

CONVERSATION ABOUT DIPLOMACY

Lecture of Ambassador Jean-François Paroz

at Andrassy University in Budapest

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The goal of Andrassy University's course of *Conversation about diplomacy* is to familiarize M.A students with the way of entering the life of diplomacy, and the tasks that follow it. The Ambassador of Switzerland, *Jean-François Paroz*,¹ showed the importance of countries' affiliations and the hardness the affiliations' configuration based on his personal experiences. Above all these, he got round to signing a supporting contract, with which the Embassy of Switzerland wishes to support the University with scholarship opportunities, and with financing various programs.²

Keywords: diplomacy – Swiss – career in diplomacy – multistage selection – equality – diplomatic task – importance of media – role of economics

Outline:

- The basic criteria of the diplomat
- The selection of diplomats in Switzerland
- The importance of equality in selection
- The tasks of diplomats and ambassadors
- The pros and cons of diplomatic life

This work was done based on the 2013.october 21 lecture of Ambassador *Jean-François Paroz* at Andrassy Gyula University.

“Observer, networker, mediator, communicator, manager- all in one person.”³ There is only one question, who can perform all these? Those who visualize their future with the *Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs(EDA)*⁴ have to fit all these. At the moment in more than a hundred countries circa three hundred and fifty Swiss diplomats are active, who were all chosen by the EDA for this task.⁵ The international opportunity of a career might seem promising for many, but achieving this is not at all. As Mr. Paroz said in his lecture, you do not have to be a genius or a Noble prize winner to be a good diplomat. But, one has to know one's way about every aspect of life, and social sensibility also plays an important role in this profession. Of course there are basic requirements too that all candidates have to meet. This includes Swiss citizenship, completed higher education, professional experience and knowing at least two languages.

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¹ The Ambassador of Switzerland in Budapest since 5th November 2012

² Schweizer Botschafter unterzeichnete Förderungs vertrag und gewährte Einblick und in diplomatischen Dienst <http://www.andrassyuni.eu/aktuelles/nachrichten/schweizer-botschafter-unterzeichnete-forderungsvertrag-und-gewhrte-einblick-in-den-diplomatischen-dienst.html>

³ Wie man in der Schweiz Diplomat werden kann; Schriflich und mündlich

<http://www.bernerzeitung.ch/schweiz/standard/Wie-man-in-der-Schweiz-Diplomat-werden-kann/story/22523882>

⁴ EDA: Eidgenössisches Departement für auswärtige Angelegenheiten

⁵ Diplomatische Laufbahn/Concours <http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/dfa/jobs/jobdfa/jobdi.html>

The selection process consists of two rounds which is a great challenge for only a few can get a chance to enter the life of diplomacy. The written test can be taken by 80 people, where the candidates have to write a study about an actual political topic in their own mother tongue. The next is the multiple-choice test, and of course testing the level of their foreign language skill is inevitable. Those 40 fortunate people who can pass this hurdle have to appear in front of a 20 member selection committee, and the candidates have to convince them that they have sufficient knowledge about politics, economy, constitutional and international law, and about the history and culture of their homeland. They also have to prove their knowledge of foreign language and they participate in a psychological conversation. Those who can pass all these tests have an opportunity to start their career; with an introductory course, at the Foreign Office followed by a one year apprenticeship period at one of the foreign representation of their homeland, and lastly they have to take the final exam in Bern. If they can pass all these, they can say, than now as a diplomat, they can represent the Swiss Confederation with the highest confidence. According to *Alois Riklin*⁶ in Switzerland the seamlessness of the selection process is assisted by the cooperation of the co-workers of the Foreign Office and the Parliament. The fact that they ignore all back-stair influence also has a positive effect on the selection. The requirements are endurance and the ability to initiate.

As in the European Union, equality is important. So is it in Switzerland. Therefore the country puts emphasis on giving the women opportunity to represent themselves, in a growing number, in the area of external politics. These years, these endeavors had an effect as nowadays half of the candidates are women. From the circa 200 candidates per year the pass number is between 8 and 20 and half of them are women.⁷ In Switzerland, because of the four official languages (German, French, Italian and Romansh) they try to pay attention to balancing the number of the people getting in from the different language groups. This way they wish to support to maintain their country's linguistic diversity. To put in context, in Germany, the number of those who apply is around 2000, circa 200 gets to the oral examination, and then only 40 people, the female percentage only 10⁸, can say that they have come to be selected.

The diplomats are handed the opportunity to represent their country overseas, and to build the country's image. First of all, it is important to show a positive image of themselves to the host country. In these situations their *social competence* – precision, accuracy, reliability and neatness and so on – comes to the front as their topmost quality. The most important tasks include organizing and coordinating the welcome of ministers; the *observation and analysis of the host country's politics, economy and trade*, while taking into consideration the possible effects to their own country. Of course they have to participate in various international conferences, support Swiss companies and conduct various cultural and juristic projects.⁹

Mr. Paroz as the Swiss Ambassador considers it important to establish mutually beneficial connections with Hungary, thereby helping the cooperation of the two countries. The keystone of his work genuine gathering of information and observation, for this reason he would like to mend the connection with the media. According to the Ambassador, in Hungary, sometimes it is a challenge to correct the news appearing in the television. Every country has those fields that need more attention; in Hungary this is undoubtedly the press. In a prior statement of *Matei Ion Hoffmann*¹⁰ the same problem is sensible. He even draws attention to the fact that in the evolved situation it is a core factor that only a few German journalists speak Hungarian, so they use their own news agencies' reports as a source.¹¹ The two Ambassadors also agree that *Hungary's economy harbors many untapped potential* so it is not a wonder that Switzerland and Germany has trade ties with Hungary.

According to Mr. Hoffman, the greatest virtue of our country is the well-trained manpower and the good infrastructure. With the *Swiss-Hungarian Cooperation Program* Switzerland would like to help Hungary in several areas. Currently there are three big projects running: the workplace creation of Kazincbarcika area,¹² the drinking-water production in Érd and area,¹³ and the tourism development of Satoraljaujhely¹⁴. Mr. Paroz also takes an active part in monitoring these programs.

⁶ Swiss political scientist, president of the St. Gallen University. Member of the selection committee: 1987-2000.

⁷ Wie man in der Schweiz Diplomat werden kann; 200 Bewerber pro Jahr <http://www.bernerzeitung.ch/schweiz/standard/Wie-man-in-der-Schweiz-Diplomat-werden-kann/story/22523882>

⁸ Im Auslande in Fürstchen, zu Hause in Würsten <http://www.spiegel.de/karriere/ausland/arbeit-von-diplomaten-so-wird-man-botschafter-a-872236.html>

⁹ Diplomatische Laufbahn/Concours <http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/dfa/jobs/jobdfa/jobdi.html>

¹⁰ German Ambassador to Hungary since 24th October 2011.

¹¹ Hungary stays Hungary, without reference to who governs her. <http://www.168ora.hu/globusz/heltai-interju-90626.html>

¹² The Swiss Ambassador was in Kazincbarcika <http://www.erdon.ro/kazincbarcikan-jart-a-svajci-nagykovet/2361209>

¹³ Erd and area's watersupply modernization started

Afterword

The participation in the life of diplomacy is not only about knowing one discipline or the proficiency in one billet. The diplomats have to do well in politics; social, economic, and cultural mediums thereby supporting their own and the host country.

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