

ON A DELICATE MISSION

Tales of Swiss Diplomacy

Landesmuseum Zurich, May 16 – September 16, 2007

OBJECTS IN THE EXHIBITION

Following a choice of objects that are shown in the exhibition:

Portrait of French King Louis XIV (1638-1715)

King Louis XIV (the Sun King) is the most powerful ruler in Europe and his aggressive foreign policy helps France achieve a strong political position. After acquiring the Sundgau and Franche-Comté with their significant salt sources, France becomes a direct neighbour of the Swiss Confederation. In economic terms, the latter is dependent on France. Its main capital is its mercenaries – in return the Swiss Confederation receives trade privileges from France. Unknown painter, early 18th century.

On loan from: Historisches Museum Bern, Inv. 1960).

Alliance tapestry

Representation of the consummation of the mercenary alliance (Swiss mercenaries for trade privileges) between Louis XIV and the envoys of the Swiss Confederation on November 18, 1663. A Swiss delegation is sent on ahead to the court to deal with issues of etiquette. They enforce the demand of the Swiss cantons to be addressed with the title «Excellency» and to negotiate with the king without covering their heads (i.e. as representatives of an independent state). Tapestry in wool, silk and metal threads. 387 x 585 cm. Collection Swiss National Museum, Dep. 65. (Gottfried Keller Foundation).

24 Wettstein goblet

Johann Rudolf Wettstein, Mayor of Basel and representative at the Peace of Westphalia Congress (1648), receives the gold-plated silver goblet in 1649 as a sign of gratitude from seven proprietors of trading establishments. He has achieved independence from the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation and the international recognition of the Swiss Confederation as a sovereign state. The immense and extremely valuable goblet is family-owned and exhibited on permanent loan in the Historisches Museum Basel. On loan from: Historisches Museum Basel, 1917.18.

39 Sign of the Swiss Trade Consulate in Bordeaux

During the Helvetic Republic, the first Swiss trade consulates are opened, initially in Europe's large seaports. The first consulate is established in Bordeaux in 1798. Marc-Antoine Pellis, a Swiss citizen from the canton of Léman, submits a request to the Directory for this new position. The Directory consequently appoints him consul. At the time, Bordeaux is one of the main French seaports for Atlantic trade. Oil on wood, 1815. Collection of the Swiss National Museum.

Gala uniforms of Swiss diplomats

Johann Konrad Kern recognises the necessity of bowing to diplomatic practices, even if this means it is impossible to circumvent monarchic formalities. This is how the *Alpenrosenfrack* tailcoat originates, a diplomat's uniform decorated with Alpine roses and Edelweiss without which no Swiss envoy can appear in the European courts. If an envoy is an officer, he can resort to his military uniform and thus combine courtly etiquette and republican frugality. The *Alpenrosenfrack*, which originates from a sense of awkwardness, becomes generally accepted and is worn by Swiss diplomats well into the 20th century. Collection of the Swiss National Museum.

58 Sissi's diaries: poetic estate of Empress Elisabeth of Austria

The Empress, who rejects courtly life and who has an anticlerical and liberal attitude, does not want her literary estate to fall into the wrong hands. She has to assume that her estate will be destroyed in Austria, so she has her manuscript sent to the Swiss Federal President via an intricate route more than fifty years after her death. In the second half of the 19th century, Switzerland has achieved the reputation of being an "honest broker" in crisis-torn Europe. On loan from: Swiss Federal Archives, J 1.64 1000/1361, vol. 1 / vol. 7.

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Carl Lutz

Together with his wife Gertrude Lutz, Carl Lutz, Swiss Vice-Consul in Budapest, saves the lives of about 62,000 Jews by means of forged letters of safe-conduct and collective passports. Risking his own life, he remains in Budapest until early April 1945 before finally returning to Switzerland by a circuitous route. Carl Lutz receives a

wealth of awards from other countries for his service; this includes being honoured – together with Gertrude Lutz and Harald Feller, Secretary of the Swiss Legation in Budapest and later Head of the Embassy – by the state of Israel with the title «Righteous Among the Nations» by Yad Vashem. It is only in 1995 – 20 years after his death – that Carl Lutz is finally officially honoured in Switzerland by Federal Councillor Flavio Cotti.

Photo: estate of Carl Lutz, Archives of Contemporary History, ETH Zurich.

Washington Agreement

Following the Second World War, Switzerland's reputation is tarnished in the eyes of the Allies. The country is seen as a kind of war profiteer. In 1946, a Swiss delegation, led by Minister Walter Stucki, is invited to Washington to negotiate about compensation for the plundered gold acquired in Germany. The USA, Great Britain and France insist on compensation and on the lifting of banking secrecy with regard to German assets. After tough negotiations, Switzerland has to pay 250 million Swiss francs.

On loan from: Swiss Federal Archives, KI 646.

Sculpture, ca. 1998

The sculpture represents a Swiss cross. Thomas Borer, Head of the Task Force, receives it from an artist (name unknown) in gratitude for his resolution and performance as Head of the Task Force.

On loan from: Thomas Borer.

Sports shoes of Federal Councillor Micheline Calmy-Rey, 2003

On May 20, 2003, Federal Councillor and Swiss Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey is the first official foreign government representative to cross the demarcation line between North and South Korea. She wears sports shoes for the occasion, which become the symbol of the «active neutrality» she propagates. Bally sports shoes, 2003. On loan from: Micheline Calmy-Rey.

Opel Diplomat B V8 long-wheelbase version, 1976

The Diplomat V8 is one of the fastest travel limousines in its class. This Diplomat is used during US President Gerald Ford's state visit in 1976. The pennant holders are still attached to the front wings. Construction period: 1969-1971. On loan from: Adam Opel GmbH, historical collection, D-Rüsselsheim.