

# INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON DIPLOMATIC TRAINING

## 32nd Meeting of Deans and Directors of Diplomatic Academies and Institutes of International Relations

Diplomatic Academy of Vienna  
23 – 26 June 2004

The Diplomatic Academy of Vienna hosted the 32nd Meeting of Deans and Directors with its usual friendly hospitality and professional efficiency. The Meeting this year was enhanced by a special Symposium, 'A Changing Europe in a Changing World', to mark the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Oriental Academy and the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Vienna Diplomatic Academy. There was in addition a Reception given by the Embassy of the United States, and a memorable *Festakt* at the Vienna City Hall. After the Forum many members had the pleasure of an excursion to the Burgenland, followed by the annual Garden Party at the Diplomatic Academy.

The Meeting commenced on 23 June with sub-meetings of the five regional groups:

**Africa:** (*Smail Benamara*, chair)

Four countries were represented at this first meeting of a specifically African group. They had discussed convening a Forum for the regional discussion of human resources development, training and challenges particular to African foreign ministries. They hoped to develop programmes of exchange between staff and students in their institutions, and perhaps with institutions in other regions. They would prepare two documents: (i) a list of institutes with their contact details; (ii) a draft proposal for their future work.

**Asia:** (*Hideaki Ueda*, chair)

Sixteen countries were represented, from East Asia to the Middle East. They had discussed principally training for economic diplomacy, both for the promotion of the national economic interest and for dealing with the international financial institutions and regional organisations. Two key challenges had been identified: (i) overcoming rivalries between the foreign ministry and other ministries; (ii) changing the mindset of senior diplomats from a focus on political and security issues to trade and investment. They proposed convening a conference on economic diplomacy to be held in East Asia, and would seek ways of promoting co-operation between the diplomatic academies of the region.

**Europe:** (*Ernst Sucharipa*, chair)

Eighteen countries, including twelve EU Member States, were represented, and two international organisations. They had discussed the emerging EU External Action Service, implications for EU Member State foreign services and for training for 'European diplomacy'. A five-module peripatetic European Diplomatic Programme bringing together two or three young diplomats from each Member State was the alternative at present to and possible precursor of a European diplomatic academy. Training continued to be offered to foreign ministries building their capacities, including new courses given by ministries having just completed their own development programmes and able to pass on lessons learned. There had been growth in training for European integration, involving non-diplomats from a number of ministries, from international organisations and from the private sector. Two conferences of international studies were forthcoming, one in the Hague on 9-11 September, the other in Istanbul on 24-27 August.

**Latin America:** (*Rolando Stein*, chair)

Eight countries were represented. There had been considerable development in co-operation between the regional academies and with academies of the Pacific area, including an Asia-Pacific online course. A number of academies were developing programmes of e-learning and distance learning. There were new courses in consular work, and in Latin American perspectives on international relations. The Diplomatic Academy of Peru looked forward to welcoming the IFDT to Lima in 2005 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Academy.

**North America:** (*Adriaan de Hoog*, chair)

Two large countries were represented. They had discussed trends in training since the events of September 11. These included an increase in language training and in the study of other cultures, training in leadership and management, and in training in developing policy positions for lower mid-level officers before they reached senior management. There was a need to develop a coherent continuum of training from Entry level to Ambassador. They also had discussed a new programme designed to engage the public in diplomacy, and the possibility of developing courses – for example in negotiation or conflict management – that linked and drew on the contributions of specialists both professional and academic from around the world. (In this context there was a contribution from the DiploFoundation on a programme of e-learning for multi-stakeholder diplomacy being developed with the support of the Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation. A conference on the subject is planned to be held at the Mediterranean Diplomatic Academy, in February, 2005.)

*Ambassador Dr Ernst Sucharipa*, Co-Chair of the Meeting, introduced new members of the Forum, and those representing member institutions for the first time:

*Sayyid Khalifa Al-Busaidi* (Omani Diplomatic Institute)

*Brook Boyer* (UNITAR, Geneva)

*Ambassador Erlinda Basilio* (Foreign Service Institute, Manila)

*Michael Cantzler* (Aus- and Fortbildungsstätte des Auswärtigen Amtes, Bonn)

*Timothy Cartwright* (UN Staff College, Turin)

*Prof Samir Daher* (Académie des Hautes Etudes Diplomatiques, Beirut)

*Reda Elmerini* (Morocco)

*Prof Dr Jürg Martin Gabriel* (Mediterranean Academy for Diplomatic Studies, Malta)

*Dr A V Gharavi* (School of International Relations, Tehran)

*Ambassador Jorge Gumucio* (Academia Diplomática Boliviana ‘Rafael Bustillo’)

*Prof Brian Hocking* (Chair, United Kingdom Forum on Diplomatic Training)

*Prof Julius Horvath* (Central European University)

*Dr Mykola Kulinich* (Diplomatic Academy, Kyiv)

*Prof Roman Kuzniar* (Diplomatic Academy, Warsaw)

*Anita Landecy*, Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva)

*Loretta Loria* (Istituto Diplomatico ‘Mario Toscano’, Rome)

*Alicia Moral Revilla* (Escuela Diplomática, Madrid)

*Dr Zdravko Popov* (Diplomatic Institute, Sofia)

*Dr Andrej Rahten* (Diplomatska Akademija, Ljubljana)

*Emma Rodriguez Sifuentes* (Instituto ‘Matias Romero’, Mexico City)

*Dean Gerard Sheehan* (Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University)

*Professor Predrag Simic* (Diplomatic Academy, Belgrade)

*Quang Thanh Trinh* (Institute for International Relations, Hanoi)

The founding fathers and past chairs of the Meetings of Deans and Directors were also welcomed: *Ralph Feltham*, *Dean Peter Krogh*, *Ambassador Dr Paul Leifer*, *Ambassador Dr Alfred Missong*, and *Ambassador Dr Heinrich Pfusterschmidt*.

The principal topic for study at this year's meeting was **Training for Economic / Business Diplomacy**. The keynote address was given by *Dr Martin Bartenstein*, Federal Minister for Economics and Labour. Presentations were given by *Dr Raymond Saner* and *Dr Paul Meerts*. Discussants included *Ambassador Yuri Fokine*, *Adriaan de Hoog*, *Ambassador Katherine Peterson* and *Ambassador Yaqing Qin*.

Key observations included:

- commercial diplomacy had always been important; regional integration and globalisation made it even more so; diplomacy was no longer just between governments
- foreign ministries were creating business units, trade and investment strategy centres, exchange programmes with national and multinational corporations
- two trends could be observed: business as a consumer of diplomacy services; business as a provider of diplomacy; there was a continuing shift between these two. The business community had been the driver, for commercial benefit; with the emergence of civil society, corporate social responsibility and their role in development had increased in importance.
- integrating civil society, the business community and social partners in the diplomatic process could be positive, but increased the complexity of decision-making
- embassies, and the ambassador in particular, had a key role to play in facilitating high-level contacts, as well as knowledge of the local/regional market
- ministers and diplomats could only open the door and invite people to walk through; business sometimes wanted to be carried through
- foreign ministries could lack credibility and authority in comparison with the technical knowledge and business networks of ministries of finance, trade, energy, industry and agriculture
- foreign ministries could play a key role in facilitating networks, co-ordinating the international efforts of the line ministries, helping to build long-term stable relationships between businesses and between their respective governments
- there was tension between the environmental and social protectionist agenda of developed economies and the economic needs of developing countries
- multilateral institutions could seem inefficient but offered the only way of producing international agreement by consensus
- diplomatic academies had a role to play in explaining the realities of international economic life to the domestic business community and civil service

There were presentations and discussion of training programmes in economic diplomacy in Canada, China and the United States. Each combined studies of the domestic, regional and global economy and of international economic and financial institutions with practical training in the tradecraft of economic diplomacy. All explored ways in which government and business could support each other, helping to overcome public/private and inter-ministerial competition.

There clearly was a need and a demand for case studies in training for economic diplomacy. Members would be grateful for reference to sources or collections. One such source was the Business Council for International Understanding which produced cases used by FSI in Washington.

The second topic of study at the meeting was **Training for spouses in the foreign service**. Presentations were given by *Ambassador Katherine Peterson* and *Ambassador Dr Hermes Herrera Hernández*.

Key points included:

- the role of the spouse simply as supporter and childcare provider was no longer tenable for families with both partners working
- not all partners were spouses; an increasing number were unmarried and/or same-sex; 'member of household' was a more flexible term
- difficulties with spouse employment was a main reason for losing diplomats from the foreign service
- the foreign service was in a sense hiring the whole family; hence all were entitled to training
- training included language, cross-cultural awareness, security, protocol, information technology, personal administration, and functional training for jobs
- e-learning had much to contribute to ongoing training and education of family members at post
- the spouse might be given diplomatic rank according to experience, and both partners posted together, maximising the value of the partnership to the mission
- professionalism, however, remained important; it did not necessarily help to manufacture an opportunity for a spouse and to force a specialist in one field into another in the mission
- on the other hand, where spouses were disallowed to work in the host country, work within the embassy was a productive option; the problem was, there was normally more demand than there were jobs available
- spouses were a team socially, therefore also could/should be professionally; it required practical, sensible, imaginative management
- there could be issues with line management and performance assessment between partners in the same mission.

*Professor Nabil Ayad* gave a presentation on **Gender in the Twenty-first Century and Diplomatic Challenges**.

Principal observations included:

- the number of women in senior positions in government and the professions was increasing
- growth in female influence on policy could be observed, with greater attention given to equal opportunity, human rights, human resources, caregiver and cultural issues
- the proportion of women in relation to men in foreign ministries was increasing
- retention, however, remained an issue as a higher proportion of women left the service before reaching senior positions
- women brought particular gender competences to diplomacy, including approaches to team-building, decision-making and problem-solving
- female spouses were increasingly well-educated and professionally qualified; twin careers could both offer opportunities and pose problems for missions
- gender had to be factored carefully into development diplomacy, as the role of women in different societies varied considerably.

Points arising in discussion included:

- in professional development for women, timing was an important factor, to take account of childbearing; the problem often was not so much sexism as ageism
- in the diplomatic services of developing countries, often there were more women than men at all levels of seniority; a higher proportion of men went into the competitive private sector, more women into the co-operative public sector
- the large increase in the numbers of women studying international relations at university had greatly facilitated the promotion of women in the foreign service
- diversity training for all was needed in most foreign services to redress stereotypes and prejudices about gender and other issues.

On Thursday, 24 June, *Sir Robin Fearn* gave a presentation on **Crisis Management Training**. Key points included:

- terrorism, civil disorder, consular crises posed different challenges and required different responses; but there was extensive overlap which facilitated contingency planning, flexible structures and systems, and training
- main objectives included rapidity of response; rapidity and effectiveness of support for posts; co-ordinated media handling; structures/systems which facilitate decision-making and co-ordination; fully worked-up emergency and business continuity plans; and effective IT and communications
- in order to manage crises effectively it was necessary continually to Prepare, Plan, Test and Train
- testing included testing the resilience, flexibility and practical effectiveness of emergency plans; training focussed on practising individual roles in a crisis and developing skills for pre-allocated tasks
- table top exercises confronted individuals and teams with the range of decisions and actions needed in the operation of a command centre, information flow between the command centre and the scene of an incident, resource deployment, assistance to victims, and media handling
- live exercises provided opportunities to test systems and equipment in real time response to a simulated incident
- effective training for crisis management needed to be structured and integrated, combining practice in planning and decision-making, knowledge and testing of systems and procedures, and practical skills development.

Points arising in discussion included:

- psychological training was essential, to assist in preparing for trauma
- there were two facets of the crisis management task: bureaucratic co-ordination, and management of public expectations
- it was advisable to practise co-ordination of own staff/forces with host country response forces and with NGOs
- the definition of crisis is culturally derived; in developing countries, crisis is constant; people bear and deal with horror as part of life. Crises do not occur out of nowhere; they are long in coming, and there is a need to deal with things in advance; but money is forthcoming only when the blood is there.

*Dr Rolando Stein* presented early findings from his research on **Building a Professional Diplomatic Service**. He had had survey responses from sixty-one countries on all continents. Some of the key data included:

- the ratio of candidates to places in the foreign service varied from 10:1 to 150:1
- 45% of foreign services imposed an age limit on entry of 35; 30% had no limit; 40% had provisions for late entry from the private sector or civil society
- 85% required a university degree for entry
- 90% had entry exams in general knowledge, and conducted a personal interview
- 85% required knowledge of foreign languages
- only 40% administered psychological or vocational tests (diplomatic profiling)
- amongst diplomatic academies, 34% awarded academic degrees
- 80% of courses lasted a year or less
- in 74% of cases, course members drew salaries as employees of the MFA
- 42% of academies offered places to other diplomatic services
- 89% of foreign services offered mid-career training
- 68% required mid-career training for promotion; only 11% employed psychological testing in promotion
- in 71% of foreign services retirement age was 60-65; in 15% officers could continue beyond 70
- in 90% of foreign services there was no age limit within each rank
- there was wide variation in the proportion of ambassadors who were professional career officers, from 100% to less than 40%
- on average it took 30 years to get to the top

Preliminary conclusions from these data suggested that ministries of foreign affairs typically offered a lifelong career to a professional cadre mainly of graduates. Diplomatic services shared many similarities in structure, human resources and corporate behaviour which helped to foster a sense of brotherhood in the diplomatic corps.

*Dr John Hemery* reported on the two-day workshop on **E-Learning for Diplomacy** which had been held in London in January, attended by forty-three members of the International Forum from twenty-two countries. The conference had been organised by the Centre for Political and Diplomatic Studies and hosted jointly by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Canadian High Commission. Presentations had been given by *Adriaan de Hoog* and his team from the Canadian Foreign Service Institute, by *Jovan Kurbalija* and colleagues from the DiploFoundation, by *Santosh Kumar*, *Kishan Rana* and colleagues from the Indian Foreign Service Institute, by *Thomas McMahan* from the United States Foreign Service Institute, with contributions from those responsible for the development of e-learning in the foreign ministries of Estonia, Germany and Iran. Specialist workshops in groups had considered strategy, syllabus, technology and development co-operation for e-learning for diplomacy.

The Meeting of Deans and Directors 2004 concluded with **Any Other Business**. *Ralph Feltham* announced the publication of the 9<sup>th</sup> edition of his *Diplomatic Handbook*, available now in ten languages. *Luis Felipe Galvez* formally invited the International Forum to convene in Lima in 2005 to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Diplomatic Academy of Peru. Possible agenda items proposed included training for diplomatic services in developing countries, training for chairing multilateral meetings, language for diplomacy, and topics specific to the curricula of Latin American training institutes.

As part of the Directors' meeting, members of the Forum were invited to participate in the Symposium, '**A Changing Europe in a Changing World**', including formal ceremonies at the Vienna Rathaus to celebrate the Academy's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The Symposium brought together leading academics and practitioners from all over Europe and beyond for a full day of discussions in five panels:

- Challenges for Diplomacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- Europe: the Global Dimension
- Austria as an International Actor in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- A newly constituted enlarged Union?
- Towards a European (Cultural) Identity?

It is not possible in a brief summary report to reflect adequately the arguments on substantive issues of international relations presented by thirty panellists in more than eight hours of discussions. There follows instead a few key observations which may be of special relevance to directors of training:

- 'Diplomacy requires sleepless tact, unmoveable calm, and patience that no folly, no blunder may shake.' (*Marc Grossman*, quoting *Ben Franklin*)
- We are not dealing with a clash of civilisations so much as a clash of cultures, dealing with the impact of the Other. Local cultures react, respond differently; it is the task of diplomacy to be culturally aware of these different responses and to facilitate dialogue. (*Santosh Kumar*)
- Elites with a global language, jet travel and the Brussels shuttle can easily forget about the common people; the gap is widening with those unconnected with this process. It is important to invest time and patience in maintaining close bilateral relations with your neighbours; alliance-building is the key diplomatic skill. (*Wilhelm Schturtz*)
- Hierarchies often like, need centres of culture; culture equals power. But in the information society the concept of centre and periphery is no longer valid; everything happens everywhere. (*Alfred Pfabigan*)
- Post-national identity is an interactive, dynamic process; attachments change over time; the identity net is made up of bulbs of varying wattage. (*Janos Rapcsák*)
- Two major challenges face post-modern diplomats: (i) the slow destruction of the nation state and the emergence of supranationality and regional identity; (ii) the atavistic challenge of pre-modern states and groups. It is the task of diplomacy to manage these two trends through the coherent application of soft and hard power. (*Ernst Sucharipa*)
- There are five possible futures for diplomacy: 'disintermediation' (rise of private corporate diplomacy); Europeanisation (replacing the national with the regional); democratisation (multilateral consultation, majority voting replacing intellectual persuasion); thematisation (focus on issues rather than places, embassies supplanted by conferences); Americanisation (public diplomacy, lobbying, influence through non-traditional channels). (*Alan Henrikson*)
- The diplomat's role is changing: the central policy machine encourages pushing decisions upwards; this needs to be turned on its head – the actors should be on the frontline, facilitated by the centre. (*Marc Grossman*)

- The practical lesson of these insights for diplomats is the need for balance between breadth of experience and knowledge on the one hand, and specialist competence on the other; need to focus on adding value – providing continuity, understanding, engagement. (*Casimir Yost*)
- It is a diplomat's professional daily task to make sense of complex affairs. More specialised training is needed to cope with specialised areas of knowledge. Given the pace of change diplomatic academies will have to work hard to keep current, providing training relevant to the realities of twenty-first century diplomacy. (*Emma Rodrigues Sifuentes*)

The 32<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of Deans and Directors was enhanced by a memorable *Festakt* in Vienna City Hall, with presentations by Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs *Benita Ferrero-Waldner* and European Commissioner *Günther Verheugen*.

*Dr Oliver Rathkolb* introduced the commemorative *Festschrift*, '250 years: from the Oriental to the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna'.

*Ambassador Dr Alexander Christiani* offered his personal reminiscence of the first year of the Academy (copy attached), in the care of the first Director *Professor Ernst Florian Winter*, who was also present at the *Festakt*.

*Vermika Meszarits*, Valedictorian 2004, referred to the Academy's contribution to 'applied inter-cultural practice'; it was not a melting pot; rather, a beautiful mosaic.

*Dean Peter Krogh*, co-founder of the International Forum, reflected on the contribution of the 'sons and daughters of Maria Theresia' to the establishment of a global family of academies setting the standard for the conduct of diplomacy.

*Dr Youssef Al Hassan*, director of the youngest diplomatic academy, the Emirates Institute of Diplomacy, presented to the Academy a magnificent model of one of the oldest forts in the United Arab Emirates as a symbol of co-operation in preserving cross-cultural dialogue.

*Ambassador Dr Ernst Sucharipa* concluded the *Festakt* with a moving gesture of reconciliation, presenting a *diploma honoris causa* to all the Jewish students of the Academy who had been forced out in the years 1938-41. One of those students, *Kathe Krauthammer*, now 86, accepted on behalf of all those who didn't survive.

*Ambassador Sucharipa* offered the thanks of the Academy and of the Forum to the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the City of Vienna, the provinces and sponsors both institutional and private for their support of the Academy and of its anniversary celebrations.

John Hemery  
Rapporteur

**Commemoration of 250 years of the Oriental-Consular-Diplomatic Academy in  
Vienna  
(25 June 2004)**

**Reminiscences of a participant in the first course (1965/66)  
by Alexander Christiani**

It happened on a summer afternoon at the Weissensee in Carinthia when on the terrace of the Strandhotel I was sitting next to a middle aged gentleman whose yellow anorak did not really harmonise with his reddish hair. I knew this gentleman also from my chairmanship of the Academic Association for Foreign Policy where he had given a lecture a couple of years before. It was none other than the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Austria, Dr. Bruno Kreisky. He turned to me and said:

“Well, Doctor, since you have just finished your studies, I ask you what will you do now ? After all, I understand you are interested in foreign policy. Well, I might have something for you.” Saying this, he pulled out a little white brochure. “Look, I have just got this from Vienna – on 18<sup>th</sup> September of this year, the new Diplomatic Academy in Vienna will be opened. Why don’t you come and have a look at it !”

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of September – a nobody amongst numerous prominent personalities – my determination was growing to at least try to be admitted to the Diplomatic Academy.

The first shock came when, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of December, I faced the august examination board. The board was chaired by Bruno Kreisky personally, the other board members were Rudolf Kirchschräger (later Austrian Foreign Minister and Federal President of the Republic of Austria), Professor Stefan Verosta (Professor for International Law at the University of Vienna) and Director General Hackl from the Federal Chancellery. Kreisky must have been aware pretty soon that my heart was sinking, as he remarked: “Doctor, don’t worry, we are not here to let you fail, but much more to let you succeed ...”

The exam went relatively well for me, until the moment when Kirchschräger – asking general knowledge and in particular literature – quizzed me about the main works of Franz Grillparzer. In my nervousness, I could just name “*Des Meeres und der Liebe Wellen*”, whereupon Kirchschräger, displaying his rather dry sense of humour, said: “Well, is that really all which comes to your mind ...it is actually not his best piece of work ..”

The lasting damage fortunately was limited – otherwise, ladies and gentlemen, I would not be here today.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of December around midnight, to the dismay of my parents, the doorbell rang and the postman delivered a piece of paper saying: “I’ve got a telegram for you – seems to be important because it is marked Etat Priorité !” Indeed it was the notification of my admission to the Academy. Here is the telegram ! (it is demonstratively waved before the audience).

A short time thereafter I was overjoyed to learn that the first Director of this institution would be Professor Ernst Florian Winter, returned from the United States and husband to one of the “singing Trapp sisters” and father of seven children. I already knew Ernst Florian since we had organised lectures and discussions with him about political science – which at that time in Vienna was an absolute novelty. But much more importantly: from the very first moment I was fascinated about his personality, his humanity, his enthusiasm, his intellectual honesty and much, much more. Those of us who were there will never forget the evenings in his rented Schloß Eichbüchel. We were sitting on the floor, discussing and debating until the early morning hours about everything under the sun, and dear Johanna was busy in the kitchen, anxious that the spiritual nourishment did not remain the only treat.

This extraordinary admiration, indeed love for Ernst Florian has in no way changed up to this very day, not only as far as I am, but also as many, many others are concerned. It is therefore a very special pleasure and honour for me to see him amongst us today. At the moment Ernst Florian is an “intellectual hermit peasant” in the province of Eastern Tyrol. Austria owes you a tremendous debt of gratitude. *Ad multos annos*, my dear, most revered Professor !

However, whoever thought to encounter in Ernst Florian a mild and lenient Director was in for a shock very soon after 11<sup>th</sup> January 1965. The dear Professor very soon presented himself as a tough “slave-driver” – a fact which, however, was greatly mitigated by his infectious enthusiasm and the determination to the pioneering work of the first weeks and months. In the next one and a half years we were more than once confronted with the harsh word that one was “free to leave the Academy any time, if ...”

The timetable bore witness of this, and with 48 hours per week it was so full that quite often one had to revert to the night for one’s own studies – in my case, it was a rather noisy pub across the street from the Paulaner Church.

All of us who were part of the team – I think there were more than thirty of us – felt every minute as pioneers and we would have gone through thick and thin with our Director. Whether this was also true for a female student who always showed herself in a snow white gown and insisted on her intention to climb Mount Sinai is beyond my memory.

The ensuing 18 months were filled with a tremendous workload. But who will ever forget the fascinating lecturers, amongst them Henry Kissinger and others ! These all happened thanks to the extensive international network of our Director.

The marking was done without exception – this too followed an American system hitherto unknown to us – by a points system according to which the highest mark of 10/10 was, apparently for educational reasons, awarded only rarely. The only one who from time to time achieved this best performance was our colleague and friend Winfried Lang who has left us much too soon. A mark under 5/10, and even when one dangerously neared the 3/10, immediately resulted in a friendly, but at the same time rather serious blow with a verbal sledge hammer by Ernst Florian.

As we approached the end of our studies, the question of the thesis came into play. I again had the good “fortune” to be given a topic by Professor Verosta which left me totally at a loss, but where he apparently nurtured the hope to thereby avoid more or less serious research of his own: “The Politics of the Holy See and in particular of Pope Pius XII during the era of National Socialism”. On top of it, all new and relevant documents in Italian – not one of my favourite languages.

Well, even this was overcome, and any illusion which we as students of the Diplomatic Academy might have had at the time to be admitted to the Foreign Ministry without having to undergo the Examen Préalable were immediately and brutally dashed.

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I feel that all of us who had the good fortune to study at the Diplomatic Academy have benefited tremendously for our future life, be it later within the Austrian Foreign Service or in another international profession. It was not only a post-graduate training which in Austria is still without competition, but much more a great human enrichment by sharing community life in a rather confined space between Austrians and non-Austrians alike.

What a tremendous joy it is for me personally – my gratitude goes to Ambassador Sucharipa – that I can stand in front of you today after forty years and towards the end of my career (how quickly this end will come is up to the Foreign Minister) to share with you, ladies and gentlemen, one and a half years of a fascinating experience.