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Choice of an emblem for the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe

Report

Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs

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A. Draft Resolution

The Consultative Assembly,

1. Resolves to take as its emblem an azure flag bearing a circle of fifteen stars or (an azure flag bearing a circle of five-pointed stars or, which do not touch).
2. This flag shall be flown outside the buildings of the Council of Europe whenever the Assembly is in Session.
3. Its use on other occasions shall be determined later by the Bureau of the Consultative Assembly.

B. Draft Recommendation

The Consultative Assembly,

Having adopted as its emblem an azure flag bearing a circle of fifteen stars or,

Recommends that the Committee of Ministers should

- a.* adopt the same emblem as the symbol of the Council of Europe as a whole;
- b.* instructs the Secretary-General to enter into negotiations with the other European institutions to ensure that the emblems adopted by them shall have features similar to that adopted by the Council of Europe.

C. Explanatory Memorandum

1.

So long as Europe is split up, its powerful voice cannot be effectively heard in the cause of peace. Once united, it can again become prosperous, strong and powerful, using its long-established diplomatic experience to foster that indivisible peace which Europe more than any other part of the world is concerned to maintain, and can again, in the concert of nations, play a great part in the service of freedom and justice.

People of all countries, social positions and political opinions are realising this more clearly every day and are desirous of seeing practical expression given to their ideal by a European emblem.

The necessity of such an emblem became evident immediately upon the creation of the Council of Europe, in 1949. The champions of the European ideal used the flag with a green E on a white ground which had been introduced by the European Movement at The Hague Congress. This improvised symbol was very popular, despite its lack of aesthetic appeal and heraldic significance. In every country throughout Europe new emblems of ' United Europe ' were displayed side by side with the national colours. This vogue proved the need for such a symbol. For it is essential for an ideal to find expression in imagery, and the lack of an emblem of the Council of Europe has made itself keenly felt.

It was no doubt desirable for the European Movement to retain the emblem with which it had come into existence; but it was no less desirable for other European institutions, as and when established, to have their own emblems with which to demonstrate their existence and their presence.

The Council's lack of a symbol has obliged it, since 1949, to display the flags of all Member States, arranged in accordance with custom in English alphabetical order.

Not a week has passed since 1949 without the Secretariat-General of the Council having received enquiries from organisations desirous of asserting their devotion to the ideas which it represents by displaying its flag; nor has a week passed, without various individuals submitting more or less felicitous suggestions for such an emblem.

Early in 1950, the European Parliamentary Union suggested the adoption of its own flag – a golden sun with a cross gules on a field azure.

When the Committee on General Affairs asked the Secretariat-General to draw up a report on the practical steps to be taken to make public opinion more directly aware of the reality of European union, the first step suggested was the adoption of a symbol.

On 18th August, 1950, these proposals were submitted to the Assembly, which decided to refer them to its appropriate Committees. The question of the emblem was therefore first referred to the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Privileges.

The Committee considers that the time has come to request the Assembly to take a final decision.

Not only are the symbols of certain private associations frequently mistaken, at present, for the official emblem of the Council of Europe, but the establishment of a number of European institutions threatens to give rise to a variety of symbols which can hardly be reconciled with an appeal for unity.

We are well aware that there are certain thorny points connected with the necessary decisions..

In the first place, it will be necessary to break away from the semi-official emblems of private voluntary movements which, whatever their merits, must give place to the official emblem of the foremost of European political institutions—that which it is the declared intention of the different Governments to adopt as the general political framework of Europe.

Moreover, care must be taken to avoid regrettable manifestations of particularism, which might produce a crop of rival symbols. Negotiations have been opened with a view to avoiding this risk. Certain symbols which have already gained some degree of acceptance should, however, be taken into account.

When the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Privileges approached this problem for the first time, it was struck by the number of proposals that had already been made. The Secretariat-General had received over a hundred unsolicited designs from private individuals, had had the official suggestion from the European Parliamentary Union, and had itself, with the assistance of certain experts on heraldry, investigated the question of an emblem which should be satisfactory from the aesthetic, symbolic and heraldic points of view.

The designs submitted being so numerous, the Committee asked the Secretariat-General to make a preliminary selection of ten or a dozen, on which the Members of the Assembly would be asked to give a first opinion.

The Assembly was therefore consulted in December, 1951. The result was somewhat disappointing. Although the Members of the Assembly were already in a position to appreciate the value of adopting an official symbol of the Council of Europe, and although the results of the campaign undertaken in France to encourage the display of the flag of the European Movement were already known, the Members of the Consultative Assembly showed little interest in the question. Hardly one-third of them replied to the questionnaire. This investigation, however, led to two deductions of a definitely contradictory nature :

- a. Among those who had expressed an opinion, there was almost a majority in favour of the emblem of the European Parliamentary Union;
- b. Our Turkish colleagues were definitely opposed to the inclusion of a cross in the emblem of the Council, and several other colleagues made the same objection.

The latter view made it impossible to adopt the first suggestion, and also ruled out the design prepared by the Secretariat-General – a cross vert on a field argent.

Don Salvador de Madariaga, President of the European Cultural Centre, then suggested the adoption – not as the emblem of the Council, but as that of Europe as a whole – of a blue flag with golden stars marking the positions of the countries which were free in 1938, with a large gold star to represent Strasbourg.

This plan was judged too difficult to carry out, and too intellectual in concept. The combination of colours and the idea of gold stars in a blue sky were, however, attractive.

For this reason the Secretariat-General finally proposed a flag having a circle of stars or on a field azure, and this was adopted by your Committee. The complete circle symbolises unity, whereas the stars shining in the firmament symbolise the hope of our nations.

An appropriate symbol could later be inserted in the centre of this circle in the flag of each of the European institutions. For instance, the flags of the President and Vice-Presidents of the Consultative Assembly and the Secretary-General might bear the arms of Strasbourg (a bend gules on a field argent); that of the European Cultural Centre, an open book; that of the College of Europe, an owl, etc. These are only suggestions which require to be studied in further detail. The main consideration was that agreement should be reached upon an emblem for the Assembly which might be adopted for the Council of Europe as a whole and might also serve as a common denominator for all existing or future European institutions.

These various institutions could adopt the circle of stars on a plain ground, varying the colour of the field and stars and the number of stars to suit their own circumstances.

It may be imagined that if such emblems, based on a single concept and closely related in subject, were adopted by all the countries of free Europe, they could be a very effective means of fostering the rapid and wide dissemination of the European idea, without which there is in the world to-day no hope for our civilisation.

In view of the fact that members of the Committee have now agreed upon an emblem, it was considered unwise to embark upon a lengthy procedure before the emblem could be put into effective use.

Thus, this Report concludes with a Resolution and a Recommendation, of which the former must perforce be submitted to the vote before the latter. By this Resolution, the Consultative Assembly would freely decide, within the limits of its competence, to adopt as its emblem a blue flag with a circle of fifteen gold stars, which would immediately be put into use.

The Recommendation, based on this decision of the Assembly, invites the Committee of Ministers to adopt this emblem for the Council as a whole and to take all steps to ensure that it is used widely and with appropriate dignity.

EMBLEM FOR THE CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Heraldic description. — Azure, a circle of fifteen stars or, their points not touching.

Symbol. — Against the sky-blue ground, the stars stand for the nations represented in the Consultative Assembly, which form a circle as a sign of union.

Geometrical description. — The length of the fly is equal to one and a half times the height of the hoist. The proportion of 3 to 2 is that of the flags of the majority of Members of the Council. The gold stars are arranged in a circle, the centre of which is placed at the point of intersection of the diagonals of the rectangle formed by the flag. The radius of this circle is equal to $\frac{1}{3}$ of the height of the hoist. The stars are centred on the circle. The stars are five-pointed, and each of them is inscribed in a hypothetical circle, with a radius equal to $\frac{1}{20}$ of the hoist. All the stars are arranged vertically – that is to say, with one point upwards and two points resting on a hypothetical line running perpendicular to the flag-pole.

