

Interview with Albert Breuer: the installation of the equipment and the implementation of the protocol of the signing ceremony (Brussels, 28 February 2007)

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[Étienne Deschamps] How many days, more or less, before the signing did you arrive in Rome with the documents in this railway wagon?

[Albert Breuer] A few days, but if I am to be more precise, perhaps two or three days. I cannot be exact, because we were in a hurry, for the printing of all these documents still had to be completed; so four days rather than three. Everything was handled by a removal firm that carried it all to the Campidoglio, to a fantastic hall hung with paintings by Rubens — paintings of inestimable value — and they put the lot down there, and our problem was to find out: can we Roneo here? Because at that time a Roneo was a machine that still squirted black ink.

[Étienne Deschamps] And how many people, or how many officials, were there preparing for this ceremony? You were not alone?

[Albert Breuer] I was there in the hall looking after technical matters, interpreting, the interpreting booths, keeping an eye on a large number of people because there were journalists milling about, and all that was my job.

In the Roneo room, there was the head of Roneo at Brussels, Mr Cools, with a team from Brussels — I think there were four of them — and the head of Roneo at Luxembourg was there too. They were there working — six of them at least. I was alone in the hall above, with all my electrical problems and all the things that had to work, and everything did work. Except, when I see the photo where everyone is sitting peacefully, for the table — in fact the image is not a very clear one... The Italian protocol department had invited the Heads of Delegations or Ambassadors to be present at the signing ceremony. You cannot imagine how many fights took place: those who wanted to be first, in the front row, in the second row, and so forth... If you look at the photo, they are all sitting there calmly, but they are all equipped with headphones and devices for selecting the languages. By noon, I had finished everything. Then came a very senior Secretary from the Foreign Office, saying: 'No, it has to be changed because this ambassador does not want to be seated next to that ambassador and it all has to be changed.' Five times I had to change the system — not for the Heads of State and Foreign Ministers, no — but for the Diplomatic Corps! At nine o'clock at night I said to myself: 'That's it now. I am not going to work any longer. I'm stopping! I'm stopping! We need someone right now to take a decision and say: O.K. that's enough now, because at nine o'clock tomorrow morning the delegations will begin to arrive...' And Mr Calmes said: 'Mr Breuer, you are right.' He agreed with me because exchanging one for another and moving it and... it was not easy. It worked. They were happy; they arrived — all very distinguished gentlemen, most of them sporting canes. We said you are here, you are here, here, here... and in the end they were happy.

But it was very difficult. The table itself — when you look at it — the table used for the signing ceremony is a disaster. It is a disaster. I could not bring the cables through the damask since it is very valuable and the Italians refused point blank to let the microphones and all that go through the damask, and each time that I look at this photo I feel ashamed. But that was how it was... I had to do what I was told. The Head of Protocol also arrived — I don't remember which — the Secretary-General, from I don't know where, and each one wanted to change things again. And at nine o'clock, I said: 'That's it Mr Calmes, I am exhausted.' Then we asked a very senior Italian civil servant who was in Luxembourg — Mr Bobba was his name — who took the decision: 'That is the way it is and that is the way it will stay,' so off we went, and the following morning it all went well.