

Vexillology in The Netherlands

Thijs van Leeuwen

Mister Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends!

I'm the former president of the Netherlands Flag Association.

In the excellent exhibition here, "Farben der Geschichte - Fahnen und Flaggen" is a painting of Mr. Abraham Store about the sea battle between the Spanish and the Dutch fleets in the 80 years war in the 16th century. And the Zuidersea, where the battle was fought, is exactly the place where Claas Sierksma, who died last year, started in 1965 the first conference of the FIAV. I am glad that still two people are here, who attended that meeting - Whitney Smith and Dr. Rabbow. Ten years later the 6th FIAV Congress was also held even on a ship in the Zuidersea. I am telling you this because the birth of the Netherland Flag Association was in Muiderberg. As you know, the Netherlands Flag Association is the oldest Flag Society in the world. The 22nd FIAV-Congress here in Berlin is held in a museum. Museums and flags are a very good combination. Since the early nineties this association is organising their annual meetings in museums. So we had meetings in the Maritime Museums in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, where replicas of the historical vessels, the ships of the Dutch-Indian Company can be seen. In the Museum of the Unions and of Sports or in the Royal Army Museum in Delft and last but not least, something in German history, in the Castle of Doorn, the last residence of the German Emperor are a lot of flags of the German Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia. I also have to mention that we are cooperating with the Association of the Dutch Textile Conservators. So museums and flags are a very good combination. The Dutch Flag Association is very proud of the initiative for the Flag Museum in Rotterdam, one of the biggest harbours in the world. I am very happy that this last month the Netherlands Flags



Association has become the Society of the Friends of the Flags Museum of the Netherlands in the Port of Rotterdam, the city where the great medieval humanist and philosopher Erasmus was born. The cooperation between the Erasmus-University and the University of Rotterdam is one of our goals. We are doing a lot of things with primary and secondary schools in Rotterdam and we hope to extend this to all over the Netherlands. Therefore it is my pleasure to give the fore now to Mr. Tom Bokhout, the chairman of the Board of the Flag Museum in Rotterdam.

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Tom Bokhout

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Following the presentation of Mr. Thijs van Leeuwen, I am very pleased to be able to inform you about the latest developments of the Dutch Museum's activities in the Netherlands.



My name is Tom Bokhout and I am Chairman of the International Flag Parade in Rotterdam and of the



Netherlands Flag Museum Foundation. In June 1997 we started to set up a Flag Museum in Rotterdam. Up till now this has been an open air museum in the form of the largest International Flag Parade in the world. All flag masts have a top illumination; that's the reason why it is permitted to show these flags day and night. 230 masts permanently show 160 international flags representing the Dutch diverse population, together with 70 flags of the museums' sponsors. Our international Flag Parade is located very close to the waterfront in the centre of Rotterdam.



For our sponsors we regularly have network-meetings, so that the fund raisers can meet each other and make business contacts amongst them. Apart from this, we are organizing open air expositions on this flag parade, such as an environmental exposition on specially designed flags which we recently held.

On 3rd July of this year 100 Ambassadors and Consuls were guests in the port of Rotterdam and all of them raised their flags at one and the same moment. It was an enormous happening to celebrate our 10 years' anniversary in such a way.

The Foundation's objective is also to establish an information, education and documentation centre on flags together with a small museum. Having begun as an International Flag Parade, we are now very busy to realize our next goal, a small know-how centre on flags. For this

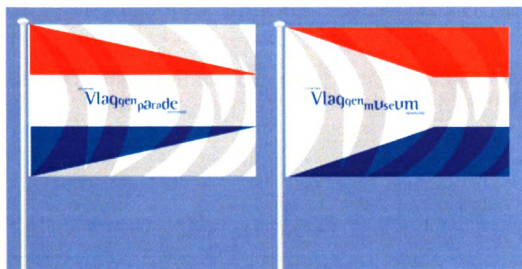


reason we recently restructured our organisation in two entities. The first one for the museum activities, namely the Netherlands Flag Museum Foundation and the second one for the Rotterdam Flag Parade Foundation.

Our latest news is to mention that our museum activities might be started in a very historical part of Rotterdam. We have been allocated part of “Het Zakkendragers-huisje” in Rotterdam, Delfshaven.



From Delfshaven the Pilgrimfathers crossed the ocean to the United States of America. The disadvantage however is that it is in the western part of Rotterdam and not nearby the Flagparade. We have an other choice for the location of a museum, which has an advantage that it is closer to the Flag Parade. Both options are very interesting, but we believe that Delfshaven is the better choice for our museum. We will keep you informed about our decisions. Anyhow, to be optimistic, we believe we will have an own location by the end of this year or at the latest during the first half of next year.



A third, but very important development which I would like to bring to your attention is that the Nederlandse Vereniging voor Vlaggenkunde - the Dutch Association for

Flags - has recently merged with the Netherlands Flag Museum Foundation. Mr. Thijs van Leeuwen has already told you so. The Dutch

Association of Flags, the world's oldest association of vexillology is continuously seeking to increase their know-how with regard to the world's flags, banners and pennants, past and present. The Association considers flags to be an expression of culture and a key source in the study of history, art, geography and political science.

The Dutch Association of Flags was founded in 1966, so it has been there for more than 40 years. We are sure a close relationship will grow between the Dutch Association of Flags and the Netherlands Flag Museum Foundation in the very



near future. The secretariat will be situated in the new museum at Rotterdam and the periodical Flag magazine *Vexilla Nostra* will be made into one with the *Vlaggenlijn*, a periodical magazine of the Rotterdam Flag Parade Foundation. This cooperation reassures all flag experts in the Netherlands, and especially in the field of vexillology that no expertise will get lost and that important documentation and of course flags are preserved in the new museum at Rotterdam.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for your attention.

Chairman of the International Flag Parade / Rotterdam and of the Netherlands Flag Museum Foundation

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