

ON A DELICATE MISSION

Tales of Swiss Diplomacy

Landesmuseum Zurich, May 16 – September 16, 2007

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Swiss diplomats have often had to accomplish delicate missions for their country behind the scenes, and this is still the case today. The special exhibition **ON A DELICATE MISSION** at the Landesmuseum Zurich recounts foreign policy successes and failures, describes the far-sightedness of individual diplomats and also their errors of judgement

In public discussion at present some people want Switzerland to take more clearly defined positions on international conflicts, and particularly on infringements of human rights. They recall this country's commitment to humanitarian causes since the 19th century. Others support the contrary view and call on today's diplomats to adopt a more defensive stance, pointing out that Switzerland is a small country and drawing attention to the success of its foreign policy in the past. Both points of view refer to the history of Switzerland. By rolling out the red carpet in the «Hall of Fame», the National Museum aims to show the actual development of Swiss diplomacy since Ambassador Wettstein from Basle negotiated Switzerland's separation from the German Empire in 1648.

The decision to tell the story of diplomacy from 1647 to today in six stations makes it necessary to choose just a few from many noteworthy tales and show them as examples; the six stations are called: «Alliances – up to 1798», «Origins – 1798 to 1848», «Red Cross as proof of identity – 1848 to 1914», «Missions in wartime – 1914 to 1945», «At the centre of the world's diplomacy – 1950 to 1990» and «New diplomacy? – since 1990». They cover the history of Swiss diplomacy both thematically and chronologically, following its development from tentative beginnings to the fully consolidated professional and democratic diplomatic corps of today.

Making an exhibition about diplomacy means rendering visible something which actually takes place out of public view. The curators Pascale Meyer and Nathalie Unternährer and the designers Tristan Kobler and Barbara Holzer have been successful in finding a way to show in an appropriate manner the many valuable objects and documents from our own collections, from other major Swiss museums and from private lenders: more than 100 exhibits are presented, veiled and yet visible, which describe diplomatic missions and negotiations, exceptional diplomats and their achievements, as well as the everyday business of diplomacy. At the end of the exhibition,

video interviews with foreign and Swiss diplomats give their insights into this special professional world, and discuss the future role of diplomacy.

Supporting programme

Public guided tours, led by our curators, will accompany the exhibition.

Various programmes are planned for Swiss Radio DRS on the subject of diplomacy; among others, the programme «persönlich» on Sunday, 20th May 2007, will be devoted to the exhibition and transmitted live from the Salon Rouge of the National Museum. Further details of the programmes planned on Swiss Radio DRS are available at www.srdrs.ch.

A book about the exhibition will also be published under the title «ON A DELICATE MISSION. Tales of Swiss Diplomacy». This will contain texts in German, French and English and some 30 illustrations, in all about 60 pages. Publisher: Landesmuseum Zurich, ISBN 978-3-908025-94-8, Zurich 2007. The book is on sale at the Museum Shop for CHF 28.–.

In parallel with the exhibition «ON A DELICATE MISSION. Tales of Swiss Diplomacy» the Landesmuseum in Zurich is presenting the photographic exhibition «Excellences, Exzellenzen. Ambassadors and diplomats in Switzerland». Diploma dissertation by Thomas Adank and Florian Joye, Ecole cantonale d'art Lausanne (ECAL).

Further details at www.inheiklermission.ch.

The media texts and a selection of media pictures are available for downloading at www.inheiklermission.ch, under «Press».

The following persons are at your disposal for additional information:

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