

# THE PROBLEM OF THE ADRIATIC

BY V. R. SAVIĆ

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THE future peace conference will have to solve many difficult and complicated problems, and among them the problem of the Adriatic is the most delicate one. Upon the just and fair solution of that problem depends the happiness of the next generation of two gifted nations, the Italians and the Southern Slavs, and the future peace between the Latin and the Slav worlds. Here, if anywhere, the factors which in the past have led to war must be eliminated, unless the bright hopes of humanity are to end in bitter disappointment, the vision of enduring peace vanish like a fairy dream.

Italy, by intervening in the present war on the side of the Allies, was able to promote the realizations of her views upon the Adriatic. I do not pretend to know what is the agreement concerning the Adriatic arrived at between the powers of the quadruple Entente, but I am convinced that no decision of the cabinets can oppose for long the living forces which determine the life of nations. If the agreement concerning the future of the Adriatic arrived at between the Allies be just, it will endure and be productive of beneficent consequences. If it be one-sided and prejudicial to the vital interests of the most-concerned parties, it will stand for some time, causing permanent irritation and friction, until it breaks out in new and sanguinary complications. But the Southern Slavs denounce such a procedure as being in evident contradiction with the principles of democracy—the bargain being accomplished without taking into account the wishes and aspirations of the people of those provinces. They rightly hope that the people and the government of the United States will use all their mighty influence to bring all former conventions arrived at between the European Allies into harmony with the lofty principles for which they entered the war. The new democracy in Russia is already raising its voice with that object in view.

Every student of the European situation knows perfectly well that Italy had nothing to gain and everything to fear from the German victory. For Italy, as for Great Britain and France, the present war ought to have a strictly defensive character. We must give the credit to the Italian statesmen that from the very outset of the present crisis they clearly saw on which side the interest of Italy was to be found. To Italy's honor, it took the side of liberty and democracy in Europe. The Teutonic victory would have placed Italy in the same position towards Austria-Hungary as Serbia occupied before the present crisis arose. Therefore it was to the paramount interest of Italy to frustrate the possibility of a Teutonic victory in Europe. This was a sufficient inducement for Italy to intervene on the side of the Allies. But an equally strong, and perhaps more popular, inducement for Italy to intervene was the achievement of national unity.

But the achievement of Italian national unity and the claims to obtain for Italy certain strategical frontiers, if pushed to extremes, will clash with the not less rightful claims and aspirations of the Southern Slavs. Already the German papers have with joy announced the irreconcilable antagonism between Italian and Slavic interests on the shores of the Adriatic, and given their public to understand that in this quarter and direction lie the hopes of the German expansion to the Mediterranean.

A fair compromise and a friendly agreement between Italy and her Slav neighbor is a necessity for both of them as well as for the future peace of Europe. Italy can achieve that if she is to follow her loftiest traditions and to listen to the advice of her best brains and patriots.

The American public can do much in this matter. The United States are the staunch and proved friend of Italy; they have also greeted with much sympathy the solution of the Southern Slav question on the basis of ethnographic unity and self-government. Nobody is better entitled to give to both nations the impartial counsel of moderation and wisdom, and nobody's advice, if so given, will be received more readily than that of this country. To be able to raise their mighty voice, the American public must take some patience to grasp and understand all the necessary facts concerning the position of both nations in the Adriatic.

The Adriatic coast now belonging to Austria-Hungary,

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and where meet the interests of the Italians and the Serbo-Croats, are: Dalmatia, together with the Dalmatian archipelago, Istria, Trieste, and Goritzia, with the naval port of Pola. As regards the nationality of these provinces the following numbers (see the official Austro-Hungarian statistics of 1910) will give the best illustration:

	Superficial Area, kms.	Italians	Slavs	Germans	Total
Dalmatia . . . . .	12,840	18,028	612,669	3,081	633,778
Istria . . . . .	4,956	145,517	224,400	12,735	382,652
Trieste . . . . .	95	118,959	59,974	11,870	190,803
Goritzia . . . . .	2,918	90,119	155,039	4,500	249,658
Total . . . . .	20,809	372,623	1,052,082	32,186	1,456,891

Following up the fallacious and the most dangerous theory of strong strategic frontiers, a very considerable part of Italian public opinion has formulated a vast programme for incorporation in Italy of nearly all the Adriatic provinces lying on the opposite shore. Already, in October, 1914, Italy occupied Valona, which port, with Brindisi on the Italian shore, completely commands the entrance into the Adriatic. Thus the idea has been propounded that the natural and strongly strategic frontier for Italy is formed by the ridge of the Julian Alps, which descends from the Tyrol to the Adriatic, forming the watershed between the Adriatic and the Danube. In obtaining that line for her eastern frontier, the kingdom of Italy would incorporate the following Austro-Hungarian provinces: Goritzia, Carniola, Trieste, Istria, the western districts of Northern Dalmatia, with all the islands of the Dalmatian archipelago. In such a way Italy would have for her subjects a dense and homogeneous population of the Southern Slavs numbering about one million people.

In propounding such views, and striving to impose such a policy upon the Italian Government, the Italian press writers argue as follows:

(1) The Adriatic is an Italian sea, and, accordingly, Italy must possess or control all its coasts.

(2) Italy possesses historical claims to those provinces, as some of them belonged for a time to the Venetian republic. Italy being the rightful heir to Venice must renew the glory of the Italian reign in the Adriatic.

(3) Italy also possesses ethnographic claims upon those provinces as they contain a large Italian population. There-

fore, in order to achieve her national unity, Italy must incorporate those provinces.

(4) Italy, for reasons of military efficiency, must have a strong natural frontier against her new Slavic neighbor.

(5) The last, but perhaps not the least, argument for the Italian occupation of the opposite coast of the Adriatic was the fear lest Russia should seize the future Serbian ports of the Adriatic, and thus threaten the security of Italy.

The issues involved in the just solution of the problem of the Adriatic are of such tremendous importance, not only for Italians and Serbians, but also for all neighboring nations, as well as for European peace in general, that I think no apology is necessary for going at some length into the above arguments.

The first contention that the Adriatic is an Italian sea, and must be militarily controlled by Italy, is a shallow piece of reasoning, whose kind is produced from time to time in every country by the heads of over-zealous patriots. In such a way the German may fairly pretend that the Baltic sea belongs to them, and the occupation of the Great and Little Belt would be a piece of justice, and only the assertion of lawful national rights.

The argument for Italian incorporation of those provinces based upon ethnography must fall at once when we look at the numbers of the racial statistics. In Dalmatia, against a pure Serbo-Croatian population numbering 630,000, the Italians number only 18,000, which represents less than 3 per cent. of the total population. Therefore to base the Italian rights of occupation upon ethnography would be sheer absurdity.

In Istria, Trieste, and Goritzia the Italian claims based upon ethnography are better founded, although they are not justified. In Istria the geographical line of ethnographical division can be easily drawn. The Italians are thickly grouped on the western coast, and the Croat population is found in the central and eastern parts of the peninsula. In Istria the Slavs (220,000) represent 60 per cent and Italians (145,500) 40 per cent of the entire population. In the town of Trieste the Italians (118,959), to the contrary, represent 66 per cent and the Slavs (59,974) 34 per cent of the total population. In Goritzia, again, as in Istria, the line of ethnographic division can be easily drawn. The Italians in this province extend in the north as far as Cormons, and along

the railway as far as the town Goritzia; in the east as far as the river Isonzo, and from Gradiska straight to Monfalcone; a dense and homogeneous Slav population inhabits the whole of the rest of the province. In the districts of Logatec and Postojna, in the southwestern Carniola, with nearly a hundred thousand purely Slav inhabitants, there are no Italians, and these districts are claimed by the Italians only in virtue of strategic reasons.

Thus leaving Dalmatia and the districts of Carniola out of the question, the Italian counts upon Istria, Trieste, and Goritzia are untenable as a whole. Here some compromise is necessary, and it could be easily effected if both sides were equally animated by a sincere desire for a peaceful settlement.

With regard to the historical right of Italy to those provinces, I should say that there is scarcely any province in Europe belonging to any nation to which another nation would not have some historic right. The argument of historic right better suits the mediæval and dynastic Europe than the modern European democracy in which rule is to be based upon popular consent. The historic rights have cost Europe so much bloodshed, suffering, and devastation that we may fairly suppose that this argument appeals but feebly to her nations. Even if it be true that the Venetian rule of the Adriatic represents a bright page in the Italian history of warlike achievements, it is not less true that the memory of the Venetian rule of the Slav coasts of the Adriatic also recalls to their Slavic inhabitants the dire days of foreign subjugation and misery. Those were days when their economic and commercial resources were ruthlessly exploited for the profit of an alien ruler, and when their manhood was mercilessly employed to fight far-distant battles for no profit to their native land and kinsfolk. Those were days when, with all their services, they were paid by economic misery and moral contempt, the days when Slavs were "Schiavi"—most despicable slaves. The memories of those days, walking like pale ghosts on the other shore of the Adriatic, make, even to-day, the blood run quicker, fists clench themselves involuntarily, and account for so much animosity and misunderstanding between their mixed population. Let those ghosts of the past be buried for ever. To shine forth brightly the glory of the young Italy has no need of the humiliation and moral misery of her Slav neighbors. Against those

historic rights of past states rises the incontestable and unquestionable right of a living nation striving for freedom, equality, and lawful recognition.

In modern Europe the militarists of every country are walking hand in hand with stealthily creeping commercialism. The combination of military and commercial interests in Italy, as was the case with Germany, will surely weave the web of Italian destiny, and lead to most dangerous complications. The closer study of the Italian claims on the Adriatic will convince us at once that those claims, though announced in the name of military efficiency are calculated to serve the interests of Italian commercialism, and to secure for Italy a practical monopoly of the whole trade in the Adriatic. Of course the commercial development of the Southern Slav country would be handicapped, which must be a new source of antagonism and friction between both nations.

Now we come to the supreme argument of the necessity of good strategic frontiers which urges Italy to occupy those provinces. The reason of strong strategic frontiers has always been a trump card in the hands of the militarists. Every state availing itself of a temporary victory imposed strategic frontiers upon the defeated or weaker nation. Strategic necessity and historic rights tore Alsace-Lorraine away from France, handing it over to the yoke of the Prussian militarists. Strategic reasons also impeded the accomplishment of Italian unity, leaving south Tyrol in Austrian bondage. The direct results of such policy have been fear and hatred, and their lawful heir the military burdens under which the European nations have labored during the last sixty years. How can we expect or hope that an Italian occupation of the Serbo-Croatian provinces, and the enslavement by her of a million of Southern Slavs, can give different results? It is an axiom in science that similar causes produce similar results. But if, in spite of all sincere warning, the naissant Italian imperialism, following blindly the teaching of German militarists, will try under the pretense of strategic frontiers to occupy the Balkan lands and to keep in subjection the Slavic population inhabiting them, Italy will inherit the weakness of Austria and, while greatly injuring her Slav neighbor, will endanger her own freedom and the peace of Europe. The Italian militarists wish to occupy these lands in the name of military efficiency. But the security for Italy, and the



progress of the Italian democracy, will be brought into peril by that very worship of efficiency. From the adversity which, after this war, will fall upon the German people lies a lesson for the Italian imperialists. Sorely burdened by the occupation of an alien population, threatened by a warlike and united nation such as the Southern Slavs, the Italians would experience all the difficulties of the new position. It would be a burden which their nervous and easily excitable democracy could not, and would not, meekly endure. The Slavic menace would become a nightmare for them which could easily deteriorate the normal course of their development. The inborn love of freedom which enabled the Serbo-Croats to shake off the Turkish yoke of five centuries, and so successfully to resist the German onrush to the East, would certainly enable them to resist Italian dominion. What has been a difficulty for the militarists of Germany in Alsace and Lorraine certainly would be much more so for a democratic Italy in the coveted Slavic provinces.

In order to show Italy's friends in America that that danger would be no small one, and that my warning against it is no exaggeration, I shall show the principal results which must follow the Italian occupation.

First, Italy would occupy all islands of the Dalmatian archipelago. The Italian population numbers 1563, and the Serbo-Croats 116,227 souls. How strong the Slav sentiment is among them can best be illustrated by the fact that for centuries, although Roman Catholics, they never suffered the mass to be read in Latin, but insisted on having it read in old Slav language, the so-called Glagolitza. And the popes, meeting the wishes of the inhabitants by special bulls, authorized the use of the Glagolitza in the Roman Catholic parishes on the islands of the Dalmatian archipelago. Those islands have contributed many popular names among the Serbo-Croatian writers, and played a prominent part in the national reawakening. The Italian occupation, besides hurting the national feeling of the inhabitants, would produce disagreeable economic changes for them. They are sailors and olive and vine growers, and their agriculture would be quickly ruined by the competition with the cheap products of Italy.

Dalmatia is a narrow strip of rocky, treeless, mountainous country. For the last fifty years the emigration from Dalmatia has been very considerable, and some country districts have lost a large portion of their population. It was

estimated that over 6000 persons left the province annually previous to the last crisis in the United States.

The same economic changes as on the islands would be operating among the inhabitants of the coastland. The Dalmatian ports in Italian occupation would lie idle and abandoned, as Italian commerce would never come through them, and the Serbo-Croatian commerce would shun them. Italy, far from increasing her own political and economic power, would only add a fresh difficulty to the existing economic and social problems, having to deal with a discontented and impoverished population, alien in thoughts and sentiments, which could be kept in obedience only by strong garrisons, representing a new burden for her national resources.

But her occupation of the islands and of Northern Dalmatia would inevitably create bitter antagonism between her and the Serbo-Croatian state and nation. The Serbo-Croatian ports in the Adriatic—Fiume (Rieka) and Splet (Spalato)—would be put under direct command of Italian guns. Both of them would be in Italian territorial waters. Everybody knows what terrible losses every belligerent nation has sustained, or will be sustaining, during the present crisis. The ruin and devastation all over Europe will be simply appalling. The Serbo-Croats, like all other nations in Europe, must hasten to make good the wastage and ruin caused by the war. The organization of commercial ports will be their first national care. They will be in need of foreign capital and enterprise. But will British, French, or American capital be forthcoming to the Serbo-Croatian ports when their wharves and docks would be at the mercy of Italian guns, and when all ships to enter them must pass through narrow Italian channels?

There will be eager patriots who will try to represent the action of Italy as a policy of blackmailing. Some will say that the word was pledged by the Allies when their armies stood exhausted after a first year of fighting, and that this pledge has no value whatever. Everybody who knows the ardent patriotism and the intensity of the national feeling among the Southern Slavs will at once recognize that the unjust solution of their national aspirations would leave a sore wound, which never could be healed until it brings a fresh terrible crisis over Southern Europe. The European democracy has every interest not to give to the Southern Slav militarists that weapon. Thus the Italian militarists arguing



for the occupation of the Dalmatian archipelago to insure Italy against imaginary Russian danger would play into the hands of a recreation against democracy, and bring that danger very near and make it very real.

But there remains Germany. One of the best acknowledged aims for which the Allies are fighting is the annihilation of German militarism. But how can Germany be cured of the canker of militarism when there would remain Italian and Serbian militarism? The German people cannot be annihilated. There will remain Germany's productive power; and German militarism, defeated and humiliated, would avail itself of any rift between the Allies in order to assert itself again. It is obvious to every student of the European situation that Germany will use every means and opportunity to obtain an outlet to the Adriatic. The Italians, having occupied the Slav coast and its hinterland, would have to resist not only the Southern Slavs' resentment, but also the German onrush to the south. It is a question primarily for Italy, whether she can, and for how long a time, successfully resist both pressures. And even if she could do so, would the advantages obtained by it be adequate to the sacrifices required?

The fallacy of strategic frontiers is the most dangerous snare for the nations, and Italy has every reason to avoid falling into it. The best strategic frontiers for every nation are the friendships of its neighbors, and in case of danger brave hearts and a good cause. The best men and the highest authorities in Italy have warned their compatriots against that fallacy and the Southern Slav danger.

With anxiety and dismay the nations are awaiting the answer to the question now on every lip: What will Europe be after the war? Surely for Europe only two ways are possible: the way of liberty, peace, and respect among her nations; or the way of brutal militarism allied to narrow nationalism. Such a Europe will be ruled by secret-cabinet policy. The teaching of Machiavelli and the time of Prince Metternich will be revived with new force, intrigue will follow intrigue, and plot will succeed plot. Italy, who, in the past, has suffered and so much and so long a time from such a political system in Europe, must be the first to oppose its revival.

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# THE PRESSING NEED: INDUSTRIAL CONSCRIPTION

BY HAROLD G. MOULTON

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THE conduct of war on an extensive scale is invariably accompanied by a rapid rise in the cost of living. The increase in prices is not confined to supplies that are required in great quantities by the armies in the field; it seems to apply with more or less severity to all classes of goods,—to practically everything that enters into the general consumption of the people. The high cost of living therefore becomes one of the most acute of the internal problems connected with war; and the regulation of prices in the interests of the masses is regarded as one of the most important duties of the Government.

There appear to be two lines of reasoning,—perhaps one might better say two sorts of reactions—that favor Government control of prices. One is a popular argument and the other may be called for want of a better term, a “scientific argument.” In the view of the general public high prices in war time are in considerable measure the result of manipulation by traitorous malefactors who take advantage of the Government’s needs and the public’s ignorance and lack of organization,—who reap where they have not sown, who make fortunes, indeed, without rendering any equivalent in service to society. The control of prices in the interests of the many as against the machinations of the few therefore makes a very simple and elementary appeal to our notions of right and wrong, to our sense of plain fairness and justice. Closely associated with this reason for price control is the idea that large profits should not be permitted, even when they do not result from manipulation, monopolizing or unfair practices, for the simple reason that it is unpatriotic to reap advantage in any way from the Government’s needs.