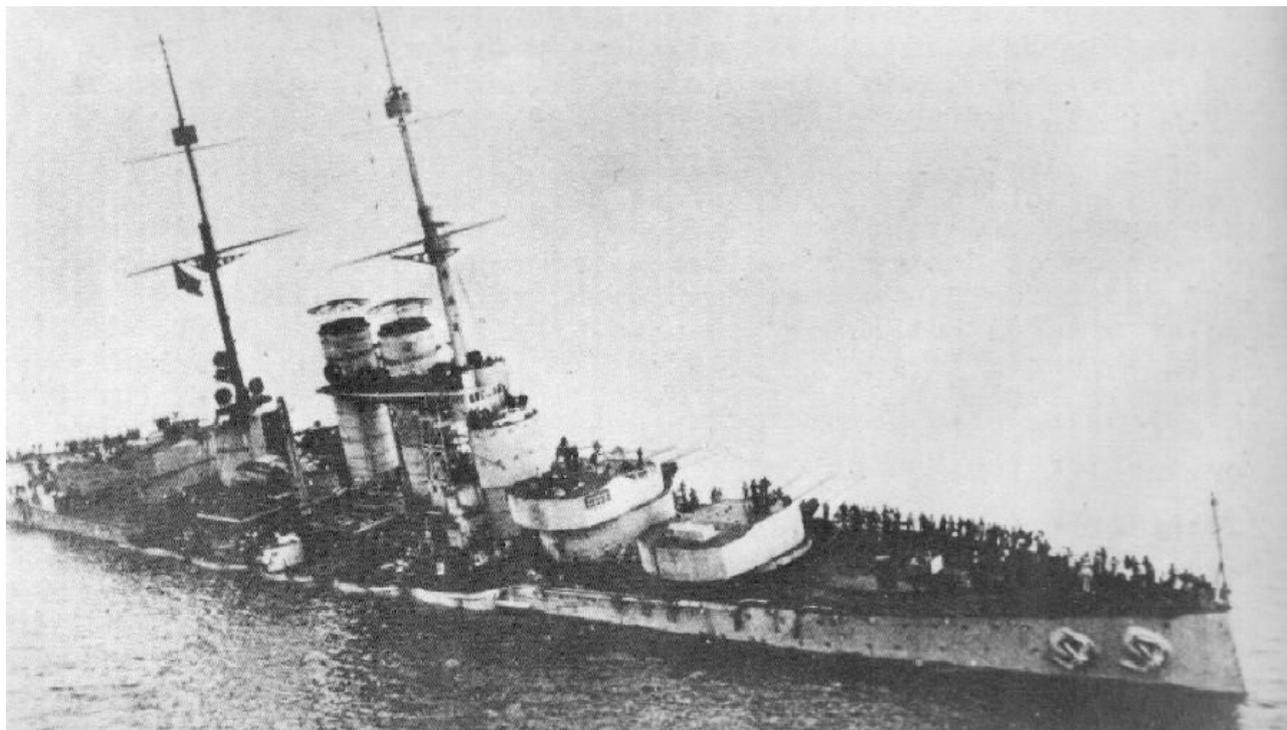


## ***IANTD EXPEDITION "SZENT ISTVAN 2003"***

(OFFICIAL PRESS RELEASE)

In June 1918 the Chief of Staff of the Austro-Hungarian Navy Admiral Nikolaus Horthy, future regent of Hungary, planned a raid against the naval barrage of Otranto, between the two coastline of southern Italy and Greece, that blocked the Mediterranean open sea access to the Austro-Hungarian Navy confined in the Adriatic sea; at the same time it should have taken place an offensive attack on the front of Piave in northern Italy.

The Austro-Hungarian fleet with the battleships Szent István and Tegetthoff set sail from Pola on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1918; on the 10<sup>th</sup> June dawn the Lieutenant Commander Luigi Rizzo, Italian Navy, was engaged with the Mas 15 and 21 (16mt. small torpedo boats) in a mine sweeping operation off the coast of the island of Lutrosnjak (actually in Croatia), accidentally he came in contact with the Austro-Hungarian fleet sailing toward Otranto.



Exploiting at the best the characteristics and the speed of his anti-submarine motorboats, thanks to a brave and hidden approach (less than 500 m.), Commander. Rizzo succeeded to sink the battleship Szent István, pride of the Austro-Hungarian Navy.

The psychological rebound of this action had so strong moral repercussions that prevented any other naval operation of the Austro-Hungarian Navy during the rest of World War One and to become the celebration day of the Italian Navy.



Today this huge and important shipwreck is strictly protected by the Government of the Republic of Croatia; from 5<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> July the Croatian Ministry of Culture appointed permission to the Italian/Croatian office of IANTD (International Association of Nitrox & Technical Divers) to perform an official expedition on Szent István shipwreck.



Twelve IANTD instructors and divers expert in using trimix and nitrox gas mixtures, performed a total of 98 dive hours at the maximum depth of 67mt. exploring the Szent István, divers used Dive Rite equipment distributed locally by Acquamarina.

Led by the expedition leader Fabio Ruberti, for the first time 8 Italian divers have been appointed of official permission by the Croatian Government to dive and explore the wreck of Szent István battleship; the Croatian team of the expedition was formed by four u/w archaeologists of the Croatian Ministry of Culture.

The success of this expedition is mainly thanks to the long time existing agreement and good relationship between Fabio Ruberti, in charge for IANTD Italy, Slovenia and Croatia, and the Croatian Ministry of Culture, whose u/w archaeologists has been trained in using nitrox and trimix mixtures for deep diving by IANTD.

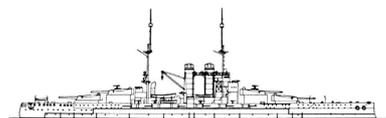
This good relationship permitted to overcome the numerous bureaucratic and political difficulties to obtain a special permission to dive this almost unexplored gigantic shipwreck. Performing exploration dives on an almost complete shipwreck like Szent István one, is an exceptional event not only because his huge size (21.254 tons., more than 160mt. length), but also because the great historical value that the shipwreck bear.



The expedition had also the task to celebrate the 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Szent István sinking, in order to remember the epic action of Commander Rizzo and the almost 100 lives lost with the ship, IANTD and the Croatian Ministry of Culture, jointly depose a wreath on the shipwreck, to sanction a reconciliation between two shores of the Adriatic sea, as good omen of a definitive European harmony.

***Fabio Ruberti***

✠ *Szent István Expedition* ✠



Szent István (1918)

*Szent István 2003*

Marina di Pisa July 27<sup>th</sup> 2003