dissolved the councils of all cities in Dalmatia, but when the Imperial débacle occurred in the fall of 1918 the inhabitants were not without previous political preparation.

This experience in self-government, although limited in character, proved conspicuously helpful when the Dalmatians undertook to erect a provisional revolutionary government in October, 1918.

Late that month local leaders met at Spalato and constituted themselves into a provincial revolutionary committee, and having acknowledged the supreme authority of the National Council at Zagreb, arrogated to the committee all civil and military functions in Dalmatia. In other cities the leading citizens assembled to form municipal councils to preserve order and carry on the government which had ground to a standstill with the hasty departure of Austrian civil and military officials. For a time all was chaos and confusion. The revolutionary technique closely paralleled that in the thirteen American colonies when British power broke down in 1776. By January, 1919, however, the situation had been regularized. A governor acceptable to Belgrade and the revolutionary junta of Spalato had replaced the original committee; under him served a board acting in an advisory capacity. Provincial elections had returned members to the Diet in Spalato which since 1912 had not been in session. The governor and Diet constituted the executive and legislative branches of the provincial government. In the cities, elections had replaced the self-appointed revolutionary committees with freely chosen municipal officers and councilmen who looked to the governor and Diet for leadership. All these political arrangements were provisional, because the Peace Conference had not ruled on the status of Dalmatia which remained occupied by the Americans, Italians, and French.¹¹³

¹¹³ The provisional government of Dalmatia was abolished by the Yugoslav constitution of June 28, 1921. By the Treaty of Rapallo, previously signed, Dalmatia had been assigned to Yugoslavia.

The provisional government of Dalmatia was civilian but necessarily employed police powers very extensively because of unsettled local conditions. Belgrade detailed a general to the province who was responsible for military affairs under the governor, and who commanded the Yugoslav garrisons there. Consequently, the governor could call upon several kinds of police forces in the event of disorder in Dalmatia. To supplement the regular civilian police, who numbered sixty-five in Spalato alone, he had jurisdiction over the militia, a national guard that had been constituted during the revolutionary days of October and November. Composed of armed citizens it at first did not prove entirely reliable, having participated in looting on occasion during the transitional period to independent government, but by the beginning of 1919 it formed a creditable police auxiliary.

To handle more serious disturbances and to prevent Italian encroachment, Yugoslav regulars were garrisoned in the larger cities and towns. In general the more sizable seaboard cities such as Spalato, Trau and Almissia quartered a battalion each, whereas inland towns like Sinj contained smaller units about the strength of an American company. All these forces fell under the command of the Serbian general whose headquarters and staff were located in Spalato. It should be kept clear that the foregoing in connection

¹¹⁷ Yugoslav troops, that is to say those units which had fought in the Austro-Hungarian armies against the allies, were merged on November 24, 1918, with the Serbian army. However, since the Yugoslav national union was effected in the middle of December, 1918, it is correct to term Serb troops as Yugoslav after that date.

¹¹⁸ Admiral P. Andrews to Benson, Spalato to Paris, March 30, 1919. Naval Records, File VA.

with Yugoslav regulars refers to the American zone; in the Italian zone Yugoslav forces were consistently excluded because of incompatibility detailed elsewhere, although they did occasionally barrack in some small interior village if sufficiently far removed from Italian influence. The French zone contained a few Italian troops, but the overwhelming majority was French and Yugoslav.

Formally and officially the American naval governor had no police authority ashore which was deposited in Yugoslav hands by the directive which enjoined the occupying powers to work through local governments. In practice, however, the naval governor exercised an extensive influence, and it is no exaggeration that ultimate police functions in the American zone were determined by the admiral under article four of the Armistice which permitted occupation "to maintain order." The American admiral controlled not the administration of the Yugoslav civil police, militia, and regulars, but did command policy. There has been found no recorded instance where the Yugoslav officials directing policing activities in the zone failed to take cognizance of the admiral's suggestions or orders. In addition to policy control over Yugoslav police units, the naval governor landed American sailors whenever existing conditions indicated the advisability of such action. Thus, by direct and indirect methods it was American police supervision that maintained order in the zone during the period of occupation.

Such, then, was the government, physical aspect, population, and economic condition of Dalmatia when its central area from Cape Planka on the north to Slano Island on the south, a distance of more than one hundred miles, passed to American naval control in November, 1918. We must now consider the nature of American

administration, and the problems encountered by the naval governor in the execution of the naval and political phases of his mission.

AMERICAN NAVAL CONTROL IN DALMATIA

The focal point of American authority in Dalmatia centered in Spalato where close relations were maintained with the provisional provincial government, and from the city radiated lines of American influence permeating the entire zone of occupation. For the first three weeks of November, 1918, it appeared highly doubtful that United States naval forces would occupy Spalato and the strategic areas in its neighborhood because Italy displayed so strong a disposition to extend her control there. Approached by the Italian naval command, the British naval attache to Rome agreed early in the month that Italy should occupy Spalato.¹¹ Although not an interallied understanding, British acquiescence provided Italy with a useful wedge in forcing open the central Dalmatian region. Had Italy dared face the consequences of unilateral action Spalato might well have been included in her zone as subsequently delimited at the Rome sessions of the Adriatic Committee. Despite unimpeachable evidence of riot and disorder in Spalato which could be made the pretext of a landing, the naval command realized that Italian occupation would cause an uprising of the countryside. Hence,

Admiral W.S. Sims to Beason, London to Paris, November 15, 1918.
Naval Records, File VD.

Admiral Di Revel formally requested a joint interallied occupation on November 14, 1918,¹¹⁷ but it seems that American naval forces arrived at Spalato first.

This was in connection with the transfer of the Austrian battleships Radetzky and Zrinyi together with torpedo boats numbers 12 and 52 to the custody of the United States navy for surveillance until the Peace Conference decided on their disposal. In obedience to Admiral Bullard's orders, Lieutenant Commander E. E. Hazlett, in charge of two hundred men, proceeded to Spalato on November 18, to take over the battleships.¹¹⁸ When Hazlett arrived, American submarine chasers of the Otranto barrage were berthed in Spalato harbor not far from the Austrian warships which had been towed from their base at Pola with Yugoslav personnel aboard in compliance with Bullard's instructions. Hazlett manned the battleships and torpedo boats with the skeleton crew at his disposal, paid off the Yugoslav sailors, and, giving a receipt in the name of the United States, hoisted the American colors on November 20.¹¹⁹ After

¹¹⁷ Ambassador Page to Lansing, Rome to Washington, November 14, 1918. For. Rel., Paris Peace Conference, II, 293.

¹¹⁸ Admiral Sims to Benson, London to Paris, November 18, 1918. Naval Records, File VD. The name is given as Lieutenant Commander E. E. Stafford in a Progress Report by Admiral Benson to Secretary of the Navy Daniels dated January 2, 1919. (Naval Records, File C-56-20.).

¹¹⁹ Progress Report, Benson to Daniels, January 2, 1919. Naval Records, File C-56-20. For details see Naval Archives, File 28785-208:5 and 6. It should be remembered that central Dalmatia, together with Spalato, did not come under American jurisdiction as a zone of occupation until the Rome sessions of the Adriatic Committee, November 26-29, 1918.

adjustment of minor details Bullard could report on December 13, that "all the conditions of the armistice...as far as regards the participation of the United States are now complete."

The strictly naval features of the American Adriatic mission, therefore, were early on the way to completion with a minimum of difficulty. There remained only the duty of keeping watch over the ex-Austrian warships until they were allocated by an agency instituted by the Peace Conference. But the elements are treacherous and the Bora fierce in Dalmatia. During a storm in 1920 the torpedo boats dragged anchor and pounded rock until they sank in shallow water, but the battleships rode safely. Subsequently all valuable material and machinery from the grounded vessels were stowed aboard the Zrinyi and Radetzky; the hulls remained, gaunt, broken, when American forces withdrew from Spalato in 1921.

Surveillance of the warships entailed the presence of American naval units at Spalato, and establishment of at least minimum base facilities, for Austria had not constructed naval works there. No purpose would be accomplished by enumerating the various American naval vessels, cruisers, destroyers, and diminutive submarine chasers which were on station at various times in Spalato harbor.

Admiral Bullard to Benson, Venice to Paris, December 13, 1918.
Naval Records, File VA.

Admiral Andrews to Admiral L. Resio, R.I.N., August 25, 1920.
Naval Archives, File 23785-208:3.

Such information is obtainable in the Logbook of the U.S.S. Olympia, and that of the U.S.S. Birmingham.

Suffice it to state that the concentration was not great from 1919 to 1921, between six and a dozen ships at any given moment were under command of the American admiral in Dalmatia. During the last two months of 1918, however, the number was considerably larger because units in the Adriatic which had been engaged in operations against Austria had not yet sailed for the United States. One ship, the U.S.S. Olympia, deserves special mention. She carried Dewey's flag at Manila Bay; from her deck Captain H.S. Knapp issued the "Proclamation of Occupation" on November 29, 1916, which established naval government in the Dominican Republic, and as Admiral Andrews' flagship she constituted the backbone of American naval power and influence along the Dalmatian seaboard. The Olympia first appeared off Spalato on February 21, 1919, and except for infrequent movements to other ports, remained there until April 26, 1921. Hence, she is closely associated with American control in the zone of occupation.

The physical facilities of the temporary American naval base at Spalato were indeed meager. Occupying one floor of the Catalinic apartment house was the United States naval port office which supervised water borne traffic at Spalato, and through which were cleared passports into and out of the zone. A wooden warehouse, an ice plant, an oil depot, a branch of the Y.M.C.A., and a recreation center in the Archaeological Museum virtually complete the list. Stationed in Castelli Bay the Zrinyi and Radetzky were

used as storeships until November 1920, when destroyers transferred the stores to a modern warehouse in Sucurac, near Spalato. Fresh food, especially meat, vegetables, and fruit were purchased in Spalato and Sucurac; mess stewards went ashore daily to shop for vegetables and fruit in the local markets, but Italian dealers in Venice and Pola supplied commodities unobtainable in Dalmatia. Similarly, because necessary installations were unavailable, routine repairs to American ships were made at the Italian naval base in Venice, or in a privately owned dockyard at Pola.

Until the spring of 1919 communication between Spalato and Paris was very difficult. Telegraph lines linked Fiume to Paris via Venice, but no wire connected Fiume to Spalato. The Fiume telegraph was so overloaded and unreliable during the immediate post-armistice phase that it sometimes required as much as five days for a despatch to go through to Paris. Consequently, Admiral Bullard improvised a system to insure transmission and receipt of information. At Spalato he stationed a destroyer which transmitted by radio to another American destroyer lying off Fiume. When received, the message proceeded by telegraph from Fiume to Venice and thence to Paris. To guarantee receipt of the despatch, Bullard directed the destroyer at Fiume to radio the identical message to a similar American ship anchored at Venice, and then relay it to Paris on the Venice telegraph. Duplication in sending was desirable owing to the congested state of the Fiume line, but wireless did not prove altogether satisfactory either because the air was jammed

¹² Admiral Bullard to Benson, Fiume to Paris, December 15, 1918. For. Rel. Paris Peace Conference, II, 330.

by the numerous ships in the Adriatic at that time, and it caused poor reception. Apart from the fact that radio despatches came through garbled if at all, Bullard could not afford to employ destroyers as station ships, since he required them to carry official mail. So dynamic was the Adriatic situation that Admiral Benson on December 17, instructed Bullard to write daily reports, and each week a courier would arrive to collect them for delivery to Paris.¹²⁵ This arrangement offered the dual advantages of secrecy and reliability when they were urgently required. As conditions approached normal in the late winter of 1918-19 the Fiume telegraph carried less traffic, but that only partially solved the problem. Therefore, Admiral Niblack undertook the construction of a direct line from Soalato to Fiume which was completed under Admiral Andrews in May, 1919, and afforded easy wire connection to Paris. Manned by American naval operators the telegraph remained in use until United States forces withdrew from Dalmatia in 1921 at which time it was transferred to the Yugoslavs.

The naval phase of the American mission was not its arduous feature, but that part of the directive instructing Bullard to "assist local governments"¹²⁶ gave rise to numerous delicate problems which did not abate during the entire stay in Dalmatia. Such problems resulted from the tense political relations between Italians and Yugoslavs; the American admiral's orders placed him in the difficult position of aiding one without alienating the other,

¹²⁵ Admiral Benson to Bullard, December 30, 1918. Naval Records, File U-UB.

¹²⁶ See above, pp. 55-56.

an apparently self-contradictory task. No sooner had Italian warships put into Spalato harbor on December 12, 1918, than friction developed. Within a few days a serious riot had taken place between American submarine chaser personnel and Italian crews which originated when an Italian sailor abused a native girl. On December 23, after the American chasers had left for Corfu, a clash occurred at Spalato between the crew of the Italian destroyer Carabiniere and the local inhabitants. Only intervention by Serbian officers and prominent Yugoslav citizens prevented further disorder. Rioting of this nature was so frequent that in late February 1919, the Adriatic Committee in its dual capacity of investigating commission (as explained previously) and interallied instrument of naval cooperation proceeded to Spalato in order to examine the situation and propose remedial measures. Before considering its deliberations we must first inquire most closely into the nature of these disorders.

Although located in the American zone allied warships could visit Spalato and other ports in central Dalmatia, because under the armistice terms the occupation was interallied. This did not alter the fact that the American admiral remained solely

The Italian Navy in the World War, 1915-1918, Appendix, Chart No. 2.

R. Millholland, The Splinter Fleet, pp. 257-59.

Admiral Bullard to Benson, Fiume to Paris, December 23, 1918. Yale House Collection. Also printed in For. Rel., Paris Peace Conference, II, 338.

in control there with the responsibility of a naval governor, but he acted in an interallied capacity and not exclusively as an agent executing an American mission. Under this arrangement Italian warships put into Spalato regularly, and on occasion French and British naval vessels did likewise, but Italy jealously, yet tactfully, denied the same privilege to her allies as far as the Italian zone in Dalmatia was concerned except for a chance British destroyer arriving at long intervals.¹³¹ The American admiral did, however, prevent any landing of Italian military forces in his zone. It was well known to the State Department, as this chapter has previously emphasized, that the Italian government intended to extend its sovereignty over all Dalmatian territory possible, and furthermore that Italy made no attempt to conceal its aid to the artificially stimulated national movement among the relatively few Italian partisans in that province.¹³² The Italian government had even drafted plans outlining the administration

¹³⁰ No record was found of any public proclamation issued to the Dalmatians by the three American Admirals successively on station at Spalato announcing a naval government. No technicality would have prevented such a manifesto. Admiral Nillo, in charge of the Italian zone, from the first regularly styled himself "Governor of Dalmatia and the Dalmatian and Currolean islands." Dalmatia of course referred to the northern part of that province which constituted the Italian zone. (Naval Archives, File 6471-230:6).

¹³¹ Admiral Andrews to Benson, Spalato to Paris, May 16, 1919. Naval Records, File U-UB.

¹³² Ambassador Page to Lansing, Rome to Washington, November 14, 1918. For. Rel., Paris Peace Conference, I, 455. Also see ibid., p. 442. For a description of feeling in Italy on the Dalmatian question consult R.S. Baker, Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement, 3 vols., London, 1923, I, 89.

of Dalmatia to be put into effect after annexation. Whenever, therefore, Italian naval officers and men on liberty from ships moored in Spalato harbor set foot on shore, their behavior was truculent. Commenting on this state of affairs Admiral Andrews wrote:

"The officers and men of the Italian ships, from the first days of the armistice came as victors, with that air and bearing, and their arrogant bearing has not decreased.... They have not avoided incidents.... Their instructions have apparently been to keep alive and active the Italian spirit of the Italian minority here. Their purpose here has evidently been political, and for propaganda purposes, and everybody knows it. The Italian element here has not been martyred or abused. They have been an active minority, generally eager for incidents to be martyrs for, and always bold by reason of the backing given them by Italian men-of-war being here."

Andrews estimated that no more than three thousand Italians lived in his zone, most of them in Spalato, and it was this element which, with the moral and sometimes physical support of Italian naval personnel, participated in riots with Yugoslavs. That is not to say that the Yugoslavs were blameless, for in some instances they inflicted personal and property damage on the Italian residents. Had the Italian government withdrawn its ships from Spalato, or even had the naval command simply restricted liberty parties ashore as Admiral Andrews frequently and futilely suggested to the Italian authorities, all unpleasant incidents would have promptly ceased.³⁷ As matters were -- and remained -- the American

³⁷ Admiral Andrews to Naval Operations, Spalato to Washington, July 30, 1920. Naval Archives, File 6471-230:7.

³⁸ Admiral Andrews to Naval Operations, Spalato to Washington, July 26, 1920. Naval Archives, File 6471-230:6. Also see Admiral Andrews to Benson, Spalato to Paris, March 30, 1919. Naval Records, File VA.

naval governor was constantly plagued by popular eruptions requiring close police supervision.

On February 24, 1919, the French, British, and Italian members of the Adriatic Committee proceeded to Spalato to meet with Admiral Niblack aboard the Olympia and confer on disturbed conditions in the American zone. A Jugoslav commission headed by a Serb colonel had called on the admiral earlier that day to acquaint him with latest developments ashore, but departed before the allied admirals arrived. That evening another riot broke out in Spalato, so the captain of the Olympia and Lieutenant Commander R.S. Field together with a few men left the ship to investigate while an armed landing force aboard stood by ready for action. After two hours rockets were seen fired from ashore, a prearranged signal indicating that the disturbances had subsided. The native police, reinforced morally by the presence of American authority, had quelled the riot. When the Adriatic Committee sat in its first formal session aboard the Olympia the next morning the cumulative troubles in the zone, emphasized by the events of the preceding evening, contributed to a quick decision. Four interallied patrols were to circulate day and night through the city, each patrol to be composed of one officer, one chief petty officer, twelve enlisted men, one local policeman, and one Serb soldier. Each allied nation represented on the Committee would contribute an officer, a chief

Admiral Niblack, Memorandum on the Adriatic.

U.S.S. Olympia, Logbook, February 24, 1919.

petty officer and three men to every patrol, its officer to hold the command. The organization of these police units were entrusted to Admiral Niblack who detailed Lieutenant Commander Field as chief officer of all patrols.¹³⁷ No evidence has been found of extensive rioting in Spalato while the patrol system continued, hence it may be concluded that the interallied police under control of the American naval governor proved effective.

Before the Adriatic Committee dispersed an incident occurred which focuses many aspects of the type of authority exercised by the American naval governor. General Milesh Wassith, commanding officer of all Yugoslav garrisons in the American zone, sent an urgent letter to Admiral Niblack on February 26, 1919.¹³⁸ In it he reported that six thousand Italian troops had arrived at the village of Muc during the previous night, and that a similar number equipped with artillery was expected within the next twenty-four hours. At Muc the Italians boasted that they would march in two columns upon Spalato and Sinj, both cities in the American zone. Wassith requested Admiral Niblack to authenticate the news and prevent the Italian advance. The next day Niblack communicated this information to Admiral Rombo, chairman of the Adriatic Committee, with the statement that:

¹³⁷ U.S.S. Olympia, Logbook, February 25, 1919. Also Memorandum, Office of Naval Records and Library, addressed to A.C.D., March 23, 1943. Field quartered the patrol on the U.S.S. Israel.

¹³⁸ All factual material on this incident was obtained from Admiral Niblack, Memorandum on the Adriatic.

"Such a movement of troops at this time cannot but have grave results in my endeavors to maintain order in the American Zone, now seriously disturbed at Spalato and Trau. I request that you immediately inform me whether this information is to your knowledge, correct or incorrect, and what assurances you can give me as to its import. I cannot but view this movement of troops at this time in any other light than unfortunate."

Admiral Niblack threatened to bring the matter up before the session of the Adriatic Committee scheduled for February 28, and on that warning note closed the letter, copies of which he despatched to the British and French delegates.

Rombo returned an immediate reply categorically denying all allegations of Italian troop movements. Receiving this disclaimer with some doubts of its veracity, Admiral Niblack sent word throughout the affected areas of his zone announcing that "there will be no Italian occupation...the population may rest quiet." At Trau, a city of some 25,000 inhabitants, the local officials placarded public places to that effect. Much exercised over this blow to Italian prestige, Rombo wrote to Niblack asking whether he had distributed such information, and simultaneously lodged a formal protest. Admiral Niblack composed a scorching rejoinder in which he stated:

"My answer is, yes. I did not give any directions to the Local Government as to how to use this information, and...if it was posted, I am very glad...because it served the purpose for which I intended the information...namely, to allay the fear, excitement, and dread in this community [American zone] that any change will be made in the present arrangement."

Naturally this only rubbed salt in the wound, but Rombo perforce let the matter drop since he had no control over the powers of the

American naval governor, nor could singly alter dispositions in his zone.

This incident throws into relief the complex arrangements in the American zone; it illustrates the type of sortie, actual and rumored, by which Italy attempted to penetrate into the region, and how the naval governor met such a putsch by firmness and exercise of moral influence. It typifies the harmony which existed between the Yugoslav military personnel and the American admiral, and underscores their reluctance to act alone against Italy by showing that they worked through the naval governor. It provides a case study in the use of propaganda by Niblack, and portrays the functions of the Adriatic Committee as the instrument of inter-allied naval cooperation and its employment as a court of appeal. Finally, it records one instance in the execution of the American mission to "assist local governments", in this case by frustrating a contemplated Italian expansion into central Dalmatia.

The degree of control exercised by the American admiral in his zone varied with circumstances but he always exerted a wide influence. He was not responsible for the colossal job of relief after the armistice, for that remained within the province of Herbert Hoover's organization. Admiral Bullard did, however, assist Colonel Atwood, whom Hoover had detailed as his representative in Serbia, to expedite the flow of foodstuffs to Adriatic ports under an American credit extended to that government. Docking facilities, stevedores, and warehouses were arranged for by Bullard's staff to handle these food shipments. This humanitarian program did not

endeared itself to the Italian navy which yearned for its full pound of flesh. Early in December, 1918, Italians halted two laden foodships at Cattaro that were bound for the relief of Spalato, and escorted the vessels to an Italian port.¹⁴⁰ It is true that the Supreme Council did not lift the Adriatic blockade until March 8, 1919,¹⁴¹ and that therefore Italy could appeal to the letter of the law, but her action was manifestly contradictory to the policy of the United States and Britain, and was intended to exert economic pressure upon the Yugoslavs in Dalmatia. Neither Bullard nor the State Department protested the matter to Italy.

On the other hand, certain acts of the American naval governor demonstrate the virtually boundless limits of his authority. When the Yugoslav government in Belgrade sought to recruit troops in the American zone, Admiral Andrews prevented it by "personal representation to [the] local government."¹⁴² On two different occasions Belgrade attempted to introduce Yugoslav law into the zone; both times Andrews resisted by indicating that, being an occupied territory, the region must remain under the Austrian law of its former sovereign.¹⁴³ Constantly the naval governor played the

¹⁴⁰ Aide memoire, Serbian Legation to Department of State, December 5, 1918. For. Rel., Paris Peace Conference, IX, 521.

¹⁴¹ Minutes, Council of Ten, March 8, 1919. Naval Records, File QW.

¹⁴² Admiral Andrews to Naval Operations, Spalato to Washington, July 3, 1920. Naval Archives, File 29231-5:1.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

rôle of mediator and arbitrator in adjusting questions between the provisional government and Italian authorities. He presented the statements and opinions of one side to the other, or, both parties willing, he decided on an issue. Numerous examples of this form of control are on record. On his own initiative Admiral Andrews discontinued on April 26, 1919 the interallied patrol established by the Adriatic Committee, a unilateral alteration of conditions in the American zone. He "forced the Serbs [Jugoslavs] to take the military control on shore,"¹⁴⁵ but at the same time instituted a small American naval patrol drawn from United States ships present to circulate in Spalato during daylight hours.¹⁴⁴ In this way Andrews eliminated the European allies from sharing any vestige of the authority vested in him so far as police power ashore was concerned, ejected particularly the Italians whom he considered troublemakers, and together with the Jugoslavs policed the area with Americans. This arrangement continued until the occupation ended in 1921.

The presence of Italian naval units in the harbor, however, continued to breed disorder even after their crews had been excluded from the patrols. On March 11, 1919 Italian naval personnel became involved in a minor riot,¹⁴⁷ and again on May 15, that same year a

¹⁴⁴ Naval Archives, File 29231.

¹⁴⁵ Admiral Andrews to Force Commander, Spalato to London, July 25, 1920. Naval Records, File VA.

¹⁴⁶ Memorandum, Office of Naval Records and Library, to A.C.D., March 22, 1943.

¹⁴⁷ U.S.S. Olympia, Logbook, March 11, 1919.

disturbance was precipitated when Italian officers failed to stand at attention for the Serbian national anthem.¹⁴⁸ Elsewhere the same sort of friction between Yugoslavs and Italians also took place; for example, after an attempted Italian encroachment upon Laibach, the frontier between Italy and Yugoslavia was closed on February 21, 1919. Nowhere along the Dalmatian coast did the Italians endeavor to adopt a more conciliatory attitude. Even Signor Branchi, who associated himself with the more moderate renunciatori party, could exclaim:

"The Yugoslavs do not exist; they have never existed. They are merely Croats, and we know by bitter experience that... they are more or less savages controlled by the priests..."¹⁴⁹

Spalato was full of thousands of refugees from the Italian zone to the north where the aggressive Italian naval governor Admiral Millo ruled with an iron hand. Yugoslavs were beaten, their ration cards seized, and other disagreeable cruelties inflicted on them. Millo suppressed all personal liberties, and dissolved the Yugoslav press and societies; he liquidated thirty out of thirty-three municipal councils, and dismissed more than half the local magistrates. Teachers, doctors, priests, and political leaders were harassed, deported in batches, and replaced by Italians. In order to erect a facade behind which to carry out this ruthless policy of demoralization, the Italians issued false reports of smallpox outbreaks, epidemics of skin disease, and the like.¹⁵⁰ It

¹⁴⁸ U.S.S. Olympia, Logbook, May 15, 1919.

¹⁴⁹ Diary of Giulio Speranza, Italy 1915-1919, p. 229; edited by Florence C. Speranza, New York, 1941.

¹⁵⁰ Material on Italian activities in northern Dalmatia during the occupation has been collated from the following sources. Admiral Andrews to Benson, Venice to Paris, May 10, 1919. (Naval Records, File U-UB). H. Temperley (ed.), Peace Conference, IV, 304 and note, Report of Italian Senator Salvemini, November 24, 1920. W.H. Miller, My Diary at the Conference of Paris (21 vols., New York, 1928), IV, 12-13, Doc. 844, Report of Professor H. Temperley on Dalmatia, April 22, 1919. It will be noted that the sources are American, Italian, and British respectively; each agree on Italian terrorization.

becomes obvious therefore, why friction should develop between Yugoslavs and Italians in the American zone when just a few miles away such a brutal program was being conducted by Admiral Millo. After Nitti succeeded Orlando as prime minister on June 19, 1919 terrorization, of Yugoslavs abated, but large numbers continued to stream into central Dalmatia where the presence of the American naval governor guaranteed decent treatment.¹⁵¹

Admiral Andrews wasted no sympathy on Italian methods.

In a despatch to Admiral Benson he flatly stated:

"The more I see and hear the more I know the Italian demands are without justice, and their actions based only on cruelty and lack of consideration. They are totally unreasonable. I have held the scales even [sic] here, and have dispensed justice so that both sides are grateful."¹⁵²

He opined that the Italian naval command had with forethought selected officers most aggressive and reckless in temperament to deal with Dalmatian affairs, and he characterized Admiral Rombo, chairman of the Adriatic Committee, as "one of the most annoying and contemptible persons [he had] ever met."¹⁵³ What Andrews did not comprehend was that any protestations of gratitude he received from Italian naval officers in acknowledgment for having "dispensed justice" were but temporary and skin-deep. The alleged historian, Camillo Manfroni, spokesman for the Italian navy and more moderate than most, in 1923 alluded to the Dalmatian

151 Admiral Andrews to Force Commander for the Secretary of the Navy, Spalato to Washington via London, February 17, 1920. Naval Archives, File 6471-228.

152 Admiral Andrews to Benson, Spalato to Paris, May 19, 1919. Naval Records, File U-UB.

153 Admiral Andrews to Benson, Venice to Paris, May 10, 1919. Naval Records, File U-UB.

occupation applying to the American naval governors such epithets as ignorant, insulting, and disputatious.¹⁵⁴ It is not surprising that the admirals should have incurred such hostility, for in carrying out the political features of the American mission they were compelled, the situation in the eastern Adriatic being what it was, to adopt an anti-Italian attitude.

An increasing spirit of Yugoslav resistance to Italian oppression became noticeable in the forepart of 1920. The nation's youth was eager to begin comatadji warfare, and observers expressed the opinion that the Yugoslavs possessed the necessary power to drive Italy from her zone in Dalmatia.¹⁵⁵ Nevertheless, older heads among the Yugoslavs realized how strong was their position before the world, and that to launch a drive against the Italians would result in prejudicing that favorable international sentiment. Had hostilities on a large scale erupted it is very probable that Admiral Andrews and his detachment would have been withdrawn from Dalmatia. In this connection it is significant that Secretary of the Navy Daniels, responding to a Senate resolution calling for information on Dalmatia, stated that Andrews had "no real function in the Adriatic other than to safeguard" the Austrian warships,¹⁵⁶ an

¹⁵⁴ G. Manfroni, Storia della marina Italiana durante la guerra mondiale, Bologna, 1923, passim, but see especially page 383. For really rabid work on the "puro eroismo" of the Italian navy consult A. Balliano and G. Soavi, L'Italia sul mare nella grande guerra, Torino, 1934; and A. Ginocchietti, La guerra sul mare, Rome, 1930.

¹⁵⁵ Admiral Andrews to Naval Operations, Spalato to Washington, June 27, 1920. Naval Archives, File 6471-230:5.

¹⁵⁶ Secretary of the Navy Daniels to President Wilson, October 7, 1919. Woodrow Wilson Collection, File VIII, Box 6.

official position incompatible with the actual fact of the admiral's control in his zone. This occurred in October, 1919, when the big debate on the Treaty of Versailles was promoting isolationism in the United States. By the middle of 1920 isolationism had so far progressed that undue complications in the Adriatic almost inevitably would have resulted in recall of the American detachment.

Nothing like that happened, but the aggravating presence of Italian men-of-war at Spalato and the growing restlessness of Jugoslavs throughout Dalmatia, a feeling which communicated itself to the American zone, created conditions that finally exploded in a widespread clash. On July 11, 1920, the Italian cruiser Puglia lay moored to a breakwater in Spalato harbor. Two Italian petty officers pulled down a Yugoslav flag flying nearby. They were contested by some natives, and before long the contagion had spread with partisans of both sides hastening to join the fray. In the ensuing gun fight a few men were killed or wounded, but no American nationals were involved.¹⁵⁷ This riot frightened and angered Italian authorities. Admiral Mille issued a decree which he caused to be posted in the Italian zone among other things elevating breach of peace to a crime, and tightening up on passport regulations. Deportations immediately increased in volume, swelling the Yugoslav population in the American zone.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁷ Admiral Andrews to Naval Operations, Spalato to Washington, July 10, 1920. Naval Archives, File 6471-230:6.

¹⁵⁸ Admiral Andrews to Naval Operations, Spalato to Washington, July 19, 1920. Naval Archives, File 6471-230:6.

There is no evidence to show that the American naval patrol concerned itself with pacifying this clash, but Admiral Andrews did undertake to investigate the incident, and his findings laid the blame upon the Italians. Admiral Millo despatched Rear Admiral Resio to Spalato for a consultation with Andrews. Captain Menini of the Puglia and Resio made much of a perverted half-truth that Italian naval personnel could not go ashore without molestation by hostile Jugoslavs. Andrews maintained that if Italy withdrew her warships from Spalato peace would be restored in his zone. This the Italians refused to do, for it would "look like being driven away."¹⁵⁹ Admiral Andrews had no power to order Italian warships from Spalato since the occupation was under inter-allied auspices, but it lay within his province to deny Italian liberty parties the privilege of going ashore since he was charged with the preservation of order in the zone. He never did take this step, presumably to avoid a further deterioration in Italo-American relations on the Dalmatian littoral, and consequently paid the penalty in being forced to deal with intermittent disturbances.

Another incident had earlier occurred in the American zone which must be sketched in here because it illustrates how the naval governor by a show of force dealt with an Italian sortie. Gabriele d'Annunzio, poetaster and irresponsible chauvinist, banded together a motley rabble of filibusters, and on September 12, 1919, seized Fiume, the regular Italian divisions in occupation there conveniently retreating before his few rifles. Using a similar

¹⁵⁹ Admiral Andrews to ^{Naval Operations,} Spalato to Washington, July 26, 1920.
Naval Archives, File 6471-230:6.

technique, his partisans attempted to capture other towns desired by Italian imperialists. Several truckloads of irregulars officered by a captain emerged from the Italian zone in Dalmatia on September 23, and descended upon Trau where, after a brief skirmish, they disarmed the small Yugoslav garrison. ¹⁵⁰ The Belgrade government believed this was the beginning of a concerted attack on Dalmatia, and accordingly protested vigorously to the Peace Conference, but before the ponderous wheels of diplomacy could turn the affair had subsided. Because Trau was situated in the American zone, the sortie became a problem for the naval governor. Appealed to by the provisional government of Dalmatia and by the Serbian general in command of Yugoslav troops, the naval governor sent Captain Boyd together with landing parties from the Olympia and Cowell "to give notice that they [Italian filibusters] would not be allowed to take the city of Trau." ¹⁵¹ Boyd presented the Italians with a two-hour ultimatum, and they withdrew. So great was the moral influence of the Americans that a show of force sufficed to end the illegal occupation.

Afraid that D'Annunzio's followers would not rest content, particularly after he had bombastically declared war on Jugoslavia, (September 29, 1919), the Belgrade government in October invoked the United States to order more warships to the Adriatic for the purpose of protecting Yugoslav interests and stabilizing conditions.

¹⁵⁰ Secretary of the Navy Daniels to President Wilson, October 7, 1919. Woodrow Wilson Collection, File VIII, Box 6.

¹⁵¹ Admiral Niblack, Memorandum on the Adriatic.

This request was denied, and Admiral Andrews received no reinforcements.¹⁶² With regard to the Trau sortie it is a curious fact

that Admiral Millo asked the American naval governor to turn the raiders back, and when it had been accomplished, conveyed his thanks. It is curious because in so doing Millo did not follow the policy of his government. Ostensibly to put pressure on D'Annunzio Italy declared a blockade around Fiume, but it was flimsiest paper, a farce, and intended as such. D'Annunzio's irregulars were even permitted to garrison the armistice line alongside battalions of the Italian army. In other words the Italian government tolerated, if it did not connive at the Fiume putsch. Now Italy did not yield her claims on Dalmatia until December, 1919,¹⁶³ hence it is difficult without unwarranted speculation to account for Millo's action in this instance.

The preceding pages have described the nature of American administration in central Dalmatia, and emphasized the type of problem encountered by the naval governor in carrying forward the political features of his mission. We must now turn to an examination of the concluding phases of the American occupation.

¹⁶²Admiral H. Knapp to Naval Operations, London to Washington, undated, but October, 1919. Naval Archives, File 27844-1126.

¹⁶³H. Temperley (ed.), Peace Conference, IV, 311 ff.

CONCLUSION OF THE OCCUPATION

At Paris during 1919 the Peace Conference intermittently discussed the disposal of all surrendered enemy warships held under allied surveillance, and tried to work out a guiding principle. The budding Anglo-American naval rivalry, and the scuttling of German men-of-war at Scapa Flow in June, injected a note of bitterness into the conversations. It was on December 9, 1919, that the Conference of Ambassadors finally decided that the interned German and Austrian naval units should be distributed among the allies according to a tonnage ratio which, incidentally, scarcely took into account the economic sacrifice made by the United States in the late war.¹⁶⁴ These vessels were to be broken up or sunk, except for a few units that France and Italy were permitted to incorporate into their fleets. The Conference established an Interallied Committee for the Destruction of Enemy Warships to make allocations of specific ships and guarantee their dismantling by the recipient power. To France the Interallied Committee allotted the ex-Austrian pre-dreadnoughts Zyrini and Radetzky, and to Italy the torpedo boats, 12 and 52. It will be remembered that these ships were in American custody at Spalato.

Shortly after the allocations had been worked out on paper the French approached the Italians with a proposition to

¹⁶⁴ Piqued by this, and having no urgent desire for the warships anyway, the United States ultimately refused its allotted share. The few units, notably the Ostfriesland, which were conveyed to the United States for inspection, testing, and bombing were acquired under another agreement.

exchange their ships, Zrinyi and Radetzky, for the Prinz Eugen, an ex-Austrian dreadnought granted to Italy. After some delay caused by Italian reluctance, an agreement was effected in July 1920 approving the transfer on the basis of a French promise to negotiate with the United States for a quick delivery of the Zrinyi and Radetzky to Italy. Therefore, even while the Italo-French conversations were in progress, Italy displayed a keen interest in the two pre-dreadnoughts anchored in Castelli Bay. No later than February, 1920, Italian authorities requested Admiral Andrews to deliver the ships, but, referring the matter to the force commander in London who got in touch with the American ambassador in Paris, Andrews found the Italian appeal denied on the grounds that "it was an attempt to remove our reason for being in the Adriatic, and thus get the American ships out." Having little faith in Italy's good behavior in the Adriatic the Americans turned down the application.

In March, 1920, when Admiral Andrews was in Rome, the Italian minister of marine reopened the question. On this occasion Andrews temporized by replying that the ships would probably be delivered when the Treaty of St. Germaine had been ratified by the three powers requisite before it came into force. Again Andrews forwarded Italy's request to the force commander, Admiral Knapp. At the same time Italy pushed the matter through regular diplomatic channels; the American ambassadors to Paris and Rome cabled to the State Department the wishes of the Italian government, and the

145 Naval Archives, File 28785-208:1.

166 Naval Archives, File 28785-208:1.

Italian ambassador to Washington personally made similar representations. But the State Department was reluctant. It desired primarily to condition transfer of the warships upon the simultaneous evacuation of central Dalmatia by American and Italian naval forces, that is, to liquidate the American mission successfully by manœvering all Italian ships out of Spalato.

Admiral Andrews emphatically endorsed this attitude in July 1920, and even went beyond by recommending that American units be withdrawn from Spalato "if the Italian naval personnel remained there and continued their propaganda and provocative tactics..."

since it might appear that the United States was supporting Italian policy.¹⁶⁷ Authorization for unilateral evacuation did not come through; Italo-American negotiations in Washington lagged. Carrying out their part of the transfer bargain referred to above, the French now injected themselves into the question. On instructions from Paris the French naval attaché in Rome asked the American attaché to have the Zrinyi, Radetzky, and the two torpedo boats turned over to Italy. Perhaps unaware that this step was linked to a larger political problem, the American naval attaché on August 6, 1920, simply directed a memorandum to Andrews advising him to get in touch with his seniors and then deliver the men-of-war to Italy.

¹⁶⁷ Admiral Andrews to Naval Operations, Spalato to Washington, July 25, 1920. Naval Archives, File 29231-8.

¹⁶⁸ Naval Archives, File 28785-208:1.

Obviously Admiral Andrews could not take such action without instructions from the force commander, so he referred the memorandum to Admiral Knapp. He, in turn, applied to Washington with the result that the languishing diplomatic negotiations revived. On September 12, 1920, the Italian government definitively declined to evacuate its ships from Spalato in return for the delivery of the ex-Austrian men-of-war.¹⁶⁷ Having no other alternative, since it could not postpone the matter indefinitely, the State Department accepted the Italian position. So it happened that in late October Admiral Andrews received an authorization to turn over the ships, all details of the operation being left to his discretion. The Italians feared if they themselves removed the vessels it would be so distasteful to the Yugoslavs that the spectacle might well precipitate a riot ashore. Rear Admiral Resio therefore submitted these views to Admiral Andrews, and asked that American units tow the warships outside the harbor. Upon his consent the Olympia and two destroyers on November 7, 1920, towed the ex-Austrian battleships out to sea in the direction of Sebenico where they were formally made over to the Italian navy. This operation concluded the naval aspects of the American mission in the Adriatic begun two years before almost to a day.

167 / Italian Ambassador to Mr. Colby, September 12, 1920. Naval Archives, File 28766-161:25.

Intelligence Report, November 9, 1920; Naval Records, File C-10-a. Also Naval Archives, File 28785-208:3, 4, and 6. All valuable parts of the two torpedo boats which had been wrecked by a storm earlier in the year were stowed aboard the battleships when the Italians received them in November, 1920.

If Italy, as appears likely, hoped to induce the United States to withdraw its warships from Spalato immediately following the disappearance of the Zyrini and Radetzky only disappointment awaited, because American units remained for another eleven months. Italy having refused to evacuate its men-of-war from Spalato when the ex-Austrian pre-dreadnoughts were delivered to Italian representatives, the State Department had the navy maintain American vessels on station. It was a gesture, but an important one. True enough, Italy had officially relinquished claims to Dalmatia in a memorandum addressed to the allies, (December 1919), but vis-à-vis Yugoslavia she pressed the claims as a bargaining point to obtain Fiume. This was not reassuring. On the other hand Italy recalled her troops from Cattaro and Antivari in June, 1920, where they had been stationed as part of an interallied force of occupation since the early days of the armistice. // However, the State Department apparently wished to see Italy withdraw not only her ships from Spalato, but also her troops from the Italian zone before concluding the American mission in the Adriatic. The objective, therefore, was political in nature.

Several events occurred about this time which strengthened Yugoslavia, and gave assurance that she would not fall an easy victim to Italian aggression. In August, 1920, the Czechs signed

// Admiral Andrews to Naval Operations, October 18, 1920. Naval Archives, File 29231-E. Cf. H. Temperley, Peace Conference, IV, 309. France handed over the administration of the Cattaro region to the Yugoslavs in October 1920, and evacuated Cattaro finally on March 4, 1921. This liberated the eastern Adriatic littoral south of Slano from allied control. On French evacuation see Memorandum of Conference of Ambassadors to the Yugoslav Delegation, September 15, 1920. Naval Archives, File 6471-230:9.

a convention of alliance with Jugoslavia. This was followed by the Treaty of Rapallo on November 12, in which Italy renounced her claims to Dalmatia, and consented to see Fiume established as an independent city. When, in June of the next year, Jugoslavia and Rumania initialed an alliance, the Jugoslavs were in a position to take care of themselves.

Equally reassuring to the State Department was Italy's announcement in the late winter of 1920-21 that she would evacuate the Italian zone of occupation in four stages beginning April 1 with the area north of Spalato. This first movement was carried out on schedule, but subsequent withdrawals were delayed partly owing to inertia, and partly to the difficulty of reconstructing the local governments which Admiral Millo had so thoroughly uprooted. It was not until the winter of 1921 that Italian forces finally left Dalmatia. The important thing from the American standpoint was that Italy had committed herself to retire from the Dalmatian littoral.

Before this had been accomplished, Admiral Andrews was back in the United States. A final meeting of the Adriatic Committee on January 31, 1921, wound up the business outstanding, and on April 2 Andrews received instructions to discontinue the Adriatic detachment. That month, on the 26, he steamed out of Spalato aboard the Olympia, and after exchanging a national salute with the shore battery,

-Naval Archives, File 6869-731.

Ibid., File 6471-230: 20 and 22.

Memorandum, Office of Naval Records and Library,
to A.C.D., March 22, 1943.

shifted his flag outside the harbor to the U.S.S. Sturtevant and proceeded to Venice. Two days later he hauled down his flag as commander of the United States naval detachment in the Adriatic.¹⁵ That he had understood and competently executed the American political mission in the Adriatic is testified by a letter which he received while preparing his departure. It was sent by the Yugoslav mayor of Sebenico, a city in the Italian zone, and thanked him as a representative of the United States for having protected the Dalmatians from the Italians for the past two years.¹¹

American destroyers remained at Spalato, however, after Andrews left the station. Command of the temporary naval base devolved automatically upon the senior officer present, but there was little to do. Italo-Yugoslav friction had not entirely disappeared, but Italy was in the process of liquidating her Dalmatian enterprise. Orders eventually arrived to close up the base, and -- strange fate indeed -- it was accomplished by the U.S.S. Reuben James under the command of R.F. Zogbaum, senior officer in the Adriatic. Leaving among other items two propellers, a tug, and several tons of oil to the Yugoslavs, the destroyer sailed for home, thereby becoming the warship that concluded American World War naval operations in the Adriatic theater. It was September 29, 1921 when the Reuben James stood out of Spalato.

Memorandum, Office of Naval Records and Library, to A.C.D., March 22, 1943.

Admiral Andrews to Admiral A.P. Niblack, no date but end of April 1921. Naval Archives, File 29231-11.

As an indication of what thirty-five months of American naval control in central Dalmatia meant to the Yugoslavs one need only refer to the parting comment made to Zogbaum by Dr. Metlicic, governor of Dalmatia. "What," anxiously queried the governor, "shall we do now that we have no one to keep the
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Italians from around our necks?"

R.F. Zogbaum to Naval Operations, October 7, 1921. Naval Archives, 28856-671.