



COE002272

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WEEKLY BROADCAST OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

A EUROPEAN FLAG

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The announcement that the Consultative Assembly has adopted a blue flag bearing a central circle of fifteen gold stars has brought down upon us a spate of correspondence. Many newspaper articles have been devoted to this decision and have given it a warm reception. We think, therefore, that the time has come to explain to our listeners the real significance of this move and the exact nature of this flag which many people already seem anxious to display.

One thing seems certain: the reign of the green E on a white field is once and for all at an end. We shall, of course, keep a place in our hearts for this first European emblem, which came into being at The Hague in 1948. It remains the emblem of the European Movement, a private movement for which we have the greatest affection as the source of all our European institutions.

But this green E on a white field is so indistinct that many consider it to be a white E on a green field, and, if we may be so bold as to say so, its design is uncouth, unheraldic, unaesthetic and completely devoid of charm.

In the absence of an alternative, there was always a chance that it might become established in spite of its faults, though there was also the flag of Count Coudenhove-Kalergi's Pan-European Movement: azure with a golden sun inscribed with a red cross. This proud banner, now thirty years' old, could be seen side by side with the green E at certain European demonstrations. However, neither of these being a satisfactory solution, the

question was submitted to examination. Without any appeal on the part of the Council of Europe, suggestions were showered upon us; I will say no more now than that the choice was extremely difficult. Confronted with this veritable array of designs, the Committee on Rules of Procedure and Privileges of the Consultative Assembly requested the Secretariat-General to make a preliminary selection for submission to Representatives. When a consensus of opinion was held in late 1951, Representatives rejected in principle all motifs incorporating a cross, in the belief that symbols of possible religious significance should be avoided, a decision regretted by many of us. A number expressed their preference for the flag of the Pan-European Movement, with the omission of its cross, which led to the idea of experimenting with a combination of blue and gold.

Stars seemed to meet with wide approval. Indeed they are fashionable not only on both sides of the Iron Curtain but in the New World as well as the Old. Finally, we hit upon the idea of a circle of fifteen gold stars on a blue field. About the same time the Hamburg branch of the European Movement put forward the same suggestion, though we only became aware of this fact very recently, when it quite rightly claimed some of the credit for our success.

When, by independent paths, various departments of the Secretariat-General and various individuals had all arrived at the same solution, the Committee on Rules of Procedure unanimously decided to propose this emblem to the Assembly, which has now adopted it.

It must be remembered, however, that the Consultative Assembly is not the only organ of the Council of Europe and that, if the emblem is to become valid for the Council as a whole, it must also be adopted by the Committee of Ministers. In the light of all the preliminary hesitations and obstacles, the Assembly determined to have done with proposals, revisions, improvements, amendments and corrections, and for this reason alone, it resolved to do what lay within its competence, by adopting its own emblem in the form of a blue flag with a circle of fifteen gold stars.

If any listeners wish to know the exact appearance and proportions of this flag and how it is designed, we shall be very pleased to send them the official description, illustrated in colour.

All you need to do is to send a plain postcard giving your name and address to: Radio Section, Council of Europe, Strasbourg. We repeat: Radio Section, Council of Europe, Strasbourg. A card with your name and address, please. You will then receive particulars of the emblem now adopted by the Consultative Assembly and recommended for adoption by the Committee of Ministers.

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