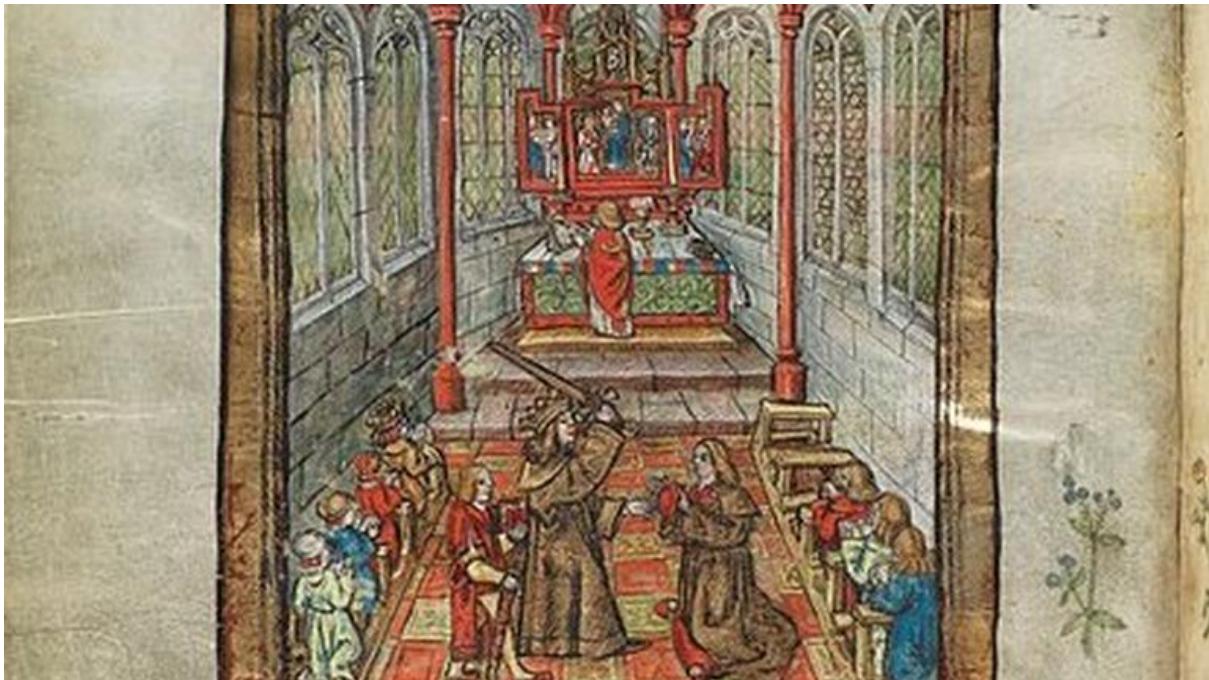




DECLINE OF A COUNCILOR AND DIPLOMAT

# Melchior Russ: a Lucerne knight writes history

08/27/2021 03:57 am · updated 08/27/2021 03:57 am · 5 minutes · 4



During a solemn mass in Vienna's St. Stephen's Cathedral, King Matthias Corvinus knighted the Lucerne envoy Melchior Russ. (Image: Diebold Schilling / Wikimedia Commons )

**The Lucerne Melchior Russ was not unknown during his lifetime, he was politically active and was even knighted. Nevertheless, hardly any more is reported about him today. He was the first to want to tell Lucerne's story.**



AUTHOR

Chantal Husler

I was amazed when I got my hands on the Diebold Schilling Chronicle a few days ago. The image of a Lucerne knight suddenly shone between descriptions of old Lucerne, eulogies about the Lucerne officials and the classic «Kantönligeist».

In a golden cloak, a young Melchior Russ kneels before the Hungarian king - Matthias Corvinus - and receives the accolade. Up until that moment I had heard neither of the Knights of Lucerne nor of Melchior Russ. My curiosity was aroused and I set off on the trail of someone who had been forgotten.

## First Lucerne Chronicle

The only remnant of his work is the first Lucerne Chronicle. Russ began writing these in his spare time, but was never able to finish his work. The historical report written in 1482 comprises only 81 pages. Instead of a quiet everyday life as a chronicler, an eventful life awaited the young Lucerne native.

- Anzeige -

ADVERTISING



«Back then» blog

Whether background about old buildings squares, well-known important events districts - the "Dämmerung" focuses on historic circumstances.

→ TO THE "DÄMMERUNG"



BLOG

«BACK THEN»

Places of execution  
of Lights

Off with your

Where people

to be executed

Lucerne

MOST READ RECOMMENDED

Places of ex

the City of F

Off with y

head: Wh

people us

executed

Lucerne

1

Lust murde

"forest man

Krumbach

When the

murderer

beheaded

Lucerne

2

The penta

symbol of

protection

the power

darkness

3



Having just returned from the Burgundian wars, the young Russ was getting used to the quiet everyday life in Lucerne's city chancellery when a message from Hungary reached the Grand Council. The Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus sought an alliance with the Confederates because he needed mercenaries to wage war against the Turks.

### Admission to the Great Council

The 28-year-old, inexperienced Melchior Russ was chosen, of all people. He was to travel unofficially to Hungary as part of a small embassy and conduct initial discussions. These were highly satisfactory for everyone involved. When Russ returned, he was happily received and admitted to the Great Council.

Luck and ability then brought him great political success and he was appointed bailiff of Ebikon and later even of Malters and Littau. He lived in peace and quiet, cultivated acquaintances, got married and began to write the first Lucerne chronicle. This would have been the perfect end to a biography: a man who finds success, happiness and family in the storm of youth and looks forward to the rest of his life without any worries.

But such an end was not granted to him.

### Another trip to Hungary

Ten years after Russ's first trip to Hungary, the Great Council asked him to make another trip to Corvinus. It was necessary to extend the negotiated mercenary contract with the Confederates.

Up until then, Corvinus had neither paid the pensions of the Lucerne mercenaries nor was he considered to be particularly reliable, but he still asked for the contract to be extended. The Great Council had allowed itself to be seduced by Hungarian gifts and beautiful words. Russ was now to travel to Hungary as an official diplomat, much to his displeasure.

At first he refused to go on this journey. But he did not withstand the pressure of the council for long. In 1488 he was greeted in Hungary for the second time by a delighted Corvinus. After the treaty was sealed, the ebullient king wanted to knight the increasingly skeptical Russ. Russ declined, knowing he couldn't afford the extravagant lifestyle of a knight. The king insisted and promised to pay him 200 guilders a year so that Russ could finance his expensive life as a knight.

- Anzeige -

### Accolade for the Lucerne

This convinced him and so Russ was knighted on June 24, 1488 in St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna before envoys of the Pope and the kings of Europe. While Hungary honored him with the sword of the Pope, in Lucerne the sword of Damocles hung threateningly over him.

When he returned, the mercenaries, still unpaid by Hungary, were already waiting for him and demanding the outstanding pensions. Russ twice asked the king to finally pay the money owed. A whole year passed and the money from Hungary was still a long time coming. Russ had no choice but to pay the pensions with his own fortune. He was under increasing pressure, also because rumors were circulating at the same time that Russ was not authorized to conclude the alliance with Corvinus.

So Russ himself had to pay for the debts of the Hungarians and justify himself to the Great Council. Although the lawsuit was dropped, he was responsible for the pensions. Russ lost all his fortune and with it his house, even his wife left him.

### New king, new luck?

Corvinus never paid him back the pensions. After his unexpected death, Russ placed his last hopes on the new king. He was even inclined to settle Corvinus' debts and draw up a new treaty with the Confederates, since Hungary was at war with the imperial army.

But luck turned away from Russ again. Confederates were also in the ranks of the imperial army, much to the outrage of Hungary. Russ was chased out of the country with shame and disgrace and retired to Uri, impoverished.

### Vom Ritter im strahlenden Umhang zum einfachen Söldner

Wahrscheinlich starb Russ als einfacher Söldner im Kampf gegen die Österreicher. Nachdem er Geld und Ehre, Frau und Haus hergeben musste, forderte das Schicksal nun auch sein Leben. Und von dem einst strahlenden Mann im goldenen Umhang, dem geschätzten Ratsmitglied und Diplomaten, blieb kein Erbe, kein Denkmal, nur eine unvollendete Chronik zurück.

Doch ganz vergessen ist er nicht. Verewigt in der Diebold Schilling Chronik glänzt für immer der letzte Moment in dem Russ' Leben noch im Lot war. Ein glorreicher Atemzug, ehe er zum Ritter geschlagen und in die Armut verbannt wurde.

---

Autorin

**Chantal Hüslér**

[Alle Artikel](#)

---

### Themen

---



Ob Hintergründe zu alten Gebäuden, Geschichten zu Plätzen, stadtbekannte Personen, bedeutende Ereignisse oder der Wandel von Stadtteilen – im «Damals»-Blog werden historische Veränderungen und Gegebenheiten thematisiert.

[→ Zum «Damals» Blog](#)

---

#### VERWANDTE ARTIKEL

[Stadt-Land-Graben: Vor 500 Jahren kam es zum Zwiebelnkrieg](#)

[Ausgenutzt und ausgeblutet – wie die Zuger Elite sich bereicherte](#)

[Soldaten machten die Luzerner Patrizier reich](#)

---

### Deine Meinung ist gefragt

Deine E-Mailadresse wird nicht veröffentlicht. Erforderliche Felder sind mit \* markiert. Bitte beachte unsere [Netiquette](#).

Kommentar \*

Your comment

Name \*

Your name

Mailadresse \*

Your e-mail address

Ja, ich habe die Netiquette gelesen.

Absenden

#### 4 KOMMENTARE

**Cédric Hortmann**, 31.08.2021, 15:20 Uhr



Super spannender Artikel und toll geschrieben. Gerne mehr von Frau Hüsl!



0



0



0



0

Antworten

**hopplaschorsch**, 27.08.2021, 17:30 Uhr



@Kurt Heller

Richtig, war auch mein erster Gedanke. Wobei dieser Russ vermutlich auch nur eine Marionette der Von Schumacher, Von Segesser, Von Altishofen, Von Pfyffer, oder wie diese Initianten, Profiteure und Drahtzieher des ehrwürdigen Grossen Rates alle hießen, war.



0



0



0



0

Antworten

**Kurt Heller**, 27.08.2021, 13:38 Uhr



Es wäre besser, wenn diese Söldnergeschichten nicht immer noch verklärt würden.

Leider geht die Söldnerausstellung in Stans leider zu Ende. Es lohnt sich, sich dies Ausstellung und das erbärmliche Leben der Söldner sich vor Augen zu führen. Und statt die Söldnerherren/Adligen aus Luzern noch zu verherrlichen, mal Klartext zu reden und ihr Verhalten auf ihre erbärmliche Gier nach Geld zu reduzieren



2



0



0



0

Antworten

**Redaktion zentralplus**, 27.08.2021, 14:39 Uhr



Danke für den Input. Wir denken nicht, dass dieser Beitrag das Söldnerwesen verherrlicht.

Kritisch waren auch die letzten Beiträge zum Thema:

– <https://www.zentralplus.ch/blog/damals-blog/wie-soldaten-die-luzerner-patrizier-reich-machten>

- <https://www.zentralplus.ch/blog/damals-blog/ausnutz-und-ausgeblutet-wie-die-zuger-elitesich-reicherte>



0



0



0



0

## Answer

### LESEN SIE AUCH



#### Simani ist wegen Testspiel-Rot vier Spiele gesperrt

Denis Simanis rote Karte im Testspiel gegen die AC Bellinzona hat Folgen. Die SFL belegt den FCL-Innenverteidiger mit vier Spielsperren.



#### +++ Wahlsonntag +++ Live dabei mit zentralplus +++

zentralplus berichtet am Sonntag über die Regierungs- und Kantonsratswahlen. Ergebnisse, Reaktionen und Analysen gehen ab Mittag online.

### AKTUELLE NEWS

Profis unterstützen junge Rock- und Pop-Talente  
**Das Pilotprojekt «Tankstelle Musik» fördert Luzerner Bands. Der Wettbewerb hat dabei herzlich wenig mit pompösen Castingshows zu tun.**

Darum könnte der Chamer Kreisel im Dorf wichtig werden  
**Die Gemeinde Cham wird bald aufgewertet. Sobald die Umfahrung Cham-Hünenberg eröffnet wird, wird das Zentrum autoarm.**

### BLOGS

Erste Einblicke ins Fumetto Comic Festival Luzern 2022  
**Das Fumetto Comic Festival ist zurück und verwandelt Luzern in eine Comic-Hochburg! Vom 2. bis 10. April kannst du das Festival besuchen.**

Das schrieben Luzerner Medien zur Grenzschliessung 1942

**1942 entscheidet die Schweiz, ihre Grenzen für Flüchtlinge zu schliessen. In den Luzerner Medien wird der Beschluss heftig diskutiert.**

### «BACK THEN» BLOG



BLOG

«BACK THEN» BLOG

Lance forge on Lake Zug



BLOG

«BACK THEN» BLOG

The "moving youth" scene in Lucerne



BLOG

«BACK THEN» BLOG

When Pastor Müller railed against skinny dipping  
**Anyone who bathed in the water of**

We too had wars, as  
evidenced by the  
finds of weapons

GO TO ARTICLE

How Kurt Buff's death  
triggered the "Lucerne  
riot night".

GO TO ARTICLE

was once sentenced  
to a penitentiary

GO TO ARTICLE