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Choice of a Europe emblem

Report¹

Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs

Rapporteur: Mr Jacques BICHET, France

1. See 5th Session, 1953 : Doc. 198 (Report of the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Privileges), Resolution 41 and Recommendation 5G.



A. Draft Resolution²

1. The Consultative Assembly resolves to take as its emblem an azure flag bearing a circle of twelve 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.

2. See 25th Sitting, 25th October, 1955 (draft Resolution redundant).

B. Draft Recommendation³

The Assembly,

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

Recommends that the Committee of Ministers :

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

3. See 25th Sitting, 25th October, 1955 (Draft Recommendation adopted after amendment) and [Recommendation 88](#).

C. Explanatory Memorandum submitted by M. BICHET, Rapporteur

On 21st September, 1953, on behalf of the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Privileges, we proposed to the Consultative Assembly the choice of an emblem.

"So long as Europe is split up" we said, "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, above all, 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 or 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.

The Council's lack of a symbol has obliged it, since 1949, to display the flags of all Member States, arranged, as is customary, 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 affirming 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."

We do not intend to go into the history of this question here, since this has already been done in our Report of 21st September, 1953. We would point out, however, that when the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Privileges first considered this question, it was struck by the profusion of proposals already formulated. The Secretariat-General had received over a hundred unsolicited designs from private individuals, had received an 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.

After studying all these suggestions, the Secretariat-General finally proposed a flag having a circle of 15 stars or on a field azure, and this was adopted by your Committee. The complete circle symbolises unity, while the stars shining in the firmament symbolise the hope of our nations.

On 25th September, 1953, the Consultative Assembly accordingly adopted the following Resolution :

1. The Assembly 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.

The Assembly also invited the Committee of Ministers to adopt this 'emblem for the Council of Europe as a whole.

A difficulty, however, thereupon arose in the Committee of Ministers concerning the number of stars; and in September, 1954, the Ministers informed the Assembly that they were proposing to appoint an ad hoc Committee composed of three representatives of the Assembly and three heraldists appointed by Member States to consider the choice of an emblem for the Council of Europe and to submit solutions to the Committee of Ministers, while bearing in mind existing proposals.

The Assembly accepted this suggestion and the ad hoc Committee met in Strasbourg on 12th November, 1954. In view of the political difficulties encountered by the Committee of Ministers, it proposed a circle of eight interlaced annulets or on an azure field. Thus the symbol remained the same: a circle of gold rings on a sky-blue ground.

On 22nd April, 1955, the Committee of Ministers re-examined the various proposals submitted to it, and decided to recommend two designs for consideration by the Joint Committee.

The first is a circle of 12 stars or on an azure field, and the second a semée of stars or, also on an azure field.

The Committee of Ministers pointed out that most of the Deputies had expressed a preference for the first of these two designs.

The Committee of Ministers thus reverted to the first proposal of the Consultative Assembly, but with a change in the number of stars in order to guard against any wrong interpretations.

The Committee on Rules of Procedure and Privileges examined the two proposals at its meetings on 15th July and 18th October, 1955, and unanimously adopted the alternative preferred by the Committee of Ministers.

Although the combination of colours and the idea of gold stars scattered about in a blue sky were attractive, this proposal seemed more difficult to carry out.

The Committee of Ministers, by expressing a preference for a circle of 12 stars or on an azure field, adopted, with modification of the number of stars, the initial proposal of the Committee and of the Assembly. Its main advantage is that it will be possible at some future date to place an appropriate symbol in the centre of the circle for each of the European institutions.

For this reason we would ask you to adopt unanimously, as the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Privileges itself has done, the two draft texts mentioned above.