

The Resident Ambassador

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

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Purpose of Thesis

This is a discussion of the evolution of the office of resident ambassador in fifteenth century Italy. The purpose of this paper is to make clear the extreme differences between the medieval ad hoc ambassador and the resident. To that end, the status of medieval ambassadors is briefly discussed, followed by a listing of possible precursors to Renaissance resident ambassadors. The actual evolution of the system in Italy is then outlined, and then the effects of this new system on diplomatic immunity is discussed in order to emphasize the ideological differences inherent in Renaissance diplomacy.

The Resident Ambassador

During the fifteenth century, diplomacy changed in a number of ways, in practice, in theory, in scope, in intensity, and, to some extent, in purpose. All of these changes are inextricably bound up in the new office of resident ambassador which began to appear in Italy in the second quarter of the century and then spread beyond the Alps around the turn of the sixteenth century. These new resident ambassadors are often treated as merely another development in the long line of political representatives that includes the late medieval envoy or herald, the Roman legatus, the classical Greek herald, and so on, but, in fact, the differences between the fifteenth (or sixteenth) century resident ambassador and any of the above are so striking that the office of resident ambassador should be considered a completely new development with few, if any, precedents and little connection to earlier ambassadors. Indeed, rulers of the time recognized this and often continued to send special ad hoc ambassadors even to courts where they maintained a resident.¹

A brief comparison of two representatives, one a medieval envoy and one a resident ambassador, should serve to make these differences apparent. First, let us look at a very famous medieval envoy, Geoffroy de Villehardouin who, at the turn of the thirteenth century, was one of the envoys entrusted with securing transport and aid from the Venetians for those Frenchmen who took up the cross of the ill-fated Fourth Crusade. Geoffroy

tells us, in his account of the conquest of Constantinople, that "they [the Crusaders] would send the best envoys they could find to make all arrangements for them, with full power to settle what should be done, exactly as if they were their lords in person."² The representative character of the envoys is typical of medieval practice and explains the considerable pomp and ceremony surrounding the arrival of ambassadors and care taken to provide them with a suitable retinue. For example, a Venetian act of 1284 requires all foreign ambassadors arriving at Venice to be met by four Venetian ambassadors, all of whom should be nobles, one of whom must be one of the heads of the Forty and the other who must be an advocate of the Commune.³ In other courts, members of the royal family might be sent to escort arriving ambassadors. As for suitable retinues, French ambassadors in 1440 were issued a safe-conduct by Henry VI that included 384 persons.⁴

That Villehardouin and his associates were given full power to negotiate and conclude is more unusual, however. Ordinarily, envoys were sent either to negotiate or conclude, but not both. "Negotiations were carried out by nuncii [envoys], the terms referred to the principals and approved by them, and the conventions could then be concluded by nuncii," but any agreement had to be accepted by the principals before a nuncius could conclude.⁵ It was not unknown, however, for envoys to carry credentials with full powers. These were usually referred to in the Latin as plena et libera potestas, mandatum, or procuratio

and reserved for matters of lesser importance.⁶

When the envoys arrived at Venice, they gave their letters of credence to the Doge.⁷ Letters of credence were what made medieval envoys official, assuring the recipient that the envoys were truly the representatives of their master and sometimes outlining their mission and the powers assigned to them. It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of such letters. In fact, they are directly linked to the original meaning of the very word "diplomacy." It comes from the Greek diploun, which means "to fold" and refers to the passports and way-bills of the Roman Empire. These were double metal plates, folded, and sewn together. They were called "diplomas" and were as essential to the Roman legatus as letters of credence were for the medieval (and, indeed, Renaissance) ambassador.⁸ Letters of credence were used throughout the period under discussion for official agents, but, later on, they were usually supplemented with detailed written instructions. As European nations became more centralized and bureaucratic, their envoys were given less and less leeway about their specific mission and powers.

Another thing that should be noted about Villehardouin's mission, though he does not mention it, is that he and his party were probably the guests of the Doge. The reason for this is closely linked to the perceived purpose of ambassadors in the medieval period. It is also closely linked to the medieval logic behind diplomatic immunity. Bernard du Rosier, who wrote

a treatise on ambassadors in 1436, claimed that anyone who hinders an ambassador or prevents him in any way from performing his duties deserves punishment, for the ambassador is not just in the service of one particular king. His duty is to the higher cause of peace throughout the Respublica Christiana.⁹ This Respublica Christiana is a particularly foreign concept to most modern ears. According to Franklin Le Van Baumer "Christendom is a European church-state whose members, whatever their patria, are subject to a central government. Christendom is a universal monarchy, specifically the divine-right papal monarchy, whose imperatives, to be sure, do not extend to the purely political affairs of princes but which clearly possesses within the spiritual realm a potestas jurisdictionis as well as a potestas ordinis."¹⁰ Because ambassadors were said to serve the good of all, not just their principals, it was the duty of the individual who accepted them to see to their upkeep. In the later period of the middle ages, Venice, as well as many other nations, was forced to lessen the number of embassies it would receive because of the cost of doing so.¹¹

Now let us turn to a typical Renaissance resident ambassador, Dr. Roderigo Gonzalvo de Puebla, the first Spanish resident ambassador to England. He was a man of middling social status, quite unlike the Dukes and Archbishops who make up the rolls of medieval ambassadors. He was a doctor of laws, which was increasingly necessary as Renaissance embassies lost their figureheads and the clerks took over. He was also a canon out

of orders, a useful thing to be in a time when diplomatic immunity was better honored in the breach than the observance.¹² However, as time passed, churchmen were sent less frequently for they occasionally concerned themselves more with the pope's agenda than with their king's.

De Puebla, I think, could not be accused of this. He was first sent in 1487 to negotiate an alliance with England against France, but he was not accredited as resident until 1495. He was instrumental in negotiating the marriage between Prince Arthur and the Princess Catherine. Until Henry VIII decided to annul his marriage to Catherine of Aragon, which was certainly no fault of de Puebla's, relations between Spain and England were on a surer footing than they had been for almost a hundred years before.¹³

As a resident, de Puebla's situation was far different from that of Villehardouin. He arrived at the English court with letters of credence, but no instructions, written or oral, besides maintaining the English alliance against France. While he was the one who negotiated the marriage contract of Catherine, it was a special envoy who came to make final revisions and conclude the negotiations. In short, de Puebla's powers were severely limited, a situation typical of the resident ambassador who was far from his court for long periods of time and, therefore, ill-informed of his nation's policies. This was particularly true of the ambassadors of Philip II of Spain, who liked to handle all correspondence himself, meaning that

ambassadors could expect tardy replies or no replies at all to their reports. The former role of the ambassador, that of negotiating treaties and alliances, was largely left to the special ad hoc ambassadors who had done the job 200 years before. The resident ambassador had an entirely new role, that of information gathering. In addition, de Puebla served as an unofficial economic consul to the Spanish merchant community in London, a role no medieval ambassador would or could have taken on.¹⁴

Another striking contrast between Villehardouin and de Puebla is in the matter of money. Villehardouin was guested by the Doge, but de Puebla received nothing from the English court. He was paid from Spain, and his pay was always in arrears. This was typical of the resident ambassador, who was unable to petition for his payment because he was often out of the sight and out of the mind of his principal. The post of resident ambassador in this period more often than not made a rich man poor and a middle class man, such as de Puebla, a debtor. In fact, de Puebla was once threatened with debtor's prison in England, but he was pardoned by the king.¹⁵ There is only one man that I know of who managed to make money on the office, Eustache Chapuys, Charles V's ambassador to Henry VIII from 1529 to 1545, who made enough in his career to found two colleges before his death.¹⁶

There is, of course, much more that could be said about each of these men, but the preceding should be enough to show

some of the many differences between medieval and Renaissance ambassadors. The medieval ambassador was, in his person, the direct representative of his principal, entitled to all of the pomp and ceremony that that implied. His function was that of a peacemaker, and his role was very public. The Renaissance ambassador, on the other hand, served as an information agent for his king, not a direct representative. He did not function as the mouthpiece of his principal but was, rather, his own man. As an information agent, he was no longer a public figure and received little in the way of ceremonials and respects. Also, his role often forced him to take actions against the general peace, a situation that undermined the theoretical basis of his immunity. He was, in short, the only soldier on the front lines in times of peace.

It is necessary now to ask how such a radical change could take place in so short a time. In Italy, the shift took place between the last quarter of the fourteenth century and the Peace of Lodi in 1454. Beyond the Alps, it took even less time. Somewhere between the French invasion of Italy in 1494 and the middle of the sixteenth century the resident system became firmly entrenched. Many possible precedents have been put forth to explain how people could come to accept such a change so quickly. The humanists of the time, perhaps embarrassed by the newness of the thing, postulated that the residents were the successors of the Roman legati, representatives sent from the Roman provinces to the Senate who, after the fall of the Empire, were

replaced by the representatives of the new Christian states to the Pope. The fact, unfortunately, is that there were no resident embassies at the papacy before the 1430s and that they were discouraged even there until the sixteenth century.¹⁷

The most promising case for a precedent to resident embassies is made on behalf of the Venetian baiulo, the Most Serene Republic's economic consul at Constantinople. Though this was essentially an economic post, it often happened that the same person was elected both ambassador and baiulo at the same time. However, it is also often clear that these two posts were held by two different men.¹⁸ The electing of just a single man to both posts is more likely the result of the great distance to travel and the amount of time involved. Venetian patricians eligible and willing to take such an arduous post were very likely few and far in between. Because of the great amount of Venetian merchant activity in the Eastern Empire the baiulo would surely have had little time to spend on the kind of protracted diplomatic negotiations that went on between the Empire and Venice. Furthermore, it is worth noting that Venice was rather slow to pick up on the concept of resident ambassadors, not sending one to its longstanding ally Florence until 1448. If, indeed, the baiulo is a valid precedent, then Venice should have been one of the first to send residents.

However, it is not to Venice but to Milan that one must look to find the first resident ambassadors. The reason for this is that Milan was the first to find itself in a position

that called for resident ambassadors, for it was not precedents but circumstances that made the first residents possible. The creation of proper circumstances took hundreds of years, beginning in the eleventh century when the popes first challenged the power of the Holy Roman Empire. This first defiance led to hundreds of years of conflict between the two powers that eventually broke the power of feudalism in northern Italy.

Without solid overlordship, the small communities of northern Italy broke up into competing city-states, each considering itself to be a nation in its own right with its own army and its own form of governance. These forms of governance, being outside the norm of feudalism, were abnormalities in medieval Europe without the all important religious sanction of kingship. As such, they were inherently unstable. Each ruling group was constantly threatened by rivals and internal dissension, much like the governments of the third world are today. Of course, today governmental legitimacy is more a matter of legality and tradition than religion; but the effect is the same. Revolution was common, and the backing of the masses, especially the army, was essential. In order to quell internal dissension, the rulers of these new Italian states resorted to an age old solution, wars of expansion. They gave the army something useful to do and wealth to the citizenry. And so Italy became a battleground. Of course, all these little wars were fought on an "Italian scale," without the bloody destruction of the Hundred Years' War happening at

the same time far to the north. Still, where war is rampant, so is diplomacy. It was only natural for a state that had constant dealings with another to leave a permanent ambassador rather than go to the expense of sending a new ambassador each week, or each month even. There was also another new and unusual development that this constant warfare caused that had an effect on Italian diplomacy, the rule of the condottieri. As warfare became more and more an Italian way of life, it was increasingly left to mercenary troops headed by warlords known as condottieri. These mercenaries and their leaders were more concerned with making their own livelihood than dying for the sake of a foreign government. Because the rulers of the Italian states were well aware of this, they began to place more faith in diplomacy than warfare, feeling that the native diplomat was more trustworthy than the foreign condottieri.¹⁹

This alone, however, does not completely explain the phenomenon. After all, in the late thirteenth century, James II of Aragon, in his attempt to contain Frederick of Sicily, maintained an ambassador at Rome for ten years, and, in the early fourteenth century, the kings of England kept procurators at Paris for just as long in an attempt to settle the feudal difficulties between England and France. In each of these cases, the intensity of diplomatic relations resulted in ambassadors being left at their posts for long periods of time. However, both sets of representatives were eventually sent home, never to be replaced. Once their mission was complete, be it with

success or failure, they left; but, if a resident ambassador has to be defined, he should be defined as an ambassador who remains regardless of whether or not he has any specific duty to perform. There was another requirement to be fulfilled before intensive diplomacy could produce residents, and that was size.

The small size of the Italian political arena contributed to the creation of resident embassies in two ways. The first was that it allowed for a better organization of resources. In the large northern states such as France, or even the comparatively small England, the sheer amount of land area to be governed discouraged highly organized central governance. Even active foreign offices, such as that of England in the thirteenth century, only had the resources to support a few diplomats and one or two clerks, hardly enough to maintain the amount of paperwork a resident could produce.²⁰ For example, one Venetian ambassador resident at Rome wrote 394 dispatches in 365 days.²¹ Money was also a problem. Diplomacy is expensive, and feudal kings, who could only effectively organize their own domains, had little money to dole out. Personnel was a problem. The great nobles who had once enjoyed the honor of representing the king's person to other states were unlikely to jump at the chance to remain, with little pay and less respect, at a hostile court for long periods of time, and the northern kings had yet to begin tapping the endless resources of their growing urban middle class.

In Italy, all this was different. The small area of space

to be organized by the central government allowed its rulers to organize much more effectively. They were able to extract taxes and personnel from all of their domains, not just their personal holdings, and, with all of their government under their direct control, not that of their vassals, they were able to effectively organize extensive diplomatic corps and a well staffed foreign office, capable of handling the amount of paperwork generated by residents.

In addition to this, the small size of the Italian peninsula made communication between a resident and his foreign office much quicker and easier. If, indeed, information gathering was a prime office of the resident, then it was essential that he be able to transmit that information home while it was still useful to his government. Accurate information on travel times in this age is difficult to find, but let us suppose that it took four days to get from Florence to Venice and four weeks to get from England to Madrid. If this is the case, who is better informed and more able to make accurate decisions, the ruler of England or the ruler of Florence? The answer is clear. Expense of travel was also a factor. Not only did the Italian states have more liquid assets to fund their diplomacy, it cost less. The cost of sending a courier from Florence to Venice was small enough to allow messages to be sent nearly every day. On the other hand, sending from Madrid to London, which, for diplomatic couriers, often involved a sea voyage in order to avoid crossing French lands, was considerably more expensive.

Far from being able to send every day, an English ambassador in Madrid might save his daily letters for weeks or months before sending them off, a practice which inevitably made many of the letters obsolete before they were ever sent.

Italy had one last advantage over its northern neighbors when it came to diplomacy, the Renaissance humanists. The growth of humanist learning in the early stages of the Renaissance was geared mainly toward a sense of civic duty that hearkened back to the Roman Republic. These men were training themselves to be effective governors of their city-states, and many of them served in public offices. Many also served as diplomats. Among the Florentine diplomatic corps can be found such names as Machiavelli, Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Guicciardini. With learned diplomats such as these, it is easy to see why diplomacy should flower in the homeland of Renaissance humanism.²²

And so, a number of circumstances have been listed that were necessary before the office of resident ambassador could take shape, a high level of diplomatic contact, efficient organization of resources and personnel, and short traveling distances. In the late fourteenth century, Milan fulfilled all of these requirements. In this period, the Visconti holdings were unified under Duke Giangaleazzo. With no natural boundaries to contain him, he then proceeded to expand across Lombardy, Tuscany, and the Romagna. "Giangaleazzo used diplomacy largely to divide and baffle his enemies and victims as a prelude,

accompaniment and conclusion for each of his triumphant, aggressive pounces, and as a shelter behind which to gather strength for the next move."²³ To organize the high level of diplomacy Giangaleazzo used, he had created a foreign office under first his secretary, Pasquino Capelli, and then his chamberlain, Francesco Barbavara. As far as money is concerned, he had plenty of that, too. As the sole ruler of Milan, he had unrestricted use of its revenues, whereas the rulers of the republics of northern Italy were often shackled when it came to money.

And so, according to Mattingly, it was Duke Giangaleazzo of Milan who first began to use resident ambassadors. The first was sent to Mantua before 1375 and lasted until 1390. He also maintained agents at Pisa, Ferrara, Perugia, and Siena. These were, however, unofficial agents, not accredited ambassadors. They carried no papers of any kind and had no official status. By their contemporaries they are often referred to as "the duke's man here," "the duke's agent," or "the duke's spy." As unofficial agents, they could easily be mistaken for spies, but, since their line of work, their position, and their duke were all well known, they were not spies in the sense of the secret information agents used by Giangaleazzo's son, Filippo Maria Visconti.²⁴

However, not everyone agrees that these were, indeed the first resident ambassadors. The most accepted candidate for the "first resident ambassador" is Nicodemus dei Pontremoli,

ambassador from Francesco Sforza to Cosimo de Medici, who took on his post in 1446 and stayed on for 20 years.²⁵ However, with Sforza's position in Italy being somewhat precarious, Pontremoli was as much an unofficial agent as those of Giangaleazzo 50 years before until 1450, when Sforza was finally in a political position to accredit an official ambassador. By that time, there were other official, accredited resident ambassadors in other Italian cities.

Much of the difficulty with trying to identify a "first resident ambassador" has to do with how to define a resident ambassador in the first place. Mattingly, whose work Renaissance Diplomacy is still the definitive work in English on this subject, defines the resident ambassador as, "a regularly accredited envoy with full diplomatic status sent to remain at his post until recalled, in general charge of the interests of his principal."²⁶ However, this definition would probably include the ambassadors of England to France in the early 14th century and the ambassadors of James II of Aragon to the Pope in the late 13th century. After all, in both of these cases, ambassadors remained at their post, protecting the interests of their principal, until recalled, and yet Mattingly rejects both of these cases as even being possible precedents for residents, much less residents themselves. Clearly, he means more than he says. Paolo Selmi has expanded on his definition a bit by saying the office, "begins to exist when one has the institution of a permanent officium of which the ambassador,

provided with a general mandate, is the titular during his assignment; and when the existence of such an officium is not diminished if it should be temporarily deprived of a titular, when such a vacancy creates the necessity of nominating a successor."²⁷ In other words, the office exists regardless of whether or not there is an officer to perform it. This goes farther than Mattingly, for, by this definition, the ambassadors of Giangaleazzo, who were, in the first place, not formally accredited and, in the second place, not replaced after the death of Giangaleazzo, could not have been the first residents, as Mattingly says. To fit Selmi's definition, we must skip farther ahead in Milanese diplomatic history, to 1425 when Filippo Maria first exchanged residents with Sigismund, King of Hungary and Holy Roman Emperor elect. This embassy was the result of an alliance and lasted from 1425 until 1432. During the few years of this embassy, Filippo Maria accredited no less than nine ambassadors to the post, and so, while the post remained continuous, as Selmi insists, the personnel changed, indicating that the officium was not diminished by the occasional lack of a titular.²⁸ Nevertheless, I feel neither of these two definitions goes quite far enough, for, though the embassy to Sigismund is a permanent resident embassy according to both Mattingly and Selmi, it lasted only 7 years. Seven years hardly seems very permanent. The reason many of these early permanent resident embassies lasted only 10 to 20 years at the most is that they were, like the embassy to Sigismund, the result of

alliances, and, in a volatile political climate like that of Italy in the fifteenth century, alliances simply didn't tend to last very long. In a way, these embassies of alliance were much the same as the ad hoc embassies of James II of Aragon and the English kings mentioned above. They did have a specific aim, and the residents there had a very specific job, to maintain the alliance and coordinate the maneuvers of the two allied powers. How is this so different from James II maintaining an embassy of alliance with the Pope against Frederick of Sicily? There is no real difference, and so I would propose an addition to the above definitions. A permanent diplomatic resident is the titular of an office such as those described above with the addition that the office is one that remains regardless of whether or not there is a specific strategic advantage to be gained by it. In other words, it endures even when there is no real contact between the two nations involved, no military alliance, no legal proceedings, no economic treaties. For an embassy of this kind, one must jump ahead in the diplomatic history of Italy to the Peace of Lodi in 1454, but first, let us trace the development of what I will call the precursors of resident agents from Giangaleazzo to the War of the Milanese Succession, which ended in the Peace of Lodi.

The swift advance of Milan on the other city-states of Italy resulted in a flurry of alliances, and diplomatic activity, among her rivals. This was the period in which Coluccio Salutati reformed the Florentine chancery, and both the Florentines and

Venetians, allies against Milan, stepped up their diplomatic activity dramatically. However, neither of these states sent resident ambassadors, even by Mattingly's definition. The reason for this is probably mostly due to the nature of government in each of these states. Venice was governed by a complex bureaucracy. Such a bureaucratic system demands that things be done through official channels, and, since official residents were as yet unknown and the kind of unofficial agents that Giangaleazzo used were unacceptable, the Venetians were forced to make do with their traditional, official ad hoc ambassadors, which they merely sent with increasing frequency. In Florence, much the same thing occurred. Florence was sometimes a republic and sometimes under the shadow of the Medicis during this century. Under the republic, it had the same difficulties as Venice. When the Medicis were in power, residents were rarely used because the Medici bank had agents in every capital of Europe and all of the city-states of Italy, so the Medicis had no real need to send resident ambassadors. Any functions the ambassador might perform could just as easily have been performed by a Medici bank representative who was already on the spot, and so, the two major hotbeds of Italian diplomacy in the early Renaissance were slow to take on the most radical change in diplomatic practice since the Romans, only exchanging ambassadors in 1448.²⁹

In the instability that accompanied Filippo Maria's rise to power, both Florence and Venice expanded, absorbing some

of their smaller neighbors. Meanwhile, to the south, in 1442, Alfonso the Magnanimous of Aragon finally ousted the Angevins from Naples. His power was never complete, and his efforts to organize and centralize power were continually blocked by the Angevin sympathizers, but the sheer size of Naples in relation to the other states of Italy made it a power to contend with once enough of its internal dissension had been eliminated to allow it to look north towards the rich Italian city-states.

The Papacy was also beginning to stabilize. The Great Schism of the church was finally ended in 1420 when Martin V returned to Rome. A republic was briefly revived in 1434, but, by a year later, Pope Eugenius IV was able to reassert some control, and, although the more distant holdings of Rome remained for the most part independent, the succeeding popes were able to use their moral authority, and judicious use of condottieri, to once again become a major power in Italian politics.

And so, by the 1440s, there were five major powers in Italian politics: the Papacy, Naples, Milan, Florence, and Venice. In between these states were many small, semi-independent "buffer" states, usually allied with their most powerful neighbor. For many years, these five major states existed in an uneasy equilibrium, none of them strong enough to battle all the others. Alliances were fairly stable, with Florence and Venice facing off against Milan. It was at this time that Venice first began sending resident agents. The first was probably Zacharias Bembo, sent to the papacy in 1435. This

was, as all of the ones before it, an embassy of alliance. They also sent to the duke of Savoy and the Marquis of Montferrat.³⁰

The War of the Milanese Succession, 1452 to 1454, which was the true birthplace of the permanent resident embassy, was set off by the activities of Francesco Sforza, a condottieri who made a small state for himself from papal holdings and then married the daughter of Filippo Maria Visconti of Milan. He was soon turned on by his father-in-law, Pope Eugenius IV, and the lord of Rimini, Sigismondo Malatesta. Desperate for aid, he began to send out semi-official agents, among whom was Nicodemo dei Pontremoli, who was mentioned above. Although Pontremoli was probably not the first resident ambassador, he has another, almost equally important, role in Italian diplomacy. He was instrumental in convincing Cosimo d'Medici to abandon his age old alliance with Venice and ally himself instead with Milan, under Sforza's rule, against Venice.³¹ We shall probably never know exactly why Cosimo made this decision, but the effects were quick and drastic.

A complete and total reorganization of the alliance system of Italy was necessary to balance the new combined power of Milan and Florence. The war that this change spurred, the War of the Milanese Succession, ensured that this reorganization was done very quickly, and the fact that there was a war going on necessitated not only diplomatic contact but continuous diplomatic contact among allies, for it was necessary that all

the allies coordinate their military efforts to assure victory.

How the alliances shifted is not really important. What is important is that, when they shifted, they spread residents throughout Italy. Every ally had resident embassies with every other ally, and these were fully accredited embassies, not semi-official agents. However, they were still embassies of alliance and could very easily have gone home after the war was over if it had not been for the special nature of the treaty that ended the war in 1454, the Peace of Lodi.

The new pope, Pope Nicholas V, managed to remain neutral throughout the war, and he was the main instigator of the peace process. Still, peace might have taken much longer if it had not been for the two major events of 1453, the fall of Constantinople and the end of the Hundred Years' War.

The fall of Constantinople caused a flurry of alarm in the Italian states, and fear of the Turk was at an all time high. Many fully expected Venice or Naples to be the next victim of Turkish attack, and so, naturally, the Italian states, in fear for their independence as Christian states, were ready to forget their internal differences, for the present at least, and present a united front against the common foe.

The end of the Hundred Years' War presented a similar threat to Italian independence. For hundreds of years the Italians had been calling in the aid of the French in their squabbles, and, usually, the French came and left, leaving little destruction in their wake, but now, with the war with England

finally resolved, the French were able to turn their full attention to the Italian states. The Sforza-Medici alliance had called them in this time, but, faced with the battle hardened veterans of the Hundred Years' War massing on their northern border, even they were daunted and ready to make any peace that would keep the French out for good.

And so the Peace of Lodi was settled, but, in order to ensure the independence of Italy against stronger aggressors, the Most Holy League was attached to it. This League first consisted of Florence, Venice, and Milan, but all of the major Italian powers eventually entered into it. It was a defensive alliance, good for 25 years, stating that each state would protect the Italian holdings of all the others and that any aggression by one partner would be opposed by all of the others.³² But an alliance of this kind would require vigilance from all its partners, for none of them really expected that the others had truly given up their aggression. And so, rather than ending the system of resident embassies in Italy, the end of the war saw the spread of the system throughout the peninsula, among allies and enemies alike. This was the true beginning of permanent resident embassies. In order to keep the balance of power that the Most Holy League required, these embassies were maintained no matter how icy, neutral, or warm the relations between the states might be. From this point on, they were only interrupted by all out war.

Which brings us at last to the role of these new resident

ambassadors. If their purpose was not to create or maintain an alliance, as it had been in earlier years, then what was it? According to Nicolson, "they bribed courtiers; they stimulated and financed rebellions; they encouraged opposition parties; they intervened in the most subversive ways in the internal affairs of the countries to which they were accredited; they lied, they spied, they stole."³³ While this may be a bit extreme, it is true that the office became an one of information gathering and behind-the-scenes maneuvering for position, and its sole purpose was not the good of all Christendom, as that of the medieval ambassador, but only the good of its own state. This is the major difference between the medieval and Renaissance ambassador, and it was a difference that changed diplomacy forever.

The spread of resident embassies throughout northern Europe in the next century is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is to that time that we must look to see the results of the drastic changes that resident embassies brought about. The relative secularism of the Italian states (the papacy excluded, of course) made the change there not so drastic, but, north of the Alps where the idea of Christendom was much stronger, it caused a crisis of conscience. If the resident ambassador existed only for the good of his own state, what place, then, did Christendom have in Europe? As the great states of northern Europe became more recognizably modern in outlook during this period, this question was asked about many of the new ideas

and institutions that began to appear. For the resident ambassador, the question was inextricably bound up with diplomatic immunity.

The medieval ambassador's immunity rested upon two things, his personal representation of his principal, and his duty to Christendom. As the representative of his principal's person, he was as immune to interference as if he were the king or duke himself. As an angel of mercy working for the good of Christendom, it was against God Himself to delay or distress him, but the Renaissance resident ambassador had neither of these things on which to rest his immunity. He did not represent his principal's person, and he was often clearly not working for the good of all Christendom. So on what, then, did his immunity rest?

Well, at first it rested on little more than tradition and was as little honored. In the early years of resident diplomacy beyond the Alps, ambassadors were often threatened, jailed, or worse, the most infamous case being that of the French ambassadors, Antonio Rincon and Cesare Fregoso, who were probably killed by agents of Charles V in 1541. Charles V never admitted to their murder, but it was generally agreed by all that they had forfeited their immunity because they were going to conclude an alliance with the Turk against the greater good of Christendom.³⁴ This is only one of numerous cases of violation of diplomatic immunity. One of the more bizarre cases concerns the secret Treaty of Vervins between France and Spain. The

articles were kept strictly confidential, but 150 years after the event, Leopold Von Ranke discovered a perfect copy in the Venetian archives. Apparently, the French courier carrying the articles to Spain:

"was drugged in an inn in the south of France, the proprietor having been bribed. How delicate the operation was may be appreciated by the fact that the text of the treaty was within a soldered and sealed metal tube within the courier's pouch, which also was sealed and the pouch chained to the person of the courier. After the copy was made the text was restored and tube and pouch resealed with forged seals so perfectly fashioned that not even the Foreign Office in Madrid had any suspicion that the contents had been tampered with, when the courier turned it in to the chief clerk."³⁵

Clearly, the old theory of diplomatic immunity was becoming virtually useless in reality and needed to be replaced.

Its replacement was directly related to the Reformation. The Reformation wrought many great changes in Europe, and, among other things, it was directly responsible for the theory of extritoriality that was to replace old theories of diplomatic immunity until the nineteenth century. Resident ambassadors lived for long periods on foreign soil, often in lands of foreign religion as well. It was essential to their principals that they be allowed to worship in the manner of their homeland, even while in the domain of another church. In fact, this issue caused a complete break in diplomatic relations between Spain and England in the late sixteenth century.³⁶ The solution, practiced in reality long before it was formulated in theory, was a rule of international law which "derives support from the legal fiction that an ambassador is not an inhabitant of

the country to which he is accredited, but of the country of his origin and whose sovereign he represents, and within whose territory, in contemplation of law, he always resides."³⁷ This theory solved the problem of religious toleration in diplomacy, but it is hardly a solution that a medieval ambassador could have understood.

There is no reference here to the good of Christendom, no reference to religion at all, and so we can see how very far it is from medieval to Renaissance diplomacy. The good of the state has replaced the good of Christendom. The rule of law has replaced the rule of God, and the ambassador is "a man sent to lie abroad for his country's good" rather than a bringer of peace and goodwill. Of course, this is an oversimplification of the complex situation resident ambassadors found themselves in, but it is enough, I think, to show that the resident ambassador was a new breed, completely divorced from his medieval ancestors, facing a new world from a completely different vantage point.

Notes

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3. Donald E. Queller, Early Venetian Legislation on Ambassadors (Geneve: Librairie Droz, 1966), 49.
4. Queller, Office, 185-186.
5. Ibid., 16.
6. Francois Louis Ganshof, The Middle Ages: A History of International Relations (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 297.
7. Joinville and Villehardouin, Chronicles, 32.
8. Harold Nicolson, Diplomacy (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 26.
9. Garret Mattingly, Renaissance Diplomacy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971), 45.
10. Franklin Le Van Baumer, "The Church of England and the Common Corps of Christendom," The Journal of Modern History 16, no. 1 (March 1944): 2.
11. Queller, Venetian, 54-55.
12. Garret Mattingly, "The Reputation of Doctor De Puebla," English Historical Review 55 (January 1940): 28.
13. Ibid., 32.
14. Ibid., 34.
15. Ibid., 31.
16. Garret Mattingly, "A Humanist Ambassador," The Journal of Modern History 4, no. 2 (June 1932): 175-176.
17. Mattingly, Renaissance Diplomacy, 65.
18. Queller, Office, 81.
19. G.E. do Nascimento e Silva, Diplomacy in International Law (Leiden: A.W. Sijthoff, 1972), 21.

Notes (cont.)

20. The best source I've found on this is G.P. Cuttino, English Diplomatic Administration: 1259-1339 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

21. J.E. Neale, "The Diplomatic Envoy," History 13, no. 51 (October 1928): 204.

22. G.E. do Nascimento e Silva, Diplomacy, 21.

23. Mattingly, Renaissance Diplomacy, 74.

24. *Ibid.*, 72-75.

25. G.E. do Nascimento e Silva, Diplomacy, 22.

26. Mattingly, Renaissance Diplomacy, 64.

27. Quoted in Grant V. McClanahan, Diplomatic Immunity: Principles, Practices, Problems (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 25-26.

28. Mattingly, Renaissance Diplomacy, 76-77.

29. *Ibid.*, 80.

30. *Ibid.*, 79-80.

31. Garret Mattingly, "The First Resident Embassies: Medieval Italian Origins of Modern Diplomacy," Speculum 12, no. 4 (October 1937): 431.

32. *Ibid.*, 432.

33. Harold Nicolson, Diplomacy, 43-44.

34. Linda and Marsha Frey, "Fatal Diplomacy, 1541," History Today 40 (August 1990): 10-15.

35. James Westfall Thompson and Padover, Saul K., Secret Diplomacy: Espionage and Cryptography 1500-1815 (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1965), 54-55.

36. Gary M. Bell, "John Man: The Last Elizabethan Resident Ambassador in Spain," Sixteenth Century Journal 7, no. 2 (October 1976): 88.

37. Quoted in Clifton E. Wilson, Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1967), 6.