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Austro-Hungarian Naval Policy, 1904-14

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Vego, Milan N. *Austro-Hungarian Naval Policy, 1904-14*. Portland, Ore.:

Frank Cass, 1996. 202pp. \$47.50

Although Austria-Hungary and Italy had both been members of the Triple Alliance before the outbreak of World War I, the two powers became rivals for supremacy in the Adriatic Sea. According to Milan Vego, the Dual Monarchy increased its naval construction to match Italy's, thus prompting Rome to enlarge its navy to preserve superiority over its ally. Therefore, the Italian fleet became "the yardstick by which the strength of the Austro-Hungarian navy was measured." Nonetheless, the two powers coordinated naval efforts in the Mediterranean Sea to benefit Germany, the remaining member of the alliance. Germany hoped that the combined Austro-Italian fleet would force Britain to divert part of its fleet from the North Sea, where it posed the larger threat, whereas Italy required Austria-Hungary's aid to counter French strength in the western Mediterranean. Although the Habsburg monarchy had no vital interests in the Mediterranean, it expanded its fleet there in the interest of its allies, by building dreadnoughts. Control of the Adriatic, however, was important to the Dual Monarchy, to prevent it from becoming a landlocked power.

Other external and internal factors affected the Habsburg naval policy. Austria-Hungary's annexation

of Bosnia in 1908 damaged its relations with Serbia but enhanced its position in the Balkans, thus necessitating an expansion of its navy. Austria-Hungary opposed Serbia's gaining a port on the Adriatic Sea that the Russian fleet could use to strengthen its own position. Italy acquired Libya and occupied the Dodecanese Islands during the Turco-Italian War, improving its status on both shores in the central Mediterranean. Italy determined that naval cooperation with its allies presented the only opportunity to stop French expansion in the region. The subsequent renewal of the Triple Alliance Treaty in 1912 accepted Italy's territorial acquisitions and Austria-Hungary's stand in the Balkans. Nevertheless, their competing interests in Albania remained and contributed to the adoption of Austria-Hungary's latest ship-construction program. Internally, the Dual Monarchy's constitutional arrangement required the approval of the Hungarian delegation for naval expansion. Hungary, therefore, could demand additional petty officers, larger participation by its industries in construction, and increased use of the Hungarian language. Austria's weak finances further constrained its naval budget, and lack of popular support hampered the government's efforts. Archduke Francis Ferdinand, the heir to the throne, however, praised naval expansion as necessary if the

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empire was to take its place as a maritime power, while he harbored distrust of Italian commitment to the alliance.

Twelve years of active service in the former Yugoslav navy sparked Vego's interest in the naval history of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Vego, professor of operations at the U.S. Naval War College, conducted his research in Austria and Washington, D.C., but relied primarily on published works for documents from other European powers. My only serious criticism of this work is the omission of maps; two are not sufficient. Even a reader familiar with Austro-Hungarian history needs visual aids showing the specific locations of port cities and areas in dispute in the Turco-Italian War and the Balkan crises.

The title *Austro-Hungarian Naval Policy, 1904–14* is misleading, for this work offers much more. It provides an excellent overview of not only Triple Alliance naval policy but also its effect on the Triple Entente's strategy. Vego addresses as well the politics within the alliance and Germany's dominant role. London understood Vienna's dreadnought construction as a response to Berlin's demands and thus viewed the Dual Monarchy as a German tool, just as it would during World War I. This monograph presents a background of events that contributed to the outbreak of war in 1914, by describing the crises in the Balkans

and the Turco-Italian War. Any reader interested in early twentieth-century European history generally and naval policy specifically should read this work.

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Gleick, James. *Faster: The Acceleration of Just About Everything*. New York: Pantheon, 1999. 324pp. \$24

James Gleick's book points to the fact that the human condition is moving at a speed that sometimes makes us feel as if we are living a blur. Not only do we feel that we are moving at a fast-forward pace, but we find ourselves frustrated by the absence of leisure time despite all the conveniences the modern world offers us. Gleick makes the point that people deal more with the perception of time than with the reality of it. "Time is defined, analyzed, measured, and even constructed by humans. . . . [T]ime is not a thing you have lost. It is not a thing you have ever had. It is what you live in. You can drift in its currents, or you can swim." For the software industry, where development cycles are shrinking every quarter and distribution has moved from the retail store to instant downloading from the Internet, life is also accelerating. Gleick's primary focus, however, is on how people