

The military participation of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in the settlement of the Scutari-crisis

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The Scutari-crisis was only an episode of the First Balkan War, but its importance outgrew the borders of Albania. The question of the national status of Scutari made a split between the Great Powers and the small Balkan countries. In extreme case the confrontation could even unleash a war. It was the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, which represented its will the most firmly in the field of diplomacy and the military. It played a decisive role in solving the Scutari-crisis and in forming the future of Albania, with military force, too. Though its naval strength was the greatest in the blockade, its participation in the naval demonstration was done only under duress. The Austro-Hungarian seamen and soldiers, together with the formations of the other countries, did their best among the special circumstances of the terrain of Albania and took part in forming the fate of the town. At the same time the activity of the Scutari detachment throws light on the conflicting interests coming from the break-down of the balance of European powers. The unity was only a surface, what ended with the start of the hostilities. It was only a cruel grimace of fate, that the once participants of the Scutari detachment later had to fight against each other on the battlefields of the Great War several times.

Introduction

During the First Balkan War in spring 1913 the interest of the diplomats, military leaders and public of the Great Powers, was engaged by the so called Scutari-crisis. The question, where Scutari in the south-west of the Balkan peninsula should belong in future, led to antagonism between Montenegro and her ally Serbia as well as the decisive powers of the continent. The crisis also latently implied the outbreak of an armed conflict between Austria-Hungary and Montenegro.

The European countries had made some efforts in the autumn of 1912 to handle the Balkan crisis. Supported by Germany and France, Great Britain suggested a conference of the Great Powers for the peaceful settlement of the problem. The conference convened in London's St James Palace on 17 December. It was attended by delegates of the six Great Powers, participants of the once Berlin Congress of 1878. Great Britain

Received: March 10, 2005

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was represented by Foreign Minister Sir Edward Grey, Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy and Russia by their ambassadors to London.¹ The meetings behind closed doors were chaired by Grey.

From 16 December 1912 the peace conference of the states assembled in the Balkan Alliance (Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, Serbia) and Turkey also met in London. As honorary chairman the British foreign minister was the arbiter in the territorial dispute of the small Balkan states with each other and with Turkey.²

On 22 March 1913 the conference decreed that the town of Scutari should belong to the independent Albania in the future. On March 29, an international naval demonstration was decided upon.³

The independent measures of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy

In the Balkan policy of Austria-Hungary the Albanian issue had high priority already at the turn of the century. The western part of the peninsula belonged to the sphere of interest of the Monarchy (and its eastern part to that of Russia). After the weakening of Turkish suzerainty, Austria-Hungary was not in the position to allow another power to occupy Albania. For the Danubian Empire, the Albanian areas had strategic significance: the threat was looming large that Italy, also interested in Albanian matters, would set its foot on the shore of the Adriatic across from Italy and block off the Monarchy's free entrance to the Mediterranean. The interests of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy would have been served best by all the Albanian ethnicity being united in a nation-state. That, however, could not be achieved for the conflicting interests of the Great Powers, but the Monarchy wished at least to have Scutari and its region belong to the new Albanian state. This was contradictory to the interests of Serbia supported by Russia, since the small state needed a sea exit, too which was only possible in North-Albania. All this explains why the Monarchy exposed itself so much that eventually it would have gone into war for Scutari. Having been unable to persuade the Great Powers that she would pacify the region alone, Austria-Hungary had to take part in the international action what aimed to solve the crisis.

Scutari of some 30 000 inhabitants, two-thirds Moslems and one-third Christians, was besieged by the troops of Montenegro and Serbia from the end of October 1912. The main war aim of Montenegro was to seize the largest and most advanced Albanian town and its environs. The town was defended by a Turkish force of 26 000 and in late March it was enclosed by some 52 000. So as to put an end to the siege, the Monarchy threatened to create a naval blockade along the coasts of Montenegro and to close the inland borders of the Monarchy adjacent to Montenegro and the Sancak. The aim of

these measure was to prevent the food supply of the little kingdom. On 18 March the Ruler of the Monarchy ordered the deployment of a naval division of 3 ships of the line, 1 heavy and 1 light cruisers, and a torpedo-flotilla to Cattaro.⁴

The division including semi-dreadnoughts *S. M. S. Radetzky*, *S. M. S. Zrínyi*, *S. M. S. Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand*, armoured cruiser *S. M. S. Sankt Georg*, scout cruiser *S. M. S. Admiral Spaun* and some destroyers left Pola the next morning.⁵

The Monarchy begun to prepare a naval demonstration.⁶ In his orders of March 22 to the Austro-Hungarian naval division in Cattaro, Conrad stressed: the aim of the future action was to enforce Austria-Hungary's demands to the two states involved in an offensive against Scutari (besiegers should stop shelling the neutral town parts and let the civil population of the town leave). The aim of the ships in the demonstration was to impose a peace blockade on the coasts of Montenegro and Albania from the Dalmatian border to Cap Langhi, south of Durazzo. Except for the ships of the allies, the blockade applied to all war- and commercial ships sailing under any colours. The ships that failed to leave the blockaded area had to be escorted to the Pola.⁷

To feed the civilians in Scutari, the Monarchy decided on sending relief aid. On 24 March the Lloyd steamship *Metković* was sent to Cattaro with food, doctors, nurses and tents on board where she arrived in the morning of the 26th.⁸ The commander of the expedition was Elias Zsivkovics, captain of the 32nd Common Infantry Regiment. The allied Italian government was also informed, and the cargo ship *Peuceta* with a load of aid also joined the Austro-Hungarian ship in Cattaro Bay on 30 March. The king of Montenegro announced on 24 April (the town fell to them the day before) that they could not feed the population of Scutari so they would let in the Austrian-Hungarian and Italian relief expeditions. The Austro-Hungarian leaders and the rest of the Great Powers were afraid that the Montenegrins would reserve the aid to supply their own troops. Therefore the convoy only reached Scutari after the Montenegrins had left, in the afternoon of May 10.⁹

The naval demonstration

On 29 May it was thus ruled in London that an international naval demonstration would be held along the Montenegrin and Albanian coasts. Russia agreed with the action but declared abstention and entrusted France with representation.¹⁰

In compliance with the London resolution, Austria-Hungary sent from its base in Cattaro Bay to the Albanian waters semi-dreadnought *S. M. S. Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand* under the command of Captain Oskar Hansa (as flagship of the squadron on board with Rear-Admiral Maximilian Njegovan.), *S. M. S. Radetzky* (Captain Gottfried

Baron Mayern-Hohenberg), and *S. M. S. Zrínyi* (Captain Alfred Baron Koudelka); small cruiser *S. M. S. Aspern* (Frigate Captain Paul Stupar), and destroyers *S. M. S. Ulan* (Corvette Captain Anton Dolenc), *S. M. S. Scharfschütze* (Corvette Captain Benno von Millenkovich) and *S. M. S. Dinara* (Corvette Captain Wilhelm Buchmeyer) on 1 April.¹¹ The same day admiral Njegovan was given order to wait for the ships of the rest of the Great Powers before Antivari and take the necessary steps in co-ordination with their commanders.¹²

The division left the base in morning 2 April and threw anchor 8 nautical miles away in front of Antivari later in the morning. On 3 April early, the Italian armoured cruiser *Francesco Ferruccio* (Captain Giorgio de Pons), and ship of the line *Ammiraglio Di Saint Bon* (Captain Goffredo Ginocchio) joined them. In the afternoon, the German small cruiser *S. M. S. Breslau* (Frigate Captain von Klitzing) also arrived. In the morning on 5 April, the British ship of the line *H. M. S. King Edward VII* (Captain Edward Henry Fitzhardinge Heaton-Ellis; on board with Vice-Admiral Cecil Burney) and the French armoured cruiser *Edgar Quinet* (Captain Albert Allaire), as well as the British second class cruiser *H. M. S. Dartmouth* (Captain Henry Lancelot Mawbey) arrived at the meeting place. For 9 o'clock in the morning the international fleet of the ships of the five European Great Powers sailed before the port of Antivari.¹³ The commander of the naval division was British ranking officer Vice-Admiral Cecil Burney, who was elected to the chairman of the admirals' council, formed on the spot.¹⁴

At the first admiral's meeting on 5 April they practically accepted the claims presented by Njegovan, since the same day Burney telegraphed to the Montenegro government that the fleet had arrived and summoned them to comply with the demand of the Great Powers (stopping the siege of Scutari) within 24 hours.¹⁵

On 6th the Montenegrin government sent a negative answer and declared that the presence of the international fleet was a violation of the principle of neutrality. At the meeting held on the same day Njegovan argued for immediate ordering of the blockade. On 7 April Burney received the command from his government that he should warn the Greek ships transporting Serbian troops to Albania before they put to port. The British second class cruiser *H. M. S. Dartmouth* was despatched to Corfu and the small cruiser *S. M. S. Aspern* to Durazzo to detect the Serbian troops transfer and the situation on the shore. The two ships returned to Antivari a day later.¹⁶

At Corfu *H. M. S. Dartmouth* found 1 Greek battleship, 1 destroyer and 18 cargo steamers, without any trace of troops. *S. M. S. Aspern* did not notice any troops leaving or landing in either San Giovanni di Medua or Durazzo.¹⁷

On 9 April the Vienna Ministry of War gave permission for the concerned ships to run into Teodo for coal supply as it was the only safe port close to the base of the manoeuvre of the international fleet in Cattaro Bay.¹⁸

When the commanders of the fleet detachments had received the necessary empowerment from their governments, the commander-in-chief of the united fleet declared the naval blockade in front of the Montenegrin and Albanian coasts from 8 am on 10 April. The blockade declaration was sent to Montenegro and the other affected countries involved in English and Croatian languages.¹⁹

An article in the contemporary press explained that the peace blockade was a tool of compulsion of maritime law which was used with the aim of forcing a weaker country to negotiations or concessions by cutting off sea traffic. It could develop into a fleet demonstration.²⁰

On the day of the declaration of the blockade the Serbian government ordered its troops fighting in front of Scutari to stop the siege. This was due partly to the presence of the fleet, and partly to the pressure of the Great Powers expressed in several threatening memorandums.²¹

The territory of the blockade was divided into three parts:

Zone A (between Antivari and Cap Menders): Austro-Hungarian semi-dreadnoughts *S. M. S. Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand*, *S. M. S. Radetzky*, *S. M. S. Zrínyi*, Austro-Hungarian destroyers *S. M. S. Scharfschütze*, *S. M. S. Ulan*, British second class cruiser *H. M. S. Dartmouth*;

Zone B (between Cap Menders and the Mouth of River Bojana): Italian ship of the line *Ammiraglio Di Saint Bon*, German small cruiser *S. M. S. Breslau*, Austro-Hungarian small cruiser *S. M. S. Aspern*, Austro-Hungarian mine-sweeper *S. M. S. Salamander*;

Zone C: (from the Mouth of River Bojana to the southern end of the Mouth of River Drin): British ship of the line *H. M. S. King Edward VII*, French armoured cruiser *Edgar Quinet* (replaced by armoured cruiser *Ernest Renan* from 21 April), Italian armoured cruiser *Francesco Ferruccio*, Austro-Hungarian destroyer *S. M. S. Dinara*.²²

Late on 10 April the Montenegrin royal yacht *Rumija*, headed for the port of Antivari with Turkish prisoners on board, was detained by the Austro-Hungarian ships and forced to leave towards Durazzo.²³

On 11th the Lloyd steamship *Adelsberg* with Serbian officers and a war chest aboard was kept off the area of the blockade. It went on to Cattaro without putting in elsewhere, where the Serbs were arrested.²⁴

The leaders of the marine section at the Ministry of War in Vienna already questioned the effectiveness of the blockade a day after its declaration. Influential

opinions claimed the blockaded area was not large enough to put sufficient pressure on the besiegers of Scutari, since the influx of food and ammunition as well as of reserves through the southern ports could only be made somewhat more difficult.²⁵

With the passing of each day it became more obvious that the blockade could not achieve the expected and desired result. On 17 April Nicholas, King of Montenegro replied to the joint note of the Great Powers of the previous day that he would go on with the siege of Scutari.²⁶

The blockade did not affect the Montenegrins very much since in the weeks prior to it the Serbian reinforcement and siege-pieces had been disembarked. The effect of the naval blockade could be detected in the difficulties of the food supply to North-Albania and Montenegro. The little kingdom simply ignored the London resolutions, as it was clear even in Cetinje that there were serious interest conflicts between the European powers: with the emergence of two large power blocs the continent became bipolar, thus an unified and forceful manoeuvre did not need to be feared.

Considering that the geographical conditions of the blockaded coast almost totally precluded the possibility of a landing, the blockade confined the ports of Antivari, Dulcigno, San Giovanni di Medua, Alessio and their surroundings. When a ship appeared on the horizon, a torpedo-boat gave a warning that there was a blockade, and the breakthrough will be punished by confiscating the ship. At nights the warships lighted up the coastline with searchlights.²⁷

The naval demonstration was favourable for the testing of new technical tools. The Monarchy, for example, first deployed aeroplanes for military purposes in late April 1913. Three French Donnet-Léveque marine aeroplanes were placed on the ships of the *Radetzky*-class. The planes had a role in the visual observation of the coastline, in photographic reconnaissance and the forwarding of information.²⁸

Between 15 and 21 April, the commanders of the naval units of all Great Powers involved in the blockade were authorised by their governments to extend the blockade.²⁹

The ships that came to take away the Serbian troops were allowed to cross the blockade line. On 21 April three Greek steamships escorted by the gunboat *Pinios* as well as the French armoured cruiser *Ernest Renan* to replace *Edgar Quinet* arrived in the port of San Giovanni di Medua.³⁰

Although the Serbs had withdrawn from under Scutari, the Montenegrins kept assaulting the town, which surrendered (mainly owing to lack of food and ammunition) at 3 a. m. on 23 April, after negotiations from the 20th with the commander of the defenders, Essad pasha. The defenders of the town (their number decreased to 24 000 men) were granted free withdraw with their complete armament and equipment. On 25th Colonel Mitar Martinović was appointed commander of the town.³¹

From 6 o'clock in the morning on 23 at the news of Scutari's falling into Montenegrin hands, the Great Powers extended the sea blockade to Durazzo.³²

The surface units cruising in front of the coastline were regrouped in keeping with the new situation, as follows:

Zone A: *S. M. S. Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand, H. M. S. Dartmouth, S. M. S. Scharfschütze*;

Zone B: *S. M. S. Radetzky, S. M. S. Zrínyi, S. M. S. Ulan*;

Zone C: *H. M. S. King Edward VII, Francesco Ferruccio, Ernest Renan, S. M. S. Breslau, S. M. S. Dinara*;

Zone south of C: *Ammiraglio Di Saint Bon, S. M. S. Aspern*.³³

After the capture of Scutari, the king of Montenegro was not willing to evacuate it. On 26 April Admiral Burney was charged with doing preparations to future occupation of Scutari. The admiral's council decided to keep an international landing force of 1000 in store.³⁴

The units of the international fleet also supervised the withdrawal of the Serbian troops from Albania. The Serbs ordered back from under Scutari, some 17 000 men, were shipped off from San Giovanni di Medua between 23 April and 3 May, while some 7000 Serbian soldiers were transported away from Durazzo in the same weeks.³⁵

Until Scutari was handed over to the Great Powers on May 14, the following ships were sent by the European states to the Mouth of the River Bojana: Austria-Hungary: armoured cruiser *S. M. S. Sankt Georg*, steamship of the Austrian Lloyd SKUTARI (with food and medical equipment on board); Greece: hospital ship *Albania*; Great Britain: destroyers *H. M. S. Angler* and *H. M. S. Foam*; Italy: armoured cruisers *Giuseppe Garibaldi* and *Varese*, lagoon monitor *Marghera*, torpedo-boat *Iride*, river steamships *Mafalda* and *Jolanda*, transport ship of the Italian state railways *Cittá Di Messina* (food, relief); Russia: hospital ship *St Petersburg*.³⁶

Foreign minister Berchtold of Austria-Hungary declared in a telegram sent to London on May 2 that the Monarchy would make independent steps to enforce the decision of the European Great Powers concerning Scutari. The council of ministers produced the necessary financial resources for the mobilisation and declared that the Monarchy would take up arms for her interests in Albania. On the same day Emperor Francis Joseph I ordered the mobilisation of the forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina.³⁷ In view of the pending military action of its northern neighbour and of the diplomatic pressure, the ruler of Montenegro decided to evacuate Scutari upon Russian and French intervention on 4 May. This made Vienna to cancel the sending of the planned ultimatum to Cetinje. With that, the "Scutari-crisis" of several months was settled peacefully.³⁸

The activity of the international Scutari-detachment

On 5 May it was decided in London that an international marine-detachment would be sent to Scutari. In the meantime talks were held in San Giovanni de Medua between Peter Plamenac, the Montenegrin governor of Scutari and the admiral's council which resulted in an agreement on 9th about handing over the town. The main point was the surrendering of the town and the surrounding fortifications to the council on 14 May and the withdrawal of the Montenegrin troops 10 km away from the town. It was also agreed that 1000 Montenegrin soldiers would remain outside the town for the removal of ammunition and heavy guns, and another 200 for the burial of their dead killed on the Taraboš mountain.³⁹

The Scutari-detachment of little combat worth was recruited on the ships of various nationalities from 9 May. From the crew of Austria-Hungary's *S. M. S. Radetzky* and *S. M. S. Zrínyi* 300, from that of *H. M. S. King Edward VII* 250, from *Giuseppe Garibaldi*, *Francesco Ferruccio* and *Varese* 200, from *Ernest Renan* 150 and from Germany's *S. M. S. Breslau* 100 men were delegated to the detachment. The chairman of the international commission for governing Scutari was the British Vice-Admiral Burney, its members included Rear-Admiral Njegovan for Austria-Hungary, Rear-Admiral Patris for Italy, Commodore Laugier for France together with Captain von Klitzing for Germany as commissioner and Corvette Captain Count Welsersheim of Austria, commander of the Austro-Hungarian unit, as judge.⁴⁰

On May 14 everything happened according to the planned program. At 8 am steamship of the Austrian Lloyd *Skutari* and Italian river steamship *Jolanda* sailed off from the Bojana Mouth with 750 members of the international detachment and supplies, ammunition, luggage enough for 8–10 days. (The remaining 250 men of the detachment were shipped into the town by the *Skutari* the next day.) Three quarters of an hour later the Italian steamship *Mafalda*, chosen as flagship, followed them with the ranking commanders and their staff. The *Skutari* ran into the town from which she borrowed her name after 1 p. m. and a guard of honour, consisting of five platoons (with 10 soldiers and 1 flag each) led by Austrian and British navy officers, disembarked immediately. The international commission arriving on board of *Mafalda* at 2.30 p. m. was received by the Austro-Hungarian, Italian, British, French, Russian consuls and a Montenegrin major, commander of the gendarmerie. After disembarking, they received the military courtesy of the international guard and the Montenegrin guard of honour of three companies. Then the delegation was received by the commander of the town, Colonel Bečir in the governor's palace, where the official surrendering of the town and the encircling fortifications took place. The troops replaced the Montenegrin guards and occupied their

sectors, putting up their flags everywhere. It was agreed that 100 Montenegrin soldiers and a few officers would remain in the town to finish the removal of the ammunition, and Montenegrin officials would continue in the post, telegraph and customs offices until they could be replaced. Several Montenegrin officers were to carry out police duties together with the officers of the international forces. That was followed by the ceremonial exchange of flags and the march-past of the Montenegrin forces.⁴¹

The Austro-Hungarian unit was temporarily accommodated in the courtyard of the Jesuit monastery, together with the German sailors of *S. M. S. Breslau*. Njegovan and his staff enjoyed the hospitality of the Austro-Hungarian chief consul von Zambaur. The flags of the five Great Powers were also set up on the citadel. A proclamation to the population was issued immediately after the take-over. The former Turkish garrisons were not used for quartering for sanitary reasons.⁴²

On May 14 the international sea blockade was lifted as of 2 p.m.⁴³ The larger ships such as *S. M. S. Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand*, *S. M. S. Radetzky*, *S. M. S. Zrínyi*, *H. M. S. King Edward VII*, *Ernest Renan*, *S. M. S. Breslau*, *Giuseppe Garibaldi* and *Varese* remained in the Mouth of River Bojana.⁴⁴ Direct contact with them at night was ensured by the Zeiss reflector of *S. M. S. Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand* set up in the citadel and by the heliotrope of the British flagship in the day.⁴⁵ The portable radio station of *S. M. S. Erzherzog Franz Ferdinand* was also installed in the monastery of the Jesuits.

From 15 May, the admiral's council met for several hours every day to work out the organisational frames, service branches useful for the town. The consular corps helped this work as advisers.⁴⁶ The admiral's council exercised legislative and executive powers.

Because of cases of smallpox and typhoid fever, the town was disinfected.⁴⁷ The whole rank and file were vaccinated. There were several Turkish officers, patients and convalescent soldiers as well as officials in the town. The 1663 people were planned to be shipped to Constantinople by sea. There was severe shortage of food. From the Austro-Hungarian and Italian relief supplies everybody received a certain portion of bread a day.⁴⁸

The territory of Scutari was divided into five districts, each district was ruled by one unit of the Great Powers. The military units performed the police, guards and fireguards service, too. Captain von Klitzing was appointed to the governor of the town. Later most sailors were put up in the fumigated garrisons of the Turkish troops.⁴⁹

The jurisdiction of the government of Scutari covered the town and its vicinity in a circle of 10 km radius. On 20 May the international commission set up a temporary town council. It contained six Christian and six Moslem Albanians, just as earlier. The lighting and telegraph service of the town were reorganised. A medical committee was set up to improve the health conditions and combat illnesses. For continuous food

supplies, lagoon monitor *Marghera* was constantly on the way along the River Bojana.⁵⁰ On 21 May the international detachment issued a proclamation in English and Albanian to the population about the governance by the international mission.⁵¹

The removal of the ammunition of the Montenegrin forces was protracted and was finished only on 7 June.⁵²

From late June 1913 the local authorities: the town council, the police, the gendarmerie, the peace and criminal court, the post, the telegraph, the customs and the medical services were already at work. The post and telegraph was taken over from the Montenegrin clerks on 22 June. The admiral's council also functioned as the supreme authority of military, educational and financial affairs.⁵³

The occupation of Scutari with naval forces was only a transitional solution, and they were soon replaced by land forces.⁵⁴

Great-Britain acted it the fastest. On board of armoured cruiser *H. M. S. Black Prince* the 3rd company of the 2nd battalion's of the West Yorkshire Infantry Regiment, 339 men and an orchestra of 42 commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Phillips arrived from Malta at San Giovanni di Medua on 8 June, and in Scutari on 10th in the morning.⁵⁵ (At the end of 1913 the British reduced their troops in the town to 300 men, and replaced them by two companies of the Warwickshire Infantry Regiment under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Laring stationed originally on Malta, in July 1914.)

On 28 June 1913 Germany set up a marine-detachment with 115 men commanded by Major Schneider. The troops arrived in Triest from Kiel and Wilhelmshaven by train on 2 July, followed their journey on board of *S. M. S. Breslau* on the 3rd and on board of the *Marghera* in the Bojana Mouth and arrived in Scutari on the 7th.⁵⁶

Two companies of the 24. Infantry Regiment (stationed at Novara), one mountain artillery platoon and seven platoons of the Alpini (mountain riflemen) (altogether 437 men and an orchestra of 40) arrived from Italy on 25 July under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Vigliani.⁵⁷

Accurate plans were worked out in the Austro-Hungarian general staff which reveal that an officer in the rank of colonel with a good command of English and French was planned to be delegated to Scutari together with 450 men. (They considered Colonel Pilár of the 32nd Field Artillery Battalion, Brigadier General Count Salis-Seewis and Lieutenant-Colonel Kailer of the 87th Infantry Regiment.) It was Archduke Franz Ferdinand's opinion that the detachment had to involve all three services and the commander was to be chosen from the 87th regiment.⁵⁸

To replace the Austro-Hungarian marine forces, the 4th battalion of the 87th (Baron Succovaty) Common Infantry Regiment, stationed in Pola (with some troops from around Cilli), was deployed. The force of four companies was reinforced by a machine

gun squad, a troop-train, the 3rd Sapper Battalion of Görz, a medical squad, a supply dump, a field radio station and the regiment orchestra, making up 29 officers and 480 men. The unit, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Ottmar Kailer, left the port of Pola at 2 p.m. on 24 July 1913 on board of the Lloyd steamship URANO. It was a speciality, that the soldiers wore tropical helmets.⁵⁹

The URANO threw anchor in the port of San Giovanni di Medua at a quarter to six in the morning of 26 July. The unit arrived in Scutari on foot, marching to music, early on the 28th.⁶⁰ Until they could occupy their planned station in a former Turkish barrack, the troops were put up in temporary shelters (Jesuit monastery, subsidiary buildings of the Franciscan monastery, some private houses).⁶¹ Everyone was vaccinated and supplied with quinine.⁶²

The sea cargo liner *Le Balkan* brought the 4th company (204 men) of the 22nd French Colonial Infantry Regiment (garrisoned at Hyères) to the mouth of the River Bojana from Marseilles on 7 August. Under the command of Captain Coulais they got to Scutari the next day.⁶³ With the last arriving French, the change of all forces in Scutari was finished.

On July 30 Richard Barry, Esq., an Austro-Hungarian Rear-Admiral already in Scutari since the 24th July, took over Njegovan's place in the admiral's council and the international commission. Njegovan went on board of *S. M. S. Viribus Unitis* with the marine-detachment as commander of the Austrian-Hungarian detachment in the Bojana Mouth.⁶⁴ At the Germans, Captain von Klitzing was replaced by Corvette Captain Biermann.⁶⁵

One of the major tasks of the Austro-Hungarian contingent was to protect the population against crime. Shortly after their arrival they set up a military police section. Training went on as in peacetime. The officers were in mutual co-operation especially with their Italian and German colleagues. In communication with the other troops they were the elite, looked upon with respect by the others.⁶⁶

The military holidays were not forgotten in Albania, either. The birthday of Emperor Francis Joseph I. was celebrated in Scutari with great pomp on 18 August 1913. The night before the orchestra of the 87th Infantry Regiment made a tour of the town, playing pieces outside the residences of the English and Italian admirals and then of the French and German commanders, ending the round in front of the consulate of the Monarchy. At 7.30 am on the 18th, Vice-Admiral Burney held a parade at the "Place des Offiziers" where apart from the entire Austro-Hungarian battalion, each division had march of honour.⁶⁷

There were, however, tensions between the different nationalities taking part in the mission, partly between representatives of the Entente and those of the Triple Alliance,

and partly between individual allies. In the admiral's council, for example, the Italian commander regularly voted on the side of the Entente representatives, so the German and Austro-Hungarian officers gradually dropped off the meetings.⁶⁸

The consensus was frequently disrupted. For example, at the admiral's meeting on 16 September the British admiral raised the question of building a bridge over the River Drin again and conducted the vote. In keeping with the Vienna directives, Barry did not agree. Burney, in his turn, expressed his decision of commissioning the Société d'Oriente for the construction of the bridge, as 4:1 votes went to it. This put an end to the so-far prevailing principle of unanimity. Barry asked the British admiral not to hold a new meeting before new instructions had arrived from Vienna. The council went on meeting in Barry's absence and even passed decisive resolutions. In a telegram of 5 October the Austro-Hungarian admiral complained to his superiors that the intolerable situation might suggest to the population that the Monarchy was excluded from the work of the international commission and the government. The German representative, who had no instructions from home, simply accepted the status quo and joined the majority. The Italian representative, who received identical directives with Barry, always voted similarly to the British admiral, with a few exceptions.⁶⁹ The English, French and Italian members of the council held further meetings and passed decisions in October with Germany's and Austria-Hungary's representatives staying away.⁷⁰

The decision about the reshuffling of the gendarmerie and the police, under British command so far, was taken on 2 September. A three-member committee was appointed to lead the two bodies, presided by an Austrian captain and a British and Italian captain as members. The Vienna Ministry of War appointed Captain Josef Mair of the 47th Imperial and Royal Infantry Regiment to the post. The officer had a good command of Italian, French and English.⁷¹

On 2 September German Major Schneider arrived in Triest with 20 marines dispatched to reinforce the German unit in Scutari. They sailed from Pola on the German cruiser *S. M. S. Geier* to the Bojana Mouth, and from there to Scutari.⁷²

On 29 July 1913, the London conference of the Great Powers decided to create an autonomous, neutral Albania under the guarantee of the European Powers, in the form of a principality. They decided to set up an International Control Commission in Valona including of one representative of each Great Power and one of Albania. The tenure of the committee was to be ten years, and they were in charge of the civilian and financial affairs of the country. Scutari's government was subordinated to this control commission.⁷³

When the control over the town administration passed to the officers of the land forces, the committee decided unanimously on 6 September that each of its members

would inform their respective governments: the international commission would dissolve the moment the Control Commission arrived in Albania. The ranking division commander would remain temporarily the military governor of Scutari and the president of the committee of the superiors of the five contingents. This committee would assume control of the town. A colonel was planned to head the international troops. Upon Burney's recommendation, it was to be a British colonel, with the French and Italian committee members agreeing.⁷⁴ On 21 September the British Lieutenant-Colonel Phillips was promoted to the rank of colonel.⁷⁵

In compliance with the resolution of the minister's conference in London on 15 October 1913, the admirals' council dissolved, and its duties were taken over by the Valona Control Commission. The German Corvette Captain Biermann left Scutari on 15 October, the Austro-Hungarian Rear-Admiral Barry on 17th, the British Vice-Admiral Burney, Italian Rear-Admiral Patris and French Captain Pradier on 19th. The flags of the five Great Powers were lowered and the Albanian colours hoisted. A marine officer as adviser of the Austro-Hungarian unit and in charge of the port authority remained. The British Colonel Phillips was appointed commander of the international occupying forces and governor of the town.⁷⁶

The Austro-Hungarian contingent, headed by Colonel Kailer, consisted of the following parts in November 1913: the 4th battalion of the 87th Infantry Regiment, its staff, four companies, a machine gun squad, the troops-train, regiment musicians, the 3rd sapper battalion, a mounted patrol, a medical squad, a supply depot and the 6th field radio station under the command of Captain Császár. The unit numbered 595 (31 officers and 564 men), the war strength was 450.⁷⁷

On 27 November the French government appointed Jules Roux, a major of the colonial artillery to lead the French unit of Scutari, and Captain Arguel, who also worked as police magistrate, was called back.⁷⁸

In mid-December the British commander of the town turned to the Control Commission for permission to repair the road between Scutari and San Giovanni di Medua, to be done by Austro-Hungarian and Italian sappers.⁷⁹ The two units agreed on 29 December to start work on 7 January 1914. Both units chose a group of 40 and worked for four weeks, dividing the stretch of road into eight sections.⁸⁰

After the assassination in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914, communication between the contingents of different nationality became difficult. On 28 July the Monarchy declared war on Serbia. The European states ordered general mobilisation one after the other, the First World War broke out. Each unit was waiting for being called back. The elimination of the international governing apparatus took place rapidly. The British unit with Colonel Phillips at its head left the town on 1 August via the ports of San Giovanni

di Medua and Alessio. They sailed to Malta and arrived in Southampton on 19th. At the end of 1914 the formation was put into action in the battles of Flanders, in the western theatre of war.⁸¹

The command of the town was taken over by the ranking Italian Lieutenant-Colonel Vigliani. The British officer as chief of police and prison warden was replaced by Italian Captain Borgna, the customs officer became the Austrian Captain Mair. They both supervised the work of the gendarmerie as well. The language of the police changed from English to Albanian. Now the town was controlled by four units instead of five.⁸²

Since 29 June 1914, the commander of the Austro-Hungarian unit in Scutari was Lieutenant-Colonel Edler von Lerch, who replaced Major Franz Peter, former commander since 1 November the previous year. After the departure of German Rear-Admiral Souchon on 1 August, the German marine detachment became the 5th company of the 4th battalion of the Imperial and Royal 87th Infantry Regiment, with Major Schneider at the head. After the receipt of the order to withdraw, on 4 August the Austro-Hungarian battalion set out to San Giovanni di Medua on foot, from where they sailed with a part of the Austro-Hungarian colony in Scutari to Cattaro Bay aboard a Triest steamship *Sofia Hohenberg* on 6 August. From Castelnuovo the battalion was transported to Mostar by train on 7 August, where they were supplied with arms and equipment suited for mountain warfare. On 10th the division was sent to Sarajevo where they joined to their original regiments in the 6th Austrian-Hungarian Army (under the command of General Potiorek) attacking Serbia from South Bosnia and Herzegovina.⁸³

The Germans received the uniform of the Austro-Hungarian Common Army, part of its arms and equipment, too. (The German company included 3 officers and 100 soldiers, as well as a machine gun.) In the meantime, the rest arrived in Sarajevo from Cilli. After the enlargement, the Scutari detachment numbered 1700 men with the Germans. The next day they were transported to Višegrad under the command of Major Franz Peter. From 16th they took part in the fights around the town. Upon their own request, the Germans fought in the first line, losing 3 dead and 23 wounded in the assault against Point No. 954. On 21st the German unit was ordered back home.⁸⁴ The Germans arrived in Vienna via Sarajevo on 3 September, where the public received the first allied troops fighting with the Austrian-Hungarian forces with great applause.⁸⁵ On 5 September the German company left Vienna, on 7th it was disbanded. The soldiers were assigned to the supplementary squads of their original units. The Austro-Hungarian 87th Common Infantry Regiment stayed in the Serbian war theatre until the

end of November 1914. From May 1915 they fought in the Italian Front, on the Doberdo Plateau, and in autumn 1915 they took part in capturing Belgrade.⁸⁶

The Italian contingent left Scutari on 21 August 1914. Via the port of Durazzo, it returned home on board of a steamship. Town commander Vigliani charged the consular corps with the leadership of the town before his start.

The French detachment led by Major Coulais remained the longest. They were put at the disposal of the Montenegrin sovereign as guards. They left the town across the Lake Scutari on 24 August. In November 1915, together with the Montenegrin troops, they were engaged for defence of the Lovćen Massif. They began retreating on 12 January 1916 via Scutari to Durazzo, from where the unit was transported back to France at the end of January 1916.⁸⁷

The consular corps took over the government of Scutari on 23 August 1914. In November law and order was ensured by a police and gendarmerie of some 450 Albanians.⁸⁸

Several members of the Austro-Hungarian Scutari-detachment got decorations for the service in Albania. Captain Elias Zsivkovics from the 32nd Common Infantry Regiment, commander and leader of the Austro-Hungarian Relief Mission, was decorated with the Military Merit Cross, similarly to Lieutenant Karl Steiner, messing officer of the 4th (Bosnia-Herzegovina) Infantry Regiment, who got decoration for taking part in the expedition on 30 November 1913. Lieutenant-Colonel Ottmar Kailer, the commander of the detachment received the 3rd Class of the Order of the Austrian Imperial Iron Crown, Captain Karl Cvitković, the aide-de-camp of the unit was given the Bronze Military Medal on Red Ribbon, Major Franz Peter, battalion commander, got a Military Merit Cross.⁸⁹

Summary

The Scutari-crisis was only an episode of the First Balkan War, but its importance outgrew the borders of Albania. The question of the national status of Scutari made a split between the Great Powers and the small Balkan countries. In extreme case the confrontation could even unleash a war. It was the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, which represented its will the most firmly in the field of diplomacy and the military. It played a decisive role in solving the Scutari-crisis and in forming the future of Albania, with military force, too. Though its naval strength was the greatest in the blockade, its participation in the naval demonstration was done only under duress. The Austro-Hungarian seamen and soldiers, together with the formations of the other countries, did their best among the special circumstances of the terrain of Albania and took part in

forming the fate of the town. At the same time the activity of the Scutari detachment throws light on the conflicting interests coming from the break-down of the balance of European powers. The unity was only a surface, what ended with the start of the hostilities. It was only a cruel grimace of fate, that the once participants of the Scutari detachment later had to fight against each other on the battlefields of the Great War several times.

Notes

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