

# ATTACK THE OTRANTO BARRAGE!

ONE OF THE MORE UNUSUAL NAVAL ACTIONS OF THE GREAT WAR PITTED SHIPS AND SUBMARINES OF THE AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN NAVY AGAINST A BARRIER ERECTED TO PREVENT U-BOAT TRAFFIC FROM ENTERING THE MEDITERRANEAN

BY LAZLO HARADY

What had become known as the Otranto Barrage was a particular thorn in the side of the Austro-Hungarian Navy during 1917. The Barrage was actually a fixed barrier that was composed of lightly-armed Royal Navy drifters coupled with anti-submarine nets and minefields. The Barrage had been created by the Allies to block U-Boat access to the Mediterranean, thus giving Allied shipping a much better chance of survival.

Commander Miklos Horthy was given the task of destroying the Otranto Barrage and he began a series of meetings with his top officers on how best to undertake the task. Horthy started his career in 1896 as a naval sub-lieutenant in the Austro-Hungarian Navy (often referred to as just

the Austrian Navy). By the start of the Great War, the Austrian Navy had expanded, along with Austro-Hungarian industrialization, into one of the largest navies in the Adriatic and Mediterranean Seas.

The Allies used the Otranto Barrage to bottle up the Austrian Navy in the Adriatic Sea. The Austrian Navy was mainly tasked with defending the Empire's 1130 nautical miles of coastline and 2172 nautical miles of island seaboard, but the high command did not wish to commit its battleships, cruisers, and other vessels to attacking Allied shipping and relied instead upon its force of U-Boats along with the U-Boats operated by Germany.

Official portrait of Horthy as Regent of Hungary.



Painting depicting the engagement of the Austro-Hungarian and Allied forces during the attack on the Otranto Barrage.



Coat of arms for the Austro-Hungarian Navy.