

= Italian ironclad Re d'Italia =

Re d'Italia ( King of Italy ) was the lead ship of the Re d'Italia @-@ class armored frigates built in the United States for the Italian Regia Marina ( Royal Navy ) in the early 1860s . She was laid down at the William H. Webb Shipyard in New York in November 1861 , was launched in April 1863 , and was completed a year later in September 1864 ; the two Re d'Italia @-@ class ships were the only Italian ironclads built in the United States . The ships were broadside ironclads , armed with a battery of six 72 @-@ pounder guns and thirty @-@ two 164 mm ( 6 @-@ 5 in ) guns .

Re d'Italia initially served as the flagship of the Italian fleet , though she was replaced by the turret ship Affondatore shortly before the Battle of Lissa in 1866 . During that battle , Re d'Italia was at the center of the melee . After her rudder was disabled by an Austrian vessel , the Austrian flagship , Erzherzog Ferdinand Max rammed her and tore a large hole in her hull . Re d'Italia quickly rolled over and sank , taking some 400 of her crew with the ship , including her captain , Emilio Faà di Bruno .

= = Design = =

Re d'Italia was 99 @-@ 61 meters ( 326 @-@ 8 ft ) long overall ; she had a beam of 16 @-@ 76 m ( 55 @-@ 0 ft ) and an average draft of 6 @-@ 17 m ( 20 @-@ 2 ft ) . She displaced 5 @-@ 610 metric tons ( 5 @-@ 520 long tons ; 6 @-@ 180 short tons ) normally and up to 5 @-@ 869 t ( 5 @-@ 776 long tons ; 6 @-@ 469 short tons ) at full load . Her hull was built from green wood . She had a crew of 565 . The ship 's propulsion system consisted of one single @-@ expansion steam engine that drove a single screw propeller , with steam supplied by four coal @-@ fired , rectangular boilers . Her engine produced a top speed of 10 @-@ 6 to 10 @-@ 8 knots ( 19 @-@ 6 to 20 @-@ 0 km / h ; 12 @-@ 2 to 12 @-@ 4 mph ) from 1 @-@ 812 to 1 @-@ 845 indicated horsepower ( 1 @-@ 351 to 1 @-@ 376 kW ) . She could steam for about 1 @-@ 800 nautical miles ( 3 @-@ 300 km ; 2 @-@ 100 mi ) at a speed of 10 @-@ 5 knots ( 19 @-@ 4 km / h ; 12 @-@ 1 mph ) . For long @-@ distance travel , Re d'Italia was fitted with three masts and was barque @-@ rigged .

Re d'Italia was a broadside ironclad , and she was armed with a main battery of six 72 @-@ pounder 8 in ( 200 mm ) guns and thirty @-@ two 164 mm ( 6 @-@ 5 in ) rifled muzzle @-@ loading guns . The ship was equipped with a spur @-@ shaped ram at the bow . The ship 's hull was sheathed with wrought iron armor that was 4 @-@ 75 in ( 121 mm ) thick . Her rudder and propellers , however , were not protected by her armor .

= = Service history = =

Re d'Italia was built by William H. Webb at his shipyard in New York City . She was laid down on 21 November 1861 and launched on 18 April 1863 . The ship arrived in Italy in April 1864 and was commissioned into the Italian fleet on 18 September 1864 . Less than two years later , in June 1866 , Italy declared war on Austria , as part of the Third Italian War of Independence , which was fought concurrently with the Austro @-@ Prussian War . The Italian fleet commander , Admiral Carlo Pellion di Persano , initially adopted a cautious course of action ; he was unwilling to risk battle with the Austrian Navy , despite the fact that the Austrian fleet was much weaker than his own . Persano claimed he was simply waiting on the ironclad ram Affondatore , en route from Britain , but his inaction weakened morale in the fleet , with many of his subordinates openly accusing him of cowardice .

Rear Admiral Wilhelm von Tegetthoff brought the Austrian fleet to Ancona on June 27 , in attempt to draw out the Italians . At the time , many of the Italian ships were in disarray ; several ships did not have their entire armament , and several others had problems with their engines . Re d'Italia had a fire burning in her coal bunkers . Persano held a council of war aboard the ironclad Principe di Carignano to determine whether he should sortie to engage Tegetthoff , but by that time , the Austrians had withdrawn , making the decision moot . The Minister of the Navy , Agostino Depretis , urged Persano to act and suggested the island of Lissa , to restore Italian confidence after their

defeat at the Battle of Custoza the previous month . On 7 July , Persano left Ancona and conducted a sweep into the Adriatic , but encountered no Austrian ships and returned on the 13th .

= = = Battle of Lissa = = =

On 16 July , Persano took the Italian fleet out of Ancona , bound for Lissa , where they arrived on the 18th . With them , they brought troop transports carrying 3 @, @ 000 soldiers ; the Italian warships began bombarding the Austrian forts on the island , with the intention of landing the soldiers once the fortresses had been silenced . In response , the Austrian Navy sent the fleet under Tegetthoff to attack the Italian ships . At that time , Re d 'Italia was Persano 's flagship in the 2nd Division , along with the ironclad San Martino and the coastal defense ship Palestro . After arriving off Lissa on the 18th , Persano sent most of his ships to bombard the town of Vis , but he was unable to effect the landing .

The next morning , Persano ordered another attack ; four ironclads would force the harbor defenses at Vis while Re d 'Italia and the rest of the fleet would attempt to suppress the outer fortifications . This second attack also proved to be a failure , but Persano decided to make a third attempt the next day . Re d 'Italia and the bulk of the fleet would again try to disable the outer forts in preparation for the landing . Before the Italians could begin the attack , the dispatch boat Esploratore arrived , bringing news of Tegetthoff 's approach . Persano 's fleet was in disarray ; the three ships of Admiral Giovanni Vacca 's 1st Division were three miles to the northeast from Persano 's main force , and three other ironclads were further away to the west . Persano immediately ordered his ships to form up with Vacca 's , first in line abreast formation , and then in line ahead formation . Re d 'Italia was the fourth ship in the Italian line , behind only Vacca 's ships .

Shortly before the action began , Persano decided to leave Re d 'Italia and transfer to Affondatore , though none of his subordinates on the other ships were aware of the change . They were thus left to fight as individuals without direction . More dangerously , by stopping Re d 'Italia , he allowed a significant gap to open up between Vacca 's three ships and the rest of the fleet . Tegetthoff took his fleet through the gap between Vacca 's and Persano 's ships , though he failed to ram any Italian vessels on the first pass . The Austrians then turned back toward Persano 's ships , and took Re d 'Italia , San Martino , and Palestro under heavy fire . The Austrian ships concentrated their fire on Re d 'Italia , paying particular attention to her stern . In their attempts to ram her , one of the Austrian ships destroyed Re d 'Italia 's rudder , leaving her unmaneuverable .

Re d 'Italia 's captain , Emilio Faà di Bruno , attempted to escape from the melee , but he could only steer his ship using her engines . Blocked by another Austrian ironclad , Faà di Bruno ordered his ship to reverse course . She was almost stopped when she was rammed by the Austrian flagship , Erzherzog Ferdinand Max . The Austrian ship 's ram tore a gaping hole in Re d 'Italia 's hull . She quickly rolled over to port and sank . Out of her crew , only 166 men were saved ; the remaining 400 went down with the ship , including Faà di Bruno .