

THE NAVAL FLAGS ON THE EASTERN ADRIATIC

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Abstract

Flags are used on warships since the antiquity, but their usage and design are not preserved. While there are numerous flags used in the navies on ships, there are as a rule three particular flags that are used as the identification of the ship's nationality the ensign hoisted at stern, the jack hoisted at the bow and the command pennant hoisted at the masthead. This paper presents these flags as used by various navies that had their seat in the Eastern Adriatic, i.e. the modern Croatian coast. Dominated by many power through the old age, since Venice overpowered the Byzantine rule of Dalmatia there were but occasional cities enjoying autonomy in certain times. In spite of its huge merchant marine Dubrovnik maintained only a small navy that used white flags with the Republic's emblems. However, the first big power that took the Adriatic from the lengthily domination of Venice was the Habsburg Monarchy introducing naval flags already in the 15th century. The documented flags reach only to 17th century, yellow with black imperial eagles. With the reforms of Joseph II the Austrian red-white-red triband was introduced to be used with minor alterations until the end of the Dual Monarchy. In the period after the World War I the captured naval ships used the Allied ensigns as well as the white ensigns of surrender and the majority of the Austro-Hungarian fleet that surrendered in Pula briefly hoisted the Croatian tricolour. The new South-Slavic state introduced a new tricolour. During World War II the Croatian puppet state used the banner of chequy arms for the ensign of the several ships. At the same time the antifascist partisans introduced the red five-pointed star in the national tricolours. This was often used upside-down in the navy manned mostly by Croats. Several designs were exchanged during the war. The Socialist Yugoslavia initially introduced naval flags based on the Soviet model, but soon departed from it, though that had but little influence on the three naval flags. Even before the formal independence Croatia dropped the star from its flags and put the chequy shield in its tricolour. Until the adoption of the current design shortly simple ad hoc versions were in use, and afterwards the ensign was of equal design to the national merchant flag. The new design adding anchors was introduced in 1999.

1. Introduction

The paper presents the flags used on naval ships on the Eastern Adriatic to indicate their nationality from the time when the modern navies began to be formed until today. The Eastern Adriatic coast was ruled by many different regimes having a turbulent history, but whoever was ruling it employed the local inhabitants on their ships. Therefore this paper presents the naval flags of military ships on which primarily Croatian sailors and officers served under. The flags of the navies of Italy and its predecessor states although they were present on the Eastern Adriatic in various periods of history, notably Venice and to a lesser degree Genoa, do not fall into the scope of this paper.¹ This paper shall not cover also other naval powers that were occasionally present in the Adriatic whose main naval force remained elsewhere, like France, Britain, Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Therefore this paper shall present the flags used on naval ships of the Habsburg Empire, Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia, Independent State of Croatia, FPR/SFR Yugoslavia and modern Croatia, as well as those used in various transitional periods between those.

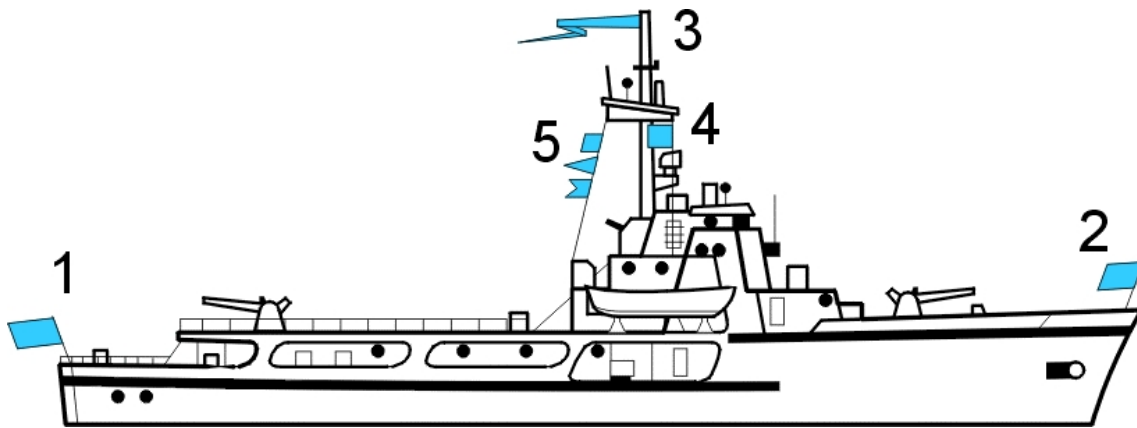


Figure 1

Flags hoisted on a modern war ship while in harbour:

- 1 ensign
- 2 jack
- 3 masthead pennant
- 4 command or rank flag
- 5 hoist of signal flags

(Unless otherwise indicated, all drawings by the autor.)

2. Flags on naval ships

In the Middle Ages the ships performing merchant activities were armed to protect themselves from pirates and other hostile ships and there was almost no difference between the military navy and the merchant marine. Since the late Middle Ages this has gradually changed and there arose the need to distinguish between war and merchant ships. This was done by use of a distinctive national flag on naval ships different from the flags used on the merchant ships. This development chronologically matches with the introduction of the flag as the ship's identification, so it is safe to say that the distinction is inherent with flagging of the ships. This distinction was retained by many marines until the present day.

The oldest treaty that determines the use of the distinctive flag on a ship to denote its nationality is said to be between the English King Edward I and the Duke of Flanders Guy from 1297, determining that their ships shall fly the flag of their respective rulers. It is around the 15th century that ensigns in the modern sense are clearly recorded. [Luetić 1967]

There are various kinds of flags used on ships (Fig. 1). Some are used to indicate the ship's origin (nationality, but some may also be used to indicate home port or similar). Others designate the ship's status (merchant, fishing, military, state function) and yet others to serve as communication signals in stricter sense transferring navigational and other operational messages from ship to ship or from ship to coast, prescribed today by the International Signal Code. Finally there is also a set of flags to indicate the presence of high dignitaries and military officers aboard the ship. Here we shall concentrate on those flags indicating nationality as used by naval ships. There is, as a rule, more than one flag used simultaneously on a ship for that purpose, depending of the status of the ship, its position in harbour or on high seas and on other circumstances, for example whether it is a holiday or not. Such group of flags that are to be hoisted on a ship simultaneously is called the ship's colours. In general for the naval ships it is tradition reaching the Middle Ages to show three flags as its colours: the main flag to indicate nationality is the one at stern named ensign. The second one is the one at bow named jack, and the third is the so-called masthead pennant hoisted from the top of the highest mast. These three flags indicate not only nationality but also that the ship in question is a war ship. That a war ship has to be clearly indicated as such is required not only by naval tradition but also by modern international maritime law. For example, the UN Convention on the High Seas of 1958, [L9] in article 8 determines a warship to mean "a ship belonging to the naval forces of a State and bearing the external marks distinguishing warships of its nationality, under the command of an officer duly commissioned by the government and whose name appears in the Navy List, and manned by a crew who are under regular naval discipline" (Similar also in Art. 29 of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982; [L12]). The external marks that distinguish a warship are as a rule national naval ensigns, or if they are equal in design to the non-military ensign then also the masthead pennant or, for example, additional markings on the ship's hull. It is left to each country to determine itself what the external marking shall be. [Pomorska enciklopedija, 1964]

The ensign is the primary flag on a ship. It is hoisted as a rule during the daytime in any position that the ship may be observed (usually the ships on the high seas when not in the vision range of other ships or other vessels, airplanes or land do not even show the ensign). In the navies all over the world the ensign is ceremoniously hoisted each morning (usually at 8 o'clock) and lowered with sundown. However, when the ship is undergoing some activities during the night, the ensign is hoisted as well. Also, it is a long standing tradition and a rule of engagement that the ensign has to be hoisted during the battle. If it is taken down by the heat of battle it has to be replaced immediately.

The ensign is by design either the same as otherwise used national flag, or it is the national flag modified in some way to indicate the military nature of the ship. This modification can be the addition of anchors or some other naval emblem, the addition of the coat of arms in the otherwise simple multi-stripped flag, a mono-coloured flag with the national flag set in the canton, the national flag with additional tails at the fly or it can be entirely different.

The jack was previously used more often but in modern times its use is more or less ceremonial, limited to warships while anchored or in harbour. The jack is often an additional indication of a warship since non-military ships nowadays rarely use jacks except on holidays. The design of the jack is much different in various navies. While some navies simply prescribe the jack to be equal in design as the ensign, but usually of smaller dimensions, others have jacks of a particular design obtained either by simplification or variation of the national colours or by setting the national emblem (or coat of arms) in a mono-coloured flag or by use of some entirely different design that is then often also the flag of the navy as an organization itself.

The masthead pennant is usually a long tapering pennant of relatively simple design. Its use by non-military ships in previous times was gradually stopped during 19th century. It is also called in English a commissioning pennant, since the pennant is hoisted from a ship from the moment when it was commissioned (i.e. entered into the service), until it is decommissioned (i.e. when a ship is retired). In the navies of the continental Europe the pennant is often referred to as the captain's pennant, since it is tradition that the pennant is considered to be owned by the ship's captain, and is given to each captain when he leaves the command. While the masthead pennant was previously often a very long, even occasionally longer than the ship itself, today it is as a rule made much smaller not to hinder the modern communication devices. When the flag officers (who are called so indeed after that fact) are aboard the ship the masthead pennant is replaced with their appropriate rank flag.

These three flags – the ensign, the jack and the masthead pennant – are considered the national identification of a naval ship. The three flags when hoisted together are referred to as the lesser pavois – the ceremonial adoration of a ship in ceremonies. The lesser pavois is hoisted on lesser holydays (in some navies each Sunday) and when ships are performing ceremonial defile. The greater pavois in addition to these flags includes other flags as well; today this means only a line of flags of the international signal code that is stretched from bow to stern along the ship in a determined order. [Isaić, 2001]

3. Early Flags on Ships in the Adriatic

As the flags on naval ships in the modern sense appear on the Adriatic only in the time of the Austrian navy, this chapter presents in brief the earlier history concentrating on occasional mentions of flags on ship recorded.

The beginning of the use of flags on ships can be traced back to Ancient Greece. Predecessor of flags as means of communications were the sails used on the ships. The black of the sails would designate sorrow or distress while red sails would indicate presence of the rulers or the high naval officials. [Novak, 2004a] Soon this was replaced with presumably a cheaper version of the method consisting only a single piece of canvas in various colours that was set atop of the masts, and the use the naval flags were born. Novak mentions that already in the Ancient Greece the ships would use flags at masts with special flags for admirals, and that a unique state flag would be used by a fleet to differentiate its own ships from the enemy's, though details of the practice are mostly unknown. The use of the signal flags was also noted.

In Rome the flag use on ships did not change much, but it may be mentioned a special blue flag awarded by Augustus to Marcus Agrippa. That was a vexillum awarded as a military decoration and such examples were a few more in the Roman times. However, it is totally unknown, how this decoration was displayed, i.e. if the actual flag was openly displayed on ship or on land or if some miniature form was worn with the uniform, for instance.² Naval practice did not change much well until the 12th century, and the main warship type since the 8th century was the dromona. On them there are already mentioned duties of a flagman aboard. [Novak, 2004a]

The Adriatic was divided between Venice and Byzantium while a new force arrived to its coasts from the east in the beginning of the 7th century the Slavic tribes. Croats settled along the east coasts of the Adriatic and in the hinterland. They soon put in the use the local inhabitants they subdued as well as their ships and slowly learned to manage the sea. The first Croatian fleet recorded to have raided the western Adriatic was noted in 642 by a Langobard historian Paul Deacon.

Until the Croats established strong states in the 9th and 10th century they were already skilled seamen and the Croatian princes and kings had significant navies in the Adriatic. The largest navy was maintained by the king Dmitar Zvonimir (ruled 1075-1089). However, not a single record on what flags they might have been using was preserved.

Soon after that Croatia entered a personal union with Hungary and lost its national rulers. The Hungarian kings had little or no interest for the rule on the sea and none of them built any fleet worth of mentioning. One of the few reports of the flags in the long period is regarding the Crusade fleet in 1202 that raided Zadar as a fee for lending the ships from Venice. Robert de Clari recounts how ships that approached Zadar were magnificent and adorned with flags.³

The 14th century on the Adriatic was marked by the conflict of Venice with a new power Genoa. In 1409 the conditions the Croatian-Hungarian king Luis II (Ladislav II) pressed by the dynastic struggle against Sigismund (Žigmund) decided to raise money by selling the coast to the Venice for 100 000 gold coins. The Hungarian kings retreated inlands once again and left the coast in conflict between the ever-expanding Turks and Venice. Many Dalmatian cities in certain period exercised some autonomy from Venice and then used their own flags on their merchant ships. [Pasch, 1965]

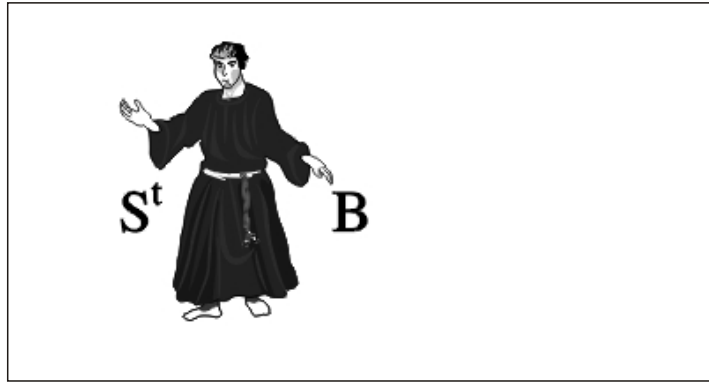


Figure 2
Republic of Dubrovnik, Ensign, ca. 17th century.
(Drawing kindly provided by Mario Fabretto.)



Figure 3
Republic of Dubrovnik, Special Ensign (Jack), ca. 1735.

Finally, one other power needs to be mentioned in the Adriatic, namely Dubrovnik, also known under its Latinized name Ragusa.⁴ The independent republic regulated its merchant flags in the Statutes already in 1272, being white with the depiction of the city patron St. Blasius (Sv. Vlaho). With the help of skilled diplomacy the Republic managed to maintain good relations with all the maritime powers, including Venice and the Turks and prospered by the trade established between the Orient and the western Mediterranean. Dubrovnik relied on their treaties for the protection of their numerous merchant fleet and they have never maintained any significant naval force (although all the merchant ships were armed to protect themselves, as was common practice in the period). For example, it is recorded that in the 15th century Dubrovnik maintained only four or five oared ships (three galleys and one or two "fustas") while at the same time maintaining the merchant fleet consisting of more than 160 large ships only. [Novak, 2004a] Therefore it is not unusual that there are no special provisions for the flags to be displayed from the warships; they would follow the practice prescribed for the merchant ships and use the white ensign with the depiction of the patron of the Republic St. Blasius.

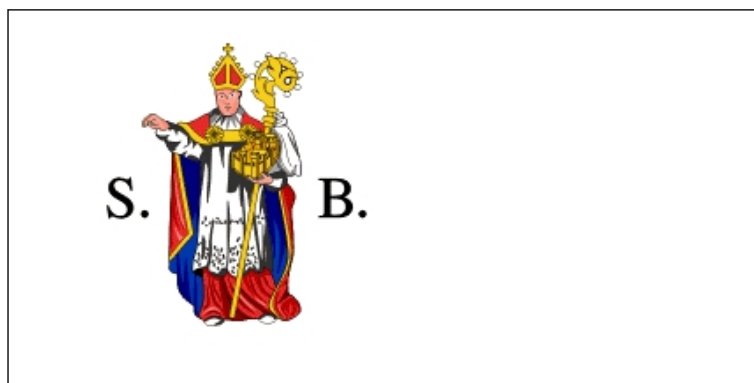


Figure 4
 Republic of Dubrovnik, Ensign, ca. 1804.
 (Drawing kindly provided by Mario Fabretto.)

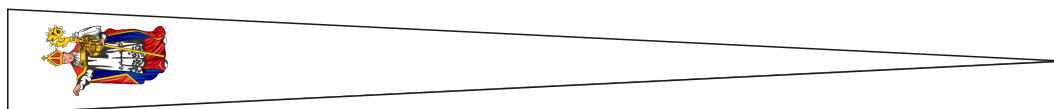


Figure 5
 Republic of Dubrovnik, Masthead Pennant, ca. 1804.
 (Based on drawing kindly provided by Mario Fabretto.)

During the years this flag was made in numerous variations according to the taste and skill of the artist. The Saint was depicted in various postures, holding the city, the Bible, episcopal staff and so on, encircled by the inscription of his name or abbreviation of it (Fig. 2, Fig. 4). Beside this ensign, the regulations mention a so-called secondary ensign that might have been used as a jack, also white with the inscription LIBERTAS (also several variations have been reported). A special flag used as jack, white with the coat of arms of the Republic, was used to denote the presence of high officials aboard and can be traced to the early years of the Republic (Fig. 3). Its version in triangular tapering form on the mainmast would have been used to indicate the warships (Fig. 5). [Luetić, 1967]⁵

4. The Habsburg Empire until 1786

In 1527 at the Cetingrad assembly the Croatian nobility elected the Austrian Archduke Ferdinand Habsburg for the Croatian king after the death of the last Croato-Hungarian king Ludwig (Ljudevit) II Jagello. The Austrian dynasty thus gained the exit towards the Adriatic with at least two larger harbours Rijeka and Senj. However, as the Hungarian kings before, they had at first very little interest for the sea, and it was only in the time of Emperor Carl VI (1685-1740) that the first Austrian ships were built. [Novak, 2004b]



Figure 6
Austria, Ensign, 17th century.



Figure 7
Austria, Ensign, ca. 1716.

The basis of the European and international maritime laws until today that already determines that each war ship should fly a flag, a pennant and an admiral's standard if he is on board is the so called *Ordonnance* (or the *See-Artikel*) that Emperor Maximilian I signed in Brügge on 8th January 1487. [Lehnert, 1886; Baumgartner, 1977] However, neither description nor depiction of these early flags exists for almost two next centuries. It is only in the reign of Emperor Carl VI that there are hints to what the flags of the Empire looked like. A copper plate drawing by Romain de Hooghe of the Turkish siege of the Ofen Fort (i.e. the fort of Buda) in year 1686 shows imperial galleys on the Danube flying the ensigns with double-headed eagle without any breast shield, holding a sword and a sceptre in his claws, with circular nimbuses behind the heads and the Imperial crown above (Fig. 6). A copperplate drawing by J. Balzer in the Archducal Collection that is also dated to the end of the 17th century shows the same flag (both etchings are preserved in the Albertina Museum in Vienna).

It is hardly possible to say that there existed a unique design of the flag that would be carried on all imperial ships. The obtaining of the flag was a duty of each captain and he would order and buy flags of design of his pleasure and the skill of the manufacturer within the general outline golden and black flags with the black double headed eagle. This was enough to identify the ship as being under Habsburg rule. The various designs found in literature include golden-black bicolour with the eagle in canton (Fig. 7) [Khuepach, 1941], golden flags with multiple black stripes with or without the eagle in the centre or in the canton and so on.



Figure 8
Austria, Naval Ensign, 1730.



Figure 9
Austria, Masthead Pennant, 1730.

In 1730 Emperor Carl VI issued a marine regulation named "See-Articuli und Kriegsgerichts-Instruction für die Marine Seiner kaiserlichen und katholischen Majestät Carl VI." with description of flags. The flag to be hoisted at the main mast of a ship commanded by an Admiral is yellow with a black double-headed eagle with escutcheon impaled Austria and Habsburg, wearing a collar of the Order of Golden Fleece, nimbuses behind heads and imperial crown above. The flag is bordered with black triangles (Fig. 8). [Lehnert, 1886; Baumgartner, 1977] The same flag is hoisted on the fore mast by a Vice-Admiral and on the rear mast by a Rear-Admiral. The *See-Articuli* also define a "Stendard" or a "breite Wimpel" to be hoisted from the main mast by a commander of a squadron consisting of at least three ships and a "Wimpel" or a "Flamme" to be hoisted from the main mast a bicolour black-yellow triangular long pennant (Fig. 9). It is also at this time that a special different flag was explicitly prescribed for the first time for the non-military (i.e. merchant) ships.

However, after Emperor Carl IV there was again decreased interest for the marine and it even happened that in 1737 it was decided that all the ships are to be sold since they are too costly and they "provoke the enemies". [Novak, 2004b]

5. The Habsburg Empire until Dualization

The next attempt of Austrians to conquer the seas happened in the middle of the first half of the 18th century when "Felix Austria" ⁶ gained by marriage the Great Duchy of Toscana, and in 1745 in Toscana was introduced a Habsburg yellow flag with black double-eagle. Toscana had signed treaties with a number of Berbery states in the Mediterranean protecting her ships from their pirates. This was the usual practice at the time and such tributes were being paid by other European nations Great Britain, France and Sweden. [Neubecker, 1980] To be able to use that privileges on the other Habsburg ships Empress Maria Theresia intended to introduce a flag for Austria similar to that of Toscana. Due to a misunderstanding the flag prescribed by Maria Theresia was never introduced [Lehnert, 1886; Baumgartner, 1977], but the flag identical to that of Toscana was used instead: on a yellow field an imperial double-headed eagle with an imperial crown above the heads and holding in the claws a sword and a sceptre (Fig. 10). [Khuepach, 1941; Neubecker, 1939] The flag prescribed by the order of the Empress Maria Theresia on 29 November 1749 was visually only a little different, but the difference was essential: the eagle was without the sword and the sceptre and crowned with the Hungarian royal crown (Fig. 11). To the black-golden masthead pennant the square golden patch with the black eagle was added at the hoist (Fig. 12). [Baumgartner, 1977]



Figure 10
Austria, Naval Ensign (de facto), 1749.



Figure 11
Austria, Naval Ensign (de jure, never used), 1749.

The reformation made by Emperor Joseph II enlarged the naval presence on the Adriatic only a little. It was required a new naval flag to match the new identity of Austrian Empire. The red-white-red triband of Austria was finally introduced in 1786 as a naval and merchant ensign. It included a crowned Austrian shield off-set to the hoist (Fig. 13). This remained in use unchanged in basic design virtually until the end of the Monarchy. Although it suffered some slight artistic changes and its usage was after a century limited to naval ships only, and it was *de jure* replaced with a flag with two shields in 1915, it was the ensign that was lowered at surrender of the Austro-Hungarian ships in 1918. The triband design was retained by the new Austrian Republic in 1918 to be used still today as the basis of the national flag. [Deppermann and Ruschke, 1844; Heyer von Rosenfeld, 1883; Lehnert, 1886; Siegel, 1912; Neubecker, 1939; Khuepach, 1941; Baumgartner, 1977]



Figure 12
Austria, Masthead Pennant, 1749.

While the ensign was adopted on 20 March 1786, Siegel notes the date of introduction of this ensign was 1 January 1787 in the Adriatic and 26 March 1787 for the Austrian Netherlands. The same flag was prescribed as the jack. The masthead pennant was also changed accordingly to red-white-red triband triangular pennant (Fig. 14). The permission for the merchant ships to fly this pennant was revoked in 1804 after Austria gained the majority of formerly Venetian held possessions on the Eastern Adriatic in 1797 with the Peace of Campoformio, when the fleet rose in numbers.

While the first half of the 19th century was dynamic on the Adriatic, with the Napoleonic wars, the presence of France and Britain maintaining the maritime blockade, and the fall of Venice, the naval flags of Austria were not changed a bit until well unto the end of the century. The ideas to differentiate the naval ensign from the merchant one were present since the introduction of the red-white-red flag, but an agreement on the design was not reached. Lehnert and Baumgartner note a number of proposals considered on the highest levels in 1805 and 1819, however no decision was made until 1869 when the joined Austrian-Hungarian merchant ensign was introduced. The triband was then prescribed exclusively as the naval ensign. However, the state services (maritime and finance administration) continued to use the triband ensign without heed for its exclusivity and it was only around the end of the 19th century that the use for naval ships only was enforced. [Baumgartner, 1979]



Figure 13
Austria, Naval (and until 1869 also Merchant) Ensign, 1786.



Figure 14
Austria, Masthead Pennant, 1786.

6. The Austrian-Hungarian Empire 1869-1918

The new set of flags of the Imperial and Royal Navy was established by Emperor Franz Joseph I on 23 December 1894, and this is referred in literature as "*1894 Muster*" [L1]. Although the Empire was dualised, the Navy retained the Austrian symbols, while the new merchant flag introduced in 1869 already showed the Hungarian colours as well. The change of the Josephinian ensign of 1786 was cosmetic only, simplifying and standardising the drawing of the crown. The number of white pearls in the crown was now fixed to eighteen, to represent the number of crown-lands of the Dual Empire. The ratio is now for the first time clearly established to 2:3 for the ships (Fig. 15). For the ensign for boats and for the jack the same flag design was prescribed in lesser dimensions and in ratio 4:5 (Fig. 16). The masthead pennant was prescribed to ratio 1:100 (Fig. 17).



Figure 15
Austria-Hungary, Naval Ensign, 1894.



Figure 16
Austria-Hungary, Jack (also Naval Ensign for boats), 1894.

The pressure of the Hungarian part of the Empire to be represented in the symbols of the joint navy was constant. Finally, while the World War was already heated the concession was made to enable the unified combat. The hundred-and-fifty-years-old Josephinian naval ensign was adapted to the new times with the addition of the second coat of arms to represent Hungarian half of the Monarchy.

However, it was not the full coat of arms of Hungary, but the eight stripes red and white coat of arms of so called Hungary Ancient. The Austrian coat of arms was crowned now with the imperial crown and the Hungary Ancient was topped with the crown of St. Stephen. Both coats of arms were offset towards the hoist (Fig. 18, 19). [Neubecker, 1954; Baumgartner, 1977; Csonkaréti, 1993; Diem, 1995]



Figure 17
1. Austria-Hungary, Masthead Pennant, 1894.



Figure 18
Austria-Hungary, Naval Ensign (unintroduced in use), 1915.

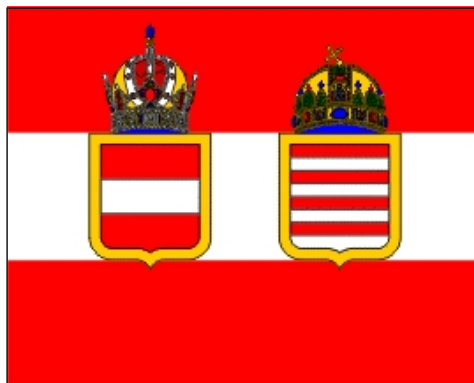


Figure 19
Austria-Hungary, Jack (also Naval Ensign for boats), 1915.

The Emperor and King Franz Joseph I signed a decision introducing a new ensign and jack of the same design into the navy on 11th October 1915 [L1]. The day of a ceremonious introduction of this ensign in the navy was left to be determined later on, and the old flags were to be retained in use and changed gradually as they were being worn out. Due to the war conditions, the change of the flags was never performed, so even if this emblem was the *de jure* flag for most of the World War it was actually never flown. The masthead pennant remained unchanged with these regulations.

Some contemporary sources show this flag similar to the dual merchant flag, i.e. with the green fly half of the lower stripe and the full coat of arms of Hungary, or in a similar way, but without the green part [e.g. McCandless & Grosvenor, 1917]. This, however, is wrong.

7. The State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, 1918

The State was formed by the South-Slavic lands of the disintegrating Austria-Hungary - Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, it was short lived and in less than a month it was integrated with Kingdom of Serbia, which already joined with Montenegro, to form what eventually was known as Yugoslavia.



Figure 20

The white ensign used on surrendered ships on final voyage from South Dalmatia to Pula, 1918.

Most of the Austrian-Hungarian naval fleet stationed in Pula was surrendered to the National Council of the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs on 31 October 1918 after the order by the Emperor Carl I. The replacement of ensigns in Pula was performed in the afternoon of 31 October and in the other Adriatic ports on 1 November 1918. The ensign of red-white-blue Croatian tricolour was hoisted on the flag ship "Viribus Unitis" (Fig. 21). [Pomorska enciklopedija, 1964; Isaić, 2001] Some ships were also adorned with the Slovenian and Serbian/Montenegrin tricolours (the Montenegrin tricolour being at the time the only maritime flag internationally recognized) [Vasiljević, 1970].⁷ The ships carrying the non-Slavic sailors and officers from Southern Dalmatia to Pula were using the white ensign (i.e. the parley flag, the sign of negotiations), as is documented in a number of photographs (Fig. 20). [Baumgartner, 1977]

Some ships captured in Montenegro were noted to be using combination of the three national tricolours into a flag of four stripes: red-white-blue-red (Fig. 24, notably "Lovćen", former "Arconia" in 1920 [Isaic, 2001; Pomorska enciklopedija, 1964]). With two circulars issued by the Maritime authorities in Bakar on 5th and 10th September 1919 the flag of blue over white over red was established for the merchant ships, but while the negotiations regarding the division of the captured Austrian-Hungarian naval fleet were ongoing in the international waters the Inter-Allied flag of four white and blue stripes was to be used (Fig. 23) [Vasiljević, 1970] with the ensign of the country that requisitioned it at the masthead [Pomorska enciklopedija, 1964] The other sources document the Allied ensign to have been the triband flag of blue over white over blue (Fig. 22) and white-blue-white [Pregel, 1987].⁸



Figure 21
State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, Ensign
rised on ships received upon surrender in Pula, 1918



Figure 22
Allied Maritime Transport Council ensign, 1919.



Figure 23
Allied ensign variant, 1919.



Figure 24
The Four-Striped Ensign, 1920.

This was the end of the official use of the Austrian naval Kriegsflagge. However, yet at one time it shall be briefly and rarely raised in an official capacity it was introduced on 1 August 1940 in Nazi German Navy, as a special flag to be hoisted on the main mast of the heavy cruiser "Prinz Eugen" on 31 May every year, instead of the German Imperial flag that was used on that date on the other naval ships of the Third Reich. [Neubecker, 1992]

8. The Kingdom of SHS/Yugoslavia 1918-1941

With the formation of the joint South-Slavic state lead by Serbia the blue-white-red tricolour was introduced first as a merchant ensign on 5 September 1919 and hoisted for the first time on warship on 30 March 1921 in Tivat. However this was not regulated for the navy but in 1922. Since then, the naval ensign included the coat of arms off-set to hoist. The vertical axis of the coat of arms is at one third of the flag length. The height of the coat of arms and excluding the royal orb at the top of the crown is one half of the flag width (Fig. 25, Fig. 26). [L3]



Figure 25

Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (since 1929 Yugoslavia), Naval Ensign, 1922



Figure 26

The Naval Ensign from the submarine "Nebojša", 1935, 137×186 cm.
(Photo ŽH, courtesy Croatian Maritime Museum Split, item no. HPMS-755:SLT-731-ZZ).

The masthead pennant is a long white pennant from the middle to fly converging to a point and ending with a white tassel. The first third of the length is in the national tricolour colours (Fig. 27).

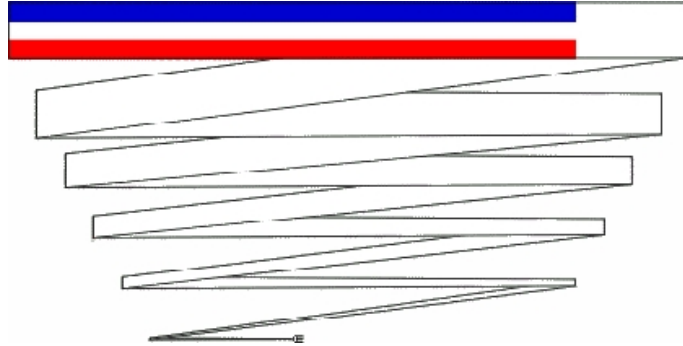


Figure 27
Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (since 1929 Yugoslavia),
Masthead Pennant, 1922.

New regulations were issued in 1937 and while they changed the design of the flags for high dignitaries and others, they have not changed the three flags indicating the national identity on naval ships. However, a new kind of a naval ensign was introduced, the honour naval ensign. It was granted to certain naval ships as symbol of merit. The honour naval ensign is design-wise entirely like the usual naval ensign, except that the grantee could include a small emblem - personal coat of arms or an other symbol - to deface the flag in an unobtrusive way usually in the canton corner. [L4; Acović, 2001]

9. The Independent State of Croatia 1941-1945

Just a few days after the attack of the Axis powers on Yugoslavia on 6th April 1941, i.e. on 10th April 1941, the Independent State of Croatia was proclaimed in Zagreb. The power was taken by Ustasha movement lead by Ante Pavelić, who prepared his troops in the pre-war years in Italy. The State (NDH, *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*) was to be a kingdom, with the king to be Italian Duke of Spoleto, but that design never came through. The NDH covered most of the territories of the current Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, some of the parts of current Vojvodina (Srijem), but had to give up of some regions to Hungary (Medjimurje and Baranja) and Italy (Istria, Rijeka, most of the islands and the Dalmatian coast). Without much coast left to Croatia, the navy was insignificant and mostly ceremonial only. Furthermore, the treaty with Italy prohibited the use of any naval ships over 50 tons. However, already with the adoption of the symbols for the new state on 30 April 1941 the naval ensign was prescribed as well. It was the armorial banner of Croatia - twenty-five white and red cheques (Fig. 28). [L5] That flag was used on the few naval boats at stern and by all offices and units of the Navy. The chequy flag is used covering coffins of sailors on the Eastern Front in 1942 (Fig. 29), while the ships serving there were navigating under the German ensign.

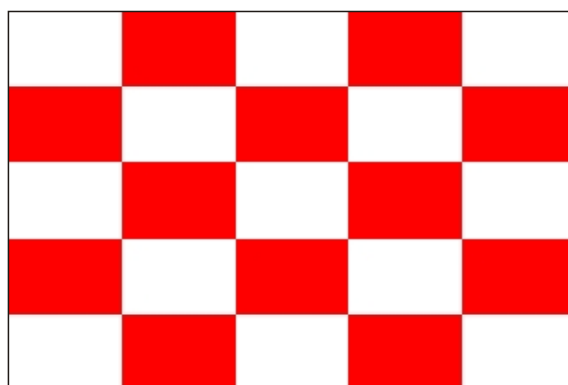


Figure 28
Independent State of Croatia, Naval Ensign, 1941 (since 1944 Jack).

With the fall of Italy in 1943 the Independent State reclaimed the coastal regions and the size limit of ships was lifted. The navy was reorganized in August 1944, but virtually lasted only for four months, most of the crews defecting immediately to the partisans. In the Neubecker's manuscripts for 1944-planned update to the German Navy *Flaggenbuch* the chequy flag is marked as "prednja ratna zastava" (forward war flag, i.e. the jack). [Neubecker, 1944] The naval ensign given there is the Croatian tricolour with the state coat of arms offset towards the hoist (the axis is on 7/18 of the flag length, height is 1/2 flag width) (Fig. 30). The hoist of flags on naval ships was complemented with a white masthead pennant with the national tricolour at the hoist tenth and a tassel at the fly, very much like the one used by the Kingdom of Yugoslavia with the tricolour replaced (Fig. 31). There is no evidence yet confirming the usage of these flags.



Figure 29

Independent State of Croatia, naval funeral, 1942 in Genicesk, Ukraine.
(Photo from the collection of Dr. Vladimir Isaić, kindly provided by Zvonimir Freivogel.)



Figure 30

Independent State of Croatia, Naval Ensign, 1944.

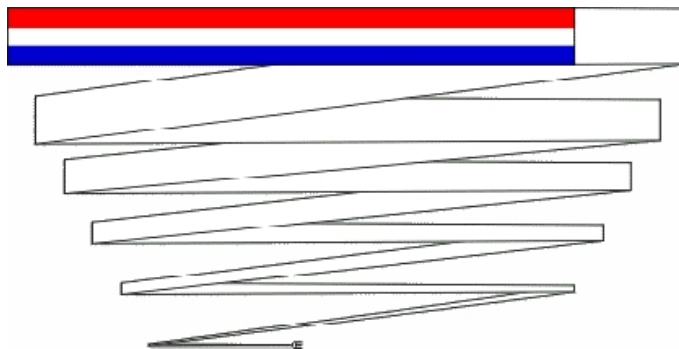


Figure 31

Independent State of Croatia, Masthead Pennant, 1944.

10. Tito's Partisans 1941-1945

The Communist Party lead by Tito organized the struggle against the occupators consolidating all the forces that opposed the Axis forming the National Liberation Movement. The symbol of their struggle was a five-pointed red star. While there are already flags equal in design to the well known later formally adopted Yugoslav tricolour with a larger star bordered yellow, the flags in general were quite various in design. The star was often made as wide as the white stripe, sometimes "fattened" (Fig. 32; cf. also Fig. 33 and Fig. 38). Since the very beginning the symbol was also used on the national (Croatian, Serbian, Slovene) tricolours carried by the partisan units. Already in the beginning some naval units were formed, but the proper navy was organized by 1942. As the most of the sailors were Croats, the Croatian tricolour defaced with the red star was used initially, but when the order was received that the Yugoslav colours are to be displayed instead, the same flag was used upside-down even though the star would then point downwards, as it is documented in a number of photographs of the period (Fig. 33, Fig. 34). [Freivogel, 2000]



Figure 32
Croatian tricolour with the Partisan red star, 1941.



Figure 33
Use of the flag upside down, ca. 1942.



Figure 34

Upside-down flag at the Yugoslav supply steamship "Morava" in an Italian port.
(Photo Sterling Jayden, Archiv R. Kugler, kindly provided by Zvonimir Freivogel.)

The first ensigns hoisted on the partisan boats and ships in 1942 consisted of the Yugoslav tricolour in the first two thirds of the flag length while the remaining third consisted of the three national tricolours of Serbia/Montenegro, Croatia and Slovenia. The Yugoslav tricolour was defaced with a red five-pointed star and a yellow anchor (Fig. 35). Several flags of this type are preserved in the Maritime Museum in Split (Fig. 36, Fig. 37). [Pomorska enciklopedija, 1964] They were gradually replaced with the later prescribed flags.



Figure 35

The First Partisan Ensign, 1942.



Figure 36

An ensign from a ship in Makarska region, 1942, 78×123 cm.
(Photo ŽH, courtesy Croatian Maritime Museum Split, item no. HPMS-755:SLT-1048-ZZ).



Figure 37

An ensign from a ship in Makarska region, 1942, 78×113 cm.
(Photo ŽH, courtesy Croatian Maritime Museum Split, item no. HPMS-755:SLT-1049-ZZ).



Figure 38

An ensign from a partisan ship, 1943, 50.5×69 cm.
(Photo ŽH, courtesy Croatian Maritime Museum Split, item no. HPMS-755:SLT-1054-ZZ).



Figure 39
Democratic Federative Yugoslavia, Naval Ensign, 1943

After the Jajce conference on which the new Yugoslav state was born on 29 November 1943, the General Staff of the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia issued a command signed by Marshall Tito on the naval and merchant ensigns to be used by the ships of the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia. The naval ensign was adopted to be the Yugoslav tricolour with the red five-pointed star in the middle of the white stripe defaced with a yellow anchor (Fig. 39). [L6; Zbornik, 1959] It seems that no special jack was prescribed, neither a masthead pennant.

11. Socialist Yugoslavia, 1945-1990

After the end of the World War II the new state of Yugoslavia was made a federal republic composed of six republics. The flag was continued to be based on the partisan star defaced tricolour, however it was in 1946 prescribed finally in a design-wise unique way enlarging the star diameter to half the hoist size and bordering it with a golden fimbriation. [L7]

The first post-war regulations regarding naval flags were issued in 1949 closely based on the Soviet model. [L8] The naval ensign is the only flag of this 1949 set that have survived changes all the time until the 1990's. It is a red ensign with the national tricolour in the canton fimbriated with a white line. In the middle of the tricolour is set a yellow-bordered red five-pointed star within a yellow-golden wreath (Fig. 40). The same ensign was prescribed for the auxiliary naval vessels.



Figure 40
Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia, Naval Ensign, 1949.



Figure 41
Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia, Honour Naval Ensign, 1949.

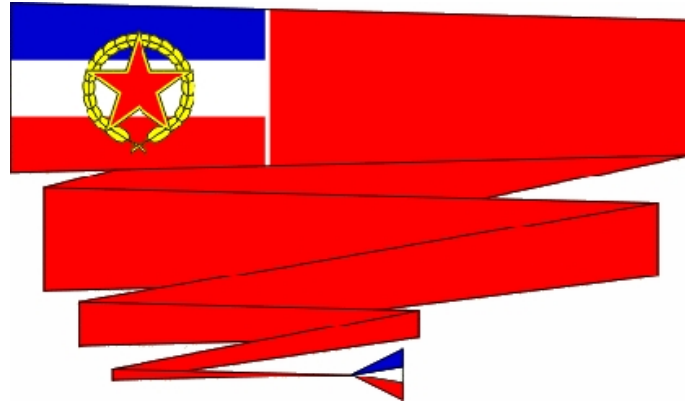


Figure 42

Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia, Masthead Pennant, 1949.



Figure 43

Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia, People's Defence Ensign 1949
(since 1956 Border Guard Ensign).

Beside the normal naval ensign, an honour ensign was prescribed as well. The special ensign was intended to be granted to naval ship in recognition of their valour. Instead of the red star in the canton was placed the coat of arms of Yugoslavia (Fig. 41). [Symbol und Wirtschaft, 1950] The artistic style of the coat of arms seems to have been such as used in the end of the World War II. The new artistic style of the coat of arms was entered into use at about the same time, but there seems to be no record of this flag ever being used, so the exact design of the coat of arms is pointless. The honour ensign was dropped from the subsequent legislation.

The commission pennant is a red triangular pennant with a tricolour tassel at the fly and at the hoist the tricolour with the star within a wreath as in the naval ensign (Fig. 42). [L9]

The jack was not prescribed yet. However, here may be mentioned the ensign for the ships of the people's defence, a red ensign with a triangular hoist with the Yugoslav tricolour and a five-pointed red star in its white stripe (Fig. 43). [L8] In practice this ensign was used mostly by the ships of the border guards, and was soon to be renamed appropriately



Figure 44
Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia, Jack, 1956.

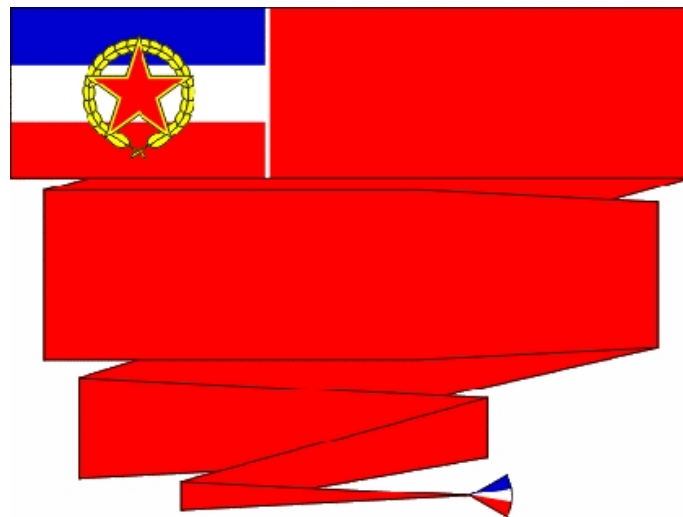


Figure 45
Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia, Masthead Pennant, 1956.



Figure 46
Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, Jack, 1963.

A new legislation on the naval flags was passed in 1956, removing from the Soviet model towards pattern more in the tradition of the former Yugoslav and Austrian navy. The ensign remained the same, as well as the border guard ensign. A minor change in the masthead pennant was in its shape, being now rectangular toward the half the length and then tapering triangularly toward the fly where a tricolour tassel was set (Fig. 45). [L9; L10]

The jack was introduced at this time, a red rectangular flag with the coat of arms in the middle (Fig. 44). [L9; L10] With the change of the name of the country from FPRY to SFRY in 1963, the coat of arms was changed in design from five to six torches, and the jack was changed accordingly (Fig. 46). [Pomorska enciklopedija, 1964; Isaić, 2001; L10; L11]

With the breakdown of Yugoslavia in the early 1990's the flags were replaced in the newly proclaimed independent states, but the majority of the ships was taken to Boka Kotorska bay in Montenegro. The socialist flags were retained in use there until the adoption of the new starless set of the FRY in 1993. [L18]

12. Republic of Croatia, 1990

Even before the proclamation of independence Croatia as a republic within Yugoslavia removed the red star from its flag replacing it with the historical Croatian coat of arms on 26 June 1990. [L15] As the details of this arms design were not prescribed until 21 December 1990 [L16], flags with the various designs were initially in use, mostly such with a simple chequy shield within the white stripe (Fig. 47). This was also used on the ships and vessels of the newly formed defence forces of Croatia. These were gradually changed for the officially adopted design.

There were no special regulations regarding the naval flags for quite some time and since 1992 when the regulations for the merchant marine introduced a 2:3 version of the national flag as the ensign (Fig. 48), the navy followed the practice. [L17] At about the same time a flag of the Navy was adopted (i.e. the ceremonial colours of the Navy as a unit within the defence forces) and this was used occasionally as a jack, even though there are photos showing the naval ships using this flag as the ensign as well. [e.g. Obrana, 2001] The exact artistic representation of the naval emblem in the flag slightly changed through the years before it was prescribed by the law. The flag of the Croatian Navy is a blue rectangle with wider red border outside and thinner white border within it and in the middle the naval emblem, consisting of the chequy shield with the crest of five shields as in the national coat of arms set over two golden anchors in saltire (Fig. 49, Fig. 50) (the Maritime Museum in Split preserves also a variation with one anchor only). The masthead pennant was not recorded, but probably, if it was used, it was as the national flag but in the triangular form.



Figure 47
Republic of Croatia, Naval Ensign, unofficial, 1990.



Figure 48
Republic of Croatia, Naval Ensign, 1992.



Figure 49
Republic of Croatia, Jack, 1992.



Figure 50
The Jack used on the Patrol Ship "Šibenik", ca. 1995, ca. 30×70 cm.
(Photo ŽH.)

In 1999 a decision of the President determined all the various flags to be used on naval ships, introducing a naval ensign of a design different then the national flag adding to it two golden anchors behind the coat of arms (Fig. 51). The flag of the Navy used semi-official as jack was now prescribed as such (Fig. 52), while the masthead pennant was prescribed to be the national tricolour in a triangular form with the coat of arms over two golden anchors in saltire set near the hoist (Fig. 53). [L19; L20]



Figure 51
Republic of Croatia, Naval Ensign, 1999.



Figure 52
Republic of Croatia, Jack, 1999.

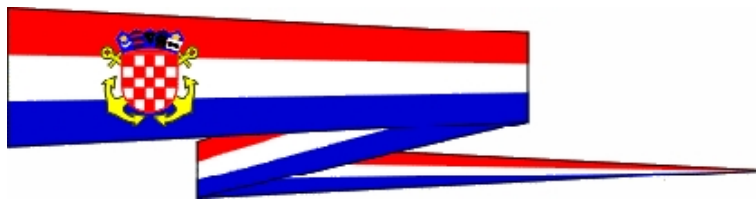


Figure 53
Republic of Croatia, Masthead Pennant, 1999.

13. Conclusion

The flags on the naval ships are national symbols par excellence. The development of the naval ensigns on the Eastern Adriatic is closely related with the turbulent history of the region. While the use of flags on warships was noted already in Antiquity, their descriptions are but vague well until around 15th century.

It is the Austrian Navy in the Adriatic that introduced firm regulations regarding the flags indicating nationality of a warship, initially based on the Imperial black and yellow colours and in 1787 the red-white-red triband was introduced that remained the naval ensign even after the dualization of the Monarchy. After the World War the new South-Slavic state introduced a new tricolour of blue over white over red with the coat of arms. While the puppet Croatian state in World War II dealt with the striped flags tradition in the navy using the banner of the chueqy arms, the opposing partisan movement replaced the coat of arms in the Yugoslav tricolour with the five-pointed star that survived with minor changes until the break-down of the Federation. The modern Croatia introduced the coat of arms on the tricolour again, eventually adding the anchors behind it for the naval ensign.

An interesting part of this history are the flags used on the warships in the transitional periods between the long lasting states, like in the case of the end of the two World War or the dissolution of the Federation in 1990's.

The Croatian sailors served on the naval ships under a number of different flags, each forming an important part of the rich Croatian maritime tradition. The change of regimes has always tried hard to make people forget about the previous one. This makes it harder for a researcher and it is even more pressing to collect the available data in one place to preserve the tradition.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

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 - E. Ghisi: "Il tricolore Italiano, 1796-1870", Rizzoli, 1931
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 - A. Ziggio: "Fiume", Armi Antiche, 1969, pp. 129-142
 - A. Ziggio: "Blasone della Repubblica di Venetia e de' suoi Regni, e Stati" in Archivum Heraldicum II, 2002, pp. 107-150.
 - P. Campodonico: "La Marineria genovese dal Medioevo all'Unità d'Italia", Faligi, 1989. (Thanks to Roberto Breschi and Pier Paolo Lugli who kindly pointed me to these works.)
2. The original text referring to the vexillum of Marcus Agrippa is from C. Suetonius Tranquillus: "De Vita Caesarum", chapter 25 (see <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu>): "M. Agrippam in Sicilia post navalem victoriam caeruleo vexillo donavit." (He awarded M. Agrippa in Sicily after the naval victory with a sky-coloured vexillum). A few other examples of such decorations are mentioned in Valerie A. Maxfield: The military decorations of the Roman army B.T. Batsford: London 1981. (Thanks to Jan Mertens for mentioning me this case and to Marcus Schmöger for providing the details above.)
3. "But when they were come forth upon the sea, and had spread their sails and hoisted their banners upon the castles of the ships, and their ensigns, then verily did it seem that the whole sea was all as warm, and that it was all ablaze with the ships that they were steering and the great rejoicing that they made.", quoted from „Robert of Clari's account of the Fourth Crusade", Chapter 13, available on-line at <http://www.deremilitari.org/RESOURCES/SOURCES/clari1.htm>
4. The English term "argosy" meaning rich merchant cargo ship is derived from the adjective "Ragusin", i.e. the Ragusin ship.

5. Luetić, 1967, notes the masthead pennant used on the naval ship in 1804, but "also in 16th, 17th and 18th century".
6. Austria under Habsburgs was gaining territories by marriage and smart diplomacy and this was expressed in the Habsburg motto "Bella gerant alii, tu felix Austria nube.": "Let others wage war, you - happy Austria - marry!"
7. Vasiljević, 1970, mentions various cases of use, for example that the torpedo ship nr. 77 navigated to Corfu under three national tricolours flags Croatian at bow, Serbian at stern and Slovenian at mainmast. At the same time there was also a Czech flag at the yardarm since there were also a number of Czech sailors on board. The ship returned from Corfu flying additionally the French tricolour, after being objected that Italians may not recognize the colours.
8. "For Austrian vessels that had been handed over to Allied Governments a special flag was introduced in 1919. It was the house flag of the Allied Maritime Transport Council, a white, over blue, over white, triband flown as an ensign at the stern. 'The National Flag of the nation entrusted with its management' was flown at the masthead. A 12' x 8' (3.66m x 2.44m) flag was specified for ships over 4,000 tons, with proportionately smaller flags for smaller vessels. Source: Public Record Office MT 25/23." David Prothero, 25 January 2001 at FOTW.

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[L7] Ustav Federativne Narodne Republike Jugoslavije, 31. I. 1946. Službeni list FNRJ.

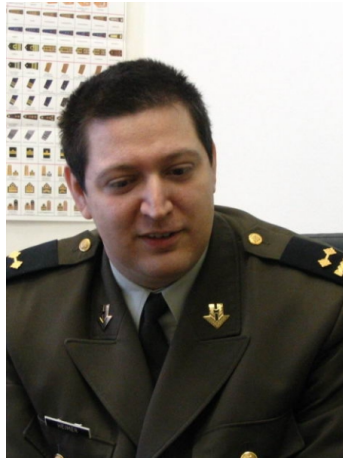
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