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THE AMBASSADOR, BETWEEN LIGHT AND SHADE
THE EMERGENCE OF SECRECY AS THE NORM
OF INTERNATIONAL NEGOTIATION

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Abstract:

The aim of this research paper is to analyse to what extent secrecy emerged as the uncontested norm for international negotiations after the Renaissance. The first section (1) introduces six key negotiation practitioners in 17th century Europe, including some of the earliest writers on negotiation: Hotman, Mazarini, Wicquefort, Rousseau de Chamoy, Callières, and Pecquet. Through an analysis of their original writings – most of which are no longer available in print – the following sections demonstrate that if an ambassador had to appear in the bright light of royal Court (2), his constant preoccupation was secrecy (3). How to protect his own secrets from third-parties (4) and uncover others' secrets (5) were central focal points, establishing secrecy as the paradigm for modern international negotiation.

Keywords: Ambassador - Callières - Hotman - International Relations - Mazarini - Negotiation (history of) - Pecquet - Rousseau de Chamoy - Secrecy - Wicquefort

Résumé :

Ce document de recherche analyse dans quelle mesure le secret a émergé comme norme incontestée de la négociation internationale au lendemain de la Renaissance. La première section présente six négociateurs clefs dans l'Europe du XVII^e siècle, qui comptent également parmi les premiers écrivains sur la négociation : Hotman, Mazarin, Wicquefort, Rousseau de Chamoy, Callières et Pecquet (1). A travers une analyse de leurs écrits originaux – dont la plupart ne sont plus imprimés depuis plusieurs siècles –, les sections suivantes démontrent que si l'ambassadeur se devait d'apparaître dans la lumière de la Cour (2), sa préoccupation constante était le secret (3). Comment protéger ses propres secrets de la curiosité de tiers (4) et comment découvrir les secrets d'autrui (5) concentraient son attention, constituant le secret en un paradigme pour la négociation internationale moderne.

Mots-clés : Ambassadeur - Callières - Hotman - Mazarin - Négociation (histoire de la) - Pecquet - Relations internationales - Rousseau de Chamoy - Secret - Wicquefort

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The Ambassador, Between Light and Shade

The Emergence of Secrecy as the Norm for International Negotiation

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Abstract. The aim of this research paper is to analyse to what extent secrecy emerged as the uncontested norm for international negotiations after the Renaissance. The first section (1) introduces six key negotiation practitioners in 17th century Europe, including some of the earliest writers on negotiation: Hotman, Mazarini, Wicquefort, Rousseau de Chamoy, Callières, and Pecquet. Through an analysis of their original writings – most of which are no longer available in print – the following sections demonstrate that if an ambassador had to appear in the bright light of royal Court (2), his constant preoccupation was secrecy (3). How to protect his own secrets from third-parties (4) and uncover others' secrets (5) were central focal points, establishing secrecy as the paradigm for modern negotiation.

Key words: secrecy, ambassador, negotiation (history of); Hotman, Mazarini, Wicquefort, Rousseau de Chamoy, Callières, Pecquet.

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Le secret est l'arme de la négociation.

François de CALLIÈRES (1716, 185)

Wisdom of the past is every bit as valid today as it was in the times of Callières.

Sir Ernest SATOW (1917, 450)

By including this observation in his major review of diplomacy, Satow underlined just how much contemporary diplomatic methods, from the turn of the 20th century to the First World War, resembled those that had been described by Callières during the reign of Louis XIV two centuries earlier. While keeping in mind the changes that naturally shape international negotiation, the negotiator in Satow recognized the unchanged nature of the job of ambassador (Berridge et al., 2001, 125-150). In this opinion he was joined by diplomatic historians:

The diplomats of 1919, many of the methods they used and the ways in which they were instructed and controlled, even many of the policies they attempted to carry out, would have been clearly recognisable to their predecessors in the age of Metternich or even Louis XIV (Anderson, 1993, 148).

Thus the practice of international negotiation is anchored in History; our understanding deserves a plunge into the depths of its origins. Satow himself could have waded even further into the past than Callières. The latter is a continuation of a long line of negotiators who practiced using lessons they had learned from a new mode of international negotiation, invented during the Italian Renaissance, that eventually took hold throughout Europe: the ambassador in permanent residence.

Following the example previously set by Bernard de Rosier in *Ambaxiatorum brevilogus* (1436), and that found in *De legato* by Ottavio Maggi (1596), numerous texts written by ambassadors help analyse the emerging uses of diplomacy¹. These texts describe a dual mission. Firstly, an ambassador should act as a representative for his Prince; this function compelled him to appear in the bright light of Royal court, and to brilliantly highlight the status and dignity of his Prince. Yet at the same time the ambassador had to negotiate the business affairs entrusted to him by the Prince; this function required absolute discretion and relied on maintaining secrecy. One such ambassador, Rousseau de Chamoy, confirmed the coexistence of these two functions: the ambassador was « choisi par un Prince pour aller en son nom vers un autre État souverain, *négociier les affaires* qu'il lui commet, et y *représenter sa personne* » (1697, 6). Wicquefort underlined a certain ambivalence : an ambassador was « *un messenger de paix* d'un côté et comme *un espion honorable* de l'autre » (1681, 6).

1. For simplicity reasons, the word *diplomacy* will be used in this text along to *international negotiation*, although it appeared only in the end of the 18th century.

Although these two functions are united in the person of an ambassador, each reflects a distinct register: one a part of outward display and light, the other in shadow and in secret. Tension is created between the obligation to appear, and the necessity for utmost discretion. At a time when the role of ambassador was becoming widespread, the ambassador found himself torn between two worlds: the light of royal Court, where visiting dignitaries gauged one another's value, and the darkened chambers where business was negotiated. Each of these environments reflected the need for distinct qualities and behaviours that were all equally useful to an ambassador. He had to know how to serve both functions, in different stages (for a modern view on this, cf. Friedman, 1994).

The analysis that arises from the articulation between shadow and light in the role of an ambassador rests on a deeper examination of the works of six key witnesses of the *Grand siècle* that ended with the Treaty of Utrecht (1). The function of *representative*, that placed an ambassador squarely in the light (2), will be examined before that of *negotiator*, where the ambassador sensed the usefulness of the covert (3). Then will follow a gathering and organization of the reflections relative to the fragility of secrecy, and thus the means to its preservation (4), as well as the means to penetrate the secrecy of others (5).

1. Six Witnesses for the *Grand Siècle*

The 17th century – or more precisely the *Grand siècle* that would end with Utrecht – saw a profusion of work published about international negotiation, whether it be traditional accounts of foreign missions or writings fuelled by the emergence of the ambassadorial figure (Behrens, 1936). Grabar lists no less than 176 works of this type, published between 1625 and 1700, 100 of which were in Latin (Grabar, 1918). If this volume attests to the interest in the field, it is not, however, any gauge of quality. For Mattingly, most of these works can be reduced to trivial platitudes (1965, 8). The majority fail to seize on the specificity of the new kind of diplomacy emerging at the time, with its deep sense of the balance of power in Europe, and the responsibilities that balance placed on the shoulders of the ambassador.

Nevertheless, some of these works constitute exceptional material to aid in the understanding of the concrete modalities of negotiation at that time. In this vein, in order to more concretely analyse the emergence of secrecy, here we have decided to focus – without ignoring the validity of other writers – on the works of six negotiators: Hotman, Mazarini, Wicquefort, Rousseau de Chamoy, Callières, and Pecquet.

From a methodological viewpoint, this selection satisfies a chronological preoccupation. It seemed important to select authors who covered the *Grand siècle* era: from the beginning of the 17th century – a time when permanent embassies were being established – until the days following the death of Louis XIV – when Europe, exhausted by war and turning toward the Enlightenment, began to dream of a *paix perpétuelle* (Saint-Pierre, 1713), thusly incorporating the defining diplomatic moment of the era: the Peace of Westphalia.

The selection also wishes to unite the most significant writings of the period, especially considering their substantive contributions, a task facilitated by the critical acclaim bestowed on them by great practitioners – Satow (1917) and Nicholson (1939) in Britain, or Plantey (1994) in France – and also by researchers attentive to the historical approach of their work – notably Berridge, Keens-Soper, and Lempereur. As important as they were, these works have not been extensively reprinted for one, two, or even four centuries. Thus, producing an original analysis of these unjustly forgotten texts constitutes yet another reason to choose them. Three of the authors are French, one Swiss (from Lausanne), one Italian who settled in France, and one Dutchman. This distribution can be justified by the fact that during the *Grand siècle*, the absolute monarchy of Louis XIV dominated political affairs in Europe. French culture was shining forth and French was the language of diplomacy (Anderson, 1993, 100-101). Hadn't Wicquefort, a Dutchman, written his monumental work directly in French? According to Keens-Soper, « by that time French diplomatic method had become the model for all Europe, and to the extent that between them Wicquefort and Callières formulated its outlook, their treatises represent the diplomatic theory of the *ancien régime* ». The emergence of a distinctly French perspective of diplomacy served as the model for the rest of Europe (Berridge et al., 2001, 93).

In chronological order, first in line is Jean Hotman de Villiers (1552-1632). A precursor in the analysis of the resident ambassador, he nevertheless did not measure the political significance of the latter. Professor at Oxford for a time, he became advisor to the Count of Leicester and subsequently advisor to the King of Navarre. He would eventually lead diplomatic missions for Henri IV. In 1603 he published *De la Charge et dignité de l'ambassadeur*. The work relies heavily on examples taken from Antiquity, but finds its place among writings of the period as the first work to treat the subject of ambassador in its own right to have been published directly in French.

Mazarini (1602-1661), architect of the Treaty of Muenster that led to the Peace of Westphalia and in turn to the Treaty of the Pyrénées in 1659, left a posthumous *Bréviaire des politiciens* (1684) that could only be attributed to him. The work opens and closes with « deux grands principes [...]: simule et dissimule ». Probably inspired by concrete practices – either those of Mazarini himself or those of any number of Court figures of his age – it describes a mode of

action blended with a certain manner or behaviour, both governed by the omnipresent concern for secrecy: how to guard and how to penetrate it.

The life of Abraham de Wicquefort (1606-1682) spanned the 17th century, during which he had the opportunity to observe the heart of diplomacy in action (Keens-Soper, 1996): Westphalia. *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions* was published in 1680-81, the « most densely recounted profile of the ambassador ever composed », according to Keens-Soper (Berridge et al., 2001, 89). Wicquefort would be the first to attempt to describe the functions and qualities of an ambassador, not from an ideal perspective, but from real world examples. He employed analysis – precise, prodigious, and erudite – of the multiple diplomatic treatises, dispatches, instructions and letters he had seen, rather than antiquated examples, to support his arguments.

Less is known about Louis Rousseau de Chamoy, apart from the fact that he was a French ambassador appointed by Louis XIV and that he led missions to Germany. In 1697, he published *L'Idée du parfait ambassadeur*.

François de Callières (1645-1717) was employed by Louis XIV to carry out diplomatic missions (Schweizer, 1995), notably the Congress at Ryswick that put an end to the Nine Years' War. Beneath the skin of the practitioner beat the heart of a theoretician, as seen in *De la Manière de négocier avec les souverains*, published in 1716. Innovative was the distance he took from the ambassadorial function, to more easily question the political meaning of diplomatic activity within the European system (Keens-Soper, 1973; Lempereur, 2002). The work met with instant success and enjoyed a positive reputation throughout Europe for the rest of the 18th century. Three great diplomats have sung its praises: Satow, who in 1917 would qualify it as a « mine of political wisdom » (1917, x); A. F. White, who deemed it so important that he translated an abridged version; and Harold Nicholson, who considered it « the best manual of diplomatic method ever written » (1954, 62).

Along the lines of Callières, Antoine Pecquet (1704-1762) published *Discours sur l'Art de négocier* in 1737, with the intention of sharing a similar conviction: negotiation is essential to the grandeur of any nation. Pecquet began his administrative career as a delegate in the Foreign Affairs Ministry, where he was *Secrétaire du Conseil* for a time. Pecquet's preoccupation was to build a general theory that could be applied to diplomatic negotiation in particular, especially that of foreign resident ambassadors.

By drawing from these works, the following sections will attempt to clarify the place and role of secrecy in the office of ambassador.

2. The Ambassador-Representative, or the Necessity of Appearing in the Light

Let us concern ourselves firstly with the function of representation, and the contingent need for it to take place in the light of day. The ambassador was the representative of his sovereign, a tangible expression of the sovereign's glory and power. He must be illustrious by definition. The status conferred on an ambassador is essential to this function of representative. Whence the importance accorded to protocol, precedence, recognition, rank, rituals, placement during public ceremonies, and the order of signatures on official documents.

Wicquefort emphasised: « L'ambassadeur ne négocie pas toujours » (1681, 3), underlining that the rest of the time he is a representative. This is why, highlighted Wicquefort,

il doit être un peu comédien [...]. Dans les assemblées de cérémonie, il ne peut pas quitter son rang sans crime: même à table, où il étale un échantillon de la grandeur et de la magnificence de son prince, il peut le représenter de quelque façon.

Three decades later, Callières would confirm that an « ambassadeur ressemble en quelque manière à un comédien, exposé sur le théâtre aux yeux du public pour y jouer de grands rôles » (1716, 79).

The function of representative was a determining factor in the choice of ambassador. Appearing in the light presupposes certain qualities quite distinct from those required for the use of secrecy. Like others before him, Rousseau de Chamoy established a list of the qualities necessary for an ambassador, among them three well-ranked assets that directly served the representative function. Firstly, riches – « la magnificence de sa table et de son train ». Then, birth – « il est utile à un Ambassadeur d'être d'une naissance et d'un nom illustres » (Rousseau, 1697, 23). Finally, physical attributes: « Une belle physionomie impose au public. [...] On n'a aucune peine à attribuer de l'esprit à un homme qui se présente bien et qui a une démarche noble et un port vénérable ». These qualities are clearly useful for a representative, who by nature is turned toward appearance and light. They may have justified the choice of an ambassador, and would have served him well in the execution of this primary function.

But this presence in public, for the benefit and dignity of his master, was disadvantageous to the secondary function of the ambassador: negotiator. Hotman deplored: « aussi [l'ambassadeur] est-il en lieu si éminent que ses actions ne peuvent être cachées, quelque peine qu'il y rende » (1603, 68). A century later, prestigious positions had the same inconvenience for Pecquet — exposure to third parties:

Les places qui mettent en évidence ont cet inconvénient que les hommes y paraissent tôt ou tard tels qu'ils sont et qu'ils ne peuvent presque rien dérober aux yeux du public de leurs défauts intérieurs. Ils sont examinés de trop près (Pecquet, 1737, 28).

Negotiation is untenable in public: « ce n'est pas dans les audiences publiques que se fait le fort de la négociation » (Wicquefort, 1681, 31).

Wicquefort's conviction came from personal experience: he believed that second rank ministers could more easily hold discreet negotiations and intrigues, because they were not in the spotlight (Berridge et al., 2001, 103). Callières concurred with this conclusion exactly:

La qualité d'ambassadeur entraîne avec elle beaucoup d'embarras à cause du grand train dont il faut que les ambassadeurs soient accompagnés, des cérémonies et des rangs qu'ils sont obligés d'observer, de leurs entrées, de leurs audiences publiques et de toutes leurs démarches qui les exposent sans cesse à la vue du public et les font observer de trop près (Callières, 1716, 200).

To escape this scrutiny that bound him, the ambassador had to concern himself constantly with secrecy, learning as much about preserving his own as penetrating that of others. A rule for the diplomatic art was written.

3. The Ambassador-Negotiator, or the Preoccupation with Shadow and Secrecy

« Le secret est l'arme de la négociation »: this conviction of Callières was shared by all the negotiators we have studied. Their vocabulary attests to it: in these works, *secret* (as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb) is among the most recurring terms used. In the second section of Wicquefort's work, the substantive *secrètement* appears 46 times, compared with *négociation* (138 times) or *réputation* (32 times). In *De la manière de négocier*, Callières uses the word *secret* in its noun form 28 times, and 12 times in adjective or adverb form, while the key term of the work, *passion*, appears 32 times. Finally, in Pecquet's work, where *négociation* appears 41 times and *négocier* 12 times, *secret* is mentioned no less than 28 times. Compare this to the term *réputation*, an aspect accorded the highest regard by Pecquet, which appears only 14 times, or two times less.

In this way, secrecy provided a natural framework within which an ambassador moved. From Hotman to Pecquet, none contested secrecy nor doubted that it constitutes the closest ally of an ambassador-negotiator vis-a-vis third parties. Pecquet dedicated an entire section to secrecy, entitled « Combien le secret est nécessaire pour le succès des affaires ». Like any political activity, a negotiation could be put into peril if third parties caught wind of it: « quiconque manque au secret détruit son ouvrage en même temps qu'il l'édifie » (Pecquet, 1737, 35). Before him, Callières had similarly argued this point: secrecy is indispensable because « il est aisé de faire échouer les plus grandes entreprises lorsqu'on les découvre dès leur naissance » (1716, 69). Hotman had already revealed that he who distances himself from the secrecy rule does so to his own detriment: « celui qui sait bien parler sait aussi quand il faut se taire » (1603, 72). A breach of secrecy is not only damaging to the negotiation, but also to the ambassador who could not see it coming: « On peut bien profiter de la révélation d'un secret

et s'en applaudir, mais on méprise celui qui le révèle par légèreté et l'on déteste celui qui le trahit par infidélité ou par intérêt » (Pecquet, 1737, 37).

Hence, the negotiator gained by concealing his actions from third parties. Mazarini warned: « Même s'ils sont parfaitement justifiés, ne dévoile rien de tes projets politiques » (1684, 55), an idea even more valid if they are not justified. For Pecquet, « il y a des affaires qu'on ne peut, ni ne doit jamais développer aux yeux du public » (1737, 31). From Callières viewpoint, this same imperative justified secret treaties: « des traités qu'on appelle secrets, parce que l'exécution et la publication en demeurent quelque temps suspendues. Il y a aussi des traités publics, auxquels on joint des articles secrets » (1716, 175).

Intense and mutual, the concern for secrecy was moreover an abiding one, naturally sustained for the duration of an ambassador's mission and even much longer after his return. Regarding the procedure of diplomatic missions, Wicquefort cited multiple examples where an ambassador or his delegation demanded to hold talks with the prince *en particulier*, or *en secret* (1681, 33 sq.): the secret meetings of President Jeannin, the secret mission to Italy by the Cardinal of Ossat to discuss the absolution of Henri IV, the secret order given to Father Joseph, advisor and confidant to Richelieu, to conclude the treaty of Ratisbonne, or « le traité secret » of 1606, between Spain and the Archdukes of Hapsburg, arranging the succession of the Empire. Callières also shared this perspective: « la plupart des grandes affaires ont été conclues par des ministres envoyés secrètement » (1716, 200-201). He evoked the role secrecy played in the three most important negotiations of his age: the treaties of Meunster, the Pyrénées (Mazarini, 1745), and Ryswick – « la paix de Ryswick a été traitée et résolue par des négociations secrètes, avant que d'être conclue en Hollande en l'année 1697 ».

Secrecy was imperative not only for a message but also for its trustee himself: for Pecquet, « Les princes ont quelquefois autant de raison d'État de cacher leurs véritables confidants que leur secret même » (1737, 35). In this vein, the prince could have been led to make an exception to the rule that states he only be represented by *des gens de condition*: « Autre chose est, quand il est question de commissions secrètes et uniquement d'affaires. Alors il ne faut chercher que l'expérience et les talents et d'ailleurs un homme obscur attire moins l'attention des curieux et dérobe bien plus sûrement sa marche » (Pecquet, 1737, 82-83). This obligation of secrecy did not end with the mission: « C'est même souvent manquer au secret que de laisser connaître après coup qu'on en a été le dépositaire ». In fact, the concern for secrecy endured with the return of the ambassador, when the latter was required to render an account to his prince. Even beyond this account provided by the agent to his principal, the necessity for secrecy remained by virtue of the specific nature of the information:

Les connaissances qu'un ministre a acquises dans le cours de sa mission ne sont point un bien qui lui appartienne; c'est le bien de son maître, puisqu'elles ne peuvent avoir d'usage ni d'application qu'aux

affaires générales et le ministre hors d'emploi doit *toujours les voiler aux yeux du public, comme un sanctuaire où tout est sacré* (Pecquet, 1737, 89).

This passage is essential, as it allows us to qualify the status defining this 'acquired' information, and which therefore constitutes a legitimation of the use of secrecy. The secret information that the ambassador was entrusted with had singular value in that his Prince was the sole recipient.

ce secret qui nous est confié n'est point à nous, c'est un dépôt qui doit sans cesse être sacré à nos yeux. C'est un bien dont nous ne pouvons faire usage *qu'avec la permission du maître* et plus il est précieux par l'objet même du secret, plus nous devons être attentifs à ne le point compromettre (Pecquet, 1737, 35).

The practice of secrecy is further validated inasmuch as all information pertaining to the negotiation is akin to private, and thus personal, property of the Prince: the persona of the sovereign merged with that of the State. The notion of *publicité* – and *a fortiori* of transparency – was absent from the negotiating arena. Secrecy, organized to the advantage of the Prince and legitimated by his status, constituted the routine paradigm of political activity, and therefore of negotiation as a political instrument. Accordingly, secrecy had to be protected by all means.

4. Keeping Secrets from Third Parties

The paradigm of secrecy within which negotiation evolved created multiple consequences. It carried with it certain obligations for the negotiator himself, leading him away from the spotlight that his primary function of representative obliged him to occupy. Secrecy also weighed heavily on the entourage of the ambassador, without whom the ambassador could not fulfill his duty. This service was placed squarely within a principal / agent relationship that demanded a regular flow of information in both directions: a question therefore arose as to the written form itself as vector for this information, and how to maintain confidentiality.

The Personal Responsibility of the Ambassador

The absolute preservation of secrecy was a responsibility that rested squarely on the shoulders of the ambassador-negotiator. In *Bréviaire des politiciens*, Mazarini described the principal methods of secrecy preservation from third parties: reveal nothing, conceal everything, and disguise the rest. These recommendations were quite valid for the negotiator: « Ne dévoile en aucun cas les secrets que [ton maître] t'a confiés, tu perdras son estime »; or « Garde pour toi ce que tu sais et feins l'ignorance »; or even: « Fais en sorte que nul ne connaisse jamais ni ton avis véritable sur une affaire, ni jusqu'à quel point tu es renseigné, ni ce que tu désires, ce dont tu t'occupes et ce que tu crains » (1684, 36, 65, 124).

Pecquet was more measured. From his perspective, preserving secrecy required tact: « Il y a pourtant un juste milieu entre l'exacte observation du secret et une réserve outrée qui conduit à faire des mystères déplacés et inutiles ». An exaggerated secretiveness had only negative effects. One must therefore « saisir le juste milieu », which is difficult for the novice; but all in all, it is preferable for him to abide strictly by the rule of secrecy (1737, 36).

Maintaining secrecy demanded an entirely new set of personal qualities from the negotiator. Secrecy had to simply become second nature.

L'habitude du secret est donc une qualité nécessaire à un ministre. Je dis l'habitude, parce qu'on ne devient pas en un moment capable du secret et qu'on ne sait se taire sur les grandes choses que quand on a appris à s'observer sur les moindres (Pecquet, 1737, 35).

From a moral standpoint, continued Pecquet, « l'importance du secret emporte la nécessité d'une grande pureté dans les mœurs. Ainsi la sobriété et la continence sont encore deux vertus nécessaires au négociateur ». He paid homage to temperance, thereby confirming the earliest recommendation of Hotman, who recalled the tactic of « Bonosus [Roman emperor in 280], lequel enivrait ordinairement les ambassadeurs étrangers pour apprendre leurs secrets. [...] Et à la vérité le vin et le secret sont choses incompatibles » (Hotman, 1603, 70). Certain character and personality traits became harmful from a covert point of view. Clearly « les hommes dont la vie est dominée par les plaisirs du vin ou de la chair sont quasiment incapables de garder un secret: les uns sont esclaves de leurs maîtresses, les autres, après boire, ne peuvent s'empêcher de parler à tort et à travers », warned Mazarini (1684, 22). Basic human drives deserved a second look. While the negotiator needed to be wary of furor and the « effets d'une vivacité démesurée », other traits were actually considered to be a threat to secrecy: indiscretion, vanity, the desire to appear, levity, and self-interest (Pecquet, 1737, 36).

Consequently, the ability to guard secrecy constituted a decisive factor in the choice of an ambassador. For Callières, « la nature des affaires qu'il y a à traiter doit encore être fort considérée dans le choix des sujets que l'on y emploie. Si c'est une affaire secrète, un particulier habile et sans éclat est beaucoup plus propre à la faire réussir » (1716, 199-200).

Withdrawing from the Light

This preoccupation with secrecy weighed on the behaviour of the ambassador even while he was acting as a representative. Here, Mazarini was extreme: to the question of when to appear in public, he replied « le moins souvent possible » (1684, 39). Thus, cultivation of relationships within royal Court was to be performed within the constraints of the secrecy paradigm. A negotiator was then called upon to be wary of public audiences which prevented secrecy from third parties: « Dans sa première audience, comme elle n'est ordinairement que de cérémonie, et que tous les courtisans peuvent entendre ce qu'il y dira, il n'y parlera qu'en termes généraux

du sujet de son ambassade » (Rousseau, 1697, 38). Indeed if the matter justified it, a secret meeting could even precede a first public audience: « souvent même il voit incognito le Prince et les Ministres, avant sa réception, lorsque les affaires le demandent ou que son équipage n'est pas encore prêt ».

If this reticence regarding public audience were not enough, Rousseau de Chamoy underscored the interest in temporarily disassociating the function of negotiating from the ambassador. His belief, shared by Wicquefort and Callières as seen above, was that if the ambassadors are « traités et reçus avec plus d'éclat et de cérémonie », the same is not true of « les ministres du second ordre »: plenipotentiaries, envoys, residents, agents, embassy secretaries, and consuls. These second rank officers, even if they were also « personnes publiques », were freer in their movements as they were less keenly observed (Rousseau, 1697, 7). Callières recommended still more clearly: « quand il y a des affaires à négocier, il y faut un homme et non pas une idole », a personality whose glory or status draws the attention of third parties, « à moins qu'on ne [lui] donne un habile collègue qui ait le secret de la négociation et tout le soin de la conduire, pendant que l'homme de grande qualité et ignorant prend sur lui le soin de figurer par une grande table et par un magnifique équipage » (1716, 96). Here, the tension is clearly shown between these two functions of an ambassador, due to their opposing attractions to shadow and light.

If even second rank ministers could not enjoy the desired level of discretion, one could always resort to the services of a secret agent: « Il semble aussi qu'on pourrait mettre au rang des agents et ambassadeurs ceux qui sont envoyés en un état pour y traiter secrètement » (Hotman, 1603, 47-48). Rousseau de Chamoy underlined:

Les Princes se servent quelquefois encore, en leurs affaires dans les pays étrangers, de gens sans caractère, et le plus souvent inconnus, comme de moines, de marchands, de voyageurs et même d'officiers prisonniers (1697, 10).

A kind of parallel diplomacy arose, able to prepare the terrain and the participants before passing the baton to official diplomacy. Indeed, Callières felt that « les religieux sont quelquefois propres à porter des paroles secrètes et importantes par la facilité qu'ils ont à s'introduire auprès des princes ou de leurs ministres, sous d'autres prétextes » (1716, 189).

Secrecy and the Entourage

The personal qualities of an ambassador, and his ability to withdraw opportunely from the light were not in themselves sufficient to preserving secrecy, if adequate precaution regarding those close to him was not taken. This included secretaries, man/maidservants, companions and acquaintances. Similarly, confirmed Pecquet: « les grands ministres ont-ils toujours eu pour

maxime de n'avoir point de confident lorsqu'ils pouvaient s'en passer et de ne les multiplier que le moins qu'il était possible » (1737, 35).

This was true primarily for the choice of a secretary. The secretary was not only a scribe, or a « confident »: he was primarily a « personne discrète sachant garder les secrets » (Rey, 1998, 3435). For Rousseau de Chamoy, the ambassador « n'en doit prendre qu'un auquel il confie ses affaires secrètes, et, s'il en a d'autres, ce ne doit être que pour les affaires moins importantes et pour soulager le premier. Le secret est ainsi plus assuré, et s'il arrive qu'on en découvre quelque chose il sait à qui s'en prendre » (1687, 32-33).

Immersion in secrecy also compelled the ambassador to limit the use of interpreters: ambassadors needed to learn foreign languages « afin de n'être pas exposés à l'infidélité ou à l'ignorance des interprètes et d'être délivrés de l'embarras de les introduire aux audiences des princes et de leur faire part des secrets importants » (Callières, 1716, 105).

The imperative of secrecy recurred regarding even the ambassador's spouse. For Rousseau de Chamoy, « la faiblesse et l'inconstance qu'on attribue à la plupart des femmes, leur penchant à trop parler, le luxe et la dépense que leur suite entraîne avec elles, pourraient faire croire que les ambassadeurs feraient mieux de la laisser en leur pays ». However, he did recognise, « s'il y a des femmes indiscrettes, il s'en trouve aussi de prudentes et capables de secret; et c'est à l'Ambassadeur à connaître le génie de la sienne et à ne s'ouvrir à elle qu'autant qu'il l'en trouve capable » (1697, 34).

Instructions and Dispatches: To the Letter

The position of ambassador is part of a principal/agent relationship. The Prince communicated his instructions to his ambassador, who in return provided an account of the thrust of his mission: letters and dispatches were exchanged as long as the commission was active. From the middle of the 16th century, it seemed clear to most European powers that ambassadors needed to write to their constituent every two to three days (Anderson, 1993, 20-21). In this necessary back and forth of information, the written word became a central issue for secrecy and its preservation (Hamilton & Langhorne, 1995, 75-76). Instructions, letters and dispatches, considering their content, clearly had to be kept secret: « Cet écrit doit être secret et est fait seulement pour celui qui en est chargé », insisted Callières (1716, 145).

Yet extreme material constraints were placed on these exchanges of information. Resident ambassadorships and the multiplication of activities made recourse to specially appointed messengers only possible on an occasional basis, and reserved only for the most strategic

information (Anderson, 1993, 21-22). For everything else, handwritten letters remained the most essential method of communication. These letters travelled via mail service, accorded great importance by the States: under Louis XIV, Foreign Minister Torcy personally supervised *les Postes*. The system relied on a tacit reciprocal agreement between nations, reinforced by the Postal Convention passed in 1674 (Stern, 1997, 41): the latter posits, in principle, the inviolability of correspondence, and the free passage of mail, with each State undertaking the right passage of letters, as quickly as possible, without disturbing their confidentiality.

Even during times of peace these principles were not respected, at least as far as confidentiality is concerned: each great European power would attempt to read the correspondence of its rivals by creating *cabinets noirs*, eg: the *Secret Office* as of 1653 in England, or the *Geheime Kabinets-Kanzlei* of the Vienna Hapsburgs (Hamilton & Langhorne, 1995, 122 sq.). Postal managers were corrupted and turned into spies. Diplomatic letters were then spotted, unsealed, read or deciphered, recopied and subsequently resealed and sent to the addressee (Stern, 1997, 42). Bély gives the example of the city of Celle (Zell), a postal hub for the Northern countries: mail from France was so regularly opened and deciphered there by a *cabinet noir*, that London was more rapidly informed about decisions made in Versailles than French ambassadors in Nordic countries (1990, 140).

To keep their written instructions secret, ambassadors and their constituents would multiply their counter-measures. These ranged between three distinct tactics. The first consisted in protecting the message through its medium: an anonymous-looking envelope helped enormously to protect the secrecy of a diplomatic letter. In fact, any influx of missives would paralyse the *cabinets noirs*, as systematic letter-opening became impossible. The trick was to mask the true addressee of the letter, by sending it to a harmless correspondent. For example, French ambassadors in Holland and England would address their bulletins to « M. Le Brun, banquier rue Bourtibourg à Paris » (Bély, 1990, 157). The second tactic employed steganography: hiding the message itself (Stern, 1997, 21 sq.), by resorting to the use of secret inks that could be revealed by a chemical reactant known to the recipient alone. The third tactic was cryptography: hiding the message is no longer the issue as it has become incomprehensible to third parties. This was the domain of the code, or cipher, a crucial tool for a negotiator. A cipher allows the sender to encode the text, and the recipient to decode it while preventing third parties from understanding. « Comme le secret est l'arme de la négociation, on a inventé l'art d'écrire avec des caractères inconnus », highlighted Callières (1716, 185). The ability to encode and decode text was fascinating to the contemporaries. For Wicquefort, « On peut dire que le chiffre [...] est une espèce de magie » (1681, 104). Cryptographers would pass on their skills from father to son, creating dynasties of 'secrecy specialists' that would

accompany the royal Courts of Europe: the Rossignols served Louis XIII and Louis XIV, the Wallises served the English kings, and the Argenti served the Popes of Italy.

As sophisticated as it may have been, a code did have its drawbacks, firstly its vulnerability to betrayal. Mazarini recommended the personal choice of code language, and writing the message personally. Next, encoding and decoding a message using correspondence tables or mathematical formulas was time-consuming. It was not a rare occurrence for a negotiation to be suspended because decoding of a dispatch had not been finished. Breaking the code of an adversary could equally take a long time, so much so that the message would have lost its usefulness once it was finally obtained.

Faced with these obstacles, an ultimate ploy consisted in developing deliberately false instructions: « Il arrive aussi qu'on fasse quelquefois de deux sortes d'instructions, une qu'on appelle *ostensive*, c'est-à-dire faite pour être montrée et une *secrète* qui contient les véritables intentions du prince » (Callières, 1716, 145). The most secret instructions would remain in oral form only: « il y a beaucoup d'occasions dans lesquelles, par excès de précaution, des ordres principaux ne sont donnés que verbalement » (Pecquet, 1737, 52). Even in congress, ambassadors hesitated to use the written word, for fear that third parties would find out. In Utrecht in 1713, Louis XIV forbade his minister plenipotentiaries to negotiate using pre-written essays: « Ce qu'on écrit auparavant et qui devient public donne lieu à des critiques plus propres à aliéner les esprits qu'à les concilier. Evitez donc, s'il est possible, de répondre par écrit » (Bély, 1990, 437).

An ambassador was forced by turns to combat the interest of spies in his dealings, and become a spy himself – albeit « honourable » – or have recourse to agents who were spies.

5. Penetrating the Secrecy of Others

The imperative of an ambassador to protect his own secrets was double: he must also penetrate the secrecy of others, using various means. This imperative rendered the ambassador himself an *espion honorable* according to Wicquefort's formula: « une des principales fonctions de l'ambassadeur est de faire *l'espion* » (1681, 6). Callières confirmed it: « Les deux principales fins d'un négociateur sont d'y faire les affaires de son maître et d'y découvrir celles d'autrui » (1716, 170).

If the ambassador could not personally obtain the necessary information, he could give himself the means to do so by calling on the services of a specialist. Spies fulfilled ambassadors' and envoys' insatiable desire for information, especially considering that the latter could not permit

themselves to use the means and actions of the former. « Il arrive d'ordinaire dans les négociations ce qui arrive dans la guerre, que les espions bien choisis contribuent plus que toutes choses au bon succès des grandes entreprises » (Callières, 1716, 81). Whether they became spies due to religious fervour, in a Europe divided between Catholics and Protestants, or political conviction, or they were fuelled by greed and ambition, spies were indispensable ancillaries. Rousseau de Chamoy was quite direct, lamenting that it was not a more frequent practice.

Spies were inescapable figures of the *Grand siècle*. Even if spies attempted to penetrate the secrecy of others, their existence in no way disputed the paradigm of secrecy itself: in fact, given his clandestine nature, the spy's very existence was born of secrecy. He was the purveyor of secret information he had appropriated from one Prince in order to benefit another Prince. But at no time did he seek to make this information public: that kind of transparency would remove any market value from the information he held. The spy, therefore, had a vested interest in keeping and even reinforcing the secrecy paradigm. For this reason, we cannot fully agree with the second half of the classic definition of a spy suggested by Dewerpe: « L'espion est celui qui découvre des secrets: il est en cela *l'agent de la révélation* » (1994, 11). On the contrary, with certain exceptions the spy does not reveal anything in daylight, nor publicly. He allowed his silent master to benefit from a secret he discovered, yet this secret still conserved its confidential nature. What's more, the spy contributed directly to reinforcing the secrecy paradigm: such was the fear of espionage that each party multiplied the precautions he took to preserve his secrets, which in turn encouraged the recourse to agents used to discover them.

Conclusion

After the Renaissance, with monarchs asserting their absolute power across Europe, relations between sovereign states were concentrated in the hands of a select few: Princes, protected by their status, and for whom foreign policy constituted a *res privata*. In this dawning monarchical order, secrecy was a wholly legitimate practice that protected the Prince's private affairs from the eyes of third parties. In this space a paradigm was created, whereby shadow became the natural realm of negotiation.

But even at that time, the institution of secrecy would fuel an argument that contained in itself the premises of its contestation. The domination of secrecy was nuanced according to the type of institutional regime, corroborating the *distinguo* between a principality and a republic as established by Machiavelli and Guicciardini. Wicquefort was the first diplomat to concretely note: « Dans les royaumes et États où le souverain partage, en quelque façon, la connaissance et la disposition des affaires avec un premier ministre, avec son Conseil ou bien avec le sénat,

l'ambassadeur fait aussi rapport à ceux qui ont part à la première autorité » (1681, 186). This is the case in England, where, after the 1688 revolution, the Constitution accorded more weight to the Parliament; the negotiators at Utrecht had to take this multiform constituent into account, as it was susceptible to sudden reversals (Bely, 1990, 518-523). This was even clearer in the *États populaires*, as noted by Wicquefort in the Republic of Venice or in Holland.

Precisely because secrecy was thus a function of institutional regime, its paradigm is called into question in the age that opened after Utrecht. The end of the exhausting reign of Louis XIV empowered critics of the war-prone absolute monarchy. At the time of Utrecht, Saint-Pierre's *Projet pour rendre la paix perpétuelle en Europe* was published. These reflections on how to avoid war and guarantee peace did not omit a critical analysis of the principal means of their obtention: negotiation. All this took place in a larger, powerful movement of thought, the Enlightenment, that held a new imperative within itself: that of the *public* nature of political affairs, in the sense of their necessary exposure to public scrutiny. Kant would see in this idea of publicity a source of legitimacy for politics itself (Kant, 1795), while Bentham would see it as a determining factor to gauge the efficacy of political action (Bentham & Bowring, 1838-1843). And so began the slow and tenacious movement against secrecy that continues to surround diplomatic negotiation even today (Colson, 2004; 2007).

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