

delegate brought the flag of his homeland with him - each, that is, except the delegate from China. When the others asked him why he had failed to bring a flag, he said that he had discussed the matter with another Chinese survivor, an ancient and very wise man, and that between them they had concluded that they would not have any cloth flag for China any more.

"What kind of flag do you intend to have?" asked the delegate from Luxembourg.

"The Chinese delegate blinked his eyes and produced a shoe-box, from which he drew a living flower which looked very like an iris.

"What is that?" they all inquired, pleased with the sight of so delicate a symbol.

"That", said the Chinese, 'is a wild flag, Iris Tectorum. In China we have decided to adopt this flag, since it is a convenient and universal device and very beautiful and grows everywhere in the moist places of the earth for all to observe and wonder at. I propose all countries adopt it, so that it will be impossible for us to insult each other's flag.'

"Can it be waved?" asked the American delegate, who wore a troubled expression and a Party button.

"The Chinese gentleman moved the flag gently to and fro. 'It can be waved, yes,' he answered. 'But, it is more interesting in repose or as the breeze stirs it.'

"I see it is monocotyledonous," said the Dutch delegate, who was an amiable man.

"I don't see how a strong foreign policy can be built around a wild flag which is the same for everybody," complained the Latvian.

"It can't be," said the Chinese. 'That is one of the virtues of my little flag. I should remind you that the flag was once yours, too. It is the oldest flag in the world, the original one, you might say. We are now, gentlemen, in an original condition again. There are very few of us.'

"The German delegate arose stiffly. 'I would be a poor man indeed,' he said, 'did I not feel that I belonged to the master race. And for that I need a special flag, natürlich.'

"At the moment," replied the Chinese, 'the master race, like so many other races, is suffering from the handicap of being virtually extinct. There are fewer than two hundred people left in the entire world, and we suffer from a multiplicity of banners.'

"The delegate from Patagonia spoke up. 'I fear that the wild flag, one for all, will prove an unpopular idea.'

"It will, undoubtedly," sighed the Chinese delegate. 'But now that there are only a couple of hundred people on earth, even the word 'unpopular' loses most of its meaning.'