

Flags in the Canton of Vaud 1798 - 1848

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The country of Vaud had been conquered from the Duchy of Savoy by the Bernese in 1536. Though living in peace and prosperity under Bernese rule, the Vaudois resented to be treated as second class subjects. The French Revolution obviously had a great impact in this French speaking southern part of the canton, where in 1789 riots against the Bernese authority were severely repressed. Many Vaudois went into exile in France and other parts of the world. The republican new spirit of liberty persisted though and on 14 and 15 July 1791 so-called popular “banquets”, a sort of revolutionary pick-nick, were organised by several revolutionary committees to commemorate the fall of the Bastille and the arrest of Louis XVI. At the banquet organised by the Rolle committee people sung revolutionary songs, stuck tricolour cockades on their hats, wore liberty caps and cheered the people of France¹. In 1792 other banquets took place in Vaud. But only after the massacre of the Swiss guard at the Tuileries on 10 August 1792, which caused a sentiment of mourning and disapproval in all of Switzerland, did the Bernese start repression. More revolutionaries had then to seek exile in France, where a revolutionary “Helvetic Club” had been established in Paris already in 1790. This club prepared directives for the revolution in Switzerland with the goal of establishing a Helvetic Republic².

A few years later, the victorious First Consul Napoleon Bonaparte, travelling from Italy to Rastatt, was frenetically cheered in Lausanne on 23 November 1797. On 28 December 1797 the French Republic guaranteed the rights of the people of the country of Vaud, whereupon the struggle to break away from Bernese authority started on a large scale. Civic committees took over power in several towns, many local troops did no longer obey Bernese orders, the castle of Chillon was occupied by revolutionary voluntaries and on 15 January 1798 revolutionaries from Lausanne invited the delegates of towns and communities of the country of Vaud to a general assembly³.

French troops were closing in to the Bernese territory and on 18 January 1798 they occupied Geneva. The Vaudois assembly opened session in Lausanne on 21 January. On 23 January the French crossed the border and the next day French general Ménard proclaimed the famous words “*Vaudois, the army of Italy gives you cover*”⁴. The very same day revolutionary instructions from the Swiss revolutionary committee in exile under Frédéric-

César de Laharpe reached the assembly at Lausanne. These instructions were addressed “*to the assembly of representatives of the Lemanic Republic... , precursor of the Helvetic Republic*”, and ordered in its article 13 “*to plant liberty trees, to destroy all the canton’s coat-of-arms and to wear the green cockade*”⁵. Green had been chosen by the Swiss revolutionaries as the colour of liberty. They claimed it had been the colour of William Tell⁶. The people of Paris had rallied in 1789 under the green colour of hope, putting green leaves and cockades on their hats, but they abandoned this colour shortly after (may be because green was the livery colour of the count of Artois)⁷. Swiss patriots had retained the colour green, they wore green and tricolour cockades already during the famous banquets of 1791 and 1792.

The whole revolutionary process and the movements of the French army were perfectly orchestrated from Paris. Considering the enormous quest from ordinary people for liberty and renewal and in view of the strength of the French army and the weakness and decadence of the Bernese oligarchy, revolution occurred almost unopposed and almost with no bloodshed.

On 24 January the radical or independence party, which was known as the “*Comité de Réunion*”, decided at a meeting in their club at Palud Square N° 21 in Lausanne to declare the independence of the country of Vaud. Eyewitness reports tell us that they hung out from a window of their club a green flag, which on one side had the words “*RÉPUBLIQUE LÉMANIQUE*” and on the other side the words “*LIBERTÉ, ÉGALITÉ*”⁸. The assembly of delegates got news of this act but preferred to constitute itself as a “*provisional representative of the Vaudoise Nation*”, refusing complete independence from the Swiss Confederation.

We do not exactly know how the flag of the Lemanic Republic looked like, except that it was green and had those 4 words stitched on it in white letters. The archaeological and historical museum at the Rumine Palace in Lausanne displays a light green cotton flag with the hand stitched words “*Liberté . Égalité*” in the centre of it (Fig. 1). The almost square flag measures 125 cm x 115 cm and has each a white five-pointed star stitched in the upper hoist and lower fly corners. The stitching goes through the cotton, so that the same emblems appears mirror-image on the reverse side of the flag. The green cotton tissue, which has several moth holes, can be dated to the end of the 18th century. The flag is labelled as

being that of the Lemanic Republic, but this is a doubtful attribution, since the words “République Lémanique” are missing and since contemporary accounts do not mention any stars. Museum documentation reveals that the flag was discovered in 1967 in the community archives of Penet-Le-Jorat.



Fig. 1

The Lemanic Republic, which was not really a republic, had been but a short-lived dream of a group of radical patriots, which after the arrival of the French on 28 January did not develop further. The legal power still lay in the provisional assembly and in local revolutionary committees, which both used only the term “country-of-Vaud” (= *Pays-de-Vaud*, as written in contemporary manner). The psychological effect though of this green Lemanic flag on the patriotic feelings of the Vaudois population was enormous. In those 4 days from 24 to 28 January, when the Vaudois no longer had to be Bernese and the French liberators still had not arrived, the country lived in a joyful frenzy of freedom. Liberty trees were planted everywhere and everybody wore green cockades and green ribbons, also were many Bernese seals and coats-of-arms destroyed.

The original green flag of the Lemanic republic seems to be lost. There are but four green flags in Vaudois museums today, and all of them are attributed to the Lemanic republic. As will be explained further in the text, these green flags can most probably be attributed to the period between 24 January 1798 and the proclamation of the Helvetic republic on 12 April 1798 - may be even before 15 February 1798, when the new constitution of the canton of Vaud as a part of the Helvetic republic was voted.

The provisional government of Vaud had already on 10 February declared the country as a part of the planned but not yet established Helvetic republic and had the new constitution voted 5 days later. Thus, by 15 February 1798, the term “Lemanic Republic” was superseded by the term “Helvetic Republic”.

Berne surrendered to the French army on 7 March, the path leading to the unitarian Helvetic republic was free. After establishment of the Helvetic republic on 12 April no green flags would have been made, since this regime tolerated no other flag but the tricolour green, red and yellow. The flag at the Rumine palace museum (Fig. 1) shows the words “Liberté, Egalité”, which allows to date it at the utmost - if we accepted that a green flag would have been made during the Helvetic republic - between 1798 and 1803. The Helvetic republic was officially dissolved by Napoleon on 19 February 1803 (a historic event putting an end to the civil war between confederates and helvetics known as the *Act of Mediation*). The canton of Vaud became an independent canton within the Confederation, adopting on 16 April 1803 a new coat of arms, a new flag and a new motto, which was “Liberté et Patrie”.

The historic museum of Vevey preserves a green flag of the Lemanic republic too (Fig. 2): both sides of the flag show with big printed letters in gold the words “RÉPUBLIQUE” and “LÉMANIQUE” in two rows in the centre of the flag, while the smaller, golden words “LIBERTÉ” above and “ÉGALITE” below are arranged in a semicircular way. An accent is missing on the word “ÉGALITE”. Three lead pieces are attached to the flying end of this square flag, which causes me to assume that the flag was intended to be hoisted from a horizontal pole, perhaps to be hanged out from a window. Then, of course, the text would have to be read in an angle of 90°, but when hoisted from a vertical pole, as a flag usually is intended to be flown, the text would have been readable the right way. We do not really know how the text on the original Lausanne flag was placed in regard to the pole.

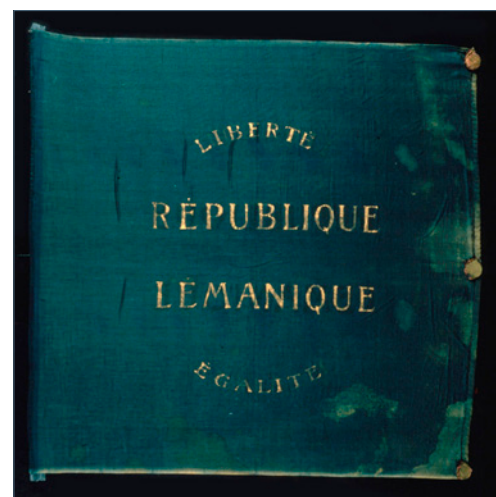


Fig. 2

Most probably the flag at the Museum of Vevey is not the original flag hoisted in Lausanne, but another flag of that period manufactured at Vevey. News of the proclamation of the republic had spread immediately, and several other green flags, manufactured after what had been heard of

or seen in Lausanne were manufactured and hoisted in various towns of the country of Vaud. This explains why different green flags of this short period are still preserved. The original flag of the Lemanic republic had certainly been made in haste and probably would not bear such perfectly arranged letters. Also is the Vevey flag in a very good shape, which supports the thesis that this flag may date from the centennial celebrations of 1898. During those festivities some green flags remembering the Lemanic republic were made. Since documentation is lacking and no textile analysis has been performed on this flag, we do not know its age and origin for sure.

The municipal council in Bex keeps a big green flag with golden inscriptions in a glass case (Fig. 3). This is the only Lemanic flag of which we know the exact date of adoption: 14 April 1798⁹. This green flag measures 205 cm x 160 cm and shows in big golden characters on its front side the words “LIBERTÉ” and “ÉGALITÉ”, arranged one below the other, with a golden garland between them, while the reverse side shows the printed words in gold “COMMUNE DE BEX”, arranged in three rows. To each side of the word “DE” is a tiny golden ornament. Though Bruckner knew this flag, it disappeared and was rediscovered in 1966 in the stone floor of the secondary school in Bex. The little town of Bex, where liberty trees had been planted already on 26 January 1798, sent their delegates to the national assembly of the Helvetic republic in Aarau, where on 12 April 1798 the first session took place. On 14 April the delegates of Bex gave to the community this honour flag “*in recognition of its zeal for the cause and the country and as a sign of gratitude for the adoption of the helvetic constitution by their citizens*”¹⁰.

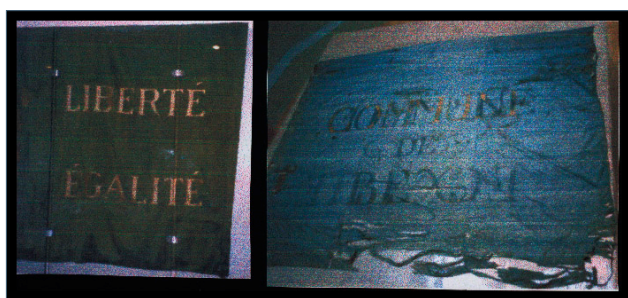


Fig. 3

Considering the time needed to manufacture this flag, it was probably made several days before adoption of the Helvetic tricolour, thus the cloth shows but the colour green. Contemporary sources state that this flag should be flown on public holidays. After the end of the Helvetic republic and the beginning of the new canton Vaud in 1803, the motto “Liberté, Egalité” was no longer politically correct, and hence the flag probably was no longer used.

Another flag of the Lemanic republic, which until a few years was kept at the museum in Moudon, but has seemingly disappeared since, is the old civic flag of the

community of Ropraz. It has a rectangular shape of 75 cm height and 85 cm length and is made of green cotton, with the word “ROPRAZ” in golden silk letters with a golden ornament in each corner on the obverse, and the words “RÉPUBLIQUE LÉMANIQUE .1798 LIBERTÉ . ÉGALITÉ” on the reverse side. The words are arranged perpendicular to the flag, i.e. parallel to the hoist.

The reverse side of this flag (Fig. 4) is depicted in black and white on page 350 in the fundamental Swiss flag book by Bruckner¹¹. He writes that the flag is dark green with golden letters, but mixes up the obverse and reverse sides. The museum records contain black and white pictures of each side of the flag (record number M 2174). Since the term “République Lémanique” was no longer used after the Vaudois people voted the Helvetic constitution on 15 February, this flag must have been adopted by the village of Ropraz between end of January and midst of February 1798.



Fig. 4

The French arrived at Lausanne on 28 January, where they were cheered as liberators. The revolutionary government co-operated with the French army in their common fight against Berne and on 20 February 1798 mobilised two half-brigades of some 2000 men each, who then fought in different Vaudois battalions and companies on the French side. About a thousand Vaudois stayed in the Bernese army. While we know the flag of the Vaudois legion loyal to Berne (the Rovérea legion), we do not know if the Vaudois revolutionary troops carried any flags. They probably used French colours, if any. I have not been able to trace any record of such flags so far. The Lemanic or Vaudois Republic, as it used to be indistinctly called by the French, had a seal though (Fig. 5). It shows the republican fasces with an axe, surmounted by the hat of liberty and a star, symbol of the unitarian state, in an oval. Within the oval and beneath the fasces are the words “LIBERTÉ,” and “ÉGALITÉ.”.



Fig. 5

The very first flag of a Vaudois unit we know of (Fig. 6) is a green and white colour of the third company of miners' volunteers from Bex, which is preserved in the cantonal archives in Lausanne. This company had been organised during the first days of April in 1798 by the director of the salt mines of Bex, François Samuel Wild, to fight counterrevolutionary forces in lower Valais, and was not a part of the regular Vaudois half-brigades set up in February. We do not know the flags of the first and the second miners' companies, which Wild had set up 4 weeks earlier (during the first days of March) to help drive out the Bernese from the Ormonts area. But we can assume that they probably looked like the flag of the third company, except for the number of course.



Fig. 6

This flag is the first documented colour of Vaudois troops and the first proof of a combination of the colours green and white to denote Vaudois nationality. The flag follows the triband national pattern of the revolutionary ideal of the time, the French tricolour. The flag has three horizontal stripes of green, white and green, the central white stripe being somewhat larger than each of the green ones and bearing on its front side in black printing characters the words "VOLONTAIRES" and "3^{me}. COMPAGNIE.", whereas the reverse side has on its white stripe the words "LA PATRIE" and "AVANT TOUT." in black. The word

"patrie" (=homeland) appears for the first time.

About all other Vaudois units from 1798 to 1803 we only know that they used Bernese equipment and uniforms, except for the red and black cockade of course, which had been substituted by the green one, but my research resulted in no further hint to flags yet.

In January and February 1798 peaceful revolutions had swept away the old regimes in Basle, Zurich, Saint Gall, Turgovia, Shaffhausen and Ticino, while several Argovian towns raised arms against Berne¹². Liberty trees were planted, new colours superseded the old ones and republican constitutions were proclaimed. After a few small battles Berne had surrendered to the much superior French forces on 5 March 1798¹³. During the following days the rest of Switzerland was occupied by the French, who in some regions were welcome as allies or liberators, but who met armed resistance in central Switzerland and the Valais¹⁴. On 19 March 1798 the "*independence of the Swiss Nation and its constitution into a democratic and representative Helvetic Republic, one and indivisible*", was proclaimed. The Helvetic assembly decided on 14 April to adopt a tricolour cockade in green, red and yellow. The colour green was chosen - instead of the originally proposed colour black - to honour the country of Vaud, a forerunner of the fight for freedom, and the first canton to choose the green colour of liberty for its flag¹⁵. The cantons Turgovia and Saint Gall would choose green for their flags 4 years later, as would Neuchâtel some decades later.

Old conservative cantons had been split up and new cantons were created, like the canton of the Lemane (= *canton du Léman*), which superseded the would-be Lemanic Republic, or the country of Vaud, as it was called more precisely. These cantons were purely administrative entities and had no individual symbols. On 12 May the Helvetic republic adopted a seal (Fig. 7), showing William Tell with his hat of liberty, standing beneath a tree (of liberty) and receiving in his open arms his jubilant son, who brings him the apple with the arrow in it, symbol of the victory of the Helvetic republic¹⁶. While Helvetic politicians made an intelligent use of this traditional Swiss symbol, identifying it with their ideals of "*liberty and equality*" in a republic where every citizen is a beloved child of the paternalistic state, opposing conservatives continued with the traditional cross symbol, other religious icons, the flamed flags and the motto "*for God and Country*"¹⁷. The William Tell emblem figures as well on the reverse side of each of the colours of the 6 Helvetic half-brigades (Fig. 8), which were integrated in late 1798 into the French army¹⁸. These Helvetic colours follow the pattern of the French half-brigade flags; they measure 163 cm in square and bear a French tricolour cravat at the finial, but they display the Helvetic colours green, red and yellow and show on both sides not only

French but Helvetic emblems as well, like the liberty hat, the arrows or the crossbow¹⁹ (Fig. 9).



Fig. 7



Fig. 8



Fig. 9

Though there is no specific law on the flag of the Helvetic republic until 13 February 1799, green, red and yellow horizontal tricolour flags appeared soon after the cockade had been adopted (Fig. 10). The first record of a Helvetic unit with a tricolour flag dates from 10

May 1798 and refers to the guard of the senate. On 13 February 1799 the government ordered “*all flags with emblems of the old regime to be collected and their silk to be sold to the profit of the nation*”, and that the old emblems should be replaced by “*colours and emblems of the Helvetic republic, one and indivisible*”.



Fig. 10

A contemporary euphemistic allegory of a triumphant France (Fig. 11), which brings the hat of liberty with green, red and yellow feathers to a Swiss, who had fallen asleep on top of his old trophies, distracts attention from the growing weariness and disenchantment of the Swiss, who suffered from the heavy burden of war imposed on them by the French and their puppet, the Helvetic government. The only loyal forces of the republic were the Vaudois soldiers, who manned most of the Helvetic battalions, which partly were also known as Vaudois battalions.



Fig. 11

The military museum in Morges keeps three Helvetic silk flags with gold inscriptions on both sides of the red stripe (Fig. 12). These flags are in such a fragile condition, that

it was not possible to remove them from the depot, so I had to rely on the black and white photographs taken some 40 years ago by the museum staff. On the front side of the tricolour is an inscription in embroidered hand writing characters which reads “*Helvetische République*”, while the reverse has stamped on its red stripe the inscription “*RÉPUBLIQUE HELVÉTIQUE*” in printing characters. The flags have golden letters and must have been manufactured in Vaud or in France, as I deduce from the French-like wrong spelling of the German word “*RépublicK*”. These flags are not quite square, they measure 170 cm x 154 cm, 166 cm x 154 cm and 167 cm x 154 cm respectively. The flag of 167 cm x 154 cm has a tiny label at the upper fly end of the obverse which reads “*B^{ON} N° 7*” (Fig. 13), which almost for sure identifies this flag as the colour of the battalion number 7, of which we know it was composed of Vaudois militia.



Fig. 12

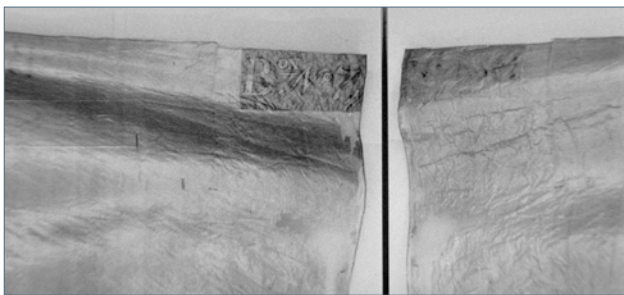


Fig. 13

The year 1799 saw the war on Swiss soil between France, assisted by their Helvetic auxiliary troops and the Allies, until general Masséna succeeded by October 1799 in driving the Austrians and the Russians out of the country. The Helvetic republic then was soon torn in both a political and an armed struggle between radicals (also known as unitarians or Helvetics) and confederates (synonymously called federals or conservatives). After a conservative coup d'état had overthrown the radical government on 7 January 1800 a period of crisis ensued with disorders, various coups-d'état and even civil war.

Napoleon retired all his troops from Switzerland in spring 1802. Once the only forces capable of maintaining law and order in the country were gone the cantons

of central and oriental Switzerland raised arms against the government in June 1802. There were uprisings as well in Argovia, Zurich and the rural areas of Berne. The weak Helvetic government sent a Vaudois company (the *compagnie de carabiniers de l'arrondissement d'Aigle*) and two companies of the Helvetic Legion against the confederate troops in Lucerne, and some Helvetic companies against Zurich, which all were defeated. On 18 September 1802 the confederate troops under general Bachmann took Berne, which was defended only by three Helvetic battalions, two of which were Vaudois battalions (*De la Harpe* and *Bourgeois*). Government troops retired to Fribourg, where they were forced out on 28, and then to Faoug, where the small remains of the Helvetic army of some 1800 men was defeated by an important confederate force of some 12,000 men on 3 October 1802. At this battle the confederate contingent of Schwytz captured a Helvetic flag identical to those at the museum of Morges which have already been discussed, and which is kept at the archives of federal charters in Schwytz. After this defeat the Helvetic army disbanded and the next day the confederates arrived at the doors of Lausanne, where the government was about to flee into exile in France.

At this precise moment French general Rapp arrived in Lausanne (4 October) with a letter announcing the peaceful mediation of the First Consul Napoleon Bonaparte and the words that “*either there was a Swiss government, which was a friend of France, or that there would be no Switzerland at all*”. Hostilities ceased and all cantons agreed to send their delegates to Paris in January 1803, where under the auspices of Napoleon they worked out a new constitution, which reverted to the pre-revolutionary confederate state system, but kept the modern civic rights. This new confederate constitution, known as the Act of Mediation, was proclaimed on 19 February 1803.

The old cantons continued to use their traditional flags and coat-of-arms, while the new cantons started parliamentary debates to adopt a new coat-of-arms and flag. The country of Vaud, which during the Helvetic era was the canton of Lemane, now became the canton of Vaud. Its great chamber joined in session for the first time on 14 April 1803. On 16 April a first project for a coat-of-arms (Fig. 14) was discussed, which of course had the Vaudois colours green and white²⁰. It showed a shield horizontally divided by white over green with two hands holding a sword with a liberty hat on top of it. This motif (which brings into mind the similar national coat-of-arms of Argentina, born under revolutionary circumstances 10 years later²¹) was rejected because its symbols were associated too closely with the defunct Helvetic republic. A second proposal was presented during the same session the same day and then accepted²²: these coat-of-arms were bicolour, white over green too, with the

words “*LIBERTÉ ET PATRIE.*” on the white upper part. The Lemanic motto “*Liberté, Egalité*”, considered to be too revolutionary and too French, had been replaced by a more popular and homebound motto.



Fig. 14

The first issue of the heraldic calendar of Vaud in 1902 contains an artistic rendering of the flag, of the decree and of the seal (Fig. 15). The official decree of 16 April 1803 states in its article 1, that “*the colours of the canton are light green and white*” and in its article 2 describes the seal, which is identical to the arms, but which has a ribbon above the arms with the words “*CANTON DE VAUD*”. The decree does not mention the colour of the words, which were originally black, nor does it specifically speak of a flag or a coat-of-arms. In those days the word *colour* was applicable for any symbol, be it cockade, ribbon, coat-of-arms or flag.



Fig. 15

I have not been able to find out any official design for the very first flags of the canton in 1803, and there are no exact specifications for the cantonal flag to the day. Only in 1916 did the official government gazette officially print the coat-of-arms with yellow letters fimbriated in black²³, this pattern being followed until the present. Early flags were white and green of course, but showed a variety of inscriptions and slightly different designs of the coat-of-arms. Early flags usually showed golden or yellow letters, sometimes fimbriated in black, the smaller coats-of-arms usually showed black letters, though more elaborated arms showed golden letters.

The historic museum of Lausanne has in its depot an undated but early flag of the canton (Fig. 16): it is made of green and white silk, measures 112 cm x 107 cm, and is badly damaged (the figure shows an old archive black and white picture). The arms of the canton are painted on the centre of the flag, so that the partition of the colours of both the flag and coat-of-arms lies on one line. The shield is fimbriated in gold and bears on its white upper part the black inscription “*LIBERTÉ ET PATRIE.*”. Below and above the arms there are each a golden wreath, the arms are surmounted by a white scroll with the black inscription “*CANTON DE VAUD.*” Such canton flags were in use probably as early as 1803 until approximately the midst of the 19th century, but there were other types of flags as well, like for instance white flags with the painted coat-of-arms, as can be seen on contemporary iconography.



Fig. 16

The military museum in Morges has two silk flags of the canton of Vaud probably dating from the first years of existence of the canton. The first flag measures 151 cm x

127 cm and has the inscription “LIBERTÉ ET PATRIE.” on the white band printed in yellow letters and the inscription “CANTON DE VAUD.” on the green band, with yellow letters too (Fig. 17). The second flag measures 156 cm x124 cm and has the particularity that there are hand painted yellow letters on the white stripe, the word “et” having been replaced by the sign “&”, while the lower green part carries printed letters in yellow (Fig. 18). Also, a narrow vertical stripe of silk has been cut away from the flying end, so that the letter “D.” from “VAUD” is missing. The reverse sides of both flags are identical, the text reading normally on both sides.

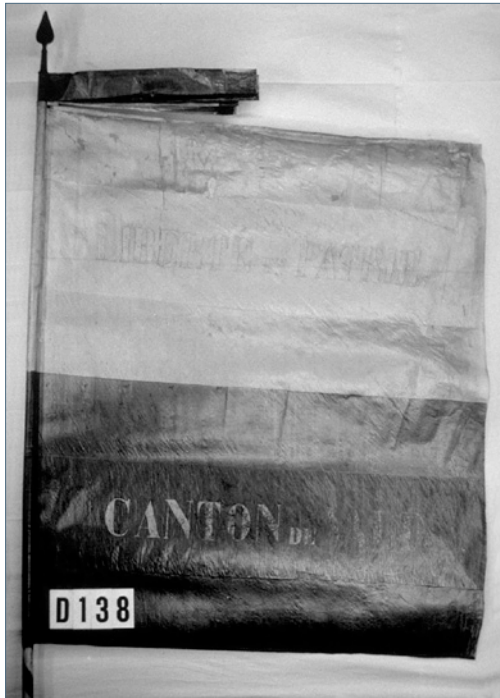


Fig. 17



Fig. 18

One of the very first green and white flags of 1803 is the flag of the miners' corps of the salt mines of Bex, which is preserved in the cantonal archives²⁴ (Fig. 19). The flag is divided vertically instead of horizontally, green at the hoist and white at the fly, and bears on the obverse the golden inscription “CORPS DES MINEURS” and on the reverse “LIBERTÉ ET PATRIE”. The upper and lower fly show the miners' symbol, two yellow crossed hammers. The flag is in a very bad shape, the partially missing white band has been restored in an amateur way. As we have seen before, the miners were most patriotic and had adopted their own militia flags already in 1798. They probably made this corps flag immediately after 16 April 1803, perhaps not knowing the heraldic term “*coupé*” (=parted per fess) used in article 2 of the law on the symbols of the canton to describe the seal.



Fig. 19

On 4 June 1803 the *gendarmérie* was created, the first armed forces of the new canton, and on 10 June the army was organised into 8 regions (= *arrondissements*) with each two districts, of which each had several battalions and companies of infantry (musketeers, grenadiers and riflemen), as well as a few units of cavalry and artillery. All these units were divided into elite and reserve units. Several organizational laws for the army were passed in 1803 and early 1804, all of them referring to uniforms, equipment, instruction, setting up of new battalions and companies and the like, but none of them has any mention of colours whatsoever.

In October 1803 the military department of the canton of Vaud ordered at a flag factory in Lyon (France) 24 flags for the elite battalions and 16 flags for the reserve units²⁵. The original order, which is in the canton's archives, does not contain any picture nor description of the flags.

On 1st February 1804 the government issued a decree establishing that each 14 April would be a public national holiday. A great solemn event was then prepared for the next 14 April, to be celebrated in Lausanne. A detachment of each 20 men and each two officers from all the new military elite units would gather in Lausanne to receive these 24 new battalion colours. Contemporary accounts precisely tell us about this important national ceremony of the young canton²⁶, but unhappily enough there are

no pictures nor are any flags described, so we only know for sure that 24 new battalion flags were presented to the army on 14 April 1804. Nothing is said about the 16 reserve unit flags either.

Many of the military flags and flags of civic societies dating from the first years of existence of the canton and which are still preserved in museums basically show a white field with a little green flame in each corner of the flag (Fig. 20). We are not sure how the centre of such flags originally looked like, but it probably bore the coat-of-arms of the canton and perhaps had golden inscriptions above and below these arms on the obverse. A golden horn might have been added on some military flags, the horn being the general emblem of the army, while other more specific unit flags might have carried a golden grenade, this being the emblem of the grenadiers.



Fig. 20

So these earliest battalion flags of the Vaudois militia probably were white with a green little flame at each corner and the coat-of-arms of the canton and a golden horn in the centre of the flag, like on the reverse side of the flag of the shooting society of La Sarraz (*abbaye des carabiniers de La Sarraz*). The flag is exhibited at the castle of La Sarraz in a glass case, where only the front side of the flag is visible. I thank Mrs. Kathrin Kocher, a member of the Swiss Society of Vexillology, who sent me a photograph of the reverse side of this flag (Fig. 20), Mrs. Kocher had made this picture during her restoration of the flag in 1994. The flag consists of two pieces of white silk, which have most probably been manufactured at the end of the 18th century and which are sewn together to form the flag. Its size of 126 cm x 119 cm, though not exactly square, corresponds to a battalion flag size. Little green flames are inserted in each corner of the flag.

Shooting societies were composed of soldiers and served both a social purpose and the military training. Their flags often were similar to military unit flags, having other inscriptions for instance. The society of La Sarraz had been established on 27 July 1803²⁷, so their flag logically displays the very first form of the canton's coat-of-arms with black letters. The visible, obverse side of the flag (Fig. 21), has green flames too and several pieces of white cloth with a brighter shade of white sewn upon the original tissue, which means that these pieces are not as old as the flag itself. The uppermost piece

of cloth has printed letters in gold reading "14 AVRIL 1803.", and immediately below is another piece of cloth, which reads "ABAYE DLS CARABINIERS DE LASARRA.". Below the central square piece of added cloth depicting a soldier aiming at a target is another rectangular piece of cloth, reading in golden letters "VIVRE LIBRE OU MOURIR.". In the shooting scene, which is painted on cloth, the soldier wears a shako. This military head dress was introduced by a decree of 25 May 1815 (in 1803 soldiers wore a two-corned hat).



Fig. 21

The museum in Morges preserves a tattered white silk flag of the officers' association of the grenadiers from the third military region, measuring 72 cm x 67cm and dated 14 April 1820. It shows soldiers with such a shako too (Fig. 22). During the patriotic festivity of April 14 usually new flags were presented, a tradition which had been initiated in 1804 in Lausanne. (Fig. 23) shows a fragment of another similar flag of that era, where details on the painted grenadier can be appreciated. The military law of 12 June 1819 had introduced red pompons on the grenadiers' shakoes instead of the red feathers they had worn since 1813²⁸.

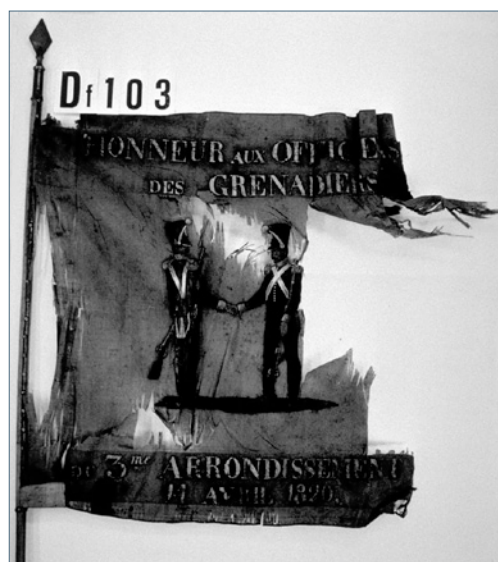


Fig. 22



Fig. 23

The obverse of the flag of La Sarraz (Fig. 24) shows the date 14 April too, but the year is 1803, referring to the founding date of the new canton and not to the founding date of the society. The central white panel covers the canton's coat-of-arms and the golden horn, which are visible through the cloth all the same, exactly as depicted on the reverse. This makes me believe that both sides of the flag originally looked alike and that probably later a possible name and number of the unit was removed and replaced by the actual inscriptions. Adapting military flags to civil use, once the unit had been dissolved, was a common practice of the time. This flag of La Sarraz represents the best fitting key to identification of the original battalion flags of 1804 that the present research has been able to reveal.



Fig. 24

Company flags were smaller in size and probably they were not regulated, for we find several types of company flags dating from the early period. One type is the silk flag of the grenadier company number 1 (Fig. 25), which is preserved in Morges. Due to its bad state of conserva-

tion, the flag could not be handled for picture taking, so a black and white archive photograph is used to illustrate this company flag, which measures 51 cm x 50 cm. The obverse is the canton's flag with the coat-of-arms within a green wreath and a grenade in each corner of the flag. The name of the unit is written above "COMPAGNIE" and below the arms "DE GRENADIERS N° 1". The reverse side is white with a small green flame in each corner and a painted golden grenade in the centre. The date "1803" is written below the grenade, a green and white cord surrounds the flag on all free sides. I haven't been able yet to check the colour of the inscriptions, but on the picture the date, the word "COMPAGNIE" and the motto on the coat-of-arms are very dark and thus seem to be either black or green, while the rest is light and thus could be golden. The date probably remembers the year the canton was founded, or may be the year the company was established.

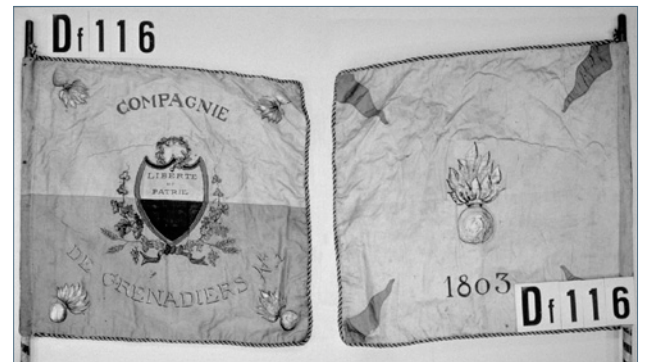


Fig. 25

Bruckner²⁹ lists on page 9 of his flag catalogue the flag of the society of the militia union of Assens (= *société d'union milice d'Assens*) and shows a black and white photograph of the reverse side of the flag (Fig. 26). The flag has the battalion flag size of 125 cm x 125 cm and consists on both sides of white silk with each a small green flame inserted in the corners. Bruckner describes the obverse side as having the green and white canton's coat-of-arms and the inscription "A L'HONNEUR DE LA PATRIE" in gold painted on it, while the reverse side bears the legend "SOCIÉTÉ D'UNION MILICE D'ASSENS 1841" in golden characters and a small federal emblem (white cross on red). Still in Bruckner's book a black and white picture of the obverse of the same flag of Assens is depicted on page 274 (Fig. 27), but the author identifies it wrongly as being the flag of the winemaker's guild of 1791 (= *confrérie des vignerons*). The coat-of-arms in the centre of this flag is identical to the one on the flag of La Sarraz, most probably having black letters on the coat of arms too, as can be deduced from the very dark shade of those letters in contrast to the light shade of the other letters, which Bruckner describes as golden. There is almost no doubt that this former battalion flag dating from the very first years of the canton was later

transformed, probably in 1841, into the flag of the paramilitary society of Assens.



Fig. 26

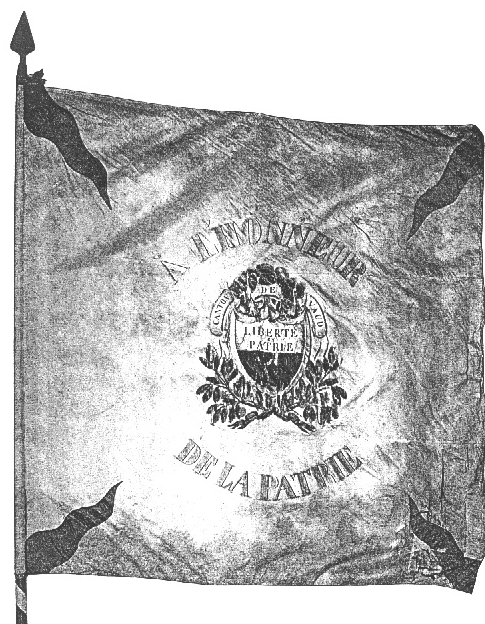


Fig. 27

The peculiar pattern of the flames of these Vaudois flags, being one little flame in each corner, is unique amongst all the typically flamed Swiss flags. The origin of this Vaudois pattern is not known, but I dare to claim that it is to be found in the 1791 flag of the winemaker's guild of Vevey (Fig. 28), which is preserved at the winemaker's guild museum in Vevey and which is the first flag known with such a type of flames. It was paraded through the streets for the first time during the very popular wine festival of 1791 – a festivity, which already had a strong patriotic Vaudois connotation³⁰.



Fig. 28

From what has been presented as evidence we can assume that the basic pattern for all the battalion flags of the 1803 to 1817 period of the canton of Vaud was white with the coat-of-arms in the centre and with a green flame in each corner. Attributes, like the horn or an inscription, were frequently added.

Company flags though seem to have shown a varied design, like the flag of company 8 of carbine riflemen (= *chasseurs carabiniers*), which is at the Morges military museum (Fig. 29). It has a size of 54 cm x 52 cm and is made of green cotton with silver fringes. The black and white museum photograph shows on the flag's obverse a horn with the cipher "8." and below of it the text "HUITIÈME COMPAGNIE DES CHASSEURS CARABINIERS.". On the reverse side are the cantonal coat-of-arms and below of them the same text as on the obverse. The horn and the inscriptions are painted in gold probably.



Fig. 29

A federal military regulation was issued on 20 August 1817, placing the elite troops in Switzerland under federal command and introducing for each unit under federal command a "colour with a white cross and a red and white cravat". Each canton then had such flags made, generally with flames in the canton's colours. On 12 June 1819 the canton of Vaud passed a law on

military organisation. Article 171 of this law states that “each infantry battalion will have a flag with the canton’s colours”, and that “when a battalion will be under federal command a white cross and a red and white cravat will be added to the flag”. The text of this law does not include any flag illustration, nor is it precise enough. Even more, the text gives the impression that the battalions would have different flags depending on whose orders they were. In fact, such green flags with the white cross and with the red and white cravat were introduced to newly created units under federal command from 1819 on, while existing units under the authority of the canton continued to use their old flags until these flags were tattered enough to be replaced.

Strangely enough, only a couple of these new flags have survived, like the one preserved at the military museum in Morges (Fig. 30). It is a green flag with a white cross and 3 small white flames in each corner. An inscription is placed along the horizontal arms of the cross, being “CANTON DE VAUD” in printing characters in gold above the cross, and “LIBERTÉ ET PATRIE” below the cross. The flag is made of silk, measures 143 cm x 143 cm, shows the same design on both sides and has no unit identification. Though I have seen the actual, badly damaged flag I dared not to remove it for photographic documentation, so the black and white museum picture is presented instead.

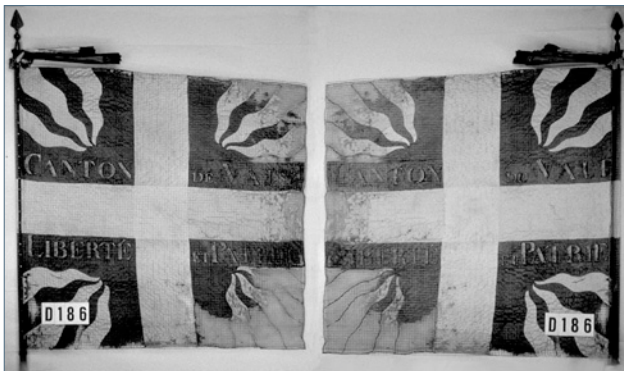


Fig. 30

In those years simple green and white company flags with a red number were introduced too (Fig. 31). They were made of linen and measured 90 cm x 100 cm, showing the same design on both sides. The museum in Morges keeps a set of such flags, which were only used to identify companies during manoeuvres.

As said before, there are almost no green flags with the federal cross throughout. Why? During that period of no foreign threat there were none or almost no federal units. The still existing very few green flags with white cross bear no unit identification at all, which leads me to the assumption, that these flags were stocked in case a Vaudois unit should come under federal command, but seemingly these flags never got into use. Maybe the cross and flame pattern was not very popular among

the Vaudois military, who preferred their white colours with little green flames, and so they may have ignored the regulation of 1819?

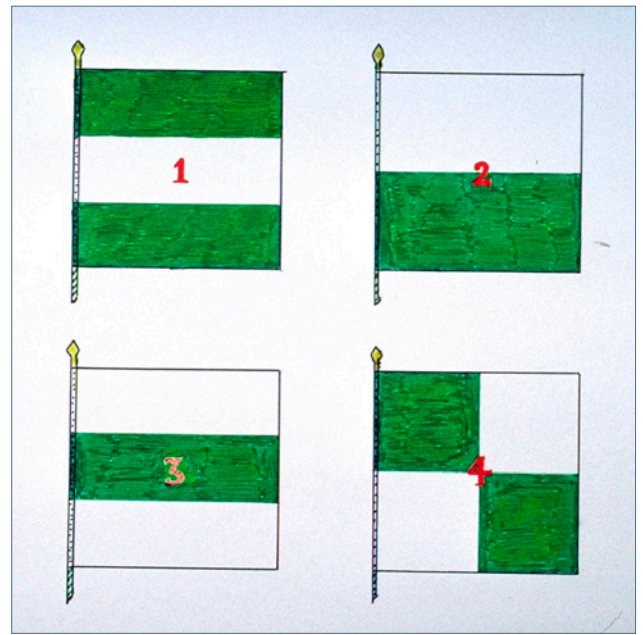


Fig. 31

Popular discontentment with the policy of the Vaudois government judged too conservative finally lead on 20 June 1831 to a new and more liberal constitution. The years around 1830 reveal many white flags with green flames.

The historic museum of Vevey keeps two such flags. They have recently been restored by Mrs. Kocher and Mrs. Sabine Sille. The flags were on a special exhibition at the museum for the first time during the year 2000 under the auspices of Mrs. Françoise Lambert, conservator of the Museum and a member of the SSV too. One of these flags is the flag of the mutual teaching society of Vevey (= *enseignement mutuel*) (Fig. 32), a society devoted to give modern laic teaching to all children according to the method developed by the British Lancaster and Bill at the beginning of the 19th century. The first such public schools were founded in Vaud in 1816, the one at Vevey was established in 1828³¹. The flag most probably dates from that year. It is made of two layers of white square cotton of about 1m and has painted on its central obverse the cantonal coat-of-arms and a green flame at each corner. The arms show black letters. The black letters “ENSEIGNEMENT MUTUEL” are placed above the arms and “VEVEY” below them. The reverse side (Fig. 33) has an armed William Tell embracing the fasces and beneath him his son holding a green wreath. The fasces have on top a blue hat with a red and a white pompon, while Tell wears a yellow liberty hat with a red, a green and a yellow feather. There can be no misunderstand as to the political credo of this society. The text above the painted central emblem reads in black characters “NOUS SOMMES AUSSI TES ENFANS” (= *we are your children too*). This motto expresses on one side the childrens’

aspiration for protection and education by the state and on the other side it reflects the political desire of this society to have the canton of Vaud integrated into a modern Confederation, symbolised by William Tell and his revolutionary attributes, which remind of the progressive goals achieved by the Helvetic republic. This message is underlined by the red federal flames in each corner instead of green ones. In 1834 a law on public schools made the Lancaster schools progressively superfluous.



Fig. 32



Fig. 33

Another typical flag of the early years is the white silk flag with inserted green flames of the 'national choir' (= *chant national*) (Fig. 34). The flag has a rectangular shape of about 85 cm x 100 cm and on its obverse has a painted brown and light blue lyre placed above light greyish clouds and surrounded by a green olive and oak wreath with a radiant golden sun emerging from above the lyre. Above the decorative emblem is the golden inscription "CHANT NATIONAL." and below it "VEVEY. 30 JUIN. 1834.". The reverse (Fig. 35) is white with green flames too and has a central painted emblem with two

hands emerging from greyish clouds. The hands hold a green scarf with gold tassels and a knot in the middle of it consisting of the red and white federal emblem. The text above the emblem reads in gold printed letters "SERRONS. PAR NOS CHANTS. LE NOEUD QUI NOUS UNIT." (= *lets fasten, by our songs, the knot which unites us*), and explains the meaning of the emblem, i.e. to reach a national Swiss unity through popular songs. The 'national choir' was founded in 1830 by the Vaudois pastor Jean-Bernard Kaupert, who organised popular song teachings in various towns. At the end of such teachings, which lasted for two weeks and were free of cost, a concert was given and a choir society was founded³². In Vevey, the concert was given on 30 June 1834 and the flag was adopted on that occasion.



Fig. 34



Fig. 35

Another witness of that era is the flag of the 5th company of the elite riflemen (= *chasseurs d'élite*), which is at the museum in Morges (Fig. 36). This silk flag is preserved within plastic layers, measures 64 cm x 64 cm and is dated 1830. It has the peculiarity of showing a small federal canton instead of the usual upper hoist flame. Both sides of the flag, which has green and white fringes, show the same emblem - the horn looking away from the hoist on the obverse and to the hoist on the reverse. The horn has the cipher "5" and the inscription "CHASSEURS D'ELITE." painted in gold, the green wreath with red fruits is held together by a blue ribbon.



Fig. 36

The originally square white flag with a green flame in each corner adopted in 1842 by the military society of peasants of Colombier (= *société militaire des agriculteurs de Colombier*) now measures 132 cm x 125 cm, a longitudinal part at the fly is missing (Fig. 37). A scene in natural colours showing peasants with a plough on the field is painted on the obverse, surmounted by various agricultural tools and the motto “*SOCIÉTÉ MILITAIRE DES AGRICULTEURS DE COLLOMBIER.*”, written in gold printing letters above the emblem. Below the emblem is a golden wreath and below the wreath is an inscription in gold characters reading “*UNION. LIBERTÉ. FRATERNITÉ.*”. The reverse side (Fig. 38) shows again an agricultural scene but this time it is the bringing in of the harvest with a loaded chariot. The name of the society is painted in gold above the scene while below the scene there is the inscription “*FONDÉE EN 1842.*” in gold.



Fig. 37



Fig. 38

Since about 1830 there was a strong popular movement towards national unity in a federal state (a historical period known as “regeneration”), in contrast to the conservative, confederate constitutions of most of the other cantons, dating from the period of restoration, which followed the fall of Napoleon and hence the end of the Act of Mediation. The struggle of progressive cantons like Vaud, Basle, Zurich, Argovia, Berne, Turgovia, Saint Gall or Ticino to overcome the conservative attitude of the cantons of central Switzerland finally ended in the short civil war of 1847/48, which led to the creation of modern federal Switzerland. The military, students, shooting societies, gymnastic societies and choir societies were the motor of regeneration, and this is told by their flags, which made a profuse use of the white cross on red and Helvetic and other republican symbols as well.

One of those flags is the flag of the society of the green and white ribbon (= *société du cordon vert et blanc*), which is in the collection of the military museum of Morges (Fig. 39). Again, there is no colour image, but a black and white picture from the museum’s photographic archive. A piece of the flying end having been lost, the flag measures only 133 cm x 104 cm. It is divided horizontally white over green and on the obverse bears the coat-of-arms of the canton with golden motto and golden wreath in its centre, and crossed behind them are a fasces and a burning torch with the federal cross emerging from the central part above the shield. The cross is surmounted by another fasces, which carries on top a liberty hat with a green feather and with red and white tassels. The white stripe has the semicircular inscription “*SOCIÉTÉ DU CORDON VERT ET BLANC DE*” printed in gold characters. The last word is missing, but probably would be “*MOUDON*”, since the only society with that name had been founded in 1806 in Moudon. This flag is not the first flag of the society, since it is dated 1841, the emblems being too modern for 1806 anyway. The reverse shows the inscription “*DIEU PROTÈGE LA SUISSE. 1841.*” (= *May God Protect Switzerland*) within a circular wreath, all painted in gold.



Fig. 39

The flag of the pioneer company of engineers (= *sapeurs du génie*) of 1843 (Fig. 40) is at the museum in Morges and measures 77 cm x 82 cm. Its obverse is made of red silk, its reverse of white silk. The painted emblems on red show the federal arms within a golden wreath, accompanied by a grenade and two crossed axes in natural colours. Above all is the inscription “SAPEURS du GÉNIE” in golden printing letters and below the date “1843”. The white reverse shows the canton’s coat-of-arms with golden characters placed within a green wreath and above it the golden inscription “CANTON DE VAUD”. The flag’s reverse looks like one of the canton flag variants mentioned before.



Fig. 40

These last two flags, dating from 1841 and 1843 respectively, bear the canton’s coat-of-arms with a golden inscription instead of a black one, and may thus be a hint to the time, when this pattern of arms started to develop more strongly.

On 16 May 1814 the Swiss Confederation had adopted a white cross in a red field - “the banner of the old Swiss” - as its seal³³, and on 3 July 1815 all troops were ordered to wear a red armband with a white cross on their left arm. Red flags with white crosses of a varied design identified the federal cause. Federal flags were widely used at federal shooting rallies, like the one at Lausanne in 1838 (Fig. 41). On top of the coloured engraving the reader may appreciate the coat-of-arms of Vaud with black letters, surmounted by a shooter’s (or Tell’s) feathered hat on top of the fasces and flanked by a federal flag and by a white Vaudois flag with the coat-of-arms. Another con-

temporary engraving shows the same federal shooting at Lausanne, but other types of federal flags (Fig. 42): in the foreground is a boy with a rectangular flag with quite a modern cross, while the flag poles in the background fly rectangular flags with another type of cross.



Fig. 41



Fig. 42

The canton Argovia introduced the federal flag for its troops as early as 1833, the other cantons followed only after a decree introducing the federal military flag had been issued on 11 October 1841.

The museum in Nyon keeps a plain federal flag with the date “1842” printed in golden characters on both sides in the centre of the cross, this being a civil flag (Fig. 43).



Fig. 43

The political controversy about the separation of state from church was going on since the late thirties of the 19th century and led to radical events in both the protestant and the catholic parts of the country. After the canton of Lucerne had called for Jesuit priests to teach in schools in 1844 the situation deteriorated dramatically and eventually led to the civil war of 1847/48. The people of Vaud, of protestant religious denomination, urged its conservative government to vote for immediate expulsion of the Jesuits at the deliberations of the federal government on the matter, but the Vaudois assembly of delegates hesitated. Thousands of people then rallied in protest in Lausanne under the leadership of Henry Druey, and when on 14 February 1845 the Vaudois military took the side of the insurgents, the government had to dismiss. A radical government ensued after this coup-d'état, placing himself at the head of the Swiss forces promoting the expulsion of the Jesuits and the adoption of a new federal constitution.

The historic museum of Lausanne displays two flags of the 1845 revolution, which have been restored in 1989 by Mrs. Sabine Sille, vice-president of the SSV. The white and green silk flag of the patriotic ladies of Lausanne of 1845 (Fig. 44) shows on its obverse within a golden wreath, which at its base is held together by two hands emerging from clouds in natural colours, the inscription "HOMMAGE AUX DÉFENSEURS DES LIBERTÉS DU PEUPLE." (=Homage to the Defenders of the People) in golden printing characters. Each a green flame in the white corners and a white flame in the green corners are placed on both sides of the flag, which measures 108 cm x 119 cm. The reverse has the same design but for the text (Fig. 45), which reads "LES DAMES PATRIOTIQUES DE LAUSANNE LE 10 AOUT 1845." (=The Patriotic Ladies of Lausanne, 10 August 1845). All emblems on the flag are oil-painted on the silk, except for the flames, which are inserted.



Fig. 44



Fig. 45

The other flag is a white and green silk flag presented in 1845 by the ladies of Lausanne to the patriotic society (Fig. 46). The obverse has an oil-painted circular green wreath in the centre of the flag and a golden decoration along the four borders, which at each corner of the flag includes a green label, of which only three are hardly legible. They read "Liberté", "Progrès" and "Égalité". Within the wreath are the golden words "AU COURAGE CIVIQUE" (=To the Courage of One's Convictions). The reverse (Fig. 47) has the same decoration with green labels at the corners, but a somewhat different green wreath with the golden inscription "DES CITOYENNES À LA SOCIÉTÉ PATRIOTIQUE 1845." (=From the Female Citizens to the Patriotic Society 1845). Only two of the labels are legible and read "Constitution" and "Vaudoise" in golden characters.



Fig. 46



Fig. 47

The political development of the country was paralleled by a social one. In 1846 the Vaudois society of mutual assistance (= *société vaudoise de secours mutuels*) was founded, being the first health insurance society on a co-operative basis. The flag of the Nyon division of this society, established in 1846 too, is preserved in the depot of the historic museum of Nyon (Fig. 48). The white and green silk flag measures 1m square and has the emblem of the society, a beehive with flying bees within a wreath, all painted on gold in the centre of the obverse. On the white stripe above the emblem is a red scroll bearing the golden inscription “UN POUR TOUS. TOUS POUR UN.” (= *One for All. All for One*) and above all is the federal emblem with golden rays. On the green stripe below the beehive are the golden words “HUMANITÉ ÉGALITÉ TRAVAIL” (= *Humanity Equality Work*). The reverse (Fig. 49) has a circular arrangement of inscriptions around the date “1846” within a wreath, all painted in gold on the white and green flag. On the upper part the text reads “SOCIÉTÉ VAUDOISE DE SECOURS MUTUELS”, while the lower part reads “SECTION DE NYON”, both parts being separated by a golden flower. The wreath is held together by a thin green ribbon, while a thin golden decoration runs along all the borders of the flag.



Fig. 48



Fig. 49

The times were getting stormy though in 1846, both the federal government and the separate league preparing for war. The museum of Vevey has a very particular military flag of 1847, belonging to the third musketeer elite company of the Vevey military region (Fig. 50). Vevey belonged to the military region (= *arrondissement*) number 1, the musketeers were elite troops, which manned an infantry battalion together with grenadiers. The silk flag, about 80 cm x 80 cm in size, has a broad white cross on green with the Vaudois and the federal coat-of-arms fimbriated in gold within a golden wreath in the centre of the cross. The characters on the Vaud arms, which partially cover the federal arms, are black. The gold inscription with printing characters on the upper part of the flag reads “CONFÉDÉRATION SUISSE”, while on the lower part it reads “CANTON de VAUD 1847.”. Little five-pointed golden stars, the emblem of musketeers, are placed in the green corners, but both flying corners have been torn away, so that the stars too are missing, as are a part of the letter “D” from “VAUD” and the letters “SE” from “SUISSE”. The reverse side (Fig. 51) has a big golden five-pointed star in the middle of the cross and little golden stars in the two hoist corners. Above the central star is the inscription “ARRONDISSEMENT” in gold and below the star are the inscriptions “..SQUETAIRE D’ÉLITE N°3.” and in a second row with smaller characters “VEVEY.”.



Fig. 50



Fig. 51

The flag was certainly made for the campaign against the “*Sonderbund*”, the league of seven catholic cantons under the leadership of Lucerne opposing the modern laic policy of the federal government. On 20 July 1847 the federal government decided by a majority of 12 cantons that the separate league be dissolved and on 3 November 1847 military operations started. 26 days later, after a few skirmishes, the separate league had ceased to exist and the war was over with only a few casualties.

On 12 September 1848 a new federal constitution was adopted, which in its article 20 specified “*that all troops in federal service will use the federal flag*”³⁴. Though the constitution did not mention any national flag, the red square flag with a cubic white cross finally in 1848 became the national flag of Switzerland.

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Credit of illustrations

Emil Dreyer: 21, 24, 31, 36, 37, 38, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49

Military Museum of Morges: 12, 13, 17, 18, 22, 25, 29, 30, 39, 40

Historical Museum of Vevey: 2, 32, 33, 34, 35, 50, 51

Archives of the Swiss Society of Vexillology: 8, 9, 10, 41

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Calendrier Héraldique Vaudois: 14, 15

Sabine Sille: 1, 3

Casimir de Rham[†]: 28

Historical Museum of Berne: 11

Historical Museum of Lausanne: 16

Kathrin Kocher: 20

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