



## Two flags, two proposals: A new system of national and rank flags of Slovenia

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**Heraldica Slovenica**

### Abstract

*The Slovenian flag is white-blue-red with the Slovenian coat of arms (emblem) on the top left. The horizontal white-blue-red bands are equal and arranged from top to bottom while the coat-of-arms (emblem) lies with one-half in the white band and the other half in the blue band. Lovro Toman, a Slovenian lawyer, poet and politician first raised the white-blue-red flag during the Spring of Nations on 7 April 1848 on Wolf Street in Ljubljana. This flag became a true Slovenian symbol representing all Slovenians from all historical regions and survived in various forms until today. There were proposals and attempts to change the flag, mainly because of its similarity with the Slovak and Russian flag. The last such attempt was in 2003 when the Parliament of the Republic of Slovenia organised a competition for new national symbols, but none of the awarded proposals were chosen. This paper presents two proposals for the system of national and rank flags. The first one is based on the Slovenian tricolour, the flag with vertical white-blue-red bands, and the second is based on the current Slovenian Naval Jack, the flag with horizontal white-blue-yellow bands. Both the Slovenian tricolour and the Naval Jack are not registered yet as flags of an independent country, and perhaps this could be a good starting point for a flag change and a new distinctive system of Slovenian national and rank flags.*

### Introduction

The Slovenian flag has a long history.



*The first Slovenian national flag*

It was first raised during the Spring of Nations on 7 April 1848 in Wolfova ulica (Wolf Street) in Ljubljana. Lovro Toman, the national activist and poet, later a lawyer and politician, led a group of students who raised the white-blue-red flag



for the first time.



*Lovro Toman (1827-70).  
Image: Aleksander Hribovšek*



*Wolfova ulica, Ljubljana, where the  
flag first flew. Image: Uroš Žižmund*

Slovenia was then part of the Austrian Empire. Slovenians were divided between provinces of Carniola, Styria, Carinthia, Gorizia and Gradisca, Istria, and Trieste. The Duchy of Carniola had a Slovenian majority and played the leading role in the Slovenian national movement.

The coat of arms of Carniola also gave its colours to the new Slovenian national flag. The Slovenian white-blue-red flag was a response to the German black-red-yellow flag which flew on Ljubljana castle at that time.

Soon the flag became a true Slovenian symbol representing all Slovenians. The flag in different forms has survived until the present day.

### Old postcards

Postcards were used as a mean of national awakening in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These postcards represented national identity, using Slovenian national colours and flag motifs.



*Left, postcard printed c.1910; the flag of Slovenia with the arms of Carniola,  
the arms of Ljubljana and the castle of Ljubljana;  
right, postcard sent in 1900; the flag bears the coat of arms of Carniola  
and the inscription 'Greetings from the Slovenian land'.  
Both images: Krese, Naprej zastava slave*



Left, postcard sent in 1916: a Slovenian soldier in Austro-Hungarian uniform holds the Slovenian flag; beneath are lines from *Naprej, zastava slave* ('Forward, Flag of Glory'), a historic Slovenian anthem and the current anthem of the Slovenian Armed Forces; right, postcard c.1905: the Slovenian flag with the Provincial Theatre, now the Opera House, Ljubljana. Both images: Krese, *Naprej zastava slave*



Left, postcard printed c.1898: the Slovenian flag with the arms of Carniola; behind is the National Shrine of Mary Help of Christians, Brezje; right, medals in the Slovenian colours, used at church and national gatherings. All images: Krese, *Naprej zastava slave*

Later under the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the national colours were banned, although Slovenians were still sending postcards bearing the national flag.



Postcard sent in 1929: the Slovenian flag and the National Shrine of Mary Help of Christians, Brezje. Image: Krese, *Naprej zastava slave*

Germans also used postcards as a national symbol, using German colours, flags and slogans.

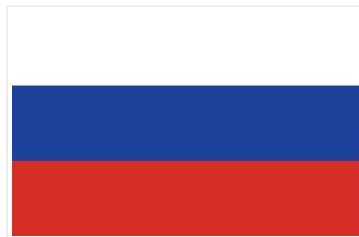
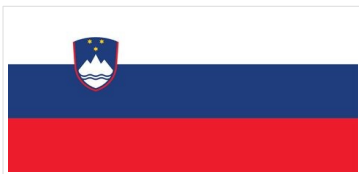


*Postcard depicting the German flag.  
Image: Krese, Naprej zastava slave*

The Slovenian national flag was used again during the Second World War. It was used on its own or with other symbols (for example, the Eagle of Carniola, or the red five-pointed star). After the Second World War, the official flag became the one with the red five-pointed star fimbriated in gold. The change came in 1991 after the proclamation of independence.

### **Independence**

Slovenia became an independent state in 1991. After a long and controversial dispute over the coat of arms, the new arms (emblem) was added to the upper left corner of the Slovenian national flag. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Russia started using its old white-blue-red flag. And after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1992, Slovakia also adopted a new flag, and the white-blue-red flag with the Slovak coat of arms became the new national flag of independent Slovakia.

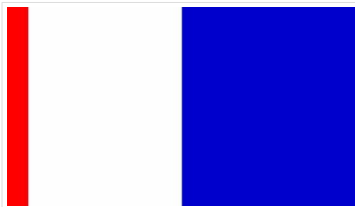


*Above left, flag of Slovenia;  
above right, flag of Russia;  
left, flag of Slovakia*

Because all three flags are very similar, they are often confused. This led to some attempts to change the flag of Slovenia, the last time in 2003.

### **Competition**

The Parliament of the Republic of Slovenia organised a competition for new national symbols in 2003. The primary goal was to find a new design for a flag, coat of arms and emblem. More than 200 proposals were submitted, and these are the top three proposals for the flag design.

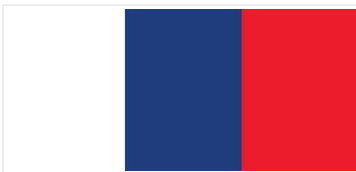


*Flag competition, 2003: above left, 1st prize, design by Dušan Jovanovič; above right, 2nd prize, design by Klemen Rodman; left, 3rd prize, design by Igor Rehar. All images: Željko Heimer*

The proposed designs were not well accepted. They were criticised as pure designs, with no historical background. Some even compared them to chocolate wrappers. Public disapproval and negative criticism seemed to affect the outcome of the competition, which resulted in a continuation of the status quo – none of the proposals were selected. Therefore, the current flag is still in use. In my opinion, Slovenia still needs a new distinctive and unique flag.

### **Two flags**

The Slovenian Tricolour was a proposal by Valt Jurečič of Heraldica Slovenica in 1989/90. It was one of the early proposals for the new Slovenian national flag. He proposed the same flag at the Parliamentary competition in 2003.



*Slovenian tricolour proposal  
by Valt Jurečič*

The white-blue-yellow flag was a proposal by Mitja Deisinger in 1992. It was a proposal for the new Slovenian ensign and later for the new Slovenian national flag.

In 1995, Whitney Smith from the Flag Research Center confirmed that with that combination Slovenia would have a unique flag. But conditions at the time were not favourable for a change. Then in 1996, the Ministry of Defence adopted the white-blue-yellow flag as the new Slovenian Naval Jack.



*Slovenian Naval Jack*

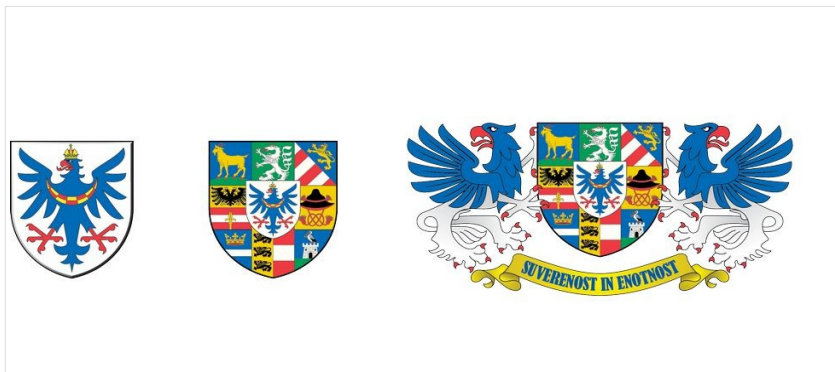


The Slovenian tricolour uses the traditional colours of the first Slovenian national flag, while the Naval Jack uses a different combination.

The colours of both flags come from the coats of arms of the historical provinces of Slovenia. Further proposals for national and rank flags are based on those two flags.

### Coat of arms

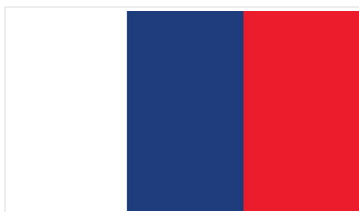
If Slovenia decides to change its coat of arms, Aleksander Hribovšek has proposed a shield that unites the arms of the Slovenian historical provinces (Istria, Styria, Gorizia, Trieste, Carniola, Slovenian March, Zala, Carinthia, Vas).



*Proposed arms of Slovenia: the Lesser, Middle and Greater coat of arms.  
Image: Aleksander Hribovšek*

### Two proposals

1. - A system of national and rank flags based on the Slovenian tricolour.



*CSW/C\*\**



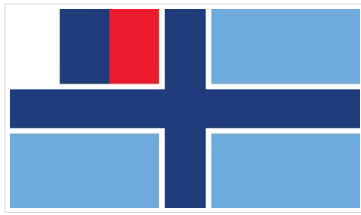
*\*\*\*/\*S\**



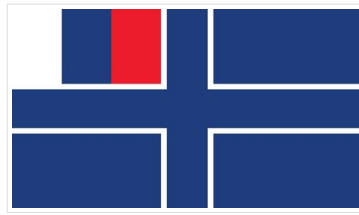
*\*\*\*/\*\*W*



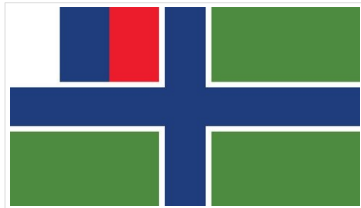
*Naval Jack*



*Air Force*



*Police*



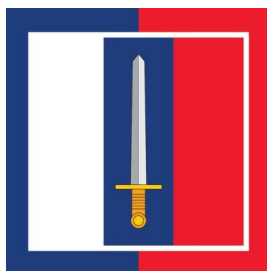
*Customs*



*President*



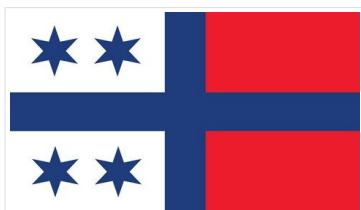
*Prime Minister*



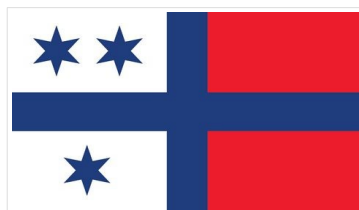
*Minister of Defence*



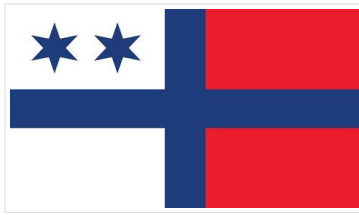
*Chief of the General Staff*



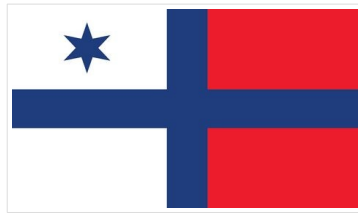
*General*



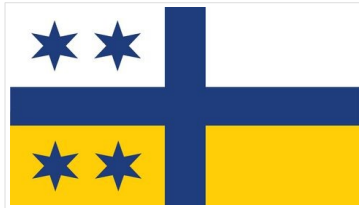
*Lieutenant General*



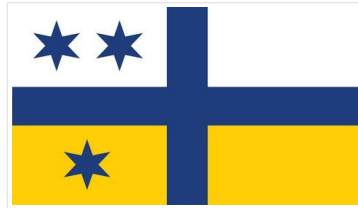
*Major General*



*Brigadier General*



*Admiral*



*Vice Admiral*



*Rear Admiral*



*Commodore*

2. A system of national and rank flags based on the Slovenian Naval Jack.



*CSW/C\*\**



*\*\*\*/\*S\**



*\*\*\*/\*\*W*



*Naval Jack*





*Air Force*



*Police*



*Customs*



*President*



*Prime Minister*



*Minister of Defence*



*Chief of the General Staff*



*General*



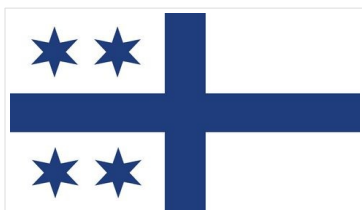
*Lieutenant General*



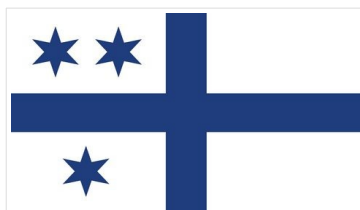
*Major General*



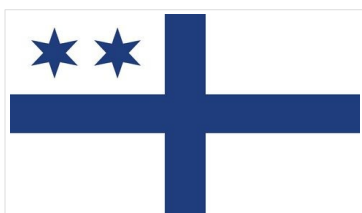
*Brigadier General*



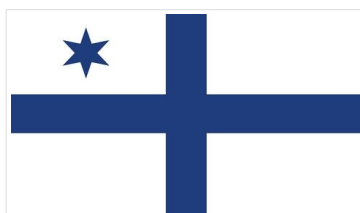
*Admiral*



*Vice Admiral*



*Rear Admiral*



*Commodore*

### Conclusion

Both flags are unique, distinctive and would be a good starting point for a new system of national and rank flags for Slovenia. There is also an excellent historical and heraldic background for both. Perhaps one day Slovenia will make a step forward toward a better flag, and this and similar papers would no longer represent just imaginary vexillology.

### Appendix

National flag variants by use:

- C\*\*/\*\* Civil flag: flown by citizens on land
- \*S\*\*/\*\* State flag: flown on public buildings
- \*\*W/\*\* War flag: flown on military buildings
- \*\*\*/\*\* Civil ensign: flown on private vessels (e.g. fishing craft, cruise ships, yachts)
- \*\*\*/\*\*S State ensign: flown on unarmed government vessels.
- \*\*\*/\*\*W Naval ensign: flown on warships.

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#### Author biography



Uroš Žižmund was born in Ljubljana, Slovenia in 1972. He works at the Institute of Microbiology and Immunology, Faculty of Medicine, in Ljubljana as an IT professional. He has been interested in flags since childhood and became involved in vexillology in the 1990s. His interest is in the history of the Slovenian and other central European flags. He is also interested in vexillography exploring the possibilities for a new flag of Slovenia. He has been a member of the Flags of the World (FOTW) mailing list since 1996. He has been a member of Heraldica Slovenica ([www.heraldica-slovenica.si](http://www.heraldica-slovenica.si)) since 2016 and the Secretary since 2017. He

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