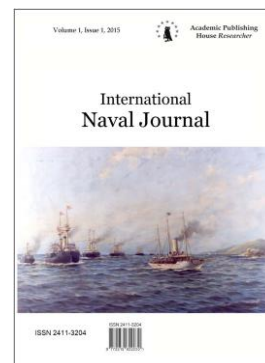


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### Coast Defence Ships of the «Monarch» Class

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#### Abstract

The ironclads of the «Monarch» class, albeit small and known mostly as «coast defenders» were first modern battleships of the Austro-Hungarian Imperial and Royal Navy (Kaiserliche und Königliche Kriegsmarine / K.u.k. Marine). They were planed and built shortly before the turn of the XIX to XX century, and were the oldest of the several Austro-Hungarian battleship classes that participated in World War One (there were some older units in service, but these were mostly used as guard, headquarters or barracks ships). Because of their old age, they served during the early war stages as an detached coast defence squadron, responsible for the defence of the Bocche di Cattaro and support of the land forces against Montenegro, and were not part of the Battle Fleet any more. Later two vesels were sent to the Northern Adriatic, supporting Army units with their artillery on the front against Italy, and one of these ships was lost there, during a stay on the supposedly secure anchorage. After the war, the remaining pair followed their younger «consorts», being delivered to the victors and scrapped afterwards.

**Keywords:** Austria-Hungary, Imperial & Royal Navy, World War One, naval warfare, Adriatic.

#### Introduction

After a long pause following the construction of «Rudolf» and «Stefanie», keels for a new class of three identical ships were laid in 1893. These units were first modern A-H vessels with enclosed gun-turrets for the main artillery, but were smaller than the battleships of other navies. Their designer, Engineer Siegfried Popper, was restricted by financial limits (an ever-lasting problem for the A-H Navy), and by the dimensions of the existing docks. The ships were having a displacement of 5,600 ts, in contrast to the contemporary British battleships of the «Royal Sovereign» and «Majestic» classes with 14,400 tons and 15,140 tons respectively, or the Italian «Saint Bon» class battleships displacing 10,000 tos. These A-H units were designed as «coastal defenders» or coast defence battleships, being more similar to big monitors than to ocean-going units. Their operational environment was the Adriatic and the Mediterranean, but the armament was weaker than the main battery of other contemporary battleships, with a calibre of only 240 mm, like the German ships-of-the-line of this era. Other fleets introduced in the meantime the 305 mm main calibre guns. All three ships of the «Monarch» class were obsolete before the WW I and were to be replaced by a new class of "super-dreadnoughts" of the «Improved Tegetthoff» class.

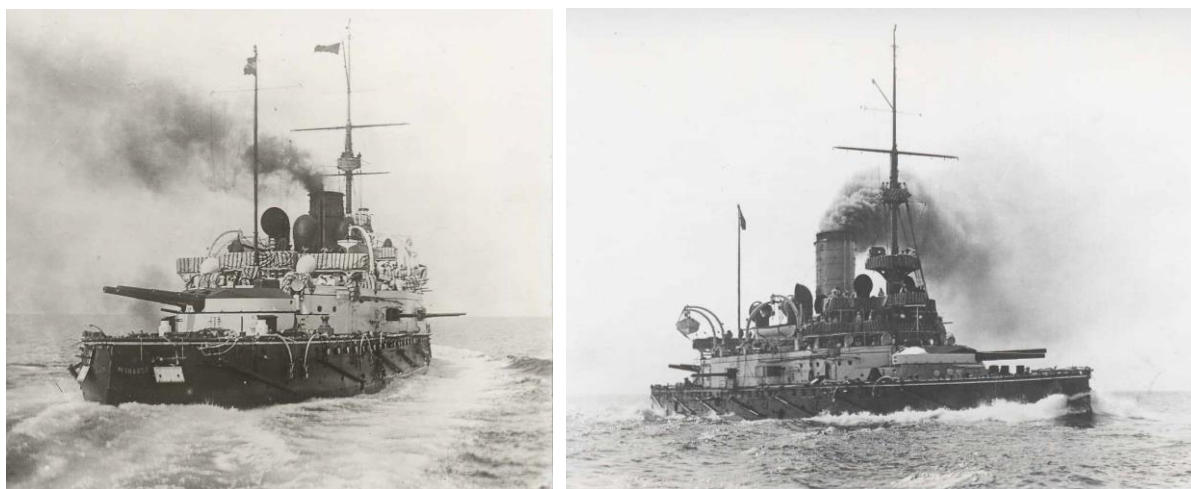
SMS «Monarch» was built at Pola and her sister ships SMS «Wien» and SMS «Budapest» at Trieste by the STT shipyard. «Wien» was completed and commissioned in 1897, being followed by her sisters one year later. The vessels were named after the Austro-Hungarian Sovereign (Mon-

arch) and after the capital cities of the Monarchy, Vienna and Budapest. The later ship was sometimes in the German literature called «Ofenpest», the German word "Ofen" having the same meaning as the Hungarian "buda" and English "oven".

### Appearance

Ironclads of the «Monarch» class were similar to the British battleships of the «Royal Sovereign» and «Majestic» classes, but were one deck lower, and the forecabin was very wet during anything but calm weather, what interfered with the operations of the forward turret and reduced the habitability in crews' quarters. There was only one funnel (in contrast to the «Majestic» with two funnels, placed side by side) and the ships were flush-decked. Design displacement amounted to 5,547 tonnes and full displacement to 5,785 tonnes. One twin turret was placed forward and another aft and the voluminous superstructure covered the boiler and machinery rooms, extending to the ship's sides. Six secondary guns, three on each side of the superstructure, completed the battery. The commando bridge and the conning tower were installed on the forward part of the superstructure, followed by a voluminous tower mast and the single funnel. «Monarch» and «Wien» were having casings around lower parts of their funnels (serving to ventilate their boiler rooms), that were missing on «Budapest». Four venting cowls were placed abreast of the funnel, and additional cowls for the machinery rooms on the after part of the superstructure. «Budapest» was having a different big ventilator aft, open on both sides, in contrast to the single ventilators carried by her sister ships. On the after part of the superstructure the secondary conning position was installed, followed by a simple pole mast, later used for the wireless antennas. During the war "whip poles" were added to the funnel for the same purpose.

The hull was 97.67 m long, with a beam of 17 m and 6.39 m draught. The underwater part of the bow was formed to the ram, to penetrate the sides of enemy warships (last echoes from the ramming successes during the Battle of Lissa). The rudder was of the simple streaming type, and all three ships were having two shafts and two propellers.



«Monarch»-class battleships

### Propulsion and protection

First two units were having five boilers of the cylindrical type, but the «Budapest» received 16 Belleville water-tube boilers. Steam supplied two vertical four-cylinder triple-expansion engines with 8,500 ihp (6,250 kW) on «Monarch» and «Wien» or 9,180 ihp (6,750 kW) on «Budapest». All three were designed to reach 17.5 knots, but the speed of the first pair fell later to 16 knots, but «Budapest» reached 17.8 knots during her trials. With 300 to 500 tons of coal, the range varied between 2,200 nautical miles at 12 knots and 3500 miles at 9 knots.

The armoured belt between the forward and after turrets was 270 mm thick, being tapered to 250 mm abreast the barbets and progressively to 200, 150 and 120 mm to the bow. The underwater part of the belt was reduced to 180 mm, and above the belt there was a 60 mm armoured breastwork. The secondary guns in the battery were protected by 80 mm of armour. The turret ar-

mour was 250 mm thick, the conning tower was protected by 220 mm of armoured steel, and the horizontal deck, 60 mm thick (but only 40 mm behind the side belt), was protecting the ships' vitals like the boilers, machinery, and ammunition stowage. The armoured citadel was enclosed behind the after turret with a 250 mm thick armoured bulkhead. The armour was of the homogenous nickel steel type, thinner and lighter, but sturdier than the "compound armour". Some sources were maintaining that the "Harveyized" cemented steel was used, with a harder side to prevent shell penetration, and a "soft" side that was holding the plate together, but according to trials made before the building, the ships were having armour of homogenous steel, locally produced at Witkowice.



Artillery on «Monarch»-class battleships

#### **Armament and crew**

Four heavy 240 mm/L40 Krupp K 94 guns were mounted in two turrets as the main armament, with secondary artillery comprising six 150 mm/L40 Skoda guns in battery, three on each side. Against torpedo boats ten Hotchkiss 47 mm/L44 and four 47 mm/L33 QF guns were mounted: four abreast the bridge, two in the fighting top on the foremast and the remaining pieces on the central superstructure above the 150 mm gun battery. From the outset the ships were having two



8 mm Skoda C 93 machine guns, and in 1917 «Wien» and «Budapest» each received one 7 cm (66 mm) anti-aircraft gun. The landing parties were to use two Uchatius 66 mm/L15 landing guns, and the torpedo armament included two 450 mm broadside tubes.

SMS «Budapest» was rebuilt at Pola during May and June 1918, receiving an open-shielded 380 mm/L17 howitzer of the Skoda 81.7 tons type that replaced the forward turret. The ship was to bombard Italian coastal positions with 600 kg shells at the range of up to 15 kilometres. The modifications were completed and successive trials conducted, but the ship remained inactive at Pola (because the ammunition was scarce), and the howitzer was finally removed before the war ended.

All three battleships were having a complement of 426 officers, non-commissioned officers and sailors.



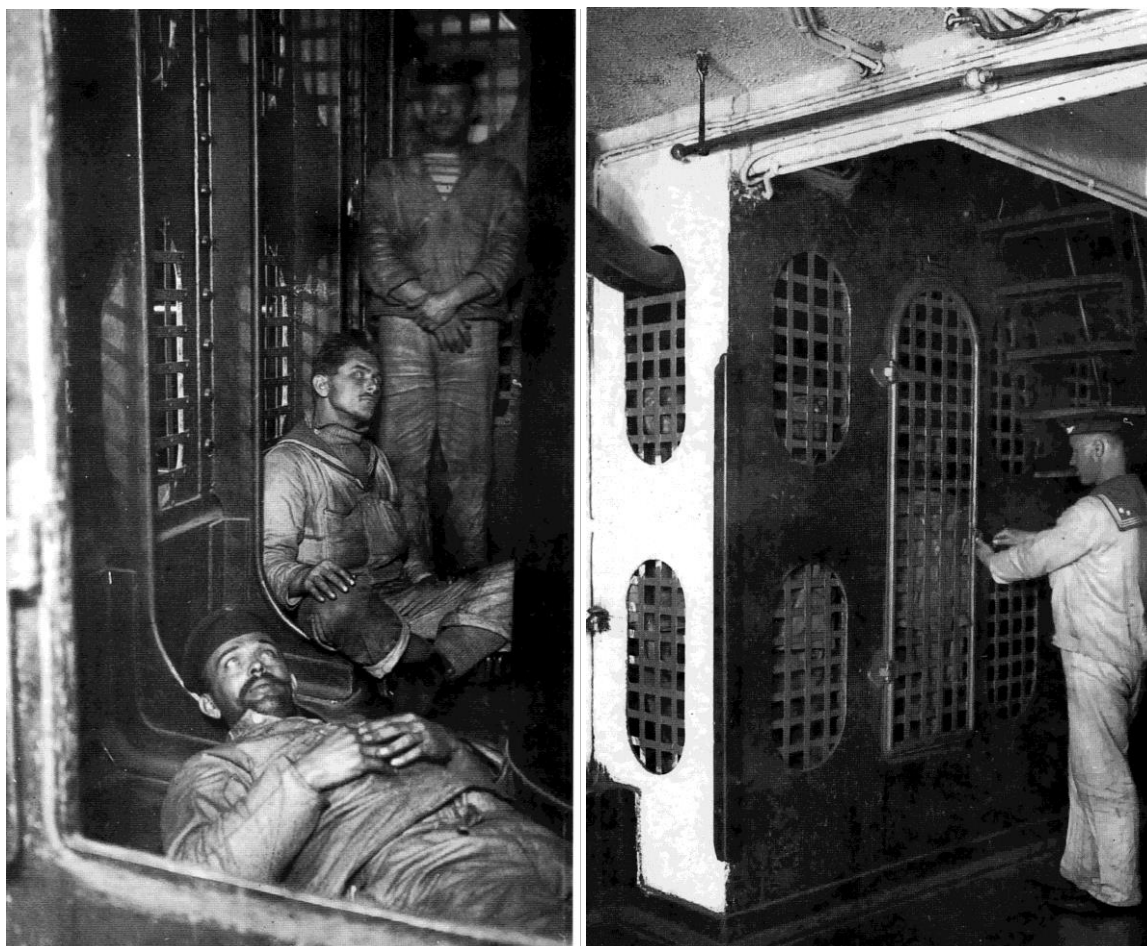
«Monarch»-class battleships

### Service and fates

The ships entered service in 1897 and 1908, to form the active fleet in summer and be placed into reserve during the winter. «Wien» took part in 1897 in the fleet review at Spithead during the 60th Anniversary of the reign of the British Queen Victoria, representing the A-H Navy. The «Monarch» class was initially forming the First Division of the Summer Squadron, and during 1902, it was taking part in the summer training cruise in the Western Mediterranean, which culminated in the exercises off Pola, where a simulated attack from the sea was testing the harbour de-

fences. The «Monarch» Division cruised in the Eastern Mediterranean in 1906, together with the armoured cruiser «Sankt Georg» and with the new destroyer «Huszár», and the cruise culminated again in summer manoeuvres.

After new battleships were commissioned, the ships of the «Monarch» class were successively forming the Second, Third and Fourth Division. In 1914 they were in reserve, «Monarch» and «Budapest» as training ships (or floating classrooms), and «Wien» was attached to the gunnery school. After the war broke out all three units were sent to the Bocche di Cattaro as the Fifth Division, to protect this southernmost A-H naval base.



Arrest-room on «Monarch»-class battleship

«Monarch» was to attack Montenegrin coastal positions off Budua (occupied by Montenegro after the A-H army evacuated this coastal strip) on August 16th, 1914, but was compelled to withdraw to the Bocche after an overwhelming French-British fleet appeared on the horizon, sinking in progress A-H light cruiser «Zenta» off the Montenegrin coast. «Monarch» bombarded afterwards enemy positions from the inner anchorage of the Bocche, and shelled later the Montenegrin wireless station at Cap Voluvica near Antivari (Bar) on September 17th, and the enemy positions near Budua during her return to the base. She was at this time the flagship of the Fifth Division, and of the Local Defence in the Bocche di Cattaro, but was relegated to the reserve shortly thereafter. All of the older ships stationed there (three ships of the «Monarch» class, armoured cruiser «Karl VI», old cruisers) were having inadequate gunnery to bombard enemy positions around the Bocche, especially after several French long-range naval guns were mounted on the slopes of Mt. Lovcen. It was the reason that the new A-H battleship «Radetzky» was detached from Pola to the south, and between October 22nd and 26th 1914 she disabled the French batteries. The crew of the «Monarch» took part in the mutiny in February 1918, and the ship was afterwards relegated to accom-

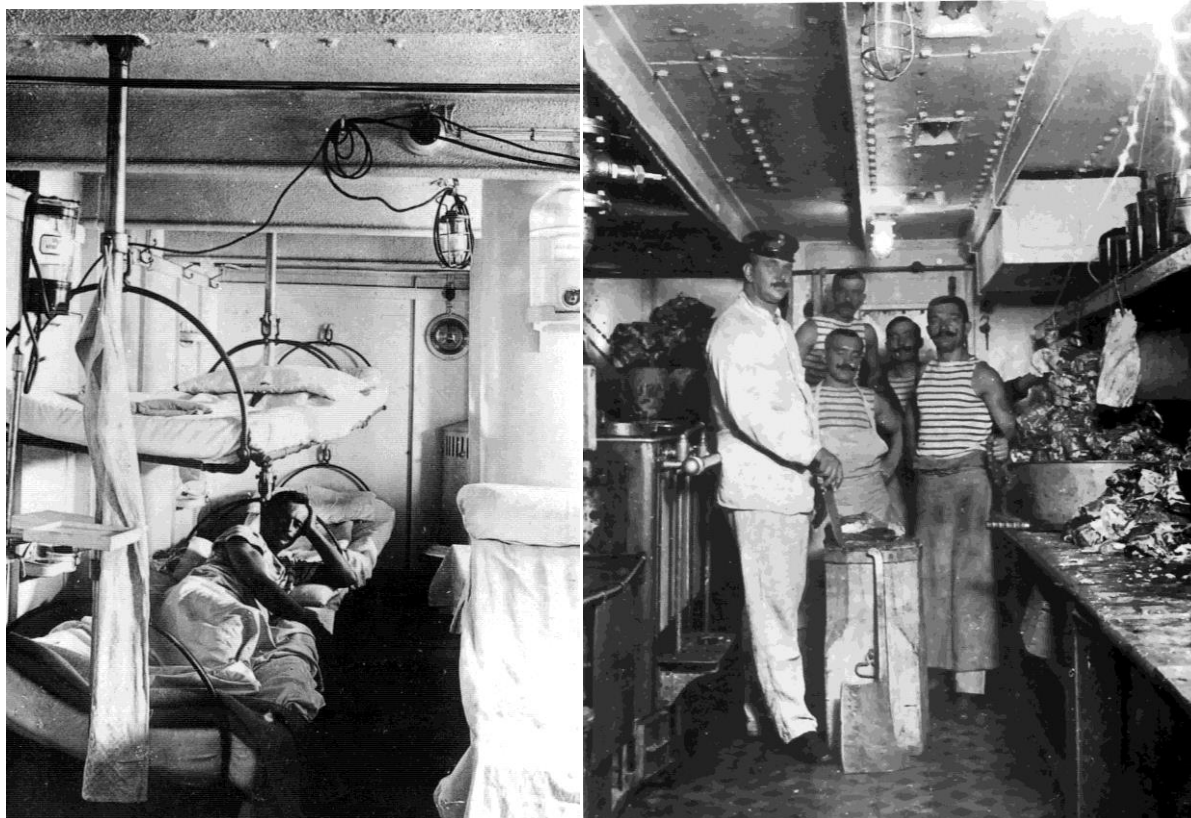
modation duties, as a floating barracks for submarine crews. After the armistice she was in 1920 delivered to Great Britain, to be sold and scrapped in Italy.

SMS «Wien» bombarded on August 24<sup>th</sup>, Montenegrin positions on the slopes of Mt. Lovcen, together with the «Monarch», and shelled enemy troops again on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1914. After Italy proclaimed war against Austria-Hungary in May 1915, the ship was sent to the North Adriatic together with the «Budapest», to bombard Italian positions near Trieste. The heaviest attack was started against Cortellazzo on November 16<sup>th</sup>, 1917. Italian reaction included the attacks by fast motor torpedo boats (MAS), that were repelled, but these small units finally penetrated the harbour of Trieste in the night of December 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup>, 1917. MAS 9 under the command of Lieutenant Luigi Rizzo torpedoed the «Wien», which sank in five minutes taking with her 32 crew members to the bottom of the harbour. The wreck was scrapped in situ by the Italians after the war, and a part of her stern with the ship's name is kept in the Maritime museum at Venice.

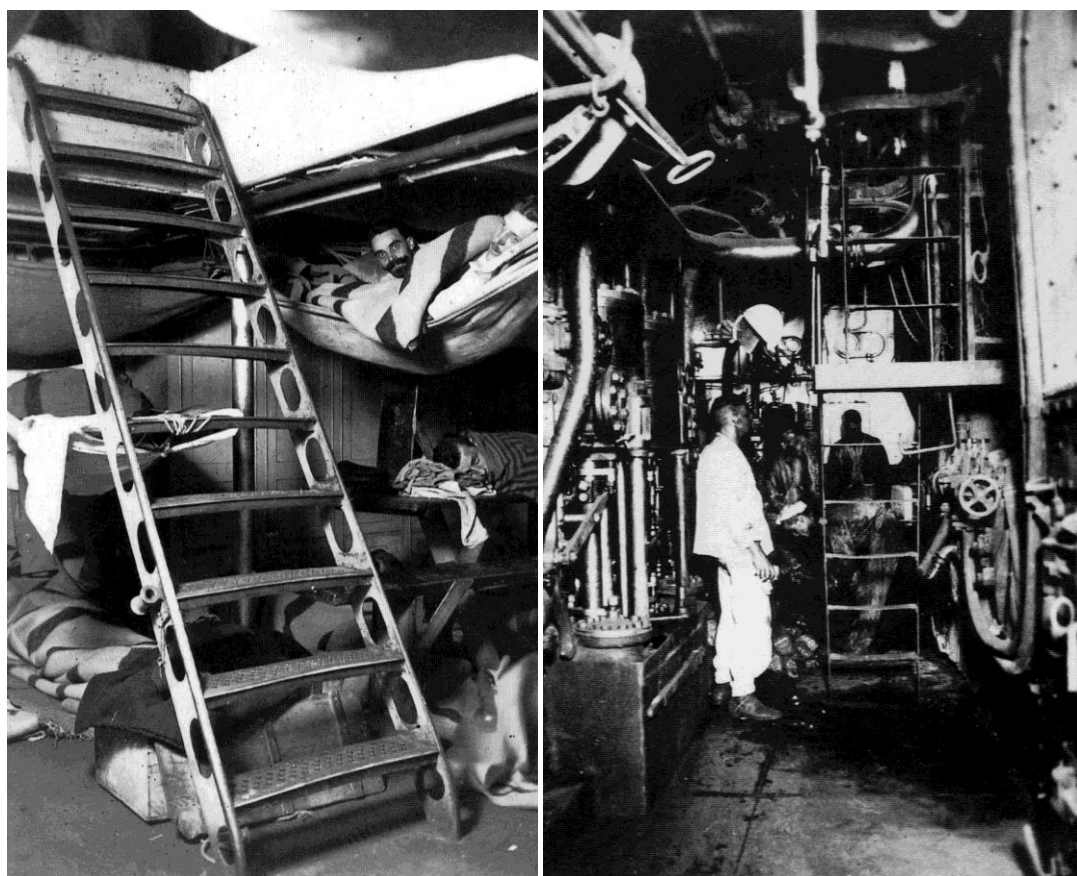


The seaman's leisure-time on «Monarch»-class battleship

SMS «Budapest» was having the longest and most active career of the trio. During the Austro-Hungarian and German offensive against Montenegro in October 1915, she bombarded enemy positions on Mt. Lovcen together with the cruisers «Kaiser Karl VI», «Kaiser Franz Josef I», «Aspern» and «Panther». In December 1915, she was to sail out, and to support the cruiser «Helgoland» and the destroyers of the «Tátra» class, which attacked Durazzo, and were chased by stronger enemy naval forces. Finally only SMS «Kaiser Karl VI» was sent to help these A-H naval units, and the slow «Budapest» was left in harbour. The battleship attacked Montenegrin batteries on Mt. Lovcen again on January 8<sup>th</sup>, 1916 and was inclined to increase the range of her guns (what was later wrongly attributed to the «Radetzky»). All heavier Montenegrin guns were destroyed before January 9, and one day later the A-H Army captured enemy positions on the Kuk Saddle. The Imperial and Royal Navy proceeded with the shelling of the enemy coastal positions until the January 12<sup>th</sup>, when Montenegro asked for cease-fire. SMS «Budapest» remained in the Bocche after the Montenegrin capitulation and on May 15<sup>th</sup>, 1917 she sailed together with the armoured cruiser «Sankt Georg», the destroyers «Tátra» and «Warasdiner», and seven torpedo boats, to help three cruisers of the Saida class, that a night before attacked enemy anti-submarine Otranto barrage, and were hotly pursued by stronger Entente naval forces.

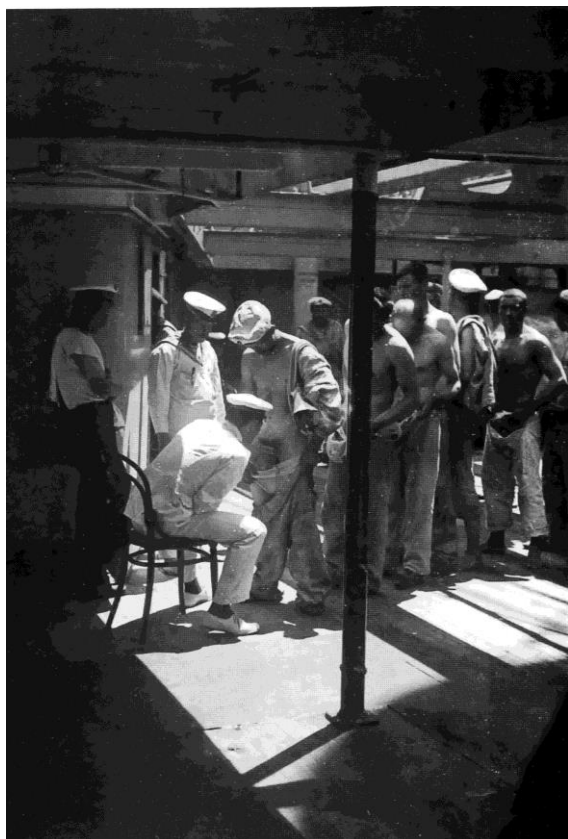


Hospital (left) and kitchen (right) on «Monarch»-class battleship

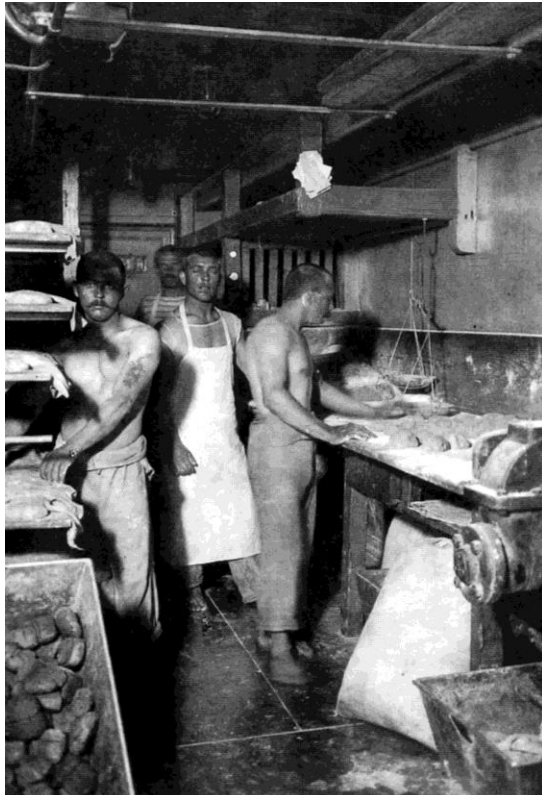
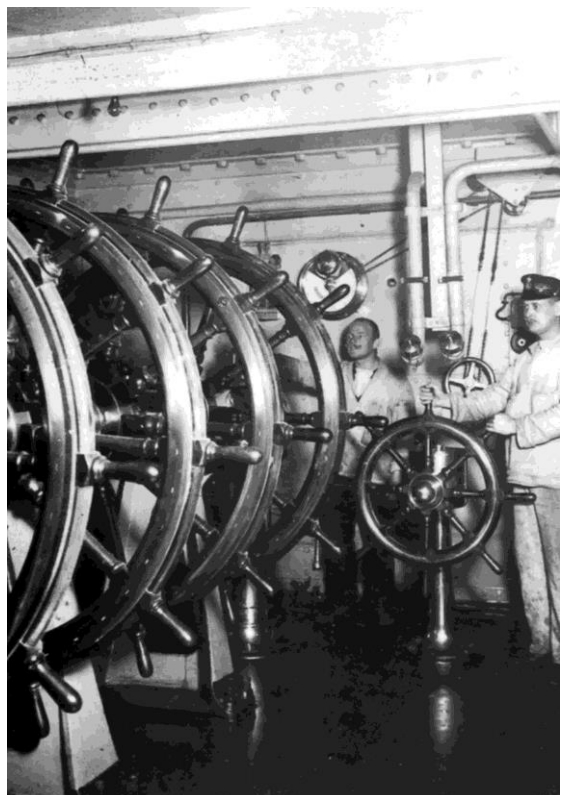


Hammocks (left) and machinery (right) on «Monarch»-class battleship





Medical service (left) and side launch on «Monarch»-class battleship



Steering (left) and bakery (right) on «Monarch»-class battleship



Afterwards «Budapest» was detached to the Northern Adriatic, shelling there - together with the «Wien» - Italian coastal positions in November and December 1917. She was attacked by the Italian MAS 13 at Trieste on December 10th, 1917, but both torpedoes missed and she escaped the fate of her sister ship. SMS «Budapest» proceeded with coastal bombardments on December 19th, but was disarmed in March 1918, to serve as an accommodation ship for the submarine flotilla. During the spring she was rearmed with a 380 mm howitzer for coastal shelling, but that piece was removed in October 1918, and the ship decommissioned. She became Italian war prize at Pola in 1918, to be released to Great Britain in 1920, and later scrapped in Italy.

Three old coastal ironclads were used successfully during the WW I in support of land forces in Northern and Southern Adriatic, thanks to their small draught and heavy artillery. SMS «Wien» was lost in the insufficiently protected anchorage, and her two sisters were decommissioned because of scarce human and fuel resources.

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## **Броненосцы береговой обороны типа «Монарх»**

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**Аннотация.** Броненосцы типа «Монарх», несмотря на свои скромные размеры, открыли новую эпоху боевого кораблестроения Австро-Венгрии. Спроектированные и построенные незадолго до смены веков, они стали самыми старыми линкорами двуединой монархии, принявшими участие в Первой мировой войне. Сведенные по возрасту в одну дивизию, «монархи» в начале войны вошли в систему обороны бухты Каттаро и приняли участие в поддержке армии в боевых действиях против Черногории. В дальнейшем всю дивизию вывели из боевой линии, но уже в самом конце войны два из них передали в распоряжение армейского командования для поддержки приморского фланга итальянского фронта. «Вин» при этом погиб, а пережившие войну «Монарх» и «Будапешт», вместе со своими, более молодыми собратьями по классу, достались победителям и впоследствии разобраны на металл.

**Ключевые слова:** Австро-Венгрия, Императорский и Королевский флот, Первая мировая война, война на море, Адриатика.