

**Richard L. DiNardo, *Invasion: the conquest of Serbia 1915.*  
War, Technology and History,  
Praeger, Santa Barbara, cal., 2015,  
XVI + 212 p., 19 Illustrations, 2 Maps, Notes,  
Bibliography, Index.**

Dr. Richard L. DiNardo's *Invasion: The Conquest of Serbia 1915*, is an excellent case study in military strategy and planning, coalition warfare, combat operation in inhospitable terrain and against stout Serbian resistance, within the context of technological advances on the battlefield.

This short monograph is divided to nine chapters. The first, „Scorpions in a Bottle”, provides the historical and diplomatic context to the 1915 conquest of Serbia, highlighting various attempts to establish alliances in Europe, and friction over the Balkans. Over the years, and particularly after the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, Austro-Hungary „regarded Serbia as a mortal threat” (p. 12). The assassination of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, on 28 June 1914 in Sarajevo by Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip seemed to be the ideal pretext for the Dual Monarchy to invade and destroy its growing nemesis. Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia one month later, initiating the world-

wide conflagration of the Great War. Austro-Hungarian forces invaded Serbia three times in 1914, and by 15 December, Belgrade was back under Serbian control.

The strategic situation changed the following year, with Ottoman reverses, the Allied loss at Gallipoli, and the Russian defeat at Gorlice. These encouraged Bulgaria to sign a treaty with Germany and begin mobilizing for war, with Serbia as the next strategic objective. The campaign is then examined chronologically in this study, from the decision-making processes that began the operation, through plans and preparations, to Chapter 4, „The Opening Moves: September 25-October 12, 1915.”

DiNardo chronicles and assesses the military operations at Belgrade, Morava, Kraguvac, and Nis, within the context of the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war. By late October 1915, the Serbian government was faced with basically only one course of action for survival, and this was to retreat. Serbian forces retreated, in horrible winter weather over

inhospitable mountain terrain, south and west through Montenegro and into Albania. Serbian soldiers who reached the Adriatic coast were transported by Allied vessels to various Greek island (mainly Corfu), before being returned to Salonika. The 1915 Serbian campaign was a complete victory for the Central Powers, who sustained some 67,000 casualties, as compared to the Serbian loss of 90,000 soldiers killed or wounded and 174,000 captured.

The culminating chapter of this work is Chapter 9, „Assessments”, in which the author emphasizes that the 1915 Serbian campaign was characterized by mobility more than anything else. The performance of the opposing commanders is also analyzed. The Serbian commander, Field Marshal Radomir Putnik, „did about as well as he could have, given the situation he faced” (p. 132), and Field

Marshal August von Mackensen was „Germany’s best commander in the realm of coalition warfare” (p. 132). The role of technology, notably modern artillery, aviation assets, and the telephone, is also reviewed, with the context of coalition and combined warfare. The influence of leadership, terrain, and weather in military operations is also described effectively.

*Invasion: The Conquest of Serbia 1915* is a thoroughly-researched, superbly-crafted, and insightful study. It chronicles and examines the tactics, operations, and strategy of the Central Powers in their successful 1915 offensive into Serbia. It is a worthwhile corrective to the Western-centric perspective of the Great War and deserves a wide readership.

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