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DIPLOMAT AFFAIRS



IN TOUCH WITH THE DUTCH




**KASTEEL DE
WITTENBURG**
AUDACIA AMICITIA FIDES



Diplomat Club Wassenaar

Landgoed De Wittenburg 1, 2244 BV Wassenaar

CONTENTS

WINTER 2014/2015



6 A warm welcome



10 Home away from home



14 American/Dutch art



18 An international mayor



22 Modern diplomacy



24 The Sieboldhuis



28 A Mexican celebration



42 A gift to world culture



44 A night at the opera

- 26 'City Ambassador of The Hague'
- 27 Beer? Czech! Wine? Check!
- 34 Dining with the Tsars
- 36 The American Women's Club
- 38 Dutch folklore or culture clash?
- 40 The Dutch-Ghanaian Connection

- 41 Two different countries
- 48 Fight against cancer
- 50 A Message of Peace
- 52 Algerian National Day
- 56 Thank you for the music
- 58 The next issue



We are excited to present the very first edition of *Diplomat Affairs* – *In touch with the Dutch Magazine*, a brand new publication, which reports about how the Diplomatic and Expat Community is being in touch with the Dutch community, the arts, business and the world of charity. In other words, we will report how they are in touch with the Dutch in a wide variety of ways. Although we will not write about political developments, we will, from time to time, touch on subjects of current interest, such as, in this issue, the on-going debate in The Netherlands about 'Zwarte Piet,' or Black Pete. In addition to covering exciting events, we will regularly have interviews with diplomats, international business people, artists and other interesting people. Art and music are also favorite subjects, as they connect us all no matter what beliefs or origin we have. For this winter issue of *Diplomat Affairs* we are grateful for

the cooperation of a number of Ambassadors, as well as other dignitaries. We hope we will have the continued support of the diplomatic, international and business community, which will provide us with interesting content for future issues. It is also worth mentioning that *Diplomat Affairs* is closely affiliated with 'Diplomat Club Wassenaar,' which is located in the Castle the Wittenburg in Wassenaar and all Ambassadors are honorary members of the Club. We would like them to experience this club as 'a home away from home'. The charity that Diplomat Club Wassenaar supports in collaboration with the TenRande Foundation is 'Cure for Cancer'. We are extremely proud that Dutch Politicians and the Corps Diplomatique support the fight against cancer.

Bonnie Klap, Editorial Director Shida Blik, Publisher

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A warm welcome

The Diplomat Club Wassenaar started a new tradition. BY BONNIE KLAP | PHOTOS ANTON VAN DER RIET



With the magnificent, 115 year old Castle the Wittenburg in Wassenaar as a backdrop, a unique event took place on Sunday, August 31st. Initiated by Mrs. Shida Blik, founder of the Diplomat Club Wassenaar, the very first welcome ceremony of newly arrived Ambassadors took place in an elegant private room of the Castle. This ceremony marked the commencement of a new tradition, which

has now become a recurrent event. Mr. Jan Hoekema, Mayor of Wassenaar, officially welcomed eight newly arrived Ambassadors, who had presented their credentials to His Majesty King Willem-Alexander and presented them with a certificate. The newly appointed Ambassadors were from (in alphabetical order) Bangladesh, Chile, Ghana, Iran, Macedonia, Malta, Spain and Turkey. The

Ambassadors were introduced to the Boardmembers of Kasteel De Wittenburg, as well as distinguished members of the Dutch Business Community, followed by a beautiful concert in the garden of the Castle. The famous Residence Orchestra, which incidentally celebrated its 110th Anniversary, performed compositions by Mozart, Ravel and Bartok, among others.





Castle lord and modern manager

BY BONNIE KLAP | PHOTOS ANTON VAN DER RIET

As I arrive at Castle de Wittenburg in Wassenaar and take in the magnificent facade of the century-old Castle, the well-kept grounds and am welcomed by the impeccably mannered staff, I cannot help but wonder that the person in charge of this impressive venue must be a strict and demanding taskmaster. The contrary will prove true, as I sit down with Mr. Ralf Meppelder, Director of Castle de Wittenburg, home of the Diplomat Club Wassenaar. He turns out to be a remarkably laid back, amicable person, but does possess a sharp eye for detail. I ask him what makes Castle de Wittenburg an attractive venue for expats and Diplomats in particular?

“First of all I would say the exclusivity of the Castle itself, but also the secluded grounds of the venue enables the guests to host an event in privacy. Moreover, the excellent location with its close proximity to The Hague and our sizeable parking area with space for 200 cars are also definitely a plus. Last but not least the whole ambiance with the beautiful garden, which can accommodate up to 400 guests, is an attractive aspect of the Castle. Our chefs prepare the culinary specialities here on the premises, so everything is fresh and homemade. For instance, they smoke the salmon themselves and the weddingcakes are also baked by our chefs right here in our own kitchen. All in all I think these are aspects of our Castle that members of the Diplomat Community will certainly value. Every Ambassador will automatically become an honorary member of



The beautiful Castle de Wittenburg in Wassenaar in all its glory.

the International Business Club of Castle de Wittenburg and this special status enables them to enjoy several attractive benefits. For instance if an Ambassador wishes to host an event here at the Castle, he or she can rent the room for free. There is no charge for the room that will be used during the event. We are also able to arrange everything in terms of entertainment, such as complete light shows, elaborate banquets and perhaps it is also worth mentioning that our chefs are skilled in international cuisine and are able to prepare dishes from a great variety of countries. On that note, naturally it is possible for an Ambassador to host his or her National Day reception here, as several Ambassadors have already done. They can even bring

in their own Chef to prepare the culinary specialities of their country. One of the most famous Chefs of The Netherlands, Robert Kranenburg, is known to have said that the kitchen of Castle de Wittenburg is the most beautiful kitchen in The Netherlands,” according to Ralf Meppelder.

Recently the Castle de Wittenburg has teamed up with the newly founded Diplomat Club Wassenaar. What can he tell us about this collaboration?

“The Diplomat Club Wassenaar invites the Ambassadors to a cultural event in Castle de Wittenburg at least four times a year. This applies not only to the Ambassadors, who reside in Wassenaar, but to all Ambassadors, so the ones who reside in The Hague as well. Also worth



'Castle lord' Ralf Meppelder with Marketing- & PR-manager Lilian Sep.

mentioning are the Welcoming Ceremonies for newly arrived Ambassadors, who have presented their credentials to His Majesty the King. They are welcomed here at the Diplomat Club Wassenaar by Mayor Hoekema of Wassenaar and presented with a Certificate. These welcome ceremonies always take place in combination with one of the Castle Concerts. We organize our Castle concerts eight times a year in addition to

several top level events, such as the Fête de Beaujolais and the Society Lunch. We always strive to include the Diplomatic Community, whenever an event takes place at the Castle that might be of interest to them. That way we can bring them in touch with the Dutch. But back to Diplomat Club Wassenaar. We have planned a number of informal Friday evening events specifically catered to the Heads of Mission, Diplomats and the members of the Business Club to

provide them with a secluded, private ambiance, in which they can communicate in an informal setting.

Following our interview Ralf Meppelder rushes off to his next appointment. Judging from the high pace of his own job, it is probably safe to say he is very much in touch with the Diplomats. This in turn should make this amicable Castle Lord and modern manager the best man to bring the Diplomatic Community in touch with the Dutch.



His Excellency Mr. Timothy Broas, Ambassador of the United States of America.

American art meets Dutch art

A unique exhibition of American-Dutch Art took place at the residence of His Excellency Mr. Timothy Broas, Ambassador of the United States of America, as part of the 'Art in Embassies' Program of the State Department. This program was established in 1963 in collaboration with the Museum of Modern Art and was formalized by President John F. Kennedy. BY BONNIE KLAP | PHOTOS ANTON VAN DER RIET

Surrounded by the most beautiful works of art, Ambassador Broas welcomed his guests and emphasized the very active role that the State Department had played in promoting American Art in Europe

that embodied energy, freedom and dynamism. He was particularly proud of the piece by Willem de Kooning. The Ambassador is an avid story teller and shared a fascinating personal anecdote about the way in which he was able to finally acquire the De Kooning painting. It was a tale of persistence, persuasiveness and luck, but it obviously had been very much worth it. The Ambassador's passion for art was obvious as he mentioned several of the pieces at his residence. Impressive pieces were the objects made

by the Dutch-born American artist, Sarah Couwenberg and which are inspired by the collars of the 17th Century Dutch paintings. The American-Cambodian artist Pakan Penn has a special place in the Ambassador's heart as the two are also friends.

After the Ambassador Mrs. Ellen Susman, Director of the Art in Embassies Program, took the floor and explained how art often is a conversation starter. 'Art as smart power,' according to Mrs.

Susman. She also praised the Ambassador's keen interest in and knowledge of art. "It is unusual for an Ambassador to have much interest in art and it is often passed on to the wives," she laughed. Mrs. Susman then walked the guests along the works of art, sharing some of her extensive knowledge about the pieces. All in all it was an impressive exhibition of both American and Dutch Art, or, as Ambassador Broas eloquently put it: "A transatlantic cross-fertilization between American and Dutch artists."



AMERICAN ART MEETS DUTCH ART





AMERICAN ART MEETS DUTCH ART





AN INTERNATIONAL MAYOR

“I very much agree with the idea to get in touch with the Dutch”

BY BONNIE KLAP | PHOTOS ANTON VAN DER RIET

Mr. Jan Hoekema, Mayor of Wassenaar, the town known for its international image, sits in his spacious office of Townhall de Paauw. The white landmark building, highly visible for the many motorists passing daily on the A44, used to be the summerhome of Prince Frederik and his family in the 19th century. This was long before the property was acquired by the Municipality of Wassenaar in 1925 to use it as its townhall. Today it is the hands-on and energetic

Jan Hoekema, who oversees this small, but cosmopolitan town. I ask him what his vision is for Wassenaar and the international community in particular? How can he bring them in touch with the Dutch? “First of all, I very much agree with the idea to get in touch with the Dutch and Wassenaar is ideally suited to facilitate that process. Twenty to twentyfive percent of our residents in Wassenaar are non-Dutch, which translates into approximately fivethousand people. We have a lot to

offer them: our very green surroundings, as well as proximity to the big cities Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam and even Brussels. We have our famous estates, the dunes, the beach. Moreover we have a lot of culture, such as the International Chamber Music Festival, open-air performances of the English Theatre and a new museum, which is being built here by Joop van Caldenborg, former CEO of Caldic. Furthermore, we are proud to have Royalty here in Wassenaar and we

have thirtyfive Ambassadors who reside here, not to mention the new US Embassy that will move here within the next two years. In addition we offer many sports, such as hockey, tennis and what have you. Many Dutch and non-Dutch children are members of these sports clubs. For instance the son of the Ambassador of Iran likes to play soccer. Then there is quite some horse riding in Wassenaar. I know of several Ambassadors, who ride horses. There are also many

“THERE IS QUITE SOME HORSE RIDING IN WASSENAAR. I KNOW OF SEVERAL AMBASSADORS, WHO RIDE HORSES. THERE ARE ALSO MANY JOGGERS, INCLUDING AMBASSADORS”

joggers, including Ambassadors. I regularly see the Ambassador of Indonesia jogging. On a different note, in these modern times of sustainability, it is also worth mentioning that we have several sustainability initiatives, such as the monthly organic market on the first Saturday of April through October and we have many charging stations for electric cars. Furthermore, I would like to mention the high level and the number of healthcare facilities that we





offer and which are of prime importance to many people. Equally important is the fact that many of these healthcare services are provided in English. Last but not least I would like to underline our excellent education. We have the ASH (American School of The Hague) with twelve-hundred students and hundred different nationalities and also the Indonesian School, as well as the British School in Voorschoten, which is close by. Of course there are excellent Dutch schools as well, such as the Rijnlands Lyceum and the Adelbert College. Sometimes however

expats send their children to a Dutch school. What better way is there to get in touch with the Dutch?" according to Mayor Hoekema.

BICYCLE TOUR

The conversation shifts to the immensely popular yearly outing with the Ambassadors and their families, which has not been initiated by Mayor Hoekema, but has been reinstated by him in 2008, after it was discontinued many years ago. This year the Mayor took the group of Ambassadors on a bicycle tour, but he

strives to do something different every year and it is very much appreciated. "It is fun for them and it is fun for us, as we get to know each other a bit better," the Mayor adds. In addition to the yearly outing, which always takes place in September, Mayor Hoekema also organizes a yearly High Tea in March for the Ambassadors, who live in Wassenaar and the US Ambassador, as the US Embassy will move to Wassenaar within the next two years. At this High Tea the Mayor and his guests discuss issues of current interest. "We discuss practical issues such as

green maintenance, traffic issues, local and national elections. Anything can be discussed and we keep it all in a very discrete, safe environment, so people can speak their minds freely." The annual Ambassadors outing and the High Tea are not the only diplomatic events, in which the Mayor plays a key role. Initiated this year by Mrs. Shida Blik, newly arrived Ambassadors, who have presented their credentials to His Majesty the King, are welcomed at the Diplomat Club Wassenaar at the Castle de Wittenburg and presented with a Certificate by

"I AM VERY HAPPY ABOUT THE WELCOMING CEREMONY. IT WAS WARM AND WELCOMING AND IT WAS HIGHLY APPRECIATED. IN THE END, AMBASSADORS ARE ALSO PEOPLE, AND PEOPLE LIKE TO CONNECT"

Mayor Hoekema. The Mayor concludes by sharing his views on the newly opened Diplomat Club Wassenaar. "I am very happy about the initiative of the welcoming ceremony by Mrs. Shida Blik. It was a warm and welcoming ceremony and it was highly appreciated. In the end, Ambassadors are also people, and people like to connect. In the setting of this club it is easy to connect and to get to know each other better, beyond the short conversations, which usually take place at receptions. I think the Ambassadors really liked it."

“No trade mission is the same”

Simon Smits, Director-General for Foreign Economic Relations, on what The Netherlands has to offer.

BY BONNIE KLAP | PHOTOS ANTON VAN DER RIET

Waiting for Mr. Simon Smits, Director-General for Foreign Economic Relations, I find myself leafing through a booklet with the title *On our way to Modern Diplomacy*, published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Several eye-catching phrases make one thing very clear: modernization is a necessity and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with its Senior Board of Management in particular, is thoroughly aware of that. The booklet is rife with innovative ideas and its forward looking implementations. Just as I am getting most eager to hear Mr. Smits’ vision, he walks into his office and takes a seat on the couch. The stunning oil-painting on the wall behind him, is an heirloom from his grandfather.

You are on the Board of the Castle de Wittenburg in Wassenaar. Can you elaborate?

“I am on the Board of Castle de Wittenburg and this primarily has to do with my present function as Director-General of Foreign Economic Relations, as there is a strong link between the Netherlands Employers Organization, the VNO-NCW, and the Wittenburg. We are in contact on a daily basis. We exchange ideas and we sit on the DTIB, the Dutch Trade and Investment Board, so as to promote Dutch business.”

Mr. Smits has participated in approximately forty trade missions. Can he share an anecdote about any of these missions?

“Maybe it’s no anecdote, but no trade mission is the same. They are all pretty unique. Time and again I am pleasantly surprised by the character and the drive of the Dutch companies that accompany us. I also think the whole Cabinet is very active in travelling abroad. For example, last year the Prime-Minister has visited both China and Indonesia and of course

“OUR KING AND QUEEN ARE REALLY AN ENORMOUS EXTRA ASSET TO US”

Minister Ploumen travels around the world at least three times a year and I myself do trade missions and what is striking, is the level of quality and innovation of the Dutch companies that accompany us. They are extremely competitive and extremely innovative and I think on the so-called top-sectors that we have identified, obviously in close conjunction with Dutch business and Dutch Captains of Industry, it is remarkable that there is this combination of both innovative capacity and international outlook. And that is the

prerequisite for success on a global scale.”

Can you name any other sectors besides agriculture and water technology, in which The Netherlands can excel?

“Certainly, there is Dutch design, which is increasingly becoming a global sector in which we can put emphasis on what The Netherlands has to offer. And logistics is another one, as well as energy, especially renewables, such as wind energy. For example, in the logistics sector there is the Dutch company Strukton which is now involved in building the metro in Saudi Arabia. If you look at infrastructure and logistics, there are Dutch companies, who are very active in Indonesia, where an ambitious program is underway both to prepare Indonesia for climate change and to tackle the challenges of rising sea levels and coastal protection and at the same time talking about urban development, logistics and port development. I think our Dutch companies are now very well introduced in Indonesia, also because of the agreement we have with Indonesia, which was signed by our Prime Minister in November last year.”

The Royal couple travelled on the trade mission to Poland. Does the fact that the King and Queen are included, make the trade mission different from other missions?



“Time and again I am pleasantly surprised by the character and the drive of the Dutch companies that accompany us.”

“Yes, it is different. When the King and Queen make an official visit, they find it very important to highlight the sectors of Dutch industry and what we have to offer and there is certainly a difference in that the King and the Queen, like no other, can open doors and are always received at the very highest level in any country, so that generates extra attention from the political level, from the industrial level, from the press, and that gives the best introduction into a foreign economy that one could wish for. So to answer your question, yes, it certainly does make a difference and I have witnessed this myself. Not only recently in Poland, but also two-and-a-half-years ago, when they were Crown Prince and Princess, on official missions to Vietnam and Brazil. This really is an enormous extra asset to us.”



Simon Smits with Minister Ploumen and Prime Minister Rutte.

Symbol of Japanese-Dutch exchange

BY KRIS SCHIERMEIER | PHOTO ANTON VAN DER RIET

Kris Schiermeier is Director of the SieboldHuis.

Japan Museum SieboldHuis exhibits in a historic Dutch house on Leiden's Rapenburg 19, the most beautiful Japanese collection encompassing both the old and the new: prints, lacquer ware, ceramics, fossils, herbaria, mounted animals, coins, clothing, historic maps and hundreds of other treasures. The collection is composed entirely of artefacts and objects gathered by the Bavarian doctor Philipp Franz von Siebold in Japan between 1823 and 1829.

For the first time in over 25 years an imposing selection of the greatest works of Kawahara Keiga will be exhibited in Japan Museum SieboldHuis. Over 100 of Keiga's best works will be on display in a two-part exhibition incorporating several themes including an impressive panorama of the Bay of Nagasaki, the city and island Deshima, as well as the four seasons, annual festivals and scenes from daily life, artisans and a number of works of the Hokusai Manga.

Part I 28 November to 11 January 2015

Part II 13 January – 22 February 2015

As Director of the Japan Museum SieboldHuis I am very proud of the fact that Emperor Akihito mentioned our museum extensively at the State Banquet in honor of the three-day visit (29-31 oktober 2014) of King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima to Japan: "The Sieboldhuis in The Netherlands, which reopened in 2005 after renovations, plays a major role as a new symbol of Japanese-Dutch exchange. I hope that the peoples of our two countries, by maintaining a mutual interest in one



another, will be able to further build on their historical exchanges and develop new cooperative ties."

I found it a great honor to be able to represent the culture sector besides the economic delegation, in collaboration with the van Gogh Museum Amsterdam. Queen Máxima told me in a personal

conversation that the SieboldHuis was mentioned several times during the talks. In the next issues of Diplomat Affairs I will elaborate on the future exhibitions about the unique kimono of Itchiku Kubota (1917-2003) and the beautiful works of American-Japanese-Dutch artist Shinkichi Tajiri (1923-2009).



Kawahara Keiga, *Visit to a temple in the snow on the first day of the second month.* Painting, 1800-1829, collection Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde.



The SieboldHuis in Leiden.



Philipp Franz Von Siebold (1796-1866)





SPECIAL ADVISOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
ALEXANDER W. BEELAERTS VAN BLOKLAND

‘City Ambassador of The Hague’

A familiar face in Diplomatic circles and well known by the Ambassadors and the International community in The Hague, we ask Mr Alexander Beelaerts van Blokland to introduce himself in a more personal way.

“For more than ten years I am in the Diplomatic and other International circles in and around The Hague, but I am not a diplomat. *Diplomat Affairs* – *In touch with the Dutch Magazine* requested me to share more information about myself, my work and my activities with this newly launched magazine, connected to Diplomat Club Wassenaar.

I am 66 years old (born in 1948), studied law at Leiden University and was during almost thirty years attorney-at-law (barrister) and partner at one of the bigger law firms in The Hague. From 1995 to 1998 I was President of the Bar Association as well. In 2006 I was asked to participate as a Justice (an appeal Judge) in the Court of Appeal in The Hague en that is my work ever since. Since 2011 I am also co-President of the Disciplinary Court, appointed by the minister of Justice.

Former Mayor of The Hague Wim

Deetman appointed in 2004 six people as ‘City Consul of The Hague’ – an honorary (unpaid) function – and I was one of them. In those days a lot of representatives of international organizations and Embassies were not very happy



about living in The Netherlands and/or The Hague and the Municipality wanted us to be ‘the eyes and ears’ of the Municipality in diplomat and other expat circles, to find out what the reason was of this dissatisfaction. In the years afterwards a lot of improvements have been made in the relation between expats and The Hague. The current Mayor Jozias van Aartsen re-appointed only me and gave a new title to the job: ‘Special Advisor International Affairs’. The national newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*

named me in a large article about The Hague City of Diplomacy in November 2013 simply: the city ambassador of The Hague. And – with a big smile – the longest acting ‘Ambassador’ as well... You can find me several times a week at International activities in The Hague, such as readings, concerts, congresses, exhibitions, lunches, receptions and dinners. There I explain to diplomats, international Judges and other expats living in or around The Hague, how the Netherlands is organised and about The Hague. I answer their questions, make contacts for them if required and sometimes solve problems. So, that is what I am doing in the last ten years apart from my daily job. I enjoy this very much, because I like to help people and I like to serve my country and my lovely city, that strives to be a good host for the 30,000 to 40,000 expats here, who work for Embassies and for the many international tribunals and institutions in the International City of Peace and Justice”.

Diplomat Affairs Magazine is looking forward to publish the special reports of activities of Alexander Beelaerts van Blokland in 2015.



Beer? Czech! Wine? Check!

CZECH NATIONAL DAY RECEPTION

The Czech Chamber of Commerce organized a fruitful gathering in the Czech residence.

BY BONNIE KLAIP | PHOTOS ANTON VAN DER RIET

Hosted by His Excellency Mr. Jaroslav Horák, Ambassador of the Czech Republic, a reception was held on the occasion of the Czech National Day for the second time this year. This time it was organized by the Czech Dutch Chamber of Commerce, which serves as the bridge between Czech companies and entrepreneurs in The Netherlands. The Czech Dutch Chamber of Commerce was founded by Katerina Velisková and Vladimira Chýská, who were also present at the reception. Some of the services offered by the Czech Dutch Chamber of Commerce are hosting business, investment and legal seminars, helping its members in finding new business partners and providing the opportunity to network, which is an integral part of doing



business. Parting Ambassador Horák held an interesting, and at times, humorous speech, looking back not only on his country’s fascinating history, but also on his own four years in The Netherlands.

He briefly touched on the succession of events in his country after the 300 years of Habsburg domination. Ambassador Horák also shared a few personal facts about himself, such as his love for poetry and music, adding that he had written his last poem as long as ten years ago. The reception was concluded by a wine tasting of Czech wine. The Ambassador told his guests, that, although the Czech Republic is better known for its beer, its wine is definitely also worth tasting. The wine company Moravino was present to serve the guests, who wanted to sample the various Czech wines. Ambassador Horák, who is a lawyer by training, will return to Prague in December, which he is very much looking forward to, as he will finally be reunited with his family.



A Mexican Celebration

A large number of members of the Diplomatic Corps and the Dutch business community had come to Wassenaar to celebrate the 204th Anniversary of the Independence of Mexico.

BY BONNIE KLAP | PHOTOS ANTON VAN DER RIET

His Excellency Mr. Eduardo Ibarrola and the charming Mrs. Fabiola Soto hosted a reception at the residence of the Embassy of Mexico in Wassenaar to celebrate the 204th Anniversary of the Independence of Mexico. On this gorgeous summer evening most guests preferred to mingle outside in the large garden, while sipping margaritas and listening to live Mexican music. The atmosphere was typically Mexican: friendly, lively and festive. Subsequently Mrs. Soto graciously invited the guests inside to enjoy a lavish buffet with Mexican specialties. The cheerful Mexican music, great food and margaritas made this a memorable Independence Day celebration.



A MEXICAN CELEBRATION



A MEXICAN CELEBRATION





Dining with the Tsars: fragile beauty from the Hermitage

BY DRS. EVA WUESTEN MENNES | PHOTOS ANTON VAN DER RIET

The Hermitage Amsterdam's fifth anniversary exhibition *Dining with the Tsars. Fragile beauty from the Hermitage* opened on 6 September 2014. Eight magnificent porcelain and creamware services from the collection of the Hermitage in St. Petersburg is exhibited in a setting that conveys what the balls and banquets of the Tsar's court were like. Visitors will imagine they are guests, in possession of a coveted imperial invitation, climbing the steps of the Winter Palace, reviewing the rules of etiquette and preparing for a festive occasion. Finally they enter the main hall where the fine porcelain dinnerware is set out in a festive display. The exquisite porcelain services, comprising no less than 1,034 pieces, exhibited on authentically laid tables with decorative centrepieces, reveal the enchanting grandeur of the Tsars'

banquets. The exhibition tells the story of the lavish ball and banqueting culture that reached its zenith under the reign (1762–1796) of Catherine the Great, Queen of Feasts, when hundreds of dishes would be served at a single banquet and thousands of guests attended the balls. The last tsar, Nicholas II (ruled 1894–1917) and his wife Alexandra, who organised the largest balls but were only present for as briefly as possible. With their abdication, the ball and banqueting customs that had once captured the imagination of all the courts of Europe came to an end. The finest pieces are from the dinnerware collections of Catherine the Great, such as the Green Frog Service (Wedgwood, England), the Cameo Service (Sèvres, Paris, exhibited for the first time with silver gilt flatware), which at one time comprised nearly a thousand pieces, and

the Berlin Dessert Service (Königliche Porzellan-Manufaktur Berlin). The services of later Tsars were no less impressive and significant for their connection to European history. The services are exhibited in accordance with the rules of etiquette, augmented with ornate centre-

NEVER BEFORE HAVE SO
MANY PORCELAIN
DINNERWARE PIECES
FROM THE HERMITAGE
BEEN EXHIBITED IN THE
NETHERLANDS

pieces, gold-rimmed crystal glassware, candelabras, vases, detailed silverwork and wall decorations. The exhibition features a wide range of pieces, from ice buckets for liqueur bottles and ice-cream coupes to salt and pepper sets and table figurines.



Paul Mosterd, Director of The Hermitage and Eva Wusten Mennes.

The exhibition also offers a culinary view of imperial dining customs, in a culture where banquets of 300 dishes were no exception. Dessert was the highpoint of the meal and the ideal course for showing off the host's wealth and refined taste. Richly decorated delicacies were served with exceptional inventiveness. There is attention for iconography and the diplomatic function of giving services as gifts and hosting state dinners in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And the balls and performances, gossip and scandal also feature in the exhibition. Evidence of the excesses of the imperial court abounds. Particularly revealing are the quotes drawn from the memoirs of Marie Cornélie van Wassenae Obdam. She visited the Winter Palace in 1824 as a member of the retinue of Anna

Paulowna and the later King Willem II. The surprising final exhibit is the service given to Stalin by the Hungarian people in 1949, which has never been used or exhibited before. It illustrates the diplomatic role that dinnerware also played in the twentieth century. Never before have so many porcelain dinnerware pieces from the Hermitage been exhibited in the Netherlands. The rich collection of European porcelain from the Hermitage in St. Petersburg comprises over 15,000 items, purchased by or given as gifts to the Tsars of Russia between 1745 and the years prior to the First World War. The services, which include many unique pieces, were produced by leading porcelain manufacturers such as Meissen, Sèvres, Gardner and Wedgwood and decorated to the highest artistic standard.



The American Women's Club

In touch with The Dutch for almost 85 years.

BY JAN DE VRIES | PHOTO'S CAMIEL GALJEE

Founded in 1930 to support Americans living in the Netherlands, the *American Women's Club of The Hague* quickly became recognized in the local community for its generosity. Special fundraising drives, charity galas and bazaars are deeply ingrained in the history of the all-volunteer organization as it approaches its 85th birthday in the coming year.

Fast-forward to the 21st century, and the AWC donated over one million euros through the iconic Pink Galas from 2002 to 2008 to advance breast cancer awareness and research in the Netherlands.

Despite the financial crisis of recent years, the AWC has continued its tradition by raising 159,000 euros on behalf of local special children in need, through its Hearts and Minds Galas held in 2011, 2012 and 2014. The most recent, on June 14th, once again, received marvelous support from the local and international community to benefit *Lighthouse Special Education, Hulphond Nederland* and *Laat Ze Maar Lachen*.

Queen Wilhelmina opened the AWC's first Bazaar in 1932, organized to support a local hospital. Eighty-three years later, the 2014 Holiday Bazaar on November 29th and 30th at the Carlton Ambassador enable the AWC to continue working with the community, for the good of the community.



Dutch folklore or culture clash?

The Dutch children's feast of 'Sinterklaas' is currently subject to a heated debate.

BY BONNIE KLAP

Truth be told, each country has its own peculiar customs. For example Halloween, which is hugely popular in the US, has its strange customs, such as placing fake skeletons and lit pumpkins in peoples front yards. Strange as that may seem, in my opinion placing a shoe, filled with a carrot next to a bowl of water and some hay (for the horse) near the fireplace at night, in eager anticipation of a gift the next morning, seems a lot odder! This brings me to the very popular Dutch tradition of the annual Sinterklaas-festivities. You might wrongly assume that Sinterklaas is primarily a children's feast, but make no mistake about it, a surprisingly large number of Dutch people – children and adults alike – enjoy celebrating Sinterklaas.

TRADITION

Obviously these days Sinterklaas is merely a man dressed up in a Sinterklaas-costume, but this wasn't always the case. Hundreds of years ago Sinterklaas, or Saint Nicholas, as he was actually called, really did exist. He was a Greek bishop in the town of Myra, which is located in present-day

Turkey. The Saint-Nicholas feast used to be an occasion to help the poor and less-privileged by putting money in their shoes, a custom that has over time evolved into putting presents in the shoes of children. Sinterklaas traditionally rides a white horse, carries a ceremonial gold shepherd's staff and is accompanied by one or more 'Zwarte Pieten,' Black Petes. The Black Petes, who are dressed up in colorful costumes resembling 17th-century pages, provide a comical note and throw hands full of gingernuts to the children. Every year Sinterklaas travels by 'steamship' (supposedly loaded with tons of children's gifts) to Holland. The tradition of travelling by ship can be traced back to the days that Saint Nicholas was a patron of the sailors.

DEBATE

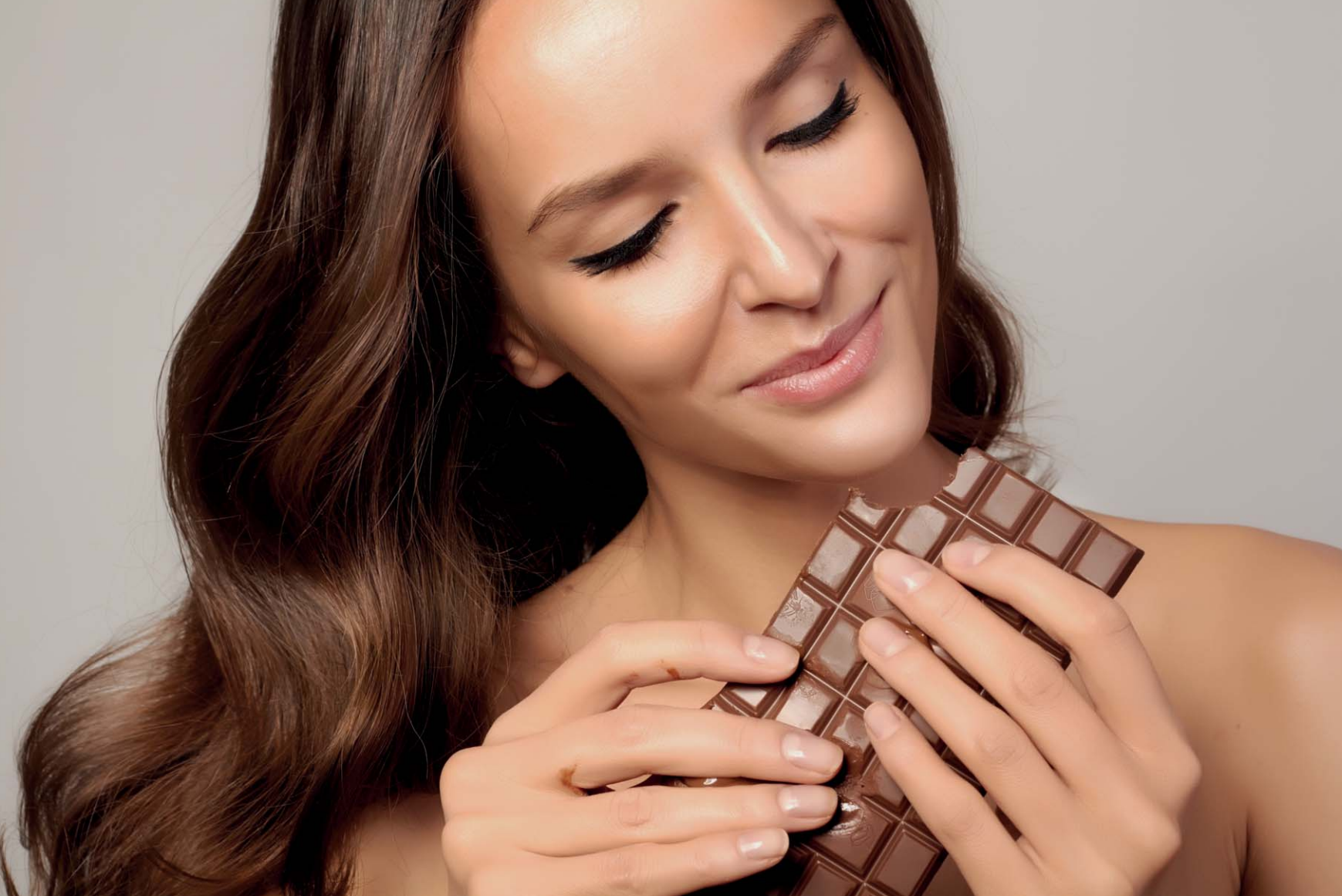
Unfortunately, these days a darker side of this seemingly pristine children's feast has emerged. Calls for the abolishment of Black Pete are becoming louder, as his role is viewed by some as a throwback to slavery. The issue has initiated a heated debate between passionate opponents and no less passionate proponents of this

thorny issue. The debate has spilled over into the press, television and social media, with Facebook and Twitter exploding with opinions. Meanwhile, in a well-intentioned attempt to appease the opponents of Black Pete, several food and department stores have started phasing out Black Pete, only to find themselves in a cross fire of furious proponents, who demand the Sinterklaas tradition should not change, as it is, in their opinion, exactly that: a centuries-old tradition and an integral part of Dutch culture and tradition.

THE MAGIC OF IT ALL

The vocal opinions on both sides have not abated. Although arguments can be made for both sides, as in any issue, where emotions run high, it will be extremely difficult to find some form of compromise. It seems as if the 'Poldermodel,' which The Netherlands is so well-known and proud of, has lost its magic. Let's hope this magic can be rekindled well before December, so the celebration of Sinterklaas can once again return to what it was: a happy children's feast for all.





The Dutch-Ghanaian Connection

BY BONNIE KLAP

During the festive Holiday Season no other commodity takes center stage the way chocolate does. Celebrating the various festivities in December would be almost unthinkable without chocolate in many countries the world over and The Netherlands is no exception. Be it the ‘Sinterklaas’ or Christmas celebrations, chocolate invariably comes into play. Everybody is familiar with the popular and typically Dutch chocolate alphabet letters, which usually are presented as gifts during Sinterklaas. Christmas is no different, with chocolate Santa Clauses in abundance. But have you ever wondered where all this chocolate comes from? Although Ivory Coast is the world’s largest producer of cocoa beans, and Ghana comes in at number two, Ghana is the number one exporter to The

Netherlands. It also exports huge quantities to countries such as the USA, Canada, the EU (UK, Germany, Belgium, France, Spain) and many others. Cocoa from Ghana is considered to be among the

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finest in the world. Most of Ghana’s cocoa production takes place on small farms of four to five acres. The first documented shipment of cocoa from Ghana was made in 1893, and by 1911 Ghana was the leading cocoa exporter in the world,

supplying the ever-growing European chocolate market. Nowadays there are well over 700,000 cocoa farmers in Ghana and cocoa is its chief agricultural export product and the country’s main cash crop, exporting a staggering 500,000 tons to The Netherlands annually. Royal Verkade, the famous Dutch candy manufacturer (which was founded 128 years ago in 1886), uses chocolate from Ghana for its many products. Verkade was also the very first Dutch candy manufacturer to offer a full range of chocolate products made with ‘fair trade’ chocolate. Fair Trade makes cocoa farming in Ghana more sustainable by guaranteeing minimum prices and providing a premium to invest in local communities, so farmers can provide a better future for themselves and their families.

BANGLADESH AND THE NETHERLANDS SHARE A COMMON FOE

Two different countries and their remarkable resemblance

BY BONNIE KLAP | PHOTOS ANTON VAN DER RIET

One of the main objectives of *Diplomat Affairs Magazine* is to determine how you are in touch with the Dutch. What better way to do this than to seek similarities between two countries? It becomes even more interesting if these similarities exist between countries, where one would not expect them. Bangladesh, after all, is an upcoming and rapidly developing country at a distance of 7,632 kilometers, or 4,742 miles, from The Netherlands. Yet, the two countries share a formidable foe. Bangladesh and



The Netherlands are both Delta countries fighting two forces of nature: Water and wind. In the words of His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed Belal, Ambassador of Bangladesh, the two countries are cousins. Ambassador Belal, who was accredited as Ambassador of Bangladesh to The Netherlands in March, 2014, has often visited coastal areas here, sometimes feeling sadness and wishing his own people could feel as safe and secure as the people in The Netherlands do. He is aware of the high level of innovative technology in the field of coastal protection in The Netherlands and is eager for his country to duplicate this knowledge. Although the complexity of the problems in Bangladesh, such as floods, cyclones, droughts and population pressure, should not be underestimated, definite strides in the right direction have been made. Already



His Excellency Sheikh
Mohammed Belal,
Ambassador of
Bangladesh.

the flooding has been reduced somewhat. The Government of Bangladesh can be praised to have adopted a long term vision in order to deal with these problems. After the tragic disaster in The Netherlands in 1953, when 1,830 people and tens of thousands of animals died during severe flooding, The Netherlands has worked hard at acquiring the highest level of technological knowledge in the field of coastal protection, which has resulted in the building of the famous Delta works in Zeeland. Now this

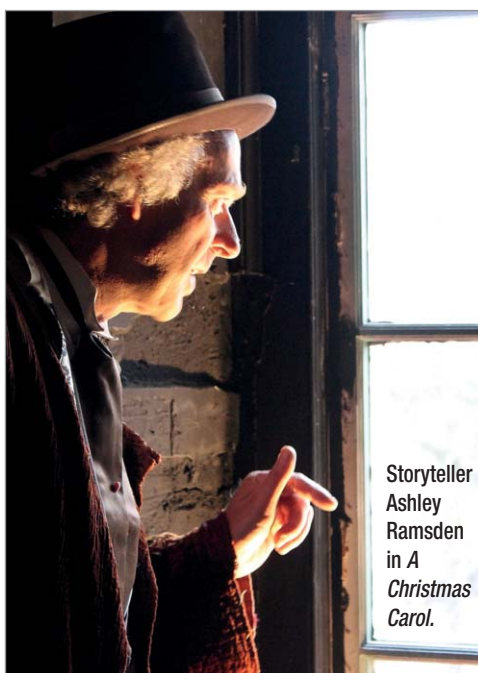
knowledge will be shared with Bangladesh, as on March 12th of this year, His Excellency Mr. Gerben de Jong, Ambassador of The Netherlands to Bangladesh, and Mr. Jaap de Heer, team leader of the Bangladesh Deltaplan, signed the contract on the formulation of the Bangladesh Deltaplan at the Dutch Embassy in Dhaka. This crucial and ambitious plan is expected to be completed within five years and will ensure an immense improvement in the safety of the people living in Bangladesh.

The English Theatre: a gift to world culture

Sir Geoffrey Adams is patron of The English Theatre. “It’s a privilege to support it.”

BY BONNIE Klap | PHOTOS ANTON VAN DER RIET

Given the ever growing size of the international community in The Netherlands and the number of English speaking people in particular, it must have come as no surprise that, after returning from a six-year stay in the UK, Dutch lawyer and social worker Elske van Holk, having worked in the London theatre world, made the bold decision to found STET (Stichting The English Theatre) in 2006. Its very first production, *Summit Conference*, in June of that year, followed by the by now highly popular open air Shakespeare performances, marked the beginning of a successful venture. STET’s programme now averages eight to ten performances a year, with the open-air performances of the British theatre company Illyria in the summer and *A Christmas Carol* in the winter as its regulars. STET’s Board consists of members of the Dutch, as well as the international community. This whole exciting venture is run by a small staff and a group of devoted volunteers, who assist in promoting and carrying out the act. Last but not least, STET’s patron is His Excellency Sir Geoffrey Adams, British Ambassador to The Netherlands,, who is kind enough to make some time in his busy schedule to welcome us in his stunning, newly renovated residence and answer some questions, as well as pose for a few pictures, together with his wife Lady



NOEMY NAGY

“MY HOPE IS THAT MANY PEOPLE WILL COME OVER TO BRITAIN – THE HOME OF ENGLISH THEATRE – AND FALL IN LOVE WITH IT”

Adams, STET- founder Elske van Holk and the very sweet Black labrador Rosy.

You are Patron of the English Theatre in The Netherlands. As an Ambassador you obviously have a very busy schedule.

What makes the English Theatre worth your time?

“I regard the English Theatre as a precious part of the culture we share across the world. It’s a privilege to be able to support it in any way I can.”

In your opinion what can be done to make the English Theatre even more well known in The Netherlands?

“I find that many people here in The Netherlands experience the English Theatre for the first time when they visit the United Kingdom. They fall in love with it, and want to follow their passion when they get home. So my hope is that many more people will come over to Britain – the home of English theatre – and fall in love with it themselves.”

After well over a century Dickens’ Christmas Carol is still hugely popular. Can you explain this?

“The publication of Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* coincided exactly with the beginnings in Britain of what we now think of as our ‘Christmas traditions’ – Christmas trees, Christmas cards, Christmas presents, and so on. As a story of redemption and of hope, *Christmas Carol* fitted right in with this new, optimistic kind of celebration – and it’s remained there ever since.”



From left to right STET- founder Elske van Holk, Sir Geoffrey Adams, Lady Adams, and the sweet black labrador Rosy.



‘A STUNNING PERFORMANCE OF THE MASTERPIECES OF
WORLD CLASSICAL AND NATIONAL KAZAKH MUSIC ARTISTS’

A night at the Astana Opera

BY SHIDA BLIEK | PHOTOS ANTON VAN DER RIET

The final concert of the first world tour of the theater ‘Astana Opera’ was performed on November 5 in Rotterdam at De Doelen concert hall. During a press conference held on the eve of the event the video ‘Astana Opera’ was presented to the Dutch public. The Director of Astana Opera, Tolegen Mukhamedzhanov, informed journalists and representatives of the Dutch cultural community about the activities of the theater. At the opening ceremony of the concert, welcoming remarks were made by Her

Excellency, Ms. Mainura Murzamadiyeva, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Mr. Adriaan Visser, Vice-Mayor of Rotterdam, Mr. Sang Hyun Song, President of the International Criminal Court and Mr. Tolegen Mukhamedzhanov, Director of Astana Opera. The Symphony Orchestra opened the concert with Kazakh kui ‘Kudasha Duman’ by Yerkegali Rakhmadiyev. Next was the scene of the opera ‘Abai’ by Ahmet Zhubanov and Latif Hamidi,

which was presented by Dina Khamzina and Baigali Mombekov, the leading soloists of the Astana Opera. The Dutch public greatly appreciated the premiere performance of the Triumph scene from the opera ‘Aida’ by Giuseppe Verdi. In the second part the guests enjoyed the performance of Kazakh masters of the scene from the opera ‘Birzhan Sara’ by Mukan Tolebayev, Kui ‘Tolgau’ by Tolegen Mukhamedzhanov, the Coronation scene from the opera ‘Boris Godunov’ by Modest Mussorgsky, the Azucena monologue from the opera ‘Il Trovatore’,



Juliet's Waltz from the opera 'Romeo and Juliette' and the scene of the Polovtsian Camp from the opera 'Prince Igor'. After the concert, the audience rewarded the Kazakh artists with a thunderous applause. In the lobby of the concert hall the guests enthusiastically shared their impressions. Among the guests at the party were the heads of international organizations, members of the Parliament of the

Kingdom of the Netherlands, heads of diplomatic missions, the management of large Dutch companies and banks, intellectuals of the Benelux countries, a large Kazakh diaspora and students studying in the Netherlands. As the Secretary General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, OPCW, Ahmet Uzümcü, said "today we have witnessed a stunning performance of the masterpie-

ces of world classical and national Kazakh music artists. Astana Opera gave us an unforgettable evening of high art." According to Ingrid de Caluwe, Member of the Parliament of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, "tonight we have seen how talented the people of Kazakhstan are and it is a great honour for me to see and hear such a high mastery of different musical genres."

DUTCH POLITICIAN AND THE CORPS DIPLOMATIQUE SUPPORT
THE FIGHT AGAINST CANCER

‘CURE FOR CANCER’

BY SHIDA BLIEK | PHOTOS ANTON VAN DER RIET

A special gathering took place in the private quarters of the Royal family at the stunning Palace Soestdijk. High ranked Dutch politician, Ambassadors and Dutch businessmen had one common aim: to support the fight against humanity’s enemy number one: cancer.

An initiative of State of Secretary for Security and Justice Fred Teeven to support a fundraising for ‘Cure for Cancer’ was joined by TenRande Foundation. He wanted to give a signal that also politicians care and arranged this special event. TenRande Foundation supports a special division of research for kidney and prostate cancer.

Two medical researchers are especially designated to get an accurate overview of these two forms of cancer guided by Prof. Jean de La Rosette, Dick Cohen, Board Member of the ‘Cure for Cancer’ Foundation and sponsor Age Vermeer, Director of Dura Vermeer.

A special tour was organized through the rich history of the palace and its former inhabitants, the State Apartments, which are still largely in original condition, and some private rooms of the late Queen Juliana and her husband, although already stripped of virtually all-private property. Since 1674 many residents have added to, and refurbished the Palace. It started out as a hunting lodge, but in time it was also used as an Inn for French troops, during the French invasion, and a country house. Well known inhabitants have been



Governor William III who later became King William I of England, King Louis Bonaparte, Princes Anna Pavlovna, who with great taste and style turned the hunting lodge into a small copy of Pavlovsk Palace, Sint Petersburg, Queen Emma and Wilhelmina. After the death of Princes Juliana in 2004, the palace was left empty for a year until it was opened to the public in 2006, handling the decision of future use. Many thanks to: the Ministry of

Security and Justice, Ms Jette Neeteson, Ms Marian Hahn. Soestdijk Palace, Mr. Alex Vermeulen, Mr. Jan Altenburg, Ms. Paula van Dijk. His Excellency’s: Mr. Rajesh Prasad, Mr. Fernando Arias and Mrs. Patricia van Oordt de Arias. Mr. Joe Aidoo, Mr. Haim Divon and Mrs. Linda Divon for there support at ‘Cure for Cancer Gala Noordwijk. Mr. Peter Goedvolk, President Director of AEG Invest and Mr. Peter Blik, Chairman of TenRande Foundation.





LETTERS OF A SOLDIER FROM THE FIRST WORLD WAR

A Message of Peace

The Alliance Française de La Haye presents in collaboration with the Carnegie Foundation and the Peace Palace Library, an exhibition of handwritten letters, photographs and memorabilia of the soldier Reymond Molle who died in combat in the French Vosges on April 17, 1915 during the First World War.

BY MARTIN BEYER

With the ‘Letters of a Soldier from the First World War’ the Alliance Française wants to remember the life of the French soldier Reymond Molle. He was a soldier amongst others, who died during the first year of what France would later name ‘The Big War’. Today, no one from

this family is still alive. Reymond Molle represents perfectly the destiny of the ‘unknown soldier’, killed at the battle front, too early, too young, and then forgotten. This correspondence of some one hundred letters which the soldier had sent to his wife who stored them away carefully at

Les Bergerons, an old small farm in the department Ardèche in France, does not contain one single word of violence, nor hate, nor fatalism. On the contrary: between the lines of the day-to-day reports of the soldier’s existence in the camp and the advice that he gave to his wife of how to



French Ambassador Mr. Laurent Pic.



Martin Beyer, Director Alliance Française.



Jenny Tutein Nolthenius and husband.



Richard Schreurs, Director Alliance Française.



Steven van Hoogstraten,
Director Vredespaleis

run the farm, the reader will discover words of hope, peace and dignity. Published on lettresdunsoldaten.wordpress.com 100 years later, day for day, after the original manuscripts were written, the letters of Reymond Molle show the high degree of humanity embodied by just a simple soldier. The exhibition of the manuscripts, photos and souvenirs is used as an accompaniment to the digital publication and illustrates the historical context of the beginning of the First World War.

Just one year after the inauguration of the Peace Palace in The Hague in 1913, the First World War started. How stupid. How sad. What a waste. With the Carnegie Foundation, the Alliance Française thus wishes to honour the ordinary, unknown, almost forgotten and universal soldiers. They were the first ones, at the front, and they paid the highest price – with their life. They all had a name: case in point – Reymond Molle. The Alliance Française thanks the owner of the letters and today’ landlord of Les Bergerons : respectively the sisters Julie & Jenny Tutein Nolthenius, as well as the translators of the project Ilda & Martijn Giebel (NL), Eva Hütte (DE), Nicole Pierre (EN) and Clémence François (FR), Malik and several volunteers. This project has been made possible thanks to the Carnegie Foundation – Peace Palace Library, the Foundation

Alliance Française – Paris, the French Embassy to the Netherlands, the Institut Français in Amsterdam, LEntl, the Reclamewinkel Den Haag and TV5 Monde. A special thank you goes to the French Ambassador Mr. Laurent Pic for his support at the opening on the 14th of November at the Peace Palace and to the German Ambassador Mr. Franz Josep Kremp for his contribution for the film projection of ‘Merry Christmas/Joyeux Noël’ on the 18th of November. The Alliance Française then also contributes to the classical peace concert on December 4th at the Kloosterkerk on Lange Voorhout with the Orchestra for Peace including musicians from Jewish, Muslim and Christian origins. Reservation can be made through the website of the Peace Palace.



The Peace Palace in The Hague.



Algerian National Day Celebration

BY BONNIE KLAP | PHOTOS ANTON VAN DER RIET

Her Excellency Ms. Nassima Baghli, Ambassador of Algeria, hosted a reception to celebrate the National Day of Algeria. Standing between the flags of Algeria and The Netherlands, the Ambassador greeted the hundreds of guests, who had come to congratulate her on this occasion. The impressive and hardworking Ambassador Baghli is known to always make time to attend most National Day receptions of her fellow Ambassadors, despite her busy schedule. She also made time to answer a few questions.

You have been in The Netherlands for almost five years now. What is your impression of The Netherlands in general?
 “I am really happy to be in The Netherlands. Because of the combination of bilateral and multilateral issues, The

Hague is a very good place to work in. The Hague is indeed home to many international organizations, which give the city a special touch. For a diplomat, being posted in The Hague really brings an added value to his/her career. The diplomatic circle is very active. I also like the mindset of the Dutch people very much. They are very energetic and pragmatic. They are always striving to adapt to new realities and to experience new things. My stay in The Netherlands is being very fruitful. I discovered a country, which has a lot of assets and a wonderful capacity of innovation.”

Algeria is an important gas producing country. Can you give an example of the cooperation between Algeria and The Netherlands?
 “Algeria is indeed an important gas and

oil producing country. We are a supplier to The Netherlands. The company Shell is bringing a precious contribution to the exploration of oil and gas in Algeria. For its part, Algeria imports a lot of agricultural products from The Netherlands. We also import machineries for industry and agriculture. We also have a very good cooperation in the field of water management. A pilot project in the south of Algeria on the reuse of water for irrigation has just been finalized. I am very happy to witness that the Algerian and the Dutch companies are very eager to work together. In Algeria people appreciate the Dutch know how and products very much. The Netherlands is the sixth client of Algeria and its fourteenth supplier. So, as you can see, the economic ties between the two countries are very good and diverse.”





H.E. DR. VIRACHAI PLASAI, AMBASSADOR OF THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND TO THE NETHERLANDS, AND HIS PASSION FOR MUSIC

Thank you for the music

BY SHIDA BLIEK | PHOTO ANTON VAN DER RIET

Just rushed back from New York and despite his very tight schedule, H.E. Dr. Virachai Plasai made a very calm and relaxed impression as we had a pleasant conversation about one of his passions, music.

I had the pleasure to get to know him better especially because he was the first Ambassador who supported the Foundation of Diplomat Club Wassenaar and hosted cultural events at which music and the food of his country were highlighted. We got acquainted with his excellent talent as a musician. He was also the first to inspire Ambassadors to play music publicly. H.E. Mr. James Lambert Ambassador of Canada, also a very talented guitar player, followed his example and he even inspired former Ambassador of France H.E. Mr. Pierre Ménat to sing Karaoke.

Do you have professional music training?
“During my childhood, I had violin and piano lessons but the passion for playing the guitar came when I went to study law in Tours, France. I was blown away the first time I heard the song *It don't come easy* by Ringo Star. That was a wonderful inspiration’. Ambassador Virachai guides us to a special room at the Royal Thai embassy in The Hague. A room full of traditional music instruments and I was invited to take a closer look at some special instruments, graciously donated



HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn

by HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. He presented some instruments; one of them is called ‘Ja Ke’, a three-stringed musical instrument that looks like ‘the crocodile’, which Mrs. Elizabeth Plasai loves to play. Another instrument that Ambassador Virachai presented as his favorite one is a pair of ‘Kong Kaek’, literally, the Indian drums. Spontaneously the Ambassador took his shoes off and sat down on the floor to play the drums, meanwhile explaining the difference in sound between the female and male drum.

I thank Ambassador Virachai for this unique moment that *Diplomat Affairs – in touch with the Dutch Magazine* could witness. I also thank him for the music contribution, a blues band that he will be in charge of, at the next ‘Cure for cancer’ event, organized by TenRande Foundation on the 30th of November. His support for ‘Cure for Cancer’ is highly appreciated by the Dutch society and we are very proud that he is an honorary member of Diplomat Club Wassenaar.



IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF DIPLOMAT AFFAIRS

IN TOUCH WITH THE DUTCH



Interview with H.E. Karim Ben Bécher,
Ambassador of Tunisia to The Netherlands
and his spouse Rim.



Kris Schiermeier from
the SieboldHuis in
Leiden will elaborate
on the future
exhibitions about the
unique kimono of
Itchiku Kubota
(1917-2003).

Brigitte Spiegel
is an attorney-at-
law in The
Netherlands and
France. She will
write about
international
negotiations.



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