

flagge eigentlich ihren Ursprung hat - wie Schärpen u. dgl. verwendet werden. Aber in einem Augenblick, wo eine Flagge ein Muster hat, wird die Verwendung z.B. in geraffter Form gefährlich. Auch hier haben die Vereinigte Staaten schon gewisse Normen geschaffen. In den letzten Jahren haben sich auch anderswo die Flaggenfabriken darum bemüht, eine grosse Auswahl von Möglichkeiten und Abarten zum Verkauf anzubieten. Wir müssen das dekorative Element bestimmt im Auge behalten. Nur Künstler mit Gefühl für die Würde von Flaggen sind dazu berufen, einen vertretbaren Entwurf aufzustellen.

Wir müssen uns auch darüber klar werden, wenn wir terminologische Probleme lösen wollen, was das für Konsequenzen hat, zumal wir ja den Anspruch erheben, auch Einfluss auf die offizielle Sprache zu nehmen. Ich denke hier z.B. an den Unterschied zwischen Fahnen und Flaggen, Banner und Standarten, wie sie z.B. auch in den gesetzlichen Publikationen von Liechtenstein wieder durcheinander geworfen worden sind.

Das war also, meine Damen und Herren, eine Reihe von Gedankensplittern, die sich bei mir in den letzten Wochen angesammelt haben; sie haben vielleicht gezeigt, dass die Geschichte der Staaten und die von ihnen entwickelte Staatsform und die sich weiter daraus entwickelnde Gesetzgebungsmaschine auch auf unser Gebiet erheblichen Einfluss hat, so dass sie bei unseren Forschungen und Bestrebungen jedenfalls in Betracht gezogen werden muss.

*) Näheres bei: O. Neubecker, Die Geschichte der Flagge von Hannover, in: Hannoversche Geschichtsblätter N.F. 3.Bd. H.4, 1935, S.83-108, bes. 98, 99.

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Dhr. J.H. Schuilenga, 's-Gravenhage: MAILFLAGS

Of old the carrying of letters was a royal right and it were kings and all sort of sovereigns who set up carrying systems for the dispatch of government-mail. In after years, it was opened for private use.

That carriers beared distinguishing marks will be clear: status and protection being the reason.

For transport one also made use of the waterways. Waterways were easy, they could be used immediately, and for the dispatch to countries overseas it was the only way. But water-transport had its disadvantages: tides, storm, adverse wind or no wind, disasters, pirates, ice drift, damage of the mail. So land transport was more regular to arrange than sea transport. More regular services came as soon as the sailing-days were more fixed and that was when steam entered, when passenger-carrying became important, emigrants included. In consequence mail began to be bulky.

Now steamshipexploitation is expensive and supply of passengers and even goods is not constant. Therefore ship-owners had much interest for what is called "Mail".

What is "mail"? The word M A I L originally meant merely a leathern bag or wallet. So much anxious interest has been centred in this simple object that its name now covers all that the postman brings. The words post and mail are often used as if they meant the same thing. But "post" is the name for the whole organisation and "mail" is carried by that organisation.

The said interest was mutual. Gouvernements appreciated fast and reliable transport. Therefore mailtransport became, next to that of emigrants, a solid base of the financial position of the steanship companies. And the bulk, carried by a big mail ship nowadays, is by no means small: the good ship "Bremen", in her great days homing at Christmas '29, carried 61 00 bags of letterpost and 6 000 bags of parcels. And even although in later years a big part of the lettermail travels by plane, the mail stays a bulky thing.

So the mailcontracts came to birth, the first ones in 1840 in England. But Gouvernment and especially the postal part of it, are hard masters and they give nothing for nothing. They are willing to pay, but they demand punctual fullfilment of the contract, departure and arrival. They are willing to pay more, if sailings are more frequent, if the duration of the voyages are shorter, that means, if ships are faster.

So it were the Gouvernment Mailcontracts that pressed

the private companies to accelerate their services and to improve the accomodation, according to Germany's Number I Postmaster General Heinrich von Stephan, who stated: "Well equiped Mailships form the backbone for all commercial relations of oversea".

Companies sailing under mail-contracts, distinguished themselves by punctuality and speed. They like to show that. What is better than a flag for a symbol ?

So flying the mailflag got another meaning than protection or identification with regard to the mail itself: it was the ship under this flag, saying: here I am; no less than a first class company !

Now, there also was a more direct material advantage. In years gone by mailships had special freedoms in relation to other naval ships, had a faster dispatch in ports, and discounts in pilot and portcharges. Of course, they had to be known as such and so had to show their colours. And at the best spot for a quick identifying: the port-side of the fore-mast top.

There are some countries with a rich mail-flag history and where the flag is flown by order of the Gouvernement (but only when owners have a regular mail contract with the state). In that case Gouvernement has prescribed a fixed model.

Then there are countries with a less great history, but none the less a model-flag; countries with such a shortage of seanail, that flying a special flag would be clear nonsense; and finally, countries with a total lack of interest in flying or non flying a mailflag, perhaps with no interest in symbols at all.

Let us look for a while to the United Kingdom where the carriage of mails by sea was of much greater importance than any of the overland routes, such as at the Continent. Mailflags are created and laid down in Regulations since 1700.

Successive British Gouvernements had tried to bring ocean-mail under their control although they lacked ships to carry it themselves. Orders were issued that captains of private vessels should hand over their letters to a State agent in the first port of call. Many captains evaded their orders as private carriage was cheaper and avoided governmental spies. But in 1694 the

Postmaster-General ordered as follows:

This is to give notice that Lancelot Plumer and William Barret are appointed by the Postmaster General of England to receive all such letters and paquets from masters of ships and vessels into the Port of London, to the end the same may be delivered with speed and safety according to their respective directions and the laws of the Kingdom; and that all masters of ships and vessels and all mariners and passengers may the better take notice thereof, the Right Honourable the Lords of the Admiralty have directed that the boat employed in this service do carry colours, in which there is to be represented a man on horseback blowing a posthorn.

With slight variations the Red Ensign with the seal of office has been flown until this model disappeared and the Blue Ensign was fixed for Governmental vessels, with an emblem or badge in the fly. That was 1864. Nowadays the badge is a rather startling design: Father Time, holding the scythe in his left hand and seated all in white and reaching out his right hand to a vivid flash of lightning in yellow.

So it has become more clear, that the Postal Service is of all times, but I am not sure if that was the idea. Anyhow, this flag is not flown by companies under mail contracts. That is the Royal mail pennant, introduced in 1884, when the Orient Steam Navigation Company suggested that their ships should be furnished with a special flag to expedite their passage through the Suez Canal. The pennant is a long white one with a red crown between the words Royal Mail, and since 1902 completed with a bugle horn.

Well, that is the United Kingdom and so is the tale of some other countries, for example Germany.

Perhaps it is of some interest here to say something about form and pattern of mailflags.

Sometimes it's the national flag, supplied with crown, posthorn, letters or words, and there are many countries owning a special flag for the merchant-fleet or for government-services, in which case the postflag is the merchant- or Governmentflag with a badge in the fly,

Next to flags of full colours there are burgees or pennants.

There is a rich diversity. In my next life I hope to get so much time, that I can produce a complete set of drawings of all postflags of the world and it will be published under the aegis of the Foundation for Bannistics and Heraldry.

With regard to the colours: one international flag would be of more importance than the whole lot of national ones, as the question is not where the mail comes from, but that the ship is carrying mail. Of course, there is such a flag: it's the one-letter flag Y of the international code-series, recognized by all countries. It means I am carrying mails. But it is not very beautiful and especially the manufacturers of flags are not enthusiastic.

Sometimes a crown is used to give a postal accent. But a crown has nothing to do with postal activities. Now you can find a relation if you want to: a crown is the hat of a king, and a king is the hat of the State, and the State is as a rule owner of the post. So when ship-owners get their mailcontract, they feel themselves like kings and put a crown in their flag.

In the greater part of the various national postflags you will find the posthorn as a symbol. It is a very ancient symbol and it goes back to the time of the so called Butcher Post in mediaval Europe. The butchers Guild members travelled in the country to buy cattle for the townpeople. They knew things, news and scandals and sometimes they had a message for a villager (who probably could not read it). So the simple inhabitants started to life and accelerated when the butcher's signal was heard, blowing a horn to announce his arrival. So well the Butcher's service was organized, that it was also used for official mail-dispatch. It lasted until the 17th century.

Now, before I come to the Netherland's history, this: if Government has used its national colours, with an annex to it in relation to a postal symbol or letters, referring to it, one can fly this flag as a national one. So a Norwegian vessel of the Meijer Company, flies the official Norwegian postflag as a national one, there

where national flags are flown at the stern. In the Netherlands postflag history, like in England, began with a distinguishing mark for mail carrying vessels. Of old the Low Countries are a land of water; there were many ferries on the rivers and in the estuaries. Flying a simple pennant was ordered in case of a contract on penalty of a fine. So, the simple appearance of the ferry guy was brightened up with a royal touch. This with regard to inland services. Of course, there was a certain overseas mail, but that was not a large bulk. So there was not a reason for the skipper to fly the special pennant, signalling the fact that he was carrying half a dozen letters and asking for quick discharging after his 20-months trip from his mother's country !

Now in the midst of the last century there was the change I mentioned before. The big steamship companies came to birth and like in England and Germany, the mail-contracts were the financial base for further development: bigger and faster ships, better service by shortening the voyages.

But with regard to the mailflag: there was not any obligation to fly such a thing, nor was a model prescribed. Obviously the ship itself with the gold-laced *état-major* was as good a mark as the postal colours were. And look here for the result.

Post in the Netherlands responds to the same rules as everywhere. It can be illustrated by the way the Lord Protector of England put an address on his letter in 1550:

To our very good Lord Dacre, Warden of the West Marshes, in haste, haste post, haste, for thy life, for thy life, for thy life.

And the Post did so, as it always did and will do. And because of the quicker attendance and reductions, when showing themselves as mail-dispatchers, companies choose mailflags of their own. By taking the national flag and making changes in it, they trespassed the law of 1797, by which it was not allowed to change anything in the national standard. But no Dutch Government ever has fined such a trespasser.

So in my country you find as much postflags as there

are broadcasting companies.

But times change and no longer all the advantages are real. The voyages are scheduled to the tick, time of departure and arrival are fixed and especially the radio enables to maintain a permanent contact with the shore. No longer a ship suddenly appears at horizon, no longer people make haste to greet the newcomer. All is fixed, isn't it? Fixed landing-stages, fixed hours, even fixed irregularities.

So the flag lost its significance and no longer it gives financial advantage. What remains, is the symbol of regularity, speed, reliability. For this reason, it is flown...sometimes. For showing a flag is rather a dear thing. It has to be clean and undamaged. One stormy day and it is gone for a good part. The Company has to furnish another 3 or 4 Pounds to buy a new one.

So flying these colours is diminishing. The Royal Dutch Mail (Nederland) only flew it on its oceanliners. The Company owned 2, but they both have been sold. So it doesn't use mailflags anymore. Neither does the Holland-Amerika Line, and the Rotterdam Lloyd in a modest way. Some others do, and amongst them the Koninklijke Nederlandsche Lloyd. The flag is a good example and in my opinion the best one we have.

A couple of years ago the Netherlands Postal Administration made an attempt to unify the stock of flags. In '29 she wanted to do a proposal to the Universal Postal Union to get a World-postflag. But she felt that other countries wouldn't support her; so she dropped its Proposals to the Shipping-companies, in later years, came to nothing.

It is evident that the lacking of any advantage prevents a vigorous taking.

Without an advantage, it is of no use to make a new attempt. That's a pity, but we have to be real. Mailflags will run out, just as the mailflags experts will do.