

EARTH FLAG EXHIBITION - July 3rd , 1995

Here in Warsaw, in this Royal Castle Courtyard there is an exhibition of more than 80 flags. I noticed that several distinguished 16th ICV guests tried to find among them, flags symbolizing countries and representatives participating in this Congress. But none could be found. Was it a big mistake? Big misunderstanding? Or a new kind of socio-political happening?

The first question that arises is how these totally unknown signs could appear in such a prestigious place as an exhibition and why these flags are so far removed from our common experience as citizens of countries, towns, communities or different societies. Let us look again at the title of our XVI ICV. It is also WORLD Congress. According to "Webster's Dictionary" the "*world*" is:

*1. the earthly state of human existence,
or the inhabitants of the earth: the human race;
or the system of created things - universe;
or a celestial body as a planet and synonymous with the earth.*

I assume we all understand pretty well what the word "*symbol*" means for flags. In the world of science, however hope and the evidence for it are sometimes unequal, so I would like to refer to "Webster's Dictionary" again which defines a symbol as: a *token of identity*;
or something that stands for or suggests something else by reason of relationship, association, convention or accidental resemblance;
or a visible sign of something invisible (the lion is a symbol of courage).

This short introduction was necessary in order to better understand the flag collection in Royal Castle in Warsaw Courtyard.

Flags were in use over 5000 years ago, first in China and later successively in more or less civilized societies. From their first appearance flags were symbols and works of art.

They were the only objects of art for which people gave their lives and died. Flags were heroically fought for and were identified with the endurance of Human dignity.

The exhibited flags belong to the Earth Flag Centre Collection, initiated in 1991 in Warsaw when for the first time 94 of the most eminent artists from 36 countries sent me their artworks for the Flag of the Earth or for a universal symbol betokening the Global Solidarity of the Inhabitants of the Earth. Together, they constituted the Polish presentation at the Universal Exhibition in EXPO'92 in Seville.

Much more about the history of this project and the artworks can be found in the album designed in Warsaw and printed in Seville - "Earth Flag Designs-Global Solidarity", declared the most beautiful book of 1992 in Poland, available in EFC.

Nowadays, in contemporary science analysis is more frequently encountered than

synthesis. But to understand the symbols on the Earth Flags and their geovexillographical significance (geovexillography is a new science studying the Earth flag from a global perspective) we have to return to the ancient Greeks. The key to understand the symbols used by the artists is philosophy. Following Greek thought all matter throughout the universe is composed of the same four basic elements but in different proportions. These elements are symbolized by different colors, thus: **water** is **green**, **fire** is **red & yellow**, **earth** is **brown & black** and **air** is **white & blue**. These same colors symbolize the human character or psychological dispositions of man.

Red is **sanguine**, yellow is **spitfire or choleric** in Mediaeval terms, white is cool **phlegmatic** and black is **melancholic**. These symbolic colors were used by such famous painters and designers as Luigi Castiglioni, Allan Fletcher and Karel Misek. We can quickly recognize that most of the authors adopted these symbolic connotations in their creations. Seymour Chwast, Paul Ibou, Kai Kujasalo, Lech Majewski, Dan Reisinger, Jan Tarasin, Armando Testa, Vladimir Vladimirov and Frans Widerberg gave us the excellent examples of how to play with all these four colors.

To understand colors is to understand symbols and partly the nature of art or artists with their creation. As we know, **white** symbolizes perfection, faultlessness, eternity, peace, truth, intellect, friendship, power, energy, daytime, marriage, cheerfulness, joy, majesty and the absolute. Aeschlimann, Allner, Bosschem, Castellano, Castiglioni, Cato, Chrisimos, Chwast, Erkmen, Fletcher, Fukuda, Hołdanowicz, Kamekura and Młodożeniec used it as the dominant color for their compositions.

Blue as a symbol of the sky, paradise, eternity, justice, stability, hope, courage, liberty, despair, and destruction and devastation, has been used frequently by Emery, Erkmen, Kamekura, Kloss, Lupi, McConnell, Marszałek, Mykkanen, Paris-Clavel, Tucker, Tyczkowski and Vonnegut Jr.

The color red, so frequent on national and state flags appeared rarely on Earth Flag proposals. Red symbolizes energy, the sun, love, liberty, internationalism, socialism and communism as well as generosity and flies on the works of Aeschlimann, Bass, Eckstein & Hagedstedt, Erkmen, Fletcher, Scholte and Emma de Sigaldi.

Green as a symbol of nature, life and fertility was applied by Emery, Erkmen, van der Hayden, Kloss, Lupi, Ratajski, Saenz, Sposari and Kurt Vonnegut Jr.

Black as a symbol of death and catastrophe intensively appeared only on Ratajski's Earth flag.

The next symbol easy to recognize, has anthropological elements and gathers together another group of Earth flags. By anthropological I understand a figure of man or parts of his anatomy. **Man** symbolizes a microcosms and the universe on the Earth flag designs of Hilscher, Ioannides, van der Linden, Majewski, Misek, Sposari, Themptander, Tucker and Tyczkowski.

The eye is a symbol of the globe in the eastern tradition as well as life and love; it appeared on Qu Lei Lei's design only.

Much more frequent used were **hands and fingers** with their multitude of meanings as symbols of the Gods, the Sun's radiation and the five main pillars in Islamic tradition (faith, prayer, charity, fasting, pilgrimage).

In Poland and in the Polish language each hand has five fingers. I don't know how many fingers you have in your native country or how many, the experts of the European Community will eventually decide upon, but "Webster" declares for four. Geovexillographers agree on one thing at least that each Polish finger signifies a celestial body. The missing finger, the thumb - represents Venus, the index finger represents Jupiter, the middle finger - Saturn, the wedding finger - the Sun and the little finger Mercury. These symbols were used by such contributors as Bosschem from Belgium, Ujvarossy from Roumania, Lins from Brasil, Pfund from Switzerland and Jorge Sposari from the land of silver - the Argentine.

The heart is one of the best known symbols around the world, thanks to the New York designer Milton Glaser. The heart symbolizes love, help, devotion, intellect and in heraldic studies - sincerity and frankness. Earth flags with a heart were proposed by Garner & Russell, Holmquist, Kurlansky, Tanaka and Vonnegut. These flags are easy to understand, memorize and love, as the symbol suggests.

Other projects also utilized many symbols stemming from and related to nature. **The tree** symbolizes cosmic life and the universe and was proposed by such creative people as Art Buchwald, Hilscher, Lupi and Nagai.

Gilles Fiszman is the only designer who used an apple and **the apple** symbolizes Earth unity, eternity, the stars, life, childhood, fertility and royal power.

One can find also the symbolic use of **flowers** and **leaves**. Flowers appeared on projects by Chrisimos, Dominik and Mykkanen their designs symbolizing logic, the virtue of chastity, hospitality, victory and congratulations. Leaves designed by Chełkowska-Wolczynska and Kerkes symbolize flowering, nobility, hope and prophecy.

Wings are also present on some flag grounds. There are a host of meanings related to this symbol but the most important for Shigeo Fukuda are: life, death, abstraction, intelligence, knowledge, fantasy, resurrection, love and property.

I hope someone will be glad to know that more than 30% of the designers introduced geometrical structures into their Earth flag projects. 24 authors such as Bass, Cato, Fukuda, Ibou, Kamekura and Tanaka used the circle which symbolizes God, the cosmos, perfect form, water, balance and of course - coinage.

Eduardo Camacho who prepared 46 compositions before selecting the right one, introduced **the triangle** symbolizing past-present and future or heaven-earth and hell.

The star as a symbol of revolution, inspiration and liberty, frequently met on national flags has been incorporated in designs by Hubert Hilscher and the Siberian designer Vladimir Vladimirov, who is with us on this Congress.

How to conclude, and give a resume of these symbols from the Earth flag collection? Probably we'll need new meta-symbols to get a compact form or we should divide these symbols on the flag ground into groups of four inspired by philosophy, anthropology, nature and geometry.

And then? Are we able to create one Earth flag?
How to design one symbol and how to agree globally on it?
Only from a cosmic perspective does become clear that we all are inhabitants of one Earth, wrote the Swiss geovexillographer and story writer Erich von Daeniken in 1992. White or Black, Red or Yellow; Christian or follower of the way of Buddha, Moslem or Jew need the Flag of the Earth representing our global community.

This XVI ICV in Warsaw gave us for about 15 min's. an opportunity to think globally.

Could we envisage the next ICV with a special colloquium related to this subject. Are we ready to be global citizens under one Earth Flag?
I believe that it is the must. My must and yours.

Władysław Serwatowski