

The swiss flag and its origin

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): **- (1960)**

Heft 1358

PDF erstellt am: **28.04.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-687825>

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must be the decisive standard. This is recognized even by foreign military experts who believe an organization of career troops to be the necessary backbone of any army and are apt to look with scepticism upon the "citizen in uniform."

For the Swiss army is more than an assemblage of "citizens in uniform," more than a citizen force of much good will but little power and lacking discipline. The principle of compulsory military service is not a mere slogan but deeply inscribed in the hearts of all young men. They want to do their service and be a soldier heart and soul. Love of their native land is inseparable from the determination to defend this homeland at all cost. Anti-militaristic tendencies have been noticeable with a minute minority only. For a Swiss it is dishonourable to ridicule military defence or to regard it as an annoying burden to be shaken off by all means. He is proud to take his kit including his rifle and ammunition home with him and to keep his shooting ability up to par even outside of the military courses.

How can the military task be performed in keeping with the principle of democracy? In fact, a certain contradiction exists between the individual's right to freedom and the severe, collective organization of the army. By its nature an army must be based on a hierarchy, on discipline and obedience; a free country is democratic, founded on discussion and free will. Theoretically this contrast can be overcome in two ways. Either the military principle is adopted to the state as well, leading to an authoritarian regime or even to dictatorship, or the democratic principle is applied to the army which no doubt would impair if not destroy its efficiency. Switzerland has done neither one nor the other. The two contrasts are there, but probably the happiest result of this policy is the fact that the Swiss militia system in itself represents no contradiction of the two separate groups of people, the "democratic masses" and the "military cast." The latent contrast thus becomes a most intense and fruitful as every man is citizen and soldier in one. As citizen he enjoys the full freedom of the individual and as soldier he is prepared for the ultimate sacrifice. Seen from outside his life moves from the career of a civilian to short termed military service and back again to civil life. Yet, deep inside he will feel that the two aspects of life, much as they may differ in their methods, are each fully justified while constituting a whole — faithfulness to the country. The citizen should uphold the country's defence not during actual service only, he should do so morally as well as financially and keep up his training on a voluntary basis; the soldier should know that the army he serves in is an instrument to safeguard the country's independence and the rights to freedom and no "contrast" to democracy, serving its own purposes.

If Switzerland's policy of armed neutrality is further to be successful a strong army is necessary the spiritual and technical training of which must be continued and perfected. However, the most beautiful proclamations, the best laws and the largest credits cannot replace the most important factor in independence: the citizen's will to be and remain free and as soldiers to form an army able to embody and enforce this will in the face of the world.

THE SWISS FLAG AND ITS ORIGIN.

The Swiss flag is, when compared with those of the states of present day Europe, both one of the most ancient and one of the most modern. The white cross upon a red ground, which floats upon its folds, goes far back in history but it was not until the XIXth century that it became really, by popular consecration, our national flag, and by a decision of the competent authorities, the rallying sign of the Federal Army. This decision, due to the far-seeing initiative and perseverance of General Dufour, marked as one realises to-day, one of the first stages of the political unification of our Federative State.

Thus it was to this peace-making General to whom Switzerland owed the rapid termination of her crisis of growth (or growing pains) that we owe the adoption of the Federal flag by all the Cantons, and the victory over the Sonderbund. It cost him no less than ten years of persevering effort to insure this measure. He presented the proposition in 1830 at Geneva with the first declaration of the Confederation's neutrality, in a series of revolutions that threatened to draw the whole world into a European war.

Then a Colonel of Engineers, Guillaume Henry Dufour insisted upon the organisation of all the defensive forces of the country. Among the questions which should, according to him, be placed before the High Assembly he specified that of the flag.

"The Diet," said he, "must see whether it is not advisable to give the Federal flag to all our battalions; the same cockade to all our soldiers. There is more

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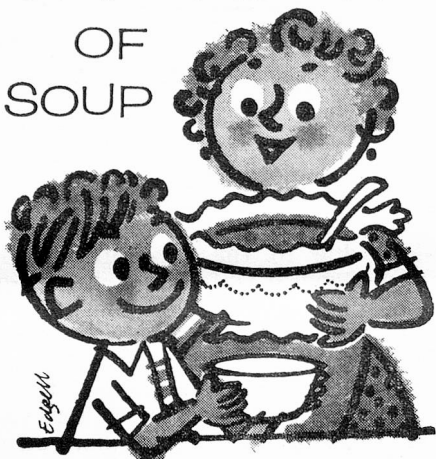
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importance than one thinks in having one unique flag, for the flag is the rallying point, the symbol of nationality. When one wears the same colours, when one fights under the same banner, one is more disposed to lend aid in danger; men become more truly brothers. But it seems that there have been some nuances, separating men, when they are ranged under different colours. Now in times of crisis there must be no nuances; one must do everything to form 'faisceaux'; recoil before no sacrifice, not even before old and honourable souvenirs. These souvenirs which I respect more than others, since they may become the source of the noblest actions, will not refuse to rally themselves under one sole flag, the veritable national banner."

The idea was greeted with opposition, hesitation, and jealousy by many Cantons, justly proud of their individual banners.

Various assemblies in 1830 and 1832 studied the project, elaborating its details, and in 1835, thanks to Dufour's ingenuity in winning the military leaders of the Confederation to his idea, the majority of 17 Cantons voted for the measure.

In 1839 it was again put to vote: Berne, St. Gall, Vaud and Geneva recommending it: "Since the Federal Army should be animated by one single spirit, the Federal one. That all insignia of separate Cantons in which Switzerland is divided in times of peace, should disappear in time of danger when they must show themselves a single people, like one great family of brothers." The deputation of Zurich warmly seconded this. The Federal flag was finally adopted on 21st July, 1840.

Historically the red flag with a crucifix in the upper corner was the emblem of the Imperial liberty of the Canton of Schwyz, and carried with them at the battle of Morgarten, according to the ancient chronicle.

The Sacred Emblem being conceded to them by the head of the Holy Roman Empire, as a recompense for their valour. This record from the Berner Chronik of Conrad Justinger, was transcribed by the learned Dean of Einsiedeln, Albert de Bonstetten, who affirms that the King Rudolf of Habsburg was the monarch in question, whom the mountaineers had accompanied to Besançon in 1289. At the epoch of the Hohenstaufens the Imperial pennon bore an upright cross in the form of a crucifix upon a purple ground.

A beautifully illuminated MS. of the XIIth century in the Stadtbibliothek at Berne shows two of these pennons; one of the Coronation of Henry VI at Rome in 1191, and again at the taking of Salerno in 1196. In the first the ground is purple, in the second it is red. At the Battle of Gölheim (1298) the King, Albert of Austria, and his competitor for the Empire, Adolf of Nassau, both had as battle flag a red standard with a white cross.

The Roman Emperors had formerly carried before them a purple standard upon which Constantine had placed the cross of Jesus Christ with this device, if one can credit the legend of his biographer Eusebius of Cesarea: 'In Hoc Signo Vincas' (Thou shalt conquer by this sign.)

The silken banners embroidered in gold presented by Pope Julius II, through the intermediary of his legate Cardinal Schinner to the Confederates who participated in the battle of Pavia, all bore religious emblems.

Those of the Forest Cantons, which are still in our days the object of special veneration, all present in the upper angle the image of Christ upon the cross.

In illuminated chronicles there is nearly always placed a crucifix in white or in colour in the upper corner of the banner of Schwyz, nearest the staff. At Morgarten the victors wear upon their clothing a white cross.

On the contrary, the followers of Duke Leopold all wear a red cross, emblem of the House of Austria.

In more recent chronicles, dating from the epoch of Burgundian wars and those of Milan, a white cross with equal arms placed upon the clothing, so as to be very visible, generally upon a red ground, is also the distinguishing mark of the Confederates.

Lacking the chronicle of Schwyz which is lost, one knows from that of Berne, that in 1339 the men of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden, of Weissenbourg and Hasli, marched with the Bernese of Laupen. "All were marked with the sign of the Holy Cross, a cross of white stuff upon a red field." (Ein wiss crüz in einem roten velde.)

"All the Confederates," wrote Josias Simmler in his book upon the State of the Swiss, 1576, "wear in war a white straight cross."

This cross worn on the armour or a piece of clothing by the plain soldiers, was also upon the red scarves of the leaders. The chronicles, and as one can see for oneself by studying the rich historical collections at Zurich, Berne, Lucerne, Altdorf, Schwyz, Stans and Fribourg, the ancient painted glass windows and banners of the XVth and XVIth centuries, show it also on the flags.

It was at the epoch of the Suabian war and on the Rhine that the Federal flag as such, first floated in the breeze in 1499. It was confided to a free company of paid soldiers, forming the little garrison of the tiny fort of Coblenz, which commanded the passage of the river to its confluence with the Aare.

The cross upon the écu (money) of Schwyz is mentioned officially in 1553, under the name of Federal Cross. (Eidgenossen Crütz). The gold medal which the Diet in 1547 had struck by Hans Jacob Stampfer, of Zurich, on the occasion of the baptism of the second daughter of Henry II, King of France, of whom the Confederation was the godmother, bears in the centre of the coats of arms of the thirteen Cantons and of their allies, a straight cross with arms of equal length.

It has been shown how in the course of the XIXth century, the Federal colours definitely replaced, in the camps, those of the twenty-two sovereign states. The flag of a people is a thing that one does not improvise. Nothing here could replace the work of Time. For a flag to speak to the hearts of children, it must have been carried by the fathers or recall great memories. Then only is it what it should be.

The ancient Swiss surrounded their flag with respect and love. The great rectangular banners of the Cantons deposited at the town hall or with the banneret (standard bearer) were only unfurled when the honour or existence of the State was in question, and when all the militia were called to arms. They were the object of the greatest care. The banneret, who was responsible for it, was a high magistrate. He was surrounded by a numerous guard chosen from among the most valiant at Berne; the four first had to swear to watch over the banner, and if the banneret fell to seize it or hold it high, or hand it from one to

the other and never abandon it until death. The others took an oath "to stay with the banner, and aid in defending it, to hold and protect it and to sacrifice their lives for it."

This banner was for the Swiss the symbol of the Mother Country.

They gave their lives for it with a heroism of which history has preserved numerous examples. In foreign service, as well as at home, our fathers have always considered their ensigns as the visible sign of the oath taken, as the emblem of fidelity to military duty.

Arbedo, Grandson, Marignan, Cappel, Malplaquet, the Tuileries, the Beresina have all been witness of it.

In our days, in our eyes, the Swiss flag is something still more. It is the dazzling symbol of national unity, a unity realised in spite of the greatest obstacles, in spite of the diversity of races, of languages, of religion, upon the basis of democracy by the conscious will of populations animated by the same ideal.

From this flag of a little nation born of the spontaneous union of twenty-two Republics, there sprang into life the neutralised international flag which extends its protecting folds over the work of the Red Cross. The plenipotentiaries of thirty-five States who gathered on July 6th, 1906, for the revision of the Geneva Convention wished to state it in these terms: "In homage to Switzerland the heraldic sign of the Red Cross upon a white ground, formed by inversion of the Federal colours, is now maintained as a distinctive emblem of sanatory service in armies."

This nation, ancient by reason of its history, is modern in its aspirations.

Its flag is resplendent as the banner of the victors of Morgarten, first victory of liberty in the Middle Ages. One might say that this flag symbolizes the whole national life of our people: their thirst for independence, their ideal of justice and Christian brotherhood; their 'raison d'être' in Europe. When it passes at the head of our battalions everyone must take off his hat to it. It is six centuries of liberty passing by.

CRONACA NOSTRANA.

E' ritornato *Carnevale*. E' questo il tempo in cui l'allegria trova libero campo nei vari centri del Cantone Ticino agli ordini di benevoli regnanti: a Bellinzona, S.M.Rabadan; a Locarno, Re Capiler; a Brissago, Re Pitoc; per menzionarne soltanto alcuni. Fra gli eventi che caratterizzano alla Capitale del Cantone la manifestazione rabadanesca tiene un posto importante la tradizionale risottata che martedì 1° marzo, dopo aver solleticato gradevolmente col suo appetitoso profumo le delicate nari dei sudditi di Rabadan ed aver aperto le cateratte della più invitante acquolina in bocca, ha fatto la gioia dei palati di 3,000 grandi e piccini. Per preparare tale pantagruelico pasto ai volenterosi organizzatori è occorso per riempire le 15 ampie caldaie che furono disposte attorno al monumento in Piazza Indipendenza 300kg. di riso, 12kg. di formaggio, 15kg. di burro, 70kg. di luganiche e luganighetta, 100gr. di zafferano, 10 fiaschi di vino, 20kg. di cipolle, nonché 30 kg. di legumi e 100kg. di ossa per il brodo. E per far cuocere il tutto sono stati consumati 8 quintali di legna. Per tutto questo po' po' di roba, il cui valore è superiore ai 1,500 franchi, Rabadan non ha speso