

This volume is the first attempt at a comparative reconstruction of the foreign policy and diplomacy of the major Italian states in the early modern period.

The various contributions reveal the instruments and forms of foreign relations in the Italian peninsula. They also show a range of different case-studies and models which share the values and political concepts of the cultural context of diplomatic practice in the *ancien régime*. While Venice, the Papal States, the Duchy of Savoy, Florence (later the Duchy of Tuscany), Mantua, Modena, and later the Kingdom of Naples may be considered minor states in the broader European context, their diplomatic activity was equal to that of the major powers. This reconstruction of their ambassadors, their secretaries, and their ceremonial offers a new interpretation of the political history of early modern Italy.

DANIELA FRIGO is Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science, University of Trieste.

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POLITICS AND DIPLOMACY IN EARLY MODERN ITALY

THE STRUCTURE OF DIPLOMATIC
PRACTICE, 1450–1800

Edited by
DANIELA FRIGO

Translated by
ADRIAN BELTON



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INTRODUCTION

DANIELA FRIGO

After Italian historiography's long disaffection with themes concerning foreign policy and diplomacy, a number of important studies have recently directed historians' attention to the problem of the origins of diplomacy and to the ties between diplomatic forms and the political and institutional development of the Italian states in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Thus a manifest gap has been filled in studies on the Italian peninsula in the modern age, where the history of diplomacy displays a curious pattern. On the one hand stands a long tradition of inquiry into the 'Italian origins' of modern diplomacy, identified in the closely knit web of political and diplomatic relations that prepared, accompanied and guaranteed the Peace of Lodi of 1454. Also identified with that Peace is the creation of the first 'balance of power'¹ system used by historians as their model to explain and interpret subsequent critical episodes in the history of international relations, from the Treaty of Westphalia to the Treaty of Utrecht.² On the other hand, this focus on

¹ On the theme of 'balance of power' in European thought see M. Bazzoli, *L'equilibrio di potenza nell'età moderna. Dal Cinquecento al Congresso di Vienna*, Milan, 1998. See also L. Dehio, *Equilibrio o egemonia. Considerazioni sopra un problema fondamentale della storia politica moderna*, Brescia, 1964; G. N. Clark, 'European Equilibrium in the Seventeenth Century', in L. W. Martin (ed.), *Diplomacy in Modern European History*, New York, 1966, pp. 23–30; G. Pillinini, *Storia del principio di equilibrio*, Venice, 1973; G. Livet, *L'équilibre européen de la fin du xve à la fin du xvme siècle*, Paris, 1976; F. Chabod, *Idea di Europa e politica dell'equilibrio*, edited by L. Azzolini, Bologna, 1995, pp. 3–31. On the situation in Italy after the Peace of Lodi see G. Pillinini, *Il sistema degli stati italiani 1454–1494*, Venice, 1970.

² This is a view shared by the classic studies on the topic: D. J. Hill, *A History of Diplomacy in the International Development of Europe*, 3 vols., London, 1921–5 (1st edn 1905–14); L. van Der Essen, *La Diplomatie. Ses origines et son organisation jusqu'à la fin de l'Ancien Régime*, Brussels, 1953; H. Nicholson, *The Evolution of Diplomatic Method*, London, 1954; G. Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, London, 1955; E. Luard, *The Balance of Power. The System of International Relations 1648–1815*, London, 1992. A recent synthesis which adopts the same approach and proposes the 'long duration' of

the theme of the 'origins' has given rise to a historiographical bias which has induced research to concentrate on the medieval antecedents of the diplomatic institutions and functions, and to neglect subsequent forms and events. Consequently, we have numerous good-quality studies on fourteenth- and fifteenth-century diplomacy³ in relation to the evolution of the communal and seigneurial institutions,⁴ and on the transition from medieval figures of diplomatic representation (*nuncii*, *procuratores*, *legati*)⁵ to that of the ambassador. And we also have the numerous digressions on diplomacy in histories of international relations and manuals on the history of international law.⁶

And yet, as regards the institutions, forms and 'practices' of diplomacy between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, the attention of historians has long focused on the Venetian ambassadors and on the figure of the papal nuncio, while little or nothing has been written on the diplomatic representations of the other Italian states. Neglected as a consequence have been numerous aspects of the foreign relations and diplomatic apparatuses of the Italian principalities and republics: the use of diplomacy by the small states to pursue their political designs and aspirations; the creation of offices to manage and control foreign policy; the emergence of rules, norms and privileges for ambassadors; the substantial nobiliary or patrician monopoly of the diplomatic service; the development of the functions and forms of diplomatic representation; the introduction of new 'techniques' of negotiation; the forms assumed by correspondence and the circulation of information among courts; the reception of the first formulation of *jus gentium* and of international law; the role of the Italian principalities in European international affairs in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In addition the fact that such a classic study of these themes as Mattingly's *Renaissance Diplomacy* (1955) has never been translated into Italian is indicative of the reluctance of Italian historiography to address the history of diplomacy. Nevertheless, there has been no lack of recommendations for a revival of a study of these matters. Almost thirty years ago, Marino Berengo called for a revision of Italy's political history in the light of new ideas

the forms of modern diplomacy is N. S. Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy, 1450–1919*, London, 1993.

³ Besides the studies cited in the following notes see Dupré Theseider, *Niccolò Machiavelli diplomatico*, vol. 1: *L'arte della diplomazia nel Quattrocento*, Como, 1945.

⁴ A. K. Isaacs, 'Sui rapporti interstatali in Italia dal medioevo all'età moderna', in G. Chittolini, A. Molho and P. Schiera (eds.), *Origini dello Stato. Processi di formazione statale in Italia fra medioevo ed età moderna*, Bologna, 1994, pp. 113–32.

⁵ D. E. Queller, *The Office of Ambassador in the Middle Ages*, Princeton, 1967. But see also the essay by Fubini in this book.

⁶ See e.g. E. Serra, *Istituzioni di storia dei trattati e politica internazionale*, Bologna, 1970.

and new historiographical methods,⁷ citing developments in the rest of Europe, where the history of diplomacy had constantly been a major area of historical investigation able to update its research issues and tools of inquiry.⁸ One reason for the scant interest of Italian historians in the matter is perhaps an enduring interpretation of Italian history between the later fifteenth and early eighteenth centuries which has only recently been superseded. I refer to the interpretation of these two centuries as largely, if not exclusively, characterized by an economic and political 'decadence' which affected – albeit in different forms and at different times – all the states of the peninsula.⁹ Distant from the institutional dynamics that distinguished the formation of the great European monarchies, marginal with respect to the pattern of international arrangements decided by the great powers, tied to the Spanish imperial system, and forced into antiquated forms of feudal dependence on the Empire, throughout the modern age the Italian states – according to this interpretation – were characterized by institutional models, political forms and economic developments entirely 'peripheral' to European history.

In recent years, however, this conventional view has been challenged by a more careful examination of events in the peninsula during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the concept of 'decadence' itself has apparently lost much of its explanatory capacity. The revision began in economic historiography, where discussion of proto-industrialization showed that the productive and commercial trends of the period were not entirely of negative sign, but were instead part of a broader and

⁷ 'If by now this constant clash of armies and intrigue by ambassadors and sovereigns has little to say to our historical culture, the refusal to examine the reasons for the rise and decline of a state, for its orientation towards one or other alliance, within this or that sphere of influence, may render all other research meaningless, distorting it into the reconstruction of inert fragments': M. Berengo, 'Il Cinquecento', in *La storiografia italiana negli ultimi vent'anni*, proceedings of the I Congresso degli storici italiani, Milan, 1970, p. 512.

⁸ A. O. Sarkissian (ed.), *Studies in Diplomatic History and Historiography*, London, 1961; C. H. Carter, 'The Ambassadors of Early Modern Europe: Patterns of Diplomatic Representation in the Early Seventeenth Century', in Carter (ed.), *From Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation. Essays in Honor of Garrett Mattingly*, New York, 1965, pp. 269–95; W. Roosen, *The Age of Louis XIV: the Rise of Modern Diplomacy*, Cambridge, Mass., 1976; W. Roosen, 'A New Way of Looking at Early Modern Diplomacy – Quantification', *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History*, 5 (1978), pp. 1–13; M. Keens-Soper and K. Schweizer, *François de Callières: The Art of Diplomacy*, Leicester University Press, 1983; *Armées et diplomatie dans l'Europe du XVII^e siècle: actes du colloque*, Paris, 1992; L. Bély, *Les Relations internationales en Europe (17–18 siècles)*, Paris, 1992; J. G. Russel, *Diplomats at Work: Three Renaissance Studies*, Sutton, 1992.

⁹ An example of this interpretation is provided by the essays collected in G. Quazza, *La decadenza italiana nella storia europea. Saggi sul Sei-Settecento*, Turin, 1971.

more profound structural change in economic processes which affected the whole of Europe.¹⁰

Apart from economic history, a different historiographical approach is now emerging also towards political and institutional events in the peninsula during the Spanish period; and the dependence on Madrid of many formally independent Italian states has been analysed not only as political subordination but also in the light of such categories as convenience, convergence of interests, and the trade-off between service and privileges.¹¹ Although confined within much tighter margins of autonomy after 1559, and obliged constantly to calculate the convenience of their political choices, states like the Duchy of Savoy, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany or the Duchies of Modena and Mantua sought tenaciously to preserve their role as actors, albeit minor ones, on the European political stage. As has been rightly pointed out, the interest and preoccupations repeatedly aroused by their initiatives in Madrid demonstrated Spain's constant fear of any change in the political arena that might threaten her supremacy in the peninsula.¹² These were fears, as again has been recently observed, wholly consistent with the nature of the Spanish power system as a primarily 'dynastic', and in which all government measures 'were tied to the military and diplomatic interests of the monarchy and therefore to its international political action'.¹³ Within the ramified and mutable system of seventeenth-century European alliances, even political realities which in the international hierarchy ranked merely as 'small states'¹⁴ could – in particular circumstances – play a political role of much greater weight than their military and territorial size might warrant. This was the case of Genoa, a

¹⁰ For a synthesis of the discussion which preserves the concept of 'crisis' in the peninsula's economy between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but alters its meaning, see P. Malanima, 'L'economia', in G. Greco and M. Rosa (eds.), *Storia degli antichi stati italiani*, Bari, 1996, pp. 249–95.

¹¹ E. Stumpo, 'Il sistema degli stati italiani: crollo e consolidamento (1492–1559)', in *La storia. I grandi problemi dal Medioevo all'Età contemporanea*, vol. III: *L'età moderna*, 3: *Stati e società*, Turin, 1986, pp. 35–53; A. Spagnoletti, *Principi italiani e Spagna nell'età barocca*, Milan, 1996. The revision has obviously also concerned the Spanish dominions: of great interest is the study by G. Signorotto, *Milano spagnola. Guerra, istituzioni, uomini di governo (1635–1660)*, Florence, 1996. For a critical reappraisal of the concept itself of 'dependence' see G. Galasso, *Alla periferia dell'impero. Il Regno di Napoli nel periodo spagnolo (secoli XVI–XVIII)*, Turin, 1994; Galasso, *Dalla 'libertà d'Italia' alle 'preponderanze straniere'*, Naples, 1997.

¹² F. Angiolini, 'Osservazioni su diplomazia e politica dell'Italia non spagnola nell'età di Filippo II', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 92 (1980), pp. 432–69.

¹³ Galasso, *Alla periferia dell'impero*, p. 31.

¹⁴ M. Bazzoli, *Il piccolo stato nell'età moderna. Studi su un concetto della politica internazionale tra XVI e XVIII secolo*, Milan, 1990.

financial market of prime importance and a strategic node of communications among the Spanish dominions.¹⁵ By virtue of Genoa's crucial role in the Spanish power system, during the seventeenth century its ruling class undertook long and complex diplomatic negotiations to increase its prestige and ranking at the ceremonials of the European courts.

However, there are further reasons for the lack of interest in diplomacy shown by Italian historians in recent decades. The first is their suspicion of political history, even though at the beginning of this century this was the main focus of inquiry by such masters as Sestan, Quazza and Chabod.¹⁶ The identification of diplomacy with 'political history' has stunted the interest of an entire generation of historians, which in emulation of the *Annales* has turned its interest to economic-social history or, under the influence of German authors like Hintze and Brunner, concentrated on social-institutional history. The influence of French historiography has induced many Italian historians to believe that political and diplomatic history has now run its course and is incapable of revising its interpretative categories.

As said, the critical phase of this break with the past is now over. Within these new currents of historical research demands are being voiced for a renewal of political historiography. The areas of inquiry have been defined, as well as the interpretative tools best suited to a re-reading of the diplomatic history and foreign policy of the Italian states in the modern age, with the intention of freeing such research from its too close, sometimes suffocating, embrace with diplomatic history in the strict sense. As one of the most outstanding contributors to the reinterpretation of the fifteenth-century origins of diplomacy has recently pointed out,¹⁷ the scant interest in the subject since the Second World War has been also due to the excessively sharp demarcation line drawn between the interior and the exterior of the state by early twentieth-century historiography. This artificial division bred historians specialized in international relations, and others specialized in domestic politics, thereby preventing understanding of the close connections between foreign policy and government of the state, between military and diplomatic choices and internal arrangements, and between negotiations,

¹⁵ C. Bitossi, 'La Repubblica è vecchia'. *Patriziato e governo a Genova nel secondo Settecento*, Rome, 1995, pp. 421-3.

¹⁶ B. Vigezzi, 'La "nuova storiografia" e la storia delle relazioni internazionali', in B. Vigezzi (ed.), *Federico Chabod e la 'nuova storiografia' italiana 1919-1950*, Milan, 1983, pp. 415-77.

¹⁷ P. Margaroli, *Diplomazia e stati rinascimentali. Le ambascierie sforzesche fino alla conclusione della Lega italiana (1450-1455)*, Florence, 1992, pp. 3-4.

alliances and alignments on the one hand, and the dynastic and patrimonial concerns of the princes, or the political concerns of the republican patriciates, on the other. Now, enriched with new insight, freed from the disciplinary divisions and conflicts that impeded any comprehensive approach to problems, armed with the results of a long tradition of social inquiry, and bolstered by prosopographical research, political historiography is undergoing a period of revival and renewal. And a contributory factor to its resurgence is that the boundaries marking out the 'political' in the *ancien régime* have been extended, while the distinctions between public and private have faded.¹⁸ However, as Angiolini has recently pointed out, this is not a matter of replacing the expression 'political and diplomatic history' with the more up-to-date and attractive one of 'history of international relations'. What is required instead, as Livet wrote some years ago, is a re-thinking of politico-diplomatic history which takes account of the most recent methodological advances and conclusions of social and economic history, as well as those of social psychology and research into the history of ideas and mentality.¹⁹ In short, in order to overcome the disciplinary dogmatisms of the past, a re-reading of diplomacy is required which not only reconstructs the aims, negotiations, grand alliances and diplomatic alliances of the European states, but examines, for each individual state, the mentality and culture of its leaders, the continuities and cleavages in its foreign policy choices, its disputes with other sovereigns, its wrangling over ceremonial, and the conceptions of state and sovereignty embraced by its ambassadors.²⁰ In this manner the history of diplomacy will offer fresh insights and open new directions for research on the themes of the state, the government, and of the ruling classes of seventeenth-century Italy, furnishing different materials and sources for those who set out to

¹⁸ For an interesting discussion see C. Mozzarelli, 'Introduzione' to G. F. Comendone, *Discorso sopra la corte di Roma*, Rome, 1996, pp. 9–42. However, all the recent historiography on the court of Rome, and on the interweaving within it of political with religious interest, of clientelism with ecclesiastical ties, of court practices with pastoral motives, makes a stimulating contribution to redefinition of the political realities of the *ancien régime*. See for example M. Pellegrini, 'Per una lettura storico-sociale della Curia romana. Corte di Roma e aristocrazie italiane in età moderna', *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa*, 30 (1994), pp. 453–602; M. A. Visceglia, 'Burocrazia, mobilità sociale e patronage alla corte di Roma tra Cinque e Seicento. Alcuni aspetti del recente dibattito storiografico e prospettive di ricerca', *Roma Moderna e Contemporanea*, 3 (1995), pp. 7–55.

¹⁹ Angiolini, 'Osservazioni su diplomazia', p. 443.

²⁰ For a recent and brilliant reconstruction of politics and diplomacy in the Italian states of the modern age see G. Galasso, *L'Italia una e diversa nel sistema degli stati europei (1450–1750)*, in Galasso (ed.), *Storia d'Italia*, vol. XIX: *L'Italia moderna e l'unità nazionale*, Turin, 1998, pp. 3–492.

analyse the political categories (honour, grace, service, reputation, etc.) of the Europe of the *ancien régime*.

At the same time, careful reappraisal of the politics and diplomatic practices of the Italian states in the age of the Counter-Reformation can shed clearer light on the connection between politics and religion, and between secular power and ecclesiastical power (further issues that recent historiography has addressed with updated tools of inquiry). In their policy choices, regarding foreign policy as well, the Italian states were constantly conditioned by their relations with Rome and by their need to obtain or keep the support of the Roman Curia, which throughout the modern age dispensed offices and benefits to sovereigns and nobles as well as to the members of local ruling groups, and acted as a springboard to the cardinalate for European aristocrats embarking on ecclesiastical careers.

Besides these little explored areas of inquiry, recent studies have also taken a different approach to the theme of the origins of 'resident' diplomacy, going well beyond the customary interpretation of diplomacy as signalling the advent of the modern state, of which the Renaissance state was some sort of precursor.²¹ In the wake of Burckhardt's pioneering work,²² the growth of diplomatic representation and control over foreign policy were viewed as indicative of the political maturity and institutional robustness of the seigneurial and princely states that, between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, supplanted medieval political forms (fiefs, communes, republics) in much of the peninsula. Although many of the findings of traditional historiography are still valid today, doubts have been raised over the 'stability' of inter-state relations from the fifteenth century onwards. More specifically, the idea has been challenged that this was the century in which sovereigns acquired that monopoly over foreign policy which has long been taken to be one of the distinctive features of sovereignty. The concept itself of 'state' has been recently revised as a concept too restrictive to contain the dynamics and practices that wove personal, familial and dynastic interests tightly together,²³ as the study of modern diplomacy confirms.

²¹ S. Bertelli, 'Il problema del Rinascimento', in Vigezzi (ed.), *Federico Chabod*, pp. 103–28.

²² J. Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, Oxford, 1945 (first published in 1860).

²³ The term 'state', notes Prosperi in his fine study, is hazardous when applied to sixteenth-century Italy. It conveys an image of a power strong in territorial terms, jealous of its prerogatives, and able to counteract another entity sharply distinct from it, the Church. 'This was not the state of affairs in sixteenth-century Italy. The Pope's interlocutors in Rome were men whom he kept around his person to conduct multiple and complicated personal negotiations, who depended on him as

To be sure, in the course of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in almost all the states of the peninsula, the reorganization and strengthening of the organs and offices responsible for foreign policy got under way, while stable relations between Italian and European potentates were intensified. But what seems to emerge from most recent studies, altering the picture for so long propounded by historiography, is the plurality of the centres of power involved in the web of diplomatic relations, and the variety and flexibility of legations: in short, the impossibility of fixing categories (the ambassador extraordinary, the resident, the legation, etc.) valid for every situation. Studies have emphasized the large number – and diversity in terms of legitimacy, power and representativeness – of the actors who conducted international (or better ‘supra-state’) relations in the early modern age. These actors were so numerous because of the numerous and diverse networks of contact and exchange in operation, not only among the great and small potentates of Europe at that time but also among factions, court parties, aristocratic groups, large mercantile companies, and so on.²⁴ Hence, the expressions ‘international relations’ or ‘foreign relations’ are of little use for description of the phenomenon and its features. The term ‘international’, in fact, presupposes the existence of nations, or at least of ‘homogeneous’ political organizations, which establish relationships with each other, and this was certainly not the case of Renaissance and sixteenth-century Italy. The expression ‘foreign relations’, for its part, is predicated on the idea that precise boundaries can be drawn between ‘internal’ and ‘external’, between ‘domestic’ affairs and military and diplomatic interests: an assumption that is not always valid for the culture and political praxis of the Europe of the Renaissance and the *ancien régime*. Bonds of fealty, constraints of protection, interweaving interests, and clientelistic networks took no account of still uncertain and insecure territorial borders.²⁵ Rather, they acted as autonomous criteria of recognition,

on a high feudal lord, who needed graces, favours and benefits. More than by princes and lay governments, ecclesiastical matters were handled by churchmen from their own states resident in Rome. The system achieved perfection when there was a cardinal member of the ruling family: a Gonzaga for Mantua, a Medici for Florence, an Este for Ferrara. It was his task to guarantee the mediation of ecclesiastical matters’: A. Prosperi, *Tribunali della coscienza. Inquisitori, confessori, missionari*, Turin, 1996, pp. 63–4.

²⁴ On this see the excellent study by Margaroli, *Diplomazia e stati rinascimentali*. Margaroli analyses the Sforzas’ network of diplomatic contacts in relation to their diverse interests with regard to other states, which gave rise to distinct forms of legation and to differing relations between the ambassadors and their duke.

²⁵ Cf. C. Ossola, C. Raffestin and M. Ricciardi (eds.), *La frontiera da stato a nazione. Il caso Piemonte*, Rome, 1987.

membership and alliance which were broader and more blurred than political, dynastic or territorial ones. If, therefore, and only for the sake of convenience, the expression 'foreign relations' can be used to denote the multiple political, diplomatic and military contacts among distinct centres of power, it must always be borne in mind that these exchanges took place not only among sovereigns, princes and republics, but also among local lords, feudatories, city magistracies, and peasants: the many and diverse subjects, that is to say, of Italian and European society of the *ancien régime*.

Riccardo Fubini has been the first to take an innovative approach to the theme of diplomacy. In numerous studies,²⁶ he has analysed the evolution of diplomatic practice in fifteenth-century Florence, at the same time raising issues for fruitful further inquiry: first and foremost, the institutionalization of a function – that of representation – which arose in Florence above all as *political praxis*. Equally interesting is the case of fifteenth-century Milan, which has been studied for some time²⁷ and is now the focus of recent studies²⁸ which, besides describing the features, functions and recruitment procedures of the Sforza ambassadors, suggest further methodological criteria for the study of diplomatic apparatuses. As Leverotti writes, historians of the evolution of diplomatic institutions too should always bear in mind that it is the 'history of men' that provides the key to the weight, significance and development of institutions, including diplomatic ones.²⁹ More than ever before, therefore, it is necessary to return to the documentary sources. Only these, Margaroli declares,³⁰ enable us to follow the progress of individual missions, to measure the coherence between a legation's goals and the results achieved, and to assess the choice of the most suitable ambassador, thereby reconstructing the overall workings of the diplomacy pursued by a state or a prince.

The figure of the ambassador, too, which certain historical works of

²⁶ For his individual studies see the notes to Fubini's contribution in this book. Many of his essays have been collected in *Italia quattrocentesca. Politica e diplomazia al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico*, Milan, 1994.

²⁷ L. Cerioni, *La diplomazia sforzesca nella seconda metà del Quattrocento e i suoi cifrari segreti*, Rome, 1970; 'Gli Sforza a Milano e in Lombardia e i loro rapporti con gli Stati italiani ed europei (1450–1535)', conference proceedings (Milan, 18–21 May 1981), Milan, 1982. For the previous period see also G. Soldi Rondinini, 'Ambasciatori e ambascerie al tempo di Filippo Maria Visconti (1412–1426)', *Nuova Rivista Storica*, 49 (1965), pp. 313–44.

²⁸ F. Leverotti, *Diplomazia e governo dello stato. I 'famigli cavalcanti' di Francesco Sforza (1450–1466)*, Pisa, 1992; Margaroli, *Diplomazia e stati*.

²⁹ Leverotti, *Diplomazia e governo*, p. 10.

³⁰ Margaroli, *Diplomazia e stati*, p. 11.

the past invested with an aura almost of sacredness, has been more realistically evaluated by recent studies which draw directly on the sources. Thus, alongside the most celebrated missions – often entrusted for the purposes of propaganda to ‘literati’ ambassadors (Bembo, Castiglione, Tasso, Ariosto, and many others) – these studies have elucidated the patient day-to-day work carried out by envoys, secretaries, chancellors, and informers. Behind the pomp that surrounded the Renaissance ambassador on solemn occasions, his function was often and much more realistically viewed as a sort of ‘honoured’ espionage. In his *Dizionario filosofico-politico-storico*, the Genoese Andrea Spinola assured his readers that ‘spying on the designs and secrets of princes is the proper business of ambassadors, and especially of residents’.³¹ More recent works have therefore emphasized the diverse and sometimes conflicting nature of the protagonists of Italian diplomacy: the *famuli cavalcanti* of Ludovico Sforza, the communal orators, the papal nuncios, the ambassador men of letters despatched by the princely courts, the jurists engaged in the most sensitive negotiations, the secretaries, the residents, as well as the secret envoys, informers and spies.³² However, only when we have more complete biographies, and more detailed analyses of negotiations and diplomatic missions, will it be possible to provide a better description of the political culture and functions of the ambassador, undertake comparative study of the Italian states between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, and thereby gain clearer understanding of Italy’s contribution to the formation of modern diplomacy, which lies not only ‘upstream’, so to speak, in its fifteenth-century origins, but also in the Venetian model of relations, in the political praxis of the Roman court, and in the ‘courtly’ style that one of the most celebrated ambassadors and men of letters of the Renaissance, Baldassare Castiglione, elaborated and codified on the basis of first-hand experience.³³

The aim of this book is to contribute further to this revival of studies on political history and diplomacy, and to provide a synthesis of problems, methods and results. The studies just discussed, in fact, highlight the wide variety of problems raised by investigation into diplomatic sources,

³¹ Quoted in P. Preto, *I servizi segreti di Venezia. Spionaggio e controspionaggio: cifrari, intercettazioni, delazioni fra mito e realtà*, Milan, 1994.

³² On French diplomacy see L. Bélys, *Espions et ambassadeurs au temps de Louis XIV*, Paris, 1990.

³³ On the Europe-wide impact of Castiglione’s book see A. Quondam, ‘Introduzione’ to B. Castiglione, *Il libro del cortegiano*, Milan, 1981. For a rather different reading of the celebrated text see W. Barberis, ‘Introduzione’ to B. Castiglione, *Il libro del cortegiano*, Turin, 1998. See also B. G. Zenobi, *Corti principesche e oligarchie formalizzate come ‘luoghi del politico’ nell’Italia dell’età moderna*, Urbino, 1993.

and the diversity of the approaches and tools that can be used to shed light on the foreign policy of the Italian principalities and republics in the modern age.³⁴ From institutional and formal aspects of the exercise of diplomacy (chancelleries, archives, embassies, regulations, controls, expenditure, correspondence, couriers, etc.) to the political and institutional context in which the ambassadors operated (the power and resources of the state, social dynamics, power balances at court, forms of political authority), from the legal features of the ambassadors' function (privileges, immunity, careers, degree of autonomy) to their cultural and worldly educations (colleges, courts, tutors, studies, academic background), to the forms of diplomatic ceremonial which codified the legitimacy of sovereignty and the ambitions harboured by the European sovereigns: these and many other topics are explored by the essays in this book. As Vincent Ilardi rightly pointed out, far from constituting an independent area of inquiry, diplomacy should be understood as 'the expression of all the activities of a particular state',³⁵ and also, one might add, as the arena of action into which the manifold currents of a state's political life flowed: power balances within ruling elites or at court, individual careers and fortunes, the influence of groups and factions, legal and political culture, religious and confessional motives, military force, economic expansion, the degree of consensus enjoyed by the government or dynasty.

The book examines the many still unanswered questions on the diplomacy of the Italian states, while also discussing the quantity and diversity of the archival resources available to scholars who set out to address these questions. One might add to what has already been said about the reluctance of historians to enter these areas of inquiry that, paradoxically, the history of Italian diplomacy has perhaps suffered from an over-abundance of sources. A large proportion of the Italian state archives concern, more or less directly, the exercise and control of diplomatic relations.³⁶ They contain not only sets of chancellery registers and files of correspondence, the instructions to envoys, their final reports and registers of diplomatic expenses, but also the many documents concerning the European states (edicts, agreements, legal verdicts,

³⁴ For a summary see D. Frigo, 'Politica estera e diplomazia: figure, problemi e apparati', in *Storia degli antichi stati*, pp. 117–61.

³⁵ V. Ilardi, 'I documenti diplomatici del secolo xv negli archivi e biblioteche dell'Europa occidentale (1450–1494)', in his *Studies in Italian Renaissance Diplomatic History*, London, 1986, p. 351.

³⁶ P. Carucci, 'La documentazione degli Archivi di Stato per la storia delle relazioni internazionali', in *Le fonti diplomatiche in età moderna e contemporanea*, conference proceedings (Lucca, 20–5 Jan. 1989), Rome, 1995, pp. 40–56.

economic data, descriptions of fortresses, portraits of key personages) that the ambassadors regularly sent back to the peninsula.

The need to take account of the social and institutional aspects of diplomatic practice as well has not only determined the organization of this book as a whole but is also evident in its individual essays. These latter start with the theme of the 'origins of diplomacy', which Riccardo Fubini reinterprets in the broader context of the changes that occurred in diplomatic institutions and practices during the passage from the Middle Ages to the early modern age. 'Residentiality' as the fundamental outcome of these transformations thus appears tied to very specific cases and situations. In reality, as Fubini points out in his essay on Florence, 'prolonged embassies only became possible when Lorenzo [de' Medici] had achieved full power as a result of the reforms of 1480, and they served as political bonds among regimes which provided each other with mutual support in potential situations of crisis'. However, this is by no means to imply that a situation of stable relations – like that of the next century – existed between two states, a conclusion which can be extended to other Italian states as well, ranging from the Milan of the Sforzas studied by Margaroli to the small states of the Po valley analysed by the present writer. Fifteenth-century diplomacy therefore proceeded within a web of mutable alliances, rather than within a network of permanent inter-state contacts. It was a flexible instrument of defence and legitimation for dynasties but not yet a stably organized sector of state business.

It was only from the second half of the sixteenth century onwards that diplomacy became a permanent sector of a state's activities. As we know, the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis (1559) settled the Franco-Spanish struggle for domination of the peninsula in favour of Spain, precluding territorial change in the peninsula (save for some minor variations) until the early eighteenth century. The Peace therefore marked the beginning of alliances and boundaries, institutional forms and power balances which were destined to endure for more than a century. The Italian dynasties, as well as the few surviving republican orders, henceforth devoted their energies to the 'conservation' of power and state,³⁷ while their ambitions and political projects gravitated more towards ceremonial gratification and status-building than towards territorial enlargement or impracticable military or economic expansion.

However, even with the apparently stable framework of *pax hispanica*,

³⁷ For an overview of the institutional evolution of the peninsula in this period see M. Verga, 'Le istituzioni politiche', in Greco and Rosa (eds.), *Storia degli antichi stati*, pp. 3–58.

the Italian states displayed marked heterogeneity in their management of foreign policy, in their elaboration of diplomatic practice, and in their construction of ritual and ceremonial apparatuses. The particular stance adopted by each of the essays in this book, therefore, does not merely arise from its author's particular preferences but also closely reflects the diverse political, institutional and social dynamics of the Italian states in the modern age.³⁸

Accordingly, of great significance is Alessandra Contini's contribution to this book in which she reconstructs the institutionalization of the Grand Duchy of Tuscany's diplomatic activity, examining the 'normative' and bureaucratic dimension as well as cultural and social aspects: court relationships, the training and functions of envoys, forms of ceremonial. Before and after their ascent to power, the Medici played their diplomatic game mainly in political arenas external to Florence: at the Roman and imperial courts, and in the mercantile and financial market-places of Europe. Thus, in parallel with an internal opposition of aristocratic-republican nature, the diplomatic designs of the Medici regime created a sort of counter-diplomacy of exiles and political refugees convinced that they could counter the rise of the Medici by skilfully forging alliances with the European powers hostile to Spain, principally France. But it was the diplomatic ability of Cosimo, with his adroit manoeuvring between Empire, France, Papacy and Spain, that impeded these oppositions and centrifugal forces from once again upsetting the Florentine order. The 'new' prince's awareness of the precariousness of his power and his fear of revolution seemingly conditioned his every diplomatic initiative. The fruit of largely unpublished archival research, Contini's study reveals the workings of Cosimo's diplomacy as the essential instrument of the affirmation and consolidation of Medici power on the European stage. It was not yet a formalized apparatus, however, but preserved the flexibility and adaptability so distinctive of fourteenth-century diplomacy, and above all the close dependence of ambassadors and envoys on the will of the Duke. To borrow an apt expression from Contini's essay, diplomacy became 'a free zone in which the sovereign exercised his discretion unhindered', and in which the search for legitimation by a power aware of the fragility of its legal basis was obvious. This was a dynastic weakness made manifest – despite repeated attempts to conceal it – on the occasion of the celebrated *querelle* with the Este over precedence between the two houses, which

³⁸ Greco and Rosa (eds.), *Storia degli antichi stati*, with its final bibliography. The wide variety of institutional arrangements devised by the Italian states emerges very clearly also from *Storia d'Italia* edited by G. Galasso and published in the 1970s by UTET (Turin), with each of its volumes devoted to a particular state.

Contini reconstructs in detail from previously unexplored archival sources. The biographies presented in her study, beginning with that of Averardo Serristori, a figure exemplary of the passage of Medicean diplomacy from a 'heroic phase' to progressive formalization, also demonstrate the 'freedom of manoeuvre' enjoyed by the Florentine ambassadors: often recruited from the leading families of the oligarchy, they were anything but simple executors of Cosimo's orders, reflecting in their behaviour the conflicting pressures of membership of an ancient mercantile oligarchy and political loyalty to a dynasty.

The study by Riccardi examines the origin and functions of the papal nuncios. By means of a clear synthesis of the numerous studies available today on the subject, it shows the quantitative and qualitative growth of the Holy See's diplomatic representation in the modern age, especially in the period following Gregory XIII's reform in the latter half of the sixteenth century, when the temporary nunciatures were made permanent and new ones were created.³⁹ As well as examining the figure of the nuncio, Riccardi highlights the value of the concordat as the distinctive expression of the relations between the Holy See and the states of Europe, dwelling on the decline in the Papacy's mediatory role after the Peace of Westphalia. The growth of the nunciatures and the formation of a diplomatic apparatus are interpreted, in the wake of other important studies,⁴⁰ as both the outcome and instrument of the 'modernization' of the Catholic Church, and also as demonstrating the Holy See's ability to understand and employ the techniques of European policy developed in the modern age. More recent studies have examined the role and evolution of the pontifical State Secretariat, which supervised the preparation and handling of diplomatic documents and correspondence by secretaries of state invested with the Pontiff's trust, and who, until 1692, worked under the direct control of the *cardinale nepote*.⁴¹ An area of constant scholarly interest is the correspondence and documents of the nunciatures. These, together with the Venetian diplomatic archives, are undoubtedly the sources most widely used to reconstruct not only diplomacy but also international relations in the modern age. Further

³⁹ P. Brezzi, *La diplomazia pontificia*, Milan, 1942; R. Belvederi, *Guido Bentivoglio e la politica europea del suo tempo (1607–1621)*, Padua, 1962.

⁴⁰ Most notably Prodi's celebrated analysis of the 'twofold nature' of the figure of the pontiff in the modern age: P. Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice. Un corpo e due anime: la monarchia papale nella prima età moderna*, Bologna, 1982.

⁴¹ On this see M. Belardini, 'Del "Secretario" e "Secreteria di Nostro Signore". Appunti per una ricerca sulle istituzioni diplomatiche della Santa Sede in età moderna', *Le Carte e la Storia* (Bollettino Semestrale della Società per gli Studi di Storia delle Istituzioni), 2 (1996), pp. 149–54.

indications for research, as well as important results, have been forthcoming from a number of recent conferences which have relaunched Rome's role as 'the centre of European politics',⁴² and the function of diplomatic ceremonial as crucially defined and updated by the papal Curia.⁴³

The exception in the fragmentary historiographical panorama of Italian diplomacy mentioned above is undoubtedly Venice, whose diplomacy has been the subject of a long-standing and authoritative tradition of studies and editions of diplomatic sources with roots extending into nineteenth-century political historiography. Although in this case there is no lack of research and analysis, the interpretative framework employed by this historiographical tradition today seems outmoded and in need of revision. This is the perspective adopted by Zannini's essay in this book, which draws on social and institutional history to describe the 'bureaucratic' aspects of diplomatic activity, analysed also as an important sector of the civil service and an area of activity for the 'citizenry'. Thus innovative treatment is given to such classic themes as careers, diplomatic expenses, control over ambassadors, the workings of Venice's information system, and the chancelleries. But Zannini's study highlights above all the figure and function of the secretaries, the veritable 'pillars' of politico-diplomatic activity both in the Venetian offices and in legations abroad. A careful re-reading of the quantitative data enables Zannini to provide further confirmation for recent scholarly opinion concerning the growth of Venetian diplomacy in the seventeenth century, firstly in relation to the numerous crises – both political (the Interdict, the so-called 'Spanish plot', etc.) and military (the war against the Turks in the east, the struggle for Crete) – that beset the Republic during that century, and secondly in relation to the diversification of the reasons for establishing or resuming permanent representation – reasons which ranged from strategic considerations, commercial convenience, political affinities and religious conflict to the need for information. It was these factors that obliged the patrician class to assign diplomatic posts and non-executive tasks to chancellery personnel and the secretaries, who were largely recruited from the 'citizenry' and therefore excluded from the decision-making organs of the Republic.

⁴² G. Signorotto and M. A. Visceglia (edited by), *La corte di Roma tra cinque e seicento. 'Teatro' della politica europea*, Rome, 1998.

⁴³ S. Andretta, 'Cerimoniale e diplomazia pontificia nel XVII secolo', in *Cérémonial et rituel à Rome (XVIIe–XIXe siècle)*, études réunies par M. A. Visceglia et C. Brice, Rome, 1997, pp. 201–22.

Since it has not been possible, for reasons of time, to include an essay on Genoa in this book, and because this would have enabled close comparison between the two republics – characterized as they were by similar institutional and social systems but tied to different European alignments – it is perhaps appropriate to mention here certain features of the diplomatic praxis of the Republic of San Giorgio. Even more than Venice, throughout the seventeenth century Genoa displayed an institutional order very different from that of the systems ruled by a prince, which were endowed with rapid and flexible foreign policy instruments. Whereas a distinctive feature of the republics was the determination of their governing bodies to maintain close control over their ambassadors – amongst other things to forestall political and diplomatic scheming that might upset delicate internal equilibria – diplomatic practice in the principalities was based on the ‘personalization’ of the political jockeying typical of their courts, and on a close relationship of trust between ambassador and sovereign. Throughout the seventeenth century, numerous features of the republics’ political life proved incompatible with the style imposed by the great monarchies on the diplomatic game. That ‘secrecy’, for example, was far from being a republican virtue was understood by the Genoese diplomat Spinola: selected, after months of indecision, to represent Genoa at the 1635 negotiations between Rome, Venice and Savoy concerning formation of an Italian league, Spinola remarked bitterly that it was impossible to count on the secrecy and discretion of a Council consisting of 125 persons.⁴⁴ And some decades later, another Genoan observed that ‘the architecture of the Republic’s government is not suited to negotiations of state, and unless a restricted junta able to handle political matters is created, everything will collapse’.⁴⁵ In the next century, this keen awareness of the weakness of the republican institutions compared with the much more efficient and rapid bureaucratic apparatuses of the sovereigns became a crucial issue of political debate within the republics – an issue raised in eighteenth-century Venice, for example, by Andrea Ton with his proposals for strengthening the bureaucratic powers of the Council of Ten.⁴⁶

But the republics had other problems to contend with, notably those concerning the recruitment of ambassadors and envoys. Apart from the

⁴⁴ A. Panella, ‘Una Lega italiana durante la guerra dei Trent’anni’, *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 95(1937), pp. 21–50.

⁴⁵ Quoted in F. Venturi, ‘Re e repubbliche tra Sei e Settecento’, in Venturi, *Utopia e riforma nell’Illuminismo*, Turin, 1970, p. 42.

⁴⁶ ‘It grew increasingly evident to him [Ton] that what the ancient republics lacked was the nucleus of a bureaucratic state’: *ibid.*, p. 46.

real risks of undertaking a mission abroad, and without the incentive of 'honour' (which derived from the presence of a sovereign and the mechanisms of the courtly world), diplomatic posts held out little attraction for the republican aristocracies. Consequently, the exercise of diplomacy in the republics was made an obligatory stage in a citizen's *cursus honorum*, and it was combined with other inducements, for instance the patrician's moral obligation to take part in the city's government, and the dignity of diplomatic service. 'The ambassadorships are among those things in a city which do honour to a citizen, nor can one summon to the state those who are not suited to such a station':⁴⁷ Machiavelli's admonition, echoed throughout the seventeenth century in the preambles to legislation *de legationibus* and in treaties, obviously did not suffice to meet the republics' needs, which consequently introduced laws to punish those who refused diplomatic appointments.⁴⁸ The main reason, however, for such reluctance lay in the enormous financial outlay required of the ambassadors, which was only partly covered by the stipends assigned to them. Scrupulous checks were conducted on missions and their costs: at Genoa, a *scriba* recorded every item of spending on the ambassador's accommodation, travel and board;⁴⁹ at Venice, the legation secretaries were created not only to assist the Republic's ambassadors but also to monitor their spending. In both systems, while the ambassadors submitted final reports recounting the negotiations conducted, the secretaries filed detailed statements of mission expenses with the financial magistracy. The republican regimes obviously cannot be considered to be unique in this respect: while the obligation of diplomatic service was accepted in Venice as a distinctive component in the formation of the governing class, in other contexts, as Berengo has pointed out, there was a sort of 'instinctive rejection of any aspect of foreign policy that was not tied to, and immediately referable to, the world of the city, and the discomfort suffered by men accustomed to mercantile life when they came into contact with the courts of the princes played a large part in transforming appointment to ambassadorships into a general stampede away from them'.⁵⁰ The honours and prestige of the diplomatic function were perceived in the republics as annoying encumbrances and as a pointless distraction from more

⁴⁷ N. Machiavelli, 'Istruzione a Raffaello Girolami', in his *Opere minori*, edited by F. L. Polidori, Florence, 1852, p. 222.

⁴⁸ For examples of laws punishing refusal to accept diplomatic missions see V. Vitale, *La diplomazia genovese*, Milan, 1941, *passim*.

⁴⁹ R. Ciasca, 'Introduzione', *Istruzioni e relazioni degli ambasciatori genovesi*, vol. 1: *Spagna: 4 febbraio 1494–22 novembre 1617*, Florence, 1951, p. xxxi.

⁵⁰ M. Berengo, *Nobili e mercanti nella Lucca del Cinquecento*, Turin, 1965, p. 249.

lucrative business in the city. As a Venetian diplomat remarked, 'it is no wonder that many prefer to live privately in Venice rather than as ambassadors away from it'.⁵¹

When in Genoa, in 1659, it was ruled that ambassadors could no longer belong to the *Minor Consiglio*, the highest legislative body of the Republic, there was a marked increase in the number of appointees to ambassadorships who asked to be 'excused'. The even greater difficulty in filling diplomatic posts that resulted from the provision forced the republic to revise it, providing in 1665 that ambassadors could sit on the *Minor Consiglio* during the last year of their missions. However, exemption from ambassadorial service was made even more difficult in 1686, and those wishing to be absolved had to justify their claim in a written petition.⁵² In the case of the republics it is therefore evident that, in addition to economic concerns, or anxiety over entrusting their domestic affairs to others, diplomatic appointees were also worried about being isolated from politics and consequently missing precious opportunities for personal advancement in the city's power structure.

As said, by virtue of its privileged relationship with Spain, during the seventeenth century Genoa was able to wield international influence that far exceeded its real military and political 'power'. This international role (which was also Genoa's role in the Spanish power system) was commensurate with the Genoese governors' awareness of the importance of their state, and also with the republic of San Giorgio's aspiration to the royal crown – an ambition nourished in the seventeenth century by other states in the peninsula as well. The aristocratic mentality of the time, which also profoundly permeated relations between the courts and the dynasties, viewed the increase in formal honours as adequate compensation for the effective lack of influence of certain sovereigns, and it functioned in some cases as some sort of political 'dissimulation' of their political–military marginality.

This was even more the case of the minor Italian principalities, where the exercise of diplomacy was closely tied to the political designs of their ruling dynasties as they pursued their various goals: enhancing their presence and political role on the European stage by creating an appropriate system of alliances; or – in the case of Tuscany analysed by Contini's essay in this book – reinforcing their power at home; or, thirdly, reviving or maintaining their prestige through exercise of the virtues of munificence and magnificence, constructing a stately and

⁵¹ Words spoken by the ambassador Marino Cavalli on returning from a mission to France (1546): L. Firpo (ed.), *Relazioni di ambasciatori veneti al Senato*, vol. v: *Francia (1492–1600)*, Turin, 1978, t. I, p. 288.

⁵² Vitale, *La diplomazia genovese*, pp. 14–16.

sacred image of the dynasty and its princes. In the case of small duchies like Mantua and Modena, diplomacy was apparently entirely subservient to dynastic designs, so that domestic politics and diplomacy closely interwove: one constantly finds the same key personages, at different stages of their careers, running government offices, foreign relations and embassies.

It was precisely the dynasties of ancient origin, after passing first through seignury and then principality, that were most severely disrupted by the War of the Spanish Succession, first in a sequence of political, military and dynastic events which brought the peninsula back to the centre of European politics, even though the final outcome, with the exception of the Duchy of Savoy, was once again that 'the Italian states played the part of the spoils and the rewards, rather than that of the players'.⁵³ As a crisis of dynastic succession, but also a clash among the conflicting interests of the European powers, the War of the Spanish Succession profoundly altered the configuration of Italy, sanctioning the political and territorial expansion of the House of Savoy and instead revealing the crisis of legitimation assailing ancient seignorial powers like the Gonzaga of Mantua, whose centuries-long history ended in accusation of treachery and confiscation of their fiefs by the Emperor.⁵⁴ The Peace of Utrecht decreed England's success, the decline of French hegemony, and the rise of the Austrian Habsburgs, who gained dominion over the Italian territories previously controlled by Spain. But the Treaty failed to resolve dynastic and territorial questions in the peninsula which would weigh heavily upon later events. The political pattern of Italy and the fate of the Italian dynasties were consequently at the centre of numerous European negotiations in the first part of the eighteenth century: the Treaty of The Hague (1720), which assigned Sardinia to Savoy in exchange for Sicily; the Treaty of Vienna (1738) following the War of the Polish Succession; and the Peace of Aachen (1748), which ensured fifty years of dynastic and institutional stability in the peninsula that enabled each state to introduce reforms and to re-organize its administrative and judicial apparatuses.

The first decades of the eighteenth century marked an important stage in the organization of diplomatic activities and in the definition of the ambassador's functions. Almost everywhere, the ancient state

⁵³ D. Carpanetto and G. Ricuperati, *L'Italia del Settecento*, Bari, 1986, p. 175. For an overview of the political problems of the period, still valid is G. Quazza, *Il problema italiano e l'equilibrio europeo: 1720-1738*, Turin, 1965.

⁵⁴ However, the entire peninsula suffered the consequences of the War of the Spanish Succession, principally states like Genoa whose international role depended on their relationship with Spain: Bitossi, *'La repubblica è vecchia'*, pp. 425ff.

secretariats were reformed to ensure greater efficiency and closer control from above. As part of a far-reaching programme of institutional reform, in 1717 Victor Amadeus of Savoy began reorganization of the State Secretariat, which was now divided according to subject matter, with an independent Secretariat for Foreign Affairs. The management of the embassies was also given more precise definition, both in order to ensure greater continuity of diplomatic action, and to give the sovereign closer control over the work of his representatives. Thus there slowly began the practice of giving priority to the office of ambassador over its incumbent, with a silent revolution in the diplomatic customs of the *ancien régime*. One may interpret in this light the appearance of the legation secretary, an authentic functionary charged with the twofold task of, on the one hand, monitoring the state's diplomatic representatives and reporting directly to the sovereign and his bureaucracy and, on the other, ensuring the continuity of activity between one ambassador and the next – or in the event of the ambassador's incapacity. It was the work of the legation secretaries that led to the accumulation and management, in each diplomatic seat, of the documents that would later grow into full-fledged legation archives, ensuring amongst other things a 'material continuity' which enables researchers to grasp and analyse the profound changes that occurred in diplomatic practice in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries between the Napoleonic period and the Congress of Vienna.⁵⁵

The Kingdom of Naples displays highly distinctive features throughout the eighteenth century, given that the Bourbon dynasty were obliged to build an entire diplomatic system from scratch. It was therefore a system born already 'adult', so to speak, from the experience accumulated by the European states – in particular by Spain, to which the young kingdom was tied by a 'family pact'. The start-up of international relations by Carlo di Borbone, and the creation of the structures responsible for the administration and control of diplomatic activity, came about in very particular circumstances, with the emergence of new economic and commercial interests in the diplomatic field, on the one hand, and the entry onto the European scene of new powers like Prussia and Russia on the other. Thus the beginnings of Bourbon rule were marked by the 'heroic' phase of the creation of the public apparatuses and insti-

⁵⁵ See on this the 'Indici dell'Archivio storico' of the Ministero degli Affari Esteri: M. Pastore (ed.), *La legazione sarda in Londra (1730–1860)*, Rome, 1952; E. Piscitelli (ed.), *La legazione sarda in Vienna (1707–1859)*, Rome, 1952; R. Mori (ed.), *Le scritture della legazione e del consolato del Granducato di Toscana in Roma dal 1737 al 1859*, Rome, 1959.

tutions, and the Bourbons sought from the outset to bring members of the aristocratic families into their service, giving them the most prestigious diplomatic appointments. Diplomacy thus provided the Neapolitan nobility with an unprecedented opportunity to assume a direct role in running the affairs of the kingdom, forcing the sovereign, and subsequently his minister Tanucci, to moderate the reforms introduced during the early years of the Kingdom. Tanucci, and later Galiani, were adept at reading the international situation, furnishing the dynasty with theoretical analyses and concrete proposals on foreign policy matters, while taking careful cognizance of the advantages (and disadvantages) afforded to the Kingdom by its Mediterranean location and its ties with the Madrid court. Apart from the events surrounding the State Secretariat – which Maiorini analyses in her essay in this book – the Neapolitan case once again confirms that eighteenth-century diplomacy, too, was largely based on personalistic criteria, exhibiting direct relationships between ambassadors and sovereigns, or between the latter and the Secretaries of State, and the networks of loyalty and obligation typical of the political praxis of the *ancien régime*. Despite the frequent reform and reorganization of diplomatic activities, the status of the ambassador did not undergo any substantial change in the eighteenth century. The defence of the full sovereignty of the ruler, the search for international guarantees of territorial inviolability, the projection into foreign policy of the principles of ‘distinction’ and ‘honour’ which still governed aristocratic society: throughout the century, these were the factors that dominated relations among the states of the peninsula, and between these and the European powers, despite the fact that modern international law had been in gestation for a century.

Only ministers of the stature of Tanucci seemed able to grasp the by now irremediable contradiction between a diplomacy based on aristocratic cultural categories – and the arena of aristocratic aspirations to ‘honour’ – and the need for trained diplomatic representatives, experts in law and economics, devoted more to the ‘nation’ than to the dynasty, the proponents of emerging interests rather than the defenders of ancient prerogatives. Indeed, in the course of the eighteenth century, new powers and previously unknown social and constitutional dynamics burst on to the European scene, while economic exigencies requiring behaviour and rules very different from those of seventeenth-century *raison d’état* conditioned relations among the courts.⁵⁶ ‘The system of Europe has changed: commerce enters all, or almost all, treaties as *raison*

⁵⁶ Including the creation or extension of the consular system: E. Contino, *Le funzioni*

d'état', wrote the Abbot Coyer in the mid-1700s, and Bougainville observed that 'the balance of trade has become the balance of power'.⁵⁷ The Italian ambassadors and envoys were well aware of the central importance now assumed by trade in international relations, and their reports provide us with a rich and articulated picture of the economic development of the European states during the eighteenth century. Manufacturing advances, new production processes, technical innovations, the financial power of states: the accounts sent back by the Italian representatives manifest their astonishment at the new economic and mercantile forms adopted by the European powers, often with the unconcealed intention of suggesting ways to modernize the productive and commercial structures of the peninsula.⁵⁸

Significant light is shed on these matters by Storrs' discussion of Anglo-Piedmontese relations in the eighteenth century, which closely reflect the rise and fall of the House of Savoy. The role and prestige of the Dukes of Savoy were greatly increased by the Treaty of Utrecht, which, above all by virtue of English support, crowned their long-standing ambition for a royal title by granting them Sicily. From the outset, the Savoy used diplomacy as an instrument to weave political relationships together, to define military alliances, and to arrange prestigious marriages. Thanks to the skill of their ambassadors and their careful analyses of European political dynamics, the Savoy dukes were almost always able to choose the winning side, gaining territory and prestige which went well beyond the effective capacities of their small state. Able and sometimes foolhardy in seizing the opportunities offered by the international situation, the Savoy nevertheless found their influence reduced by changes in the European context, in particular by the so-called 'reversal of alliances' of 1756. In the second half of the century, consequently, Savoy foreign policy shifted towards a search for profitable

dei consoli e lo sviluppo del commercio marittimo del regno di Napoli nel secolo XVIII, Naples, 1983.

⁵⁷ Both quotations are taken from P. Alatri, *L'Europa dopo Luigi XIV (1715-1731)*, Palermo, 1986, p. 19.

⁵⁸ D. Frigo, *Principe, ambasciatori e 'jus gentium'. L'amministrazione della politica estera nel Piemonte del Settecento*, Rome, 1991, pp. 171-3; G. Zorzanello, 'Il diplomatico Simon Cavalli e la sua legazione in Inghilterra (1778-1782)', *Ateneo Veneto*, n.s., 22 (1984), pp. 225-56. An evident sign of the importance assumed by economic interests in international relations is the expansion of their consular networks by the Italian states: Contino, *Le funzioni dei consoli*; C. M. Moschetti, 'L'istituzione del console mercantile pontificio a Venezia nel XVIII secolo', in *Studi in onore di Gino Barbieri. Problemi e metodi di Storia ed Economia*, Salerno, 1983, vol. II, pp. 1105-48.

trade relations or towards new diplomatic contacts with Prussia and Russia.

However, this route was not followed only by the Savoy diplomatic representatives. Excluded from the great European political game, often representatives of a court nobility that had survived dynastic changes – or of city patriciates which in eighteenth-century Europe seemed at most the remnants of a distant medieval past – in the second half of the century the Italian ambassadors were more spectators than protagonists of European politics. Moreover, the collecting and transmitting of information which throughout the *ancien régime* had been an inseparable part of the ambassadorial function was now performed by other means. Gazettes, news-sheets and periodicals, as well as the constant peregrinations of thinkers and intellectuals from one city to another, delivered more rapid knowledge of events and ideas. Rather than sources for the reconstruction of events, the accounts left to us by the Venetian or Piedmontese ambassadors in which they describe the Habsburg reforms or England's economic ascent, the birth of the United States or events in France,⁵⁹ provide valuable testimony with which to reconstruct the mentality and political convictions of the Italian noble class in the eighteenth century. In short, they enable us to understand the mind-set and culture of government of the Italian ruling classes at the close of the *ancien régime*, and thereby to appraise both differences and similarities between the political cultures of continental Europe and of 'Mediterranean' Europe.

To conclude: numerous research themes emerge from the essays in this book on specific political contexts, and they may constitute further areas of inquiry into the diplomacy of the ancient Italian states: from the question of ceremonial⁶⁰ to the role of the court as the chief arena of the ambassadors' action;⁶¹ from the relationship between diplomatic activity and political information to the literature on the figure of the

⁵⁹ G. Benzoni, 'Flash sull'Europa: le relazioni dei diplomatici veneziani', in *Storie di viaggiatori italiani. Europa*, Milan, 1988, pp. 108–31; M. Mazzucchelli, *La rivoluzione francese vista dagli ambasciatori veneti*, Bari, 1935; G. Pillinini, 'Le prime fasi della rivoluzione francese nella testimonianza dell'ambasciatore veneziano', *Archivio Veneto*, 178 (1990), pp. 65–78; A. Tirone, 'I residenti veneti e il riformismo in Lombardia', *Studi veneziani*, 8 (1966), pp. 481–92.

⁶⁰ W. Roosen, 'Early Modern Diplomatic Ceremonial: A Systems Approach', *Journal of Modern History*, 52 (1980), pp. 452–76.

⁶¹ M. Fantoni, *La corte del Granduca. Forme e simboli del potere mediceo fra Cinque e Seicento*, Rome, 1994, and Fantoni, 'Corte e Stato nell'Italia dei secoli XIV–XVI', in *Origini dello Stato*, pp. 449–66; P. Merlin, *Tra guerre e tornei. La corte sabauda nell'età di Carlo Emanuele I*, Turin, 1991.

‘good ambassador’; from issues concerning the development of international law to the controversies surrounding immunity and diplomatic privileges;⁶² and such questions as ‘neutrality’,⁶³ freedom of navigation, and consular customs. The aim of the book is make a first, albeit partial, attempt to deal with these many issues, to provide methodological tools and keys to interpretation, and to stimulate new and in-depth research.

⁶² M. Tocci, ‘Immunità internazionali e ordinamento interno a Roma sotto Innocenzo XI’, in *Rivista di storia del diritto italiano*, 59 (1986), pp. 203–26. Still valid on this theme is E. R. Adair, *The Exterritoriality of Ambassadors in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, London and New York, 1929.

⁶³ L. Garibbo, *La neutralità della Repubblica di Genova. Saggio sulla condizione dei piccoli stati nell’Europa del Settecento*, Milan, 1972.

DIPLOMACY AND GOVERNMENT IN THE ITALIAN CITY-STATES OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY (FLORENCE AND VENICE)

RICCARDO FUBINI

This essay returns to and adapts a previous contribution of mine¹ which provided the basis for several subsequent studies on the evolution of diplomacy in Italy (and particularly in Florence), on the advent of the regional state or – which is the same thing – of the oligarchical regimes.² My experience of writing a commentary on the edited letters of Lorenzo il Magnifico,³ which confronted me with vast collections of late-fifteenth-century documentation, and which in particular familiarized me with Florentine diplomatic practice, has persuaded me of the outdatedness of the traditional approach to the study of Renaissance diplomacy, from the classic work by De Maulde la Clavière to the more recent book by Mattingly – both of which regard the resident ambassador as the key element in the transition from medieval to modern diplomacy, and as marking, in Italy first, the advent of the modern age.⁴ When writing on the conclusion of the Italian League (1455), Mattingly

¹ R. Fubini, 'La figura politica dell'ambasciatore negli sviluppi dei regimi oligarchici quattrocenteschi', in S. Bertelli (ed.), *Forme e tecniche del potere nella città (secoli XIV–XVII)*, Perugia, 1982 (*Annuario della Facoltà di Scienze Politiche dell'Università di Perugia*, 16, 1979–80), pp. 33–59.

² Cf. R. Fubini, 'Appunti sui rapporti diplomatici fra il dominio sforzesco e Firenze medicea', in *Gli Sforza a Milano e in Lombardia e i loro rapporti con gli stati italiani ed europei (1450–1535)*, Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Milan, 1982, pp. 291–334; Fubini, 'Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia nella Firenze quattrocentesca', in *I ceti dirigenti nella Toscana del Quattrocento*, Florence, 1987, pp. 117–89 (now revised in Fubini, *Quattrocento fiorentino: politica, diplomazia, cultura*, Pisa, 1996); Fubini, *Italia quattrocentesca. Politica e diplomazia nell'età di Lorenzo il Magnifico*, Milan, 1994.

³ Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, general editor N. Rubinstein, vol. I: 1460–1474 and vol. II: 1474–1478, edited by R. Fubini, Florence, 1977.

⁴ R. A. De Maulde la Clavière, *La Diplomatie au temps de Machiavel*, Geneva, 1970 (reprint of the Paris edition, 1892–3); G. Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, London, 1955. The more recent N. S. Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy, 1450–1919*, London, 1993, does not alter the traditional account.

declared: 'Italy first found the system of organizing interstate relationships which Europe later adopted.'⁵ However, when considered from within, the reality is not so clear cut. To anticipate the argument developed later, and with my remarks restricted to Florence alone, prolonged embassies only became possible when Lorenzo had achieved full power as a result of the reforms of 1480, and they served as political bonds among regimes which provided each other with mutual support in potential situations of crisis (I refer to Florence's intercourse with Milan and Naples, and also with the Pope). There was nothing here, therefore, that resembled an ordinary relationship between sovereign states. Previously, the city embassies had been conceived as fixed-term appointments, although in exceptional circumstances they could be renewed; and nor did the missions involve reciprocity with the seat abroad. I shall return to this topic later. For the moment I wish to emphasize that specialist histories of diplomacy, often based on personal experience or serving as manuals for diplomats, have tended to view the history of the institution from the point of view of the classical diplomacy of the nineteenth century. The transition to modernity is indicated in terms too generic to be applicable to specific situations ('au moment où le système idéal et doctrinaire va faire partout place au système expérimental', as De Maulde wrote),⁶ and the doctrine is specified in terms of concepts developed with hindsight, like the eighteenth-century aim of achieving a balance of power (*iustum potentiarum aequilibrium*).⁷ But there is another reason, one not devoid of interest, why this historiographical stereotype has arisen and been perpetuated. I refer to the marked spirit of professionalism displayed by diplomats, which was such as to allocate this category of senior civil servants to a sphere of its own, on the margins of the struggles among states and political forces. Moreover, given that the institutional purpose of the profession was to mediate conflict and to achieve peace according to sets of international rules established among sovereign states, it could be represented as a value in itself, one able to act as the yardstick of historical assessment. These ideas have perhaps been best set out in the historical outline of diplomacy written by the English diplomat and essayist Harold Nicholson.⁸ For Nicholson, the old diplomatic culture in which he had been schooled was a value now lost and to be nostalgically evoked, but in opposition not so much to

⁵ Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, p. 70; on the Italian League see Fubini, *Italia quattrocentesca*, pp. 185–219.

⁶ De Maulde, *La Diplomatie*, vol. I, pp. 3–4.

⁷ Cf. S. Nava, *Sistema della diplomazia*, Padua, 1950, p. 230.

⁸ H. Nicholson, *The Evolution of Diplomatic Method*, London, 1954.

the brutal methods of fascist and bolshevik foreign policies as to the ideological and propagandistic style inaugurated in 1919 by the American President Wilson. Whatever the case may be, the diplomatic style mourned by Nicholson was not generically that of the *ancien régime* but its civilized version, as he put it, of the 'French system' regulated by the rules of etiquette laid down at the beginning of the eighteenth century by François de la Callières and at odds with the amoral 'Machiavellian system' introduced in Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.⁹

However, as said, this account fails to grasp the origin of so-called 'modern' diplomacy and its connection with the first embryonic pattern of a pluralistic system of states claiming their sovereignty. To return to the Italian League referred to by Mattingly, it was in fact anachronistic, indeed unthinkable, that resident embassies instituted for a greater or lesser period of time should imply continuity of office, given their inherent lack of institutionality. The jurist Alberico Gentili described 'legates' as *temporarii*, 'who are not despatched on a specific matter, but for a certain period of time, whether established or not';¹⁰ while Gentili's contemporary, Carolus Paschalius (Pasquale), also a jurist, pointed out their empirical and, as he put it, inauspicious character: 'an unhappy product of these unhappy times'.¹¹ In fact, the embassies of the Italian princes of the fifteenth century – to dwell on the decades following the Italian League – varied greatly in their duration and purpose. In the 'republican' regimes of Venice or Florence, for example, ambassadors were elected for a fixed term, though their appointment could in exceptional circumstances be renewed,¹² and always to deal with the specific matters set out in their instructions. And the embassy ceased as soon as the conditions that warranted the appointment had been superseded. Princely missions were different in character because they were not subject to official controls, and moreover were intended to sanction intrinsic relationships among courts: of alliance, of dependence or vassalage, or of dynastic kinship. Typical instances were the exchange of ambassadors between the Sforzas and the Aragoneses of Naples, and the presence of the Sforzas' orators or

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 62ff.; and F. de la Callières, *De la manière de négocier avec les souverains*, 1715.

¹⁰ 'qui non ad definitum certumque negotium, sed ad tempus sive certum sive incertum . . . mittuntur'.

¹¹ Alberico Gentili, *De legationibus*, 1585, quoted in G. Mattingly, 'The First Resident Ambassador: Mediaeval Italian Origins of Modern Diplomacy', *Speculum*, 12 (1937), p. 427; C. Paschalius, *Legatus* (1598), quoted in Nava, 'Diplomazia e diplomatici', *Nuovissimo Digesto Italiano*, 5 (1960), p. 653: 'infelicitis huius aetatis infelix partus'.

¹² The issue caused lively controversy. For more specific information see Fubini, 'Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia', pp. 152–3.

envoys, albeit intermittently, at the courts of France and Burgundy,¹³ not to mention relationships with the Duchy of Savoy. Once again, however, this was not so much a structural innovation as the intensification of a practice already current in the seigneurial world of the fourteenth century and noted by Mattingly regarding relationships between Gonzaga and Visconti in the late 1300s.¹⁴ It was then adopted by Filippo Maria Visconti in his dealings with the Emperor Sigismund, whose vassal he acknowledged himself to be¹⁵ just as the Sforzas later recognized their vassalage to the King of France for the *signoria* of Genoa and Savona. It is to be noted that, although these types of embassy were in effect marked with greater continuity, they nevertheless retained a strictly private, not to say collusive, character regardless of whether they were internal or external to the Italian League, and that they were part of what was still a feudal system of relationships. If anything, their purpose was to offset with a tangible and forceful presence the precarious, when not random, nature of such relationships, which not for nothing had their roots in the vexed process of seigneurial legitimation.

What was indeed novel, however, was the fact that Francesco Sforza established this kind of on-going relationship, for differing reasons, with Venice and Florence. The noteworthy accomplishments of Sforza's diplomacy – other than the conclusion of the Italian League in 1455 – were the bilateral pact of compromise signed at Lodi in 1454 and, some time previously, the decisive support that Sforza and Cosimo de' Medici provided for each other after the latter's ascent to power in 1434;¹⁶ support which led, especially after the 1440s, to the constant presence of Sforza's trusted agents in Florence and, after Sforza's elevation to the Duchy and the forging of a sort of Medici–Sforza dynastic alliance, to their well-nigh obligatory confirmation, at least initially (with

¹³ Cf. B. de Mandrot and C. Samaran (eds.), *Dépêches des ambassadeurs milanais en France sous Louis XI et François Sforza*, 4 vols., Paris, 1916–23; P. M. Kendall and V. Ilardi (eds.), *Dispatches with Related Documents of Milanese Ambassadors in France and Burgundy*, 2 vols., Athens, Ohio, 1970–1; vol. III, ed. V. Ilardi, Dekalb, Ill., 1981; and also E. Pontieri (ed.), *Carteggi diplomatici fra Milano sforzesca e la Francia*, vol. I: 18 agosto 1450–26 dicembre 1456, Rome, 1978; E. Sestan (ed.), *Carteggi diplomatici fra Milano sforzesca e la Borgogna*, vol. I: 8 marzo 1453–12 luglio 1475, Rome, 1985; *ibid.*, vol. II: 1475–1476, Rome, 1987.

¹⁴ Cf. G. Mattingly, 'The First Resident', pp. 421–44; and Ch. De Tourtier, 'Un ambassadeur de Louis de Mantoue', *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire*, 69, (1957), pp. 321–44.

¹⁵ Cf. G. Soldi Rondinini, 'Ambasciatori e ambascerie al tempo di Filippo Maria Visconti (1421–1426)', *Nuova Rivista Storica*, 49 (1965), pp. 313–44; and also Fubini, *Italia quattrocentesca*, p. 201.

¹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 80–5.

Nicodemo Tranchedini and Sacramoro da Rimini), under the title of 'ducal secretaries'.¹⁷ In this sense (and only in this sense) there is some justification for the traditional view of Nicodemo Tranchedini, Sforza's most favoured agent in Florence between the 1440s and 1460s, as 'the first resident ambassador'.¹⁸ This was in fact an exceptional occurrence, since Tranchedini acted as the intermediary not for a relationship between states but for a mutual bond between regimes. Accordingly, he was the first to represent within the context of a republic a type of presence (and of interference) more appropriate to a relationship between courts. (And in fact, at least until the 1480s, a reciprocal Florentine post was unthinkable.)

There was a different reason for the presence of a Sforza representative at Venice (but once again, as a rule, without reciprocity)¹⁹ implicit in the compromise Pact of Lodi: namely, the climate of mutual and incurable suspicion generated by the Treaty.

In a more general sense, the intensification of bilateral relations in various directions and of various kinds, internally and externally to the Italian League (most notably the extremely close relationship with the Papacy), was for Sforza and his successors almost a reversal of Clausewitz's celebrated maxim that war is the continuation of politics by other means. Sforza had to remedy his failure to obtain Imperial legitimation, and he had to maintain constant surveillance over events in other states, as well as ensuring recognition by virtue of the presence of his diplomats there.²⁰ As Kendall and Ilardi stress,²¹ Sforza diplomacy was for these reasons undeniably of utmost importance in establishing a new praxis of permanent diplomacy and, therefore, the residentiality of the ambassador. But this should not induce us to believe that a solution is now forthcoming to the long-standing issue of the 'Localisierung der "neuen Diplomatie"', on which an essay by F. Ernst has dwelt with dubious

¹⁷ Cf. Fubini, 'Appunti sui rapporti diplomatici'. It is noteworthy that these agents were not of Milanese extraction, or at any rate subjects of the Duchy, but were foreign members of Sforza's most intimate entourage. Nicodemo Tranchedini was a native of Potremoli and had served Sforza since 1429; Sacramoro da Rimini had been co-opted from service to Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta in the 1450s.

¹⁸ Cf. Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, p. 69; he quotes from A. Schaub, 'Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der ständigen Gesandtschaften', *Mitteilungen für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 10 (1889), pp. 501–2.

¹⁹ For still relevant information on this topic see G. B. Picotti, *La dieta di Mantova e la politica de' Veneziani*, Venice, 1912 (*Miscellanea di storia veneta*, third series, 4). Cf. the reprint of the book, edited by G. M. Varanini, Trento, 1996.

²⁰ For a description of the formidable network of Sforza diplomacy see L. Cerioni, *La diplomazia sforzesca nella seconda metà del Quattrocento e i suoi cifrari segreti*, 2 vols., Rome, 1970 (*Fonti e studi del Corpus membranarum italicarum*, 7).

²¹ See Kendall and Ilardi (eds.), *Dispatches*, vol. 1, p. vi.

conclusions.²² And this is not just because, given that we are dealing with diplomacy here, an answer cannot by definition be unilateral; it is especially because reference to the sole external fact of the resident embassy cannot grasp the essence of the question. Suffice it to point out the inconclusiveness of research on the beginnings of the modern institution, or the arbitrary institutional genealogies proposed, for example, with regard to the Venetian *bailo* or to the consuls of the mercantile nations. Indeed, if one followed this line of inquiry, it would not be difficult to find examples, even very early ones, of prolonged residentiality, like that of the Florentine notary despatched to the papal Curia in 1285, with the following clause: 'and he shall remain there as long as the Podestà, the Captain, and the Prior wish'.²³

To insist on the matter would be to lose sight of the central issue, which is by no means one of change in gradual stages. In fact, there is no questioning the fact that the fifteenth century saw a veritable transformation of the institutional order or, if one prefers, an erosion of extant legal orders which had repercussions of constitutional magnitude and thereafter effects on political doctrine. In this connection, Mattingly is quite correct when he contrasts the traditional assumptions of the French provost and diplomat Bernard de Rosier – according to whose *Ambaxiator brevilogus* (1436) the duty (*officium*) of the ambassador was the safeguarding of peace, to which purpose his status as 'public official' was connected – with the peremptory statements by Ermolao Barbaro at the end of the century: 'The purpose of the ambassador is the same as that of all other civil servants: to do, say, discuss and devise everything he judges useful in order to maintain and increase the well-being of their city.'²⁴ According to Mattingly, 'This is the voice of the new age.' But the quotation evidences clearly that the substantial innovation was not so much the residentiality of the ambassador as the assimilating of his sphere of activity into the more general one of the public functionary, to the point of justifying relaxation of the close constraints on his mandate and proudly asserting the republican quality of such discretion-

²² F. Ernst, 'Über Gesandtschaftswesen und Diplomatie an der Wende vom Mittelalter zur Neuzeit', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, 33 (1950–1), pp. 64–95 (reference to p. 65).

²³ Cf. A. Gherardi (ed.), *Le Consulte della Repubblica fiorentina*, Florence, 1896, vol. I, p. 196: 'et ibi moretur donec placuerit Potestati, Capitaneo et Prioribus'.

²⁴ Cf. Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, p. 109; E. Barbaro, *De coelibatu, De officio legati*, edited by V. Branca, Florence, 1959, p. 159: 'Finis legato idem est qui et caeteris ad Rempubicam accedentibus: ut ea faciant, dicant, consulant et cogitent, quae ad optimum suae civitatis statum et retinendum et amplificandum pertinere possent iudicent.' Note that, in contrast to De Rosier, Barbaro refers to that particular type of ambassador, the resident.

ality: 'it is one thing to act as the ambassador of a republic, another to act on behalf of a tyrant'.²⁵

I shall not enquire here whether Barbaro was correct in this remark, which in fact concerned the princely ambassador (sometimes a full-fledged counsellor to the prince) as much as his republican counterpart. What matters most is that he acknowledged an external sphere of political activity which was no less important than that internal to the city, so that the ambassador was assigned a function similar to that of any other public official. The vague expression that Barbaro uses in this regard ('idem est qui et caeteris ad Rempublicam accedentibus') is nevertheless indicative of the difficulty of the concept when transferred from actual reality to doctrine. I shall therefore address the following question: did the old institutional orders envisage the embassy as an 'office'? And if not, in what circumstances and through what practices did it assume such a character? And in what forms and after what lapse of time did it come to be sanctioned as such?

Put otherwise: analysis should shift from the abstract history of the evolution of an institution to examination of the inner workings of the regimes which resorted to diplomatic activity until, as in the Italian states of the fifteenth century, it became such an integral part of their very existence that it modified their constitutional order.

Once again, the issue has been clouded by speculations based on hindsight. I refer in particular to *jus legationis* as elaborated by Grotius: the right, that is, to send and receive ambassadors, and the legitimation of the office via the figure of the prince. According to accepted legal theory, the creation of an embassy became an attribute of sovereignty, and therefore an attribute in particular of the prince. Reciprocally, in historical reconstruction, the evolution of the diplomatic system interweaves with the progressive assertion of the principle of sovereignty and consequently with the growth of modern international law in a community of sovereign powers – of a *jus inter gentes*, no longer a *jus gentium*, according to Vitoria's celebrated assertion.²⁶

Conversely, however, one notes the paradox that the purported origins of modern diplomacy were rooted in – and stemmed directly

²⁵ 'aliud esse reipublicae, aliud tyranni legatum agere'. Cf. also Barbaro, *De coelibatu*, p. 160: 'Incidunt quaedam causae nonnumquam, ut molienda quaedam sint et quasi repolienda sint mandatorum genera', etc. See also R. Fubini, 'L'ambasciatore nel xv secolo: due trattati e una biografia (Bernard de Rosier, Ermolao Barbaro, Vespasiano da Bisticci)', *Mélanges de l'Ecole Française de Rome, Moyen Age*, 108 (1996), pp. 645–65.

²⁶ Cf. Nava, *Sistema della diplomazia*, pp. 64–5; Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, pp. 284–5; Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy*, pp. 157ff.

from – imperfect forms of sovereignty and legitimation. Sforza diplomacy is an obvious case in point. Florence was no exception, and nor even was Venice. I say this not in order to denigrate the Venetian ‘myth’ of the perfect constitution, but because the intensification of diplomatic activity in the fifteenth century was directly related to Venice’s expansion on *terraferma*, and it raised problems of legitimacy no less important than those of the *de facto* assumption of sovereignty by a city commune like Florence, or of the new dynasty of the Sforzas devoid of imperial investiture.

The new diplomacy of fifteenth-century Italy was therefore first and foremost political activity, whose range and purposes were, at least, juridically problematic. And this raises once again the issue from which I have somewhat strayed: in the terms current at the time, and in what manner, could an embassy be called an ‘office’? The traditional view as summed up by De Maulde had no doubts on the matter: ‘La légation est un office.’²⁷ Likewise the more recent monograph by D. Queller, even though it seeks polemically to detach diplomatic law and practice from the notion of sovereignty, is entitled *The Office of Ambassador in the Middle Ages*, and consequently enfeebles its revisionist endeavour by conducting a routine survey, diluted over an excessively long time-span, of formal figures (*nuncius*, *ambaxiator*, *procurator*, etc.), almost as if they represented successive stages in the evolution of the office.²⁸ In fact, the ambassador’s investiture with public office had been already asserted by medieval jurisprudence, and most notably in the institutional *Specula legatorum* by the canonist William Durant (thirteenth century). And it was reiterated in the mid-fifteenth-century treatise *De legatis et legationibus* by Martino Garatti da Lodi which supported De Maulde’s contention. It should be borne in mind, however, that Durant’s principal purpose was to define the figure of the apostolic legate, who was equipped with broad powers of delegated (or *commissa*) jurisdiction and was accordingly a ‘public official’. It is equally true that, in the composite fashion of scholastic argumentation, Durant had sought to furnish a comprehensive definition of the *legatus*, drawing eclectically on Roman law (whence the equivalence of the legate with the civil representative, *vicarius muneris alieni*), and extending the term to include the various diplomatic forms of the time.²⁹ However, this was in marked contrast with the concept then current of the *nuncius* (the later terms of *amba-*

²⁷ De Maulde la Clavière, *La Diplomatie au temps de Machiavel*, p. 294.

²⁸ D. E. Queller, *The Office of Ambassador in the Middle Ages*, Princeton, 1976; see also W. Höflechner, ‘Anmerkungen zu Diplomatie und Gesandtschaftswesen’, *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs*, 32 (1979), pp. 1–21.

²⁹ On this see Fubini, ‘Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia’, pp. 132–3. Du-

xiator and *orator* were merely rhetorical elaborations on the same concept),³⁰ conceived as a 'living letter' shorn of subjectivity, which spoke 'per se sed non de per se' – 'by (by means of, through) himself, but not from (on behalf of) himself'.³¹ Indeed, it was Durant himself who emphasized the problem when he introduced his treatise by saying: 'we see infinite doubts arise on the matter, and the experts disagree with each other'.³²

A formal definition was still *sub judice* in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century treatises, to the extent that one scholar has been induced to conclude that a theory of the ambassador 'as a representative has less interest for them in its legal abstract than in its personal implications'.³³ The figure of the *nuncius* did not fall into disuse in doctrine and chancery formularies; it was instead flanked with those mentioned above, as evidenced by the statutory norms enacted at Venice and elsewhere, which forbade the elected ambassador from participating in the council or college that formulated his instructions – thus dispelling any suspicion that his role might be any other than that of a representative who spoke 'per se sed non de per se'.³⁴

To restrict my discussion to communal traditions (and the reference is henceforth to these), at the beginning of the fourteenth century the embassy was still not necessarily, or principally, political in character, at least in the sense with which the term is used today. The most frequent missions were those requested by private citizens so that they might be backed by the commune in lawsuits, mostly mercantile, outside the city boundaries.³⁵ The ambassador, moreover, could also be 'lent' to other

rant's text is reproduced in V. E. Hrabar (ed.), *De legatis et legationibus tractatus varii*, Dorpati Lovonorum, 1905, pp. 31–41.

³⁰ Contrary to the widely held view, the term 'orator' does not derive from literature but from Roman law. The *oratores* were legates acting on behalf of the senate who, unlike the imperial legates, reported orally: see F. d'Amoia, 'Diplomatici, agenti (Premessa storica)', in *Enciclopedia del diritto*, vol. XII, Milan, 1964, pp. 574–5.

³¹ Cf. B. Behrens, 'Treatises on the Ambassador Written in the Fifteenth and early Sixteenth Centuries', *English Historical Review*, 51 (1936), p. 622; Queller, *The Office*, pp. 10ff.

³² Cf. Hrabar (ed.), *De legatis et legationibus*, p. 31: 'dubia oriri videmus infinita et peritos ad invicem dissentire'.

³³ Behrens, 'Treatises on the Ambassador', p. 620.

³⁴ Cf. D. E. Queller, *Early Venetian Legislation on Ambassadors*, Geneva, 1966, p. 44; S. Angelini, *La diplomazia comunale a Perugia nei secoli XIII e XIV*, Florence, 1965, p. 35; and also Fubini, 'Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia', pp. 134–5.

³⁵ See the relevant chapter on this subject in R. Caggese (ed.), *Statuti della Repubblica fiorentina*, vol. I: *Statuto del Capitano del Popolo degli anni 1322–25*, Florence, 1910, p. 115. Diplomacy was treated only in this regard by the Statutes of Siena, 1337–57, in Archivio di Stato di Siena, *Statuti del Comune*, 26, c. 124v. See also Angelini, *La diplomazia comunale a Perugia*, p. 30.

communities to act as an intermediary without formally involving his commune.³⁶ Consequently, one searches the communes' statutes and legislations in vain for systematic treatment of these matters. They restrict themselves to haphazard regulation of the various eventualities surrounding the embassy, while their overriding concern is with measures to force reluctant appointees to undertake their mission, with guarantees that the mission had been actually accomplished, with the assembly of apparatuses of representation according to personal status and the prestige of the post, and above all with curbing expenditure.³⁷ Although rules governing election and the relative incompatibilities (or *divieti*) were established quite early, it is hardly the case that the figure of the ambassador thereby acquired a constitutional guise, so to speak. Emblematic is the fact that a special oath had to be sworn by those appointed to missions at the papal Curia and at the imperial or royal courts, in order to prevent their profiting from 'the embassy in order to obtain credentials, or an office, or an appointment as *podestà*, or privileges of any kind'.³⁸ The purpose, that is to say, was to forestall breaches of communal law brought about by direct and potentially contaminating contact with sovereign powers.³⁹

In terms of statutory law – and this is the crucial point – the embassy was not envisaged as an 'officium' in either its ordinary or extraordinary forms. The rubrics relative to the matter were entitled, in fact, *De ambaxiatoribus mictendis*, *De ambaxiatoribus dandis*, and so on (but conversely see *De officialibus pro equis ambaxiatorum extimandis*).⁴⁰ Ambassadors could also (albeit rarely) be personages extraneous to the citizenry, like jurists or prelates. One finds, in truth, one particular rubric which likens an ambassador to an extraordinary official, but the observation is made more in passing than by virtue of any effective analogy between the two figures.⁴¹ Subsequently, and with reference to the prohibition on election to an embassy of anyone who had previously been drawn by

³⁶ Cf. Gherardi (ed.), *Le Consulte della Repubblica fiorentina*, vol. I, p. 74: 'de facto ambaxiatorum petitorum per Lombardos'.

³⁷ On this see Fubini, 'Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia', pp. 129–31.

³⁸ 'licteras vel officium aliquod vel potestarias vel privilegium aliquod'. See n. 39 below.

³⁹ Cf. R. Caggese (ed.), *Statuti della Repubblica fiorentina*, vol. II, *Statuto del Podestà dell'anno 1325*, Florence, 1921, p. 61; and Fubini, 'Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia', pp. 130–1.

⁴⁰ Cf. Caggese (ed.), *Statuti della Repubblica fiorentina*, vol. I: *Statuto del Capitano del Popolo*, pp. 15–16.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 18–19; regarding the 'prohibition' that prevented 'extraordinary officials' from assuming office unless six months had elapsed since their previous appointment, the rubric stipulates: 'Et hoc capitulum non intelligatur habere locum in ambaxiatoribus nec in nunptiis communis Florentie, dummodo ipsi uno et eodem tempore ultra

lot to occupy the office of Prior, the following precautionary clause was significantly added: 'etiam quantumcunque talis ambaxiata non diceretur officium'. In other words, the proscription was to be deemed valid even when, given the uncertainties of jurisprudence at the time, an embassy was not considered of equal status with an 'office' (and indeed the entry 'embassy' does not appear in the *Tabulum devetorum* of the *Statuta* of 1415).⁴² The distinction between 'embassy' and 'office' is drawn even more clearly by Venetian source documents.⁴³ Therefore, although an embassy was not clearly definable in the juridical sense of 'office' (which entailed jurisdictional powers), it was commonly indicated by the generic use of the verbs 'serve' or 'operate': for example, apropos the obligation of ambassadors to render account of the time in which 'they served the commune of Florence on behalf of the Commune itself',⁴⁴ according to the Florentine Statutes;⁴⁵ or 'fulfilled service to their Lordships' in Venetian documents.⁴⁶

The situation, as said, changed radically in the course of the fifteenth century. To be sure, thorough understanding of the evolution of formal aspects can only be gained at the end of the century, but if examination is limited to only these accomplishments, knowledge of the forms and purposes of the process will be inadequate. Such is the risk run by those who conduct only superficial examination of the collected Florentine legislation edited by Vedovato prior to the 'Constitution for Ambassadors' of 1529, which furnishes unsound evidence on the Medicean reforms.⁴⁷ By contrast, Queller, in his studies of Venetian diplomacy, is guilty of the opposite shortcoming. He lumps together a corpus of 'Venetian legislation' from the end of the thirteenth century until 1500 according to a purported line of continuity and without adequate political evidence. Rather than the plain institutional fact (the embassy), therefore, one should more broadly address the process whereby the powers established themselves and authority was concentrated. If the embassy was conceived essentially as an emanation of the accrediting body, by which its commission was formulated (councils, colleges, or

unum offitium habere non possint.' See also Fubini, 'Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia', p. 139.

⁴² Cf. the provision of 2 Dec. 1421, in G. Vedovato, *Note sul diritto diplomatico della Repubblica fiorentina*, Florence, 1946, p. 47; and also Fubini, 'Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia', pp. 132-3.

⁴³ Cf. Queller, *Early Venetian Legislation*, p. 68; D. E. Queller, *Two Studies in Venetian Government* (with F. R. Swietek), Geneva, 1977, pp. 22-3, 35-6, 46-7.

⁴⁴ 'servient pro communi Florentie in ambaxaria Communis'. See n. 45 below.

⁴⁵ Caggese (ed.), *Statuto del Podestà*, p. 62.

⁴⁶ 'compleare servicium Dominacionis'. Cf. Queller, *Two Studies*, pp. 22, 36.

⁴⁷ See on this Fubini, 'Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia', pp. 178-89.

equivalent offices), its progressive integration into the dynamics of power, and therefore its gradual institutionalization, should be examined in terms of the forms assumed by executive power (as well of the regulation of its technical organ, the chancery). And one should also examine the increasingly evident conflicts that arose between the executive power and the traditional apparatus of collegiate control. The sources are legislative and statutory, of course, but they should be taken less in and of themselves than as indicative of more general situations. Consequently, the focus should be on chancery practice, as well as on more broadly political documentation, both *in se* and as regards its inherent ideological meanings. Since the topic is too complex to be given thorough treatment here, I shall restrict discussion to its essential features.

Notwithstanding the enduring 'myth' of Venetian diplomacy, the best point of departure for analysis of the break with the past is the Statutes of Florence of 1415.⁴⁸ For the first time, the body of municipal legislation was addressed broadly to the 'People and Commune of Florence', and no longer to a single magistracy exercising jurisdiction, the Captain of the People or the *Podestà* (the two Rectors had in fact been excluded from presidency of the two civic councils, the so-called *Consigli opportuni*, since 1396).⁴⁹ To this corresponded the definition, much broader than it ever had been in the past (and a matter of great controversy at the time), of the powers of the Lordship (*Signoria*). In the section of the Statutes devoted to this executive organ we find for the first time a set of rules which regulated the election and the activity of ambassadors, now at last identified in their properly political function. Although in the past their election had been the responsibility of the Lords and Colleges, this was now specified as their exclusive (*solummodo*) province, and by a majority vote of two-thirds.⁵⁰ Likewise the drafting of written instructions was solemnly reserved to the executive body, and ambassadors were defined as those who were sent outside the country and district of Florence. The next rubric states that the ambassador could be sent 'only for the affairs of the aforesaid Commune',⁵¹ thereby drastically curtailing the 'private' embassies, which now could only be granted by practically unanimous resolution of the Lordship, and were hedged about by strict financial guarantees.⁵² Exclusive powers were extended to chancery registration ('henceforth the elec-

⁴⁸ On this issue see *ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 143; and also Fubini, *Italia quattrocentesca*, p. 47.

⁵⁰ Cf. *Statuta populi et communis Florentie*, vol. II, Freiburg [but Florence], 1778, p. 705 (Liber V, Tractatus I, rubr. 219).

⁵¹ 'nisi dumtaxat pro negotiis dicti Communis'.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 710 (rubr. 222).

tions of ambassadors shall be noted only by the Chancellor of the aforesaid Commune, and in no circumstances by anybody else'),⁵³ and the same chancery was to receive the oath of the returning ambassador concerning the correct conduct of his mission.⁵⁴ The chancery was also responsible for registering the *informationes* (as ambassadorial instructions were then known, although, towards the end of the century, they would acquire the more solemn para-legal title of *mandata*) and also the final *relationes* presented on conclusion of the embassy.⁵⁵ The same rules applied to the *ad hoc* war committee of the *Dieci di Balìa* (instituted in 1384), to which election of ambassadors was also delegated, although the most important missions 'ad Papam, vel d. Imperatorem, aut Regem vel Reginam' were only decided on deliberation by the Lords and Colleges, with the relative acts being drawn up 'only by the will and consent' of the Lords themselves.⁵⁶

There is no doubt, and this warrants repeating, that in this *solummodo*, in this *dumtaxat* – that is to say, in the solemn arrogation of powers by the Lordship and in the relative dispositions regarding chancery registration – one discerns the origin of the new public physiognomy of the ambassador, who although not formally the incumbent of an 'office', was effectively such. Indeed, the term appears, albeit fortuitously and almost surreptitiously, in a later law, one of whose additional provisions had been delegated by a statutory clause to the Lordship.⁵⁷ A provision of 21 December 1444, which dealt with the prohibition on election as ambassador (or commissioner, syndic, lieutenant) before one year had

⁵³ 'quod deinceps electiones . . . notentur . . . solummodo per Cancellarium dicti Communis et non per alios quoquo modo', *ibid.*, p. 707 (rubr. 229). It was in compliance with this order, which derived from the provision of 24 Sept. 1408 (in Vedovato, *Note*, pp. 60–1), that compilation began of the register *Electiones et remotiones* . . . *Cetera ad legationes pertinentia* (in Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF), *Signori, Dieci di Balìa, Otto di Pratica, Legazioni e Commissarie*, 8). The register begins with an election held on 12 Oct. 1408 and concludes in 1423, with an appendix for 1428 (the elections of the *Dieci di Balìa* are not included). After the interruption, registration resumes in *Electiones et remotiones* . . . *Nomina oratorum qui eligentur pro cognoscendis devetis* (*ibid.*, *Carte di Corredo*, 51), beginning on 4 Jan. 1436 and concluding in 1460, roughly simultaneously with the new system for the election of ambassadors adopted by the *Consiglio dei Cento*. For a more complete description see Fubini, 'Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia', p. 150.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 138–9; *Statuta*, vol. III, Freiburg, 1778, p. 247 (Liber V, Tractatus II, rubr. 247).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. II, p. 711 (rubr. 223); and Fubini, 'Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia', p. 136. For a parallel with Venice see Queller, *Early Venetian Legislation*, p. 46.

⁵⁶ 'tantum de voluntate et consensu'. Cf. *Statuta*, vol. III, pp. 26–7 (rubr. 23). On evasion of the rule see Fubini, 'Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia', p. 150.

⁵⁷ *Statuta*, vol. II, p. 711 (rubr. 224).

elapsed following conclusion of the previous embassy, termed such appointees 'officia seu servitia'.⁵⁸

But this 'prohibition' (or *devetum*) warrants consideration from another point of view. In contrast to the communal tradition – which regarded diplomatic missions as onerous, with the consequence that the Statutes solicitously ensured that a suitable interval of time elapsed between one mission and the next⁵⁹ – contemporaneously first with the partisan struggles between Albizzi and Ricci (1361) and then with the growth of the oligarchical regimes, the interval was set at two years, and then definitively at one year under the provisions of the 1415 Statute.⁶⁰ The concern to restrict the authority exercised through diplomatic activity is plain. In other words, the imposition of the prohibition – which was in any case elastic since it could be lifted by majority vote of the Lords and Colleges – provides clear evidence of emerging oligarchical tendencies. And this places the legislative and statutory norms in a different light, which is not that of the sole, if undeniable, concentration of authority. The authority of the Lordship, in fact, was asserted also, and perhaps principally, with regard to the extraordinary powers of the *Balia* committees, after twenty years (beginning in 1393) of extraordinary governments.⁶¹ The solution was a compromise. The Lordship assumed some of the powers wielded by the *Balie* (i.e. the committees or assemblies endowed with extraordinary powers), affirming its sovereignty and thereby ratifying in forms of ordinary government the centralization of power in which oligarchical tendencies had become manifest. But apart from these measures, which had been institutionally embodied in the *ad hoc* *Balie*, a further breach was left open. Although the power of the Albizzi *Balia* Council, known as '*degli Ottantuno*' (of the Eighty-One), was officially suppressed, its existence was nevertheless mentioned in an additional clause appended to the 'provision' of 12 December 1415 by which the Statutes were approved by the Councils (which was one of the principal reasons why they were subsequently quashed);⁶² and the Medici regime did nothing but enlarge the breach further and render it irreparable.

Examination of diplomatic activity furnishes a patent example of the

⁵⁸ Cf. Vedovato, *Note*, p. 55.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Statuto del Podestà*, p. 61; and also Vedovato, *Note*, p. 12.

⁶⁰ Cf. *Statuta*, vol. II, p. 710, rubr. 223; see also D. Marzi, *La cancelleria della Repubblica fiorentina*, Rocca San Casciano, 1910, p. 87.

⁶¹ Cf. A. Molho, 'The Florentine Oligarchy and the "Balie" of the Late Trecento', *Speculum*, 43 (1968), pp. 23–51; and also Fubini, 'Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia', pp. 166ff. and *Italia quattrocentesca*, pp. 48–52.

⁶² Cf. *Statuta*, vol. III, p. 717; and Fubini, *Italia quattrocentesca*, pp. 48–52.

process just described. The first register expressly devoted to the ambassadors' instructions begins with a '*Ricordança et informatione*' of 15 February 1384;⁶³ the '*relazioni*' or final reports of the ambassadors were first recorded in 1395, both in the ordinary register of the *Signori* and in the one specific to the Ten.⁶⁴ Considering the circumstances (the wars against the Visconti), it is plain that this series, and with it the new salience of the diplomatic function, arose in conditions of emergency, and that routine chancery business was interwoven in those early beginnings with that of the office of the Ten. Conflicts of competence, and especially avoidance by the Ten of the limits imposed on the authority delegated to them, were soon manifest. A significant case is the report by Piero da Sanminiato, ambassador to 'the Cardinal of Florence' (Pietro Corsini) at the court of the Avignon Pope (to sound out the King of France's attitude to the alliance). Da Sanminiato's report was submitted in its extended form to the Ten on 14 June 1396, but the text duly presented to the Lords contained only its most generic parts.⁶⁵

The mandatory provisions of the Statutes are thus understandable; but a subsequent and comprehensive measure of 13 March 1431, which revised the entire matter, is much more elusive. At issue was the election of the 'orators, commissioners or agents (*mandatari*)' despatched in the service of the Commune, be it 'ad Summum Pontificem, Imperatorem, Regem, Reginam, Principem, Dominum vel communitatem, universitatem aut locum', by the Lords, alone or with the Colleges, 'vel per officium Decem Balie, vel per aliud officium' invested with authority.⁶⁶ A further provision of 29 December 1447 specified 'that the aforesaid provision must not be interpreted as contravening the authority of the Ten of the *Balia* concerning the election of ambassadors', with registration independently of the ordinary chancery.⁶⁷ Nor was it a question that concerned the Ten alone, who were elected only in situations of war or manifest danger. From the outset, the Ten were interchangeable with the ordinary and plenipotentiary office of the Eight of the Ward (*Otto di Guardia*), and the practice was resumed in the early

⁶³ ASF, *Signori, Carteggi, Legazioni e Commissarie*, 1.

⁶⁴ ASF, *Signori, Carteggi, Rapporti di oratori*, 1; *Dieci di Balìa, Relazioni di ambasciatori ai Dieci di Balìa*, 1.

⁶⁵ ASF, *Signori, Rapporti*, c. 5r; *Dieci, Rapporti*, cc. 20v–21v.

⁶⁶ Cf. Vedovato, *Note*, p. 50; and, for the date, Marzi, *La cancelleria*, p. 589. Envisaged for the first time was the systematic registration of all documentation, from the 'commissione' to the 'littere', to the concluding 'relazione'. Although only partially implemented, the provision nevertheless marks a turning point in the history of the institution.

⁶⁷ 'quod per predicta non intelligatur derogare neque sit derogatum auctoritati Decem Balie circa deputandum vel eligendum ambaxiatores'. Cf. Vedovato, *Note*, p. 58.

Medici period especially. On 20 August 1445, for example, the Lords with their Colleges, acting on a report submitted by a committee of *savi* (wise men), lifted the prohibitions on orators sent to Venice and elsewhere, and determined that 'the Eight of the Ward, old and new, should elect one or more ambassadors, as many as they wish, on one or several occasions, to the Venetians and to others, according to the need and the necessities of the commune of Florence'.⁶⁸ This delegation of powers was reaffirmed in broader terms on the following 20 September. Since the laws forbade the *Signori* from deliberating in the absence of the Colleges, and since the Colleges could not be convened with sufficient rapidity, 'owing to the urgency of the matter' the Eight were authorized to devise and to execute 'anything they considered expedient and necessary for the welfare of the said Commune in the name of the Lordship'.⁶⁹ The measure may appear typical of the Medicean regime, in its early and arduous ascent to power, but the legal pretext for it was furnished by the provision of 1431, indicating continuity in the exercise of oligarchical power as well as in the justifications and devices employed in the formal sphere of provisions and resolutions. After the events of the latter 1440s, with the highly controversial support provided by Cosimo de' Medici for Francesco Sforza's cause in Lombardy, less recourse was made to the Eight. However, further clashes among the Lordship, the Ten and the Councils arose for not dissimilar reasons during the war waged by Florence in alliance with Sforza, now Duke of Milan, against Venice and Alfonso d'Aragona in 1452-4. Matters deteriorated until even Chancellor Poggio Bracciolini became involved, repeatedly contesting, on the basis of a statutory clause, the legitimacy of the appointment and despatch of ambassadors.⁷⁰ A more regular and peaceable arrangement was not found until the 'Parliament' (that is, the Medicean *coup d'état*) of August 1458, whereupon the entire controversy on diplomatic matters was delegated to the newly created and plenipotentiary Council of the Hundred (*Consiglio dei Cento*), the regime's first truly constitutional organ.⁷¹

⁶⁸ '... Octo Custodie veteribus et novis quod eligant unum vel plures et quot voluerint et semel et pluries ad Venetos et ad alios, prout opus fuerit pro urgentibus necessitatibus communis Florentie'. ASF, *Carte di Corredo*, 51, c. 55v; for more detailed treatment see Fubini, 'Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia', pp. 164-7.

⁶⁹ 'quecunque expedientia et necessaria pro utilitate dicti Communis ... nomine Dominationis'. ASF, *Carte di Corredo*, 51, c. 56r.

⁷⁰ See for example ASF, *Carte di Corredo*, 51, c. 122v: 'Dominus Poggius cancellarius florentinus significavit supradictis Dominis ut sub pena in lege contenta decernant commissiones suo tempore supradictis oratoribus, reducens ad memoriam ipsorum omnem ipsius legis tenorem'. See also on this Fubini, 'Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia', p. 178.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 178-81.

However, I shall dwell no further on this theme. I wish instead to direct attention to a point central to the entire question: namely, the recourse made to what jurists have termed the 'state of necessity' argument ('ob causas urgentissimas', 'pro urgentibus necessitatibus', etc.). One notes a close parallel here in the Venetian evidence on the lifting of prohibitions, increased expenditure, and the prolongation of missions – in short, exceptions to the established norms. The first explicit example in public records dates back to the war with Padua, specifically to 26 February 1406, when in view of ongoing events and the requirement, indeed the necessity ('Cum . . . oporteat, imo est necessarium'), to despatch nobles to various places 'for the good of our affairs and the well-being of our State',⁷² a decree by the Great Council authorized the *Pregadi* (the Senate) to remove any prohibition that might impede these elections.⁷³ The *ratio status* argument (which was quite different from the traditional 'service to the Commune', and also from the general 'status dominationum et principum' ('the welfare of commonwealths and lordships') invoked in 1404),⁷⁴ appears again in a resolution by the Senate which decreed that ambassadors 'despatched externally on matters affecting the well-being of our State' could not refuse their appointments.⁷⁵ The most extreme statement of this position was the declaration of something akin to a permanent state of necessity which justified the entire network of diplomatic relations. I refer to the Senate's provision of 19 March 1471, which, while seeking to ensure the prompt payment of bills of exchange to external ambassadors, added the following specification: '[those] whom we have sent to various places and whom we are sending in increasing numbers, day after day, impelled by necessity'.⁷⁶

In both Florence and Venice, so-called permanent diplomacy (i.e. the prolongation and interweaving of missions) stemmed from a state of necessity which was rooted not in the (relatively ephemeral) set-up of the Italian League but in the conflicts of the late 1300s and their related processes of territorial expansion. Indeed, to dwell on technical detail, in substantial analogy with the Florentine situation of some years previously, the first creation in Venice of a special register of ambassadors in 1425 was occasioned by the mission to Milan by Paolo Correr (whose report inaugurated the series) resulting from Doge Francesco

⁷² 'pro bono agendorum nostrorum et status nostri'. See n. 73 below.

⁷³ Cf. Queller, *Two Studies*, pp. 35–6.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁷⁵ 'qui mittuntur extra pro rebus tangentibus statum nostrum'. Cf. Queller, *Early Venetian Legislation*, pp. 89–90 (10 Aug. 1440).

⁷⁶ 'quos ad diversa loca misimus et in dies mittimus necessitate coacti'. Cf. Queller, *Two Studies*, p. 63.

Foscari's new policy of expansion on *terraferma*.⁷⁷ As at Florence, albeit in less blatant forms which scholars have only recently begun to describe,⁷⁸ the strengthening of the political role of the ambassador coincided with the centralization of authority, but also with recourse to decision-making procedures more direct and secret than those envisaged by the legislation. And if, as Queller notes, competence on such matters was progressively centralized to the Senate, and then into the hands of the Ten,⁷⁹ the repeated protests that only the Doge and the College were privy to the reports of ambassadors, Venetian and foreign, are significant.⁸⁰

Common to both Venice and Florence, moreover, was the narrowing of the choice among those eligible for embassies at the highest level of their *cursus honorum*,⁸¹ thereby raising sensitive constitutional and legal issues. Those increasingly fewer individuals who could boast titles of professionalism and privilege were loath to accept their strict hierarchical subordination to the competent bodies, especially when there were margins for discussion and a range of options available. They consequently pressed for effective authority in the exercise of diplomatic missions, as rightfully due to men belonging to the innermost circle of the ruling group. This gave rise to cases of overt tension which sometimes degenerated into judicial indictment,⁸² as evidenced by the denunciation issued by the Senate, on 18 July 1478, of the 'extremely bad and harmful custom'⁸³ of certain ambassadors, who, in disobedience of their mandate, 'do not hesitate to show themselves disrespectfully wiser than their own superiors'.⁸⁴ It is surprising, though, that this apparently unobjectionable condemnation of the ambassadors for disobeying their mandate encountered considerable opposition.⁸⁵ Apart from the circumstances (the resolution probably refers to the policy pursued by Giovanni Emo at Florence),⁸⁶ the document illustrates the

⁷⁷ Cf. Queller, *Early Venetian Legislation*, p. 86.

⁷⁸ Cf. G. Cracco, 'Patriziato e oligarchia a Venezia nel Tre-Quattrocento', in S. Bertelli, N. Rubinstein and C. H. Smyth (eds.), *Florence and Venice: Comparisons and Relations*, vol. 1, Florence, 1979, pp. 71-98.

⁷⁹ Cf. Queller, *Early Venetian Legislation*, p. 11; and more generally, Cracco, 'Patriziato', pp. 83ff.

⁸⁰ Cf. Queller, *Early Venetian Legislation*, *passim*.

⁸¹ For details see Fubini, 'Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia', pp. 153-4.

⁸² Picotti, *La dieta di Mantova e la politica de' Veneziani*, pp. 301ff.

⁸³ 'pessima quedam et nocentissima consuetudo'. See n. 85 below.

⁸⁴ 'sine ulla reverentia sapientiores velle videri maioribus suis'. See n. 85 below.

⁸⁵ 91 votes for, 19 against, 1 'insincere': see Queller, *Early Venetian Legislation*, p. 116 (and also the comment on pp. 45-6).

⁸⁶ Cf. Lorenzo de' Medici, *Lettere*, vol. III: 1478-1479, edited by N. Rubinstein, Florence, 1977, p. 70. The outcry provoked by the case is reflected by the 'Lamentatio

claim for an active role of the ambassador cautiously adumbrated, and justified by republican ideals, in Ermola Barbaro's treatise.

Similar and even more striking examples of ambassadors pursuing their own policies can be found in Florence.⁸⁷ And the phenomenon is further highlighted by the contrary traditionalist doctrine echoed by Savonarola's admonition to departing ambassadors: 'neither subtract nor add . . . be faithful to those who send you'.⁸⁸ However, to remain in the ideological and literary domain, an effective rhetorical characterization of the typical Florentine patrician is provided by the consolatory letter written by Donato Acciaiuoli to Pandolfo Pandolfini on the occasion of his father's death, on 23 November 1456:

The Republic granted him, even if he had not requested them, the highest dignities, which it had refused to many who sought them out. It assigned the most honourable embassies to him; it appointed him to the decemvirate [i.e. the Ten of the *Balia*] when grievous dangers threatened the city. Whenever a matter of some importance was publicly discussed, the city made recourse to his most wise counsel, since he had reached the age appropriate to hold public office.⁸⁹

The embassies, the Ten and the *Consulta*, the elected and consultative bodies here eloquently set side by side, were therefore the means – together with the ordinary offices allocated by lot – by which influence was exerted over the city's public life, or, according to the classical formulation now entering widespread use in official documents, over the republic.

It was Medicean legislation that institutionalized, and simultaneously brought under control, this praxis of government. The rules regulating the ambassadors, in fact, were contained in the exceptional measures enacted by successive *Balie*: the election of ambassadors and the granting of full discretionality on such matters to the newly created Council of the Hundred in 1458–9; the provisions of 1466 which assigned the dignity of a sovereign state to the city in its dealings with foreign

Ioannis Emi patricii veneti', in A. Medin (ed.), *Lamenti de' secoli XIV e XV*, Florence, 1893, pp. 66–70.

⁸⁷ See for example the case of Otto Niccolini, ambassador to Rome and Naples in 1469–70, who supported an alliance with the King of Naples detrimental to Lorenzo de' Medici; see Fubini, 'Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia', pp. 183–4.

⁸⁸ Cf. Vedovato, *Note*, p. 10.

⁸⁹ 'Maximas dignitates ei non postulanti saepe Respublica tribuit, quas multis petentibus denegarat: legationes honorificentissimas dedit, decemviratum ei detulit in gravissimis periculis civitatis, nulla denique res tractata est ponderis gravioris posteaquam is ad rem publicam gubernandam accessit, quin civitas suo prudentissimo consilio usa sit.' Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS. Magl. xxxix, 86, c. 28r; see also A. della Torre, *Storia dell'Accademia platonica di Firenze*, Florence, 1902, pp. 385–6.

powers; the sanctioning of ambassadorial letters as public documents;⁹⁰ and finally the reforms of 1480, with the consequent restructuring of the Chancery in 1483 and 1487–8.⁹¹ Thus instituted was the so-called ‘*ordine de’ Settanta*’: a senate which – on prior institutive agreement with the dominant figure of Lorenzo de’ Medici – assumed the consultative function of the so-called *Pratica*, and which, through its delegated body of the *Otto di Pratica* (or Committee of the Eight) effectively stole from the Lordship its privilege of acting as the executive body. Simultaneously, the designation of a select group of chancery secretaries to accompany the orators (as well as performing their own confidential missions) would have ensured, by virtue of specific chancery rules on the matter, the full publicity, in the legal sense, of documentation. One is tempted to say that what had hitherto been ‘extraordinary’ practices now became ordinary by virtue of public legislative sanction. In fact, however, this was not precisely the case. The senate of the Seventy was appointed for the long period (five years, and renewable), but it lacked the legal capacity to acquire the status of full officialization, and owed its existence to a compromise pact with Lorenzo de’ Medici, whose own princely function, too, lacked specific sanction. However, it is not this more general aspect that interests us here. It was only in a system of delegated power of this kind, one no longer ‘extraordinary’ but which nevertheless could not be officialized, that the figure of the ambassador finally found its institutional role, on an equal footing, as the electoral rules declared for the first time, with the Ten of the *Balia* and the Eight of the Ward. In other words, the ambassador was now a real and proper official as well as the recipient of special power. No one could for the moment object to his denomination as an ‘official’, since this would have meant taking exception to the entire system – a system, moreover, which was enfeebled by the fact that Lorenzo’s compromise with the ‘principal citizens’ of the oligarchy encouraged him to undertake a personal and parallel diplomacy which interwove and overlapped with public diplomatic business. In fact, a constitutional system founded on mere personal authority, necessary but ill tolerated, was inherently contradictory. Indicative in this regard is Guicciardini’s condemnation of the creation of the embassy secretaries, which he ascribed to Lorenzo’s

⁹⁰ Cf. Marzi, *La cancelleria*, pp. 594–5; and also A. Brown, *Bartolomeo Scala, 1430–1497, Chancellor of Florence. The Humanist as a Bureaucrat*, Princeton, 1979, pp. 169ff., who highlights the contrast between the old notarial conception of the Chancellor and the figure shaped by the new *étatisme*.

⁹¹ Cf. Marzi, *La cancelleria*, pp. 598ff.; Brown, *Bartolomeo Scala*, pp. 144, 179ff.; see also Fubini, ‘Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia’, pp. 185–8.

tyrannical 'suspicion' of the free operation of the embassy itself.⁹² However well grounded this criticism may be, it is not exempt from the suspicion of speciousness. The 'principal citizens', or the 'men of the state' as they were otherwise known, personified the state (i.e. the regime increasingly incorporated into legal power) and they were intolerant of any conditioning of one of their most jealously guarded prerogatives by the public bureaucratic apparatus, that is, by embryonic princely authority. Evidence of this is provided by the registers of dispatches conserved, in defiance of public dispositions, in the private archives of the family palaces. These were the domestic registers, incidentally, that prompted Guicciardini to undertake his early historiographical investigations and which were one of the main reasons for their innovativeness.

There still remains a crucial point to consider, however. The first, fully explicit institutionalization of the embassy as an 'office' did not come about under the aristocrats or the Medici. It can be dated to the restoration of the popular councils, and specifically to the Parliament that abrogated the Medicean Councils, just before the subsequent establishment of the Savonarola Great Council. Thus a general decree of the Parliament issued on 2 December 1494 established that orators and commissioners were to be elected by the Lords with the Colleges assembled in the Councils of the People and of the Commune, and that the election should be by ballot. Those elected were thus considered 'like any other communal magistrate or officer elected in the past by the Council of the Hundred, or by the Seventy'.⁹³

One again notes the parallelism with what in this case was the Venetian model. From the 1460s onwards, a series of measures sought to reaffirm the authority of the Great Council, 'in which resides overall power and full authority over all our matters',⁹⁴ through its delegation of powers to the Senate and to the College, against the tendency of the ambassadors to evade the political and financial control of the competent bodies. These measures culminated in the solemn resolution of the Ten 'with the consent of the College' ('consulente Collegio') of 31 July 1495 which regulated the election of ambassadors, competence for which the Senate was gradually acquiring, although, as we have seen, it

⁹² Cf. F. Guicciardini, *Storie fiorentine*, edited by R. Palmarocchi, Bari, 1931, pp. 79–80.

⁹³ 'qualunque magistrato o officio di Comune o pel Comune, e che si solevano fare pel Consiglio del Cento, per Septanta'. Cf. Vedovato, *Note*, pp. 61–2.

⁹⁴ 'in quo consistit omnis potestas et liberum arbitrium in omnibus rebus nostris'. Cf. Queller, *Early Venetian Legislation*, p. 100 (resolution of the *Maggior Consiglio*, 22 Feb. 1461).

was not yet completely in its hands.⁹⁵ Citing the authority of 'our most wise forefathers', who had wished 'appointment to all offices and governments and to public posts of any kind' to be 'by election or by lot', recourse was once again made to the arbitrary election of ambassadors 'through direct nomination by the College of our Lordship' that had constituted legitimate 'cause for protest'. It was therefore established that 'our Lordship, with or without the College, shall only elect persons to any public appointment within and without the city by means of balloting and votes', unless, as the College put it, 'greater liberty and power were attributed or augmented than our laws and constitution permit'.⁹⁶ It is worth pointing out that the Romanist term used here, *munus publicum* – which summarizes the ancient sequence of *officia*, *regimina*, *ambaxiate*, etc. – was the same as that employed by Barbaro to denote the embassy: '*Legati munus*'.⁹⁷ But no less important is the fact that such formal institutionalization was accompanied by appeal to the tradition of 'our forefathers'; an appeal, moreover, made with insistence throughout the century.⁹⁸ With due recognition of the differences between Venice and Florence, similar provisions were reinforced by an appeal, one more ideal than effective, to tradition, as if the intention was to channel innovative practices into a constitutional context which they themselves were helping profoundly to transform, or to 'corrupt', to use a scholarly term of the past. In other words, whilst the emergency of the early 1400s had provided opportunities for oligarchical projects, and pretexts for claiming exemptions from the law, the response to the emergency that arose the end of the century was a reaffirmed (or rather renewed) constitutionalism. The practice of diplomacy was now conceived within this framework and accordingly recognized as belonging among the public *officia* or *munera*. The 'myth' of Venice, which then predominated both at home and in republican Florence, should also be viewed from this perspective.

A quite different issue, of course, is the extent to which formal sanctions had concrete effect, or whether, conversely, constitutional principles were not translated into the further consolidation of orders and

⁹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 130.

⁹⁶ 'sapientissimi progenitores nostri' . . . 'electio omnium officiorum et regiminum et omnium aliorum munerum publicorum' . . . 'per modum electionis aut per unum scrutinium' . . . 'ad vocem . . . per Collegium Domini nostri' . . . 'causam murmurandi' . . . 'non possit per Dominium nostrum cum Collegio vel sine eligi vel constitui vel mitti ad aliquod munus publicum, tam intus quam extra, nisi per viam scrutinii ad bussolas et ballotas' . . . 'tributa sive aucta maior libertas vel auctoritas quam habet vel habere potest per formam legum et ordinum nostrorum'. See n. 95 above.

⁹⁷ Barbaro, *De officio legati*, p. 159.

⁹⁸ Cf. Queller, *Two Studies*, pp. 46, 47–8.

privileges. This topic is obviously beyond the scope of the present essay. Guicciardini's disdain for the ambassadors elected by the popular regime is well known:

Whether the crossbow is good or not one may know from the bolts that it shoots; likewise the value of princes is known from the quality of the men that they send abroad. Hence one may deduce the sort of government that Florence was, when at one particular time it used for ambassadors such men as Carduccio in France, Gualterotto in Venice, Bardo at Siena, and Galeotto Giugni at Ferrara.⁹⁹

It is probably no coincidence that this 'maxim', which was only included in the definitive collection of the *Ricordi* edited in 1530, roughly coincides with Florence's final electoral regulation of its ambassadors (6 November 1528 to 7 September 1429) – the occasion, as said, of the collected legislation edited by Vedovato¹⁰⁰ – and it immediately precedes the definitive restoration of the Medici. On a previous and strikingly similar occasion, in the 'Discourse from Logrogno' which Guicciardini wrote just before learning of the Medicean restoration of 1512 and which he conceived as a critique of the Soderini regime, he expressed the hope that the appointment of ambassadors would be removed from the Great Council and delegated, as an elective decision, to the would-be 'perpetual' Senate. Such appointments would thus be part of deliberations to be 'conducted in the strictest confidence and by wise and experienced men'. One of the chief competences assigned to the Council, in fact, was the creation of

ambassadors and commissioners, whose appointments should not pertain to the people, both because of their importance and because, these being distinct competences, the people do not have sufficient capacity to choose who is most fit, with the further requirement that these should be men of greater or lesser quality, according to the matters with which they must deal and their importance; this the people cannot judge, since they are unaware of their causes or of the secrets that surround them.¹⁰¹

The obvious corollary, in direct antithesis to the strict obedience to the mandate enjoined by Savonarola, was the granting to ambassadors of a due degree of discretionality: 'it being almost impossible to give such detailed instructions to ambassadors that they are directed in all particulars: only discretion shall teach them to accommodate themselves to the

⁹⁹ Guicciardini, *Ricordi*, C171 ('Introduction' by M. Fubini, Milan, 1977, p. 164).

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Vedovato, *Note*, pp. 79ff.

¹⁰¹ F. Guicciardini, *Opere*, vol. I, edited by E. Lugnani Scarano, Turin, 1979, pp. 259, 279. See also Fubini, 'Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia', pp. 127–9.

overall purpose'.¹⁰² But most importantly for Guicciardini, especially in his later writings, the problem of the ambassador arose essentially in his relationship with the prince – both the prince who sent him and the one who received him – and the construction to place on his often unfathomable intentions (*Ricordi*, c153). For Guicciardini, the aristocratic solution, in this and other more general respects, was also a condition for the survival of a republic, almost its last defence indeed, in a princely world governed by change and arbitrary will.

Guicciardini thus proves to be the most acute and discerning interpreter of the political institutions of the time, in the pattern that they had assumed after almost a century of evolution. With the exception of Venice, the embassy was now developing into a typically princely institution from which the figure of the ambassador drew legitimacy – although contemporary treatise writers were unable to dispel the aura of suspicion generated by the fact that it was an instrument of political activity difficult to reconcile with the principles of good juridical order, both internal and international. True, a new international order gradually evolved out of the great diplomatic treaties like Westphalia and culminated in the 'restorative' Treaty of Vienna. It is equally true, as Nicholson insists, that the brutal 'Machiavellian system' of Renaissance diplomacy gave way to its cultured, professional and well-intentioned French counterpart. Nevertheless, as Nicholson again emphasizes, this was not a point of arrival. The new 'American system' that he so deplored was in certain respects a return to the origins, in the sense that – as another diplomat historian, Sergio Romano, has more recently pointed out – in the manner of authoritarian regimes (and the old absolutisms) the 'leading ambassadors' were chosen 'externally to the bureaucracy' from among men loyal to the government in office.¹⁰³ I shall not now embark on similar discussion of diplomatic history. Rather, I wish to cite, as I did at the outset, the authoritative voices that – internally to the world of diplomacy itself – announced the end of the old system and with it the demise of its modes of thought. And this is also an invitation to reconsider the origins of diplomacy independently of comfortable convention, restoring its history to concrete political life and to the more general change and evolution of its fundamental concepts.

¹⁰² *Ricordi*, c2 (edn cited in n. 99, p. 103).

¹⁰³ S. Romano, 'Prefazione' to H. Nicholson, *Storia della diplomazia*, Milan, 1995, p. xvii.

ASPECTS OF MEDICEAN DIPLOMACY IN THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY*

ALESSANDRA CONTINI

If diplomacy was long considered one of the formative elements of the 'Renaissance state as the progenitor of the modern state',¹ it is also true that in the last few decades several commentators have complained about the noticeable malaise to which this area of study has succumbed, especially as regards the sixteenth century. The phenomenon was noted by Marino Berengo in a paper presented in 1967 to the First Congress of Italian Historians,² and again some years later by Franco Angiolini, who remarked on the total lack of research on 'non-Spanish' Italian diplomacy and politics in the second half of the sixteenth century.³ For Angiolini (who also made useful suggestions for research in this area), such indifference also stemmed from the more general state of historiography of those years, as well as from the scant interest in the period.

Fifteen years later, the situation seems once again to be in movement. The considerable development of research on social and economic factors, on the political activities⁴ of the Italian states in the fifteenth and

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¹ A. K. Isaacs, 'Sui rapporti interstatali in Italia dal Medioevo all'età moderna', in G. Chittolini, A. Molho and P. Schiera (eds.), *Origini dello stato. Processi di formazione statale in Italia fra medioevo ed età moderna*, Bologna, 1994, pp. 113–43 (quotation at p. 114).

² M. Berengo, 'Il Cinquecento', in *La storiografia italiana negli ultimi vent'anni*, Milan, 1970, vol. 1, pp. 483–518 (quotation at p. 512).

³ For Angiolini, by spreading 'the lesson of the *Annales* in massive manner', Braudel's *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II* (Paris, 1949; 2nd edn 1966) helped to shift the researches of youthful historiography elsewhere: F. Angiolini, 'Diplomazia e politica dell'Italia non spagnola nell'età di Filippo II', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 92 (1980), pp. 432–69. Similar observations on the historiographical situation of those years are made by Giorgio Spini in the Introduction to the revised edition of his *Cosimo I e l'indipendenza del Principato*, Florence, 1980, pp. vii–xvi.

⁴ On the central importance of the theme of international politics in analysis of six-

sixteenth centuries – on their institutions, but also on their power systems and apparatuses of government and court⁵ – now makes it necessary, I believe, to combine these results with those of new research on diplomacy, the aim being, as Brambilla pointed out, to establish the type and the importance of the links between ‘internal organizational forms’ and the ‘system of external dependences’.⁶ It is this undertaking that explains the insistence with which more recent historiography – I cite as examples the papers by Fubini, Isaacs and Musi in the proceedings of the international conference held in Chicago in 1993 on the ‘Origins of the State’⁷ – has advocated a revival in studies on ‘inter-state relationships’ and diplomatic action as an indispensable tool in the building of embryonic statehood, in order to narrow the gap between these studies and the recent development of research on power and institutional systems.

The present essay on diplomacy and politics in sixteenth-century Medicean Tuscany is guided by this recent orientation. As a contribution to the revival of inquiry into these matters,⁸ the essay examines diplomatic action not only as regards its contents but also as regards its forms and representatives: diplomatic action as political mediation to prevent or attenuate direct conflict, but also as a means to give symbolic formalization to the hierarchy of powers among states, as an essential instrument of legal legitimation, and as a vital ‘workshop’ of political information. It was, as we shall see, a system whose personnel and appa-

teenth-century Europe, despite the prevalence in those years of research on economic, social and cultural aspects, see the Introduction by G. R. Elton to the volume edited by him of *The Cambridge Modern History*, vol. II: *The Reformation. 1520–1559*, Cambridge, 1958, pp. 15–16. Recently, in the more general terms of French historiography’s return to the history of ‘events’ see: J. B. Duroselle, ‘L’Histoire des relations internationales’, in *L’Histoire et le métier d’historien en France 1945–1995*, Paris, 1995, pp. 351–4.

⁵ C. Mozzarelli, ‘Corte e amministrazione nel principato gonzaghese’, *Società e Storia*, 5 (1982), pp. 245–62; E. Fasano Guarini, ‘Gli stati dell’Italia centro-settentrionale tra Quattro e Cinquecento’, *Società e Storia*, 6 (1983), pp. 617–39; M. Verga, ‘Le istituzioni politiche’, in G. Greco and M. Rosa (eds.), *Storia degli antichi stati italiani*, Bari, 1996, pp. 3–58; L. Mannori, ‘Genesi dello stato e storia giuridica: a proposito di “Origini dello stato. Processi di formazione statale in Italia fra medioevo ed età moderna”’, *Quaderni fiorentini per la storia del pensiero giuridico moderno*, 24 (1995), pp. 485–505.

⁶ E. Brambilla, ‘Gli stati minori nell’Italia moderna. Note su una pubblicazione recente’, *Società e Storia*, 5 (1982), pp. 924–34 (quotation at p. 926).

⁷ R. Fubini, ‘Lega italica e politica dell’equilibrio all’avvento di Lorenzo de’ Medici al potere’; Isaacs, ‘Sui rapporti interstatali’, and A. Musi, ‘Stato e relazioni internazionali nell’Italia spagnola’, in Chittolini *et al.* (eds.), *Origini dello stato*.

⁸ See the Introduction by D. Frigo to this book.

ratures embodied the new forms of power organization that sovereigns desired.

Of course, in the space available, it is impossible to provide an exhaustive and balanced account of the whole of sixteenth-century Tuscan politics and diplomacy. Instead, the essay highlights a number of key issues and provides an interpretation which blends insights already available in the literature with the results of direct archival research. Although the focus is mainly on the Medici principality (after 1530), it will be necessary to trace the evolution of foreign policy and diplomacy prior to that period. This will entail breaching the barrier traditionally erected by historians between late republican Florence and the Medici period, while taking account of the results of historiographical research on the Florence of Lorenzo de' Medici.⁹ It will also be necessary to provide a description, in outline form, of the turbulent phase between 1494 and 1530 in which the transition to the principality was accomplished. I think, in fact, that demonstration of the great political importance of fifteenth-century diplomacy, as has been undertaken by previous contemporary historiography, has not only crucially aided understanding of the Laurentian power system but, more generally, it has shifted attention to diplomatic action as an instrument used to define and legitimate a constantly evolving power system. Thus, the emphasis has shifted from 'disciplinary', so to speak, formal analysis concerned to depict the rise of new models of 'modern' diplomacy in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Europe – and therefore focused on the themes of residentiality and diplomatic formalization – to a 'bottom-up' interpretation of political mechanisms which reveals the fundamental role of diplomatic action in the formation of the embryonic state.¹⁰ This manner of reading diplomacy in constant relation to domestic and external political choices must be adopted as regards the sixteenth century as well. Indeed, after invasion by the French and imperial

⁹ R. Fubini, 'Appunti sui rapporti diplomatici fra il dominio sforzesco e Firenze medicea. Modi e tecniche dell'ambasciata dalle trattative per la lega italiana alla missione di Sacramoro da Rimini (1451–1473)', in *Gli Sforza a Milano e in Lombardia e i loro rapporti con gli stati italiani ed europei (1450–1530)*, Milano, 1982; Fubini, *Italia quattrocentesca. Politica e diplomazia nell'età di Lorenzo il Magnifico*, Milan, 1994. On Laurentian diplomacy see N. Rubinstein, 'Introduzione' to R. Fubini (ed.), *Lorenzo de' Medici, Lettere*, vol. 1: 1460–1474, Florence, 1977, pp. v–xiv; M. M. Bullard, 'The Language of Diplomacy in the Renaissance', in B. Toscani (ed.), *Lorenzo de' Medici. New Perspectives*, New York, 1993, pp. 263–78.

¹⁰ For this 'bottom-up' approach see F. Leverotti, *Diplomazia e governo dello Stato. I 'famigli cavalcanti' di Francesco Sforza (1450–1466)*, Pisa, 1992; P. Margaroli, *Diplomazia e stati rinascimentali. Le ambascerie sforzesche fino alla conclusione della Lega Italiana (1450–1455)*, Florence, 1992.

armies – first in the crucial phase of the crisis of republican freedom and then in the laborious construction of the Medici state – one witnesses a strengthening of these links, although they lie beyond the scope of this essay and must be investigated elsewhere.

When Charles VIII entered Italy in 1494, the country was riven by the drama of war and devastation. And it was amid the uncertain destiny of the ‘freedom’ of Florence and Italy described by Machiavelli and Guicciardini that Florence’s passage from republic to principality came about.¹¹ When the ‘balance’ established by ‘Italian Renaissance diplomacy’ broke down,¹² the ties between domestic equilibria and foreign policy grew even tighter. From the diplomatic sources,¹³ from the studies first by Anzilotti and then by Rubinstein and by Bertelli,¹⁴ from the lucid analysis of Gilbert¹⁵ and the broad canvas painted by Albertini, one point emerges with signal clarity: that Florentine political struggle and the great flowering of constitutional political thought during that period were framed by a constant relationship between Florentine political ‘*partes*’ and European ‘*partes*’. From the ousting of the Medici in 1494 to Savonarola’s ‘popular’ regime and its fall (1494–8), from the gonfaloniership of Soderini (1502–12) to the Medicis’ return to power and their precarious reign thereafter (1512–27), to the final tragic episode of the popular republic, whose collapse marked the end of republican ‘freedom’ and the advent of the principality in 1530, the destiny of Florence and its alternating regimes was tied to the course taken by external events, within the more general drama enacted by the

¹¹ R. von Albertini, *Firenze dalla Repubblica al Principato, Storia e coscienza politica*, Turin, 1970 (orig. edn Bern, 1955).

¹² R. Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, London, 1955, p. 115.

¹³ N. Machiavelli, *Legazioni e commisarie*, edited by S. Bertelli, 3 vols., Milan, 1964; N. Machiavelli, *Legazioni e commisarie. Scritti di governo*, edited by F. Chiapelli, 4 vols., Bari, 1971–85; on diplomacy in the early sixteenth century see also: *Carteggi delle magistrature dell’età repubblicana. Otto di Pratica. Legazioni e commissarie*, edited by P. Viti with the assistance of P. Benigni, F. Klein, S. Marsini, D. Stiaffini and R. M. Zaccaria, 2 vols., Florence, 1987.

¹⁴ A. Anzilotti, *La crisi costituzionale della Repubblica fiorentina*, Florence, 1912; N. Rubinstein, ‘Firenze e il problema della politica imperiale in Italia al tempo di Massimiliano’, *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 116 (1958), pp. 5–35 and pp. 147–77; S. Bertelli, ‘Uno magistrato per a tempo lungo o uno dogie’, in *Studi di storia medievale e moderna per Ernesto Sestan*, Florence, 1980, vol. II, pp. 451–94; Bertelli, ‘Di due profili mancati e di un bilancino con pesi truccati’, *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 145 (1987), pp. 579–610; G. Silvano, ‘Vivere’ e ‘governo misto’ a Firenze nel primo Cinquecento, Bologna, 1985.

¹⁵ F. Gilbert, *Machiavelli e Guicciardini. Pensiero politico e storiografia a Firenze nel Cinquecento*, Turin, 1970 (orig. edn Princeton, 1965); G. Sasso, *Per Francesco Guicciardini. Quattro studi*, Rome, 1984.

Italian states in the early sixteenth century. The dynamics of a contraposition that saw France intent on consolidating its European role, and using its Italian venture to do so, an Empire which from Maximilian onwards and especially with Charles V was bent on 'imperial restoration'¹⁶ in Europe and in Italy, and a Papacy concerned to consolidate the temporal power of its territorial state and to relaunch its universal role as the leader of Christianity and as the sole counterweight against imperial authority;¹⁷ it was these dynamics that determined the interplay of alignments and factions in Florence, albeit on a reduced scale, amid the struggles of popular republicans, the positions taken up by oligarchical groups, and fluctuating adherence to the pro-Medici 'party'.¹⁸ And it is this scenario that accounts for the paramount importance of diplomacy in this period, too, and the recruitment into government service of men of such outstanding stature as Machiavelli and Guicciardini: the former responsible *inter alia* for the recovery of Pisa in 1509 and vigorously active during Soderini's gonfaloniership;¹⁹ the latter making his name between 1526 and 1527 as 'foreign minister' for Clement VII during the final, bitter struggle to avert the definitive triumph of the Spanish imperial army and to defend 'Italian freedom' and independence. In the writings and in the action of Machiavelli and Guicciardini, as well as of other witnesses to one of the most intense periods in the history of civil consciousness, the theme of foreign policy and diplomacy is paramount.²⁰

The diplomatic action and destinies of Florence, of its factions and families, unfolded within this broad external space. It was a space that comprised not only the chancellery and magistrates of Florentine diplomacy, the military camps, courts and antechambers where, as power shifted, representatives of the Republic or of the Medici regime pursued their diplomatic action, but also the Rome of the powerful Medici papacies of Leo X (1513–21) and Clement VII (1523–34) which domi-

¹⁶ Rubinstein, 'Firenze e il problema della politica imperiale', p. 34.

¹⁷ P. Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice. Un corpo e due anime: la monarchia papale nella prima età moderna*, Bologna, 1982.

¹⁸ 'Internal consolidation was not sufficient unless it had an international equivalent. The uprisings of 1494, 1512 and 1527 were not solely events to do with internal politics but they concerned foreign politics as well, and they were encouraged by the general political situation; indeed it was this that made them possible': Albertini, *Firenze dalla Repubblica al Principato*, p. 40.

¹⁹ E. Dupré Theseider, *Niccolò Machiavelli diplomatico*, vol. 1: *L'arte della diplomazia nel Quattrocento*, Como, 1945.

²⁰ Scrutinizing the machinations of the factions and power groups involved in relations between Rome and Florence during this period is particularly misleading. See Bertelli, 'Di due profili mancati'.

nated life in Florence and monopolized much of its political and diplomatic initiative.²¹ And it further comprised the larger arena of the commercial and mercantile markets in which interwove the dealings, plots and 'political' action of the great Florentine merchants and gentlemen: the Strozzi, the Salviati, the Pucci, the Guadagni, the Gaddi, the Altoviti, and the Antinori. These were merchant bankers who wielded power based on capital circulating in diverse markets, from the great emporium of privileges that was the Rome of the Medici Popes, to Lyon, a financial centre long dominated by Florence,²² but also in Venice, Naples, Antwerp, London, and Constantinople.²³ Like the Medici and Pazzi in the fifteenth century,²⁴ these merchants exploited the difficult conjuncture of the Cinquecento by serving as financiers to sovereigns whose protection they received in return – although they did so at the price, apart from the uncertainty of their credit, of personal and political dependence.²⁵ The role of these great Florentine mercantile families, which moved in circles much wider than that of the Florentine state – those, that is, of the mercantile 'international'²⁶ – and therefore to some extent at odds with the interests of Florence and its regimes, has already been highlighted by studies on the fifteenth century. And it is, I

²¹ On the subordination of Florentine to Roman diplomatic policy during the reign of Leo X, see M. M. Bullard, *Filippo Strozzi and the Medici. Favor and Finance in Sixteenth-Century Florence and Rome*, Cambridge, 1980; see also P. Hurtubise O. M. I., *Une famille-témoin. Les Salviati*, Vatican City, 1985; on the links between papal power and family power in the modern age see W. Reinhard, 'Papal Power and Family Strategy in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in R. G. Asch and A. M. Birke (eds.), *Princes, Patronage and the Nobility: The Court at the Beginning of Modern Age, 1450–1650*, London, 1991, pp. 329–56; for the fifteenth century: R. Bizzocchi, *Chiesa e potere nella Toscana del Quattrocento*, Bologna, 1987.

²² R. Gascon, *Grand commerce et vie urbaine au XVI^e siècle. Lyon et ses marchands*, Paris and The Hague, 1971.

²³ On the necessity for further investigation of the 'Florentine nationals operating in the European markets' see G. Spini, 'Il Principato dei Medici e il sistema degli stati europei del Cinquecento', in *Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici nell' Europa del Cinquecento*, 3 vols., Florence, 1983, vol. I, pp. 177–216 (esp. p. 179).

²⁴ R. De Roover, *Il banco Medici dalle origini al declino (1397 al 1494)*, Florence, 1970, pp. 200–1, and pp. 500ff. (orig. edn New York, 1966). On the Medici and their 'party' between 1426 and 1434 see D. Kent, *The Rise of the Medici Factions in Florence 1426–1434*, Oxford, 1978.

²⁵ On the merchant bankers who financed the sovereigns engaged in the wars of the first half of the sixteenth century (besides the Florentines, the Fuggers of Hamburg and the Chigi of Siena) see M. M. Bullard, *Filippo Strozzi*, pp. 14ff.; G. Luzzato, *Storia economica dell'età moderna e contemporanea*, 2 vols. (Padua and Milan, 1955, 4th edn), part I, pp. 56ff.

²⁶ For a lucid overview see M. T. Boyer-Xambeau, G. Delaplace, G. Gillard, *Banchieri e principi. Moneta e credito nell'Europa del Cinquecento*, Turin, 1991 (original edn Paris, 1986).

believe, fundamental to an understanding of a geography of relations and dependences which tended to perpetuate and reproduce itself throughout the sixteenth century. During the first part of the century, in fact, some of these families, or better some branches of these families,²⁷ with the Strozzi at their head, constituted the driving force of aristocratic–republican opposition against Medici ambitions: something akin to a ‘lobby’ which fuelled the massive phenomenon of Florentine political exile. Consider the oligarchical republican plot against the Medici led by the Orti Oricellari group under France’s protection in 1522,²⁸ and the large-scale transfer to the opposition by oligarchy families from 1523²⁹ until the Medici government’s overthrow in 1527. After the establishment of the principality, this was an opposition which resembled a ‘European’ party (aristocratic–mercantile but also, as regards some of its members, democratic–republican), and it vigorously combated the power, first of Alessandro and then of Cosimo, with, as we shall see, the solid backing of great but dangerous allies – mainly France³⁰ but also Venice, on some occasions the papacy, and to a lesser extent the Este. This ‘party’ was joined by intellectuals of sincere republican (and in a Europe marked by profound politico-religious cleavages) still heretical faith, but also by writers and adventurers. To contemporary eyes, the Medici family’s rise to power in Florence must for long have appeared reversible; especially to the more powerful families of the mercantile oligarchy, which in some cases fashioned themselves into the champions of republican ‘freedom’. Although Filippo Strozzi (the great merchant whose fortune was exceeded only by that of the Fuggers)³¹ after committing suicide in prison became the symbol of republican anti-Medicean resistance, one should not forget that – fifteenth-century enmities between the two families notwithstanding – his power had been built and consolidated on family alliances and economic–political links with the Medici Popes. And the Salviati, one of whose branches was anti-Medici,³² were likewise tied

²⁷ See Hurtubise, *Une famille-témoin*, pp. 220ff., where he examines the differing fortunes of the Roman and Florentine branches of the family and shows that the latter’s decision to support the Medici regime brought them great advantages in the sixteenth century.

²⁸ G. Spini, *Tra Rinascimento e Riforma: Antonio Brucioli*, Florence, 1940, p. 37.

²⁹ Albertini, *Firenze dalla Repubblica al Principato*, p. 38.

³⁰ On the ‘long tradition that tied republican Florence to France and Ferrara’ see *ibid.*, p. 144 and *passim*.

³¹ Rabelais wrote about Strozzi in 1536: ‘Après les Fourques d’Aousbourg [the Fugger of Augsburg] en Allemagne, il est estimé le plus riche marchand de la Chrestienté’: quoted in Spini, *Cosimo I*, p. 16.

³² Hurtubise, *Une famille-témoin*, pp. 137ff. A constant feature to emerge from the large body of research on the structure and political affairs of the mercantile aristocracy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is the heterogeneous policy pursued by the

by marriage to the Medici and had built their fortunes on privileges bestowed by the Medici Popes.

Throughout the sixteenth century, therefore, there still persisted a factious consortium of Florentine aristocratic families whose behaviour can only be understood when examined at the level of Europe-wide economic and political interests.³³ It was a sort of fluctuating 'political countersystem', backed by France, with roots extending into the previous century and loath to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Medicean 'political system'; and it was a phenomenon that Cosimo I and his diplomacy – aided by the countervailing power of the Empire – found difficult to control. It is therefore plain – before I embark on detailed discussion of diplomacy in the age of the principality – that the final collapse in 1527–30 of the Republic, with its radical utopianism and its by now anachronistic communal vocation, was largely caused by its external isolation. In that beleaguered city, abandoned by the entire oligarchy of the '*Grandi*', it was difficult to understand, to quote Rubinstein, how closely internal 'freedom' depended upon 'external freedom'.³⁴

It has been debated whether in his endeavour to reinstate the Medici in Florence Clement VII in 1530 had any other option than to rely on imperial troops and the help of Charles V.³⁵ Whatever the case may be, the restoration of Medicean rule in the person of Clement's nephew – Alessandro marked the beginning of a phase that differed formally and juridically from the previous Medici regimes. Although the Florentines were still free to organize their own constitutional system, the

various branches of a particular house. Examination of the Strozzi and Salviati families confirms this picture of different policies adopted by different branches, some of which supported the Medici regime, while others opposed it and were banished. In general, the international ascent of Cosimo and the crisis of the Florentines' role in the international money markets at the end of the century, in concomitance with the great shifts that took place in the European economic axis, led to broad reconciliation between the mercantile aristocracy and the Medici regime.

³³ Numerous studies have been written on the clientelistic and factional system that wove together the complex and variable relationships among the families that belonged to the Florentine oligarchy in the fifteenth century. For an introduction to the subject see F. W. Kent and P. Simons, 'Renaissance Patronage: An Introductory Essay', in Kent and Simons (eds.), *Patronage, Art and Society in Renaissance*, Oxford, 1987, pp. 1–21; A. Molho, 'Il patronato a Firenze nella storiografia anglofona', *Ricerche Storiche*, 15 (1985), pp. 5–15.

³⁴ On the distinction between the two meanings of freedom – freedom as a republican regime and freedom from foreign domination – see Rubinstein, 'Dalla Repubblica al Principato', in *Firenze e la Toscana*, vol. 1, pp. 159–76; Berengo, 'Il Cinquecento', pp. 484ff.; Fasano Guarini, 'Gli Stati dell'Italia', pp. 618ff.

³⁵ Spini, 'Il principato dei Medici', pp. 177–8.

Emperor issued a series of ordinances which effectively set a juridical encumbrance on such 'freedom': a lien on Tuscany's independence of such stringency that, as we shall see, Cosimo I was constantly preoccupied with safeguarding the liberty and independence of Florence and its state – a concern which produced a plethora of politico-judicial acts in the years that followed.³⁶ Two centuries later, this encumbrance – which was reinforced by the imperial recognition granted to Cosimo in September 1537 and by the annexation of Siena as a subfeudal Spanish domain in 1557 – constituted the key component in the imperial claims to Tuscan succession advanced by Leibniz on the eve of the demise of the Medici dynasty.³⁷

After regimes that had seen long periods of *de facto* Medicean hegemony in the city government – although they had always been characterized by formal respect for the republican constitution – it was the Emperor, on the bidding of Clement VII, who introduced a new hereditary seigneurial regime,³⁸ albeit one tempered by the liberty that the Florentines had built into their system of government and which thus preserved its republican character.³⁹

Numerous studies have been written on this important phase in Florentine constitutional history, and it is to these that the reader is referred.⁴⁰ However, for my present purposes a number of further considerations are relevant. First, the early 1530s – at least until the death of Clement VII (1534) – were years marked by general consensus within the Florentine oligarchical elite concerning reform of the state. Although temporary, this consensus gave rise to an aristocratic-oligarchical bloc which opposed any return to 'broad' government and thus definitively put an end to the model of the communal city-state. Despite the antagonisms and differences that had hitherto divided the *Grandi*, the experience of the last republic, with its attendant economic crisis and destruction, had for the moment realigned dominant political and economic interests. From this temporary convergence sprang the

³⁶ D. Marrara, 'I rapporti giuridici fra la Toscana e l'impero (1530–1576)', in *Firenze e la Toscana*, vol. I, pp. 217–22.

³⁷ M. Verga, *Da 'cittadini' a 'nobili'. Lotta politica e riforma delle istituzioni nella Toscana di Francesco Stefano*, Milan, 1990.

³⁸ D. Marrara, *Studi giuridici sulla Toscana medicea. Contributo alla storia degli stati assoluti in Italia*, Milan, 1965, p. 6.

³⁹ The diploma issued by Charles on 12 Aug. 1530 is reproduced in L. Cantini, *Legislazione Toscana*, vol. xxxii, Florence, 1800–8, vol. I, pp. 35ff.

⁴⁰ F. Diaz, *Il Granducato di Toscana. I Medici*, Turin, 1976 (G. Galasso (ed.), *Storia d'Italia*, vol. xiii); A. Anzilotti, *La costituzione interna dello stato fiorentino sotto il duca Cosimo I de' Medici*, Firenze, 1910, pp. 27ff.; A. D'Addario, *La formazione dello stato moderno in Toscana: Da Cosimo il vecchio a Cosimo I de' Medici*, Lecce, 1976.

Ordinazioni of 1532 – drafted by twelve *riformatori* chosen by Clement VII after long and meticulous consultations among the representatives of the most powerful families – which reorganized the Florentine constitutional order into a ‘mixed’ form of government.⁴¹ Although this is not the place for detailed discussion of this fundamental constitutional act, which effectively ushered in the exercise of princely power, I wish to stress that the internal equilibria that made possible the publication of the *Ordinazioni* lasted as long as Clement VII – who had urged and established these equilibria – remained Pope. In fact, while Alessandro⁴² gave autocratic interpretation to his domestic role as ‘Duke of the Florentine Republic’ and introduced forms of control, policing and fiscal pressure intended to curtail the role of the patriciate, a breach once again opened up in the oligarchical front, which was apparently not impervious to external political influences. Whilst the continuing service of Francesco Guicciardini, but also of Vettori, Acciaiuoli, Niccolini or even de Nerli, as Alessandro’s counsellors and collaborators was to a certain extent conditioned by their strong ties of interest with Florence and its territory, the growing authoritarianism of Medici power was less acceptable to Filippo Strozzi, or to the powerful cardinals Salviati, Ridolfi and Gaddi, who ‘disposed of large means and were economically independent’.⁴³ Thus, the unsuccessful attempt to oust Alessandro and to replace him with cardinal Ippolito de’ Medici, as well as the lawsuit brought by Charles V in Naples against the ‘constitutional’ illegitimacy of Alessandro’s ‘tyrannical’ system with respect to the solemn precepts established by the Emperor himself,⁴⁴ can only be understood in the light of the accession to the papal seat by Paul III Farnese (1534–49), who immediately gave an anti-Medici thrust to his political action, thereby revitalizing the European alliances and fomenting expectations and intrigue in Florence. And it was this anti-Medici republican ferment, enthusiastically joined by the most sincere and active republican anti-Medici exiles – most notably Cavalcanti, Nardi and Varchi – that prompted Lorenzino de’ Medici, the new Brutus, to have Alessandro murdered at the beginning of 1537.

Hence it is to external factors that we must look for explanation of

⁴¹ G. Pansini, ‘Le segreterie del Principato mediceo’, in A. Bellinazzi and C. Lamioni (eds.), *Carteggio Universale di Cosimo I de’ Medici*, Florence, 1982, vol. I, pp ix–xlix; Pansini, ‘Le “Ordinazioni” del 27 aprile 1532 e l’assetto politico del principato mediceo’, in *Studi in memoria di Giovanni Cassandro*, Rome, 1991, vol. III, pp. 761–85.

⁴² M. Rastrelli, *Storia d’Alessandro de’ Medici primo duca di Firenze*, 2 vols., Florence, 1781.

⁴³ Albertini, *Firenze dalla Repubblica al Principato*, p. 183.

⁴⁴ Marrara, *Studi giuridici*, pp. 12–17.

the behaviour of the anti-Mediceans and their European political alignments; and it is *a fortiori* in terms of external equilibria that we must assess Alessandro's position. His marriage to Margherita, the natural daughter of Charles V, his diplomatic inertia (if we are to believe the truly meagre sources for this period), and his servile obedience to Charles V (prompting Desjardins⁴⁵ to dismiss him as the Emperor's 'lieutenant' and 'creature'), were the not minor effects of a conditioned strategic choice.

With the advent of Cosimo I, as we shall see, matters changed greatly. Cosimo's ability to gain protection without being forced into subservience, to shuttle, in the Europe of the Reformation, among the Empire, France, the Papacy and, after 1559, Philip II's Spain, was made possible by the efficiency of an extraordinary device: diplomacy. Cosimo used his diplomatic corps not only to gain recognition for his status and role but also as to gather the information he needed to 'police' his internal and external enemies. More than a formalized apparatus, this was a complex network of personal and clientelistic relations which, in the hands of a sovereign able to bend it to his will, proved to be an extraordinarily flexible instrument. Although it was a system that still bore distinct traces of the informal regime established by the Medici in the fifteenth century, it was now used for the different purpose – in the sphere of monarchies and principalities – of gaining robust international legitimacy.

Thus, as Cosimo spun his institutional web, he was less concerned to build a modern state founded on the spirit of service or incipient bureaucracy⁴⁶ than to organize, on the basis of his own person and 'reputation', as Burckhardt puts it, the space and political recognition of his state, as well as to mark out a clearly defined juridical-political arena in the Europe-wide diplomatic game. Only later did he turn his attention to the court and to the formal organization of government apparatuses.

Amongst the other necessary qualities of the absolute Prince, Cosimo possessed notable shrewdness combined with admirable diligence, attributes which he used to discover the attitudes of his ministers, the covert

⁴⁵ *Négotiations diplomatiques de la France avec la Toscane. Documents recueillis par Giuseppe Canestrini et publiés par Abel Desjardins*, 4 vols., Paris, 1859–86, vol. III, pp 1–4. This extremely rich collection of documents is still of fundamental importance for students of Tuscan diplomacy from the Republic to the principality.

⁴⁶ For current discussion among historians on the 'modern state', as well as the works cited above by Fasano Guarini, Mannori, Blanco and Mozzarelli, see the study by G. Chittolini, 'Il "privato" e il "pubblico", lo Stato', in *Origini dello Stato*, pp. 553–89.

desires of his subjects, the humours of the populace, and the intelligences of princes and potentates, in the city of Florence, throughout the state, and elsewhere besides. He employed men adept at understanding the secrets and thoughts of his vassals, above all those of the Florentine nation, who, by trading outside their homeland in various parts of Europe, might more easily, in those frail beginnings of his dominion, plot against him. Thus he was kept abreast of every matter, however insignificant, and speedily so; and once he was versed in the thoughts and the dealings of his adversaries, he could, to his great advantage, thwart them and shun them.⁴⁷

This passage from Cosimo I's biography, written by Manuzio the younger – and published more than a decade after Cosimo's death, in 1586, in order to ratify and extol now firmly established Medici power – vividly depicts both the uncertainty and the assertiveness with which the 'First Grand Duke of Tuscany' was able to consolidate his power.

Between 1537, the year in which Cosimo was summoned to Florence to become 'lord and master of the government of the city of Florence and its dominion',⁴⁸ and 1586, this 'young man of great expectation and goodness'⁴⁹ managed to achieve the internal political consolidation, and the international recognition, of a state whose ranking as the most solidly structured territory of late sixteenth-century Italy was matched only by the Piedmont rebuilt by Emanuele Filiberto.⁵⁰

The period of Cosimo I has been so thoroughly explored by recent historiography that it is difficult to return to such well-trodden terrain. One risks sacrificing the whole by concentrating on only one part of it. However, it is a risk worth taking if an admittedly partial point of view (in this case the role of diplomacy in Cosimo I's construction of his power system) helps to alter our overall conception of the period, or at least to develop that conception. The recent revival of interest in the

⁴⁷ [A. Manuzio,] *Vita di Cosimo de' Medici, primo Gran Duca di Toscana, descritta da Aldo Mannucci*, Bologna, 1586, pp. 63–4.

⁴⁸ One reads in an instruction issued in January 1537, a few days after Alessandro's murder, that the *Senato dei Quarantotto* ordered Bernardo de' Medici, Bishop of Forlì, to request Charles V's confirmation of Cosimo's nomination and to sue for imperial protection against his overthrow and the French threat associated with it: Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF), *Mediceo del Principato*, 2634, p. i, cc. 2–5r. Imperial confirmation was forthcoming in Charles V's diploma of 30 Sept. 1537 which granted Cosimo the same prerogatives as Alessandro: the diploma is conserved in ASF, *Trattati internazionali*, I\B.

⁴⁹ ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, 2634, c. 3r.

⁵⁰ P. Merlin, 'Il Cinquecento', in *Il Piemonte sabauda. Stato e territori in età moderna*, Turin, 1994 (G. Galasso (ed.), *Storia d'Italia*, vol. VIII), pp. 3–170; C. Rosso, *Una burocrazia di antico regime: i Segretari di Stato dei duchi di Savoia (1559–1637)*, Turin, 1992.

government of Cosimo I, with its reconstruction of the composite political, cultural and ideological physiognomy of the Medicean principality, has also emphasized its external, European dimension. Nonetheless, diplomacy, with its action, personnel and instruments, is still a relatively neglected area of inquiry. Consequently, although Spini's two important studies on Tuscan foreign policy in the sixteenth century can be credited with refocusing attention on the international dimension of this period, they perhaps do not fit easily with the now abundant findings on the salient aspects of Cosimo's domestic policy and that of his immediate successors.⁵¹

It is my contention that an approach to diplomacy which addresses both internal and external political action during the high Cinquecento will not only increase our knowledge of this specific subject; it may also prompt us to reconsider certain aspects of historiographical opinion on such matters. A first and emphatic point to make is the central importance of these themes throughout the sixteenth century. The international consolidation of Medicean power, but indirectly its internal consolidation as well, was achieved by means of a complex diplomatic game, and obviously by the men who orchestrated it. The interweaving of these themes, and the movements of these men within and without the state, between the secretariats of the Duke and the European courts, can be reconstructed by drawing on the extraordinary documentary archive – the *Mediceo del Principato* – created by Cosimo I and his successors. The diplomatic documents contained in this archive⁵² – extraordinary both for their quantity and their quality – ordered into series of minutes, correspondence, instructions and announcements, constantly evoke the image of a 'spider king'⁵³ ensconced at the centre of his web

⁵¹ As well as the works cited, see the following studies by E. Fasano Guarini, which shed important light on politics and the consolidation of new institutional forms in the Cinquecento: *Lo stato di Cosimo I*, Florence, 1973; 'I giuristi e lo Stato nella Toscana medicea cinque-seicentesca', in *Firenze e la Toscana*, vol. 1, pp. 229–47; *s.v.* 'Cosimo I', in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani (DBI)*, Rome, 1984, vol. xxx, pp. 30–48. See also F. Angiolini, 'Dai segretari alle "segreterie". Uomini ed apparati di governo nella Toscana Medicea (metà XVI–metà XVII secolo)', *Società e Storia*, 15 (1992), pp. 701–20, and for administration of the territory and related jurisprudence the fine study by L. Mannori, *Il sovrano tutore. Pluralismo istituzionale e accentramento amministrativo nel principato dei Medici (sec. XVI–XVIII)*, Milan, 1994.

⁵² Cf. ASF, *Archivio mediceo del Principato. Inventario sommario*, edited by M. Del Piazzo and G. Antonelli, Rome, 1951; A. Bellinazzi and C. Lamioni, 'Gli archivi medicei della "Segreteria Vecchia"', in Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali, *L'Archivio di Stato di Firenze*, edited by R. Manno Tolu and A. Bellinazzi, Florence, 1995, pp. 64–75.

⁵³ I have obviously borrowed the image of the spider-king from Braudel's Philip II, who controlled a web very much larger than that of the state of Florence: *Civiltà e*

as he monitored the consistency and quality of the multiform network of collaborators on which diplomatic and his own action depended. Cosimo's letters and instructions to his resident diplomats and secretaries are striking in their immediacy: 'thou shalt go', 'thou shalt do', constantly recur.⁵⁴ With the parallelisms typical of diplomacy in the previous period now abolished, and with the Duke's having arrogated to himself powers previously wielded on such matters by the *Senato dei Quarantotto* and the *Magistrato Supremo*, diplomacy became a free zone in which the sovereign exercised his discretion unhindered.⁵⁵ Freed from every other institutional constraint, diplomatic action proceeded through the constant relaying of announcements and decisions. It was driven by the direct and personal relationship established by the sovereign with the secretaries who attended him in his apartments, with his residents at foreign courts, with the legation secretaries, and with the informers who dispatched information from every part of Europe.

There is no doubt, therefore, that sixteenth-century Tuscany was conditioned by the need to preserve its dependence on the Habsburgs of Spain and on the Empire, since only this dependence could ensure the survival of Medici power in the European power system, by legitimating it and by permitting its territorial expansion. Also characteristic of sixteenth-century Tuscany, however, was its formidable and open-minded diplomacy which strove, in all directions, to consolidate a power constantly undermined by the fragility of the political and juridical legitimacy of a new dynasty – a dynasty which had preserved its constitutional compromise with the republic system by means of the *Ordinazioni* of 1532 but which had scant entitlements of lineage and prestige with which to assert its position *vis-à-vis* the other Italian and European states. In sum, the policy directions of Cosimo I must be construed as the close interweaving of measures designed to strengthen his rule and his instruments of control against the centrifugal forces operating internally and externally to the state, and foreign initiatives under-

imperi del Mediterraneo nell'età di Filippo II, Turin, 1976 (orig. edn Paris 1949), vol. II, p. 712.

⁵⁴ For the 'instructions' given to residents and legation secretaries see ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, fols 2633–4.

⁵⁵ Although the *Ordinazioni* of 1532 expressly stated that the *Senato de' Quarantotto* possessed 'authority to appoint commissars and ambassadors' (L. Cantini, *Legislazione*, vol. I, art. 4, p. 8), the '*provvisioni*' of the *Senato* bear no trace of its being exercised: ASF, *Senato de' Quarantotto*, fols. 1ff.: *Provvisioni*). This is further evidence that by Cosimo's reign the ambassadors had come to depend directly on the sovereign and his court, with their annual salaries being paid out of the privy purse, the *Depositeria* (cf., for instance, ASF, *Depositeria Generale, parte antica*, fol. 776: *Libro di entrate e uscite 1570*).

taken to consolidate the role of the Florentine state and then of the Grand Duchy in the system of Italian and European states.

Reconstruction of the careers of the representatives of sixteenth-century Medicean diplomacy offers a number of preliminary insights, which may then be refined by examining the activities of these men as diplomats. It is advisable to begin with a brief description of the structure of Cosimo's diplomatic apparatus, which comprised permanent ambassadors, special envoys, spies, informers and secret agents. Accordingly, a first point to stress is that in the early years of his reign Cosimo was able to secure solid diplomatic representation in all the most important states.

In 1537, Cosimo immediately gained accreditation, with residential status, for representatives to the two greatest powers of Europe: the imperial court of Charles V and the Rome of Paul III. Relations with the French court, however, were still sporadic and no permanent accreditation was granted to a Tuscan resident. This is understandable in the light of the strained relations between the states consequent on the lengthy dispute between the Habsburgs and the Valois, in which Tuscany gravitated towards the Habsburg axis. The French court, moreover, had for long acted as a point of reference for anti-Medici exiles, as well as providing them with shelter. Although after the Peace of Cr py a Florentine representative did in fact receive accreditation at the French court, he was swiftly withdrawn after Ferrara's victory over Florence in the battle of precedences (1544-5).

The situation obviously changed with the Peace of Cateau-Cambr sis (1559), which marked the end of the great European conflict. Henceforth Tuscany enjoyed diplomatic representation in France and also installed a resident in Spain, which Philip II now established as the centre of his new political system.

Certainly the most novel feature, however, was the flanking of Tuscany's ambassadors with legation secretaries: at the imperial court after 1537, in Rome after 1539, and in France after 1544.

The establishment of permanent Tuscan ambassadorships in the Italian states came later, and it was never fully accomplished: recognition of Medicean power was a controversial issue and the indispensable conditions of reciprocity never came into being. Agents were first sent to Venice in 1540, and residents in 1589; agents to Ferrara in 1551, residents in 1560. By contrast, and obviously because of Tuscany's dependence on the Habsburgs, a resident ambassador was installed in Naples as early as 1539, and in Milan in 1546. There were no accredited Tuscan representative to the House of Savoy, nor indeed was there one in

Parma, Mantua and Lucca during either the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries.⁵⁶ In the years straddling the two centuries, by skilful manoeuvring, Grand Duke Ferdinando I (1587–1609) managed to gain accreditation for the first Tuscan resident in London.

Those attentive to the formal component of the history of diplomacy will find much of significance in these facts. The presence of accredited Tuscan representatives at the courts of Popes and sovereigns⁵⁷ – no novelty in Florentine history but new in the way that it came about – was an important development, for it guaranteed a constant supply of information and provided positive proof that Tuscany had acquired the formal recognition that all the minor states sought. And yet, as Fubini rightly points out, these data tell us very little – when set against the information to be culled from examination of Medicean diplomacy and of the men who undertook such activity in various periods – unless we shift our attention from formal structures to the personal and political relationships between the prince and his collaborators.

Restoring a human and political physiognomy to these representatives – to these men – dispels the monolithic image of power exercised exclusively by the prince, and it restores substance and weight to the system's protagonists.⁵⁸ Although reconstruction of the stories of these diplomats can be only partial in the space available here, a number of important points may nevertheless be made.

First of all, one certainly does not gain the impression that Tuscany's resident ambassadors in the sixteenth century, almost all of them recruited from the leading families of the Florentine patriciate, performed a merely symbolic role. In short, they were not chosen simply in order to lend titles and dignity to a diplomatic service which in fact relied on other means, and above all on the 'new men' employed by the early Medici to consolidate their power. On the contrary, this small group of Florentine nobles – selected from that section of the oligarchy which had long taken the interests of the principality for its own, and which in some cases was tied to the Medici by kinship – provided

⁵⁶ For a careful reconstruction, for each legation, of the chronological list of the resident ambassadors, the ambassadors extraordinary and legation secretaries, see M. Del Piazzo, *Gli ambasciatori toscani del principato (1537–1737)*, Rome, 1953.

⁵⁷ Reumont argues that the Tuscan residents did not bear the title of ambassador, since this pertained only to crowned heads: A. von Reumont, *Della diplomazia italiana dal secolo XIII al XVI*, Florence, 1857, pp. 135–7.

⁵⁸ As early as 1965 Paolo Prodi insisted that it was necessary to 'study . . . the social provenance of diplomats of various states and periods': *Diplomazia del Cinquecento. Istituzioni e prassi*, Bologna, 1965, p. 65; on the same topic see D. Frigo, *Principe, ambasciatori e 'jus gentium'. L'amministrazione della politica estera nel Piemonte del Settecento*, Rome, 1991, pp. 5–13.

ample proof of their ability to handle political duties with great skill and intelligence. Vincenzo Alamanni, Lodovico Antinori, Averardo Serristori, Angelo Niccolini, Giovan Battisti Ricasoli, Pier Filippo Pandolfini, Alessandro de' Medici, to name but a few, were men of outstanding calibre, and in their activity as diplomats they demonstrated themselves entirely able to perform the tasks assigned to them. They were men of refinement, some of them doctors of civil and canon law, and often accomplished men of letters, as well. Many of them were priests later elevated to bishoprics in recognition of their work in the diplomatic service. More rarely they transferred as cardinals to Rome, where they acted as key players in the electoral manoeuvring of the conclaves, some of them subsequently continuing their careers in the papal diplomatic service. The 'lay' ambassadors were instead rewarded on their return to Florence, usually after a long period of residence at a foreign court, by appointment to the *Senato dei Quarantotto* (when they were not already members), the apex of the Florentine institutional system, and with appointments of great prestige in the administration of Florence's territories, as governors, commissioners or vicars.

Brief discussion is required at this point of the Medicean system of power. Historians unanimously agree that Cosimo gradually disempowered Florence's traditional institutional system by creating a parallel apparatus which directly expressed his sovereign authority, and that he did so – following the general tendency of the time – by relying on *homines novi* entirely extraneous to the logic of Florentine politics. Usually from the provinces, or even recruited from outside the state, these were men of thorough technical preparation – like the jurists who worked in his legal apparatus or his secretaries – and bound to Cosimo by ties of the profoundest loyalty. Nevertheless, Cosimo was careful to maintain close links with those families of the oligarchy which constituted the most powerful economic and social force in the state, and to whom he owed his ascent as well as the political stability of his newly created power structure.⁵⁹ Consequently, it is of great significance that the *Senato dei Quarantotto*, whose members were appointed by the sovereign, and the subsidiary system of the Florentine magistrature, remained the perquisite of the pro-Medici patriciate, just as the most important ordinary and extraordinary diplomatic missions to Italian and European courts remained the preserve of members of those families. Equally significant was the inclusion in Cosimo's supreme consultative

⁵⁹ The essential text on the entrenchment (ideological as well) of the Florentine ruling class during Cosimo's reign is F. Diaz, 'L'idea di una nuova élite sociale negli storici e trattisti del principato', in *Firenze e la Toscana*, vol. III, pp. 665–81.

organ, the *Pratica segreta*, the ‘engine’ of his governmental action after 1545, of four men – Gianfigliuzzi, Serristori, Ricasoli, and Niccolini⁶⁰ who were among the shrewdest operators in Medicean diplomacy, and who flanked the grand jurists responsible for running domestic policy and for overseeing the administration of justice. And certainly no less important is the fact that, when Cosimo decided in 1560 to undertake major reform of the territorial control of the Florentine state by instituting a new judiciary (the *Nove Conservatori del dominio e della giurisdizione*), he chose three of his most trusted senators and ambassadors for the task: once again Averardo Serristori, Bongianni Gianfigliuzzi and Pier Filippo Pandolfini.⁶¹ This constant transfer of men from the diplomatic service to the topmost echelons of the government apparatus dispels the image of Cosimo’s power system as centred mainly on internal consolidation; it depicts instead a situation in which domestic duties were inextricably intertwined with diplomatic service.

Two biographies will serve to highlight the qualities of the men who worked in Cosimo’s diplomatic service: those of Averardo Serristori, an outstanding member of the first generation of Cosimo’s ambassadors, and of Alessandro de’ Medici, a representative of the generation that followed, during the years straddling Cosimo’s reign and those of his immediate successors, Francesco I and Ferdinando I.

Averardo Serristori (1497–1569) was born into a family belonging to the intermediate stratum of the Medicean *reggimento*, or order, and which had risen to prominence in the fifteenth century: his father Antonio had been a ‘*familiare*’ or kinsman to the de’ Medici at the time of Lorenzo il Magnifico.⁶² Averardo married into the Antinori family and first defended the Medicean regime, and then the gonfalonier Piero Guicciardini in 1527. He was summoned by Cosimo in the summer of 1537 and sent as ambassador extraordinary to Charles V⁶³ in order to serve alongside – but in fact also to control – Giovanni Bandini, a personage as ambiguous as he was influential, and resident at Charles’ court since the years of Alessandro. In dry and somewhat inelegant prose (often couched in diplomatic cipher), Serristori tenaciously lobbied the Emperor for a diploma that would confirm Cosimo as Duke of Florence, manoeuvring among the various power groups headed by the imperial councillors as he did so. Although he failed to secure the hand

⁶⁰ Anzilotti, *La costituzione interna*, pp. 172–4.

⁶¹ ASF, *Cinque conservatori*, 352 bis, cc. 59r–70.

⁶² *Legazioni di Averardo Serristori ambasciatore di Cosimo I a Carlo V e in corte di Roma (1537–1568)*, edited by G. Canestrini, Florence, 1953, p. xvii. The volume contains a documentary appendix on Serristori’s legations.

⁶³ ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, 4296; *ibid.*, 2634., cc. 13–16.

of Alessandro's widow, the illegitimate daughter of Charles V, for Cosimo in marriage, he took extraordinary pains to inform him of the imperial court's plans for Filippo Strozzi, taken prisoner after the defeat of the anti-Medici exiles at Montemurlo. Averardo returned to Florence in 1538. The following year he was sent to defend its borders against possible attack by the Farnese pope and, as commander of a military corps, to strengthen the fortifications of Borgo San Sepulcro, Arezzo and Cortona. Created a senator in 1540,⁶⁴ he was immediately dispatched as resident ambassador to Paul III. In Rome, he closely monitored the shifting patterns of European politics and the resumption of the conflict between France and the Empire, scrupulously informing Cosimo of the movements and meetings of all suspected anti-Mediceans, so that any support for them by Paul III might be swiftly identified. In March 1542 he reported as follows:

There is no lack of every possible vigilance in observing the movements of Piero and Ruberto Strozzi, who go the rounds in Rome with parties of six and eight men, bearing cutlasses and coats of mail, and they all gather in the house of Salvestro; and sometimes of an evening Piero Strozzi goes to the house of Lorenzo Ridolfi to sleep . . . The Pope receives them but it does not appear that he affords them what they desire.⁶⁵

In the months that followed, Serristori supplied a steady stream of information on a possible alliance of the Strozzi with France and the Pope. Recalled by Cosimo in 1545, following the fierce conflict with Paul III provoked by Cosimo's decision, later revoked, to banish the Dominican friars accused of fomenting anti-Medicean and pro-French discontent, Serristori was once again sent as ambassador to Charles V, this time flanked by the young and enterprising legation secretary Bartolomeo Concini. After the Peace of Cr  py (1544), Cosimo's diplomatic action was now directed towards territorial expansion; and having regained military control of his fortresses, he sought to acquire Piombino, an outpost of Habsburg military rule. Although suspected of not pursuing this aim with sufficient energy, owing to some covert accord with the Pope, and for this reason under surveillance by Concini, Serristori negotiated the acquisition of the small state of Piombino in exchange for a loan to the Emperor.⁶⁶ This was a low-key mission which

⁶⁴ D. M. Manni, *Il senato fiorentino o sia notizia de' senatori fiorentini dal suo principio fino al presente*, Florence, 1771, p. 117.

⁶⁵ *Legazioni di Averardo Serristori ambasciatore*, pp. 120ff.

⁶⁶ ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, 4304 (Averardo Serristori's letter-book kept by B. Concini: 1545-7).

demonstrated that Serristori was seemingly less at ease in his dealings with the Emperor than with Rome. On the other hand, the moment was not a propitious one for Cosimo's ambitions: the concession of Piombino was immediately followed by the affront of its revocation.⁶⁷ While Cosimo hesitated over what action to take, he leaned 'perilously' towards France.⁶⁸

In 1547 Serristori returned to the papal court, where he remained until 1555, distinguishing himself by the incisiveness and promptness of his action as he once again monitored the activities of the *fuorusciti* party and garnered information on the conclaves, while also keeping a watchful eye on the repercussions in Rome of the War of Siena.⁶⁹ In 1556 he informed Cosimo of a plot against him contrived with the backing of Piero Strozzi and the Archbishop Altoviti.⁷⁰ On his return to Tuscany, he entered politics and – as already mentioned – was appointed to highest rank in the government apparatus as a member of the *Pratica segreta* and, subsequently, as a *riformatore* for the creation of the *Magistrato dei Nove* in 1560.

But when Cosimo's protégé Pius IV ascended to the throne, Serristori was once again obliged to return as resident to what was by now his second home: Rome. During the long years spent in Rome, he acquired fame as a cultivator of letters and science. He frequented Cellini and Michelangelo, and, according to Vasari, on the latter's death (1564) ensured that his drawings and possessions were conserved for posterity. Testifying to his growing influence – apart from the *palazzo* (still extant) that he had built in the heart of Rome in 1555 – are the several printed works dedicated to his name, including Suetonius' *Life of the Twelve Caesars*, translated by Paolo del Rosso,⁷¹ who was the same del Rosso that Serristori subsequently had arrested and sent to Tuscany for incarceration as a supporter of Leone Strozzi.

A key player in a diplomatic system that moved in those years from a 'heroic' phase to one of progressive formalization,⁷² Serristori died in 1569, which was precisely the year in which diplomatic effort to gain

⁶⁷ Spini, 'Il Principato dei Medici e il sistema degli stati', p. 183.

⁶⁸ A. D'Addario, *Il problema senese nella storia italiana della prima metà del Cinquecento*, Florence, 1958, pp. 159ff.

⁶⁹ R. Cantagalli, *La guerra di Siena (1552–1559)*, Siena, 1962.

⁷⁰ A. D'Addario, *Aspetti della controriforma a Firenze*, Rome, 1972 (Ministero dell'Interno, *Pubblicazioni degli Archivi di Stato*, 77), p. 122.

⁷¹ P. Simoncelli, *Il cavaliere dimezzato*, Paolo del Rosso 'fiorentino e letterato', Milan, 1992, pp. 41 and *passim*.

⁷² ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, 2634, cc. 666–70 (*Istruzioni* of 10 Sept. 1561); *ibid.*, 3281–8: Serristori's diplomatic papers, years 1561–9.

more exalted recognition for Tuscany bore fruit when Cosimo acquired the title of Grand Duke.

While Serristori's death coincided with papal sanction of the Grand Duchy, the name of Alessandro de' Medici brings us to the next generation of sixteenth-century Florentine diplomats. When de' Medici took up his appointment as resident in Rome to replace Serristori, he was thirty-four years old. His father, Ottaviano – first cousin to Cosimo as the son of Francesca Salviati, sister to the duke's mother, Maria – had been one of the most zealous advocates of the passage from Republic to principality, and he had then worked as administrator of the Medicean assets.⁷³ Initially associated with the Dominicans, Alessandro became Pope in 1605, assuming the significant title of Leo XI.⁷⁴ Although his reign as Pope was short – he died just one month after his election – his role, first as a Medicean diplomat and then, in his capacity as Archbishop, as a protagonist of the Counter-Reformation in Florence, was much more incisive. Sent, as said, by Cosimo to replace Serristori in 1569, he was subsequently appointed bishop of Pistoia, and then, in 1573, archbishop of Florence. In fact, however, de' Medici remained in Rome as resident ambassador until 1584.⁷⁵ On his return to Florence he devoted himself to the liturgical renewal and reform of pastoral practice that typified religious affairs in those years.⁷⁶ A friend of San Filippo Neri, he provided the Medici with influential diplomatic representation in a Rome where Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici – who in 1587 became Grand Duke of Tuscany – acted as the hub for a powerful party of pro-Medici cardinals. On becoming a cardinal himself, in 1584, Alessandro de' Medici epitomized the passage from Medicean diplomacy's more aggressive phase to its 'Romanized' maturity. His detailed diplomatic reports deal with religious themes and the defence of Catholicism, and they are imbued with the frank and intransigent Counter-Reformationist spirit distinctive of the mixed politico-religious nature of relationships between the papacy and Tuscany from the 1560s onwards. His career was typified by the repeated shuttling between Medicean and pontifical diplomacy that I have already mentioned. Indeed, between 1596 and 1598 he undertook an extremely sensitive diplomatic mission to France on behalf of the Pope. Charged with enforcing Henry IV's promise to restore Catholic religious conditions in exchange for

⁷³ On Ottaviano de Medici see Pansini, 'Le segreterie', pp. xix–xx, n. 60.

⁷⁴ L. von Pastor, *Storia dei Papi dalla fine del Medio Evo*, 17 vols., Rome, 1930, vol. xii, pp. 3–23.

⁷⁵ ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, 3289–94 (1569–84).

⁷⁶ D'Addario, *Aspetti della controriforma a Firenze, passim*.

revocation of his excommunication, de' Medici accomplished his task with great intelligence and circumspection.

As well as the small group of patrician ambassadors exemplified by the preceding two biographies, the sixteenth century saw the creation and progressive strengthening of the corps of embassy secretaries. With permanent accreditation as ambassadorial staff, these officers became widespread in the sixteenth century and developed into a key instrument of the new diplomacy. Directly appointed by the sovereign without institutional restraint, in Tuscany as well as elsewhere they tended to remain in their posts whenever, as frequently happened, ambassadors changed. They acted as the long 'conveyor belt' that delivered the sovereign's orders and representation throughout Italy and Europe,⁷⁷ and in some well-documented cases they also covertly reported on the resident ambassadors.

Once again, close biographical analysis yields interesting material for reflection. A first finding is the following: whereas the ambassadors of the first generation all belonged, as we have seen, to the Florentine oligarchy, the legation secretaries who accompanied the ambassadors were all *homines novi*. The second point to stress is that it was from their ranks that the sovereign recruited his secretaries. Usually from the provinces, often with university educations, profoundly loyal, and the direct expression of the prince's authority, these men formed, together with the 'auditory' jurists, the basis of the autocratic rule wielded by Cosimo and his successors. And all of them had already worked in Tuscany's embassy secretariats in various parts of Europe. Francesco Babbi, Bartolomeo Iacopo Dani, Bernardino Grazini, Camillo and Iacopo Guidi, Lorenzo and Cristiano Pagni, and again Curzio Picchena, Piero Usimbardi, Francesco, Emilio and Belisario Vinta,⁷⁸ all began their careers as embassy secretaries. Indeed, it is perhaps more accurate to say that Cosimo's secretaries served him just as much when they stood at his side at the Florentine court as when they were sent forth to flank the ambassadors, or even when they were used on extraordinary missions.

Before the secretariats consolidated themselves into apparatuses of the Medicean court, with their own regulations and hierarchy of grades – a process which began under Francesco I but gathered impetus mainly

⁷⁷ On the role of the legation secretaries from the Cinquecento onwards see S. Nava, s.v. 'Diplomazia e Diplomatici', in *Novissimo digesto italiano*, Turin, 1968, vol. v, pp. 652–9, especially p. 655.

⁷⁸ It is impossible here to itemize the careers of all these men. The reader is referred to the abundant information in Pansini, *Le segreterie*; for appointments as legation secretaries see Del Piazzo, *Gli ambasciatori toscani del principato*, s.v.

under Ferdinando I – the recruitment and training of the new men who came to form the backbone of government by Cosimo and his immediate successors was therefore determined by the experience that they had acquired in foreign service. And here, it seems, we must examine a phenomenon evidenced not by straightforward biographies and career profiles, but by analysis of sixteenth-century diplomatic activity and foreign policy: the overriding priority given by the Medici to the assertion of Tuscany's role in international relations. The ascent of Cosimo, the gradual consolidation of his power, the restoration of the fortresses, the conquest of Siena, and finally the crowning of the new politico-territorial arrangement with the title of Grand Duchy granted by Pius V in 1569: these were all stages in a campaign for status and legitimation conducted with extraordinary tenacity by Cosimo and his diplomacy, the outcome of which was by no means a foregone conclusion.

Perhaps the most interesting period from this point of view is between 1537 and 1557: the period, that is, from Cosimo's nomination as Duke to his acquisition of Siena, and during which he is customarily viewed by historians as entirely subservient to the Emperor. Examination of the sources, however, reveals – as Spini and Diaz have emphasized – a Cosimo actively engaged in carving out his own role in the great game played out by the Papacy, the Empire and France. To be precise, his diplomatic action moved in two main directions. Its first purpose was to neutralize the external plotting that tied the *fuorusciti* – but also more generally the merchants congregated into the various '*nazioni fiorentine*' – to Tuscany's various enemies: action which ranged from the defeat of the *fuorusciti* at Montemurlo,⁷⁹ achieved largely with the Emperor's help, to constant surveillance of Farnese manoeuvres, to the vigorous repression of the anti-Medici conspiracy mounted by the Lucca-born Burlamacchi.⁸⁰ As was often the case in this period, diplomatic and military action overlapped. Cosimo not only relied on the military strength of powerful but irksome protectors like the Emperor; he also proved adept, as had the Medici during the fifteenth century, at gaining the support of the great feudal houses: the Bardi, for

⁷⁹ On the defeat of the *fuorusciti* at Montemurlo in the summer of 1537, and on the military manoeuvres by the Farnese that repeatedly threatened Tuscany in those years, and more in general on the precarious political situation, see Spini, *Cosimo I*, pp. 84ff., and pp. 187–8 for the *fuorusciti* manoeuvres in 1540.

⁸⁰ M. Berengo, *Nobili e mercanti nella Lucca del Cinquecento*, Turin, 1974 (2nd edn), pp. 203–18; S. Adorni-Braccesi, '*Una città infetta*'. *La Repubblica di Lucca nella crisi religiosa del Cinquecento*, Florence, 1994 (*Collezione di studi e testi per la storia religiosa del Cinquecento*, edited by A. Rotondò, 5), pp. 161ff.

instance, allies and kinsmen to the Medici, who mobilized their 'vassals and followers' in his service.⁸¹

The second objective of Cosimo's diplomatic action was to bolster Tuscany's independence, first by regaining military control over the state – Tuscany's fortresses were returned by Charles V in 1543⁸² – and then by campaigning for its formal recognition.

In 1545, as we have seen, Cosimo withdrew his recently accredited resident from France in reaction to Tuscany's loss of precedence to Ferrara. And when he wrote that the French King must realize (although the message was intended for general consumption) that 'we are a prince who by necessity or obligation recognize no one but God, and by desire only the Emperor as our benefactor, but not with tribute nor any sort of recognition save that of needful gratitude',⁸³ he could not have more forcefully defended his 'free' space in the great arena of symbolic legitimation of the hierarchy of states constituted by the ceremonial game of precedences.⁸⁴

Cosimo's diplomacy was conditioned from the outset by his acute awareness of the precariousness of his position. In need of powerful protection – but without thereby creating ties of political and juridical dependence – and fearful of a recrudescence of the subversive forces that had overthrown Florentine governments so frequently in the past, Cosimo used every means, diplomatic as well as military, to defend 'his' state against the terror of 'revolution' with the protection of great clients. The system he created was entirely political in its nature: a close-knit network of personal contacts among European power

⁸¹ ASF, *Carte Bardi*, letters from the Florentine Republic and de' Medici to the counts Bardi, without inventory numbers, correspondence relative to 1537. For a careful reading of the military component of the Medicean political system in the fifteenth century, as well as of the feudal power exercised by the Bardi and the Medici, see O. Gori, 'La crisi del regime mediceo del 1466 in alcune lettere inedite di Piero dei Medici', in L. Borgia, F. De Luca, P. Viti and R. M. Zaccaria (eds.), *Studi in onore di Arnaldo D'Addario*, Lecce, 1995, vol. III, pp. 809–25; Gori, 'Per un contributo al carteggio di Lorenzo il magnifico: lettere inedite ai Bardi di Vernio', *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 154 (1996), pp. 253–378. On the crucial importance of military power during the Renaissance see M. Mallet, *Signori e mercenari: La guerra nell'Italia del Rinascimento*, Bologna, 1983 (English edn, London, 1974).

⁸² On the negotiations for the restitution of the fortresses to Cosimo see R. Galluzzi, *Istoria del Granducato di Toscana sotto il governo della Casa Medici* (5 vols.), Florence, 1781, vol. 1, pp. 47–51; D'Addario, *La formazione*, pp. 221ff.

⁸³ *Cosimo I de' Medici, Lettere*, edited by G. Spini, Florence, 1940: letter from Cosimo to his resident ambassador Bernardo de' Medici, Bishop of Forlì, dated 30 May 1545, pp. 87–93 (the original is in ASF *Mediceo del Principato*, fol. 6, cc. 53ff.).

⁸⁴ Emblematic of the great symbolic-political importance attributed to precedence is the controversy between Philip II and his brother the Emperor in 1562: Braudel, *Civiltà e imperi*, vol. 1, p. 711.

groups, rather than an impersonal and formalized set of relations among states.

The broad European context in which the protean anti-Medici party of the *fuorusciti* moved, therefore, reappeared in diplomatic correspondence, in notices and in secret information. Once again, as at the beginning of the century, the great and powerful merchant bankers surrounded themselves with a composite array of writers and courtiers, of republicans and soldiers. Each of these men were known individually to Cosimo, and their movements were closely monitored, and their behaviour recorded, by the lowest link in his diplomatic system, the secret informers. The alarm was raised whenever concentrations of exiles were noted: for example, in 1542, when Duretti advised Cosimo from Venice of suspicious meetings at the house of Strozzi; or when a large military build-up of *fuorusciti* at Mirandola was reported; or, again, in 1545 when the agent Pier Filippo Pandolfini warned that the Strozzi were gathering in Venice.⁸⁵ The surveillance system might be headed by the ambassador, who gathered information and relayed it to Cosimo, or the lower-level legation secretaries might instead take on the task. In 1545–6, for example, years of severe tension between Paul III and Cosimo, the legation secretary Francesco Babbi remained in Rome as Cosimo's sole representative after the ambassador Serristori had been withdrawn, and informed on the movements and speeches of the three cardinals under suspicion: Pucci, Salviati and Ridolfi.⁸⁶ The information was frequently transmitted via extra-diplomatic channels directly from the informer to Cosimo, examples being the 'double-crossing' intelligence provided by Brucioli on the Venetian *fuorusciti*,⁸⁷ or the information on the activities of the exiled Medicean adversaries in Rome transmitted by De Rossi⁸⁸ during the crucial years of Cosimo's preparations for the War of Siena.

The focus of all this activity was the Strozzi family, the great Europe-wide antagonists of the Medici. When their leader Filippo, the prestigious merchant overlord, committed suicide to escape imprisonment by Cosimo in 1538, the Strozzi rapidly reorganized their resources. Roberto assumed responsibility for the family's estates; Piero took

⁸⁵ Simoncelli, *Il cavaliere dimezzato*, pp. 48ff.

⁸⁶ ASF, *Spogli della Segreteria Vecchia detti Spogli rossi, Appendice, Legazione di Roma*, c. 1; ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, 3590.

⁸⁷ Spini, *Tra Rinascimento e Riforma*, p. 119; ASF, *Mediceo del principato*, 433 (July–Aug. 1554).

⁸⁸ On this interesting early-Cinquecento aristocrat and ecclesiastic, politically involved in all the principal issues of the time, see the Introduction by V. Bramanti to his *G. De' Rossi, Vita di Federico di Montefeltro*, Florence, 1995.

command of an army deployed against the Medici, first at Mirandola and then at Siena; and Leone, prior of Capua, was made commander of a powerful fleet of galleys, which was actually in service to the French king but which the Emperor wished to have transferred to his own command. Just as Cosimo, the obscure son of Giovanni delle Bande Nere, found himself elevated to the lofty station of Duke of Florence, so the Strozzi saw their fortunes change dramatically as a result of the shifting conjunctures of the sixteenth century. Although by tradition merchant-bankers, and financiers to popes and sovereigns, the Strozzi were transformed into powerful warlords by the strong economic-political demand for money and arms advanced by important political patrons (the Pope, the Emperor, the French King) in a Europe lacerated by conflicts. They were always Florentines, however, although by necessity they grew increasingly internationalist in their outlook. Besides the Strozzi there were other families – or more often branches of families – which refused to yield to the Medici regime: the Altoviti, the great bankers of Rome, who had close links with the Strozzi and who only returned to Florence and made their peace with Cosimo when Tuscany realigned with Rome after the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis; the Pucci, who mounted two conspiracies against the Medici regime;⁸⁹ and the Ridolfi⁹⁰ and the Salviati families of Rome. Under constant surveillance by Cosimo's 'secret service',⁹¹ these men and their followers operated on the broad terrain constituted by the anti-Medicean political and economic *partes* headed by France. They moved between Venice, the nerve centre of the *fuorusciti* movement, the Ferrara of the Este family, the anti-Medicean Rome of Paul III, and above all the France of Francis I and later of Henry II and Catherine de Médici: the France in which Florentine merchant-bankers had amassed fortunes on the great money market of Lyon during the first half of the sixteenth century, and the France in which several anti-Medicean Florentines⁹² had transformed themselves – suffice it to cite the case of

⁸⁹ Diaz, *Il Granducato*, pp. 108–9. About to be published on this conspiracy is J. Boutier, 'Trois conjurations italiennes: Florence (1575), Parme (1611), Gene (1628)', *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome, Italie et Méditerranée*, 108 (1996), pp. 319–75.

⁹⁰ ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, fol. 29, letter from Cosimo to Pandolfini (11 March 1554), cc. 346–7.

⁹¹ For discussion of Tuscany see P. Preto, *I servizi segreti di Venezia. Spionaggio e controspionaggio: cifrari, intercettazioni, delazioni fra mito e realtà*, Milan, 1994.

⁹² In his biographies of Donato Giannotti and Bartolomeo Cavalcanti, Albertini points out that these intellectuals, after being directly involved in anti-Medici battles, were forced to become courtiers at the Este and French courts: *Firenze dalla Repubblica al Principato*, pp. 145–78.

Alamanni – into refined men of the court. Proof that this fluctuating party was nevertheless highly dangerous is provided by the military and political resolve with which it defended the freedom of the Republic of Siena⁹³ against the Medici and the Emperor in the 1550s. And it was a movement joined on occasion – as Cantimori⁹⁴ has shown – by groups of republican heretics.

Medicean diplomacy, therefore, was constantly directed towards the Emperor and Spain as it pursued its three principal objectives: extending Tuscany's borders; preserving, albeit with constant declarations of loyalty to the Habsburgs, the 'freedom' of the state; and bringing the sub-feudal domain of Siena under ducal sway. It was governed less by a coherent set of foreign policies than by an infinite quantity of actions and trade-offs where nothing appeared certain or fixed. The central concern was to achieve ratification abroad of that 'reputation'⁹⁵ which the Duke of the Florentine Republic deemed so essential for defence of his state and dynasty. This 'reputation' Cosimo pursued with centralizing vigour in his domestic policy as well, through the omnipresent and rigorous enforcement of his authority and by his reliance on men – whether *homines novi* or prestigious members of the aristocracy – unswervingly loyal to him and also, as already mentioned, with outstanding personal qualities.

By means of a chain of highly personal relationships which bound the sovereign to his secretaries, and these latter to the ambassadors ordinary, Cosimo's foreign policy on individual issues, from the initial manoeuvring to the final outcome, was conducted by a handful of men who combined intelligence with accumulated experience.

I have already discussed the authority and qualities of Cosimo's resident ambassadors, and of his legation secretaries. Now to be emphasized, and especially from the end of the 1540s onwards, is the role played by those legation secretaries who transferred from service to ambassadors at the courts of Europe – and who were almost always privy to the most sensitive of state secrets – to direct dependence on their sovereign in Florence, where several of them became Cosimo's most intimate advisers. Thus, Lorenzo Pagni – sent in 1537 as legation

⁹³ On the links between Siennese domestic politics and their international backers in the early Cinquecento see A. K. Isaacs, 'Impero, Francia, Medici: Orientamenti politici e gruppi sociali a Siena', in *Firenze e la Toscana dei Medici*, vol. II, pp. 249–70.

⁹⁴ D. Cantimori, *Eretici Italiani del Cinquecento*, Turin, 1992, pp. 36, 177, 338.

⁹⁵ The theme of 'reputation' is a constant theme in Cosimo's correspondence, and it is an essential key to the interpretation of relationships within the sixteenth-century hierarchy of crowned heads. Not coincidentally, one of Charles V's officials referred to 'reputaçion' as the 'firm basis for imperial authority': F. Chabod, *Carlo V e il suo impero*, Turin, 1985, p. 200.

secretary to the imperial court, where he flanked Serristori on his delicate mission to obtain recognition of the ducal title⁹⁶ – became first counsellor to Cosimo on foreign affairs on his return to Florence. Although Pagni worked closely with his sovereign in collating information and deciphering the most sensitive messages, he was nonetheless used for several further missions.⁹⁷ It is symptomatic of the favour he enjoyed that, although he held the generic title of ‘*segretario*’, in 1551 he was already earning more than the other secretaries, and even more than the prestigious *segretario delle Tratte* responsible for the allocation of public appointments.⁹⁸ Indeed, his salary was second only to that of Cosimo’s chief adviser on domestic affairs, the *primo segretario* Lelio Torelli.⁹⁹

Wielding even greater authority than Pagni, however, was Bartolomeo Concini. Having risen to prominence in the entourage of Pagni, and enjoying the latter’s protection, Concini became the fulcrum of Cosimo’s foreign policy.¹⁰⁰ He epitomizes the extraordinary opportunities for political and social ascent that the absolute sovereigns offered to their most capable and faithful ‘servants’. Concini began his career as Pagni’s protégé, and in 1544 he was appointed legation secretary at the court of Charles V, where he worked for Averardo Serristori, the key personage in Cosimo’s diplomatic service, whom I have already discussed. Concini utilized his appointment – which he found irksomely restrictive from the outset (‘more a courtier than a good servant’)¹⁰¹ – to establish direct links with Florence, especially when the ambassadorship fell vacant, and to forge a personal relationship with Cosimo himself, for which Pagni acted as the intermediary. With his ability to achieve rapid implementation of his patron’s blunt instructions, he joined the ambassador Bernardo de’ Medici, Bishop of Forlì, to defend Tuscany after the supposed ‘betrayal’ of the concession and then revocation of Piombino to Cosimo.¹⁰² The wearisome political and diplomatic manoeuvring that preceded the War of Siena began partly on Concini’s

⁹⁶ *Legazioni di Averardo Serristori*, pp. 22–9 and 41–2.

⁹⁷ ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, 2634: instructions to Pagni for various missions, cc. 135 r and v, 387r and v; *Négotiations diplomatiques*, vol. III, *passim*.

⁹⁸ V. Arrighi and F. Klein, ‘Aspetti della Cancelleria fiorentina fra Quattrocento e Cinquecento’, in *Istituzioni e società nell’età moderna*, Rome, 1994, vol. I, p. 164.

⁹⁹ ASF, *Depositeria generale, parte antica*, 391 (1551). Pagni earned 150 *scudi* a year, and Torelli 200, while all the other secretaries were paid lower salaries.

¹⁰⁰ P. Malanima, *s.v.* ‘Concini Bartolomeo’, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. XXVII, Rome, 1982, pp. 722–25.

¹⁰¹ ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, 4302, n. 1: letter from Bartolomeo Concini to Lorenzo Pagni, dated 1 Dec. 1544.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 4306.

initiative;¹⁰³ and it was this diplomatic activity that provided him with his greatest opportunity for career advancement. When the war eventually broke out, Concini was sent to monitor the actions of the Marquis of Marignano and to inform his sovereign about them.¹⁰⁴ This mission was the first in an uninterrupted sequence of ambassadorships extraordinary which Cosimo assigned – when more complex and sensitive questions and negotiations were involved – almost invariably to Concini, who came and went from Florence virtually as Cosimo's *alter ego*. When unable to confer directly with his lord, owing to his absence from Florence on a mission, Concini dispatched exhaustive and always lucid reports: the constant and extraordinary correspondence between the two men is today conserved in the Medicean and Strozian archives. Henceforth, Concini was the architect of Cosimo's foreign policy, acting not so much as the instrument as the active protagonist and planner of Florentine intervention abroad.¹⁰⁵

The Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis of 1559, which brought the war between the two great French and Spanish-Imperial blocs to an end and restored peace in Italy, gave authoritative sanction to Cosimo's young state. According to a report written by the Venetian ambassador Fedeli in 1561, the threat of republican 'revolution' was long past: indeed, it was now the image of a prince able with Machiavellian skill to create and buttress 'his good fortune' that impressed itself most upon European diplomatic observers. Cosimo was a sovereign 'honoured and feared' by all princes. Behind him stood a state, or better two states (Florence and Siena),¹⁰⁶ solid and strengthened, governed and administered with firm 'rigour and dread'.¹⁰⁷ He is the prince whose apotheosis is celebrated by Vasari's frescoes in the Palazzo Vecchio,¹⁰⁸ which depict him in the

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 4305: 'registro delle lettere del signor Bartolommeo Concini, segretario appresso l'Imperatore in Bruselles dal 1545 al 1547'.

¹⁰⁴ ASF, *Carte strozziane*, series I, xxxv.

¹⁰⁵ Concini's political importance was evident to his contemporaries: see 'Relazione dello Stato di Firenze' by Andrea Gussoni (1576), in *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al senato*, edited by E. Albèri, s. II, v. II, Florence, 1841, pp. 353–97. Concini was well aware of his decisive role, as evidenced by the signed memoir in which he describes his twenty-one most important missions: ASF, *Carte strozziane*, series I, xxxvi, no. 14.

¹⁰⁶ F. Angiolini, 'Politica, società e organizzazione militare nel principato mediceo: a proposito di una "Memoria" di Cosimo I', *Società e Storia*, 9 (1986), pp. 1–51 (the quotation is on p. 4).

¹⁰⁷ 'Relazione dello stato di Firenze di Vincenzo Fedeli (1561)', in *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al senato*, edited by E. Albèri, s. II, v. I, Florence, 1839, pp. 320–83.

¹⁰⁸ N. Rubinstein, 'Vasari's Painting of Florence in the Palazzo Vecchio', in *Essays in the History of Architecture Presented to Rudolf Wittkower*, London, 1967, pp. 64–73.

clothes of a Roman emperor, surrounded by the Florentine Arts in the form of festive *putti*, and a series of scenes from the history of Florence, from its origins until the seizure of Siena, in a significant blend of republic and principality.

With the grave external threats to Florence now appeased, with the hazard raised by *fuoruscitismo* neutralized – not least because the European economic role of the Florentine merchants was now in decline – and with the new state's internal solidity (as well as its considerable military strength) effectively demonstrated, the urge to obtain greater international recognition grew more compelling.

Without abandoning its loyalty to the Empire and to Spain – since it was on this loyalty that the very survival of the young principality depended – from the end of the 1550s onwards Medicean diplomacy nevertheless tended to gravitate towards Rome, and thence towards France. After the death of the distinctly anti-Medici Pope Paul IV Carafa, the Medicean candidate, Angelo Maria de' Medici (from Milan and not a relative of the Florentine Medici), was elected to the pontificate. Although his election was not entirely engineered by Cosimo I and his emissary in the conclave – once again Bartolomeo Concini – there is no doubt that the decisive factor in the Medicean candidate's success was the diplomatic skill of the Tuscans.¹⁰⁹ It was with Pius IV (1559–65) that Cosimo's long and difficult campaign to obtain recognition of his prestige began – together with pursuit of a title that would place him above the majority of the other Italian princes. Cosimo sought to achieve a twofold objective: to overtake, in the symbolic area of the ceremonial of precedences, his Italian antagonists, in particular the Este; but also, and this was the more ambitious project, to obtain legitimation from a powerful authority, namely the Pope, which would release him and his dynasty from its dangerous dependence on the Empire – whence derived his relentless insistence on the juridical and political 'freedom' of the Florentine state, *superiorem non recognens*. Florence's prolonged dispute over precedence with Ferrara, which began in 1541 and dragged on until the end of Cosimo's reign, warrants detailed study in itself. There exist a number of studies written some years ago, but the affair is of such interest that it should be examined entirely anew. This battle, which the two parties fought to the tune of feverish vote-gathering and the soliciting of the most celebrated jurists at Italian and European universities and courts of justice,¹¹⁰ pitted not only two

¹⁰⁹ Pastor, *Storia dei Papi*, vol. VII, pp. 66ff.

¹¹⁰ ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, 2914: 'Informazioni e consulti dei principali giurisperiti e università di Europa nella causa di precedenza del duca Cosimo Primo de' Medici con la Casa d'Este'. The Medici also asked for the opinions of jurisconsults

princes but two different models of state and nobility against each other. On the one hand stood the Tuscan 'mixed' model of the state, dominated by a sovereign with outstanding gifts of government, at the helm of a state politically and economically in the ascendant, buttressed by a citizen nobility of civil and republican tradition and directly involved in public life.¹¹¹ On the other stood the Estean model of the princely state, which rested on a dynasty of more ancient lineage, and was sustained by a chivalrous nobility – marquises and counts – with power deriving from partly papal, partly imperial enfeoffment, but now in political and economic decline. As the controversy gathered head, it developed a welter of interesting historical–juridical¹¹² but also theoretical and ideological ramifications. Here, the obligatory reference is to Donati's analysis of the ferment that, with the waning of the Este family's grandeur, made Ferrara the focal point of debate on the nobility in the last decades of the sixteenth century.¹¹³ Pius IV intervened with a proposal to cut the Gordian knot. He suggested that Cosimo should acquire, by papal decree, the title of *Arciduca*, which had never before been granted in Italy, and which would secure for Tuscany a status higher than that of all the other Italian sovereignties except for the Republic of Venice. Cosimo's application to the Emperor for endorsement of his new title was rejected, however, and stalemate ensued – to which a further contributing factor was Pius' death in 1565. By now, however, the resourceful machinery of Medicean diplomacy had been set in motion. In the 1560s, Cosimo stepped up his campaign for an enhanced role in international politics. In Rome, pressure was applied on the Pope to increase the number of pro-Medici cardinals, but Florence threw its weight principally behind the counter-reformationist policy of Pius IV (and then of Pius V), favouring the resumption of the Council of Trent (1562) and, more in general, penetration of the Counter-Reformation

in many Italian and European cities. Cf. P. Gribaudo, 'Questioni di precedenza fra le corti italiane nel secolo XVI. Contributo alla storia della diplomazia italiana', *Rivista di Scienze Storiche*, I (1904), fasc. IX, pp. 164–77, X, 278–85, XI, 374–56; 2 (1905), fasc. II, pp. 87–94, III, 205–16, VI, 475–85, VII, 29–38, VIII, 126–41; V. Maffei, *Dal titolo di duca di Firenze e Siena a Granduca di Toscana*, Florence, 1905; G. Mondaini, *La questione di precedenza tra il duca Cosimo I de' Medici e Alfonso II d'Este*, Florence, 1898. But still the best study is L. Carcereri, *Cosimo Primo granduca*, 2 vols., Verona, 1926.

¹¹¹ See the interesting minutes on the claims brought by Medicean diplomacy against the Este in ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, 2913, ins. 20 bis. On the booklet (*Informazione sopra le ragioni della precedenza*) prepared by Cosimo's staff, printed and delivered in March 1562 to Alfonso D'Este, see Carcereri, *Cosimo Primo*, pp. 104ff.; Gribaudo, 'Questioni di precedenza', pp. 475–85.

¹¹² Mannori, *Il sovrano tutore*, pp. 81–93.

¹¹³ C. Donati, *L'idea di nobiltà in Italia. Secoli XIV–XVIII*, Bari, 1988, pp. 166ff.

in Tuscany.¹¹⁴ Simultaneously, the new chivalric order of Santo Stefano was instituted (in 1562) with the declared purpose of aiding Christianity in the struggle against the Turk, but also in order to protect Livorno and to create a new noble order, on the chivalric model, wholly extraneous to Florence's oligarchical tradition. It was in this context that Tuscany undertook an instrumental rapprochement with France whereby, on agreement by the Pope, it partly financed the war against the Huguenots. And it was during this phase that Cosimo, through his diplomatic corps, stipulated treaties that made him the great financier – he, the new prince, son of a soldier but from a family of grand mercantile tradition, and himself the foremost merchant of the state – of politico-military initiatives by the European states. In 1565 he loaned 200,000 *scudi* to the Emperor,¹¹⁵ and in the same year 100,000 ducats to France;¹¹⁶ a few years later, in 1572, he lent a further 100,000 ducats to France¹¹⁷ and 200,000 *scudi* to Spain.¹¹⁸ These were loans whose economic risks were more than outweighed by their implicit political *quid pro quo*: the highest political and juridical recognition for the Tuscan state and dynasty in the European assembly of states, or in other words, conferment of a 'title' that would safeguard Cosimo's 'international reputation'. Having handed the reins of domestic government to his son and heir Francesco (1564), for whom he arranged a prestigious marriage with Giovanna d'Austria, Cosimo – once again with Concini and his ambassadors ordinary and extraordinary, legation secretaries and secret informers – devoted all his energies to realizing the final ambition of his reign: gaining definitive international legitimacy. Thus, the controversy over precedence with Ferrara became the first phase of a conflict which – after Pius V had unilaterally granted of the title of Grand Duke to Cosimo and his heirs in 1569¹¹⁹ – involved all the European powers. It was a controversy of which the protagonists, actors and spectators were the Pope and the Emperor, sovereigns and republics, princes and noblemen of Europe in its entirety. The sabre-rattling of the German and Italian princes induced Maximilian to convene the imperial diet and to request the Pope's revocation of a bull which undermined imperial authority and provoked severe tension between the Papacy and

¹¹⁴ H. Jedin, 'La politica conciliare di Cosimo I', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 62 (1950), pp. 345–74, 477–96.

¹¹⁵ ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, 4325.

¹¹⁶ ASF, *Spogli della segreteria vecchia detti Spogli rossi, Spoglio di carteggi e affari di Francia*, c. 10 r.

¹¹⁷ Spini, 'Il Principato dei Medici e il sistema degli stati', p. 198.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

¹¹⁹ The papal bull was published by public proclamation on 9 Dec. 1569. It is reproduced with a commentary in Cantini, *Legislazione*, vol. VII, pp. 125–32.

the Empire.¹²⁰ At a lower level, the Italian, Spanish and German princes hastened to defend their political and diplomatic positions amid a plethora of legal opinions and historico-juridical citations. The endeavour of Cosimo, and the truly frenetic activity of his ordinary and extraordinary representatives abroad to split the opposition using every means available, including covert payments to imperial councillors, was a masterpiece of political strategy.¹²¹ By constantly, and wisely, insisting on his loyalty to the Empire, while still defending Florentine 'liberty' and the validity of the papal bull (which, as we have seen, placed the Medicean dynasty above all the Italian sovereignties with the exception of the Venetian Republic and the House of Savoy), by having his title recognized by France and England, and especially – and this was the decisive factor – by splitting the Habsburg front by bringing the Spanish king onto his side with a substantial loan in 1572 and a further subsidy to the Emperor of 100,000 *scudi* in 1575;¹²² by deploying a combination of all these strategies, Medicean diplomacy eventually managed to break the chain of resistance. Recognition of the grand-ducal title by the Emperor, who issued a diploma to that effect in January 1576, crowned the efforts of Cosimo – who had died in 1574 – on behalf of Francesco and his successors. The imperial diploma rewarded the tenacity with which the new prince had pursued recognition, with all juridical entitlements, of the weight acquired by the new state and by the Medicean dynasty in Italy and Europe. In this endeavour, which can be reconstructed in detail in all its theoretical, legal and economic aspects, at least two elements should be emphasized. The first is the shrewd use made by Cosimo of the men in his diplomatic service. The preparatory phase, whose outcome was by no means a foregone conclusion, was entirely orchestrated from Florence by Cosimo and his first secretary Bartolomeo Concini. The ambassadors ordinary utilized for the purpose were men of outstanding quality. Alessandro de' Medici, the great

¹²⁰ ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, 58: 'Minute di Cosimo I', 1570: see the draft of a letter from Cosimo to Pius V of 15 April 1570, in which with his customary haughtiness he asserted the validity of the bull and of his action 'to defend the freedom of my state of Florence'.

¹²¹ ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, 4329–30 ('Corrispondenza dalla corte imperiale di Lodovico Antinori e del segretario Belisario Vinta, 1568–1571'). A great deal of important material, probably from Bartolomeo Concini's archive, is contained in ASF, *Carte strozziane*, series 1, XLIII–XLVII. See also L. Carcereri, *L'erezione della Toscana a Gran Ducato e la politica Europea tra il 1569 e il 1576*, Verona, 1912.

¹²² ASF, *Spogli della segreteria vecchia detti Spogli Rossi*, 'Spoglio e indice dei carteggi di Spagna e affari trattati', c. 28 v; on these loans, which were brokered by the Fugger, see ASF, *Depositeria Generale, Parte Antica*, 779 (income and expenditure ledger 1575–6).

churchman and diplomat mentioned earlier, was sent to Rome in 1569 as resident ambassador. But the principal conduit of information between Rome and Florence was Cosimo's son, the Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici.¹²³

In Spain, the ambassador De Nobili – who had blundered in his handling of the question of the grand-ducal title by 'imprudently' suggesting that Cosimo should abide by the decisions of the King of Spain and the Emperor¹²⁴ – was replaced in March 1571 by Giulio Del Caccia, a doctor of law and a prestigious advocate, future governor of Siena, senator and *auditore* of the Order of Santo Stefano,¹²⁵ and also son of another important diplomat and personage in Cosimo's administration, Alessandro Del Caccia.¹²⁶ Flanking Del Caccia on an extraordinary mission in 1572 was Antonio Serguidi – later first secretary to Francesco I – who was instructed to negotiate the loan granted by Cosimo I to finance the Spanish troops against the 'rebels' of Flanders, and simultaneously to persuade Philip II to apply pressure on the Emperor for recognition of the grand-ducal title.¹²⁷ Again in 1575, the arrival in Spain of Roberto Ridolfi – previously expelled from England for acting as the secret emissary to the Catholics in their anti-Protestant plotting – further strengthened Medicean diplomatic representation on Spanish territory.

Serving at the imperial court as resident ambassador after 1568 was another outstanding personality: Lodovico Antinori,¹²⁸ who occupied

¹²³ P. Usibardi, *Istoria del Gran Duca Ferdinando I*, edited by Saltini, in *Archivio Storico Italiano*, series 4, 6 (1880), pp. 371–401 (the quotation is on p. 375). On Ferdinando's service in Rome essential reading is E. Fasano Guarini's entry 'Ferdinando I de' Medici' in *DBI* Rome, 1996, vol. XLVI, pp. 258–78.

¹²⁴ ASF, *Spogli della segreteria vecchia detti Spogli Rossi, Spoglio e indice dei carteggi di Spagna e affari trattati*, cc. 18–21. In general on diplomatic relations between Spain and Tuscany in relation to conferral of the grand-ducal title, and on Spanish resistance to the growing international influence of the Medici, see: E. Panicucci, 'La questione del titolo grandducale: il carteggio diplomatico fra Firenze e Madrid', in *Toscana e Spagna nel secolo XVI. Miscellanea di studi storici*, Pisa, 1996, pp. 7–58; and on De Nobili as ambassador, C. Mangio, 'Il non facile viaggio di un diplomatico fiorentino dalla Toscana a Madrid (1569)', in *ibid.*, pp. 301–7.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, cc. 28–9; F. Angiolini, 'Il principe e i cavalieri: l'auditore del gran Maestro e l'ordine di Santo Stefano nell'età di Cosimo III', in *La Toscana nell'età di Cosimo III*, conference proceedings (Pisa – San Domenico di Fiesole, 4–5 June 1990), edited by F. Angiolini, V. Becagli and M. Verga, Florence, 1993, pp. 189–91.

¹²⁶ Manni, *Il senato fiorentino*, p. 28.

¹²⁷ ASF, *Spogli della segreteria vecchia detti Spogli Rossi*, 'Spoglio e indice dei carteggi di Spagna', cc. 23ff.; ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, 4907: 'Istruzioni e carteggio del segretario Serguidi mandato in missione in Spagna nel 1572–73'.

¹²⁸ In this case too, an ecclesiastic born into one of the most powerful Florentine families, with an important as well as controversial political record – he was formerly

the post until 1572. After April 1571 he was first joined by Giovan Battista Concini,¹²⁹ dispatched with instructions to intensify diplomatic pressure on the Emperor to grant the grand-ducal title, and then replaced by him in 1573 when Concini became ambassador ordinary. That a commoner like Gian Battista Concini was able to overtake Antinori is highly significant. The son of Bartolomeo Concini, in the space of a few years he rose from embassy secretary to become Cosimo's most trusted and intimate adviser, acquiring influence and wealth which impressed contemporary observers no less than the bogus title of Count of Penne that ennobled a family of plainly peasant origins. Gian Battista epitomizes how, in the course of a generation, the social and political ascent of the *homines novi* could be rewarded and proclaimed abroad by conferral of a diplomatic appointment of extraordinary prestige.¹³⁰ Nor did Giovan Battista disappoint the expectations placed in him, for he demonstrated himself able – under his father Bartolomeo's guidance from Florence – to mastermind negotiations over Cosimo's title until the Emperor finally granted his recognition.¹³¹

Together with the remarkable quality of Medicean diplomacy – a diplomacy that always used men of outstanding talents, even if of diverse social provenance, and flanked their activity with secret and extra-institutional devices¹³² – there is the further consideration that the

Pope Paul IV's ambassador to France – managed to regain Pius IV's (Carafa) good graces and be sent on sensitive diplomatic missions. On obtaining the episcopate of Volterra, and now reinstated in Cosimo I's favour despite his past record, Antinori was sent to the imperial court, where he remained until 1572: Del Piazzo, *Gli ambasciatori toscani*, s.v.; Miani, entry in *DBI*, vol. III, Rome, 1961, pp. 462–3.

¹²⁹ Manni, *Il senato fiorentino*, pp. 40–1.

¹³⁰ On social mobility and also on Concini, see F. Angiolini and P. Malanima, 'Problemi della mobilità sociale a Firenze tra metà del Cinquecento e i primi decenni del Seicento', *Società e Storia*, 2 (1979), pp. 17–47.

¹³¹ ASF, *Archivio Mediceo del Principato*, 4332–4 ('Corrispondenza di G. B. Concini dalla corte imperiale, anni 1572–1576').

¹³² In 1569–70, for example, much use was made of covert informers. Working alongside de' Medici in Rome for many years was Nofri Camaiani, who was simultaneously loyal to the Curia and to Cosimo, and who played an important part in the successful outcome of the negotiations over the grand-ducal title: M. Giansante, entry s.v. in *DBI*, vol. XVII, Rome, 1974, pp. 71–2; also Domenico Bonsi, a jurist appointed to handle the battle of precedences with Ferrara, as well as Pietro Usimbardi, secretary to Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici: cf. ASF, *Depositeria Generale, Parte Antica*, 776 (income and expenditure ledger 1570); ASF, *Archivio Mediceo del Principato*, 3596: 'Lettere da Roma di Pietro Usimbardi, sotto lo pseudonimo di "amico del fornaio"', 1570. Usimbardi was given the task of keeping Cosimo 'abreast of what is said, done, and intended by the adversaries of his Most Serene Highness' (*ibid.*, letter of 22 March 1570). On Usimbardi's career see M. Fantoni, *La corte del Granduca. Forma e simboli del potere mediceo fra Cinque e Seicento*, Rome, 1994, pp. 139–68.

diploma of 1576 set the seal of success on Cosimo's twofold design: on the one hand to assert to the political continuity of the principality with respect to the Florentine Republic, and therefore its freedom, and to achieve legitimation of all the juridical and diplomatic entitlements in international relations that the Republic had acquired *ab antiquo*; on the other, to gain ideological and political recognition (stated unequivocally by Pius V's bull of 1569) of the outstanding personal stature of a prince who equitably administered his people, who committed himself and his state to Christianity, and who energetically deployed economic and social forces to ensure growth and prosperity. The diploma constituted international recognition of the primacy of '*doventare*' (becoming) over '*nascere*' (being born) that Cosimo had argued so vigorously in a fine letter written in 1545.¹³³

The affair of the grand-ducal title left an aftermath of resentment, of which the apparently futile squabbling over ceremonial and precedence was a significant expression, even after 1576. The skirmishing continued between the House of Savoy, the Gonzaga and the Este, and it was a battle that the latter – now lapsing into in their 'scintillating twilight'¹³⁴ – continued to fight with dogged persistence but with increasingly blunter weapons. After 1576, however, the international equilibrium between Florence and Ferrara displayed a pattern whereby the Medicean state, with its enterprise and wealth, and its skilful diplomacy, exploited its new, juridically recognized status, while the Este, for whom neither the foremost 'titles' nor its chivalric nobility sufficed, went into irreversible decline: a decline due to internal factors, to be sure, but also hastened by the family's ill-considered and aggressive diplomatic action against Rome. The devolution of Ferrara to the Papacy (1598) after the death of Alfonso marked the final stage of the family's slide into oblivion.

It is within this larger context of international equilibria and diplomatic conflict that one fully grasps the political significance of the cultural strategies pursued by the Italian states during the high Renaissance. I am convinced that it is only in terms of a 'dialogue' – or better of a battle conducted at a distance – among states on political and diplomatic

¹³³ 'As for myself, I cannot say, nor am I greatly concerned to say, that I was born duke of Florence, since it is not yet firmly established which is the more laudable, to be born to or to have somehow become what I have done': Cosimo I de' Medici, *Lettere*, pp. 87–93; letter from Cosimo to Bernardo de' Medici, Bishop of Forlì, dated 30 May 1545 (quotation at p. 88). On the tempered Machiavellianism in Cosimo's ideological system see C. Vasoli, 'Osservazioni sui "Discorsi Historici Universali" di Cosimo Bartoli', in *Firenze e la Toscana*, vol. II, pp. 727–38.

¹³⁴ Donati, *L'idea di nobiltà*, p. 166.

terrain that one can understand many of the propagandistic and ideological aspects of sixteenth-century treatises on the prince and the nobility.¹³⁵

In 1569, Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici arrived in Rome with such a vast retinue – more than three hundred '*bocche*' (mouths) – that Cardinal Farnese was prompted to remark: 'he has come with such an entourage that he shall humiliate us'.¹³⁶ Farnese's comment is surprising, in fact, since Ferdinando had tried to attenuate the pomp of his entry to Rome – as Elena Fasano Guarini has recently shown – in order not to offend Pius' ascetic sensibilities.¹³⁷ It is also remarkable that Ferdinando should set up such a large court in Rome when, in those same years in Florence, the great Cosimo – and Francesco I, who had taken charge of domestic government – maintained what was a very small court indeed. 'He lives with great parsimony according to the custom of his homeland, with few servants and without a guard', wrote the Venetian ambassador in 1566: a report confirmed by a recent study on the Medicean court.¹³⁸ There must have been a definite purpose behind Cosimo's decision to establish such a large court for his son in Rome. And it must have been the same purpose that prompted him to stage such grandiose public celebrations for Francesco's marriage to Giovanna d'Austria in 1565;¹³⁹ to organize a grand city parade on obtaining the grand-ducal title in 1569; and then to mount an extraordinary procession for the Roman coronation of 1570;¹⁴⁰ while simultaneously living in a court of extremely modest proportions, indeed almost in isolation except for his two 'families', one consisting of his closest kin and the other, his institutional family, constituted by faithful secretaries and a

¹³⁵ For Tuscany, as well as the previously cited studies by Diaz and Vasoli, see G. Cipriani, *Il mito etrusco nel Rinascimento fiorentino*, Florence, 1980. See also W. Barberis, 'Uomini di corte nel Cinquecento fra primato della famiglia e governo dello Stato', in *Storia d'Italia*, Annali 4: *Intelletuali e potere*, Turin, 1981, pp. 859–94.

¹³⁶ G. Fragnito, 'Le corti cardinalizie nella Roma del Cinquecento', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 106 (1994), pp. 5–41 (quoted on p. 23).

¹³⁷ E. Fasano Guarini, 'Ferdinando I de' Medici', in *DBI*.

¹³⁸ Fantoni, *La corte del Granduca*, pp. 23ff., which also contains a recent bibliography. On this see also C. Mozzerelli (ed.), '*Famiglia*' del principe e famiglia aristocratica, 2 vols., Rome, 1988.

¹³⁹ E. Cochrane, *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries. 1527–1800*, Chicago, 1973, pp. 91–2; P. Ginori (ed.), *L'apparato per le nozze di Francesco de' Medici e di Giovanna d'Austria nelle narrazioni del tempo e da lettere inedite di Vincenzo Borghini e di Giorgio Vasari, illustrato con disegni originali*, Florence, 1936. See in general on this subject B. Mitchell, *The Majesty of the State. Triumphal Progresses of Foreign Sovereigns in Renaissance Italy (1494–1600)*, Florence, 1986.

¹⁴⁰ L. Cantini, *Legislazione*, vol. VII, pp. 132ff.

handful of trusted advisers. It is not easy to explain this deliberate contradiction. While two likely explanations are, first, the still incomplete transformation of the Florentine oligarchy into a court aristocracy and, second, Florence's still precarious international position, which made it perilous to indulge in symbolic self-representation before the eyes of Europe, there is a further explanation which is at once simple and banal: the rich duke pinched and scraped so that he could accumulate funds '*per li bisogni*' (for necessities), where such '*bisogni*' were, as the sharp-eyed Venetian ambassador noted, those of financing the princes and sovereigns of Europe in exchange for higher-level recognition of his international prestige.¹⁴¹

When twenty years later, in 1587, Ferdinando left the powerful cardinalate court of Rome to be installed as Grand Duke in Florence on the death of his brother Francesco I, the situation had changed substantially. In 1588, the ambassador Contarini reported that the Grand Duke stood at the centre of an expanded and consolidated institutional and court apparatus, and at the head of a rich and free state.¹⁴² 'He has enlarged the court and given it much greater magnificence than it previously possessed . . . He is arraying the court with men who are noble and who give it splendour'; it is 'magnificent' in the reception accorded to guests. Ferdinando quickly demonstrated his qualities: steadfast in maintaining the equilibria inherited from his father, shrewd in diplomatic affairs (also thanks to his twenty-year experience of the cardinalate), and resolute in preserving the space and independence of his dominion.¹⁴³ Having moved from the medieval geometries of the 'republican' *palazzo della Signoria* to the Renaissance elegance of the *Reggia di Pitti*, surrounded by a nobility now almost entirely loyal to the regime, by diplomatic representatives, and by an organized and hierarchized apparatus of secretaries, the prince of Florence modelled his court on those of the other Italian princes. As the expansionary, so to speak 'heroic', phase of Medicean

¹⁴¹ *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti*, s. II, v. II, pp. 57–93: 'Relazione di Firenze del clarissimo M. Lorenzo Priuli' (1566), p. 74.

¹⁴² The feudal bond was relative only to dominion over the state of Siena, while the freedom and independence of the state of Florence was by now universally acknowledged. Contarini wrote in 1588: 'With the Emperor it has no dependence of inferiority or fiefdom, because the government of Florence has always been free from subjection to the Empire, and in altering form it has not lost its privileges. And if Charles V constituted the house of the Medici as princes of that state, he did so not as emperor but as *compositor* empowered to do so by the parties concerned': *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti*, s. II, vol. II: 'Relazione di Firenze di Tommaso Contarini' (1588), pp. 251–96 (the quotation is on p. 287).

¹⁴³ On Ferdinando see again Diaz, *Il Granducato*, pp. 28off.; and the entry by Elena Fasano Guarini in *DBI*, 'Ferdinando I'.

diplomacy drew to its close, there now began the period of courtly splendour, with its attendant symbolic representations. At the time of the prestigious marriage in 1589 – once again the fruit of shrewd diplomatic action – between the ex-cardinal Grand Duke and Christine of Lorraine,¹⁴⁴ the grand-daughter of Catherine de Medici, Florence presented a scenario typical of the international aristocracy, with the great network of European diplomacy amply represented as well. The sumptuous retinues of the Roman cardinals, the representatives of the French and Spanish courts, those from Lorraine, Spain, the Swiss cantons, and other minor states, as well as the legations sent by all the Italian states (from the Republics of Genoa and Venice to the Este, the Savoy and the Gonzaga), amounted to a total of almost 2,800 guests, who were accommodated at the Pitti Palace and the numerous *palazzi* made available by the Florentine aristocracy.¹⁴⁵

Apart from assembling a true court – a process begun by his predecessor Francesco I¹⁴⁶ – Ferdinando immediately (on 2 November 1587) set about giving a precise hierarchical organization to the Court Secretariat, and more efficient organization to the Florentine system of controlling and managing diplomatic channels. The distinction concerned appointments, which were conferred *ad personam*, rather than marking a clear division of competence among the apparatuses. Domestic and foreign responsibilities still attached to the same secretary, although his range of action was now very clearly defined. A distinct continuity can be discerned between this personnel and the team that had previously worked for Cosimo. The secretariat was headed by Pietro Usimbardi, who had been secretary to Cosimo and, in 1570, a diligent Florentine informant on the actions of the cardinals. Apart from supervision of the Florentine magistrates, therefore, Usimbardi was also responsible for all matters concerning Rome. Serguidi, son-in-law of Bartolomeo Concini, who handled ‘*negozi*’ with France, Genoa and Naples, had also been a prominent official under Cosimo, and he too had been appointed to carry out sensitive diplomatic missions. Belisario Vinta, the third secretary, had previously been employed with Giovan Battista Concini as legation secretary at the imperial court during the years of

¹⁴⁴ F. Martelli, ‘Una lorenese al governo della Toscana medicea: Cristina di Lorena’, in A. Contini and M. G. Parri (eds.), *Il granducato di Toscana e i Lorena nel XVIII secolo* (Atti del Convegno, Florence, 22–4 Sept. 1994), Florence, 1999, pp. 71–81.

¹⁴⁵ ASF, *Guardaroba mediceo, Diari di etichetta*, 1, pp. 1–14. The foreign entourages comprised 2734 people. On the wedding see J. M. Saslow, *The Medici Wedding of 1589*, New Haven and London, 1996.

¹⁴⁶ *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti*, s. II, v. II, pp. 57–93: ‘Relazione di Firenze di Andrea Gussoni (1576)’, pp. 351–97.

the campaign for the grand-ducal title, and he had then successfully completed a number of important foreign assignments. Vinta was given – again not fortuitously – responsibility for relations with the Empire and with all other foreign sovereigns apart from France and Spain, as well as for conduct of Florence's affairs with the other Italian princes.¹⁴⁷

Vinta (later appointed first secretary of state in 1610) was a man endowed with the same outstanding qualities as Bartolomeo Concini,¹⁴⁸ to whom he was related, and a figure of paramount importance as adviser to the sovereign, especially on matters of foreign policy. The reign of Ferdinando – although detailed exploration of the topic is not possible here – was once again a period of intense diplomatic activity, albeit within the limits set on the sovereign of a middle-ranking state in the Italy of the *pax hispanica*. While the Grand Duke's unremitting work of imposing internal discipline continued at home,¹⁴⁹ abroad he sought to counterbalance the power of Spain by shifting the axis of Florentine intervention to a France lacerated by the Wars of Religion. While covertly financing the war waged by Henry of Navarre, still the leader of the Huguenots, Ferdinando made reckless use of extra-diplomatic channels. For example, he sent Francesco Bonciani to serve for many years at Henry's side under the false name of Baccio Strozzi.¹⁵⁰ He intervened in the negotiations for Henry's absolution by Clement VIII, an operation which, after renewed tension, was crowned with success when the prestigious marriage was arranged of Ferdinando's niece Marie de Médici to Henry IV. Preceded by tedious negotiations over the dowry, which was also to serve as partial redemption of France's debts to the Tuscan Grand Dukes,¹⁵¹ the wedding split European diplomacy in two. The celebrations of Ferdinando's great political and dynastic accomplishment went to the extremes of the mannerist

¹⁴⁷ The regulation is in ASF *Carte Stroziane*, series I, XII, ins. 29 and is published in the inventory: *Le carte strozziane del R. Archivio di Stato in Firenze*, Florence, 1884, vol. I, pp. 80–2.

¹⁴⁸ As regards Braudel's description of these jurist functionaries, considered as 'Colbert *ante litteram*', between loyalty to the sovereign and *raison d'état*, see Braudel, *Civiltà e imperi*, vol. II, p. 741.

¹⁴⁹ On Cosimo's and Ferdinando's differing styles of government see E. Fasano Guarini, 'Produzione di leggi e disciplinamento nella Toscana granducale tra Cinque e Seicento. Spunti di ricerca', in *Disciplina dell'anima, disciplina del corpo e disciplina della società tra medioevo ed età moderna*, conference proceedings (Bologna, 7–9 Oct. 1993), edited by P. Prodi, Bologna, 1994, pp. 659–90.

¹⁵⁰ Del Piazzo, *Gli ambasciatori toscani*, p. 67; R. Cantagalli, entry *s.v.* in *DBI*, vol. XI, Rome, 1969, pp. 673–4.

¹⁵¹ In 1600 agreement was reached on a dowry of 600,000 *scudi*, of which 350,000 in cash and the rest in credit: ASF, *Spogli della segreteria vecchia detti Spogli Rossi, Spoglio di carteggi e affari di Francia*, cc. 33 r and v.

phantasmagoria of the period,¹⁵² and they remained impressed on the memory of Paul Rubens, who some years later was commissioned by the French court to depict them in an extraordinary cycle of paintings now in the Louvre. This operation, too, demonstrated the expertise of the enterprising sovereign's secretary-councillors, who conducted the negotiations from the Florentine cabinet room, as well as the skill of his diplomatic representatives abroad.

However, apart from the shift of policy towards France, the chief breakthrough achieved by Ferdinando's diplomacy was the establishment of official diplomatic contacts with England.

Tuscany's failure to gain accreditation for a resident at the English court throughout the sixteenth century was indicative of how the close alliance between the Papacy and counter-reformationist Florence constantly precluded establishment of stable and internationally recognized relations with England. Moreover, then living in London were a number of Florentines linked with *fuoruscitismo* and therefore antagonistic to their homeland.¹⁵³ Yet events across the English Channel could not fail to interest the Medicean dynasty, which organized an efficient network of collaborators and informers in Florence's pay. Not only did 'avvisi' (reports) and 'nove' (news)¹⁵⁴ continue to roll into the offices of the Grand Duke,¹⁵⁵ but important contacts for the gathering and transmission of information were created with the untrustworthy but nevertheless useful Florentine bankers and merchants resident in London, who grew more and more sympathetic to the new Medicean regime. Indeed, at the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, they became the obligatory reference points for the Grand Duchy's envoys, even temporary, in England. Cases in point were Roberto Ridolfi (discussed below) and also the Tuscan 'gentlemen' bankers, Bartolomeo Corsini and Lorenzo and Iacopo Guicciardini.¹⁵⁶ Even more pervasive was the system of informers and

¹⁵² P. Marchi, 'Le feste fiorentine per le nozze di Maria de' Medici nell'anno 1600', in M. Gregori (ed.), *Rubens e Firenze*, Florence, 1983, pp. 85–101.

¹⁵³ Contarini wrote (*ibid.*, p. 289): 'With the Kingdom of England, owing to its distance, the Grand Duke has no commerce; indeed there still remain in that country those Florentines who, being unable to live in freedom, have not wished to be servants of their homeland and are therefore enemies of this government': *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti*, s. II, v. II: 'Relazione di Tommaso Contarini', p. 289.

¹⁵⁴ On the 'avvisi' and 'nove' as embryonic information systems see Preto, *I servizi segreti*, pp. 87ff.

¹⁵⁵ ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, 4185.

¹⁵⁶ On sending Montecuccoli to London in 1603 as ambassador extraordinary, Ferdinando I wrote in his instructions: 'On arriving in London you shall lodge at the house of Bartolomeo Corsini, a most esteemed Florentine gentleman . . . also in London will be a certain Jacopo Guicciardini, a Florentine gentleman, who has

undercover agents that Florence, like the other states, created in the luxuriant undergrowth of the world of the *'avventurieri'*. These men made their livings from a network of clientary relations that extended throughout Europe, hiring out their pens and their ears as they constantly sought a patron to serve or to betray.¹⁵⁷

At this point, mention should be made of further discontinuities between the reigns of Cosimo I and Francesco I, on the one hand, and the grand-ducal government of Ferdinando I on the other. Relations were certainly more difficult in the former period. In a Europe traversed by profound religious cleavages, the main policy instrument employed by the Papacy and the Counter-Reformation countries was not so much diplomacy as the indirect action of the Medicean informal 'secret services' in England. Accordingly, the activities of a man with such a distinctive personality as Roberto Ridolfi tells us a great deal about the enormous personal risks taken by those who committed themselves personally to the cause of Catholicism. After this Florentine aristocrat had created what was apparently an extremely successful banking business in London, he became the key figure in the Catholic resistance. Indeed, he accepted, under pressure by Cosimo I it seems,¹⁵⁸ the highly sensitive assignment as Pope Pius V's secret nuncio to London. Involved in the rebellion raised by the northern noblemen in 1569¹⁵⁹ and backed by the Catholic bloc (the Pope, Philip of Spain, the Duke of Alba, and probably Grand-Duke Cosimo), in 1570–1 Ridolfi masterminded the conspiracy (which took his name as the Ridolfi Plot) to depose Elizabeth and replace her with Mary, Queen of Scots.¹⁶⁰ Expelled from London after confiscation of his substantial assets, and welcomed with obvious munificence by Pius V, Ridolfi then joined the service of the Medici. Between 1575 and 1576 Francesco I used him as ambassador extraordinary in Spain and Portugal, where he pursued the delicate mission of persuading Philip to support Tuscany's claim to the grand-ducal title. By accomplishing his task with great poise and skill, during an extraordinary conjuncture which, as we have seen, mobilized the most

been there several times and received our grace and favour; and he, again, having been there many and many years, will be a goodly source of information': ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, 4186, cc. 39–40.

¹⁵⁷ On the 'hunger' for information of the sovereigns of the *ancien régime* see L. Bély, *Espions et ambassadeurs au temps de Louis XIV*, Paris, 1990, p. 14. For treatment of the theme in more recent studies, see A. Dewerpe, *Espion. Une anthropologie historique du secret d'état contemporain*, Paris, 1994.

¹⁵⁸ A. M. Crinò, 'Un altro memoriale inedito di Roberto Ridolfi', in Crinò, *Fatti e figure del Seicento Anglo-toscano*, Florence, 1958, pp. 67ff.

¹⁵⁹ Braudel, *Civiltà e imperi*, vol. II, pp. 1130–1.

¹⁶⁰ Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, p. 263.

talented exponents of Medicean diplomacy in every part of Europe, Ridolfi made a significant contribution to Tuscany's acquisition of the coveted title on 26 January 1576. Francesco's gratitude was immediate and unstinting: he rewarded Ridolfi with prestigious appointments and in 1600 granted him the title of senator. In the meantime, Ridolfi had also resumed his activities as a banker.

To return to relationships between Tuscany and England, one gains the distinct impression that after this period of extreme tension (the Ridolfi Plot and the direct involvement therein of the Medici demonstrate that conditions were still far from ripe for the establishment of more stable relations between the two countries), matters changed radically under Ferdinando I. In this case too, the resumption of wide-ranging diplomatic action by the Grand Duchy shows not only that Ferdinando had learned a great deal at the grand school of pontifical diplomacy during his long years in Rome as cardinal, but that he was cut from the same cloth as his father, both as a skilful interpreter of the dynamics of international diplomacy and as an able architect of the fortunes of his dynasty. Proof is provided by the accomplished manner in which he once again inextricably interwove the instruments of a now consolidated diplomacy with highly efficient secret channels.¹⁶¹ The crucial importance of this system of international espionage and counterespionage has been demonstrated by Fasano Guarini in her recent study on Ferdinando.¹⁶² After 1589, indeed, the Grand Duke assumed the difficult and important role of secret informer to Elizabeth on the movements of the Spanish fleet.

In a first phase, from the end of the 1580s onwards, Tuscany relied for its English information on the detailed reports on military and political affairs sent back by the anglicized Florentine Ubaldino Petrucci. 'A man of letters, a soldier, a courtier and a miniaturist of no little talent',¹⁶³ Petrucci was a member of the Italian expatriate community in London, and the composer of apologist tracts in defence of the Medicean dynasty which have apparently never been dignified by an appearance in print.

¹⁶¹ 'There was no Court or Ministry of princes at which the gold of Ferdinando had not managed to buy a domestic servant from whom to have the most secret reports, and the most recondite and interesting documents': Galluzzi, *Istoria*, vol. III, p. 261.

¹⁶² E. Fasano Guarini, 'Ferdinando I de' Medici', in *DBI*.

¹⁶³ G. Pellegrini, *Un fiorentino alla corte d'Inghilterra nel Cinquecento: Petruccio Ubaldini*, Turin, 1967, p. 9. For Petrucci's signed, or more often anonymous, correspondence from London see ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, 4185. His lengthy apologia for the Medici family, 'Discorso nella genealogia et discendenza della casa dei Medici et dell'attioni degli huomini illustri di quella, di Petruccio Ubaldino, cittadino fiorentino' is in ASF, *Miscellanea Medicea*, 145 (I am grateful to Silvia Baggio for helping me to find this manuscript).

Another personality acting as a conduit for information between England and Tuscany was Sir Anthony Standen,¹⁶⁴ an English Catholic of ambiguous loyalties and an 'adventurer' courtier by temperament. After he had worked in the service of Francesco de' Medici, Standen was secretly denounced to Ferdinando as a spy in the employ of Elizabeth when he returned to England in 1593. He was accordingly discarded for a number of years, to be then rehabilitated and frequently used thereafter. However, accreditation of a permanent Tuscan ambassador in England was principally due to the zeal and fine intelligence of Sir Henry Wotton.¹⁶⁵ Extremely well known at the time, Wotton was a gentleman of refined culture who corresponded with the foremost European intellectuals of the time and was also an accomplished diplomat. After the disgrace of the Earl of Essex, for whom he worked as secretary, in 1601 Wotton presented himself to Ferdinando I, who promptly dispatched him, with the pseudonym of Ottavio Baldi, to James VI of Scotland – shortly to succeed Elizabeth to the English throne – in order to inform him, in the name of the Grand Duke, of a plot against his life. Assiduously served on his highly sensitive mission by two secretaries from the Medicean cabinet, Marcello Accolti and Belisario Vinta, Wotton orchestrated informal diplomatic contacts between James and Florence which were decisive in the subsequent rapprochement between James's England and Ferdinando's Tuscany. As soon as the English throne changed hands on the death of Elizabeth in 1603, the sagacity of the first secretary Belisario Vinta enabled Florence to harvest all the fruits of the links cultivated with the English in previous years. On his reinstatement to Medicean service, Standen was sent to Rome to contrive a strategy with the Pope that would induce James to convert to Catholicism, and then travelled from Rome to London. Sent at the same time from Florence to England as ambassador extraordinary, and subsequently as resident, was Alfonso Montecuccoli. The doors of the English court thus opened to a man who epitomized the 'good' ambassador. The scion of a feudal family or *consorteria*, of Ghibelline and imperial tradition, with a marked military vocation,¹⁶⁶ Montecuccoli was appointed, as one reads in his instructions, by virtue of the 'prudent experience that besides your

¹⁶⁴ ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, 4185; on Standen see A. M. Crinò, 'Sir Anthony Standen ed i Granduchi di Toscana', in *Fatti e figure*, pp. 84–114.

¹⁶⁵ A. M. Crinò, 'Lettere autografe inedite di Sir Heny Wotton nell'Archivio di Stato di Firenze', in *Fatti e figure*, pp. 7–48.

¹⁶⁶ The family, which devoted itself to the imperial and Catholic cause against the Turks, later produced the celebrated Raimondo Montecuccoli: R. J. W. Evans, *Felix Austria, L'ascesa della monarchia asburgica: 1550–1700*, Bologna, 1981 (orig. edn Oxford, 1979), *passim*.

military profession you have of the actions of the world and of the courts of the Princes, and your knowledge of diverse languages'.¹⁶⁷ A man of outstanding qualities, therefore, Montecuccoli was secretly charged¹⁶⁸ with two tasks of great importance: first to ascertain whether James really intended to restore England's relations with Spain; second, more ambitiously, to arrange the marriage of a Medici princess with the king's son.

The English sovereign was therefore subjected to pressures which pushed in several directions. The principal aim was to engineer James' conversion to Catholicism by using the Stuart tradition and the declared Catholicism of his wife, Anne of Denmark, as leverage; pressure which sought forbearance, at least compared with Elizabeth's intransigence, in the treatment meted out to the English Catholics, so that 'to each [should be permitted] the use of his Religion'.¹⁶⁹ In his bid to act as mediator between London and the Pope, the Grand Duke was obviously playing for high stakes. The second aim, equally ambitious, was to have Tuscany included in the possible détente with Spain, for which purpose a twofold strategy was adopted: on the one hand, the resumption of astute diplomacy in the service of the European powers; on the other, recovery of the influence in Spanish relations that Tuscany had lost by shifting its interests to France. The third objective was to ratify this relaunching of the dynasty's role by means of a prestigious marriage into the English royal family.

The principal aim was not accomplished, given that James was entirely unwilling to convert to Catholicism, and the third one of dynastic elevation was thwarted by the death of the young prince. A crucially important outcome was nevertheless achieved: the creation in the following year of the official diplomatic link which finally united the London court and Florence. In the first half of the seventeenth century, with official relations now established thanks to the loyalty of men like Ottaviano Lotti, and especially of pro-Medicean exiles like the Antelminelli, it was possible to develop trade between the two distant countries, especially in view of the growing importance of the port of Livorno. These trade relations were subsequently strengthened by Lorenzo Magalotti during the reign of Cosimo III.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ ASF, *Mediceo del Principato*, 4186, c. 37 r. ff.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 'Istruzione segreta', c. 53ff.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*: 'Copia di lettere del Montecuccoli del 21 ottobre 1603 (da Winchester) fatte proseguire per Roma', c. 70 r.

¹⁷⁰ On Magalotti's journeys to England and his political initiatives during the reigns of Ferdinando II and Cosimo III see L. Magalotti, *Relazioni di viaggio in Inghilterra, Francia e Svezia*, edited by W. Moretti, Bari, 1968; L. Magalotti, *Relazioni d'Inghilterra 1668-1688*, edited by A. M. Crinò, Florence, 1972.

However, in the early decades of the seventeenth century, the role of Florentine diplomacy and its position in the European political system changed profoundly. Now that the dynasty was firmly established in a context very different from the precarious conditions in which Cosimo fought his battle against the mercantile oligarchy – an enemy effectively defeated by the new worldwide economic equilibria – the Grand Duchy's position too became firmly entrenched. As the Venetian ambassador Priuli remarked, the priority in 1566 had been to conserve, certainly not to expand.¹⁷¹ Tuscany's numerous defeats in the battles of precedence that dominated the middle decades of the sixteenth century in a Europe torn by the Thirty Years War were accompanied by the shift from diplomatic action as a weapon in the juridical and legal battle for affirmation and consolidation to a ramified system of information-gathering and interference in the economic and political machinery of other states – a transformation which was not surprising in a Europe now moving towards the assertion of mercantilist principles.

¹⁷¹ *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti* s. II, v. II, pp. 57–93: 'Relazione di Firenze del clarissimo M. Lorenzo Priuli (1566)', p. 78.

AN OUTLINE OF VATICAN DIPLOMACY IN THE EARLY MODERN AGE

LUCA RICCARDI

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, the question of the political representation of the Holy See has been a leitmotif of international affairs. But it was in the modern age that the diplomatic function acquired more definite form, structuring itself in accordance with the process of historical evolution that gave rise to homogeneous states organized on a dynastic-monarchical basis.

The question of pontifical representation had been current since the Middle Ages, and it began to grow urgent when the Papacy acquired territorial jurisdiction of its own.¹ Diplomatic representation therefore acquired the outward guise of the expression of sovereignty. The continuity that one discerns in the transition from the Middle Ages to the modern age is precisely this search by the Holy See, in a changing historical context, for legal and political instruments with which to assert its sovereignty by means of effective diplomacy. The creation of an organizational apparatus for this purpose was an essential part of the 'modernization' of the Holy See. It has been claimed, indeed, that 'as the modern State was being built, it permeated the Church and transformed even that nucleus of it deemed most impermeable, the Papacy'.²

Papal diplomacy, therefore, was a factor in the 'inadvertent' constitution of the modern state through the figure of the nuncio, who must therefore be viewed in relation to the complex passage from the medieval to the modern age. There is no doubt that the papal nuncios came to play an increasingly decisive role in the Holy See's relations with other states, and in political relationships in general, until the Treaty of

¹ Cf. I. Cardinale, *Le Saint-Siège et la diplomatie. Aperçu historique, juridique et pratique de la diplomatie pontificale*, Paris, 1962, p. 28.

² P. Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice. Un corpo e due anime: la monarchia papale nella prima età moderna*, Bologna, 1982, pp. 298 and 300.

Westphalia. But it is equally indubitable that they were part of a more general and evangelical endeavour by the Church to transform human society. Although their role and function changed as the decades passed, the nuncios continued to manifest the Holy See's commitment to the more efficient use of political instruments whose ultimate purpose was to establish a Christian society. Evidence of this is also provided by the influence that they exerted on the activities of national and local churches. The figure of the nuncio, therefore, encapsulates that 'modernization' of the Papacy's international relations evidenced by other highly innovative instruments such as the concordats and the institution of the *Segreteria di Stato* or State Secretariat.

In juridical terms, the legitimacy of the Holy See's diplomatic representation abroad was a matter of some controversy: not always was the Church recognized as possessing an international legal personality. The unfolding of events, and the Church's role in them, obliged the attribution of this capacity to the Church even though it was the outcome of an intricate historical process.³ For this reason, the present inquiry concentrates on the early modern age, since it was in this historical period that the political-organizational structure of papal diplomacy acquired its definitive form.

THE ORIGINS OF PAPAL DIPLOMACY

Since the origins of the Church, Popes had used their delegates to maintain contacts with ecclesiastical realities geographically distant from Rome. The purpose of this policy was to maintain the primacy of the Holy See as Christianity spread ever further afield and came increasingly under threat from centrifugal forces. From the fourth century onwards, the task of pursuing this policy was assigned to the Vicars Apostolic, whose activities continued until the ninth century. These were resident bishops who, as well as wielding their ordinary powers, were appointed as papal representatives and thus enjoyed a certain hierarchical superiority over the other bishops. Some scholars have compared their functions, in the broad sense, to those of the apostolic delegates of today.⁴ Their representation, therefore, was not temporal in character, but was intended primarily to maintain the spiritual supremacy of the Holy See over any other authority.

Beginning in the fifth century, moreover, the figure of the *Apocrisario* grew increasingly in importance. Originally a functionary sent by the

³ Cf. P. Brezzi, *La diplomazia pontificia*, Milan, 1942, p. 8.

⁴ Cardinale, *Le Saint-Siège*, p. 25.

Emperor to represent him in matters of vigilance and administration, the *Apocrisario* was adopted by the Church as well, which turned him into the representative of ecclesiastical authority to other civil or religious ones. The first Pontiff to make use of these intermediaries was Leo I (440–61), who sent Giuliano, bishop of Kos, to the Byzantine court in 453 in order to represent the Holy See's interests to Emperor Marcian, and especially to attend to matters concerning the faith and the spread of heresies.⁵ Thereafter, for almost three centuries, the figure of the *Apocrisario* assumed a relatively stable form and performed a function of great prestige. The *Apocrisario* sent to the imperial court was always a man of eminence and authority: those who served in the capacity included Pope Gregory I (590–604), who represented the Holy See in Constantinople from 579 to 586. Not only the Pope but numerous other incumbents of important bishoprics exercised their right to send an *Apocrisario* to the imperial court of Constantinople. Among those to do so were the patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem, as well as the titulars of such important sees as Thessalonica, Carthage and Ravenna. And it was customary for even the minor episcopates to send an *Apocrisario* to the metropolitan or patriarchal sees.

In the eighth century, when the Bishop of Rome became a sovereign exercising temporal power over a particular territory, the issue of pontifical representation acquired a more specifically political significance. And it was precisely the assumption of temporal power by the Pope that accounts for the political advance of the apostolic legate, an ecclesiastic who represented the Pontiff in exceptional circumstances, for example at diocesan councils and synods. Not infrequently, a papal legate was sent to other religious authorities: the *Apocrisario*, too, belonged to this category of ecclesiastical representative.

In the ninth century and thereafter, the Holy See's increasing concern to maintain close contacts with the states then emerging in the Christian West gave rise to the figure of the pontifical legate: an envoy with both civil and ecclesiastical powers of representation sent to foreign sovereigns and charged with special missions largely coincident with the interests of the Papacy. These legates therefore discharged important diplomatic functions and, depending on the nature of their mission, could be permanent or extraordinary. After the pontificate of Gregory VII (1073–85) the legates increased significantly in number and were also used to maintain close links with local ecclesiastical hierarchies. After the eleventh century, some of these legations acquired further prestige: indeed, various of them were assigned to cardinals.

⁵ A. Giobbio, *Lezioni di diplomazia pontificia*, Rome, 1899, vol. 1, pp. 262ff.

Known as *legati a latere* because they were directly accountable to the pontifical court, they were assigned missions of especial importance, and accordingly performed a decisive role in the Holy See's endeavour to regain its supremacy, not only in the spiritual sphere but in temporal matters as well.

Contemporaneously, the figure of the *legati nati* or *perpetui* – residential archbishops assigned special functions and rights – also grew in importance. Besides maintaining vigilance over ecclesiastical discipline and ensuring observance of the faith, these men were entitled to conduct inspections in the minor dioceses under their jurisdiction. The title was usually assigned to the *cathedra*, not to its incumbent, so that its renewal was not necessary whenever the bishop changed.⁶ Among the most important dioceses to which this right attached were Arles, Lyon, Canterbury, York, Tarragona, Seville, Toledo, Pisa, Prague, Graz, Trier and Salzburg. The mandate was mainly religious and doctrinal in nature; only rarely, in fact, did the Pontiff assign diplomatic posts to ecclesiastics, since these might have been biased towards the political authorities of the country in which they resided.⁷ Their role, therefore, was always restricted to the purely ecclesiastical sphere.

In contrast to the *legati nati*, the so-called *collettori* performed an eminently secular role as fiscal agents despatched by Rome to collect feudal benefits for the Apostolic Camera. However, they also increasingly carried out diplomatic functions, and as the Holy See's fiduciaries many of them were appointed to deal with more strictly political and diplomatic matters. They were of fundamental importance in the European territories more distant from Rome and consequently more difficult for the pontifical legates to reach. In those areas the *collettori* represented not only the fiscal but also the political interests of the Holy See, and in many cases they can be regarded as the precursors of the nuncios. In due course their diplomatic attributes – always closely circumscribed and temporary – were absorbed by the nuncios, and by the sixteenth century, the figure of the *collettore* had entirely disappeared.⁸

THE MODERN AGE

'It is impossible', Fisher wrote, 'to define with a single date the division between the medieval and the modern world. The transformation came about gradually and unevenly.'⁹ Cialdea apparently concurs: 'the prota-

⁶ Cardinale, *Le Saint-Siège*, p. 27.

⁷ Brezzi, *La diplomazia pontificia*, p. 11.

⁸ Cardinale, *Le Saint-Siège*, p. 29.

⁹ H. A. L. Fisher, *Storia d'Europa*, Bari, 1951, vol. II, p. 3.

gonists on the European stage in the last decade of the fifteenth century were to various extents still encamped on the frontier between the feudal political system and the monarchical system then undergoing the difficult process of formation'.¹⁰ And it was during this slow modernization of society and political institutions that the figure of the apostolic nuncio grew in importance. The modern age was marked by the progressive strengthening of the state and its functions: consequently, from the second half of the fifteenth century onwards, governments found it necessary to establish stable diplomatic relations that would guarantee less haphazard contacts than those which had characterized the Middle Ages. It was developments in the international situation at the end of the fifteenth century, therefore, that induced the Holy See to create the permanent nunciatures¹¹ which soon became such a distinctive feature of its diplomatic action, and whose institution reflected Rome's need to interact with the other states in a manner that ensured her continuing centrality in European diplomatic affairs.

By the mid-fifteenth century numerous foreign powers had installed permanent representatives at the court of Rome. Yet it was not this circumstance that led to the growth of the *collettori* system into a veritable apparatus of diplomatic representation; rather, it was the overall political system, and especially the growing diplomatic importance of the Papacy at the end of the fifteenth century, that did so.¹²

Among the first countries to receive official envoys from the Holy See was the Spain of Ferdinand of Castile and Isabella of Aragon, which, in 1492, accepted the mission of don Francisco des Prats in his capacity as *collettore* and nuncio. And in 1486 the Republic of Venice, too, was one of the first powers to accept a permanent embassy of the Holy See on its territory, followed by France in the early years of the sixteenth century – although the Popes had been sending *nuncii et oratores* to the Paris court since the middle of the fifteenth century. Common to these various missions were their distinctive characteristics of stability and diplomatic significance.¹³

Nevertheless, the nuncios differed profoundly from other diplomats. They were usually high-ranking ecclesiastics – on occasion they might be laymen, even humanists¹⁴ – but they were always endowed with a

¹⁰ B. Cialdea, 'Le relazioni internazionali europee dal 1492 al 1700', in *Nuove Questioni di Storia Moderna*, Milan, 1972, vol. 1, p. 472.

¹¹ Cardinale, *Le Saint-Siège*, p. 29.

¹² Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice*, p. 301.

¹³ For detailed treatment see P. Richard, 'Origines des nonciatures permanentes. La Représentation pontificale au XVII^e siècle (1450–1513)', *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique*, 7 (1906), pp. 52–70 and 317–38.

¹⁴ On humanism in late medieval Italy see the competent summary by F. Braudel,

representative status greatly superior to that of diplomats with mere 'worldly' powers. The nuncio exerted considerable authority also over the church of the country in which he was accredited. His status as representative, in fact, did not derive solely from the sovereign of a state, for it had also been granted by the head of the Church. Consequently, as the representative of a spiritual power the nuncio was wholly distinct from the other members of the diplomatic corps.

From the point of view of international relations, therefore, the nuncio's mission was invariably twofold in its purpose. As representative of the interests of a state his role certainly had a marked political connotation, but this was always intermingled with equally marked religious and spiritual aspects. Accordingly, one may say that the figure of the nuncio was still inspired by the doctrine of the 'two swords' – the one spiritual, the other temporal – that had dominated papal politics since the thirteenth century.¹⁵ Traces of this mixture still persist in the contemporary age, despite the progressive separation of spiritual from political matters and the definitive decline of Rome's temporal power.

The nuncio was therefore the 'quotidian artificer' of relationships between the Papacy and the sovereign at whose court he served.¹⁶ And this was a radical change in the structure of the Church, which found itself forced to adapt to the new geopolitical situation taking shape in the Europe of the early modern age.

The pontificate of Leo X de' Medici (1513–21) coincided with the definitive development of the nunciature system in parallel with the fragmentation of European religious unity and the spread of the Lutheran heresy in Germany. Biaudet has identified some of the principal reasons why permanent diplomacy acquired such decisive importance during Leo X's pontificate.¹⁷ The main reason, as said, was the spread of Lutheranism in Germany, but other dangers to the Church derived from the religious struggles in the France of Francis I. These several pressures confronted the Church with the problem of increasing its prestige both in the spiritual sphere and in international political relations: diplomacy thus became the crucial means with which to achieve this objective.

In 1513, at the beginning of Leo X's pontificate, it was decided to establish a nunciature at the court of the Emperor. The man chosen for

'L'Italia fuori d'Italia. Due secoli e tre Italie', in R. Romano and C. Vivanti (eds.), *Storia d'Italia*, vol. II: *Dalla caduta dell'impero romano al secolo XVIII*, Turin, 1974, pp. 2119–24.

¹⁵ For an outline see R. Graham, *Vatican Diplomacy*, Princeton, 1959, p. 158.

¹⁶ Cf. Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice*, p. 309.

¹⁷ H. Biaudet, *Les Nonciatures apostoliques permanentes jusqu'en 1648*, Helsinki, 1910.

the post, Lorenzo Campeggi, was the first to be invested with a role that would develop into one the most important and enduring of all in Vatican diplomacy. The nunciature at the imperial court was established permanently by Pius IV in 1559 – the year of the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis – and Stanislaw Osio, Bishop of Warmia, was appointed as its head.¹⁸ A permanent nunciature was instituted in Paris during the pontificate of Leo X.

The events of the sixteenth century compelled the Catholic Church to equip itself with an diplomatic service of increasing efficiency. The twofold threat to the Catholic world raised by Protestantism in central-western Europe and by Islam in the Mediterranean basin required the Church not only to entrench its position on doctrinal matters but also to create a new political structure which adhered more closely to the logic of a state: an innovation which was to have profound repercussions on subsequent history.¹⁹

The Reformation and the Council of Trent, in fact, required radical changes to be made to the functions performed by the nuncios, then engaged in strenuous defence of all the Church's interests, and its spiritual and religious interests especially. There is no doubt, however, that this was an extremely difficult period for papal diplomacy. Cardinale has shown the extent to which the breakdown of unity in the Christian world restricted the sphere of the Holy See's religious and diplomatic relations.²⁰ Nonetheless, although the role of the nuncio was still imprecise, it was enhanced by these events.

The Pope who most fully grasped the need to create a permanent diplomatic structure was Gregory XIII (1572–85). By overcoming the hesitancy that had marked the decisions taken by the Popes of the Council of Trent regarding the Holy See's diplomatic apparatus, Gregory rapidly stabilized the Vatican's 'foreign' service. During his pontificate, the permanent nunciatures acquired definitive form and their number was increased to thirteen: in France, Spain, Portugal, Flanders, Switzerland, Poland, Savoy, Venice, Florence and Naples, to which were added the 'German' seats of the Empire, Cologne and Graz. Thereafter the Holy See established permanent diplomatic channels with all the great powers of the time. Apropos the choice of seats for permanent nunciatures, the importance attributed to the states in the Italian peninsula should also be stressed, for it confirmed that the Pope now felt that, among his various functions, he should also act as an Italian sovereign.

¹⁸ Brezzi, *La diplomazia pontificia*, p. 14.

²⁰ Cardinale, *Le Saint-Siège*, p. 31.

¹⁹ Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice*, p. 300.

The reform of the Holy See's diplomatic structure during Gregory's pontificate also brought about significant change in the hierarchy of the officials that served in it. The status of 'legate' was attributed to the cardinals assigned special missions by the Pope. The nuncio, instead, became the Pope's permanent representative at the court of the Emperor, or at those of other Princes of the Blood. The 'internuncio'²¹ was also a permanent representative, but he was sent to governments of lesser importance, and the mission heads were invested with episcopal dignity.²² Pontifical diplomacy, therefore, was gradually shaped in accordance with the system of power relations that emerged during the sixteenth century: the Papacy took cognizance of the new European situation and acted accordingly. Thus a permanent diplomatic channel was established with the imperial court, as well as stable contacts with the other 'Catholic' seats. The Peace of Augsburg of 1595, which marked the affirmation of the principle of *cuius regio eius et religio*, was also a first step towards the definitive curbing of papal interference in the religious affairs of the European states. This profound change in the general political context affected, therefore, the modes and the forms of papal diplomacy.²³

And yet the essential structure of Vatican diplomacy had by now been assembled. The organizational model that arose in the sixteenth century would remain substantially unchanged until the Restoration. And nor did any radical shift occur in the Vatican's policies, which constantly rotated around the problem of preserving its central role in politics and doctrine while combating Islam and Protestantism. However, the sixteenth century also saw profound change in the relationships among the European states: the notion of a 'respublica Christiana' gave way to that of a continent made up of diverse national entities whose interests were closely bound up with those of the other members of the international community.²⁴

²¹ The internunciature was a function which became a definitive part of pontifical diplomacy at the end of the nineteenth century.

²² Cardinale, *Le Saint-Siège*, p. 32.

²³ On relationships between the State and the Church more generally, see L. Spinelli, *Lo Stato e la Chiesa. Venti secoli di relazioni*, Turin, 1987. For an interesting discussion of the Church's relationships with the Italian states see F. Ruffini, *Relazioni tra Stato e Chiesa*, Bologna, 1974.

²⁴ S. Giaccio, 'Le origini delle nunziature permanenti', degree thesis in *Storia dei rapporti tra Stato e Chiesa*, Dipartimento di Studi Politici, Facoltà di Scienze Politiche, Università 'La Sapienza', Rome, 1992.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE *SEGRETARIA DI STATO* AND THE
CONCORDAT SYSTEM

By the seventeenth century the network of apostolic nunciatures had grown considerably in complexity. Whereas the man appointed to carry out the diplomatic mission had previously enjoyed high status, the diplomatic corps now became increasingly 'bureaucratized'. Distinct career paths were created which took account of both the envoy's experience and the seat to which he was to be sent.²⁵ A 'typical' career moved through five stages (*abbreviatore, segretario, referendario, protonotario, uditore*)²⁶ which preceded appointment as nuncio to a seat deemed of minor importance and eventually to one of high status. The 'bureaucratization' of the diplomatic career also eliminated the practice of changing all the nuncios whenever the Pope died, and this gave greater stability to the diplomatic apparatus. More than the personal representatives of the Pope, the apostolic nuncios gradually became the envoys of a member state of the European community.

The increased functions of the nuncios required profound alterations in the central structure of Vatican diplomacy. Initially it was the Pope himself who issued instructions to the nuncios through his secretariat.²⁷ The pontificate of Clement VIII Aldobrandini (1592–1605) was marked by the full-blown development of the central diplomatic functions of the Holy See. Clement, who had served as nuncio in Poland in 1588–9, immediately set about reorganizing the Vatican's diplomatic operations. His experience in such matters prompted him to create an office to coordinate the nuncios and transmit their orders, an office which was soon transformed into the vital centre of the Holy See's diplomacy and politics.²⁸ The creation of the pontifical *Segreteria di Stato*, however, should also be set in relation to the general growth of European diplomatic activity in the years at the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, and also to the use of diplomatic channels as instruments of diplomacy and information transmission.²⁹

Clement's reform also created a figure who would be of central importance throughout the Vatican's subsequent history: the Cardinal Secretary of State. This post resulted from the fusion between the various officials who worked in the Pope's special secretariat – overseen

²⁵ Brezzi, *La diplomazia pontificia*, p. 16.

²⁶ As indicated in *ibid.* For a survey of careers in pontifical diplomacy of the contemporary age see E. Serra, *Manuale di storia dei trattati e di diplomazia*, Milan, 1980, pp. 309–17; see also P. Fantò, *Una diplomazia per la Chiesa nel mondo*, Rome, 1990.

²⁷ Brezzi, *La diplomazia pontificia*, p. 23.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Cialdea, 'Le relazioni internazionali', p. 484.

by the 'domestic' secretary – with the *cardinale nepote*³⁰ to whom Popes had initially assigned responsibility for the conduct of relations with other states. The Cardinal Secretary of State rapidly became the head of the papal diplomatic service and therefore also acted as official interpreter of the Pope's position on a wide variety of questions. It must be stressed that the Cardinal Secretary of State has been influential in the contemporary age as well, and that he has always imparted that 'authenticity' which every other Vatican source, apart from the Pope himself, has lacked.

The 'modernization' of Vatican diplomacy did not concern organizational and functional aspects alone. From the mid-fifteenth century onwards, there emerged a new model of the Holy See's relations with other states based on an innovative juridical instrument that had profound political implications: the concordat.³¹ This was an almost entirely new means with which to manage relations between State and Church, and it radically altered the manner in which the Holy See conducted its international policy.

The first concordat to which historians customarily refer was the Worms Concordat of 1122, which resolved the conflict between the Church and the Empire over the question of investitures. The fifteenth century saw the formation of a new political culture regarding the function of the State which induced the Church to resort to this form of covenanted pact. Its introduction, as Prodi notes, 'was connected to the new political dimension of the Papacy and was never substantially superseded; it was only directed and adjusted by the new course that began with the Council of Trent, which did nothing to negate this previous process'.³²

The concordat, therefore, is an element of continuity which breached the confines of the modern age to persist until the contemporary period. However, as regards the concordats of the contemporary age, one should bear in mind Giannini's assertion that 'the concordats are the most evident and apparent, if not most profound, expression of the Holy See's international policy'.³³

³⁰ P. Prodi, 'Il "Sovrano Pontefice"', in *Storia d'Italia, Annali*, vol. ix: G. Chittolini and G. Miccioli (eds.), *La Chiesa e il potere politico*, Turin, 1986, p. 209. He was denominated thus because the Pontiff usually relied on members of his family to deal with matters of such sensitivity. On this see also Brezzi, *La diplomazia pontificia*, p. 23.

³¹ Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice*, p. 301.

³² *Ibid.* Prodi points out that, together with the concordat system, the nunciatures were the other factor affecting the political behaviour of the Church.

³³ Cf. 'Introduction' to A. Giannini, 'I Concordati postbellici', in *Vita e Pensiero*, Milan, 1929, p. 7.

After the middle years of the fifteenth century, moreover, the new attributes and powers acquired by the secular states in ecclesiastical matters forced the Holy See to alter the bases of its traditional political action.³⁴ The concordats, Prodi writes, were 'the price paid by the papacy for its victory over the conciliar movement'.³⁵ But even more important was the general change that it heralded. The ideological interpretation given to these covenants was that they involved concessions made by the Pope to sovereigns. In reality, the concordat was the outcome of transformation ongoing in the structure itself of the Holy See's policy, which increasingly tended to model the forms and methods of its diplomatic action on those of the secular principalities.

The concordats stipulated by Eugenius IV with the German princes in the last year of his pontificate, in 1447, and by Nicholas V with the Emperor in 1448, were indicative of this change. By means of these bilateral pacts, the Holy See created a new source of law which closely resembled the treaties governing normal political relations between two sovereign states. In this sense the shift in the political stance of the Holy See appears even more radical: the institution of the concordats, in fact, initiated a laicization process and itself participated in the transformation of the state during the early modern age. If the Vatican's concordat-based policy was one of the cardinal factors in its secularization, this latter process was also matched by what we may call the 'sacralization' of the secular state, which came increasingly to assume functions in ecclesiastical matters which had hitherto been precluded.³⁶

Of notable importance in this regard was the concordat stipulated between Leo X and Francis I in 1516. Under this agreement, the Holy See, fortified by its *plenitudo potestatis*, conceded to the French sovereign the right to appoint bishops, abbots and priors, retaining only the faculty to ratify such appointments.³⁷ The 1516 concordat, therefore, well exemplifies the political and diplomatic development of the Holy See during a period in which, faced with the ecclesiastical policy pursued by the Catholic states, 'the post-Tridentine papacy was unable to resist and reverse the by now prevalent tendency towards the secularization of the Church'.³⁸

We may therefore say that papal diplomacy – as the channel for the

³⁴ Cf. Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice*, p. 302.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

³⁶ On this see *ibid.*, pp. 303–6.

³⁷ For a description of the episcopacy prior to the Counter-Reformation see A. Prosperi, 'La figura del vescovo fra Quattro e Cinquecento: persistenze, disagi, novità', in Chittolini and Miccioli (eds.), *La Chiesa e il potere politico*, pp. 219–62.

³⁸ P. Prodi, 'Riforma Cattolica e Controriforma', in *Nuove Questioni di Storia Moderna*, Milan, 1972, vol. 1, p. 400.

Vatican's international representation – was also the instrument by which it regulated relationships between political power and the churches of individual states. The concordat was therefore also the product of the progressive affirmation of the 'twofold figure'³⁹ of the Pope as he acted simultaneously as head of the universal Church and sovereign of an Italian state. In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, this latter role increased in importance. The Church State became the principal source of fiscal revenues, and its politico-diplomatic character inevitably influenced the ecclesiastical issues addressed by the Holy See in its relationships with the other states.⁴⁰ Here too, one discerns the progressive secularization of the Holy See's international stance.

CONCLUSIONS

The Peace of Westphalia of 1648 marked the onset of profound change in papal diplomacy. Thereafter, in fact, one notes a crystallization of the norms and behaviours evidenced by the papal envoys.⁴¹ The continuity of its organizational structure aside, the Holy See was obliged to absorb the changes imposed by the new European order. One of the major political outcomes of the Peace of Westphalia, in fact, was the resolution of religious conflicts. And when this circumstance was confirmed by the Peace of Augsburg, the terms of which extended to include Calvinism as well, the Vatican definitively renounced its endeavour to restore religious unity to Europe. Debate on the importance of this treaty still continues: there are those who contend that it was a turning point in modern history; others restrict its effects to Germany alone.⁴² As far as papal diplomacy is concerned, however, the Peace of Augsburg inevitably reduced its political influence. As Prodi has written on subsequent Vatican policy:

Papal diplomacy failed to identify itself with the position of the Empire, not least because, at bottom, it was still based on a logic whereby the independence of the Papal State and the problem of Italian equilibrium exerted considerable weight with respect to more properly ecclesiastical concerns.⁴³

The international order established by the Peace of Westphalia

³⁹ The definition is Prodi's, in *Il sovrano pontefice*, p. 306.

⁴⁰ Prodi, 'Riforma Cattolica', p. 402.

⁴¹ Brezzi, *La diplomazia ponteficia*, p. 15.

⁴² On this see Cialdea, 'Le relazioni internazionali', especially pp. 504–5.

⁴³ Prodi, *Il sovrano pontefice*, pp. 320–1.

marked the definitive decline of the incidence of the religious factor in European politics. As Cialdea has put it:

Catholic, Protestant and Calvinist states accepted each other's presence; and although religious movements did not entirely disappear from international relations, both in Germany and the rest of Europe Westphalia secularized relationships among the member states of the Empire, and as a result – to quote Guizot – European politics were laicized. In fact, the members of the Empire committed themselves to resolving their controversies and to reacting against transgressors of the imperial Constitution 'without distinction of religion'.⁴⁴

This situation forced papal diplomacy to adapt increasingly to the 'classical' canons of European diplomacy, copying methods, forms and practices from the secular diplomatic services.⁴⁵ The papal foreign service still preserved a number of distinctive features, however, notably the distinction between nunciatures of first and second class. Belonging to the first category were the nunciatures at the great Catholic powers: a nuncio who had served his mission to one such government was usually appointed cardinal on its conclusion. These governments, however, had the right to be informed of the envoy's name in advance, and to express their prior approval of the appointment.⁴⁶ This aspect, too, is indicative of the growing independence of individual states from the Holy See, as far as eminently political and temporal matters were concerned.⁴⁷

Serving internally to the papal diplomatic corps, however, were nuncios and secretaries of state of considerable political skill and acumen.⁴⁸ Among the former, mention should be made of several envoys to the Venice nunciature: Niccolò Franco, the first permanent nuncio in Venice; Altobello Averoldi, who headed the nunciature after a 'holiday' of more than three years from 1514 to 1517; Tommaso Campeggi, Averoldi's successor, who successfully handled numerous ecclesiastical questions; Gerolamo Aleandro,⁴⁹ who was particularly active in the suppression of heresy. But mention should also be made of Moroni, who attended the Council of Trent, Guido Bentivoglio, nuncio to Flanders, Carlo Carafa, and Fabio Chigi, who

⁴⁴ Cialdea, 'Le relazioni internazionali', pp. 502–3.

⁴⁵ Graham, *Vatican Diplomacy*, pp. 119–20. ⁴⁶ *Ibid.* ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

⁴⁸ On this see Biaudet, *Les Nunciatures apostoliques*. For the period following the Peace of Westphalia see L. Kartunen, 'Les Nonciatures apostoliques permanentes de 1650 à 1800', *Annales de l'Académie Scientifique*, Geneva, 1912; see also P. Richard, 'Le Secrétaire d'Etat apostolique', *Revue d'Histoire Ecclesiastique*, 9 (1910).

⁴⁹ On Aleandro see F. Gaeta, *Un nunzio pontificio a Venezia nel Cinquecento, Gerolamo Aleandro*, Rome and Venice, 1960.

later became Pope with the name of Alexander VII.⁵⁰ Brezzi has described their activities thus:

The nuncios attended to everything, they made provision for everything: in their correspondence with Rome they described the geographical, historical, political, economic and social conditions of the country, they reported on intrigues at court, they sketched pen-portraits of important personages, they repeated what they had heard or been told, they sent home the most important publications that came to their attention.⁵¹

Nor should we forget the work performed by the local church, relationships with bishops and clergy, and relations between these and the political power.

There thus emerges the picture of a complex function produced by a political society now severing its ties with medieval traditions and customs. The nuncio, and the development of permanent papal diplomacy, are among the most evident outcomes of the 'modernization' of the Church, and a clear demonstration of its ability to respond to the demands and challenges of history.

⁵⁰ This information is taken from Brezzi, *La diplomazia pontificia*, p. 19.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF THE CRISIS OF VENETIAN DIPLOMACY IN THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

ANDREA ZANNINI

Although the last work specifically devoted to the history of Venetian diplomacy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries dates back more than half a century, the topic is one that has never ceased to interest scholars of the Republic of San Marco. Indeed, various passages in recent works reveal renewed interest in a subject once reserved for specialists in diplomacy or in the history of international relations and today more closely studied by students of the social history of the institutions.

As Willy Andreas framed the question in the late 1930s, the evolution of Venetian diplomacy in its last two centuries of life was 'mechanically' correlated with the political decline of the Republic in Europe. This was a thesis that, although incontrovertible, risked simplifying every change in the diplomatic apparatus by compressing its significance.¹ Some years prior to Andreas, in one of the few comparative studies of the diplomacy of the Italian states of the modern age, Carlo Morandi had advanced a similar argument by including Venice among the states either engaged in strenuous defence of their status or entering irremediable decline. And it was a perspective adopted shortly afterwards by Ruggero Moscati: although in the context of the progressive loss of vitality by the diplomacy of San Marco, Moscati did not report the presence of any exterior symptom of decay but instead discerned 'numerous flashes' which lit up its twilight years.² In recent decades the theme of decadence as the only key to the interpretation of Venetian politics and society in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been superseded

¹ W. Andreas, 'Die Spätzeit der venezianischen Diplomatie', *Die Welt als Geschichte*, 5 (1939), pp. 1-24.

² C. Morandi, 'La diplomazia europea e italiana tra il Seicento e il Settecento', in *Relazioni di ambasciatori sabaudi genovesi e veneti durante il periodo della grande alleanza e della successione di Spagna (1693-1713)*, Bologna, 1935, pp. xi-xx; R. Moscati, 'Le relazioni venete del secolo xvii', in *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al Senato. Serie III (secolo XVIII). Francia*, Milan, 1943, pp. xi-xviii.

– a development which has made it possible to focus on numerous aspects of diplomatic practice that were previously neglected, and the importance of which emerges clearly from the more than one hundred entries devoted to Venetian diplomats in the first volumes of the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*.

Among the various themes addressed by this historical inquiry, the one that has attracted the closest scholarly attention is the reports submitted to the Senate by diplomats on their recall to Venice. If more than a century ago Arnand Baschet dispelled the aura of historical objectivity constructed around them by Leopold von Ranke, their ‘titantic sponsor’,³ the value and significance of the Venetian diplomatic reports have today been enriched by new interpretative insights and nuances. These were ‘historical essays’, as the historian Marco Foscarini suggested in the mid-eighteenth century, literary descriptions of distant courts and exotic countries to be theatrically declaimed, documents ‘with a high degree of sophistication’ in which a declining patriciate celebrated itself, texts with which to prepare for a diplomatic career, and tests for the career advancement of diplomats.⁴

However, the final report was only one aspect – often, as has been pointed out, not a particularly revealing one – of the activity of the Venetian representatives: that is to say, of men who, although the political area occupied by the Venetian Republic did not in practice allow them to stand as a model for the diplomacies of Europe as they had done previously, were nevertheless the repositories of a solid and acknowledged tradition which continued to nourish the myth of Venice and of the efficiency of her institutions.

Other aspects mistakenly regarded as of secondary importance have received less attention. And it is these that are analysed in this essay, which examines Venetian diplomacy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a branch of the civil service; certainly an original branch, if nothing else because it was constantly involved abroad in the ‘great village’⁵ of international diplomacy but nonetheless was always part of a

³ G. Benzoni, ‘A proposito della fonte prediletta di Ranke, ossia le relazioni degli ambasciatori veneziani’, *Studi Veneziani*, 16 (1988), p. 248. For a critique, in some respects rather superficial, of seventeenth-century relations see C. H. Carter, ‘The Ambassadors of Early Modern Europe: Patterns of Diplomatic Representation in the Early Seventeenth Century’, in C. H. Carter (ed.), *From the Renaissance to the Counter-Reformation. Essays in Honour of Garret Mattingly*, London, 1969, pp. 278–80.

⁴ A. Baschet, *La Diplomatie vénitienne. Les Princes de l’Europe au XVII^e siècle*, Paris, 1862, pp. 26–7, 35; F. Gaeta, ‘Introduction’ to *Relations des ambassadeurs vénitiens*, Paris, 1969, pp. v–xx; A. Ventura, ‘Introduzione’ to *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al Senato*, Bari, 1976, vol. 1, pp. vi–cxxxix; Benzoni, ‘A proposito della fonte’, p. 256.

⁵ R. B. Mowat, *A History of European Diplomacy*, London, 1928, p. 3.

broad and structured bureaucratic apparatus. In this regard, the essay analyses the changes that took place in the career profile of the noble-born diplomat, the increasingly severe problem of legation expenses and the interaction between a 'government diplomacy' which recruited from the ranks of the nobility and a 'service diplomacy' which instead employed members of the secretarial corps, the criteria for whose recruitment and training had specific characteristics.

If we adopt the diametrically opposite view and regard seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Venetian diplomacy as the continuation of a Renaissance tradition in a more restricted political context, the diplomatic apparatus of *la Serenissima* may instead be seen as moving in the contrary direction, namely in that of expansion. According to Stefano Andretta, faced with the crisis of its foreign policy from the second half of the sixteenth century onwards, the Venetian state reacted by 'producing an elephantiasis of its diplomatic apparatus, occupying itself punctiliously, even obsessively, with events that did not necessarily directly concern it. The strengthening of the diplomatic network proportionally to the crisis assumed a markedly Europeanized dimension.'⁶

A survey of Venice's network of stable diplomatic representation may help to clarify whether – at least in terms of the quantity of ambassadorial seats established – her political and diplomatic effort diminished, or whether it did not. Venice's maximum diplomatic presence lasted from the first to the eighth decade of the seventeenth century. Although in this period Venice had already determined her international policy to be the outright defence of her domains, she still had to deal with severe politico-military crises in the early decades of the century and, from the mid-1600s onwards, the exhausting as well as futile military defence of the island of Crete. In these seventy-five years the Venetian diplomatic service occupied, at various times, thirteen stable legations. Of these six were located in the peninsula (Florence, Mantua, Milan, Naples, Rome, Turin) and seven abroad (Constantinople, London, Madrid, Paris, as well as the various seats of the imperial court, of the republics of the United Provinces and of the Swiss Confederation).⁷ With the odd exception, the Republic sent to these legations a patrician

⁶ S. Andretta, "Rivoluzioni e commotioni", "cabale e arcani". La crisi della "simmetria d'Europa" nei resoconti diplomatici veneti in Francia durante la fronda parlamentare', *Dimensioni e Problemi della Ricerca Storica*, 1 (1989), p. 265.

⁷ N. Barozzi and G. Berchet (eds.), *Relazioni degli Stati europei lette al Senato dagli ambasciatori veneti nel secolo decimosettimo*, vol. XI, Venice, 1956–78; Ministero dell'Interno – Archivio di Stato di Venezia, *Dispacci degli ambasciatori al Senato. Indice*, Rome, 1959; L. Firpo (ed.), *Relazioni di ambasciatori veneti al Senato. Tratte dalle migliori edizioni disponibili e ordinate cronologicamente*, vol. XII, Turin, 1965–84.

ambassador ordinary who was charged with routine duties of representation and information, or else it sent a 'resident', whose practical functions were equivalent to those of a patrician representative but who gave a less prominent profile to the legation because he had been recruited from the secretarial corps. The aristocratic government customarily used this system for most of its Italian legations, but occasionally also for those abroad, and not only ones of lesser importance. For some months between the spring and autumn of 1642, ambassadors were replaced by residents or secretaries in fully nine legations, including those in Constantinople, at the imperial court and at the Holy See, while patrician ambassadors were installed only in three capital cities: London, Paris and Madrid. Although this was certainly an exceptional occurrence, it is nevertheless indicative of how in government of the state, and in diplomatic practice, the Venetian patriciate had to entrust tasks which involved more than simple junior duties to men from classes other than the aristocracy.

Beginning in the 1680s, following shifts in the European balance of power, Venice's diplomatic network effectively shrank. The exchange of representatives with the Grand Duchy of Tuscany ceased, as it had already done some time previously with Mantua. Venice's perennially difficult relations with the House of Savoy became critical and entered a long period of coolness, and her highest-level relations with the United Provinces and the Swiss Confederation were only sporadic. There were eight traditional legations for the pursuit of Venetian diplomacy in the eighteenth century – Constantinople, London, Madrid, Milan, Naples, Paris, Rome and Vienna – to which were added Turin in 1741, and St Petersburg, where the Republic kept a permanent representative, though in a particular capacity, in 1782.

This rapid survey confirms that greater caution is required when considering seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Venetian diplomacy solely in the light of the Republic's political decline. The decision to formalize relationships among states by means of stable representation was, in fact, not taken for political-military reasons alone. It was frequently prompted by religious conflicts, as in the case of relationships with England, by commercial interests, such as those that led to the creation of the Russian embassy, or by complex issues which we today call 'formal' but which instead involved substantial problems, such as the disputes that disrupted relationships between Venice and Piedmont.⁸

⁸ For England cf. Barozzi and Berchet, *Relazioni*, series IV, vol. 1, Venice, 1863, pp. iv–xi; L. Firpo, 'La relazione inedita di Alvise Mocenigo sull'Inghilterra (1706)', *Atti dell'Accademia delle Scienze di Torino*, 99 (1964–5), pp. 489–563; Firpo, *Relazioni*, vol. 1, Turin, 1965; S. Carbone, *Note introduttive ai dispacci al Senato dei rappresentanti*

Secondly, various commentators have argued that Venice's neutralist stance in the context of continental Europe, and her concomitant loss of political clout, led not so much to her withdrawal from institutional obligations as, on the contrary, to greater zeal in confronting the international situation – from which the ever-weakening Republic had much more to fear than previously.⁹

Corresponding to this continuing activity of diplomatic information-gathering was a political policy of almost constant defence, since all available energy was devoted to maintaining a position of strenuous neutrality. The Venetian diplomats – no longer negotiators but now only informers¹⁰ – were observers, as vigilant as they were ineffectual, of a reality in which *la Serenissima* by now exerted very little influence.

But who were the diplomats appointed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to represent the Republic? And what alterations were made to the criteria that regulated their recruitment and cultural and political training in this age of change?

A distinctive feature of the Venetian institutional system was that diplomatic appointments were, from various points of view, regarded as equal to the other public offices of government, and these had been the exclusive preserve of members of the nobility since the fourteenth century.¹¹ Because of the republican character of the constitution, all

diplomatici veneti. Serie: Costantinopoli, Firenze, Inghilterra, Pietroburgo, Rome, 1974, pp. 63–80; L. Firpo, *Ambasciatori veneti in Inghilterra*, Turin, 1978. For Turin: Barozzi and Berchet, *Relazioni*, series III, vol. I, Venice, 1862, pp. iii–vii; Firpo, *Relazioni*, vol. XI, Turin, 1983. For St Petersburg: C. Malagola, *L'istituzione della rappresentanza diplomatica di Venezia alla corte di Pietroburgo e una relazione sulla marina russa sotto Caterina II*, Venice, 1906; Carbone, *Note introduttive*, pp. 81–5; G. Bonfiglio Dosio, 'Introduzione' to G. Penzo Doria (ed.), *Dispacci da Pietroburgo di Ferigo Foscari*, 1783–90, Venice, 1993, pp. ix–xxiv.

⁹ G. Stiffoni, 'Diplomazia ed "opinione pubblica" veneziane di fronte ad una crisi dell'assolutismo riformatore: le rivolte di Madrid e province del 1766', *Nuova Rivista Storica*, 66 (1982), pp. 511–46; D. Caccamo, 'Introduzione' to *Il carteggio di Giovanni Tiepolo ambasciatore veneto in Polonia (1645–1647)*, Milan, 1984, pp. 37–8; G. Stiffoni, 'Per una storia dei rapporti diplomatici tra Venezia e la Spagna nel Settecento', *Rassegna Iberistica*, 27 (1986), pp. 3–30; G. Benzoni, 'I papi e la "corte di Roma" visti dagli ambasciatori veneziani', in *Venezia e la Roma dei Papi*, Milan, 1987, pp. 75–104; G. Scarabello, "'L'ottantanove" francese visto dalla diplomazia veneziana', in R. Zorzi (ed.), *L'eredità dell'Ottantanove e l'Italia*, Venice and Florence, 1992, pp. 291–306; D. Caccamo, 'Sui documenti diplomatici veneziani e sulle loro edizioni', *Clio*, 29 (1993), pp. 145–59.

¹⁰ M. Berengo, 'Il problema politico-sociale di Venezia e della sua Terraferma', in V. Branca (ed.), *Storia della civiltà veneziana*, vol. III: *Dall'età barocca all'età contemporanea*, Florence, 1979, p. 153.

¹¹ A Segarizzi (ed.), *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al Senato*, Bari, 1912, p. 281; M. F. Tiepolo, 'Presentazione' to *Aspetti e momenti della diplomazia veneziana*, catalogue for

nobles enjoyed equal status and could aspire – provided they fulfilled certain requirements such as a minimum age for the highest posts – to any office. This important institutional feature, together with the fact that the aristocratic class sought to prevent explicit positions of power from forming internally to itself, brought about an extremely precocious depersonalization of public appointments which was evident, from the late Middle Ages, in the diplomatic service as well. And this depersonalization was accentuated by the fact that, for diplomatic appointments too, crucial matters such as the minimum duration of the legation, the time permitted to accept an appointment and to arrange departure, the sanctions to be applied in case of refusal, the rules governing the keeping of accounts and the payment of fees, were not only established by law but, even more importantly, fixed according to the appointment and not according to the person selected to fill it.¹²

Moreover, the delicate position of Venetian ambassador was assigned, like any other patriciate office, by means of a complex electoral procedure which took place in the Senate, the second city council in terms of the number of its participants.

Nevertheless the legislation did not envisage any precise *cursus honorum*, and although, as said, everyone was in theory eligible for any post, because of the elasticity with which the severe electoral rules were applied and above all because of the practice of ‘steering’ elections, it was possible for a young diplomat to carve out a career which matched his aspirations and capacities as long as he was occasionally willing to accept irksome or undesired appointments. If a young nobleman decided, with his family’s consent, to set off on ‘the road of the embassies’, provided he possessed a good basic education – a quality which in the great majority of cases was closely associated with the family’s wealth and honour and therefore with the electoral support of a certain

the exhibition of documents from the Archivio di Stato di Venezia, 26 June–26 Sept. 1982, Venice, 1982.

¹² For medieval legislation see Tiepolo, *Aspetti e momenti*; D. E. Queller, *Early Venetian Legislation on Ambassadors*, Geneva, 1966; Queller, ‘Newly Discovered Early Venetian Legislation on Ambassadors’, in D. E. Queller and F. R. Swietek, *Two Studies on Venetian Government*, Geneva, 1977, pp. 7–98. Apart from G. Mattingly’s classic *Renaissance Diplomacy*, London, 1973 (3rd edn), similar aspects of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italian diplomacy are examined in: J. R. Hale, ‘Diplomazia e guerra in Occidente’, in *Storia del mondo moderno*, vol. 1: *Il Rinascimento (1493–1520)*, Milan, 1967 (Cambridge, 1964); G. Soldi Rondinini, ‘Ambasciatori e ambascerie al tempo di Filippo Maria Visconti (1412–1426)’, *Nuova Rivista Storica*, 49 (1965), pp. 313–44; R. Fubini, ‘Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia nella Firenze quattrocentesca’, in *I ceti dirigenti nella Toscana del Quattrocento*, Florence, 1987, pp. 117–89; F. Leverotti, *Diplomazia e governo del stato. I ‘famigli cavalcanti’ di Francesco Sforza (1450–1466)*, Pisa, 1992.

number of nobles – and if he indicated that he was interested in a post and suitable for it, he usually managed to obtain an appointment to an embassy ordinary in a reasonable number of years, and not infrequently at the residence that he deemed most useful for his career.

A short paper written by a sixteenth-century ambassador, one of the few writings on the diplomatic profession by a member of the patriciate, provides us with interesting information on the matter.¹³ As well as the commonplace of a ‘pleasing and manly bearing’, which is to be found in all contemporary treatises, the author lists the qualities required of those undertaking the ‘road of the embassies’: a predilection for study, the ‘honest’ virtues, an honoured and illustrious father, and two further requirements which should be interpreted in the light of the Venetian electoral system: the possession of numerous relatives and of ‘very close friends’. But the ‘best strategy’ was to earn the esteem of ‘those with authority’, and this could only be done by demonstrating oneself ‘practised in matters of State’ and well versed in international affairs. Such knowledge was to be acquired by cultivating acquaintance with members of the government, diplomats and even foreigners, although the laws restricted contacts between nobles and foreign ‘gentlemen’.

As in the case of the other European diplomatic services, one cannot speak of a diplomatic ‘career’ in the strict sense with regard to the Venetian service. With the exception of a few full-time diplomats, even those noblemen who committed themselves most wholeheartedly to diplomacy alternated long years of service abroad with periods spent at home when they were called upon to serve in the principal organs of government and to work in the Republic’s various administrative, financial and judicial bodies, and also, if need be, in its fiscal and military services. This accorded with the spirit of the patrician constitution, which held that a nobleman should be accomplished in several fields, and need not necessarily be narrowly specialized in one.

The importance of having a diplomatic appointment on their professional *curriculum vitae* was nevertheless recognized by those who aspired to the highest offices of government. And it is an element to be borne in mind when considering certain diplomatic career paths which, for ease of comparison, we may take to be typical of the sixteenth century – although many of their features are apparent in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as well.

With a certain amount of simplification, it is possible to identify four of these career paths. The first was reserved for the offspring of noble families, which enjoyed greater wealth, ancient traditions of service and

¹³ *Delle qualità di un veneto ambasciatore. Scritto inedito di Michele Suriano, Venice, 1856.*

great influence in the government. These noble houses generally adopted a distinctive family strategy, both in planning descendance and in dividing duties among the members of the same generation. One son would be appointed to attend to the economic interests of the 'house'; another would be sent into public service, which rarely yielded an income; while the son who perhaps showed some special talent, and with brothers willing to finance him, was launched on a diplomatic career. Why were the most prestigious families willing to commit a son to this demanding vocation? Because the 'road of the embassies' allowed rapid career advancement up to the highest level, and because assuming the burden of one or more legations gave public distinction to the house. Both these aspects brought prestige and power, and it was the pursuit of them that chiefly motivated the illustrious houses.

After a sound classical education which included the study of Latin, and sometimes also Greek, of philosophy and rhetoric, but which did not necessarily conclude with a university degree, these young men completed their preparation abroad. They often joined the entourage of a relative in charge of an embassy, or they could act as ambassadors extraordinary accompanying an experienced *oratore* or envoy on a 'ceremonial' mission (*missione di complimento*), one, that is, which did not involve political duties and which familiarized them with the world of the courts. In the meantime the young diplomat would also have entered the arena of Venetian politics, carrying out simple duties in order to learn the mores of the *palazzo*. He would on occasion be deputed to receive foreign personages and diplomats in order to learn the complex rules of court etiquette.

In the sixteenth century, those with good educations and powerful backers began their careers proper at about the age of thirty-five, and therefore after two decades of preparation. In that turbulent century almost none of the residencies occupied by nobles can be considered as of secondary rank and therefore they all provided useful experience in the running of a legation (when they were instituted, it was the Italian residencies that performed this function). However, there is no doubt that throughout the century the legation to the Holy See and, with different characteristics, that to Constantinople were the crowning achievements of a diplomatic career. According to repeated dispositions, legations could not last for less than two years,¹⁴ so that, with the outward and homeward journey and the time spent waiting for a replacement to arrive, the average duration of a legation outside Italy amounted to around three years. On his return to Venice, the ambassador was often

¹⁴ Segarizzi, (ed.) *Relazioni*, pp. 282-3.

elected to a post of responsibility in the city or its dominions. In short, he entered the inner circle of Venetian politics, and when the occasion arose he was chosen for a new and permanent ambassadorship. Thus, in this first career profile, it not infrequently happened that the fifteen or twenty years of a man's greatest physical vigour were spent almost entirely in service abroad. If he had fulfilled what was expected of him, as he approached his sixtieth birthday, the now expert diplomat became a permanent fixture in the highest echelons of government, except when he was sent on temporary missions '*di complimento*' or was called upon to join the more demanding and onerous legations '*di negozio*' (negotiation) when political or military crises required his expertise. In these cases it was deemed preferable to send a diplomat who had already served as an ambassador ordinary to a court, for obvious reasons of custom and experience.

The Republic had no qualms about demanding exhausting journeys of even its most elderly diplomats. An emblematic case was the appointment, in 1539, of the *oratore* to negotiate a peace settlement with the Turks. The choice fell upon the eighty-five-year-old Pietro Zen, the age's outstanding expert on the Levant. But he succumbed to the rigours of the journey and died before completing it, in Sarajevo. The Republic evidently did not reconsider its criterion of choice, for Zen was replaced by the veteran *bailo* (as the Venetian ambassadors in Constantinople were known) Tommaso Contarini, who at the sprightly age of eighty-four successfully completed the mission and on his return to Venice continued to be active in politics for a further ten years.¹⁵

Other patricians from the wealthiest houses did not base their *cursus honorum* on the 'road of the embassies', and their career strategies gave substantially different significance to obtaining a permanent ambassadorship. These men were more interested in civic appointments, or at any rate in the administration of Venice's dominions. Appointment to an ambassadorship in their case came at a slightly later age, usually when the man was in his forties, and it opened the door to the highest offices of government on his return. A second posting as an ambassador did not invariably follow; if it did, the man's 'diplomatic career' lasted for not

¹⁵ R. Derosas, 'Tommaso Contarini', entry in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani (DBI)*, vol. xxviii, Rome, 1983, pp. 295–300; C. Coco and F. Manzonetto, *Baili veneziani alla Sublime Porta. Storia e caratteristiche dell'ambasciata veneta a Costantinopoli*, Venice, undated, pp. 33–4. The episode is mentioned in A. de Wicquefort, *L'Ambassadeur et ses fonctions*, Cologne, 1715, vol. 1, p. 102. On this topic see R. Finlay, 'The Venetian Republic as a Gerontocracy: Age and Politics in the Renaissance', *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 8 (1978), pp. 157–78.

more than around ten years, save subsequent secondment on extraordinary missions.

A third career path was followed by the sons of wealthy but not illustrious families. The careers of these patricians typically advanced through a series of appointments in the city government, interspersed with duties outside Venice. In this case too, an ambassadorship – as an alternative to a senior rectorship on *terraferma* – was an obligatory step towards the highest dignity, and not infrequently the destination was chosen with care, following the inexorable arithmetic of economic costs and returns in terms of prestige. Appointments as ambassador extraordinary rarely followed.

The fourth career path was still sharply distinct from the others in the sixteenth century. It involved one very particular diplomatic posting: to Constantinople, an ambassadorship whose characteristics and responsibilities marked it out from all the others. Because of the unusual conditions of Constantinople, and because of the peculiar nature of relations between the Venetian Republic and the Ottoman Empire, those preferred for the job of *bailo* – as the only diplomatic post which could bring economic benefits to its incumbent – were patricians who had spent decades in the merchant galleys or the navy, rather than those who had prepared themselves first with bookish study, and then in the affairs of court. In the course of the sixteenth century only very rarely was the Constantinople residence assigned to diplomats who had completed the customary round of legations; and these were almost always men of outstanding political influence sent to Constantinople either to deal with specific matters or to be rewarded for an onerous career in service of the Republic. The choice thus frequently fell upon nobles aged fifty, sixty or even older. Although this was to be their first diplomatic experience, they would acquire it on those shores of the eastern Mediterranean where they had already spent several decades of their lives.

The four broad career paths described above underwent quite substantial changes in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The first element to change was an underlying trend which then became increasingly overt, and to which it is difficult to give precise periodization. I refer to the decline in the number of noble houses willing or able to sustain the considerable expense of a diplomatic career. Since the problem of legation expenses was extremely complex, it is not possible to say to what extent this decline was due to a general decrease in the wealth of the patriciate (which indubitably occurred) or to an increase in the embassy costs sustained directly by the incumbent (which equally indubitably occurred).

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries this phenomenon combined with growth in the number of permanent residencies occupied by nobles – which between 1560 and 1640 was invariably between six and seven – and fell back to five midway through the century. The financial commitment entailed by just one extra embassy to cover, together with the dwindling numbers of diplomats from non-illustrious families willing to assume the burden of even one legation for their career purposes at home, had as its consequence the greater specialization and more complex structuring of the diplomatic career. In the seventeenth century, the average age at which a diplomat obtained his first permanent ambassadorship fell by several years, and not infrequently men younger than thirty were appointed. However, this apparently did not affect the average level of preparation of the Venetian diplomats. As Wicquefort stressed – when he pointed out that ‘le jugement se forme à Venise plus tôt qu’ailleurs et . . . d’ordinaire on y est plus sage à trente ans qu’ailleurs à cinquante’¹⁶ – the ease with which younger men were instructed in political affairs enabled those who wished to undertake the road of the embassies to prepare themselves well in advance.

It should also be emphasized that if the political situation was poised to degenerate into crisis, the Republic hastened to flank the ambassador ordinary with an extraordinary legation consisting of more expert patri-cians. The promising thirty-four-year-old, Leonardo Donà, a future doge, *oratore* to Philip II in the years following the Battle of Lepanto, limited himself to recording the progress of the Holy League’s negotiations conducted in Rome by the most important representatives of the powers concerned. And in any case, expert diplomats – Antonio Tiepolo first, and Giovanni Soranzo later – were sent to help him at more difficult junctures.¹⁷

As the number of Venetian embassies increased, and as a certain political equilibrium based on unequal power relations established itself among the European states, distinct differences emerged among the embassies, and something akin to a diplomatic *cursus honorum* began to take shape. The least prestigious embassies were those of London and Turin, when the Republic had permanent representatives in these capitals in the first half of the seventeenth century, although the subsequent decline of the Spanish monarchy meant that the Madrid embassy became the most frequent posting for young Venetian diplomats in the

¹⁶ Wicquefort, *L’Ambassadeur*, vol. I, p. 101.

¹⁷ F. Braudel, ‘Avant-propos’ to M. Brunetti and E. Vitale (eds.), *La corrispondenza da Madrid dell’ambasciatore Leonardo Donà (1570–1573)*, Venice and Rome, 1963, p. xxvii.

second half of the century. The Paris and imperial legations continued to enjoy higher status, mainly because of the formal complexity of the relationships that they handled. But the most prestigious embassy was still the Holy See, which for *la Serenissima*, and especially after her fierce conflict with the Papacy in the early 1600s, occupied a place of an outstanding importance, requiring an extremely refined diplomatic sensibility if a path was to be cut through the labyrinthine meanderings of Vatican politics.¹⁸

Apparently still distinct, at least until the beginning of the eighteenth century and the end of the War of Morea, was the Ottoman legation, to which men with seafaring experience continued to be sent – although theirs was expertise gained more in naval warfare than in maritime trade, which the nobility had by now largely abandoned.

In the eighteenth century, the reservoir from which the patrician diplomats were recruited continued to shrink, and diplomatic careers grew increasingly structured. A factor in this trend, as an anonymous seventeenth-century commentator observed, was the sale of the prestigious title of *procuratore di San Marco* during the wars in the Levant; bids were submitted by the richest families, and since the title expressly ruled out diplomatic appointments, several potential ambassadors eluded this onerous eventuality.¹⁹ The stabilization of the five seats allocated to noble ambassadors (Constantinople, Madrid, Paris, Rome, Vienna), and an increasingly evident politico-economic hierarchy internally to the patriciate – whereby diplomatic posts became the almost exclusive reserve of the wealthiest families – helped to raise the average age at which young noblemen obtained their first important appointments.²⁰ The circuit of embassies assumed an increasingly regular pattern: first Spain, then France or Germany, finally Rome, a hierarchy established

¹⁸ Baschet, *La Diplomatie*, p. 164; Benzoni, 'I papi e la "corte di Roma"': Benzoni, "Dipingere i personaggi". I ritratti nelle relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti', *Eidos*, 9 (1991), pp. 69–77.

¹⁹ 'Della Repubblica Veneta', p. 356, published in P. Molmenti, *Curiosità di storia veneziana*, Bologna, 1919, pp. 359–438 with the title 'Relazione dell'anonimo', on which see P. Del Negro, 'Il patriziato veneziano al calcolatore. Appunti in margine a "Venise au siècle des lumières" di Jean Georgelin', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 92 (1981), p. 839, note 6.

²⁰ The assertion by Segarizzi (ed.), *Relazioni*, p. 282, and also by C. Antoniadis, *Les Ambassadeurs de Venise au XVII^e siècle*, Madrid, 1984, p. 8, that a law passed in 1640 fixed the minimum age for ambassadors at thirty-eight, is erroneous. This deliberation – Archivio di Stato di Venezia (ASV), *Maggior Consiglio, Deliberazioni*, reg. 39, cc. 43v–4r, 19 March 1640 – instead set the minimum age for entry to the *Collegio* and to the *Consiglio dei Dieci* by appointees to embassies at two years less than that stipulated. It does not appear, in fact, that Venice ever fixed a minimum age for diplomatic appointments.

more by criteria of prestige, etiquette and finance than by strictly political considerations.

The changed significance of the *bailato* was evident. With the Ottoman Empire no longer a threat, Venice began to send to Constantinople ambassadors at the end of their careers and who needed to restore their depleted family fortunes, and in some cases noblemen who had pursued routine administrative careers in Venice: '[The appointment] is given to recoup the expenditure sustained in the other embassies, or to give help to some noble house in straitened circumstances', observed the patrician Zuan Antonio Muazzo as early as the second half of the seventeenth century.²¹

A phenomenon which became apparent in other eighteenth-century diplomatic services as well, and which has been cited in evidence of the declining importance of Venetian diplomacy, was the growing number of noblemen who refused ambassadorial appointments.²² That from the seventeenth century onwards it became necessary to resort to an increasing number of elections in order to fill public posts outside Venice is a fact that has also been substantiated numerically. And it was not rare for legations to apply years in advance for a nobleman willing to shoulder the financial burden of running them.²³ Although in the last years of the Republic the practice of gaining exemption from the more onerous offices grew more common, the phenomenon should be regarded as exclusive to the eighteenth century alone. Indeed an array of late-medieval laws and cases have been cited to show that the Venetian patriciate behaved much more selfishly than the Renaissance myth of Venice and her perfect government would have us believe.²⁴

A possible key to interpretation of the matter is provided by the biography of a diplomat who lived between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Daniele III Dolfin, the descendant of an illustrious and wealthy family. Having climbed the usual ladder of a civic career, by the age of forty Dolfin had moved into a position of importance. He then contrived on several occasions to avoid appointment as ambassador to the imperial court, for which he was deemed most suitable, by

²¹ Z. A. Muazzo, *Historia del governo antico, e presente della Repubblica di Venetia*, in Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana (BNM), *Manoscritti Italiani*, cl. vii, 966 (8406), p. 130.

²² Andreas, 'Die Spätzeit', pp. 21–2; J. C. Davis, *The Decline of the Venetian Nobility as a Ruling Class*, Baltimore, 1962, pp. 86–8; V. Vitale, *La diplomazia genovese*, Milan, 1941, pp. 16–20.

²³ L. Megna, 'Riflessi pubblici della crisi del patriziato veneziano nel XVIII secolo: il problema delle elezioni ai reggimenti', in G. Cozzi (ed.), *Stato, società e giustizia nella Repubblica veneta (sec. XV–XVIII)*, Rome, 1985, vol. II, pp. 253–99.

²⁴ D. E. Queller, *Il patriziato veneziano. La realtà contro il mito*, Rome, 1987 (Urbana and Chicago, 1986), pp. 203–300.

adducing the financial outlay that the post would require of him and by pleading the responsibilities placed upon him by his ten children. However, in 1702, at the age of forty-eight, on his fourth election Dolfin was compelled to accept and thus began a long series of postings outside Venice: a second ambassadorship, extraordinary, in Vienna, a similar mission in Poland, prolonged appointments on *terraferma*, and then, at the age of seventy-one, the arduous assignment of Constantinople, where he died, but not before arranging that, should his lineage cease, his estate would be used to extinguish Venice's public debt.²⁵

Dolfin's vicissitudes – he certainly cannot be accused of scant public spiritedness or of possessing an inadequate sense of state – and his repeated rejection of his first diplomatic appointment testify that the Venetian nobility had grown increasingly reluctant to undertake a generic political career in which they would perforce have to submit to the demands of the Republic. They now adopted a circumspect and much more selective view of the politico-administrative profession, assessing different offices with greater care and not infrequently rejecting certain of them if necessary. In the specific case of Dolfin, it seems clear that he hoped to pursue a satisfactorily dignified career while avoiding the onus of the embassies – or at least assignment to the Habsburg court, which was regarded as the most financially burdensome. However, when Dolfin realized that it was precisely this that the patriciate expected of someone with his abilities and means, and that further refusal would damage his prestige, he accepted.

As said, this increased preoccupation with the financially onerous nature of many appointments, especially diplomatic ones, stemmed from the reduced financial means of the patriciate. But it also attests to the fact that the offices of government were no longer regarded solely as gratuitous services to be financed out of the incumbent's family fortune, but as a public function which should be adequately remunerated. One discerns, albeit amid numerous contradictions, the fading of the patrimonial conception of the state and of politics, and the advent of the new figure of the public functionary.

Given these various changes, one is prompted to ask whether the cultural preparation of the young men launched on diplomatic careers did not also assume a different form. In a study of Venice's perception of the Ottoman Empire, Luciette Valensi has pointed out that, during the period when Venetian diplomacy was at its zenith, its ambassadors stood

²⁵ M. Zorzi, 'Daniele Dolfin, 3^o ambasciatore in Polonia', *Ateneo Veneto*, 20 (1982), pp. 267–303; G. Benzoni, 'Daniel Dolfin', entry in *DBI*, vol. 40, Rome, 1991, pp. 473–9.

at the locus at which three different spaces intersected: humanism, political action and empirical observation.²⁶ With the demise in the late sixteenth century of Venetian humanism, there was a concomitant decline in the number of young men entering the diplomatic service after a suitable period of study and direct acquaintance with letters or philosophy. Although their educations were still based on the classics, they were only propaedeutic to empirical experience, since the egocentric patrician mentality held that only the latter could prepare a man for the affairs of state.²⁷ Incisive – as were for that matter all his writings, which in the second half of the seventeenth century definitively dispelled the Renaissance myth of Venice – was the comment by the Orléans *polygraphe* Amelot de la Houssaie: the whole science of the Venetians ‘consiste à connoître le dedans’; they are almost all ignorant of foreign affairs and read only those books which deal with their homeland and their customs. This is illustrated by the episode of the senator who, on finding his son engrossed in a history of France, tore it from his hands exclaiming: ‘Dolt, read the things of your Republic, and nothing else.’²⁸ In similar vein are the remarks made by the patrician Leopoldo Curti, who in his *Memorie storiche e politiche* (edited in 1792 and published in Paris), harshly criticized the education of the young Venetian noblemen as generic and inadequate, especially in the study of foreign languages.²⁹

Although amplified by acrimony, the judgments of these two critics of the Republic encapsulate a feature invariably reflected in the tone of many eighteenth-century diplomatic papers, ‘saturated with a lagunar bias’,³⁰ self-congratulatory monuments of a patriciate loath to forgo its narcissism.

As Paolo Prodi observed while commenting on a passage in Garret Mattingly’s celebrated book, when studying the problem of the costs of diplomacy it is all too easy to indulge in generic considerations – or, I would add, lapse into futile anecdote which fails to capture the overall nature of the problem.³¹ Examination of this aspect of diplomacy, in

²⁶ L. Valensi, *Venezia e la sublime porta. La nascita del despota*, Bologna, 1987 (Paris, 1987), pp. 25–8.

²⁷ On the education of the Italian aristocracy see G. P. Brizzi, *La formazione della classe dirigente nel Sei-Settecento*, Bologna, 1976; cf. also C. Bechu-Benzet, ‘La formation d’un ambassadeur au XVIII^e siècle: Vergennes’, *Revue d’Histoire Diplomatique*, 101 (1987), pp. 193–219.

²⁸ Amelot de la Houssaie, *Histoire du gouvernement de Venise*, Paris, 1676, vol. II, pp. 224–5.

²⁹ L. Curti, *Memoires historiques et politiques*, Paris, 1802, vol. I, p. 223.

³⁰ Benzoni, ‘A proposito’, p. 256.

³¹ P. Prodi, *Diplomazia del Cinquecento. Istituzioni e prassi*, Bologna, 1963, ch. 8.

fact, highlights all the difficulties that arise when we study the economic history of the bureaucratic apparatuses of the modern age, complicated by the fact that the diplomats carried out their activities in an economic arena other than that in which they earned their salaries. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although a diplomacy based on stable embassies had by now become the rule, there still remained, masked by established custom, forms of remuneration based on the medieval practice whereby the embassies expenses were paid by the host country. In 1466, Venice decided to put an end to this practice by forbidding diplomats from receiving donations of any kind.³² But since it was the usual custom for an ambassador leaving a court to be offered a gift, the ban was changed into the obligation to present this gift to the Senate, which then usually returned it to the diplomat.

This gift, which was almost always a jewel, proved to be an object of considerable value in the case of ceremonial ambassadorships. On these missions, which were usually conducted amid great pomp, the *oratore* frequently also received sums of money; or alternatively the entire sojourn of both himself and his entourage would be paid for by the host. This explains why these legations were often joined by young nobles bent on acquiring experience, and also why they often turned into prolonged and pleasurable holidays for the entire company. For instance, around twenty young gentlemen, some of them from *terraferma*, accompanied the four ambassadors sent to Rome to congratulate Sixtus V on his ascent to the papal throne in 1585.³³ Indeed, in order to transport the legation which in 1581 attended the circumcision of Mehemet, son of the sultan Amurat, it was necessary to fit out two entire ships.³⁴

The remuneration of foreign ambassadors sometimes took other forms: for example, the entitlement to include a certain quantity of duty-free goods in the diplomatic bag. The Venetian ambassador in Spain, for instance, had since antiquity enjoyed the right to import wine: an entitlement subsequently converted into a monthly allowance of ninety *doblas* and which remained in force until 1714.³⁵

As Martin Lunitz has recently pointed out regarding the imperial legations of the sixteenth century,³⁶ a second distinctive feature of the

³² Queller, *Early Venetian*, p. 22.

³³ F. Pigafetta, *Descrizione della comitiva e pompa con cui andò e fu ricevuta l'ambasceria dei veneziani al Pontefice Sisto V, l'anno MDLXXXV*, edited by G. Da Schio, Padua, 1854, p. 8.

³⁴ E. Albèri (ed.), *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al Senato*, series III, vol. III, Florence, 1855, pp. 211–13.

³⁵ Barozzi and Berchet (eds.), *Relazioni*, series I, *Spagna*, vol. I, Venice, 1856.

³⁶ M. Lunitz, 'Diplomaten im 16. Jahrhundert. Zum Problem der Finanzierung stän-

financing system of modern diplomacy was the practice of making emoluments proportional to the duration of the legation, a criterion which replaced the traditional custom of remunerating the ambassador with a lump-sum payment. Examination of how the fee system of the Venetian diplomatic service, which did not substantially differ from those of other countries, changed in the course of three centuries may help to illustrate this process.

Broadly speaking, the various types of ambassadorial emolument can be grouped under four headings: the stipend, general expenses 'to set oneself in order' (*per mettersi in ordine*), a *donativo* or special gift, and extraordinary expenses.

As said, the stipend for each ambassadorial seat had been fixed by law earlier in Venice than in other states, and by the sixteenth century it was already calculated on a monthly basis in most cases. Several decades usually passed between one increase in the salary and the next. But income was adjusted to take account of inflation and the increasing cost of running the embassies by acting on the other items in the ambassador's budget – these being more flexible and decided *ad personam* – rather than on the salary, since this, because it was paid monthly, proved more intractable.³⁷ However, despite its apparently static nature, the stipend was much more frequently increased than one might suppose. Ambassadors, residents and secretaries frequently petitioned for exemption from some tax or other, or to have their stipends – which the law stipulated must be expressed in a money of account – paid at a higher rate than usual.³⁸ One should not be misled, therefore, by the long persistence of the same nominal values: covert bargaining (or bargaining unreported in the source material) enabled satisfactory accommodations to be reached.

The grant paid to the ambassador so that he could 'set himself in order' was necessitated by the considerable expense of the outward journey, which might last for several months, and during which various emergencies might arise. It should be borne in mind that the ambassador's so-called '*famiglia*' – that is, his employees and assistants – were all paid out of his own pocket, except, usually, for his secretary. Hence maintenance of the ambassador's *famiglia* as he journeyed to his new

diger Gesandtschaften am Beispiel der Botschafter Kaiser Karls V in Frankreich und England', *Mitteilungen des österreichischen Staatsarchivs*, 40 (1987), pp. 1–26.

³⁷ B. Pullan, 'The Occupations and Investments of the Venetian Nobility in the Middle and Late Sixteenth Century', in J. R. Hale (ed.), *Renaissance Venice*, London, 1973, pp. 379–408, 396–7.

³⁸ A collection of laws on this matter is contained in ASV, *Savi sopra conti*, *Capitolari*, bb. 1 and 2.

appointment, or when he was obliged to follow the court on its occasional peregrinations, required efficient organization and careful budgeting. This is well described in a long memorandum on the principal aspects of the ambassadorial office written to his son by Marin Cavalli, one of the most celebrated diplomats of the sixteenth century.³⁹

The Venetian administration tended to divide the grant 'to set oneself in order' into a set of specific and more easily checkable items: one of which was a contribution to the cost of mounts, another for the purchase of blankets and strong-boxes. In addition, a certain number of monthly salary instalments were paid for the journey, which, according to a law passed in 1678, ranged from fifteen days for the residencies of Milan and Florence to six months for those of Madrid and London.⁴⁰ The same system was adopted for the *donativo* and for extraordinary expenses. At the end of the seventeenth century it was decided to disburse a substantial sum to those who departed within six months of accepting their appointment, and a further contribution was paid to those obliged to remain at their embassies for more than the scheduled two years.⁴¹ However, by 1609 extraordinary expenses had been drastically reduced, by fixing a sum for the despatch of special couriers and by establishing a maximum monthly amount, for which adequate documentation had to be produced. In 1693 restrictions were also imposed on the 'campaign stipend', which could now only be granted in the case of a visit made by the sovereign to the army or to the frontiers.⁴²

The long and carefully itemized law of 1733, which definitively regulated these matters, was the outcome of the process described above and the natural consequence of the progressive specialization of the diplomatic office. For each embassy, the various items that made up its budget – around a dozen of them altogether – were calibrated to the needs of the legation and to the importance attached to it, according to the traditional hierarchy adopted in Western diplomacy throughout its history. The total amount (considering the lump-sum payments for the entire mission and only four months of stipend and monthly instalments) was more than 20,000 ducats for the Vatican embassy, 15,000 for Vienna, and 11,500 ducats for Madrid and Paris. It then diminished substantially, to 5,600 ducats for Milan, 4,150 ducats for Naples, while it was even more exiguous, 3,300 ducats, for the London residence, which was the furthest away but evidently con-

³⁹ *Informatione dell'offitio dell'ambasciatore di Marino de Cavalli il Vecchio*, MDL, edited by T. Bertelè, Florence, 1935.

⁴⁰ ASV, *Savi sopra conti, Capitolari*, b. 1, law Senate 27 April 1678, *sub data*.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, law Senate 13 Dec. 1691, *sub data*.

⁴² *Ibid.*, law Senate 28 July 1609 and 19 Sept. 1693, *sub data*.

sidered the least important.⁴³ Embassies extraordinary were not subject to particular constraints. Their remuneration was decided in accordance with tradition, but they always required considerable financial outlay by their incumbents, irrespective of whether they were ceremonial legations, which required exceptional display, or whether they were missions '*di negozio*', for which extremely expensive extraordinary couriers had to be used.⁴⁴ A sixteenth-century example illustrates this difference well. The ambassador extraordinary in England was assigned a *donativo* of 1,500 gold ducats and a monthly stipend of 600 gold ducats; his ordinary colleague received 1,000 in *donativo* and 200 per month. Remuneration for a resident instead amounted to a *donativo* of 430 ducats (not gold, and therefore worth less) and a stipend of 160 ducats, while the legation secretary received 100 ducats annually.⁴⁵ If this is considered jointly with the acts of generosity that accompanied these missions, one understands the reason for such differences: the mission extraordinary represented a sort of 'delayed career bonus' awarded to diplomats after a certain number of years of ordinary legations; and it acted as an incentive for the most expert specialists on foreign politics to accept exhausting, difficult and sometimes dangerous missions. It was, in short, the most cost-effective way to administer the resources allocated to diplomacy, rewarding those who chose to sacrifice themselves for the good of the Republic and fortunate enough to survive to an age at which they could be recompensed for an onerous career.

Various sources agree that appointments as *bailo* to Constantinople also came to display this pattern over time. The rules regulating the office's economic aspects were always negotiated separately from other diplomatic postings, since *la Sublima Porta* was a legation with specific characteristics to do with the hybrid nature of the office – half gubernatorial and half diplomatic – and because of the peculiar nature of Venice's relations with Constantinople.⁴⁶

⁴³ *Ibid.*, b. 2, *Scrittura dei Deputati ed aggiunti alla provision del denaro pubblico*, 14 Aug. 1733, *sub data*. One notes with interest that at the end of the seventeenth century the Roman legation was the richest for the French diplomatic service as well: G. Cuer, 'Pomponne, Feuquières et la Suede. Scènes de la vie diplomatique à l'époque du Grand Roi (1672–1679)', *Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique*, 98 (1984), pp. 206–7.

⁴⁴ See for example F. Rossi, 'Introduzione' to *Ambasciata straordinaria al Sultano d'Egitto (1489–1490)*, Venice, 1988, p. 20.

⁴⁵ Barozzi and Berchet (eds.), *Relazioni*, series IV, *Inghilterra*, p. x; Carbone, *Note introduttive*, pp. 72–7.

⁴⁶ V. Lazari, 'Cenni intorno alle legazioni venete alla porta ottomana', in Albèri (ed.), *Le relazioni*, series III, vol. III, Florence, 1855, pp. xiii–xx; T. Bertelè, *Il palazzo degli ambasciatori di Venezia a Costantinopoli e le sue antiche memorie*, Bologna, 1932; Carbone, *Note introduttive*, pp. 11–54; P. Preto, 'Le relazioni dei baili a Costantinopoli', *Il Velro*, 23 (1979), pp. 125–30; B. Simon, 'I rappresentanti diplomatici vene-

The *bailo* had jurisdiction over the large Venetian mercantile community of Constantinople. He was head of the various Venetian consuls in the Levant and enjoyed special authority over the Sultan, to the extent that at least in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the representatives of the other Western nations would consult him concerning the most delicate diplomatic matters. The *bailo*'s role required him to maintain an exceptional level of ostentation at his residential *palazzo* (today the Italian embassy in Istanbul). In the seventeenth century his '*famiglia*' included, besides the secretary and a number of minor functionaries, various dragomans, around fifteen servants and footmen, a doctor and a chaplain.⁴⁷ When in 1714 the *bailo* Andrea Memmo was imprisoned in the castle of Abydos he was joined by his accountant, a '*giovane di lingua*' and three servants, while a further forty-five members of his entourage were incarcerated elsewhere.⁴⁸

Also controlled by the *bailo* was the *Scuola dei giovani di lingua*, founded in the mid-sixteenth century to provide training for officials and interpreters, and above all the postal service, with its dozens of diplomatic couriers, used by all the Western nations throughout the seventeenth century.⁴⁹ This 'command over letters', as a *bailo* of the mid-sixteenth century termed it, was one of the foundations on which the primacy of Venetian representation in Constantinople was built.⁵⁰

The *bailato* was financed by a broad range of emoluments difficult to reconstruct in detail because of their variability, but of which two require brief explanation: the revenues from the tolls levied on all the merchant ships flying the flag of St Mark which passed through the Ottoman capital (*cottimo*), and the sum received by the *bailo* for extraordinary expenses – moneys for which he was not obliged to give any account apart from a generic 'note'.⁵¹ His revenues from '*cottimo*' – which was subject to ordinary bookkeeping periodically audited in Venice – and his reimbursements for extraordinary expenses enabled the *bailo* to run a household which surpassed in splendour those of both

ziani a Costantinopoli', in *Venezia e i Turchi*, Milan, 1985, pp. 56–69; Coco and Manzonetto, *Baili veneziani*.

⁴⁷ Lazari, 'Cenni intorno alle legazioni', p. xviii; Barozzi and Berchet (eds.), *Relazioni, Turchia*, pp. 352–5.

⁴⁸ B. Brunelli, 'Un ambasciatore veneto prigioniero dei Turchi (Andrea Memmo sen.)', *Memorie della R. Accademia di Scienze Lettere ed Arti in Padova*, 52 (1935–6), p. 16.

⁴⁹ Coco and Manzonetto, *Baili veneziani*, pp. 105–16, 73–8.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

⁵¹ Carbone, *Note introduttive*, pp. 14, 25–9; Lazari, 'Cenni intorno alle legazioni', pp. xv–xviii.

other Western embassies and of the other Venetian noblemen at the courts of Europe.

The money utilized by the *bailato* as gifts to the huge Ottoman court, as tips for servants and functionaries, and as presents to every kind of dignitary and the sultan, provided the subject-matter for a wealth of anecdotes to which modern publications, too, devote considerable space.⁵² The interest aroused by Ottoman corruption, to which the Venetian noblemen made frequent reference in their reports, should be considered in the light of their endeavour to convey the alien nature of the Ottoman government and of Turkish society in general.⁵³ As a seventeenth-century *bailo* – a harsh critic of corruption at home and perhaps sent to Constantinople to cool his moralizing ardour – recounted: here ‘dona il privato al suo capo, quello alli maggiori, questi al supremo, il supremo al Re, il Re a tutti, onde per dichiarazione della forza del donare sono soliti a dire nella loro lingua proverbio tale: man che porta alla Porta e che dà, mai non vien taglià’.⁵⁴

In circumstances such as these it was less morally reprehensible for a *bailo* to line his pocket – especially if his assets had been depleted by long years of service for the state. Approximations of the sums that could be earned from the office of *bailo* have been made by certain denigrators of the Republic: 100,000 ducats in the late seventeenth century, indeed 200,000 a century later, according to Leopoldo Curti. These enormous sums are undoubtedly exaggerated, but they are nevertheless indicative of the economic importance of a diplomatic appointment.⁵⁵ More interesting is the fact that between 1736 and 1783 the amount allocated by Venice’s budget to the *bailato* amounted to between 24 and 43 per cent of the total sum assigned to the Venetian diplomatic service as a whole:⁵⁶ an outlay which, according to an anonymous commentator, the Republic preferred to blame on the corruption of the *bailo*

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. xv; Coco and Manzonetto, *Baili veneziani, passim*; C. Coco, *La lussuria del viver turchesco. Ovvero scandali, intrighi, relazioni d’amore dei Veneti a Costantinopoli*, Venice, 1990.

⁵³ P. Preto, *Venezia e i Turchi*, Florence, 1975, pp. 233–43.

⁵⁴ ‘... the private citizen pays largesse to his chief, the chief pays it to the authorities, these pay it to the governor, the governor to the King, the King to everyone, so that to express the power of gift-making they have a proverb in their language which runs: hand that brings to the *Porta* and gives, is never cut ...’: Barozzi and Berchet (eds.), *Relazioni, Turchia*, p. 305; Preto, ‘Le relazioni dei baili’, p. 127.

⁵⁵ *Relazione sull’organizzazione politica della repubblica di Venezia*, edited by G. Bacco, Vicenza, 1856, p. 24; Amelot de la Houssaie, *Histoire*, p. 186; Curti, *Mémoires*, p. 163.

⁵⁶ *Bilanci generali della repubblica di Venezia*, series II, vol. III: *Bilanci dal 1736 al 1755*, edited by E. Besta, Venice, 1903, pp. 86–9, 108–13; series II, vol. III: *Bilanci dal 1756 al 1783*, edited by A. Ventura, Venice, 1972, pp. 96–9, 116–19.

rather than acknowledge its nature as tribute paid to the Ottoman Empire,⁵⁷ thus providing further evidence of how, even in a period of virtual stability, *dominio da mar* continued to be the cornerstone of Venetian policy.

A question that the scholar of the bureaucracy of the *ancien régime* must address, and which assumes especial importance in analysis of diplomacy, is the congruity of the sums that the state administrations disbursed to their officials. Did these sums remunerate the services rendered, or did they not?

Like many simple questions, this one requires a complex answer, and it must be prefaced by at least two considerations. Firstly, as I have already pointed out, remuneration should not be considered in terms of one single legation: ambassadorships served in part to recover expenditures incurred during previous postings. Secondly, since a diplomatic career led rapidly to positions of institutional prestige, this advantage too, together with the other fringe benefits that derived from it, should be calculated among the earnings forthcoming from diplomatic office.

However, various examples and contemporary accounts suggest that the emoluments received by the Venetian diplomats in the seventeenth century were not sufficient for them to maintain a dignified household. The reason usually cited was the 'pompa delle corti', as Zuan Antonio Muazzo phrased it,⁵⁸ and hardest hit were the diplomats with limited means, like Simone Contarini, ambassador to France, whom the papal nuncio dubbed 'the ambassador of the *pistole*' (a pun on pistol and *pistole*, the two-*escudo* coin) because of his claim that he spent no more than one *dobla* per day on his household,⁵⁹ or Zuanne Sagredo, an *oratore* at the same court, who lodged with a widow and on his return from audiences would order his footmen to remove their livery.⁶⁰ Anecdotes about the meanness of the Venetian ambassadors are plentiful in regard to 'table expenditures', about which the patrician orators seemed to be particularly parsimonious. However, this is unreliable documentation that cannot be cited in evidence. Indeed, quite the opposite is reported by other commentators of the time. The already-mentioned Amelot de la Houssaie – by no means benevolent in his treatment of the nobility: 'sobres, non point par vertu, mais par avarice' – acknowledges that their embassies were furnished with great munificence, and no expense was spared 'pour le service et la gloire de leur patrie',⁶¹ while *Mémoires touchant les ambassadeurs* blames the envious English for

⁵⁷ *Relazione sull'organizzazione politica*, p. 24.

⁵⁸ Muazzo, *Historia*, p. 128.

⁵⁹ G. Benzoni, 'Simone Contarini', entry in *DBI*, vol. xxviii, 1993, pp. 282–90.

⁶⁰ 'Della Repubblica Veneta', p. 411.

⁶¹ Amelot de la Houssaie, *Histoire*, pp. 235–6, 258.

spreading the rumour of the Venetian ambassadors' niggardliness, when instead they were widely celebrated because 'leur train est magnifique, mais réglé'.⁶²

Similarly unhelpful are observations on individual economic circumstances. According to an anonymous seventeenth-century informant, Alvise Da Molin, sent to Vienna 'in order to ruin him in the most sensitive part of his person, namely his purse', met expenses of 20,000 ducats out of his own pocket, when his annual income amounted to only 6,000 ducats.⁶³ Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Zanetto Querini Stampalia spent around 180,000 ducats during his ambassadorship in Spain, and like many Venetian noblemen of the period his behaviour was highly contradictory: he paid minute attention to the most insignificant expenses while spending tens of thousands of ducats on gambling.⁶⁴ A source of information which distinguishes between 'the vices, namely women and gambling' and general household expenses is the authoritative testimony of the opulently rich Andrea Tron, who wrote from Paris in 1746 that he spent 2000 ducats per month on his *ménage* alone when his salary totalled only 700 ducats.⁶⁵ It is clear that random figures such as these can be used both to prove a contention and to deny it.

Finally, further corroboration is provided for a point already made, namely that during the seventeenth century a growing number of noblemen viewed diplomatic office as a public appointment for which adequate recompense should be paid. Indeed, there was an effective decline in the number of noble houses willing to mix their assets with the state budget and use them to finance their ambassadorial expenses. In this sense the increased cost of ambassadorships, which is highlighted by the ever more frequent refusals of diplomatic appointments, may have been largely due to the fact that, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, many more nobles silently met their expenses out of their own pockets. Seen in this light, the Francesco Donà affair is of considerable significance. A member a rich family, but not one of first rank, Francesco Donà embarked on an expensive political career which brought him to the embassy of Vienna, and to pay for which he contracted debts

⁶² *Mémoires touchant les ambassadeurs et les ministres publics. Par L. M. P.*, Cologne, 1676, p. 100.

⁶³ 'Della Repubblica Veneta', p. 391.

⁶⁴ R. Derosas, 'I Querini Stampalia. Vicende patrimoniali dal Cinque all'Ottocento', in *I Querini Stampalia. Un ritratto di famiglia nel Settecento veneziano*, Venice, 1987, pp. 68–70.

⁶⁵ G. Tabacco, *Andrea Tron (1712–1775) e la crisi dell'aristocrazia senatoria a Venezia*, Trieste, 1957, p. 36.

amounting to 40,000 florins. On his return to Venice, Donà sought to win election to the *bailato* and thereby redeem his debts, but by the time he had obtained the appointment he was paying an impossible amount of interest upon them. In order to obtain the sum necessary for his departure – and which he immediately used to fend off his creditors – Donà fitted out his escort, but his ship remained moored at the Lido. Accused of arrogance by the noblest families for seeking the highest offices of state, Donà was forced to plead exemption from the *bailato*: a political and economic failure which he did not survive for long.⁶⁶

As regards the role and the importance of the legation secretary, too, the Venetian system was distinctive not so much by virtue of the originality of certain solutions as by the early institutionalization of this diplomatic figure. As Garret Mattingly observed, at least during the Renaissance ‘no other Italian state developed the secretary’s office as highly’.⁶⁷

Whereas in Louis XIV’s powerful diplomatic service the secretary was nothing but a servant of the ambassador, with the attendant danger that secrets would be divulged if he died, in Venice from the mid-fifteenth century onwards the *oratore* was usually flanked by an official who was appointed and paid separately. If in Genoa the obligation to choose this functionary only from among citizens of the state was formalized by laws issued in the early seventeenth century, a similar recruitment criterion had already been made explicit by the Venetian senate in 1478.⁶⁸ Whereas aspects such as selection criteria, the appointment procedure or training programmes were elsewhere decided by custom or depended upon contingent circumstances, in Venice, because of the impersonal nature of public office, they were codified relatively early and accordingly given systematicity. One gains an idea of who these officials were by dwelling for a moment on the ducal chancellery, an office with unique characteristics within the Venetian administration. Its components were not in fact seconded to a single administrative unit: as well as compiling and conserving the principal scripts of government, they assisted the highest patrician councils in their work and were sent outside Venice or abroad to accompany the city’s representatives.

⁶⁶ G. Gullino, ‘Francesco Donà’, entry in *DBI*, vol. XL, 1991, pp. 728–30.

⁶⁷ Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, p. 98.

⁶⁸ G. Trebbi, ‘La cancelleria veneta nei secoli XVI e XVII’, *Annali della Fondazione Luigi Einaudi*, 14 (1980), pp. 69–70; W. Roosen, ‘La diplomatie du XVII^e siècle fut-elle française ou européenne?’, *Revue d’Histoire Diplomatique*, 93 (1979), pp. 10–12; R. Ciasca, *Istruzioni e relazioni degli ambasciatori genovesi*, vol. 1: *Spagna (1494–1617)*, Rome, 1951, pp. xxv, xxvii, 354. According to Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, pp. 97–8, the practice of appointing and paying legation secretaries separately was institutionalized in Venice and Florence after the 1460s.

Unlike the great majority of public offices, posts in the chancellery were filled by means of a public examination which also required the candidate to take a practical test. The appointee held the office for life and performed different tasks at different stages of a career which proceeded according to rigidly predetermined criteria. Admission was restricted to non-patricians, to whom was accorded the title of '*cittadino originario*' if they could demonstrate three generations of legitimate birth in the city and the abstention of 'self, father and forefather' from the 'mechanical arts', by which was meant artisanship or the retail trade.⁶⁹

Selected from the ranks of the chancellery notaries and secretaries were the secretaries who accompanied the patrician ambassadors on their legations, the *residenti* who ran Venetian residences in Italy or abroad, and the officials sent abroad in place of patricians.

The social backgrounds of these men worked in favour of their employment on assignments frequently of great delicacy and responsibility: whether they were of mercantile extraction, and therefore with well-developed technical-commercial and linguistic skills, or whether they had received their training in the humanist-secretarial sphere, their abilities well suited them to diplomatic activity. Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the diplomacy of the *cittadini* was divided between operations of an economic nature and those conducted in the eastern quadrant of Venetian foreign policy. Examples are provided by the mission conducted by Lunardo da ca' Masser to Lisbon in 1504 in order to gather information on Portugal's newly established link with India; the sending of Jacopo Regazzoni in 1571 to negotiate a separate peace with the Turks; or the numerous missions to negotiate mercantile treaties and to acquire supplies, like the transfer to Danzig of Marco Ottobon in 1591.⁷⁰

The use of diplomats of citizen status instead of patrician representatives was an alternative to which the aristocratic government made frequent recourse in subsequent centuries as well, given the versatility of the chancellery personnel and the advantages that this solution brought. The fact that the non-patrician *oratore* was formally an official of the Republic, and was therefore empowered by his credentials to perform functions of representation and negotiation of a lower level than those

⁶⁹ Trebbi, 'La cancelleria', pp. 70–8. M. Casini, 'La cittadinanza originaria a Venezia tra i secoli xv e xvi. Una linea interpretativa', in *Studi veneti offerti a Gaetano Cozzi*, Venice, 1992, pp. 133–50; A. Zannini, *Burocrazia e burocrati a Venezia. I cittadini originari (sec. xvi–xviii)*, Venice, 1993, pp. 61–118.

⁷⁰ U. Tucci, 'Ranke storico di Venezia', in L. von Ranke, *Venezia nel Cinquecento*, Rome, 1974, p. 36; A. Bertini, 'Sulle relazioni commerciali fra Venezia e Danzica nel secolo xvi', *Ateneo Veneto*, 145 (1961), pp. 73–84.

of an ambassador, conferred great flexibility on missions of this kind. And the citizen-*oratore* could in any case undertake a full, if no longer free, activity of information-gathering, consulting his government if need be, or exploiting the fact that the orders received were not to his liking. At the same time this solution released the *Signoria* from direct diplomatic involvement. In the not infrequent cases of serious diplomatic incident, for example with Constantinople, the fact that a minister and not a man of government was involved enabled the Republic to rely on mediation to resolve the conflict, which was the typical strategy of its foreign policy and the one most appropriate to its international role in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

This alternative but complementary recourse to a 'diplomacy of government', or to an equally useful 'diplomacy of service', rested on a set of crucial factors: the reliability of the chancellery personnel who, as said, were recruited from a social group with deep roots in the city, their technical-cultural preparation, and their full participation in the political and administrative life of the state.

An opportunity to serve the Republic on a particular mission was a privilege enjoyed only by the most able and expert of the non-patrician functionaries. It usually came at the end of a career which, like that of the patrician diplomat, alternated diplomatic appointments with long periods of service at home in the ducal chancellery. The personnel serving in this office totalled between eighty and 100 people, and it was hierarchically divided between notaries extraordinary, notaries ordinary, secretaries to the Senate and secretaries to the *Consiglio dei Dieci*, all of whom were subordinate to the *Cancellier grande*, the head of the chancellery, and elected from the corps of functionaries. From the late 1400s onwards, those appointed to the post of notary extraordinary were obliged to pass an examination consisting of a written test in Latin and vulgate, with subsequent assessment and election by the *Consiglio dei Dieci*, the body that supervised the chancellery.⁷¹ The subsequent stages of their careers were again determined by public examinations announced only when posts fell vacant, with the result that career advancement proceeded regularly and in hierarchical manner. A complicating factor was that the officials sent in attendance on patrician representatives outside Venice – mainly ambassadors but also the various *provveditori* and *capitani da mar* – had to be recruited from the members of the chancellery. From the mid-1600s onwards, the Venetian diplomatic seats increased in number, and this reinforced the tendency to send on ambassadorships not notaries ordinary and secretaries to the

⁷¹ Trebbi, 'La cancelleria', p. 89.

Senate, but young notaries extraordinary of recent recruitment. For a number of years, between 1577 and 1583, this opportunity was even extended to apprentice notaries aged no more than fourteen years old.⁷² A law of 1589 settled a number of matters relative to career advancement which remained in force for two centuries: most notably it fixed the minimum age for assumption by the chancellery at eighteen years, and established the principle whereby passage from extraordinary to ordinary and from this level to Senate secretary required five years of service or two missions abroad.⁷³

The inclusion of foreign missions among the entitlements for career advancement was undoubtedly the most powerful incentive for the chancellery notaries – more than incentives of an economic character, for example. By the mid-1500s, the emoluments paid to the legation secretaries had been formalized. They consisted of a *donativo* paid on departure and a (usually) annual salary. Although these disbursements were much lower than those paid to residents or ambassadors, they enabled the chancellery functionary to double or even to triple his usual income. Even more significant was the eventuality that the functionary might be paid a further *donativo* on his return or, following the customary praise that the ambassador appended to the report that he read to the Senate, be awarded a life pension. And it was not rare for some intermediate office of the administration to be allocated to a chancellery notary in recognition of his services to the *Signoria*.⁷⁴

Unlike the resident, who had to manage the embassy on his own, not only did the official accompanying a patrician *oratore* not incur major expenses, he might even profit from service at a foreign court. The reason that so many resisted the appointment, therefore, was that at such a distance from Venice the notary or chancellery secretary was unable to engage in the intricate negotiations that attended competitions for posts in the chancellery, the culminating moment of which – the vote by the *Consiglio dei Dieci* – gave rise to an out-and-out struggle among the members of the chancellery to win the favours, and therefore the votes, of the powerful patrician councillors.

The private correspondence of the secretaries *in missione* clearly shows that the principal concern of this society of bureaucrats – like that of the patricians ‘always on the electoral plane’⁷⁵ – was the constant

⁷² ASV, *Compilazioni leggi*, b. 107, *sub data*.

⁷³ Trebbi, ‘La cancelleria’, p. 99; Zannini, *Burocrazia e burocrati*, p. 132.

⁷⁴ Muazzo, *Historia*, pp. 93–4; Lazari, ‘Cenni intorno alle legazioni’, p. xviii; Carbone, *Note introduttive*, pp. 34–5, 51ff; Trebbi, ‘La cancelleria’, p. 114–15; Zannini, *Burocrazia e burocrati*, pp. 138–51 and *passim*.

⁷⁵ G. Cozzi, ‘Una vicenda della Venezia barocca: Marco Trevisan e la sua “eroica ami-

cultivation of friendship with their patrician protectors, the gathering of information on affairs at the chancellery from colleagues and friends, and the urging of relatives and friends to take a more active interest in a particular competition or appointment. Emblematic in this regard is the case of Giulio Muscorno, secretary during Antonio Foscarini's ambassadorship to England. The bad blood between the two men, which seems to have been largely responsible for the patrician's unjust condemnation to death, apparently stemmed from Foscarini's refusal to recommend Muscorno when he decided to compete for the position of secretary to the Senate.⁷⁶

Under such circumstances, the prospect of some years' absence from Venice was carefully assessed and not infrequently deferred or refused. Plausible reasons were always given, however, in order not to provoke resentment, given that this was an obligation that those aspiring to a top-level career could not evade.

The account provided by a *Cancellier grande* of the early seventeenth century, Bonifacio Antelmi, sheds credible light on the system just described and on the complex relationship between patricians and the members of the chancellery.⁷⁷ Having entered the chancellery at the age of seventeen, Antelmi undertook his first mission at twenty-three, to the Spanish court. After various disagreeable appointments, combined with the customary routine work at home, the young man was summoned to the *Collegio* where, seated upon Savio's high-backed chair, the patrician Giacomo Surian, *oratore*-elect to Madrid, embraced Antelmi and told him 'humanly' that he wished him to be his 'secretary and companion' at that embassy. Although appointments were formally ratified by the *Cancellier grande*, in practice it was the patricians elected to a diplomatic post who selected their legation secretary from those available and in possession of the legal requirements. On this occasion Antelmi refused, citing his 'desire to go to another court, and then because that one I have already once seen'. And he gave the same reply to the patrician elected to replace Surian in the meantime, the future doge Leonardo Donà. He was able to return abroad only one year later, however, when he joined the entourage of the ambassador to Poland. Thus the year 1570 marked for Antelmi the beginning of that long sequence of foreign missions which distinguished the careers of the

cizia'', *Bollettino dell'Istituto di Storia della Società e dello Stato Veneziano*, 2 (1960), p. 69. Now in Cozzi, *Venezia barocca. Conflitti di uomini e idee nella crisi del Seicento veneziano*, Venice, 1995, pp. 325-409.

⁷⁶ S. Sandra, *Antonio Foscarini. Un patrizio veneziano del '600*, Florence, 1969, p. 83; R. Zago, 'Antonio Foscarini', entry forthcoming in *DBI*.

⁷⁷ Zannini, *Burocrazia e burocrati*, pp. 153-60.

most illustrious functionaries. After Poland he was appointed notary ordinary and immediately departed for the secretary's office at the Vienna embassy, whence, after only two months' respite in Venice, he moved to the equivalent office in Constantinople. Having survived the plague in Turkey, and on receiving notice of his appointment as secretary to the Senate, Antelmi returned to Venice. There, however, the plague again awaited him (killing his entire family) and delayed his departure for the embassy at the pontifical court. The year 1579 found Antelmi acting as resident in Milan, where he remained for eight years. On his return to Venice, at the age of forty-five and with a distinguished record of foreign service to his credit, he was now in a position to seek election as secretary to the *Consiglio dei Dieci*, an office of great power and prestige assigned to only four secretaries and therefore infrequently available. Two places almost immediately fell vacant, however; but Antelmi, who was on a mission to Tuscany at the time, failed in his bid to win election. His thoughts on the matter are interesting.

My almost constant absence from Venice [Antelmi wrote disconsolately] has rendered me deficient in the things of Venetia and inept at intrigue; at the two elections my inability to gather votes has been plain, and as my two adversaries had made great practice thereof, when I began to move myself the others had already finished and all the posts had already been assigned: in the future I shall do as the others have done.

Despite his determination, however, fully nine elections passed before Antelmi managed to obtain the appointment he so eagerly desired, and from which he moved, not without difficulty, to the dignity of *Cancellier grande*.

The problem of preventing the assignation of young recently appointed notaries to the most important embassies – those 'to the crowned heads' (*alle teste coronate*) – was never resolved. In 1781, the *Cancellier grande* observed in a report delivered to the *Consiglio dei Dieci* that all the secretaries at the courts were notaries extraordinary; indeed many of them were '*in aspettativa*' and therefore not yet hired on a full-time basis and still adolescents.⁷⁸

This organizational aspect of the chancellery, which originated from the deliberate intent of the patrician authorities not to expand its official personnel, raises a number of questions about the effective cultural and technical preparation of the young secretaries who worked for the Venetian legations. As we have seen, all the members of the chancellery were recruited from the 'civil' class of the populace: a social group made

⁷⁸ ASV, *Consiglio dei Dieci*, *Comuni*, file 1229, *Scrittura del cancellier grande Giovanni Girolamo Zuccato*, enclosed with the law, 18 Sept. 1781.

up of merchants, professionals and civil servants which considered a good education to be indispensable for any type of career – so much so that it was common for children as young as four or five to receive instruction from tutors or to attend lessons given by priests.⁷⁹ After 1633 the conditions were created which encouraged the recruitment to that office of the sons of functionaries already employed in the chancellery, so that the education of these young men, in a climate permeated by the chancellery work ethic, must have been even more precocious.

Only rarely was a solid but generic basic education followed by university studies. The examination for admission to the chancellery sought principally to assess the candidate's humanistic education centred on the study of Latin – and Latin one should remember was the official language of diplomacy among the European countries and between them and the Ottoman Empire until the mid-1700s. Consequently the syllabus of the chancellery school, whose lessons the notaries extraordinary were obliged to attend, consisted largely of grammar and rhetoric.

It was therefore their practical work in the chancellery, under the supervision of expert functionaries who had served in the courts of the entire world, which provided the secretaries to the Venetian legations with the bulk of their professional training. As he applied himself to the copying of official scripts and to the compiling of the *rubricarii* (digests of dispatches),⁸⁰ the young notary might happen upon a secret diplomatic document or a report on a court to which he would shortly be sent. Within the chancellery, he mastered that knowledge of the state, of its functioning and its men, which in the Venetian notion of administration signified culture *tout court*.

Marino Cavalli, the ambassador who in the Paris of the mid-1500s was known as 'l'escole des affaires du monde', and who endeavoured to give a technical character to the diplomatic profession, gives a fine description in a short treatise of what, in practice, constituted the duties and requirements of a Venetian legation secretary.⁸¹

One of the first topics addressed by Cavalli is the role of the secretary within the legation and his relationships with the *famiglia*. Although bound in service like the others, the secretary was in no wise comparable with the members of the *famiglia*, since he was 'entirely devoted to the negotiations of the state', and with the ambassador as his only superior, 'to service and satisfaction whereof he should be entirely

⁷⁹ Zannini, *Burocrazia e burocrati*, pp. 80–1.

⁸⁰ A. Baschet, *Les Dépêches des ambassadeurs vénitiens en France pendant le xvi^e et le xvii^e siècle*, Paris, 1887, p. 12.

⁸¹ A. Olivieri, 'Marino Cavalli', entry in *DBI*, vol. xxii, 1979, pp. 749–54; *Informazione dell'offitio*, pp. 86–93.

directed and intended'. He was a servant, therefore, but one of entirely different 'rank'.

In discussing the requirements of a legation secretary, Cavalli eschews the customary rhetoric of sixteenth-century treatises on the secretarial profession and dwells on practical matters. Besides being deeply versed in notarial practice – which comprised the drafting of treaties of peace, truce and alliance, deeds of protest, in short the entire range of diplomacy – and having mastered the techniques of ciphering and decoding, the secretary had to be painstaking in his writing because 'he must . . . be the interpreter in script of the ambassador's concepts'. This phrase should probably be taken in its narrow sense as referring to the specific task of the legation secretary: the writing of dispatches. As has been pointed out,⁸² the quality of information and the tenor of the accompanying commentary did not deteriorate when a secretary, because of the indisposition or sudden death of the ambassador, had to substitute for his superior and attend to correspondence with the Senate. Being the interpreter in script of the ambassador's concepts meant deducing – from the colloquies overheard at the side of the ambassador, from the secret information to which the secretary presumably had easier access, and from all the other sources at his disposal – that set of concepts which, expressed in orderly and thorough fashion, constituted the dispatch. And this was work which was absolutely necessary to, when not substituting for, that of an ambassador.

A number of observations on the duties of the legation secretary are forthcoming from the writings of two important personages in the Venetian chancelleries of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: Antonio Milledonne, who among his various duties was instructed to report on the Council of Trent, and Giovanni Carlo Scaramelli, appointed to numerous missions, including that of restoring diplomatic relations with England after the long period of coolness coincident with the reign of Elizabeth I.⁸³ Milledonne's essay, written in his old age, lays greater emphasis on his intelligence-gathering activities for his superior. Scaramelli, writing on the eve of his first diplomatic mission when he was not yet twenty, concentrates on moral behaviour and on aspects, including the psychological, of the relationship with his master. Otherwise, the two essays recast in a form suited to the Venetian reader a series of commonplaces in which one looks in vain for any trace, even

⁸² Tucci, 'Ranke storico', p. 36.

⁸³ (A. Milledonne), *Ragionamento di doi gentil'huomini . . .*, in BNM, *Mss. Italiani*, cl. vii, 709 (8403); G. C. Scaramelli, *Ricordi a sé stesso*, *ibid.*, 1640 (7983). For a biography of Scaramelli see A. Barzazi (ed.), *Corrispondenze diplomatiche veneziane. Dispacci*, vol. iii: 27 maggio 1597–2 novembre 1604, Rome, 1991, pp. 25–8.

minimal, of deviation from the patrician doctrine that the role of secretary was connoted by obedience, loyalty, reserve, affability, diligence, and so on.

A non-apologetic insight into the relationship between the ambassador and his secretary is provided by the unwritten rule requiring the ambassador to make his secretary privy to all his colloquies, including those of a confidential nature. A pronouncement to the Senate by the ambassador Matteo Dandolo in 1551, who described this practice as 'something not only unusual for all the others, but which appears so strange that everyone believes that your lordships [the Senate] do not trust us [ambassadors] and that the secretaries come as witnesses',⁸⁴ reflects a certain preoccupation with a custom that might undermine the internal hierarchy of the Venetian institutions, giving rise to incidents damaging to the credibility of the patrician representatives. A case in point occurred during the late 1400s at the court of Rome. The Milanese ambassador reported, not without malice, that during a reception the patrician *oratore* let slip a number of inappropriate remarks. Whereupon his secretary 'before all those present told his ambassador to be silent, that this was not the wish of the *Signoria* . . . the ambassador fell silent and spoke no more'.⁸⁵

The delicacy of the question is confirmed by the considerable space devoted by Cavalli to the problem of participation by the secretary in the colloquies of the patrician *oratore*. 'Although it is good that he should know every secret matter that the ambassador knows', he should nevertheless not interfere when the ambassador draws aside to converse with someone. Although it is well known that the secretary knows all the secrets of his superior, the interlocutor may be distressed to find himself discussing them in the presence of others. Likewise, it is more prudent at the beginning of audiences and negotiations that the secretary should stand apart, then to be invited to approach, rather than provoke resentment by immediately including himself in the conversation.⁸⁶ Like the other functions and prerogatives assigned to officials of citizen rank, this practice was never explicitly sanctioned – probably in order not to officialize a function that might assume political significance. In truth, a law for this purpose was indeed promulgated in 1578 – that is, in the years when because of various political and social factors the ducal chancellery was at the height of its institutional power – but it was soon

⁸⁴ Cit. in Ventura, 'Introduzione', p. lxxiii.

⁸⁵ F. Leverotti, *Diplomazia e governo dello stato*, pp. 102–3.

⁸⁶ *Informazione dell'offitio*, pp. 87–8.

suspended, and the years that followed saw a certain political downgrading of the powerful chancellery functionaries.⁸⁷

In the diplomatic sector the chronology was slightly different. Owing to the expansion of Venice's diplomatic network, and because of the sensitive political and military issues in which she was involved, the first six decades of the seventeenth century were in all probability the golden age of non-patrician, *cittadina* diplomacy. It was certainly no coincidence that the two champions of Venetian diplomacy – the patrician Alvise Contarini, the leading negotiator at the Congresses of Münster and promoter of the Peace of Westphalia, and the secretary Giovan Battista Ballarin, responsible for relations with Constantinople during the most difficult phases of the long Cretan War – were born within a few years of each other at the turn of the century and active during the most crucial years of the 'century of iron'.⁸⁸

In parallel with this arduous and prolonged mobilization of Venetian diplomacy, changes were made to certain aspects of personnel recruitment and training in the ducal chancellery. The importance of being the son or grandson of a chancellery functionary was given even greater emphasis than before. Those who could claim such parentage were allowed to sit the entrance examination when they were as young as fourteen or sixteen. These aspiring notaries, moreover, often gained admission to the chancellery not on passing an examination but by virtue of a '*grazia*' or dispensation which allowed them to begin their careers on a temporary basis. The first consequence of this change was that a certain segment of the populace of citizen rank – less tied to public offices and more closely involved in trade – saw the chances of their offspring entering the chancellery or diplomatic corps diminish. The second consequence was that the average age of the notaries extraordinary – on whose shoulders rested the weight of the legation secretaries – beginning service at a foreign court was less than twenty years, while the practice spread of assigning newly hired notaries to the embassy of one of their relatives as '*coadiutori*' or assistants. Since this system gave young men better in-the-field preparation and anticipated their 'diplomatic cycle', scholastic preparation was reduced to the minimum, and its replacement by training acquired entirely within the sphere of the chancellery and the *famiglia* received further impetus: as evidenced by the steady decline in the importance of the chancellery school and its definitive closure in 1719, because of the scant attendance

⁸⁷ Trebbi, 'La cancelleria', p. 112

⁸⁸ G. Benzoni, 'Alvise Contarini', entry in *DBI*, vol. xxviii, 1983, pp. 82–91; G. F. Torcellan, 'Giovan Battista Ballarin', entry in *DBI*, vol. v, 1963, pp. 570–1.

of the young notaries, who either preferred to follow their relatives abroad or had been seconded to serve the *capi da mar* in the Levant.⁸⁹

In short, all these changes delineate a *serrata* (closing) of the chancellery which gave the officials' families almost total control over recruitment, in exchange for the more efficient internal organization of work and closer control over the technical training of the young notaries. The mixed meritocratic and clientelistic system – unique to the Venetian administration and which had created a corps of diplomats and chancellery officials of considerable professional stature – had by now been transformed into a system midway between pure patronage and the hereditary transmission of the profession. And it was a system in which the relationships between chancellery officials and patricians were inevitably connoted by a greater degree of subordination: behaviour like Antelmi's refusal to accompany an important patrician because he wished to gain experience elsewhere would now become increasingly improbable.⁹⁰

The pinnacle of a chancellery functionary's diplomatic career was appointment as resident, an office awarded by means of election in the exclusive *Collegio*. Only the twenty-four chancellery functionaries bearing the title of secretary to the Senate were admitted to this election. As we have seen, these were officials who had already held a secretary's post abroad and who occupied positions of major responsibility in the chancellery, as regards foreign policy as well. Some of them were 'assigned' a court: that is, they were entrusted with the correspondence to a patrician ambassador abroad and acted as intermediaries in relationships with the foreign *oratore* in Venice. When the latter was officially received by the *Signoria*, the secretary stood before him and translated his speech. The doge could only provide generic answers to the petitions presented by the *oratore*, referring matters to the Senate for examination, and then dismissing him.⁹¹ It was therefore the secretary's task to take note of what was said by each party and to report it to the Senate – where it was also his duty, or a colleague's, to draft on the basis of discussion in the chamber the motion that was subsequently put to the vote.

For these men, by now in their maturity, appointment as resident was

⁸⁹ Zannini, *Burocrazia e burocrati*, pp. 163–81.

⁹⁰ In early eighteenth-century England, too, the creation of an exclusive patronage system and the lowering of the average age of diplomats improved the technical abilities of that country's diplomatic personnel: see L. H. Snyder, 'The British Diplomatic Service during the Godolphin Ministry', in R. Hatton and M. S. Anderson (eds.), *Studies in Diplomatic History. Essays in Memory of David Byrne*, London, 1970, p. 67.

⁹¹ Muazzo, *Historia*, p. 108.

an opportunity which they carefully weighed against its possible implications for their careers, and against the probable disadvantages deriving from prolonged absence from Venice. This explains why appointment of a resident was usually a difficult matter, and why its duration was extended to four years, twice that of a patrician ambassadorship.⁹² The fact, moreover, that a residency often entailed five or more years' sojourn abroad made it even less attractive.

The same observation as previously made concerning the patrician embassies applies to residencies: namely that their economic importance should be assessed in terms of the financial resources of the family that accepted them, with the complicating factor that most non-patrician families had fewer assets. The emoluments paid to a resident were for broadly the same items as were paid to an ambassador, but they were considerably lower in value: for the London embassy, to which both residents and ambassadors were sent in various periods from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the fixed items in the resident's income amounted to no more than 50 to 70 per cent of those paid to the patrician representative.⁹³ Considering that non-patrician families did not possess fortunes comparable to those of their patrician counterparts, and that they consequently could not supplement their state emoluments with large sums drawn from their own assets, this ratio gives an idea of the different status assigned to a residency, which was run by a much smaller *famiglia* and required much less expenditure on display.

There are, nevertheless, various other factors which suggest that a residency was generally less expensive for a secretary than an embassy for a patrician. These citizen families had still not lost their predilection for business, and residence in a foreign capital invariably provided them with opportunities to turn a profit. Unlike the patricians, for whom the prime benefit deriving from a diplomatic appointment was political power, and was economic only in a broader context, on their return to Venice the secretaries could count on being almost immediately granted special allowances, public offices '*in grazia*', or promotions for themselves and their relatives: benefits that brought an immediate economic return.

However, other elements suggest instead that beyond the commonplace that diplomatic missions grew increasingly costly as the

⁹² Segarizzi (ed.), *Relazioni*, pp. 282–3.

⁹³ Barozzi and Berchet (eds.), *Le relazioni*, series iv: *Inghilterra*, p. x; Carbone, *Note introduttive*, pp. 72ff, on which see however G. Zorzanello, 'Il diplomatico veneziano Simon Cavalli e la sua legazione in Inghilterra (1778–1782)', *Ateneo Veneto*, 22 (1984), p. 241 and n. 52; G. Gullino, 'L'anomala ambasciata inglese di Nicolò Tron (1714–1717) e l'introduzione della macchina a vapore in Italia', in *Non uno itinere. Studi storici offerti dagli allievi a Federico Seneca*, Venice, 1993, pp. 185–207.

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries progressed, the financial outlay that such appointments required of chancellery families became more onerous. A further contributory factor was the co-option of sixteen such families into the ranks of the nobility between 1646 and 1717, not by virtue of their distinguished service records but because they had paid considerable sums of money to purchase the honour. Consequently, it was the richest families, those that could best sustain the expense of a residency, which abandoned the order.⁹⁴ Conversely, many of the families that had served the Republic as residents in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries failed to achieve aristocratic title because their fortunes were by now entirely depleted.

Nonetheless, one may conclude that although a residency continued to be a considerable financial burden, the lesser social responsibility that rested on the shoulders of a resident gave him greater flexibility in managing his budget compared with the patrician *oratore*, who, because he belonged to a ruling aristocracy, could not cut a poor figure with the envoys of half Europe, and therefore incurred much higher household expenses.

It is widely believed that the contribution of the secretaries to Venetian foreign policy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was not inferior in level and quality to that provided by the nobles. However, one may inquire as to whether, and how, the changes that occurred from the first decades of the seventeenth century onwards in the secretarial corps influenced the diplomatic activity of those functionaries.

Examination of the dispatches and reports by Venetian ambassadors and residents in the eighteenth century reveals a growing preoccupation with the social and economic conditions of the states concerned, and a concomitantly lesser interest in political questions and the intrigues of court. This shift of interest is especially evident in the dispatches sent in by the residents, who discussed such conventional matters as taxation, the army, trade and industry, but with much greater thoroughness than the generic heightened 'eighteenth-century rationality' displayed by the patrician ambassadors.⁹⁵

We know that the distinctive feature of citizen diplomacy was its marked propensity for practical matters. Nor should we ignore the long

⁹⁴ Zannini, *Burocrazia e burocrati*, pp. 169–74.

⁹⁵ Morandi, 'La diplomazia', pp. xxi–xxvii; Stiffoni, 'Per una storia', p. 8; Stiffoni, 'Venezia e Spagna nel Settecento nelle relazioni e nei dispacci degli ambasciatori', in *Venezia e la Spagna*, Milan, 1988, pp. 195–220; M. Infelise (ed.), *Corrispondenze diplomatiche veneziane da Napoli. Dispacci*, vol. xvi: 10 giugno 1732–4 luglio 1739, Rome, 1992, pp. 9–10.

tradition that tied the secretarial class to mercantile activity; a link, it will be remembered, which was dissolved in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by the social *serrata* of the chancellery. More useful, perhaps, is the observation that in this same period the ducal chancellery's progressive loss of institutional weight was matched by the growing importance assumed in the economic and financial administration of the state by officials of citizen rank. As the public economy grew more complex, the fulcrum of state management shifted from the strictly political domain controlled by the patricians to the technical-administrative sphere, where the citizen functionaries had substantial and highly developed skills to deploy. This process was accentuated by the system of rotating patrician appointments, which, because the administration of the state had grown even more complicated, rendered the generic education possessed by the patriciate increasingly unsuitable. This accounts for the greater weight in economic-financial management assigned to intermediate officials: as, for example, in the crucial sector of public accounting, where not coincidentally it was a *cittadino* accountant, Gerolamo Costantini, who campaigned in the early 1700s for introduction of an annual budget to regulate the finances of the Venetian state.⁹⁶

The central role assumed by this group in the economic administration of the state may therefore help to explain the tendency among the residents to transform their dispatches into long and systematic reports on the economic and financial situation of the countries that they visited, and also the talent for industrial espionage which they displayed in the second half of the eighteenth century.⁹⁷

That this new sensibility was accompanied by greater objectivity of description is perhaps obvious, considering that the secretaries had always complied with the principle of the impersonal nature of their public function. In the course of the eighteenth century, however, the tendency to omit personal opinions, and to render information entirely ascetic, grew into the explicit renunciation of any role that was not one of overt subordination.⁹⁸ While in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a number of non-patrician diplomats had contrived to give an independent interpretation to their role while still adhering to aristocratic ideology, in the eighteenth century, on account also of the

⁹⁶ F. Besta, 'Appunti generali sulla compilazione dei bilanci di fatto', in *Bilanci generali*, series II, vol. III, pp. lxxxii-xc; Ventura, 'Introduzione' to *Bilanci generali*, pp. li-lxiii; A. Zannini, *Il sistema di revisione contabile della Serenissima*, Venice, 1994, pp. 158-9.

⁹⁷ P. Preto, *I servizi segreti di Venezia*, Milan, 1994, p. 201.

⁹⁸ M. Infelise (ed.), *Corrispondenze diplomatiche veneziane da Napoli. Dispacci*, vol. VII: 16 novembre 1632-18 maggio 1638, Rome, 1992.

low-profile foreign policy adopted by the Republic, very few legation secretaries, residents or special envoys deviated even minimally from the dutiful provision of detailed and neutral information. In the rare cases when a resident indulged in explicit comment, his opinions would ingratiatingly mirror the most rigid canons of patrician orthodoxy – a case in point being the observations on Joseph II's reforms offered by the resident in Milan, Andrea Alberti, in 1791.⁹⁹

Not even when the doctrine of the alleged superiority of the Venetian system was no longer defensible, and when the compactness of the aristocratic corps was showing visible signs of disintegration, did this group of citizen functionaries – despite the fact that they had travelled the world and witnessed the changes brought by eighteenth-century reformism at first hand – renounce the ideology of the patrician republic that had accorded them such privileges and honour. Their maximum expression of dissent, therefore, consisted in this 'option of silence', the renunciation of personal opinion, the reaffirmation of subordinate status, behind which one discerns an unexpressed detachment.

In this period, as Daniela Frigo has written, diplomacy too faced the dilemma of choosing between a centralized management of the administration which assigned a merely executive role to subordinates, and an organization that gave greater opportunity for individual initiative, but at the price of diminished political uniformity.¹⁰⁰ The Venetian secretaries had long since opted for the first alternative, while the Republic's declining international influence forced the patrician diplomats to revise certain of the criteria on which for centuries they had based their service to the Republic. Inextricably tied to an impersonal conception of public office, both groups unconsciously developed an idea of the diplomatic function to which only the nineteenth-century states would give material form.

⁹⁹ Segarizzi (ed.), *Relazioni*, vol. II, pp. 141–55; Berengo, 'Il problema', p. 154; A. Tirone, 'I residenti veneti e il riformismo in Lombardia', *Studi Veneziani*, 8 (1966), pp. 481–92.

¹⁰⁰ D. Frigo, *Principe, ambasciatori e 'jus gentium'. L'amministrazione della politica estera nel Piemonte del Seicento*, Rome, 1991, p. 188.

‘SMALL STATES’ AND DIPLOMACY: MANTUA AND MODENA

DANIELA FRIGO

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the modern age, the Po Valley was an area in which the fragmentation of power typical of the late Middle Ages coexisted with a progressive consolidation of power in more or less stable forms. In this area of densely concentrated powers, populated by towns, *signorie* and ecclesiastical orders, the Estensi and the Gonzaga, in Ferrara and Mantua respectively, brought into being a form of power management and a model of government that traditional historiography has summed up in the expression ‘Renaissance state’.¹ And it was in this area that Cesare Borgia, whom Machiavelli later cited as an example of the ‘new prince’, prosecuted his political and military ventures at the beginning of the sixteenth century. In this territory, papal nepotism achieved a further significant success with the creation of the Farnese Duchy of Parma and Piacenza. And it was here, finally, that the process of crisis and decline of the Italian principalities got prematurely under way, foreshadowed in 1598 by the devolution of Ferrara to the Papacy.

Amid the political equilibria of the late fifteenth century and the wars of the early sixteenth century, the Gonzaga and Estensi played a pivotal role in Italian politics. In their numerous and shifting alliances with the French and the Spanish, the two dynasties displayed consummate diplomatic skill as they responded to the alternating fortunes of armies by rapidly switching sides. But with the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis (1559) and with the consolidation of Spanish dominion over a large part of the Peninsula their protagonism in foreign affairs seemingly ceased. The

¹ F. Chabod, ‘Y a-t-il un état de la Renaissance?’, in *Ates du colloque sur la Renaissance organisé par la Société d’Histoire*, Paris, 1958, pp. 57–73 (also in *Scritti sul Rinascimento*, Turin, 1967, pp. 591–623); G. Chittolini, ‘Stati padani, “Stato del Rinascimento”: problemi di ricerca’, in G. Tocci (ed.), *Persistenze feudali e autonomie comunitative in stati padani fra ’500 e ’700*, Bologna, 1988, pp. 9–29.

two *signorie* submitted to Spanish 'protection', using the system of military *condotte* (the contracts stipulated with *condottieri*) to reap honours, gifts and lucrative earnings from their service to Spain. Although they were obliged to seek the consent of Madrid or of the Governor of Milan for their every political or military initiative, the Gonzaga and the Estensi continued to exploit the political game to the full. The activism of their ambassadors – present at all the principal European courts – often served to offset the scant importance of their political designs, or to pursue impossible dynastic and expansionary ambitions. The diplomacy of the 'small states' of the Po Valley was primarily a means to consolidate princely power and to manage inevitable crises of dynasty and succession. With the passage of time, this diplomatic activism developed into a form of 'compensation' for the limited military weight of the two states.

The duchies of Ferrara and Mantua differed in their origins, in the foundations of their power, and in the forms assumed by the exercise of such power. Whereas the Este domains consisted of a multiplicity of communal and seigneurial structures held together by the Estensi dynasty, Mantua was prematurely dismembered into a set of minor lordships assigned to collateral branches of the family, and, from the fifteenth century onwards, it emerged as a cohesive or 'single-citizen' state, one very different from the pattern of composite regional states to be found elsewhere.²

On the other hand, though, the duchies of Mantua and Ferrara also display closely similar features and problems which permit joint analysis of their diplomatic activity in the modern age. Firstly, the small territorial size of both duchies entailed their constant dependence on alliances with other powers. Secondly, power was wielded in forms that still adhered, even after the sixteenth century, to the model of the seigneurial and Renaissance state. Moreover, both states derived their presence and political weight on the European stage from the strategic importance of their territories, which were located on the north–south axis of the peninsula and therefore crucial for passage to the centre and the south. Again, the figure of the prince in both Mantua and Modena exhibits features in common and which can be summed up in the image of the 'prince–captain'. Given their small geographical size, both states had to contend with numerous competing powers (principalities, imperial fiefs, minor *signorie*, ecclesiastical estates) which considerably complicate the picture of foreign policy and military alliances. The

² I. Lazzarini, *Fra un principe e altri stati. Relazioni di potere e forme di servizio a Mantova nell'età di Ludovico Gonzaga*, Rome, 1996, p. vii.

Sforza, for example, maintained relations with these 'minor' powers throughout the second half of the fifteenth century, creating a close-knit network of alliances and military commitments.³ Finally, both principalities made skilful use of their ties of matrimony and kinship with other Italian and European dynasties to obtain support and alliances in times of crisis.

MANTUA AND FERRARA FROM THEIR ORIGINS UNTIL THE
'ITALIAN WARS'

The two states differed both in the chronology of their origins and in the forms assumed by their subsequent rise to power. In 1186, the Estensi installed themselves in Ferrara by forming an alliance with another local family, the Giacoli; and they consolidated their power thanks to the support provided by a Rome preoccupied in those years with the imperial factions, and by Venice, which hoped to control the Ferrara area through the Estensi. In 1452, Borso d'Este obtained the title of Duke of Modena and Reggio and Count of Rovigo from the Emperor, and in 1471 was granted the title of Duke of Ferrara by the Pope. Subsequent events, as we shall see, were significantly influenced by this twofold investiture, which tied the Duchy simultaneously to the two greatest powers of the age. The rule of the Gonzaga in Mantua began in August 1328, when Luigi Gonzaga seized power at the expense of his allies, the Boncolsi, and it was consolidated at the end of the fourteenth century with the dominion's transformation into an outright *signoria* in which the will of the lord was the only stable institutional principle.⁴ The rise of the house of Gonzaga was sanctioned in 1433, when the title of Marquis was conferred on Gian Francesco. Mantua and Ferrara, therefore, as two *signorie* rooted in their territory and long legitimated by popular approval, were able to exploit the prestige of their ancient origins in diplomatic negotiations. In this they differed from the Farnese Duchy of Parma and Piacenza created by Paul III's bull of 26 August 1545 in favour of his son Pier Luigi, and which entered the Italian scene as an 'artificial' state created by investiture from above of medieval stamp. In similar fashion to less well-established

³ P. Margaroli, *Diplomazia e stati rinascimentali. Le ambascerie sforzesche fino alla conclusione della Lega italiana (1450-1455)*, Florence, 1992, pp. 187-91.

⁴ For a comparison of institutional developments under the Gonzaga and Estensi see M. Cattini and M. A. Romani, 'Le corte parallele: per una tipologia delle corti padane dal XIII al XVI secolo', in G. Papagno and A. Quondam (eds.), *La corte e lo spazio: Ferrara estense*, Rome, 1982, vol. 1, pp. 47-82. See also L. Marini, *Lo stato estense*, Turin, 1987; C. Mozzarelli, *Mantova e i Gonzaga*, Turin, 1987.

powers like the Medici or the Sforza, the Gonzaga and Estensi regarded diplomacy as an essential factor in the definition of their sovereignty and in the 'construction' of their external representation: a concern manifest in constantly revised diplomatic ceremonials made ever more complex by incorporation of the rules in force at the most important courts, primarily those of Rome and Spain.

As said, the Gonzaga and Estensi states were founded on a type of authority that closely interwove dynastic and political interests with military ones. Often 'in service' to foreign powers, these princes initially viewed diplomacy as the means to knit together of a network of alliances, military contracts, and sources of information on allies or adversaries. The first diplomatic missions about which information is available, in fact, fulfilled precisely this function of supporting the military activity of the lord. They concerned agreements for military *condotte*, the signing of pacts or alliances, and the payment of contracts for services rendered. 'Foreign policy, diplomacy, and war, were thus playing their parts in that crucial consolidation of power which was so much a feature of the Italian political scene in the later fifteenth century.'⁵ This is an aspect that we shall meet again in the following period, until the seventeenth century, during which the military function, although its ancient splendour had faded, continued to be an important component in the identity and sovereignty of the Gonzaga and Estensi dynasties.

The two dynasties therefore soon began diplomatic exchanges with the other power centres of the peninsula. After the occasional missions undertaken during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, as early as the fifteenth century the Estensi had already created a web of diplomatic contacts which was expanded further under the government of Borso d'Este (1450–71), the first to receive the title of Duke from Emperor Frederick III. Borso sent ambassadors to every part of the peninsula, and in Europe as far afield as Spain, France and England. Under his successor Ercole I (1471–1505), diplomatic relations were also established with Hungary, Germany and the Levant, and a few years later occasional contacts with Poland and Switzerland as well.⁶ It was this consolidation of their feudal power consequent on imperial recognition that induced the Estensi 'to accentuate the more costly aspects of their diplomatic and military activity'⁷ in order to give greater visibility and impact to their political presence on the Italian stage. Giovan Battista Pigna wrote in his *Historia de Principi di Este* that Borso's

⁵ M. Mallett, 'Diplomacy and War in Later Fifteenth-Century Italy', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 67 (1981), p. 288.

⁶ G. Ognibene, *Le relazioni della Casa d'Este coll'estero*, Modena, 1903.

⁷ Marini, *Lo stato estense*, p. 22.

true talent lay in diplomacy rather than warfare, citing a bent for neutrality and skill in mediation as his particular gifts.⁸ Pigna's comments recall certain passages from Commynes' celebrated *Mémoires* in which he emphasizes that the Italians preferred to settle their differences by negotiation.⁹ A crucial role in the constant quest of the Dukes of Ferrara for recognition and direct relations with the European powers was played by the '*liberalità*' or extravagance with which they entertained foreign dignitaries. In 1459, Borso d'Este welcomed Pius II with extraordinary magnificence as he journeyed to Mantua, while ten years later the Emperor was afforded equally lavish treatment during his stay in the city.

The Gonzaga, too, built their diplomatic network on military exigencies. Until the fifteenth century, the tasks assigned to the Mantuan ambassadors consisted largely in the stipulation of contracts of *condotte* with Milan,¹⁰ Florence and especially Venice, or the collection of payments for services rendered by the Marquises. But the Gonzaga soon established broader diplomatic relations with the power centres to which Mantua was tied by military accords. For example, the Mantuan court frequently exchanged information, gifts, and requests for the mutual protection of their subjects, as well as for financial aid, with Lorenzo il Magnifico.¹¹ Only in the mid-fifteenth century did political exchanges become less sporadic and extend to other Italian centres of power. However, although these relations covered a wider range of interests and transactions, they did not give rise to those forms of 'permanent diplomacy' that historians generally date to this period.¹² External relations were mainly handled by the chancellery secretaries, who alternated between office work and missions abroad, where they were flanked by local informers, men from other cities, and merchants; all individuals motivated not by a relationship of true service but by gratitude or the hope of favours, or because they were the Marquises' subjects.

Until the mid-sixteenth century, therefore, the international relations of the Gonzaga were characterized by extreme pragmatism, by flexible and informal forms of management, and by contingent occasions and necessities. An exception was their relationship with the

⁸ G. B. Pigna, *Historia de Principi di Este*, Venice, 1572, p. 720 and p. 756.

⁹ A. Prucher, *I 'Mémoires' di Philippe de Commynes e l'Italia del Quattrocento*, Florence, 1957, p. 51.

¹⁰ Margaroli, *Diplomazia e stati*, pp. 220–2.

¹¹ G. Praticò, 'Lorenzo il Magnifico e i Gonzaga', *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 107 (1949), pp. 155–71.

¹² Lazzarini, *Fra un principe e altri stati*, pp. 77–9.

imperial court. Like the lords of Ferrara, the Gonzaga were tied to the Empire by a feudal bond which obliged them to maintain envoys at the imperial court. These envoys might even be called residents if it were not for the long and exhausting peregrinations that they were forced to undertake as members of the Emperor's retinue.¹³ Although historians have interpreted the use of resident ambassadors as a clear signal of the affirmation of modern diplomacy,¹⁴ the first residents employed by the Gonzaga and the Estensi were instead part of a network of relations that was feudal in character, and they more closely resembled medieval *procuratores* than the ambassadors ordinary of the modern age.

A feature shared by the diplomatic systems of the two dynasties was their inseparable blending of diplomatic appointments with political ones, of diplomacy with government office.¹⁵ The men who assisted the Dukes in governing the state (councillors, jurists, secretaries) were from time to time assigned the most delicate negotiations or the most secret missions. It should be borne in mind, in fact, that throughout the *ancien régime* the web of international relations was woven by multiple exchanges among dynasties tied together by bonds of matrimony, alliance or kinship. This explains the 'private' and secret nature of the envoys' actions as they performed functions as broad as they were disparate, and which varied greatly according to circumstance. This feature emerges clearly from examination of the Mantuan bookkeeping records, in which until the mid-sixteenth century the Gonzaga envoys are varyingly denominated 'orators', 'secretaries', 'gentlemen' or 'agents'. This mix of appellations evidently reflects the still poorly defined political function and role of the envoys, and their general-purpose use according to the shifting exigencies of the Marquis and his court. 'Orator' is the term most frequently employed in the accounts of 1554, while the Gonzaga representatives are listed under the heading 'Lord Ambassadors' (*Signori Ambasciatori*) only in the accounts of 1577.¹⁶ In the sixteenth century, too, the tasks assigned by the Gonzaga to their envoys reflect an amorphous diplomatic function closely dependent on contingencies. The ambassador was required, often in the course of a

¹³ G. Schizzerotto, 'La carriera di un funzionario e poeta al servizio dei Gonzaga giustiziato dal suo signore: Andrea Painelli da Goito', in Schizzerotto, *Cultura e vita civile a Mantova fra '300 e '500*, Florence, 1977, pp. 29–83.

¹⁴ G. Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, London, 1955.

¹⁵ A. Luzio, *L'Archivio Gonzaga di Mantova. La corrispondenza familiare, amministrativa e diplomatica dei Gonzaga*, Verona, 1922, reprinted Mantua, 1993, p. 79.

¹⁶ A. De Maddalena, *Le finanze del ducato di Mantova all'epoca di Guglielmo Gonzaga*, Milan, 1961, p. 116.

single mission, to act as a negotiator, an orator, a commercial agent, a petitioner, a businessman, a supplier of goods and services to the court, a correspondent with other courts, an informant, and an arbitrator. This medley of political, economic and cultural functions, which is to be found in exactly the same form at Ferrara, provides further evidence of the blend between state and court, between public and private, so distinctive of the 'seigneurial state'.

The contribution by the seigneurial powers to the building of modern diplomacy, therefore, was not the use of residents as such. Rather, it was the view of diplomacy subsumed by that use. The seigneurial dynasties, in fact, stand as a synthesis, real or symbolic, of the multiple interests of the territory that they controlled, and they consolidated authority into more stable and visible forms. These were the necessary conditions for establishing a system of permanent relations that would ensure reciprocal military or financial support, compel respect for pacts and alliances, and deliver more accurate and more rapid information on distant events.

Charles VIII's invasion of Italy in 1494 initiated the long period of the Italian Wars; a period in which equilibria shifted and powers waned or consolidated, but above all in which new criteria were developed for the 'measurement' of the strength and political weight of states. As said, the years in which the Marquises of Mantua enjoyed the military glory and the economic prosperity brought by the *condotte* were precisely the years in which the small Italian states were compelled to acknowledge that control of the political-military game had slipped from their grasp.¹⁷ The decline in their military importance obliged the two states to develop the art of bargaining and negotiation to its fullest extent, and to rely on the skills and talents of their diplomatic representatives. Severely put to the test in the early sixteenth century, the diplomatic ability of the Marquises of Mantua and of the Dukes of Ferrara proved to be a crucial factor in the survival of the two dynasties and in the consolidation of their power.

Both the Estensi and the Gonzaga pursued vacillating policies in those decades, as they sought to draw maximum advantage from events, and as they carefully monitored changing alliances and the difficulties of other states. The rapid and sometimes foolhardy shifts of alliance practised by Francesco Gonzaga (1484-1519), and his release from imprisonment by the Venetians through the good offices of his wife Isabella and Julius II, would not have been possible without the persuasiveness and diplomatic skill of his envoys, and without the political shrewdness of

¹⁷ Mozzarelli, *Mantova e i Gonzaga*, p. 44

Isabella d'Este's advisers.¹⁸ Not always, however, was diplomatic ability and the zeal of ambassadors able to avert the consequences of political choices made with reckless opportunism, or of unequal alliances. Between 1510 and 1512, Alfonso I d'Este lost Modena and Reggio after clashing with Julius II; and only with great difficulty, and at the price of a new alliance which placed him under the protection of Charles V, was the Duke able to rebuild his state.

The early sixteenth century was not solely a period of warfare, however. Military events were matched throughout the peninsula by the growth of courts, both large and small, which performed important diplomatic functions, not only as the centres of the most important political decision-making but as the training-ground for ambassadors and advisers to the prince. There arose in the Renaissance courts that humanistic culture of the courtier which was such a distinctive feature of the training given to the diplomats of the *ancien régime*. The use of men of letters and culture on diplomatic missions was a practice adopted by both dynasties. The most celebrated of these men was Baldassare Castiglione, who proved himself not only an able executor of orders issued by others while serving his mission to Rome in 1519–21, but also a politician in his own right, fulfilling a role which went well beyond the one normally assigned to an ambassador.¹⁹ Castiglione's letters from Rome, moreover, were read in Mantua by a highly restricted circle of people comprising, apart from the Marquises and Cardinal Sigismondo, Mario Equicola, a scholar of repute and personal secretary to Isabella, and the second secretary Calandra, who also had literary ambitions.

The Estensi likewise dispatched Ludovico Ariosto on a mission to Rome, during the difficult period of their conflict with Julius II,²⁰ as well as using Giovan Battista Pigna as secretary.²¹ Some years later, Alfonso II employed another celebrated man of culture, Annibale Romei, as his negotiator in a dispute with Rome over the diversion of the river Reno. Romei was presumably not enthused by his appointment, given that he referred in private to these duties as 'great disasters' (*gran disastri*).²²

¹⁸ F. Bonati Savorgnan D'Ossoppo, 'Isabella d'Este nei rapporti dei Gonzaga con l'estero', extract from *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, series IX, vol. VII, 1968.

¹⁹ G. La Rocca, 'Il contributo di Baldassar Castiglione alla formazione della politica estera gonzaghesca negli ultimi anni del papato di Leone X: 1519–1521', in *Mantova e i Gonzaga nella civiltà del Rinascimento. Atti del Convegno (Mantova 6–8 ottobre 1974)*, Mantua, 1977, pp. 57–64.

²⁰ L. Chiappini, *Gli Estensi*, Varese, 1967, p. 226.

²¹ R. Baldi, G. B. Pigna. *Uno scrittore politico nella Ferrara del Cinquecento*, Genoa, 1983.

²² S. Prandi, *Il 'Cortegiano' ferrarese. I 'Discorsi' di Annibale Romei e la cultura nobiliare del Cinquecento*, Florence, 1990, p. 15 (on the mission to Rome see pp. 23ff.).

The two courts also resorted to literati, jurists and men of culture to create a climate of political and cultural consensus around their respective dynasties. The literati were used on some occasions as orators because of their rhetorical skill, while on others they were given the task of writing the history of the dynasty or of drafting funeral eulogies, speeches, letters, and memoirs.

More concretely, the employment of men of culture in the chancelleries and secretariats of the two duchies also meant that a broad range of technical skills were available for the handling of diplomatic correspondence, for the management of information and archives, and for consultation on the most sensitive political problems. Consequently, service to the prince and patronage, political duties and cultural clientelism, court and diplomacy interwove in a pattern that was a further distinctive feature of the 'Renaissance state'.

The political role of the court became more sharply defined in the first half of the sixteenth century in relation to other aspects of diplomatic activity as well, especially those to do with ceremonial and display. The solemn coronation of Charles V at Bologna in 1530 gave the Italian princes first-hand experience of the myth and symbolism of the Empire, and compelled them to measure the forms and symbols of their own sovereignty against such standards.²³ Thereafter one notes a qualitative change in Mantuan and Ferrarese diplomacy: not just because contacts with the Spanish court grew more frequent, but also and especially because the two courts strove to adjust their ceremonials and titles to the greater dignity that the imperial alliance conferred. After the restoration of Modena on 12 October 1531, for example, Alfonso I upgraded his representation at the imperial court by replacing his envoy in residence with Count Alfonso Bevilacqua, on whom he bestowed the rank of ambassador. But diplomatic ceremonial was evidently not just a question of form: beneath the controversies over formulas, rituals and titles there simmered a much more profound inter-dynastic conflict that involved the conception of sovereignty itself. The most celebrated of these clashes arose from a question of precedence between the Medici and the Estensi. In 1541, when Charles V received the homage of the two princes, he placed the Duke of Ferrara to his right and the lord of Florence to his left. On the basis of this precedent, the Este dynasty thereafter claimed the right to be accorded precedence in perpetuity. However, in 1569, as a consequence of the bull issued by

²³ G. Romano (ed.), *Cronaca del soggiorno di Carlo V in Italia*, Milan, 1892. See also R. Strong, *Arte e potere. Le feste del Rinascimento 1450-1650*, Milan, 1987, pp. 127ff.; B. Mitchell, *The Majesty of the State. Triumphal Progresses of Foreign Sovereigns in Renaissance Italy (1494-1600)*, Florence, 1986, pp. 133ff.

Pius V which granted the grand-ducal title to the Medici, the Florentine house definitively overtook the Estensi in terms of *dignitas*. Alfonso II refused to accept defeat, however, and the dispute dragged on for years, with polemics and posturing by pamphleteers and jurists on each side.²⁴

The political weight of Mantua, too, increased after 1536, the year in which Charles V recognized Margherita Paleologa, wife of Federico Gonzaga, as the rightful heir to Monferrato, thereby giving the Mantuan dynasty control over an area of strategic importance for the whole of Europe. Charles decision brought the Gonzaga definitively within the Spanish orbit. As the Venetian ambassador to Mantua remarked in 1615, the Gonzaga were now lords of two territories divided by the state of Milan, and therefore dependent on the Spanish governor and ministers for their every political initiative.²⁵ However, despite the Mantuan dynasty's enforced dependence on the Spanish system of power, its acquisition of Monferrato brought it greater influence in the assembly of states. Although Federico Gonzaga decided not to attend the imperial coronation in Bologna, for fear that he might be obliged to yield precedence to the Marquis Bonifacio del Monferrato, once he had acquired the ducal title he demanded more appropriate treatment for his envoys. In the 1540s he reorganized court procedure, paying particular attention to diplomatic ceremonial. The 'well-regulated court' that emerged from the regulations of those years was therefore the outcome of deliberate imitation of royal models and of the desire to 'have the presence of their sovereigns blaze in the eyes of the world'.²⁶

In keeping with the importance attributed to the court as a public arena of display and propaganda, the court of Mantua flaunted its magnificence most lavishly in the hospitality that it accorded to foreign princes and ambassadors. Even the architectural embellishment of many of Mantua's public buildings, most notably the Ducal Palace and the Palazzo Te, was tied to events in foreign policy, because these alterations and refurbishments were undertaken to welcome illustrious foreign guests to the city. Throughout the century, numerous distin-

²⁴ G. Mondaini, *La questione di precedenza tra il duca Cosimo I de' Medici e Alfonso II d'Este*, Florence, 1898; Archivio di Stato di Modena (ASMo, *Archivio segreto*, Casa e Stato, Corte, b. 461: *Titoli e cerimoniali tra le Corti*).

²⁵ 'A truly great misery it is for this prince that he is unable to have even a simple foot-soldier pass or a minimum quantity of foodstuffs delivered, whether in time of war or of peace, for his ordinary needs between one or other of his states, without applying to the Spanish ministers for permission': 'Relazione dell'Illustrissimo Signor Gioanni da Mulla ritornato di ambasciator dal Cardinal Duca di Mantova Ferdinando' (1615), in A. Ventura (ed.), *Relazioni di ambasciatori veneti al senato*, Bari, 1980, vol. II, p. 387.

²⁶ Archivio di Stato di Mantova (ASMn), *Archivio Gonzaga* (AG), b. 416.

guished visitors, Henry III, for instance, the Prince of Luxembourg and the Japanese princes who visited Mantua in 1585,²⁷ were lodged in the *Foresteria*, the guest-quarters in the Corte Nuova. During the sixteenth century the Gonzaga reorganized the functions of the court for representation purposes, introducing ceremonial which grew increasingly complex. And in the following century, in imitation of usage at the leading European courts, the *Maggiordomo Maggiore* (senior steward) and the chatelain were flanked by an official with more specific duties, known as the *Ricevitore delli Ambasciatori*.²⁸

Therefore, in both Mantua and Ferrara, court, patronage, diplomacy and the arts interwove into a form of political management as yet devoid of precise administrative or bureaucratic 'specializations' and with no clear demarcation between government and foreign policy. As regards diplomatic missions, the fundamental criterion for selection was still loyalty to the dynasty; a requirement which in practice meant that the diplomatic function was almost entirely monopolized by the greatest noble families in the two duchies, often flanked, especially on missions to the papal court, by prelates, bishops and other high-ranking members of the clergy.

In the case of Mantua, there was an evident tendency to regard diplomatic service as a forum of 'exchange' between a prince constantly in search of able personnel and a noble class intent on buttressing its social hegemony with titles, honours and material rewards. For the scions of many families, service abroad became the obligatory choice of career. It was an art that they learnt as young men as they accompanied their fathers and other relatives on missions, and which they then exercised in parallel with other private occupations, or alternately with public office or appointments at court. It was certainly not the stipends disbursed for such missions that attracted the nobles into diplomacy, since they were barely enough to cover expenses. Instead, a diplomatic career was seen as a device to gain access to the favours dispensed by the Duke and thereby improve their family fortunes. From the Bonatti to the Cavriani, from the Calandra to the Soardi, many of Mantua's noble families enhanced their prestige and augmented their landed wealth by means of diplomatic service. Among such families, the Arrivabene contrived for two centuries to transmit the office of secretary to the Gonzaga from father to son, alternating it with missions abroad; and the Calandra, secretaries and chatelains throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, were

²⁷ *Honori fatti da Sua Altezza alli Signori Principi del Giappone il mese di luglio 1585*, in ASMn, AG, b. 389.

²⁸ ASMn, AG, b. 395.

frequently appointed to embassies and negotiations.²⁹ Another prominent family in Mantuan diplomacy were the Capilupi, one of whose members, Benedetto Capilupi, a celebrated writer and jurist and secretary to Isabella after 1490, substantially increased his family's landholdings as a result of his services as ambassador. Sent to Milan in 1497, he obtained for Francesco the title of imperial captain to Francesco with a stipend of 40,000 ducats and was rewarded with a vast landholding near Suzzara. In 1508, after representing the Gonzaga at the funeral of the Duke of Urbino, Isabella rewarded him with another large parcel of land in Valle. Benedetto's son Ippolito Capilupi, later Bishop of Fano, and Ercole Gonzaga's fellow pupil under the tutelage of Pomponazzi, was for many years the Gonzagas' resident in Rome, where he prepared his nephew Camillo, canon of Mantua, to take over from him as resident, an appointment which he assumed in 1580.

As well as members of the nobility, the Gonzaga and Estensi made constant use of clerics and members of the religious orders, whether native-born or foreign, and especially for missions to the court of Rome. A decisive political role within the papal Curia was performed by the '*cardinale di famiglia*', who acted as the guarantor and protector of the dynasty as regards both ecclesiastical benefices and more strictly political matters.³⁰ The *cardinale di famiglia* was frequently used on diplomatic missions as well, a case in point being Alessandro d'Este, appointed cardinal in 1599, who handled contacts with the Spanish court and was then nominated by Philip III to act as his '*Protettore*' at the Roman court.³¹ Frequent use was also made of members of religious orders, bishops and confessors. One of the few Este embassies to have been studied concerns the mission to Spain conducted in 1587 by Gaspare Silingardi, bishop of Modena. Chosen for the task by virtue of his proven skills as a mediator, Silingardi deplored the profligacy of the Madrid court, and for the entire duration of his mission wrote acerbic letters to Modena, complaining that 'the sending of a poor prelate here as ambassador' was detrimental to the interests of the Duke.³² Nonetheless, even brief examination of the diplomatic correspondence in the

²⁹ See R. Quazza, *La diplomazia gonzaghesca*, Milan, 1940; D. Frigo and A. M. Mortari, 'Nobiltà, diplomazia e cerimoniale alla corte di Mantova', in *La Corte di Mantova nell'età di Andrea Mantegna: 1450-1550*, Rome, 1997, pp. 125-43.

³⁰ M. Pellegrini, 'Per una lettura storico-sociale della Curia romana. Corte di Roma e aristocrazie italiane in età moderna', *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa*, 30 (1994), pp. 453-602.

³¹ Chiappini, *Gli Estensi*, p. 383.

³² B. Ricci, 'Le ambascerie estensi di G. Silingardi, vescovo di Modena, alle corti di Filippo II e Clemente VII', *Rivista di Scienze Storiche*, 1907, p. 60.

Modena archives reveals the constant presence of prelates and churchmen among the Estensi envoys.

Official representation and dynastic ceremonies required the presence of court noblemen. Of very different social origins, however, were the men called upon to perform the numerous complementary functions of diplomacy: the jurists who drafted the memoranda and instructions which enabled the Duke's envoys to defend his interests more effectively; the minor functionaries or obscure men of letters dispatched on the less important missions;³³ the merchants who worked as correspondents and informers in the minor cities or states.

It should also be borne in mind that a significant proportion of the diplomatic activity of these small states consisted in administering a network of quotidian contacts, negotiations and transactions which spread outwards from Ferrara and Mantua to neighbouring states, and concerned border disputes, conflicts of jurisdiction, food supplies, military skirmishes, disputes over watercourses, and numerous other problems. One might call this activity 'micro-diplomacy'; but it was 'diplomatic' nonetheless because it was conducted by envoys and ambassadors through interminable negotiation and discussion, with dense exchanges of letters, instructions and juridical memoranda. More careful investigation of the foreign relations of the small states might thus help to redefine the physiognomy of modern diplomacy. For this was not merely a form of representation among sovereign states. It was also a close-knit and multiform network of exchanges, agreements, alliances, information, interests and dynastic affairs; the pre-eminent vehicle, therefore, of the 'policy' of the *ancien régime* and of its many and diverse aspects.

AFTER CATEAU-CAMBRÉSIS: THE STRUCTURES AND PRACTICES OF FOREIGN POLICY

The Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis (1559) definitively ratified Spanish control over the Italian peninsula. But, although on the one hand the treaty restricted room for independent initiatives by the small Italian states on the European stage, on the other it stabilized these states and gave them definitive recognition. Nevertheless, as subsequent events show, this was not an arrangement devoid of tensions and conflicts, as witness the devolution of Ferrara to the Papacy, or the conflict between

³³ A. Mortari, 'Tra corte e diplomazia. Il nobile Ercole Udine, accademico incauto (1540-1609)', in C. Mozzarelli (ed.), *'Familia' del principe e famiglia aristocratica*, Rome, 1988, vol. II, pp. 539-62.

the Gonzaga and Savoy for possession of Monferrato, episodes which highlight the situation of 'creeping' conflict that typified Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.³⁴

The consolidation of a power which still largely relied on titles and investitures granted from above was therefore a long and controversial process for the two states. It was surrounded by risks and marked by reversals, like the loss of Ferrara by the Estensi, which drastically restricted their room for political manoeuvre. Although increasing the number of envoys and reinforcing the network of foreign legations were decisive factors in the defence of acquired positions, for this purpose it was even more important to bolster the institutions responsible for foreign policy and administration of the diplomatic network. The chancelleries, of medieval origin and regulated by typically notarial procedures, were now replaced with state secretariats more closely attuned to the exigencies of the rapid transmission and confidentiality of information, and regulated by a privileged relationship between the first secretary and the prince.

In Mantua, the institutional strengthening of the state concerned both domestic government – with the consolidation of administrative and judicial structures – and foreign policy. In the 1540s, Cardinal Ercole undertook radical reform of the ducal chancellery. Although the office still preserved its distinctive character as a cultural institution of the previous century,³⁵ it was now reorganized so that duties were allocated more efficiently and a clearer distinction was drawn between current affairs and extraordinary negotiations. Contacts with Mantuan representatives abroad were handled by two secretaries, Sabino and Abbadino. Military questions and those to do with ceremonial and other matters were allocated to the remaining chancellors.³⁶ In 1592 the three secretaries '*a secretis*' were instructed – together with the other councillors and the heads of the judiciary – to set up the council '*sibi col-laterale*', a body which Vincenzo I envisaged as the highest political organ of the duchy.³⁷ Numerous rules introduced in subsequent

³⁴ On the Monferrato question see R. Quazza, *Mantova e Monferrato nella politica europea alla vigilia della guerra per la successione (1624–1627)*, Mantua, 1922; Quazza, *La guerra per la successione di Mantova e del Monferrato, 1628–1631*, Mantua, 1926, 2 vols.; C. M. Belfanti and M. A. Romani, 'Il Monferrato: una frontiera scomoda fra Mantova e Torino (1536–1707)', in C. Ossola, C. Raffestin and M. Ricciardi (eds.), *La frontiera da stato a nazione. Il caso Piemonte*, Rome, 1987, pp. 113–45.

³⁵ E. Faccioli, 'L'attività letteraria a Mantova nell'età del Rinascimento', in *Mantova e i Gonzaga*, p. 128.

³⁶ ASM, AG, b. 3013; also in A. Borgogno, 'Prime indagini sulla cancelleria mantovana al tempo della Signoria', *Ricerche Medievali*, 1 (1966), pp. 54–74.

³⁷ Mozzarelli, *Mantova e i Gonzaga*, pp. 106–7.

decades also show that it was the exigencies of diplomacy that prompted plans and proposals to reorganize the chancellery, often in emulation of the institutions and rules at other European courts that the Mantuan ambassadors described in their correspondence.³⁸

In fifteenth-century Ferrara, foreign affairs were administered by the *Consiglio segreto*, whose members varied in number from three to eleven. In the sixteenth century, when the *Consiglio* lapsed, foreign relations became a responsibility exclusive to the Council of State, whose councillors and secretaries acted as full-fledged ministers. Internally to the chancellery, the duties previously performed by notaries were taken over by secretaries invested with diplomatic and notarial functions in foreign policy (commissions, treaties, ratifications).

Much more is required of them than mechanical service, however orderly and correct: and it is for this reason that one finds among their ranks men of elevated culture and humanistic education, from Bonaventura Pistofilo to Giambattista Giraldi Cinzio, from Giambattista Pigna to Battista Guarini.³⁹

One notes the first signs of specialization in the 1580s, when Giovan Battista Laderchi was appointed head of the secretariat. Laderchi mainly attended to juridical matters, such as conventions, treaties and controversies with foreign states, while another secretary, Antonio Montecatini, was assigned more general duties concerning the reception of foreign dignitaries as they passed through Ferrara, audiences with ambassadors, and examination of the correspondence with Ferrarese residents abroad.⁴⁰

But in Modena, and this should be noted, reform of the apparatuses and the definition of new competences in matters of foreign policy proceeded *pari passu* with a marked decline in the influence of the Estensi on the European stage. Definitive proof that the small states had now lost their role as protagonists is provided, at the end of the century, by the episode of the devolution of Ferrara, which painfully exposed the diplomatic weakness of the Estensi. At many critical junctures of the early sixteenth century, diplomacy had proved to be a valuable weapon in defence of the dynasty's rights. But in 1598 diplomacy no longer sufficed to avert a loss which the Estensi strove for more than a century to remedy with political negotiations as prolonged as they were futile. In

³⁸ See for example ASM, AG, b. 3013: 'Regolamento da operarsi per la Ducale Cancellaria' (1590).

³⁹ Chiappini, *Gli Estensi*, p. 322.

⁴⁰ R. Montagnani, 'G. B. Laderchi nel governo estense (1572-1618)', *Atti e Memorie della Deputazione Modenese di Storia Patria*, series 10, 12 (1977), pp. 101-53.

the devolution affair, moreover, the military aspect was entirely secondary, while centre stage was occupied by the 'diplomatic battle' between papal and Ferrarese diplomacy.⁴¹ The inept behaviour of some of the Estensi diplomats was largely responsible for the failure of the negotiations with Rome. For example, when Cesare d'Este was threatened with excommunication, he sent Girolamo Giglioli to defend him in Rome. But his envoy cowered with fear before the Pope and wept incessantly during the audience, declaring that he cared more for the saving of souls than for material goods: a curious argument indeed for an ambassador supposedly defending the legitimacy of his lord's worldly power! This institutional weakness at the apex of the state was reflected in a general social malaise, while the breakdown in the consensus previously enjoyed by the dynasty was evidenced *inter alia* by widespread personal disaffection with Cesare d'Este. The management of day-to-day affairs deteriorated dramatically as their lack of coordination became more and more apparent. The Duke was betrayed by several members of his closest entourage: by Lucrezia d'Este, sister to Alfonso II and duchess d'Urbino, for example, accused of having negotiated an accord too favourable to the Papacy with Cardinal Aldobrandini; or by his secretary Montecatini who, on becoming the Pope's privy chamberlain, disclosed to him important secrets of state. Secretary Laderchi, too, was accused of treachery after his clumsy handling of the Ferrara negotiations and his opposition to recourse to arms.⁴²

With Ferrara lost, the curtailment of Estense power entailed the creation of new forms of administration which affected the secretariat as well. The reform of 1618–19 allocated responsibility for specific sectors and for certain 'places for correspondence outside the State' to each of the councillors and secretaries of state.⁴³ The latter were obliged to assemble once a week as the *Consiglio di Segnatura*, which was flanked on matters of especial importance by the Council of State (or *Consiglio segreto*) composed of three secretaries and members of the court appointed by the Duke.⁴⁴

Fearful of Spanish power, frequently in conflict with the Roman court over ecclesiastical benefices, constantly alert to the manoeuvres of

⁴¹ A. Gasparini, *Cesare d'Este e Clemente VII*, Modena, 1960 (with a generous selection of documents).

⁴² Laderchi was the true architect of Cesare's foreign policy, which he entrusted to him completely. As well as being official ambassador to Rome, Laderchi also had his trusted agent, Gaspare Carrà, in that city, who promptly informed him on every matter: Montagnani, 'G. B. Laderchi', pp. 115ff.

⁴³ Marini, *Lo stato estense*, p. 107.

⁴⁴ F. Valenti, 'I Consigli di Governo presso gli Estensi dalle origini alla devoluzione di Ferrara', in *Studi in onore di R. Filangieri*, Naples, 1959, pp. 39–40.

the Milanese governors, suspicious of the minor feudatories or powers, throughout the seventeenth century the Gonzaga and Estensi organized the control and management of their foreign policy on a personal basis. The relationship of *fidelitas* between the individual secretary or ambassador and the Duke, or with other members of the noble house invested with political responsibilities, was of central importance. The two noble houses were concerned less with defence of their borders than with buttressing their power at home and maintaining the prestige of their dynasty. They fostered a 'culture of suspicion' which led to the meticulous compilation of the ducal archives – the authentic historical 'memory' of the dynasty – and to extremely rigid rules, constantly updated, governing the safekeeping and use of diplomatic documents, true *arcana principis* accessible to only a few trusted councillors.⁴⁵

Although removed from public view and confined to the privacy of the prince's chamber, information and notices nevertheless circulated widely in the two courts, along with the daily exchange of news. The subordinate position of the two duchies, in fact, and their shifting alliances, required the rapid and reliable gathering and transmission of information. The very survival of the Gonzaga and the Estensi depended on their foreknowledge of the moods and decisions of foreign powers, of the activities of allies, of troop movements, of negotiations and agreements among other states. As well as the despatches of their ambassadors, the Gonzaga received information from informers in every part of Europe recruited among men tied to the court by self-interest, among Mantuans temporarily living abroad, or among professional spies. The house of Gonzaga could also count on the information sent back by its members on their travels abroad,⁴⁶ as well as on the intelligence to be gleaned from the epistolary correspondence arising from the house's numerous links of kinship with other European dynasties. Valuable information could also be garnered from the personal letters sent by sovereigns and other political leaders to the lords of Mantua, today collected in the 'foreign correspondence' section of the Gonzaga archives.⁴⁷ There was, moreover, the constant flow of the '*fogli di avvisi*' or news-sheets compiled in Rome and Venice by true professionals of information. After 1542, and for around a century, the Gonzaga had

⁴⁵ On the Mantuan archives see P. Torelli, *L'Archivio Gonzaga di Mantova*, vol. 1, Mantua, 1920, pp. xxvii *et seq.*; on the Modena archives see F. Valenti, *Profilo storico dell'Archivio Segreto Estense*, Rome, 1958.

⁴⁶ See the edited letters in R. Tamalio, *Ferrante Gonzaga alla corte di Carlo V*, Mantua, 1991, and in Tamalio, *Federico Gonzaga alla corte di Francesco I di Francia nel carteggio privato con Mantova*, Paris, 1994.

⁴⁷ Luzio, *L'Archivio Gonzaga*, p. 44.

their own *foglio di avvisi*, which the secretaries constantly updated with news from every part of the peninsula and Europe.⁴⁸ The Archivio di Modena, too, contains an impressive collection of *avvisi*, often dispatched to the court by compilers specially paid by the Dukes for their services.⁴⁹ And in Modena a special section of the chancellery gathered the letters of the princes and foreign powers that corresponded with the Estensi.⁵⁰

This voracious appetite for news displayed by the Gonzaga and Estensi was not stimulated by their political or military preoccupations alone. The early seventeenth century was a period in which the political aspirations of the two duchies took concrete form more in the pursuit of prestige and honours than in independent political initiatives. Mantua and Ferrara were drawn into the Spanish orbit by the system of alliances, of course, but much more concretely by a set of financial inducements both direct (pensions, subsidies) and indirect (military *condotte*, titles, fiefs). The principal task of the ambassadors in Spain was to monitor the workings of the Spanish power system, from the activities of ministers to the decisions of the Councils, from the journeys of the sovereign to the comings and goings of foreign guests, for every change in the power balances internal to the Spanish government might alter the favours bestowed at that court. This constant preoccupation with shifts in the Spanish power system emerges clearly from the correspondence of the Mantuan ambassador Annibale Iberti, who testifies to the creation of the system of government based on the *valido*, in this case the Duke of Lerma. In a letter announcing the death of Philip II, Iberti recommended that a personage of importance should be sent to Madrid to attend Philip's funeral and to assure the new Spanish political actors of Mantua's continuing loyalty. A few days later, Iberti reported on the first changes to take place at the Spanish court and on the increasing favour enjoyed by the Duke of Lerma. On his return to Mantua, Iberti passed on his knowledge to his successor and wrote a brief memoir in which he described the Spanish ministers and their secretaries, indicating the most rapid way to obtain audiences with them, and how best to negotiate with them.⁵¹ Detailed knowledge of the Spanish govern-

⁴⁸ G. Amadei, 'I giornali manoscritti che erano letti dai Gonzaga', *Civiltà Mantovana*, 3 (1968), p. 369. See also ASM, AG, b. 2000: *Bollettino Storico-Diplomatico-Politico*, a collection of *avvisi* in chronological order.

⁴⁹ Ognibene, *Le relazioni della Casa d'Este*, pp. 231–3; ASMo, *Archivio segreto*, Cancelleria, sez. Estero: *Avvisi e notizie dall'Estero*.

⁵⁰ F. Valenti, *Panorama dell'Archivio di Stato di Modena*, Modena, 1963.

⁵¹ D. Frigo, "'Per ben negoziare'" in Spagna: una memoria del primo Seicento del mantovano Annibale Iberti', *Cheiron*, 9 (1992), pp. 289–306.

ment was vital for the policy of cautious rapprochement with France now being pursued by Vincenzo I; but Iberti's memoir also demonstrates, once again, the extent to which the diplomacy of the small states relied on personal familiarity, on the sometimes reckless use of ducal extravagance (Iberti also itemizes the most suitable gifts for each dignity), and on constant attention to the dynamics of power at court. Here diplomatic practice coincided with the political doctrine then current which held that the essential quality of the 'good ambassador' was prudence, by which was meant constant observation of others in order to intuit their moods and inclinations and thus obtain information valuable for the conduct of negotiations.

The diplomatic initiatives of the Gonzaga and Estensi in the early seventeenth century were therefore based on a constant exchange relationship with the Spanish and framed by the wholly particular form of hegemony wielded by Madrid over the peninsula. Given that Spanish domination was the source of obligations, political protection and honours, the principal purpose of many of the Gonzaga and Estensi diplomatic missions to Spain was to obtain a *condotta*, an honorary title, or a military 'dignity' that would elevate them above their peers. Further evidence of the importance assumed by 'glory' and 'reputation' in the day-to-day action of the ambassadors is provided by the mission of Gian Battista Ronchi, the Estensi envoy to Spain in 1630-3. Ronchi's instructions provide a telling summary of the motives, aims and forms of Modenese diplomacy in the early seventeenth century. Ronchi had many tasks to accomplish, but Francesco I d'Este's most immediate concern was to obtain Spain's recognition of the title '*Altezza*' accorded him by some of the Italian princes. Ronchi was instructed to recall the blood ties that joined Madrid and Modena when perorating his suit. But he was to do so with caution, ensuring, should Spain refuse, 'a safe and honourable withdrawal' which would not prejudice his other negotiations on 'military appointments, *commendae*, ecclesiastical vacancies, pensions relative to these, and pensions of other kinds'.⁵² Ronchi was also instructed to negotiate investiture of the fief of Correggio, the payment of Spanish credits to Modena, the still unresolved question of the restitution of Ferrara, and Francesco I's claim to the office of *Generale del Mare* or Viceroy of Sicily or of Naples. This, therefore, was a sizeable 'package' of requests intended to satisfy Francesco's desire for honour as well his much more concrete needs.

But Ronchi's embassy is of interest as regards other aspects of the

⁵² E. Manni, *Un ambasciatore estense del Seicento alla Corte di Spagna (G. B. Ronchi) 1630-1633*, Modena, 1929, p. 13.

diplomatic practice of the two duchies as well. Sent to Madrid to obtain titles and offices for his prince, Ronchi was nevertheless ordered to arrive in the Spanish capital in a manner befitting the dignity to which the Duke aspired. And in this 'theatre of appearances', the Modenese envoy proved to be an accomplished actor. When boarding ship in Genoa, he made sure that his galley set sail alone, the intention being to show that the Duke was no niggard in his spending on his ambassadors. On his arrival in Spain, Ronchi wrote with pride to his Duke 'that in Madrid there is no livery that even closely approaches ours', and that the envoy of the Grand-Duke of Tuscany 'rides in a paltry carriage and with ordinary livery'.⁵³ The embassy was staffed in keeping with such ostentation, given that it had a resident secretary, an embassy secretary, and three personal assistants, two of whom were Counts. The house occupied by Ronchi alone cost 8,000 reals a year, and it must have employed a large domestic staff indeed if, after cutbacks introduced to reduce costs, it still amounted to ten servants – the same number, it has been pointed out, as employed at the embassies of Genoa, Florence and Messina. Ronchi's instructions indicate that at least four footmen, six pages, two coachmen and a butler made up the retinue of the Modenese ambassadors in Spain, certainly one of the most prestigious diplomatic appointments for subjects of the Estensi. However, the conspicuous expenditure required of Ronchi at the Spanish court obliged him to petition Modena for further funds, and when these were slow to arrive, to trim his budget and reduce the pomp of his legation. In the spring of 1631, Ronchi wrote, 'these pages and flunkies are reduced to such parlous circumstances that being unable to dress them I do not know how to leave the house, and they do not know how they can continue to serve, such is the state they are in . . .'.⁵⁴

In 1587, even more lavishly ostentatious had been the legation of Bishop Silingardi, who took a secretary, two chaplains, a housemaster, a *spenditore* or bursar, eight pages and footmen, as well as several waiters and cooks, to Spain.⁵⁵ But in this case, too, the Estensi resident was compelled to economize after his initial display of magnificence and to take out loans with which to finance his mission. As Silingardi disconsolately wrote to his prince: 'I bought the mounts that I required to negotiate. But I suspect that I shall have to sell them in order to live.'⁵⁶

This preoccupation with maintaining appearances and matching the magnificence of other sovereigns is a constant feature of the diplomatic action of Modena and Mantua. The disparity between the ambassadors'

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁵⁵ Ricci, 'Le ambascerie estensi', p. 60.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

resources and the ambitions of the two dynasties forced the former to make constant economies, to incur debts, and to draw upon their family assets, whereupon they complained to the prince, beseeching his help and protesting against the burdensome expense of diplomatic appointments. The correspondence of the Mantuan envoys is littered with complaints about the financial difficulties of their missions,⁵⁷ difficulties sometimes exacerbated by uncertainty over the actual duration of their residence abroad. Unlike in the republican political regimes, the length of Mantuan foreign service was not regulated by specific rules,⁵⁸ but depended on circumstances, on the patience of the envoys, and on the political expediencies of the moment. At Mantua, and precisely because of the enormous expenditure required of their incumbents, missions did not usually last longer than three years. However, there were numerous exceptions: Benedetto Agnello's sojourn in Venice, for instance, which lasted from 1530 to 1556, or that of Giustiniano Priandi, who was resident in France for more than thirty years.

But not even financial difficulties dissuaded the Dukes of Mantua and Modena from their frenetic search for 'reputation', or from their pursuit of wholly unrealistic ambitions solely in order to elevate themselves above their peers. Envoys and ambassadors were instructed to promote the dynastic or political interests of their sovereigns abroad, of course, but they also had to verify the unlikely success of ambitions and projects erected on often inadequate and inaccurate information and nourished behind the closed doors of the ducal chambers. The elections for the Polish crown provided a frequent outlet for political ambition and designs for dynastic expansion. In 1573, Alfonso II d'Este dispatched the celebrated poet Giovan Battista Guarini to Poland, to perorate his cause before the Diet. Guarini failed in his mission, however, and on his return to Ferrara was criticized for diplomatic ineptitude.⁵⁹

In 1631, Spain offered Francesco I d'Este the prestigious appointment of Governor of Portugal; but Fulvio Testi, an authoritative politician of the time, as well as councillor and diplomat to the Modenese court, advised the Duke to refuse, pointing out the risk of attack by the French or by the Pope during his absence. Moreover, acceptance of the post would have placed the Duke in the hands of Spanish ministers, since Madrid would never have allowed Alfonso to take Modenese councillors and ministers with him to Portugal. In short, what Madrid was

⁵⁷ Luzio, *L'Archivio Gonzaga*, pp. 83–4.

⁵⁸ On the difference between republican diplomacy and the diplomacy of the princes see D. Frigo, 'Politica estera e diplomazia: figure, problemi e apparati', in G. Greco and M. Rosa (eds.), *Storia degli antichi stati italiani*, Bari, 1996, pp. 117–61.

⁵⁹ Chiappini, *Gli Estensi*, pp. 298–9.

offering was only apparently an honour; it was much more advisable, Testi concluded, to remain 'Duke of Modena free and independent, who commands and is not commanded; who teaches rather than learns to obey'.⁶⁰ Subsequent events proved Testi right, for a few years later Portugal regained its independence.

Vincenzo I Gonzaga (1587–1612) too aspired to the Polish crown when Sigismund III Vasa returned to Sweden on his brother Karl's accession to the Swedish throne. On the advice of Polish dignitaries also, the Duke sent two envoys to Poland to assess his chances of election, and to sound out the attitudes of the various noble factions. The reports sent back by the envoys dispelled the Duke's illusions, however, but at the same time provided the Mantuan court with valuable information on the workings, history and institutions of Poland.⁶¹

Many other dreams of glory were cherished by the ambitious Duke of Mantua: in his expeditions against the Turk,⁶² for example, but most signally in his endeavour to gain the throne of Albania, a project arising from misunderstandings and false information, and encouraged by foreign adventurers. The episode testifies to the persistence in the Mantuan and Modenese courts of a residual chivalrous culture which, now that it had lost its original impulse, had transmuted into dreams of glory and quixotic warfare which were at odds with the political situation of seventeenth-century Europe. It was a culture, moreover, which was beyond the reach of the financial and military resources effectively available to the Dukes, and alien to the needs and expectations of their subjects.

Therefore, although the diplomacy of these 'small duchies' served the sole purpose of protecting and promoting dynastic interests, the burden of financing courtly pomp and the reception of foreign dignitaries was shouldered by the duchy as a whole. A system of *donativi*, or compulsory gifts to the ruler, and extraordinary levies, financed every aspect of dynastic activity. In some cases, even ordinary diplomacy was paid for by additional taxation: for example, Guglielmo Gonzaga's decision in 1570 to install a permanent legation in Turin was accompanied by a tax increase in Monferrato, the justification being that

⁶⁰ V. Di Tocco, *Ideali di indipendenza in Italia durante la preponderanza spagnola*, Messina, 1926, p. 155.

⁶¹ Edited versions of documents concerning this mission have been published in G. Fusai, 'La candidatura del Duca Vincenzo I Gonzaga di Mantova al trono della Polonia', *Italia. Rivista di Storia e Letteratura*, 5–6 (1915–16), pp. 242–70.

⁶² U. Errante, "'Forse che sì, forse che no". La terza spedizione del duca Vincenzo Gonzaga in Ungheria alla guerra contro il Turco (1601)', *Archivio Storico Lombardo*, 1915, pp. 15–335.

Mantuan representation in Savoy was made necessary by events in that territory.⁶³

A yearning for independence and honour, military daydreaming and defence of the prestige and name of the noble house: these, therefore, were the motives and goals of the foreign policy pursued by the two dynasties in the first decades of the seventeenth century, although it was by now clear that the Spanish power system was dramatically and irreversibly in decline. The episode of the devolution of Ferrara in 1598 had already demonstrated that the international situation and the immediate interests of the European powers were crucial in providing some sort of political 'cover' for the aspirations and intents of the small princes. And this was made even more evident by the War of the Mantuan Succession. The takeover of Mantua by the French branch of the house of Gonzaga was accompanied by feverish diplomatic activity on the part of Carlo I Gonzaga-Nevers: initially to assert his right of succession, then to contain the damage wrought to his possessions by the war, and finally, after the sacking of Mantua in July 1630, to regain political recognition and restore the relations without which the small state could not survive. This was the period of the greatest mobilization of the Gonzaga ambassadors. Required to construct the policy of the new dynasty, they were obliged to draw upon substantial reserves of historical and juridical knowledge, to which a valuable contribution was made by Francesco Faenza, orator in Rome, and by Monsignor Ottavio Morbioli at the imperial court. At this critical juncture, numerous extraordinary embassies were sent out from Mantua. For these, men of the church were preferred: the Bishop of Mantua, Vincenzo Agnelli Soardi, was dispatched to the court of Ferdinand II, while the Bishop of Casale, Scipione Agnelli Maffei, went to Spain. Ambassadors extraordinary were also sent to France, Rome, Florence and Venice. Until the arrival of Carlo di Nevers in Mantua, in January 1628, this assiduous diplomatic activity was accompanied by a radical reorganization of the chancellery. Correspondence with foreign countries was handled by the Grand Chancellor, Alessandro Striggi, the Duke's valued adviser on foreign policy in those years.⁶⁴ Striggi was assisted in his management of foreign affairs by three councillors and secretaries of state, two *segretari di camera* for private letters and confidential documents, and two chancellors who wrote the correspondence. Although the chancellery was reorganized on several occasions in the years that followed, when secretaries died or governments changed, the structure established by Carlo remained

⁶³ G. Coniglio, *I Gonzaga*, Varese, 1967, p. 335.

⁶⁴ Quazza, *La diplomazia*, pp. 47–8.

substantially the same until the advent of Ferdinando Carlo in 1673. It was this relative bureaucratization of the chancellery's functions that gave the Dukes direct control over foreign policy, the lines of which were discussed in daily audiences with the Grand Chancellor (later called the 'First Secretary of State'), and it ensured the orderly management of diplomatic correspondence with the ambassadors extraordinary and with the permanent embassies at the imperial court, as well as in Germany, Spain, France, Flanders, England, Rome, Milan, Venice, Genoa, Florence and Naples.⁶⁵

The War of the Mantuan Succession was a watershed in Italian politics. Under Richelieu's direction, from the 1630s onwards the French again asserted their presence in the peninsula, opening up broader terrain for political initiatives by the small states and enabling Mantua and Modena, in particular, to loosen their ties with the Spanish court. A first outcome of the new European situation was the 1635 Treaty of Rivoli between Louis XIII and Victor Amadeus I of Savoy, to which both Carlo Gonzaga and Francesco I d'Este adhered in order to create an anti-Habsburg front in Italy. Their action followed the diplomatic initiative of the early 1600s led by Charles Emmanuel I which created something similar to a 'league' among certain of the Italian states and was also favoured by the matrimonial ties among the courts of Mantua, Modena and Parma.⁶⁶

And yet, although the Habsburg power system, which hinged on the complementarity between its Spanish and Austrian branches,⁶⁷ was curtailed by the Peaces of Westphalia and the Pyrenees, in the peninsula it demonstrated considerable capacity for resistance. Despite Modena's oft-repeated demands for the restitution of Ferrara, the only dividends accruing to the Duchy from the Peace of the Pyrenees were the investiture of Correggio, the right to neutrality, and Spain's promise to settle her longstanding debts. According to Simeoni,⁶⁸ the house of Este lost its political nerve on the demise of Francesco I: thereafter, as in Mantua following the war of succession, the Estensi dynasty forsook military ventures for the indolent routine of the court.

⁶⁵ F. Fantini D'Onofrio, 'Fonti per la storia della cancelleria gonzaghesca: gli ordini ducali dal 1628 al 1707', *Civiltà Mantovana*, new series, 6 (1988), pp. 39–60.

⁶⁶ A. Panella, 'Una lega italiana durante la guerra dei trenta anni', *Archivio Storico Italiano*, 94 (1936), pp. 3–36; 95 (1937), pp. 21–50.

⁶⁷ K. O. Von Aretin, 'L'ordinamento feudale in Italia e le sue ripercussioni sulla politica europea. Un contributo alla storia del tardo feudalesimo in Europa', *Annali dell'Istituto Storico Italo-germanico*, 4 (1978), pp. 51–95; G. Signorotto (ed.), *L'Italia degli Austrias. Monarchia cattolica e domini italiani nei secoli XVI e XVII*, Mantua, 1993 (special issue of *Cheiron*, 9, 1992).

⁶⁸ L. Simeoni, *Francesco I d'Este e la politica italiana di Mazarino*, Bologna, 1922.

Despite energetic bargaining at every available negotiating table, the Gonzaga failed to obtain revision of the clauses in the Treaty of Cherasco, which was confirmed both at Westphalia and by the Peace of the Pyrenees.⁶⁹ After its successes of the Renaissance, and its resilience during the years straddling the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the diplomacy of the two small states was now apparently impotent, unable even to obtain the most minor of alterations to clauses and provisions suiting the purposes of the large states.

The hub of Spanish hegemony over the small independent states of the peninsula was the court of the Governor of Milan, which exercised direct political and military influence over neighbouring states and acted as the principal channel of political transactions between the Italian courts and Madrid. Moreover, the Governors of Milan supplied Madrid with information and political opinions which then directly influenced the decisions of the Council of Italy. For instance, the decision by Olivares to intervene in the War of Mantuan Succession was prompted *inter alia* by a series of anxious letters dispatched by Don Gonzalo de Córdoba to the Madrid court, in which he emphasised the danger to Spain should the French branch of the Gonzaga install itself in Mantua. Milan was undoubtedly the second most important centre in Italy after Rome, the 'centre of gravity of the diplomatic system of the potentates large and small' tied to Spain.⁷⁰ The Gonzagas' ambassadors, moreover, had particular reasons for maintaining vigilance over the manoeuvres of the Spanish in Milan and for cultivating contacts and connections with functionaries and aristocrats in that city, given that Lombardy was the access route to Monferrato.⁷¹

Besides being the market that supplied the two dynasties with vital goods and services (banks, college of jurists), the importance of Milan as a centre of information on Spain and the other territories of the Catholic monarchy obviously lay in its proximity. Whereas it took between eighteen and twenty days to travel from Modena to Madrid, and almost as many to reach the imperial court, the distance from Modena to Milan could be covered in three or four days, and towards the end of the seventeenth century in only two. It was hoped, moreover, that the

⁶⁹ B. Cialdea, *Gli stati italiani e la pace dei Pirenei. Saggio sulla diplomazia seicentesca*, Milan, 1961.

⁷⁰ M. Cattini, "'Alla Altezza Serenissima di Modena dal residente in Milano". Ambasciatori, agenti e corrispondenti modenese nel XVII secolo', in *'Millain the Great'. Milano nelle brume del Seicento*, Milan, 1989, p. 226.

⁷¹ M. Romani, "'A Milano, città sì grande et famosa, non vi sono cima d'huomini?" Ambasciatori gonzagheschi e la società ambrosiana del Seicento', in *'Millain the Great'*, pp. 365–79.

Governor might provide easier access to the court of Madrid, or that he could accelerate negotiations over requests for titles, pensions and military aid. Gifts were lavished to this end, to the extent that even the Mantuan ambassador Striggi commented from Milan: 'the world murmurs that the potentates of Italy do push too far in their adulation'.⁷² Seventeenth-century Milan also became a remarkable 'theatre' in which the representatives of the Italian princes rehearsed the formalism and ceremonious manners of the Spanish. After 1670, the year of his solemn entry into the city, the Duke of Osuna imposed a style imbued with the 'sacredness' of the Catholic monarchy, and which his '*cameriero maggiore*' Juan de Sotomayor translated into rules of ceremonial for the Italian princes and their ambassadors.⁷³

Owing to the central importance assumed by questions of etiquette and ceremonial, the diplomacy of the Dukes of Mantua, as well as that of the Estensi, was seemingly devoid of initiative and independent action, entrenched as it now was in sterile defence of a formal dignity and a dynastic prestige based more on the memory of past successes than on the actual political weight of the two duchies. In the meantime, as the political literature shows, the criteria for the legitimation and evaluation of states had changed. Resources, population, volume of trade, finances and military strength now counted much more in determining the hierarchical order of states than the splendour of courts, papal or imperial investitures, or the brilliance of dynastic descent. Although there was little that the efforts of the envoys of the Gonzaga and the Estensi could do in these circumstances to alter the course of events, their work in gathering information and intelligence was still crucial. The fact that the two dukes were by now 'spectators rather than actors on the great political stage', and that from the point of view of negotiation, theirs was a 'subdued diplomacy',⁷⁴ does not gainsay the value of the daily and detailed observation of the European states and courts conducted by their envoys. Rather, one has the impression that it was precisely their marginal role in negotiations that enabled them to garner details that the chief players tended to overlook. Nevertheless, their numerous reports and memoranda on the European states kept in the Mantuan and Modenese archives – which yield a wealth of information not only political and military but commercial, economic and

⁷² R. Quazza, 'Una vertenza fra principi italiani nel Seicento', *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 47 (1930), p. 240.

⁷³ A. Alvarez Ossorio Alvaríño, 'Gobernadores, agentes y corporaciones: la corte de Madrid y el Estado de Milan (1669–1675)', in Signorotto (ed.), *L'Italia degli Austrias*, pp. 183–288.

⁷⁴ Manni, *Un ambasciatore estense*, p. 5.

geographical as well – have been little explored and little used by historians.⁷⁵

Together with the curtailment of diplomatic initiatives and influence, mention should also be made of the weakening of ducal control over the institutional apparatuses responsible for the conduct of foreign policy. In Modena, during the reign of the youthful Francesco II (1674–94), one notes the emergence of a smaller-scale replica of the figure of the 'prime minister' characteristic of the France of Richelieu and the Spain of Olivares. Government was taken over by Cesare Ignazio, a member of the cadet branch of the dynasty. It was Ignazio who corresponded with the ambassadors, who received foreign representatives, and who supervised the diplomatic machinery. The marriage of Ignazio's sister to Emanuele Filiberto di Savoia-Carignano was opposed by Louis XIV, who indeed pressed for the powerful minister's banishment. Ignazio's exile was brief, however. Dismissed in June 1685, he was recalled to court in the autumn of 1686, when the Duke found it impossible to attend to the many affairs of state on his own.⁷⁶

That the machinery of government and the diplomatic network were disintegrating became patently obvious at the end of the seventeenth century, even at the Mantuan court, where the last Duke, Ferdinando Carlo, sought in vain to combat, by repeatedly issuing regulations, the hegemony of the great aristocratic families which had now spread from high society into the public offices and the ducal chancellery.⁷⁷

THE CRISIS OF THE SMALL STATES AND THE NEW EUROPEAN BALANCE OF POWER

The long period of calm, if not of actual peace, enjoyed by the peninsula in the second half of the seventeenth century after the Treaties of Westphalia and the Pyrenees had confirmed Spanish domination, came to an end in much of Italy with the sudden death of Charles II of Spain in 1700. Prior to that year, the ties between Mantua and Modena and the Empire had been growing closer. Under the Turkish threat, Leopold I had begun once again to exploit the Italian states' subjugation to the Empire in order to obtain financial and military aid.⁷⁸ In the last decade of the century, the ambassadors of the two duchies were

⁷⁵ ASMo, *Manoscritti* (invent. 44).

⁷⁶ Chiappini, *Gli Estensi*, pp. 330–2.

⁷⁷ Mozzarelli, *Mantova e i Gonzaga*, pp. 124–5.

⁷⁸ M. Verga, 'Il "sogno spagnolo" di Carlo VI. Alcune considerazioni sulla monarchia asburgica e i domini italiani nella prima metà del Settecento', in C. Mozzarelli and G. Olmi (eds.), *Il Trentino nel Settecento fra Sacro Romano Impero e antichi stati italiani*, Bologna, 1985, pp. 203–61.

repeatedly involved in disputes with the Empire over the nature and magnitude of these contributions, and over the compulsory billeting of imperial troops.

The War of the Spanish Succession marked the beginning of a sequence of military and dynastic events which once again placed the peninsula at the centre of the European political stage, although it brought no change to the subordinate position of the Italian states – with the exception of Savoy. As a crisis of dynastic succession, but also as an occasion for competition and conflict among the diverse interests of the European powers, the War of the Spanish Succession decisively rearranged the pattern of Italian politics. Although it provided some sovereigns with spaces for action and territorial aggrandizement – a case in point being the Savoy – for the Gonzaga of Mantua the war was the epilogue to a centuries-long enterprise. The demise of the Mantuan duchy, moreover, only confirmed the institutional fragility of a state whose legitimacy still rested on dynastic and feudal criteria of seigneurial origin. The last Duke, Ferdinando Carlo, was deprived of his possessions by the accusation of treason brought against him by Leopold I; an accusation that fell on fertile ground, given the Duke's lack of an heir. The skill of the ambassadors promptly dispatched to Vienna to justify the Duke's behaviour were to no avail; and nor was the *scientia juris* of his councillors, who strove to defend him with learned juridical dissertations.⁷⁹ It was feudal law, therefore, that brought about the first dynastic change in the peninsula, just as it determined other matters in the future, most notably the imperial claims for Comacchio.

With such limited space available, it is impossible to give a thorough account of the manifold manner in which the model of the small Renaissance state – characterized by the prestige of a local dynasty, by the centrality of the court and by the personality of the 'prince-*condottiere*' – finally withered away. By way of conclusion one may note that the survival of the Modenese duchy amid the turmoil of the early seventeenth century was largely due to the ability of the dynasty's members to adapt to changing European contingencies. It is no coincidence that Francesco III is better known as the Governor of Austrian Lombardy than as an independent prince. The transfer of Comacchio to the Papacy confirmed the marginal role now occupied by the small duchy in the international context, and it evidenced, as had the devolution of Ferrara more than a century before, the uselessness of cultivating political ambitions unless they matched the interests of some European

⁷⁹ D. Frigo, 'Impero, diritto feudale e "ragion di stato": la fine del Ducato di Mantova (1701–1708)', *Cheiron*, 11 (1994), pp. 55–84.

power willing to promote them. Such was the case of the protection afforded by Austria, reinforced by the granting to Rinaldo d'Este – albeit on payment of a substantial sum of money – of the Duchy of Mirandola and of the Marquisate of Concordia, on which territories Vienna reserved the right to maintain garrisons and to move troops.⁸⁰ And nor did Francesco III's rank as general of the Austrian troops in Lombardy suffice to restore Renaissance splendour to the dynasty: in the changed European context, such a title was no longer the emblem of chivalric superiority; it was merely the badge of political subjugation.

⁸⁰ G. Quazza, 'Il problema italiano alla vigilia delle riforme (1720–1738)', in *Annuario dell'Istituto storico italiano per l'età moderna e contemporanea*, Rome, 1954, p. 27.

NEAPOLITAN DIPLOMACY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: POLICY AND THE DIPLOMATIC APPARATUS

MARIA GRAZIA MAIORINI

THE KINGDOM OF NAPLES AND FOREIGN POLICY CHOICES

As in the case of the other Italian states of the eighteenth century, there is a large body of literature on the kingdom of Naples and its international relations, but nothing has been written on its diplomatic apparatus or on topics relating to it.

I shall not insist here upon the importance of the institutional aspect of diplomacy, since this has been amply dealt with elsewhere. I shall merely make clear that, given these gaps, this essay will seek to delineate the apparatus created by the Bourbons of Naples in the early period of their reign. It will highlight a number of key features and will concentrate in particular on the interweaving of foreign policy and the domestic situation so influential on diplomacy in its structures and nature, since this was tied to society and especially to the milieu of the nobility and the court.¹ I shall seek, in fact, to convey the particular significance

¹ The importance of the institutional aspect has been stressed with particular clarity in the 'Introduzione' to D. Frigo, *Principe, ambasciatori e 'jus gentium'. L'amministrazione della politica estera, nel Piemonte del Settecento*, Rome, 1991. All the nineteenth-century literature of idealist inspiration gives priority to politico-diplomatic problems. This approach continued until the 1950s, when economic and social issues moved to the forefront. In this essay I have made particular reference for the reign of Carlo to M. Schipa, *Il regno di Napoli sotto Carlo di Borbone*, 2 vols., Naples, 1924; and to R. Ajello, 'La vita politica napoletana sotto Carlo di Borbone', in *Storia di Napoli*, vol. VII, Naples, 1972; and for the reign of Ferdinando IV to: L. Conforti, *Napoli dalla pace di Parigi alla guerra del 1798*, Naples, 1889; A. Cortese, *La politica estera napoletana e la guerra del 1798*, Naples, 1924; A. Simioni, *Le origini del risorgimento politico nell'Italia meridionale*, Messina, 1925-9; G. Nuzzo, *La monarchia delle due Sicilie tra ancien régime e rivoluzione*, Naples, 1972; Nuzzo, *A Napoli nel tardo Settecento: la parabola della neutralità*, Naples, 1990. Moreover, for commercial relations, I have drawn on: R. Romano, *Le commerce du royaume de Naples avec la France et les pays de l'Adriatique au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris, 1951; V. Giura, *Russia, Stati Uniti d'America e Regno di Napoli nell'età del Risorgimento*, Naples, 1967; A. Di Vittorio, *Il commercio tra Levante ottomano e Napoli nel secolo*

of the connection evident throughout the eighteenth century between the evolution of Neapolitan diplomacy and (a) the growth of the society which became a nation and which, in Galasso's words, created its own 'way to development' by following its maritime and commercial vocation as propounded by neo-mercantilist thought and later by the *illuministi* or Enlightenment thinkers, and (b) the disputed position allocated to the Kingdom in the international order as a power of secondary rank, with its own role and its own image, amid the constraints imposed by the old equilibrium and its upsetting by the emergence of new powers. The recent literature, most notably the studies by R. Ajello, provides thorough treatment of the topic, and I shall draw from it only those elements relevant to the argument developed here as I reconstruct a sequence which will necessarily appear more linear than it actually was.

The distinctive feature I mention derives from the fact that, given the events that surrounded the foundation of the Kingdom, Neapolitan diplomacy was not compelled to move through the various phases of theoretical and practical construction that other European powers underwent as they forged their diplomatic tradition in centuries of struggle to assert their individuality and to gain political and economic supremacy: whence the importance of ceremonial, titles, procedures and etiquette – those extrinsic elements which in the old monarchies served to emphasize prestige and political primacy. Neapolitan diplomacy was instead born already in adult form, so to speak, according to the timing and in the manner established by Spain. However, in its evolution the Kingdom sought to make its own way in increasingly stricter accordance with political exigencies and the aspirations of a society (or of the elite that it expressed) then slowly taking shape, until the collapse of the regime brought the endeavour to a dramatic halt. However, it should be stressed from the outset that this process unfolded at a time of major changes in mentality and in the international political scenario, so that the instruments and procedures of diplomacy as theorized by the classical culture of the *ancien régime* were also forced to take account of the modern mentality and the pragmatic and aggressive postures of younger powers like Great Britain, Prussia, Russia, and even

xviii, Naples, 1979; M. L. Cavalcanti, *Alle origini del Risorgimento. Le relazioni commerciali tra il Regno di Napoli e la Russia, 1777–1815. Fatti e teorie*, Geneva, 1979; E. Lo Sardo, *Londra nel XVIII secolo. Le relazioni economiche*, Naples, 1991. Almost all these works contain information on the diplomatic apparatus and personnel, and they have been used in this essay when other sources are not cited. Fundamental, moreover, to all aspects of my reconstruction is Bernardo Tanucci's *Epistolario*, edited by M. d'Addio, of which vols. I–V (years 1723–58) and IX–XV (years 1760–5) have been published to date.

the United States. These aspects will be examined in more detail below. For the moment I wish to make it immediately clear that the circumstances surrounding the creation of the Kingdom of Naples – conquest by the Spanish army and its ceding by Philip V of Bourbon to his son Carlo – required the Kingdom to make a number of crucial foreign policy choices, which we may summarize as the need to gain international recognition and to affirm the dynastic principle. Hence derived the Kingdom's subordinate role to the leading Bourbon 'family' powers and especially to Spain, and the perpetuation of that 'colonial' status which the exigencies of Spain's imperial politics had already imposed on her Italian dominion, with the consequent neglect of enormous problems of maritime defence, economic and social development, and political and spiritual growth. Within the overall framework of the European balance of power, the birth of the new state was ratified in 1738 by the Treaty of Vienna, but its subordinate role was constrained within limits that each of the great powers, for its own purposes, intended to maintain.² Yet the problems mentioned above had already attracted the attention of an intellectual elite, and especially so from the second half of the seventeenth century onwards. Literature abounds on the psychological effect of independence on intellectual and moral development, and on the enthusiasm and hopes aroused by the realization that it was finally possible to 'far da sé' (literally 'do it ourselves', i.e. act independently of the great powers) for cultivated southern society, and especially those 'Frenchified' jurists (as Ajello calls them) who, with their close interest in technical and economic problems and inspired by a scientific view of the world, had already demonstrated their maturity and commitment in what proved to be a 'pre-Enlightenment' rich with promise.³ The

² Article 2 of the Treaty of Vienna recognized Carlo's possession of the Kingdom of Naples: in C.-G. Koch, *Histoire abrégée des traités de paix*, vol. 1, Paris, 1817, p. 255. An example of the Kingdom's subordinate position is provided by England's claim to continue enjoying the *delegato della nazione*, that is, extraordinary jurisdiction in civil suits lodged by British subjects, which were thus removed from the ordinary magistrates of the Kingdom; and to obtain the Kingdom's compliance with the Treaty of Madrid of 1667 signed with Spain, as if the Kingdom were still a Spanish 'dominion'.

³ On the thinkers of the seventeenth century see S. Zotta, *G. Francesco De Ponte, il giurista politico*, Naples, 1987; and I. Ascione, *Il governo della prassi. L'esperienza ministeriale di Francesco d'Andrea*, Naples, 1994. On *preilluminismo*, cf. R. Ajello, 'Gli "afrancesados" a Napoli nella prima metà del Settecento. Idee e progetti di sviluppo', in M. Di Pinto (ed.), *I Borboni di Napoli e i Borboni di Spagna. Un bilancio storiografico*, vol. 1, Naples, 1985; Ajello, *Il preilluminismo giuridico. Il problema della riforma giudiziaria e legislativa nel regno di Napoli durante la prima metà del secolo XVIII*, Naples, 1965; Ajello, 'Carlo Antonio Broggia', in *Politici ed economisti del primo Settecento*, Naples, 1980; Ajello, 'Dal giurisdizionalismo all'illuminismo nelle Sicilie: Pietro Contegna', *Archivio Storico per le Province Napoletane*, third series, 19 (1980), pp. 383ff.; Ajello, *Tra Francia e Spagna*.

encounter between the members of the 'Frenchified' elite and the ambition, as well as the genuine cultural interests, of Secretary of State Montelegre determined a foreign policy which, albeit under the vigilant eye of Spain, saw the Kingdom spiritually and materially expand with the 'heroic' foundation of the State through reforms and the curbing of the privileged classes, and, in our case, through construction of a network of international contacts. The directives of the Spanish monarchy were thus seemingly enriched by patently 'national' motives, giving rise to an amalgam of great significance and implications.

However, the introduction of reforms aroused the opposition of a broad spectrum of privileged social groups – well analysed by Venturi – ranging from the judiciary to the nobility. The latter, despite the major social changes of past decades, was still the economically, socially and – above all in the periphery – politically most powerful class, and it controlled not only the provinces but the capital itself. The Neapolitan nobility, like its European counterpart in general, had its own conception of society and of the state, which it perceived as pivoting on the fundamental role that rightfully belonged to itself. This was a conception promulgated by Tiberio Carafa and it was bound up with the strong awareness of spiritual and cultural identity that had strengthened the individuality of the Neapolitan 'nation' under various foreign dominations; an individuality embodied in the Piazzas of Naples. The new dynasty could not do without the support of the noble class, which it therefore sought to bring within its orbit and insert into the structures of the newly founded state. Priority was given to the pro-Spanish party, but the search for consensus also extended to nobles not directly involved with the previous government, to whom were granted offices, privileges and appointments at court and, indeed, in the diplomatic service. This openness enabled the Neapolitan nobility gradually to gain control of the system, imposing conditions on the monarchy, which it bent into an instrument for the pursuit of its own ends: this occurred during the War of the Austrian Succession when the concession of the '*quattro grazie*', the key issues covered by Maria Teresa's manifesto, cancelled out the advances achieved by the reformism of previous years.⁴

Diritto, istituzioni, società a Napoli all'alba dell'Illuminismo, Naples, 1992; D. Luongo, *Serafino Biscardi. Mediazione ministeriale e ideologia economica*, Naples, 1993. On the problem of maritime defence – as evidenced in the concept of the 'unarmed frontier' – and on that of commercial development, which was central to the analyses of the *illuministi*, see R. Ajello, I. Del Bagno and F. Palladino, *Stato e feudalità in Sicilia. Economia e diritto in un dibattito di fine Settecento*, Naples, 1992, pp. 129ff.

⁴ Cf. F. Venturi, *Settecento riformatore. Da Muratori a Beccaria*, Turin, 1969, pp. 85ff. See also M. G. Maiorini, *La Reggenza borbonica (1759–1767)*, Naples, 1991, pp. 403ff.; Maiorini, 'Nobiltà napoletana e cariche amministrative: i presidi provinciali nel Sette-

The war proved to be decisive. The threat of losing his throne induced Carlo to pursue a policy which Venturi has called '*ripiegamento*' or retrenchment: the dismissal of Monteleone and his replacement by Fogliani signalled that the dynamic reformism of the early years had been abandoned; but it was also indicative of a new conception of the dynastic principle. Certainly, the problem of the Spanish succession, and the slackening of the ties with Spain following the death of Philip V, as well as realistic assessment of what was now a dramatic domestic situation, induced Carlo to adopt the neutrality that was intrinsic to the Neapolitan cultural tradition and which for the first time now combined with the political choices of the sovereign – bearing in mind the diversity of ideological and political motivations between the two. This was a momentous encounter, and its implications were evident in the subsequent evolution of the theory of neutrality, which, almost unknown to Grozio, now flourished, finding in Galiani an outstanding theoretician.⁵ For the time being, however, Carlo's intention was to ensure European equilibrium and to secure for the Bourbons both the Spanish succession and that of the two Sicilies. His designs, in fact, were evident in his behaviour during the Seven Years War, when he imposed neutrality on the two Sicilies despite the Family Compact. This neutrality did not question the validity of the dynastic principle; indeed it strengthened that principle within a new vision connected with the maintenance of equilibrium in the Mediterranean, subsequently bolstered by Austrian marriages and the Bourbon 'family' policy imposed on the Kingdom. Neutrality, moreover, was understood in a broad sense which prevented the Sicilies from taking any initiative, even economic, that might upset the equilibrium. The Spanish sovereign entrusted this foreign policy strategy to Bernardo Tanucci, who faithfully interpreted it with unflagging 'Bourbonic zeal', convinced as he was that the union of the '*Augustissima Casa*' was the only hope for the peace and security of both Europe and the small Kingdom of Naples. However, Tanucci's sincere loyalty to the Bourbons should be interpreted in the light of his realistic assessment of the Kingdom's concrete possibilities of political and economic expansion. Restricted on land by the Pope and at sea by the Turks, threatened by the ambitions of Austria, thwarted in its aspirations

cento', in M. A. Visceglia (ed.), *Signori, patrizi, cavalieri in Italia centro-meridionale in età moderna*, Bari, 1992, pp. 311ff.

⁵ D. Anzilotti, *Corso di diritto internazionale*, vol. I, Padua, 1964; F. Galiani, 'Dei doveri dei principi neutrali verso i principi guerreggianti e di questi verso i neutrali', 1782, in F. Galiani, *Opere*, edited by L. Guerci; R. Ajello, 'I filosofi e la Regina. Il governo delle due Sicilie da Tanucci a Caracciolo (1776–1786)', *Archivio Storico del Sannio*, 1–2 (1991), p. 100.

to economic and commercial development by the arrogance of France and England, indeed with its very survival insidiously under attack, the only valid guarantee for the Kingdom, Tanucci realized, was the protection afforded by Spain. And here, as Ajello has shown, one discerns elements of that concept of 'unarmed frontier' which later so frequently recurs in the writings of the *illuministi*.

The constraints imposed on the Kingdom – analysed in new light by Genovesi in the 1750s – in the decade that followed came into conflict with the growth of society and its aspirations to development, reinforced by the patriotism which in those years pervaded European culture. One of the many and contradictory features of the European political and cultural movement that spread to Naples during the 1760s was a marked antagonism to absolute monarchy which interwove with demands for civil and political liberty and with wide-ranging action and expression designed to enhance national features and sentiment.⁶ This movement profoundly influenced the debate on the role of the nobility which arose at the beginning of the century. In Naples, these upheavals merged with the retaliatory campaign mounted by the nobility, and they significantly altered its form. In the new climate, which was also infused with awareness of the economic and social problems of the country, this sentiment matured into a perception that – as Galasso stresses – was above all '*conoscenza*' (cognizance) of the Neapolitan nation. These new ideas filtered through the mentality and ideology of the nobility, and they gave rise to a renewed and forceful assertion of the nobility's role as simultaneously the bulwark of the monarchy and co-participant in sovereign power – thereby following the example of the political struggle then being waged by the French and English parliaments and which epitomized the conflict that pitted the nobility against monarchic absolutism. Shortly thereafter, the stance adopted by the nobility combined with Freemasonry, thereby engendering a new sense of service animated by the theme of virtue in that segment of the noble class which viewed the monarchy as its point of reference. Subsequently, under the influence of further, more profoundly political and ideological impulses, the noble class split into democratic and

⁶ For analysis of Neapolitan society towards the end of the century see in particular: G. Giarrizzo, 'Galanti: il regno "forense" e la classe dirigente meridionale', in Giarrizzo *et al.*, *Giuseppe Maria Galanti nella cultura del Settecento meridionale*, Naples, 1984; Nuzzo, *A Napoli nel tardo Settecento*, pp. 150ff., which quotes Maria Carolina's judgement that the Neapolitan nobility divided between Jacobins and reactionaries, both of them enemies of the monarchy; F. Venturi, *Riforme e riformatori nell'Italia meridionale*. Pagano, Palmieri, Delfico e altri minori, n.p., 1962, part 1; G. Galasso, *La filosofia in soccorso de' governi. La cultura napoletana del Settecento*, Naples, 1989; Ajello, 'I filosofi e la Regina'; Ajello *et al.*, *Stato e feudalità*.

reactionary camps, both of which had its own reasons for setting itself against the monarchy.

As for intellectuals, their increasingly detailed and thorough analyses of the Kingdom's international position and its prospects for development took up and extended neo-mercantilist theory, going so far, indeed, as to assume xenophobic tones. After Genovesi's economic-social and cultural studies, with their moral underpinning, his pupils concentrated on political aspects: analyses which culminated in Galiani's studies and, from a different point of view, those of Filangieri.

With the marriage of Ferdinando IV, but especially with the fall of Tanucci – the event that marked the slackening of the Kingdom's ties with Spain – the various components that made up society believed that the changes at court now gave them the chance to fulfil their aspirations. The sovereigns seemed amenable to such demands. Yet, as Ajello points out, theirs was an 'ambiguous willingness' loath to allow pursuit of these ambitions to the fullest extent. In this climate, the foreign policy of the 1780s was inspired by the analyses of the *illuministi*, and its outstanding accomplishment was rapprochement between the monarchy and society in realization of a joint 'programme' whose salient features were political neutrality and economic and social development. It was principally Galiani who told the sovereigns which policy to adopt in what was now – with the rise of Russia and the new powers and the cordial relations established with Austria – apparently a promising international situation. There ensued a set of domestic measures (most notably the construction of the navy), as well as various foreign initiatives, which culminated in the *Lega dei Neutri*. The latter performed a symbolic function, for in some sense it ratified the Kingdom's hard-won release from its subordinate position while interpreting the dynastic principle in new light without repudiating it. Caracciolo's promotion to take charge of foreign policy seemingly crowned the aspirations of the *Società dei Lumi* with success. His appointment was a 'miracle', according to Ajello, not just because he was a *philosophe* but because he was noble *philosophe* from the Kingdom of Naples.⁷

The intricate problems that arose in those years still await thorough clarification. It is certain, however, that cooperation between sovereigns and intellectuals once again stemmed from a misunderstanding which very soon became apparent. The climate of immorality and intrigue at court alienated the best minds, notably Filangieri, and reduced the

⁷ On the *Lega dei Neutri* see Nuzzo, *A Napoli nel tardo Settecento*, pp. 17–19. On Galiani's 'programme', 'L'abate Galiani consigliere di commercio del Regno di Napoli', in F. Diaz, *Per una storia illuministica*, Guida, 1973, p. 305.

service that the nobility and the intellectuals were willing to pay to empty posturing: this was the cleavage between court and society that Ajello rightly dates to the 1780s. The country derived no benefit from ineffectual and haphazard reforms which failed to eradicate parasitical structures at home, and were unable to redeem the Kingdom from its colonial position abroad. The economic and social crisis became tragically manifest when brigandage revived with a virulence of unprecedented proportions.⁸ Society as a whole felt itself increasingly distanced from a monarchy that it had never managed to approach, but the elites too were distanced.

The events of the 1790s helped to some extent to clarify an inextricable tangle of problems; but they did so by emphasizing the most grievous aspects of the crisis: not just the breakdown of the relationship between sovereign and society but the fragmentation of society itself, while the sovereigns, having lost all contact with the realities of the country, entrusted defence of the crown to a non-Neapolitan minister who, from a vision of the dynastic principle and of neutrality fuelled by suspicion and fear, prepared the 'downfall' of both by yielding to a court policy increasingly dominated by the extremist fringe of the nobility.

THE SECRETARIAT OF STATE

In the situation just described, the creation and subsequent history of the Secretariat of State, the apex of the diplomatic apparatus, exhibit aspects of great political significance which warrant careful examination, bearing in mind that the specific and delicate nature of foreign policy issues under the *ancien régime* determined both the pre-eminence of the Secretariat's functions and the prestige of whoever performed them.⁹

The Secretariat, in fact, attended to the '*più geloso*' – the most delicate matters (Tanucci's expression for them) – which extended well beyond international relations to embrace every aspect of the most important affairs – domestic as well, therefore – within the overall vision of

⁸ Cf. in Archivio di Stato di Napoli (ASN), *Giustizia*, 120–5, the reports by the provincial administrations on the '*comitive di malviventi*' (bands of miscreants).

⁹ Cf. P. Legendre, *Stato e società in Francia*, Milan, 1978 (orig. edn Paris, 1968), p. 217. From this pre-eminence arose in our case its precedence over the other secretariats and its appellation of 'First Secretariat' – to which the precedence of the incumbent did not always correspond, however. For example, Tanucci, Secretary of State after 1755, was declared 'First Secretary' only in 1768. For comparison with the organization in France under the *ancien régime* see R. Mousnier, *Les Institutions de la France sous la monarchie absolue*, Paris, 1980, vol. II, p. 166.

preserving the Kingdom. Significantly, the Secretariat also supervised the contents of the *Gazzetta*, ensuring that it published nothing that was politically improper, and soliciting the inclusion of articles favourable to the government. This conception of the Secretariat's role was evidenced in the initial arrangement which gave it jurisdiction over warfare and the navy (*guerra e marina*), services which were complementary to each other in defence of the state. And precisely because of its crucial function, the Secretariat was the first institution to be created out of the office of *Segretario dell'Infante* occupied by Monteleone as its first incumbent at the moment of the conquest.¹⁰

On its creation in the first months of the new Kingdom, the Secretariat of State was divided into three departments – state, war, and the navy – each of which had its own competences and personnel. The responsibilities of the Department of State were the following: correspondence in the conduct of affairs with the Italian states, including the Papacy, and with foreign countries; correspondence with private individuals on matters concerning the state; the handling of specific issues such as (in those years) the Concordat; correspondence with the Neapolitan agent in Bologna; matters concerning the theatres, the Royal Household and the royal residences (*Siti Reali*); interception of foreign correspondence and the deciphering and enciphering of correspondence with Neapolitan representatives at foreign courts. Initially annexed to the Department of State were the two departments of Naples and Sicily, which attended to the internal affairs of the two parts of the Kingdom '*di qua e di là del faro*' (on either side of the Straits of Messina); but these were abolished on the creation of the Secretariat of Justice, which took over their competences – apart from those of especial delicacy, notably the appointment of the Viceroy and *Consulore* of Sicily, since this still pertained to the Secretariat of State.

The Secretariat's business was distributed among various offices, which Tanucci called '*officine*' (similar to the French *bureaux*) in which worked the secretarial staff consisting of officials and assistants. All these men were officials, in fact, but a hierarchy was established among them based on seniority, ability and the degree of trust placed in them by the

¹⁰ Ample documentation on the Secretariat of State can be found in ASN, *Esteri*, 3430, 3484–6, 3488–90, which comprises sundry correspondence, circulars, edicts and memoranda with information on the Secretariat's creation, subsequent transformations, personnel and internal organization, as well as furniture and fittings. Reference will be made to this documentation hereinafter. See in particular the documents on the 1737 reform of the secretariats carried out with the approval of Spain, contained in ASN, *Esteri*, 3487 and 3430. On subsequent reforms, mentioned below, the documentation for the years 1773, 1778, 1785 is contained in fascicles 3488–9; and for the years 1790 and 1795 in fascicle 3430.

Secretary of State.¹¹ Completing the Secretariat's personnel were the porters, the equivalent of office-clerks, who also acted as couriers, thereby performing a function of great importance and delicacy, one indeed that was often mortally dangerous and of which Tanucci was suitably appreciative in his correspondence. Finally there was the maintenance staff, the *barrenderos* or janitors.

The distribution of business among the *officine* was initially matched by a distinction between the languages in which correspondence was to be couched, given that Spanish was the official language of the court. Thus, while all dispatches were written in Spanish, there was one official whose duties included holding 'todas las correspondencias que fuera del reyno con diversos motivos se ofrece tener en Italiano'. Only on institution of the Regency did Carlo establish Italian as the official language of the Neapolitan court, 'in accordance with the Italian character of the sovereignty', although those officials who knew only Spanish were still allowed to use that tongue. The composition of the Secretariat personnel mirrored events prior to the foundation of the Kingdom, since these officials came from all the states that the *Infante* had passed through at various stages of the Spanish conquest: the Spaniards Hernáez, Fernández and Pérez; Pecorini, Pocobelli and Pighetti from Piacenza; Ludolf from Tuscany. Recruitment, in fact, was by direct acquaintance or on recommendation by influential personages; and supernumerary personnel were reallocated whenever the secretariats were reformed. Nonetheless, these were highly educated men, often of noble origin, and since they had not received specific training, they learned their profession 'on the job', so to speak. Their relationship with the Secretary of State was important. Indeed, almost every Secretary managed to ensure that trusted associates were employed on his staff: Montelegre, for example, recruited the Fernández brothers: Fogliani summoned G. B. Terzi from Piacenza; Tanucci not only engaged Galiani but had his brother-in-law Catanti transferred from the Secretariat of Justice. Given the system of recruitment and training, dynasties of officials were created (Mechelli, Carcani, Fernández): a feature which, together with the interchangeability between officials and diplomatic personnel, gave rise to what was a veritable 'corps'. With the exception of certain specific cases – Catanti and Ludolf, who rose to the rank of heads of

¹¹ ASN, *Scrivania di ragione*, 57, sets out the officials' pay scales, which ranged from 650 ducats for Juan Crisóstomo Hernáez, first official (fol. 2) to 300 ducats for G. B. Terzi, the lowest official on the roll (fol. 10). The internal organization, with the various tasks of the personnel, is described in a *Nota*, undated but from May 1734, contained in ASN, *Esteri*, 3484, which also lists the names of the other staff-members of the offices, even those of lower grade.

legation, or Mechelli, appointed Secretary of the Kingdom of Sicily – the careers of these officials were confined to the Secretariat: the slowness of staff turnover, except when reforms were introduced, meant that it was difficult to rise to the rank of *'primo ufficiale'* (similar to the French *premier commis*). From 1737 onwards, the Secretariat's personnel was substantially renewed only in 1759, following the transfer of many of its *ufficiali* to Spain in service to the Marquis of Squillace, and with the reform of the Secretariats. Special mention should be made of the Archive, in which Carlo always showed great interest. Begun under the governorship of Montealegre, and continued with scrupulous care by Tanucci (who used every means to gather the papers scattered by a privatistic conception of the management of the *res publica*), and with the constant support of the King, even from Spain, the Archive was directed by a true dynasty of officials – the Vettori – who succeeded one another in the post for almost a century.¹²

It was the Department of State that effectively constituted the Secretariat of State and kept the above-described organizational pattern substantially unchanged despite the numerous transformations undergone by the 'system of the secretariats' in the course of the century. The reforms of the department, and the alternation of ministers in charge of it, reflected the influence of the various factions at court and of the power struggles within it – as well as more urgent political exigencies which should be carefully examined. For example, the major reform of 1737, which created four Secretariats, was prompted by the need to broaden the political base – Tanucci wrote that the *Segretario dell'Ecclesiastico*, Brancone, 'era stato fatto per farlo' ('was made for the job') – but also to give more rational organization to affairs by ousting Santostefano, who had directed them until that time. The competences of the 'First Secretariat' remained unchanged, but the triumph of Montealegre was plain when he took over as absolute leader or 'il Vizir' amid the intrigues and plotting at court which Tanucci's correspondence describes in all their intricacy. Nor was any transfer of competences induced by the fall of Montealegre – this too being engineered by a tight web of intrigue and followed by profound political change. His successor Fogliani was imposed by the Parma 'clan', and he skilfully occupied the strategic centres of power by installing his clients and protégés, in which he was helped by his wife. His appointment, however, was something of a compromise between the demands of the political

¹² ASN, *Esteri*, 3486, contains the *Pianta ed istruzione dell'Archivio della Real Segreteria di Stato*, 1745. ASN, *Esteri*, 3484, 3488 and 3490 contain reports on the recovery of official documents from various personages.

forces on the one hand, and the King's above-mentioned policy of *ripiegamento* (retrenchment) on the other. Subsequent events until the reform of 1789 were marked by the removal from the Department of State of responsibility for war and the navy and its increasing, highly specific and autonomous involvement in foreign affairs; but they were also characterized by the major political upheavals caused by these developments. On the fall of Fogliani in 1755, it was economic policy that moved to the fore, as evidenced by the ascent of the new Secretary of Economic Affairs Leopoldo de Gregorio, later Marquis of Squillace, who was equipped with extremely wide-ranging powers which covered not only war and the navy but also the new commercial sector and its important branch of the consulates. The undoubted pre-eminence assumed by Squillace overshadowed the significance of the appointment of Secretary of Justice, Bernardo Tanucci, as head of the Secretariat of State and the Royal Household. As Schipa has stressed, the assignment of the highest responsibility for diplomacy to a man with a legal background clearly indicates the preoccupation of those years with the intricate questions of the Spanish succession. But his appointment also had a specific political significance which soon became apparent with the departure of Carlo for Spain and confirmation of Tanucci as head of the 'First Secretariat', for which post he resigned his appointment at the Secretariat of Justice. The insistence with which the *Istruzioni alla Reggenza* asserted that the Secretary of State 'alone can and must maintain constant correspondence with the ministers of the King resident at the foreign courts' and that 'the other Secretaries of State must correspond concerning particular affairs of their ministry only through him, as likewise must residents [resident diplomats] abroad correspond with the Neapolitan court', together with the return of the consulates to administration by the Secretary of State, emphasizes the specific nature of his function and the need for unitary control over such matters.¹³ Confirmation that foreign policy was part of a global conception of the system of power equilibrium devised by Carlo – and for which the Secretary of State was responsible – is provided by the instruction that 'only he shall be informed of my thinking on these matters and of the direction that I have given to these affairs'. The expansion of the Secretariat's competence in foreign affairs is reflected by the fact that official documents now increasingly referred to it as the 'Secretariat of State and Foreign Affairs'; and its importance was further emphasized by the ordinance of 1778 establishing that 'any internal matter of the two

¹³ Cf. *Istruzioni alla Reggenza*, in ASN, *Casa Reale Antica*, 856.

Kingdoms of Sicily that is relevant to foreign Courts shall be communicated to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs'.¹⁴

As said, until 1789 the Secretariat of State and Foreign Affairs preserved its previous structure – with the exception of internal changes to the '*officine*' and a limited amount of turnover in its personnel (in 1773, in 1778 and in 1785) which reflected the need for closer harmony between the Secretariat's organization and its function; closer harmony which was also made possible by the increased staffing necessitated by the Kingdom's intense diplomatic activity within the framework of the 'active' neutrality propounded by Galiani and implemented by Caracciolo. Following the death of Caracciolo, the competences of the Secretariat of State, the Royal Household and Foreign Affairs and its departments were divided between the two secretaries, Acton and Demarco, with affairs of state assigned to the former and those concerning the Royal Household to the latter. The most significant aspect of this reform was its removal of responsibility for the Royal Household from the Department of State – to which its previous assignment had demonstrated that supervision of the *Casa Reale* too was considered crucial or 'geloso'. This separation also signalled that new political relationships had developed internally to the government as a result of Acton's rise to power: from 1778 he was Secretary of the Navy but nevertheless still an influential voice on matters of foreign policy, for which reason the King enjoined Caracciolo to cooperate fully and openly with his colleague.

Further reorganization was necessary in 1795, when Acton resigned as a result of the crisis provoked by the Latouche mission. The competences of the three secretariats previously headed by Acton were 'provisionally' distributed between two departments, each of which was run by a Director exercising what were substantially only executive functions. Nonetheless, the choice of the Prince of Castelcicala as director of the Department of State Affairs, Foreign Affairs, the Navy and Commerce, after the post had originally been intended for the Marquis di Gallo, is indicative of the growing power of the extremist fringe of the nobility. Even more significant, however, was Acton's appointment as supervisor of the same department; an appointment which Nuzzo calls a 'chancellorship' in order to stress that the controversial foreign-born minister had become the court's sole referent in a tangle of issues concerning public order, military defence, and international relations in a country on the brink of collapse. This situation cannot be interpreted in

¹⁴ ASN, *Esteri*, 3489, circular of 26 May 1778.

terms of diplomatic history alone; it must also be examined from within an international and national framework that still awaits clarification.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE DIPLOMATIC APPARATUS

Proceeding in parallel with the creation of the Secretariat of State was the definition of procedures and the establishment of the Kingdom's network of representation. As Schipa has pointed out, the dynastic principle and the circumstances surrounding the foundation of the Kingdom entailed the wholly mandatory character of directives from Madrid as regards both policy choices and the behaviour – and indeed the selection – of the country's representatives abroad. Once again, however, these constraints had to adjust to the social pressures and the historical and cultural roots of the Kingdom. Although the latter might not have had a diplomatic tradition in the strict sense of the term, in certain specific areas (for example, relations with the Holy See) it had always claimed the right to represent its own interests, being supported in this claim by a large body of theoretical and political thought.

Although Tanucci's correspondence contains numerous examples which shed light on this topic, space precludes analysis of them all. Accordingly, I shall examine one legation in particular from the point of view just outlined. I have chosen the Neapolitan legation in Denmark for various reasons: firstly, because adequate documentary sources are available;¹⁵ secondly, because the events examined occurred in a time-span which embraces the whole of the early Bourbon period and therefore allows us to trace the rise and fall of Bourbon diplomacy; thirdly, because Denmark was a 'hardship' posting to a new and second-ranking power with a number of unusual features.

Although of secondary importance, Denmark was of extreme diplomatic interest in that it provided a vantage-point on changes in the international scene and on the ascendant powers of the north. The country's opening to Europe was brought about by the Bernstorff family and their attempts to find a 'national way' for the reform and development of a low-ranking country subject to pressure from Russia and Prussia, on the one hand, and to the competing influence of France and England on the other. Since the mid-seventeenth century, the

¹⁵ ASN, *Esteri*, fascicles 260–6, for the years 1740–1800 on legation affairs, include the *Istruzioni* and documents on expenses, the representatives' *soldo*, etc.; fascicles 6775–95 contain the correspondence between the various Neapolitan representatives in Copenhagen and the Secretaries of State of the time, for the years 1766–99. Matters concerning the opening and debut of the legation are treated in Tanucci's papers and correspondence, in Archivo General de Simancas (AGS), *Estado*, libros 269–77.

Danish monarchy had sought to install an absolutist system, but rivalry with Sweden and the strength of the feudal regime had stunted the development of society. Only with the ascent of the new nobility – many of whose members had moved into Denmark from the German states – did the old structures begin to crumble. Among these immigrant nobles was the powerful Bernstorff family from Hanover, which dominated Danish politics throughout the century apart from the brief parenthesis of Struensee. Johan-Hartvig-Ernst, Count of Bernstorff, entered the service of Denmark in 1732. Secretary of State and the most powerful member of the privy council after 1751, he was ousted in 1770 on the instigation of Struensee. During his term of office Bernstorff embarked on a cautious programme of reforms which hinged on the development of trade and manufacturing, while also seeking to introduce Enlightenment ideas into a reactionary and bigoted country. It is these various factors that account for Denmark's openness to other countries besides those located on the shores of the Baltic.¹⁶

To return to the framework delineated by Schipa, the new Kingdom of Naples established its first diplomatic relations with the Bourbon 'family' powers: primarily Spain, and then France, with which first-rank ambassadorships were established as a sign of respect and decorum. The ambassador in Spain 'was obliged to declare that the entire policy of his King consisted in dutiful obedience towards his kinsmen, and to interpret every wish of the sovereigns of Spain so that he might promptly satisfy it'. The ambassador in France – whose instructions were approved in Madrid – was ordered to behave in exactly the same way as his Spanish counterpart. Besides these two representations to Bourbon 'family' courts, first contacts were made to ensure Carlo's possession – through international recognition – of the dominions conquered by Spain; and these relations were created with the consent of Madrid, by representatives vetted in Madrid, on instructions approved in Madrid, and in some cases, indeed, through the Spanish diplomatic corps (Father Ascanio in Florence, for example).

But, as Schipa notes, a number of diplomatic links were also established in which Carlo acted on his own initiative: either because Spain had no direct interest in the matter, or because these links derived from factors intrinsic to Neapolitan society.¹⁷ It was therefore in this climate

¹⁶ Cf. F. Bluche, *Le Despotisme éclairé*, Paris, 1968, pp. 276–8. Count Bernstorff corresponded with Voltaire and planned commercial expansion not only towards the Mediterranean but also towards Asia, advocating the creation of a *Compagnia della Cina*, (*ibid.*).

¹⁷ Schipa recalls that the first relations, apart from those with the Bourbon 'family' powers, were established with Poland and some Italian states. Not mentioned here

– which subsequently led to establishment of relations with Holland, Constantinople and Sweden as well – that negotiations began with Denmark, but still under the authorization and indeed on the order of Spain, which regarded Denmark as an excellent ‘observatory’ from which to keep watch on neighbouring Holland.

After preliminary overtures by Denmark following Carlo’s official announcement of his coronation and marriage, the *Rey Católico* ordered that negotiations should be commenced by the Spanish representative, Count Cogorani. Despite the interest of the Neapolitan government, however, these negotiations were suspended during the war. They were resumed in 1747 and led a year later to a commercial treaty signed in Madrid.¹⁸

The normalization of international relations on resolution of the Spanish succession marked a turning point in Neapolitan diplomacy as regards not only the development of the diplomatic network, which now extended to more difficult sectors like London, Vienna, Turin and Lisbon, but also the establishment of diplomatic seats of secondary rank – ones more in keeping with the Kingdom’s real status on the world stage – in countries of more direct concern to Naples’ foreign policy in Italy and Europe. Relations with other countries were largely restricted to agents: it was still only the Bourbon ‘family’ powers that were honoured by ambassadorships.

When Carlo departed for Spain, the diplomatic system taken over by Tanucci was now largely complete in its structure and conception. Legations had been established at Dresden, Vienna, London, Lisbon and Constantinople; at Turin, Venice, Parma and Rome in Italy. There were Neapolitan agents in Holland, Bologna, Florence and elsewhere. Further evidence of the extent to which the Kingdom’s diplomatic network had expanded is provided by the increased expenditure on related items in the budget.¹⁹

Mention should also be made of the consulates, for there already existed a network of consulates in the Mediterranean established to protect the interests of the Neapolitan ‘nation’. With the creation of the independent Kingdom disputes erupted between the Neapolitan and royal consuls which Tanucci endeavoured to resolve, for two main purposes: to assert the authority of the king, and to preserve the political

are relationships with the Holy See, since these involved complex problems, such as the investiture of the Kingdom and the Concordat.

¹⁸ *Trattato di commercio e navigazione tra S. M. Siciliana e S. M. Danese conchiuso a Madrid a 8 aprile 1748*, in A. De Sariis, *Codice delle leggi del regno di Napoli*, Naples, 1792–7, l. 2, tit. 29, no. 1, p. 214.

¹⁹ Cf. L. Bianchini, *Della storia delle finanze del regno di Napoli*, edited by L. De Rosa, Naples, 1971, p. 416, on diplomatic expenditure.

function performed by the royal consuls – the Marquis Silva in Livorno, for example – in certain strategic areas.

During his twenty years of service as Secretary of State, Tanucci consolidated the Kingdom's diplomatic service on the basis described, and also in terms of its procedures and internal organization. He pursued a vision that remained substantially unchanged until the 1780s and which warrants examination. In Tanucci's view, the conception and the organization of diplomacy were functional to its role; it was this, he maintained, that should be the distinctive feature and guiding principle of Neapolitan diplomacy. Tanucci's, therefore, was a highly modern and realistic vision which took account of the Kingdom's effective international position. He accordingly regarded a network of numerous representative organs as superfluous, since this would incur excessive outlays for the royal exchequer while bringing no concrete advantages. He consequently created diplomatic relations only with countries where real reciprocal interests were at stake, and then only in the form of legations of secondary status, since these were less expensive and could be assigned to trusted, loyal and possibly non-noble ministers – or, better, men unconstrained by a noble ideology now to be replaced by a single idea of 'service of the king and of the State'. Tanucci planned to overhaul the Neapolitan diplomatic network, adapting it to the new international situation and to the Kingdom's pressing need for economic and commercial development: for which favourable opportunities, he believed, were offered by Portugal, Russia and the Levant, while Holland and Saxony were no longer of interest to him.

Nonetheless, the opportunity arose during the Regency to extend the Kingdom's permanent diplomatic network to include Copenhagen, even though this city did not figure among the legations that Tanucci regarded of interest, and it would only have generated further expense for the royal treasury. Overtures were once again made by the Danish court, whose representative in Paris contacted his Neapolitan counterpart. According to the Spanish representative in Copenhagen, Denmark was concerned to establish contacts with the Neapolitan court so that it could enjoy the friendship of the greater Bourbon monarchy. In actual fact, given the international situation and the situation internal to the country, the initiative was clearly political in its intent. Without enthusiasm, 'since Your Majesty has ordered the legation to be created', and after a long and difficult search, Tanucci selected the new minister in the person of his brother-in-law Giacinto Catanti, who had now concluded his mission to The Hague and, in 1766, was appointed minister plenipotentiary.²⁰

²⁰ The Danish minister in Paris was Baron Gleichen, who was later sent to Naples as

Tanucci found the selection of personnel to be an almost insuperable problem. He believed that the aim of the Kingdom's representatives should be the 'service of the King and the State', and that this should take concrete form firstly in their constant insistence on the 'union of the Bourbon House', and secondly in a manifest love of peace, a friendly disposition towards all those with whom they had dealings, and a dislike of international intrigue and squabbling. In his opinion, no member of the diplomatic corps possessed these essential requisites, not even the men that he deemed most competent, like Caracciolo. In Naples, in fact, diplomats were recruited from the nobility for political reasons – apart from the requirement that the sovereign's representatives should be men of suitably dignified station – because appointment to diplomatic posts had always been a strategy to tie that powerful class to the new dynasty. The nobility was therefore marked out for the most prestigious diplomatic appointments – which were often ambassadorships extraordinary, given that only two such posts were permanent – while junior members of noble families and non-magnate nobles were assigned to the minor legations. Since there was no tradition of diplomatic training and culture in Naples similar to that of other countries,²¹ men with a reputation for culture, moral probity and commitment to the dynasty were chosen, although in fact what counted in their selection were intrigues and recommendations at court. Tanucci's deep suspicion of the noble ideology, of the nobility's ties of blood and marriage, and its selfish interests still persisted, therefore. He was constantly preoccupied with the noble diplomats' lack of culture and expertise, and with their overweening vanity as they vied with each other to squander the King's money on extravagant hospitality which was neither needed nor appreciated, nor brought any advantage to the King. The appointment of Galiani as embassy secretary in Paris was one outcome of Tanucci's preoccupations; and so too was his use of other

envoy extraordinary from 1770 to 1771: cf. *Repertorium der diplomatischen Vertreter aller Länder seit dem Westfälischen Frieden (1648)*, vol. III: 1764–1815, edited by Leo Santifaller *et al.*, Zurich and Berlin, 1965. The Neapolitan representative in Paris was the Duke of Cantillana. AGS, *Estado*, leg. 6097, contains Sebastián de Llano's report to Tanucci of 26 July 1765 concerning the intentions of the Danish court and the character of Baron Osten, the minister assigned by the latter to Naples. Osten remained in Naples from 1766 to 1770: *Repertorium*, p. 56. Before appointing Catanti, Tanucci had in vain enquired after the availability of Prince di Campofranco, of Prince di Belmonte, and of the Marquis De Majo.

²¹ For example in France: cf. G. Thuillier, 'L'Académie politique de Torcy (1712–1719)', *Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique* (1983), pp. 54ff.; C. Bechu-Benazet, 'La Formation d'un ambassadeur au XVIII^e siècle: Vergennes', *Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique* (1987), p. 215.

sources of information such as consuls, agents and non-official representatives, like Francesco Bindi in Vienna. It should also be pointed out that recruitment among the Sicilian nobility was governed by the same rules of political expediency, the intention being to counterbalance the influence of the Neapolitan nobility, and also because it was believed that this would ensure more exact and disinterested service. Indeed, from the delicate phase of his succession onwards, Carlo sent Sicilian noblemen to serve at the Spanish court. And it was again for these reasons that Carlo made use of 'foreigners' like Fogliani, Malaspina, Ludolf, Finocchietti and Catanti.

The Minister closely vetted not only the head of the legation but also his secretariat. The staff rolls of the legations did not comprise the figure of legation secretary: with the exception of the Paris embassy – where Tanucci had expressly created the post for Galiani – and Rome, where there was a legation *uditore* or auditor. Provision was instead made for personal secretaries to the ministers. These men were freely chosen by the latter – as were the rest of the secretariat personnel, clerks, porters and domestic staff – and they were paid by the minister, who undertook personal responsibility for their behaviour.²² These secretaries were sometimes chosen from the personnel at the State Secretariat, but more often they were the minister's relatives, bound to him by relations of protection and patronage, of course, but also by the esteem and trust befitting their expertise, culture and moral probity: indeed, some of them were men of outstanding intellectual accomplishment. The fact that they in particular – and among them we find Matteo Egizio, Nicola de Martino, later Michele Torcia, and at Copenhagen, Isidoro Bianchi – were selected reveals a little known aspect of clientelism. The choice of secretary was not only important because he carried out confidential tasks, but also because he did so in an official capacity. As well as attending to the legation's correspondence and compiling its archive, the secretary signed the statements of accounts, and in the absence of the head of legation he could be appointed *chargé d'affaires* on proposal by the minister, approval by Naples and acceptance by the court to which he was accredited. Unless called upon to fill other appointments, the secretary's career proceeded through the various branches of the diplomatic service. Although he never achieved highest rank, he continued to serve in the legations, either following his principal when the latter was transferred elsewhere or remaining at the same legation to

²² On the '*pianta*' and organization of the Neapolitan legations abroad see in ASN, Esteri, fascicles 4813–4 (*Spedizione straordinaria di diversi soggetti*) and 4815–6 (*Destinazione dei ministri di S. M. nelle corti estere*).

serve his successor, with the same or different responsibilities; or else, in the absence of a legation head, the secretary worked as *chargé d'affaires*, or he returned to the Secretariat of State or, finally, sought appointment to a different office. Certainly, the possible recall of his principal was a constant source of uncertainty and anxiety for the secretary, given that his civil status held out scant prospects of obtaining another appointment of equal prestige.²³

As regards the written and unwritten rules, the customs and procedures which regulated international relations, and the rights and duties of individuals, Tanucci's overall 'vision' was moulded by the transformations of the eighteenth century. The Kingdom's links with Spain and the circumstances of its creation have been frequently mentioned – as well as the culture and mentality of most of its government – and they compelled the adoption of Spanish ceremonial and acceptance of the rules and procedures followed at the principal European courts, especially those of Spain and France, and of the *jus gentium* advocated by the most authoritative jurists. Moreover, from the outset, the Neapolitan government relied on the written advices (*consulte*) issued by the *Camera Reale* – the highest court of the Kingdom with consultative as well as jurisdictional responsibilities, and whose role was blatantly political – and on the opinions of other personages, most notably the Secretary of Justice, as witness the latter's numerous memoranda on matters of foreign policy in which he annotated the sources of his counsel. Moreover, a library was created at the Secretariat of State and stocked with the most important works on the subject, ranging from dictionaries to diplomatic codes, to books on the history, geography and customs of various countries, thereby providing preliminary information on the courts with which Naples had to deal. When doubts arose, experienced Spanish representatives were consulted, or the advice was sought of the Spanish Secretary of State, or the ceremonial of Madrid was directly applied.²⁴

The relationships between foreign representatives and the Secretariat of State were regulated by the latter, and those with the court by the

²³ On all these aspects see the correspondence of Abbot Della Costa, secretary to Prince di Cardito and appointed *chargé d'affaires* by him on his departure in 1790 in ASN, *Esteri*, 265.

²⁴ The opinion of the *Camera Reale* was canvassed in order to establish the privileges and prerogatives of foreign representatives, which were then regulated in *Prammatica* no. 2 *de legatis sive ambasciatoribus*, of 30 July 1735, in A. De Sariis, *Codice delle leggi*, I, 2, tit. 40, p. 280. Cf. ASN, *Camera Reale, Consulte italiane*, vol. I, fol. 1 and v, *consulta* of 18 July 1735. On the contents of the secretariat library see Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli, Ms. XIII. C. 103, *Inventario de' libri sistentino nella Libreria della prima real Segreteria di Stato*. See also 'Cerimoniale con cui fu ricevuto in Spagna il sovrano del

Maggiordomo Maggiore. In the unanimous opinion of the foreign ministers, etiquette at the Neapolitan court was much more familiar and relaxed than in Madrid; indeed, it degenerated into licentiousness during the reign of Maria Carolina.

The eighteenth century saw profound changes and contradictions in the international community. New powers arose, and the minor powers advanced claims for equal treatment with the great ones, while the latter stubbornly defended titles and precedences which, at least formally, continued to buttress their political supremacy. The new emphasis on individual values was reflected in assessments of the real power of states which challenged the traditional hierarchy and highlighted the distinction between the formal nature of relationships pertaining to ceremonial and the substantial nature of those that pertained to politics. At the same time, however, it exaggerated the formality of ceremonial, breaches of which gave rise to interminable squabbling.²⁵ This is an ambiguity also evident in Tanucci's thought. Given his education, legal training and political vision, Tanucci argued for observance of the hierarchical and dynastic principle in the international community, since it was from this that the supremacy of the House of Bourbon derived. But he also scornfully dismissed the punctilios of etiquette as vain and dangerous, and he was especially censorious of its abuse by diplomats who, out of vanity and for private interest, exploited it to conceal violations of the country's laws and to obtain exemptions and immunities which limited the sovereignty of the host state, and by governments, whose misguided sense of prestige infringed the rights of other states.

Relations with Denmark on the occasion of Catanti's replacement provide a good example of Tanucci's conception of ceremonial and etiquette, and of the problems related to them. The establishment of relations was conditional on the choice by the Danes of a man of quality and experience in keeping with the prestige of the Neapolitan court, belonging as the latter did to the House of Bourbon. The first of the Danish diplomatic representatives in Naples was Baron Osten, followed by Baron Gleichen, who had already represented his country in the other Bourbon capitals. The recall of Catanti in 1771 following the

Marocco', directly requested in Madrid, in ASN, *Esteri*, 406; and the 'Cerimoniale per le visite dei rappresentanti esteri e presentazione di credenziali a S. M. e al Segretario di Stato', in ASN, *Giustizia*, 22; on presentation at court see ASN, *Esteri*, Austria, 110-11.

²⁵ On changes in the international community and their effects on diplomatic relations see G. Quazza, *La decadenza italiana nella storia d'Europa*, Turin, 1971, pp. 219ff., 260ff.; G. Rudé, *L'Europa nel Settecento. Storia e cultura*, Bari, 1974, pp. 303ff. On the renewed emphasis on etiquette see various testimonies contained in AGS, *Estado*, libros 269-77.

transfer of Caracciolo to Paris (December 1770) coincided with the ousting of Bernstorff and the grave political crisis that ensued. The political leaders who took over, one of whom was Baron Osten himself, now Secretary for Foreign Affairs, introduced an enlightened despotism which manifested itself abroad in a hardening of attitudes and a new sense of national pride. When the Neapolitan government decided to replace Catanti with the Duke of Cerisano, the Danish court was much taken with the idea of receiving a duke – as Catanti himself wrote in ciphered letter – but Cerisano's hesitation aroused the ire of Osten, who recalled Baron Gleichen to Denmark. The acrimony increased when the Danes appointed an interim representative in Naples in the person of a Neapolitan subject, which was against the laws of the Kingdom, and insolently announced that they intended to appoint a man of extremely low rank as their new minister. In the event, however, the Danes refrained from taking any concrete action, and there followed a period in which relations were suspended because neither of the two courts wished to make the first move, the precise intentions of the Danish government in this respect being corroborated by the Spanish representative in reply to an ultimatum issued by Tanucci. The significance of this controversy over etiquette is testified by the fact that the immediate effect of Osten's fall (in March 1773) was the appointment by his successor – Andreas-Peter Bernstorff, the nephew of Count Bernstorff – of a man of suitable dignity for the Naples court, and the cordial overtures addressed to the Spanish minister, to which Tanucci responded by appointing no less than a prince. Throughout the affair the Neapolitan government behaved with detachment and courtesy, on the principle that the dignity of the Kingdom should not be compromised by such controversies.

However, the image of the monarchy depended above all on the conduct of its diplomatic representatives. On their departure from Naples, or at any rate at the beginning of their missions, they were issued with a set of documents consisting of credentials, circular letters announcing their appointment to their colleagues resident at other courts, the cipher book, and naturally their *Istruzioni*, which not only described the purpose of the mission but set out a code of behaviour, suggesting the most advantageous social and political contacts to be cultivated. Generally speaking, given the situation of the Kingdom, with the exception of special missions or unexpected events, its representatives were given only the task of gathering information: those at the Bourbon courts restricted themselves to 'fare la corte' (rendering homage); those at the other courts were told to model their behaviour on that of the ambassadors from the Bourbon courts. The foreign policy

lines described above – namely observance of the dynastic principle framed by overall neutrality – continued to inspire diplomatic instructions, although some slight shifts of attitude can be discerned over the years, for which reason the ambassador in Spain continued not to receive instructions from Naples.²⁶

Catanti's *Istruzioni*, indeed, contained directives to this effect which instructed him to pursue two main courses of action: to resume trade negotiations on the basis of the treaty signed in 1748; and to conduct 'amicable correspondence' concerning the intentions of the Danish court. Worth noting is the insistence of the *Istruzioni* on exemplary private behaviour by both the diplomat and his staff, with the interesting detail that they were expected to maintain a 'public chapel with seemly decorum ... ensuring that it be served for edification and respectful modesty, imposing it [i.e. modesty] above all on the members of your family by the good example to which you are obliged by your representation and by your conscience, particularly in countries where everything in this regard is noted'. The upkeep of the chapel was of particular importance, especially in the Protestant countries. Together with the legation archive, it epitomized the diplomatic representation and its continuity. As one diplomat succeeded another, the symbolic fittings of the legation, namely the ornaments and equipment of its chapel and archive, were consigned together with the inventory to the interim appointee, or to the Spanish minister in his absence, and then by the latter to the new incumbent. Finally, the diplomat was enjoined to ensure 'that in comparison with the other ministers of your grade and rank you are not subject to slight or prejudice in any circumstance, whether of exemption, privilege, immunity, or ceremonial treatment; on these matters you may consult or confer with the Minister of Spain or of France, and with others accustomed to the manners of that court: although in this you are advised to use the greatest and most prudent moderation' (article 16): which confirms the Secretary of State's realistic assessment of questions of ceremonial.

²⁶ In ASN, *Esteri*, 4815, 'Spedizione di Caramanico', 1784: 'A Caramanico non si danno istruzioni perchè non vi è mai stato uso o necessità di darne agli ambasciatori presso S. M. Cattolica, essendosi loro solamente inculcato di procurare di nutrire ed accrescere sempre più ed in ogni occasione la buona e cordiale corrispondenza tralle due corti, e di stringere sempre più i nodi del sangue e gli intimi rapporti di famiglia che felicemente esistono'. [Instructions are not given to Caramanico because it is not and never has been customary or necessary to give them to ambassadors to His Catholic Majesty, given that these are usually instructed to procure, to nourish and to enhance, increasingly and on every occasion, good and cordial correspondence between the two courts, and to strengthen the ties of blood and the intimate family relationships that so felicitously exist.]

Furthermore, the emoluments paid to the diplomat were designed to enable him to maintain his legation with 'seemly decorum': ministers of second rank earned a total of 6,000 ducats per year. The diplomat usually received a lump-sum payment – the so-called *aiuto di costa* – amounting to half his annual salary to help with his travel expenses and so that he could find suitable living quarters. When a mission was first established, accommodation was found by the Spanish ministers already in residence. Catanti received 7,000 ducats for his mission – 1,000 more than he was paid when sent to The Hague – as well as 3,500 ducats towards his expenses. When Sicignano was sent to Copenhagen in 1791, he received a yearly salary of 7,000 ducats and a premium amounting to an entire year's salary to help cover his costs. For the upkeep of the chapel 700 ducats a year were paid, a sum which rose to 1,000 ducats in the case of Catanti. While the *aiuto di costa* was paid in advance, the diplomat's salary was deferred until he had submitted his '*fede di vita*' to the *Scrivania di Razione*, or Ration Office. Likewise, every six months his ordinary and extraordinary expenses were reimbursed: these were usually postal charges, expenses arising from the court's transfers out of the capital, and the costs of correspondence and the maintenance of the legation secretariat. But claims were often made for items, such as meals and tips, which Tanucci deemed useless and which only weighed on the treasury, rendering service not to the King but to the diplomat's vanity. The accounts of the Copenhagen legation amounted to approximately 700 ducats every six months, including firewood. Despite these reimbursements, the cost of living and entertainment obliged ministers to draw on their own assets and even to incur debts, forcing them to ask for subsidies which the government usually granted.

According to Catanti's instructions, his entire mission in Denmark was to be conducted under the guidance of the minister of Spain 'for whom you are given a special letter to manifest that good correspondence and the confidence which you should use with him, for as minister of our Lord King and Dear Father he will not leave you in ignorance of any matter which gives you certainty in taking the first steps advisable at that Court . . .' (article 5). Moreover, he was instructed to correspond both with the Neapolitan ministers resident at the other foreign courts and with 'those of our Lord King and Dear Father for better information'. The reference to the Spanish ministers requires clarification. From the earliest years, the Neapolitan ministers were enjoined to emphasize the Kingdom's union with Spain. Tanucci expanded this requirement to include the entire Bourbon system, thereby reinforcing the dynastic vision of Neapolitan policy. He urged

the same in his confidential correspondence as well. The *Istruzioni*, in fact, were always complemented and explained by correspondence with the Secretary of State which, whether overt or encrypted, confidential or routine, kept both Tanucci and the Neapolitan representative abreast of the country's political affairs and of all developments that might be of interest to them. But it also served to establish and maintain an identity of view and thought, to resolve doubts, to suggest courses of action, and to call attention to specific items in the *Istruzioni*. Once again, Tanucci's letters are important sources of information. He recommended the extremely limited use of cipher, mainly because he was well aware of the efficiency of the system of espionage: not only did he have proof that certain officials in his Secretariat were spying for foreign courts (Turin in particular), but he himself made regular use of the decoded correspondence of the various foreign legations. And he also advised against cipher because of a haughty and moralistic awareness of his own behaviour and of his political faith.

The aspects examined also characterize the *Istruzioni* consigned to Catanti's successors, thereby confirming the substantial continuity of the foreign policy choices and of the conception of the role of diplomacy already described. However, one notes a significant change in the instructions given to the Duke of Sicignano, appointed envoy extraordinary in 1791, and which display the rise and fall of the neutrality.

Sicignano's instructions are noteworthy for their length and complexity, and also for the different ordering of the directives, a rearrangement indicative that the priority given to problems had now changed. Sicignano was also reminded that the principal purpose of his mission was friendly correspondence. This emphasized the pre-eminently political purpose of his mission, which finds confirmation in its secondary purpose of not only 'informing' but 'investigating' the intentions and political activities of the Danish court (article 9).

Also significant is the instruction on the behaviour deemed appropriate towards ambassadors from the Bourbon courts and other diplomats. Sicignano was urged to reach understanding with the Spanish minister, who, given his long experience, could guide his first steps at the Danish court (article 4). Then, after recommendations that Sicignano should conduct 'good correspondence' with all the ministers resident at that court, so that he might be well versed in current developments (article 7), the next article enjoins him not to befriend any of them and that 'indeed the maximum caution is necessary in routine reciprocal communication', and to be extremely attentive and circumspect. Even more interesting is the conclusion to this article: 'Frequent especially the Minister of Spain, but only to keep him in good faith, do

not take him into your confidence or allow him to participate in your own affairs, except in matters concerning ceremonial, etiquette or in family affairs regarding the House of Bourbon'. The predominantly political nature of the mission emerges from all Sicignano's instructions – only articles 19 and 20 mention commerce – and also from their minuteness of detail, their circumspect and diffident tone (articles 5, 6, 8, 9, 13, 17), and their insistence that he must 'investigate' the intentions of the Danish court and the situation in the north. These dispositions powerfully convey the climate of suspicion created by the new Secretary of State: this was a matter of style, and of mentality, more than a political necessity. However, Sicignano's *Istruzioni* also indicate the continuing observance, at least formally, of the dynastic principle, and of equidistance, although a new policy of alliance was also envisaged now that the 'rise and fall of neutrality' was moving towards its conclusion (article 13).

All diplomatic instructions, finally, emphasized that correspondence should be conducted solely with the Secretary of State, who would communicate in his turn the sovereign's resolutions. This specification was necessary to prevent a careless exchange of letters between diplomats and courtiers which might give rise to dangerous influences or to embarrassing consequences. Tanucci's correspondence frequently inveighs against the 'incontinence' of the letters written by ministers abroad to their friends and relatives, who believed themselves authorized to divulge or comment upon sometimes sensitive matters, thereby creating a groundswell of opinion damaging to the image of the government and the court.

Various studies have shown that the specific and delicate nature of foreign policy planning required up-to-date information if it was to adapt to the fluctuations of the international situation. And likewise it required an undivided and absolute authority at the apex of the state which controlled not only one single diplomatic corps dependent on the Department of Foreign affairs but also the relationships internal to it.

The Secretary of State was not only the hierarchical superior of the diplomatic representatives who handled all the correspondence regarding their careers and office (salary, leave, etc.). He also required personnel whose mentality matched his own, and he had to make sure that he did not compete with the court, and with the ties of blood and class that united the nobility over and above the dictates of service.

The relationships between the diplomatic representatives and other personages at court pivoted on numerous centres of influence, if not of direction, which conflicted with the specificity and exclusiveness of its dynamic centre: the sector of foreign policy. This was therefore a telling

indicator of confusion and conflict; a signal of crisis, indeed. Providing an emblematic example of the significance of these relationships is the entry on the political scene by Acton. It was to Acton that the ministers directed their correspondence, informing him – with the favour and solicitation of the sovereigns themselves, as we have seen – on matters before, and in more detail than, they informed the Secretary of State himself.

DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY

Protection of the interests of the King and of the Kingdom and of their prestige depended not only on instructions and directives but also on the sensitivity and intelligence of the diplomats; on that ‘prudence’ which the instructions themselves recommended. The behaviour of these diplomats was in reality guided by the ‘internalization’ of their instructions filtered through their mentality, culture, ideology, social origins, sense of service and sense of state. It is these elements that we must bear in mind when assessing the activity and image of the Neapolitan diplomatic corps in the Bourbon eighteenth century. To this end, diplomatic correspondence, its gaps and disorder aside, does not provide sufficient material for analysis, and it must be supplemented by inquiry into the social structures and their relationships with the political institutions that cannot be thoroughly conducted here. However, once again, Tanucci’s *Epistolario* is a rich source of information and allows one to conduct a rapid survey which highlights several points of interest. It should be pointed out, though, that recent studies on the Neapolitan nobility in the modern age have examined various aspects of its composition and ideology, but they have not considered the aspect relative to ‘service’, which must accordingly be treated with caution.

The concept of ‘service’ was defined within the framework of the rise of absolute monarchism as the particular bond between the monarchy and society. It was augmented in the eighteenth century with ‘administrative’ overtones which emphasized the principles of execution and of hierarchical subordination. It was exactly these qualities that Tanucci required of his diplomatic personnel when he summoned them to ‘service of the King and of the state’, and to the ‘blind’ execution of his instructions. Yet in the assertion by the noble class of its right to reappropriate its powers, one still discerns – although now evolved into somewhat new form – that traditional noble ideology that can be summed up as the consciousness of class supremacy. As Tanucci’s comments on the matter reveal, this doctrine was especially evident in the Neapolitan nobility, and in the first half of the century in particular.

Characteristic of the nobility's new assertiveness was its reluctance to assume public offices which did not match its status and dignity, and its tendency to prefer security to responsibility. This prompts consideration of the features in general of the southern ruling elite: namely its utter lack of a sense of service which entailed sacrifice and dedication to the good of the King and of the state; that sense of *honneur de servir* which has instead been cited as the distinctive feature of the new public function of absolutism in France.

Thus delineated, therefore, is the ambiguous character of the Neapolitan diplomatic corps: recruited as we have seen from the ranks of the nobility, it viewed the diplomatic service solely as an opportunity to build personal prestige and to gain honour for the family. An emblematic figure in this regard is the Duke of Sora, one of the most powerful barons in the Kingdom and first ambassador to Madrid, where he acquitted himself with honour. As the Prince of Piombino, Sora deemed himself the vassal not of the King of the Two Sicilies but of the King of Spain, and accordingly advanced various claims for preferential treatment. The ambiguity of Neapolitan diplomacy also emerges from its relations with the government. In addition to the predominantly political purpose served by recruitment from the high nobility of the Kingdom there was the simple function of homage-rendering that it performed, while more vital matters and indeed the very survival of the country were entrusted to the Spanish diplomatic corps.

Amid the changes in custom and mentality that had accompanied the crisis of the War of the Austrian Succession, the nobility sought to fashion a new relationship with a monarchy now firmly installed on the throne. Noblemen now either entirely withdrew from politics and devoted themselves, like Raimondo di Sangro or Carafa di Noja, to scientific or literary studies, or they resorted to intrigue and clientelism in order to occupy new areas of power, including, apart from court appointments, the diplomatic service. This latter was no longer considered solely a source of honours for the great landed magnates; it now offered a career to the junior members of the noble houses, who accepted the postings of second rank now implicit in the diplomatic apparatus of the Kingdom. In the meantime the high nobility continued to contend for the honour of ambassadorships extraordinary. Thus, thanks to the patronage of the Marchioness of Fogliani, Albertini, Caracciolo and Guevara entered diplomatic service during the years of the normalization of international relations. However, despite these changes, the above-mentioned ambiguity still persisted in the stubborn resistance raised by the noble ideology, which resented the diplomat noble's role of mere executor of the Secretary's orders. A significant

example is provided by Albertini, who insisted on meddling in negotiations during the Seven Years War, ignoring the secret contacts that had been established, so that he had to be recalled to Naples. The attitude of the nobility towards a career in diplomacy is even more clearly evidenced by the affair of the Duke of Calabritto. The scion of a great house, Calabritto had accepted the legation in Dresden, even though it was of second rank and a hardship posting, and therefore beneath his dignity. Calabritto contemplated mortgaging his property in order to pay his travel and accommodation expenses, but his family applied to the courts to prevent him from doing so – on the ground that its rights would be infringed since an appointment of second rank did not justify such a measure. Finally, also testifying to this ambiguity is Tanucci's fruitless search for a nobleman willing accept the legation in Denmark, this too, as already mentioned, being of second rank and *disagiata* (uncongenial).

The ambiguous character of Neapolitan diplomacy also persisted because '*forestieri*' (foreign-born subjects) continued to be appointed to diplomatic offices. These were men selected because they had no ties with the noble milieu of the Kingdom, with its privileges and entitlements, and were therefore a further element in the heterogeneous character of a corps by whom 'the King is exceedingly badly served'.

Examination of the legation in Denmark gives us first-hand knowledge of the tasks performed by the Neapolitan diplomats belonging to the two groups in question. Among the *forestieri*, the activities of Catanti shed interesting light on the reasons that induced the government to utilize these men. Catanti's execution of his instructions was meticulous and diligent, but precisely because his action was free from the influence of Neapolitan social and political reality, it was unproductive. By following his instructions, in fact, Catanti not only laid the basis for commercial negotiations with Count Bernstorff, he also mooted the possibility of purchasing 'an island in the Atlantic' which would serve as a free port and, above all, circumvent the English ban on trade by the Kingdom of Naples in the area. And he also proposed the recruitment of two high officials, one a naval expert, the other an expert in artillery, and Protestants to boot, in order to give the Neapolitan army the technical expertise that it lacked. While this latter proposal encountered the political and social obstacles raised by the corporative environment of the Court, then at the height of its patriotic fervour, the purchase of the island and the proposed trade agreement were rejected outright by the *Rey Católico*, on the ground that they would upset the equilibrium that was the guiding principle of Spanish foreign policy. Catanti's personal behaviour also provoked calls for prudence, accustomed as he was to a

freedom of thought which although tolerated – indeed advantageous – in Holland, might prove dangerous and counter-productive in still bigoted and conservative Denmark.

The reverse side, that of the selfishness of the noble mentality, is represented by the Duke of Cerisano, who it will be remembered was responsible for the breakdown of relations between Naples and Denmark. The episode is well documented by the letters written by Cerisano to justify his actions.²⁷ On the death of his father, who had served Carlo for many years, the young duke had asked – as was customary when seeking a court appointment – for Tanucci's protection, citing the merits of his father. In the belief that he was doing Cerisano a favour, Tanucci appointed him to take the place of Catanti in Denmark. The duke, however, had hoped that his powerful protector would find him an appointment more in keeping with his status and above all his mentality: a comfortable position as gentleman-in-waiting, for example, with the 'golden key' (*chiave d'oro*) so eagerly sought by all the nobility. Faced with Tanucci's refusal to change his mind, Cerisano feigned acquiescence, pocketing the 7,000 ducats of *aiuto di costa* in the meantime but constantly postponing his departure on various pretexts until the Danish court took offence and, as we have seen, suspended diplomatic relations between the two courts. Cerisano was more than happy at the diplomatic incident, since it put off his departure indefinitely, and he accordingly resigned his appointment; but he refused to repay the 7,000 ducats, which he contended were due to him for the expenses incurred during his preparations for the journey to Denmark. He instead magnanimously proposed to indemnify the sum through appointment to a more commodious legation, that of Rome for example. The intervention of the *Reggente della Vicaria* was necessary before he could be persuaded to repay the sum at least in instalments, although four years later he still had not done so. The Cerisano affair is less absurd than might seem, since the next appointee, the Prince Raffadale, also delayed his departure for four full months after his nomination, again on various pretexts, and only the threat of forfeiture – this time the *aiuto di costa* had not been paid – induced him to make up his mind. Furthermore, the Prince della Rocca, he too having expressed his availability for royal service 'to achieve glory', when offered the Copenhagen legation declined, persuading his grandmother to write a letter to the King which justified his refusal.²⁸

²⁷ Cerisano's letters are contained in ASN, *Casa Reale Antica*, 914 (letters of 27 Feb. and 25 Sept. 1775); and 915 (letters of 11 March, 9 April, 20 April 1773, and orders to the *Reggente di Vicaria* of 12 and 19 Oct. 1773).

²⁸ ASN, *Esteri*, 263, letter to Raffadale of 5 Feb. 1774, warning that if he was not in

The ambiguous nature of Neapolitan diplomacy described in these pages was destined to endure as long as the generation which 'had filled the entire ministry' through intrigue remained in office and prevented the turnover that Tanucci had planned but had been unable to achieve. But in the 1760s, noble resistance to the Bourbonic zeal and service enjoined by Tanucci was strengthened by the patriotism that swept through Europe in those years, and which in Naples interwove with the doctrines of Genovesi. This new climate oriented the more perceptive Neapolitan diplomats towards a conception of service very different from that envisaged by Tanucci. The sentiment of the nation's independence and superiority, and the sense of Masonic 'virtue', now assumed particular prominence and bred a spirit of rebellion against the government. It was in fact the *illuministi* diplomats who caused difficulties for Tanucci with their arrogance and self-confidence fuelled by Enlightenment ideas, by their awareness of nationhood and their hopes for the future. For them, Bourbonism represented the past, Spanish protection and the endeavour of the great powers to confine the Kingdom to colonial status. The diplomatic blunders of Caracciolo and Galiani stemmed from the impatience of an elite which, from London to Paris to Naples, believed itself ripe for emancipation and ready to 'far da sé', spurning Tanuccian caution and sacrifice.²⁹ In the 1770s, enriched by Masonic doctrine, this sentiment matured into a new sense of service among the Neapolitan nobility. With the resignation of Catanti and the progressive elimination of the Sicilians, the diplomatic corps assumed an increasingly marked Neapolitan character, a process favoured by the new climate at court. In fact, the massive presence of Neapolitan nobles at court and in the diplomatic service evidenced the close ties that they had now established with the monarchy and with the policies that it pursued. This, therefore, was the setting in which Caracciolo undertook reforms – as Nuzzo rightly emphasizes – made possible by a fortunate coincidence between political choices and the instruments with which to implement them. In order to realize the policy advocated for decades by the Neapolitan elite, and fashioned into a 'programme' by Galiani, Caracciolo set out to create a diplomatic apparatus composed of young men, most of them his relatives instructed and guided by himself, accustomed to the court and its hierarchies, diligent, willing, obedient, and professional; young men,

Copenhagen by the end of April, the appointment was to be considered revoked; *ibid.*, petition by the Princess della Rocca, grandmother of Giambattista Filomarino, Prince della Rocca, that her grandson be exempted from service.

²⁹ Cf. G. Ferraioli, 'Un fallo diplomatico dell'abate Galiani', *Archivio Storico per le Province Napoletane*, 5 (1880), pp. 690–8.

even if the scions of noble houses, who would accept assignment to second-rate 'hardship' legations out of a sense of duty.³⁰ Some of these new representatives are well known for their later achievements. Among the more obscure was the Duke of San Teodoro. Sent to Denmark in 1794 charged with the official mission of restoring commercial contacts, he was in actual fact instructed to heal the breach between the two countries provoked by the Armfelt conspiracy, at a time when the observation of the international situation from the Baltic region was deemed of major importance, and alliance among the neutral powers even more so. Carlo Maria Venato Caracciolo, Duke of San Teodoro, was related to Domenico Caracciolo and to the other 'Caraccioliani' diplomats of the new generation. He had acquired good 'professional' training, he tells us in his correspondence, from his studies in international law especially, and from long journeys through Europe during which he had frequented diplomatic legations and met many of his future colleagues, building his inter-personal skills as he did so.

Examination of San Teodoro's correspondence reveals the method he followed in execution of his instructions. Immediately on receiving his appointment he submitted a memorandum which set out the manner in which he intended to conduct his mission. This he followed with a series of reports in which he analysed the political situation in northern Europe and its possible evolution, appending thoughts of his own on the 'system of neutrality', in which he showed good historical as well as political acumen. Finally, on reaching Denmark, he sent several reports on the speech he intended to deliver when presenting his credentials to Bernstorff, and on the action he proposed to undertake, especially regarding the most delicate aspect of his mission. However, he also devoted great effort to the second purpose of his appointment: to resume trade negotiations. He dwelt in particular on the issue of exporting the Kingdom's wines, which were treated as liqueurs in Denmark because of their high alcohol content and taxed accordingly, to the especial advantage of Portuguese wines. Nor did he neglect the organizational exigencies of his appointment, proposing a 'plan' for the installation of a vice-consul who would attend to the more technical and administrative aspects of economic and commercial relations. On a personal level, too, the Duke adapted happily to the Danish environment. He struck up a friendship with the Secretary of State and maintained impeccable relations with the Spanish representative. Discharged

³⁰ Cf. his advice to his nephew the Marquis of Gallo, in B. Croce, *Uomini e cose della vecchia Italia*, Bari, 1925, vol. 1, pp. 82ff. On the Marquis of Gallo see C. di Somma, Marquis de Circello. *Une mission diplomatique du marquis de Gallo à St.-Petersbourg en 1799*, Naples, 1910.

in the summer of 1797, he was appointed minister plenipotentiary in Spain in January 1798.³¹ The behaviour and actions of San Teodoro as revealed by his orderly and regular correspondence is strikingly that of a 'professional'; of a man, that is, driven by a new sense of service defined in the modern sense of the term 'professional' and indicative of the development of the diplomatic corps in parallel with that of society.

After San Teodoro's recall, his place in Copenhagen was taken by the Duke of Campochiaro,³² who was still conducting his mission when the tragedy of the Kingdom reached its climax. Repeatedly recalled to Naples, he preferred to remain in Copenhagen, where he lived in straitened circumstances until he was able to return in safety and join the King in Palermo.

Campochiaro's behaviour represents one aspect of the Neapolitan diplomats' reaction to the collapse of the regime, a reaction consisting of fear and a certain passivity. On the other side stands the well-known example of the Prince of Castelcicala, who, with his 'extremist' ideology of honour over obedience, rejected the government's instructions in favour of his own political vision of the Kingdom's entry into the anti-French coalition, breaking with the neutrality that had so long been the cornerstone of Bourbon foreign policy.

I conclude this essay with two general considerations. Firstly, despite the rapidity and the brevity of the foregoing analysis, it seems that confirmation has been provided of the richness of information yielded by institutional inquiry into the complex of issues that necessarily correlate with it. Secondly, I wish to call attention to the historical setting, which reveals the crucial influence of the crisis of the 1780s on the growth of society, and whose manifold and interweaving aspects have yet to be

³¹ Profiles of Neapolitan diplomats, Sicignano and Castelcicala for example, are provided in G. Nuzzo, *A Napoli nel tardo Settecento*. On the Duke of San Teodoro see ASN, *Tavole genealogiche Livio Serra*, vol. 1, p. 120. Carlo Maria Caracciolo, son of Tommaso and Maddalena Moles duchessa di Parete, Duke of San Teodoro, was born on 8 Jan. 1764 and died on 11 May 1823. On 17 Jan. 1789 he married Maria Luisa di Tocco Cantelmo Stuart of the princes di Montemiletto. He was therefore grandson of the late Secretary of State, brother-in-law of the Duke of Sicignano and cousin of the Marquis of Gallo. Regarding his mission, the 'memorandum' cited is contained in ASN, *Esteri*, 266; all other information is drawn from the correspondence in ASN, *Esteri*, 265, regular and confidential, of June, July and August 1794; and of December 1794 relative to the problem of the Kingdom's wines. The 'plan' to institute a consul or a vice-consul is contained in ASN, *Esteri*, 2553.

³² On the appointment and mission of the Duke of Campochiaro, see ASN, *Esteri*, 266, which contains part of the correspondence, regular and confidential, with information on the dramatic situation in the Kingdom. Campochiaro returned to Naples on 2 Aug. 1800.

thoroughly explored. The distinctive feature of this setting is the political and moral stance adopted by the Neapolitan diplomatic corps, albeit slowly and laboriously, *pari passu* with the growth of the noble class to which it was tied, thereby becoming part of the Kingdom's cultural heritage beyond its relationship with the Bourbon monarchy – as the case of the most noted diplomat of the period, the Marquis of Gallo, demonstrates.

SAVOYARD DIPLOMACY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY (1684–1798)¹

CHRISTOPHER STORRS

The prestige and political importance of the Savoyard state during the eighteenth century contrasted sharply both with its own relative unimportance in the seventeenth and with the marked failure of most of the other Italian states to play an effective independent role in international politics in the period. This enhanced status was the product of a series of military and political developments during the decades around 1700. Victor Amadeus II's membership of the Grand Alliance against Louis XIV in the Nine Years War (1688–97), forcing the French first (1695) from Casale and then in a separate peace (1696) which undermined the anti-French coalition, from the other fortress, Pinerolo, which dominated his capital, Turin, astonished his contemporaries. Participation in the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–13) won a more easily defended Alpine frontier with France, which confirmed the shaking off by the Savoyard state of its French satellite status to become more completely autonomous in the European states system. It also brought the coveted royal title associated with the rich and strategically valuable island kingdom of Sicily. Victor Amadeus was obliged by the Quadruple Alliance to exchange Sicily for the inferior Sardinia (1718–20), something neither he nor his successors forgot or forgave. Nevertheless, the island and crown of Sardinia represented a significance advance on the dignity and dominion Victor Amadeus had enjoyed at his accession in 1684.² Victor Amadeus was one of those princes who had successfully

¹ I wish to thank Dr Derek McKay of the London School of Economics and Dr H. M. Scott of the University of St Andrews for their comments on an earlier draft of this essay.

² Thereafter the Savoyard state, a name derived from the House of Savoy, rather than the Duchy of Savoy (which was less populous or wealthy than the Principality of Piedmont), was generally known as the Kingdom of Sardinia, or the states of His Majesty the King of Sardinia, although the island of Sardinia was among the least valuable of the various territories (the others were the Duchy of Aosta and the County of Nice) ruled by Victor Amadeus II and his successors. Throughout this essay the

seized the opportunities made available in the cycle of European warfare between 1688 and 1720 to gain territory and dignity. (Others who had sought to do the same, but failed, included Victor Amadeus' cousin, the Elector of Bavaria, Max Emmanuel.) Indeed, in 1713 the Savoyard state seemed likely, and far more than that other recent success, Hohenzollern Prussia, to be one of the great successes of the eighteenth century. Participation in the Wars of the Polish (1733–8) and Austrian (1743–8) Successions brought Victor Amadeus II's son and successor, Charles Emmanuel III (1730–73), further territorial gains in north Italy: the imperial fiefs in the Langhe, parts of the Milanese (the provinces of Novara, Tortona, Vigevano, Voghera, part of Oltrepo and the county of Anghiera) and the future prospect of Piacenza.³

In fact, Savoyard success had owed much to the ability to mobilize, by diplomatic means, the support of allies whose financial, military and naval strength exceeded anything that Victor Amadeus II or Charles Emmanuel III could generate within their own small and relatively poor state. The Kingdom of Sardinia remained a small, vulnerable, second-rank power, its success due in part to always choosing the right side: as the English minister in Turin explained in 1784, during the Scheldt crisis, 'the ancient and useful policy of the House of Savoy . . . was to side with the strongest party'.⁴ This essential weakness made for a political opportunism which might bring short-term gains, but at some cost. Victor Amadeus II's betrayal of his allies in 1696 left him isolated and may have cost him the Spanish Succession, while his gains in 1713 should not obscure the fact that he had hoped for much more and had himself to make concessions (ceding Barcelonette to Louis XIV to secure his Alpine frontier). For his part, Charles Emmanuel III was in large part forced into the War of the Polish Succession by the determination of France and Spain to attack the Emperor in Italy. As it was, Charles Emmanuel did not gain all he had expected from this conflict; and England's sacrifice of Sardinia's interests at the end of the War of the Austrian Succession, preferring to save the Dutch Republic rather

terms Savoy/ard, Piedmont/ese and Sardinia/n are used only as a convenient modern shorthand to describe a more complex juridical and political reality which was typical of the composite early modern state: cf. R. Oresko, 'Introduzione', in A. Cifani and F. Moretti, *I Piaceri e le Grazie*, Turin, 1993, vol. I, p. 11.

³ The broad outlines of Savoyard foreign policy between 1684 and 1798 are in D. Carutti, *Storia della diplomazia della corte di Savoia*, 4 vols., Turin, 1875–80, vols. III and IV (1675–1773); and N. Bianchi, *Storia della monarchia Piemontese dal 1773 sino al 1861*, Turin, 1877, vols. I and II. There is no good single survey in English. D. B. Horn's account in *Great Britain and Europe in the Eighteenth Century*, Oxford, 1967, is too brief.

⁴ Trevor to Carmarthen, 27 Oct. 1784, Turin, Foreign Office (FO) 67/3.

than to secure Piacenza and Finale for Charles Emmanuel, was regarded in Turin as equal only to the Quadruple Alliance's earlier perfidious treatment of Victor Amadeus II.⁵

After 1748, the geo-political situation which underpinned the rise of Savoy between 1690 and 1748 disappeared. Hitherto, Victor Amadeus II and Charles Emmanuel III had been able to exploit the rivalry between France and first Spain and then Austria in north Italy, and French anxiety regarding its vulnerable south-eastern border, to sell its alliance to the highest bidder. Despite the qualifications noted above, this had proved advantageous. However, the Treaty of Aranjuez (1752), guaranteeing the Italian settlement of 1748 and, more importantly, the Franco-Austrian alliance (1756), the so-called 'Diplomatic Revolution', crucially undermined Savoy's ability to manoeuvre between the main protagonists of great power conflict in Europe. Exhaustion after the enormous financial and military effort of the War of the Austrian Succession, and less capable (or at least less determined) leadership, compounded Savoy's difficulties. For the rest of the century, the Kingdom of Sardinia was the reverse of the adventurous or expanding power it had been between 1690 and 1748. The Kings of Sardinia failed to make good opportunities, including their claims on Piacenza, which they might earlier have seized on, while Charles Emmanuel III was obliged, partly because of the quiescence of other powers (notably Britain), but above all because of the unfavourable international situation, to accept a French occupation of Corsica which he deeply resented. Sardinia did not participate in either the Seven Years War (1756–63) or the War of American Independence (1775–83). Savoyard policy was driven by fear of a general European war which was expected to be disastrous for Sardinia, not least because of Emperor Joseph II's desire to recover his predecessors' losses to both Prussia and Sardinia. Charles Emmanuel's son and successor, Victor Amadeus III (1773–96) effectively moved back into the French camp. He married his daughters into the French royal house and joined the French in the only Savoyard military adventure between 1748 and the 1790s, intervention in Geneva (1782), reversing Charles Emmanuel I's humiliation in the *escalade* of 1602. The wisdom of this policy of restraint was confirmed following its abandonment in the 1790s. The breakdown of the Austrian-French alliance and the re-

⁵ M. Gasco, 'La politica sabauda a Utrecht nella "relazione Mellarède"', *Rivista Storica Italiana* (RSI), 52 (1935), *passim*; A. Mattone, 'La cessione del Regno di Sardegna dal Trattato di Utrecht alla presa di possesso Sabauda (1713–1720)', *RSI*, 104 (1991), pp. 5ff.; G. Quazza, *Il problema italiano e l'equilibrio europeo 1720–38*, Turin, 1965, pp. 105ff.; R. Lodge, *Studies in Eighteenth Century Diplomacy 1740–1748*, London, 1930, p. 359ff. and 399ff.

emergence of an earlier pattern of international politics, with Sardinia receiving British subsidies as part of a coalition against revolutionary France, brought defeat, the loss of Savoy and Nice, the abandonment by Charles Emmanuel IV (1796–1802) of his mainland territories and their annexation (1802) by France.⁶

Diplomacy played a crucial role in the rise of Savoy to 1748 and an equally vital one in monitoring a more threatening European environment thereafter. It also offered a sphere in which to demonstrate the enhanced status and prestige of the House of Savoy in Europe after 1713. Contemporaries, like later historians, often admired Savoyard diplomacy. On the conclusion of the War of the Austrian Succession, the English peer Lord Chesterfield, a former diplomat and Secretary of State who had frequent dealings with Sardinian diplomats, sent his illegitimate son to Turin as part of his training for the diplomatic career, noting the superior quality of the King of Sardinia's ministers abroad. Appreciative comments of this sort are harder to find after 1748, but the harsher international situation made effective diplomacy more important to the Savoyard state than before.⁷ Not surprisingly, the diplomatic history of the state which was to unify 'Italy' in the nineteenth century attracted (particularly Piedmontese) historians during and after the *Risorgimento*. However, few in-depth studies have used the rich, but largely unpublished, materials in the Archivio di Stato in Turin, to assess the real quality or character of Savoyard diplomacy in practice in the eighteenth century.⁸ The decline of traditional diplomatic history means that Quazza's work on Savoyard policy in the War of the Polish Succession remains an isolated example.⁹ There are no structural

⁶ English ministers in Turin after 1763 largely attributed the constant nervousness of Savoyard monarchs and their ministers in successive crises to the so-called Diplomatic Revolution: cf. Poyntz to Chamier, 24 Nov. and 4 Dec. 1779, Turin, Public Record Office. State Papers (SP) 92/81. D. Beales and T. Hochstrasser, 'Un intellettuale piemontese a Vienna e una inedita storia del pensiero politico (1766)', *Bollettino Storico-Bibliografico Subalpino* (BSBS), 91 (1993), p. 275, think that the Savoyard state risked extinction after 1756.

⁷ Lord Chesterfield, 18 Nov. 1748 (Old Style), in Chesterfield, *Letters to his Son and Others*, edited by R. K. Root, 1969, p. 85. Cf. G. Quazza, *Le riforme in Piemonte nella prima metà del Settecento*, 2 vols., Modena, 1957, vol. II, p. 373.

⁸ Some of the diplomatic materials were published in the series *Le campagne di guerra in Piemonte (1703–1708) e l'assedio di Torino (1706)* (CGP), *Parte Seconda, Diplomatica*, ed. C. Contessa, Turin, 1908 and 1933; and in A. Manno, E. Ferrero and P. Vayra (eds.), *Relazioni Diplomatiche della Monarchia di Savoia dalla prima alla seconda Restaurazione (1559–1814)*, *Francia, Periodo III*, 3 vols. (1713–18), Turin, 1886–91 (the latter were the only volumes to appear in an ambitious project to publish the entire Savoyard diplomatic correspondence between the sixteenth and early nineteenth centuries).

⁹ G. Quazza, *Il problema*. Cf. C. Storrs, 'Diplomatic Relations between William III and

analyses of the Savoyard diplomatic 'service' in the eighteenth century to compare with those of Horn, Picavet and Ozanam on England, France and Spain,¹⁰ Quazza's brief discussion in his general study of the reforms of Victor Amadeus II and Charles Emmanuel III, published forty years ago, remaining the best available until quite recently.¹¹ Individual diplomats have been the subject of monographs, but there is no general study of the men who staffed the diplomatic 'service' or 'foreign office'.¹² Finally, there is nothing on the general assumptions underlying Savoyard policy.

Daniela Frigo's recent study of the administration of Savoyard foreign policy in the eighteenth century, on which the present study depends enormously, has done much to fill this void. In order to avoid merely covering ground already gone over by Frigo, the present study seeks to assess the organization and character of Savoyard diplomacy in the eighteenth century by concentrating on contacts with England. Focussing on relations with England has its drawbacks, not addressing for example the very different relationships between Turin and the courts of Vienna (which was complicated by the fact that much of the Savoyard state remained a part of the Holy Roman Empire) and Rome. But the new relationship with England is broadly typical of the larger transformation and pattern of Savoyard foreign relations after 1684. Indeed, the new relationship with England was seen by many in the Savoyard state in the eighteenth century as the defining feature, symbol and pillar of its new European position. In April 1732, the Marquis d'Ormea, Charles Emmanuel's first minister, told the English minister

Victor Amadeus II (1690–96)', Ph. D. thesis, University of London, 1990, for the Nine Years War.

¹⁰ D. B. Horn, *The British Diplomatic Service 1689–1789*, Oxford, 1967; G. Picavet, *La Diplomatie française au temps de Louis XIV*, Paris, 1930; D. Ozanam, 'La diplomacia de los primeros Borbones (1714–1759)', *Cuadernos de Investigación Histórica*, 6 (1982), pp. 169ff. The only printed lists of Savoyard diplomats are in L. Bittner and L. Gross (eds.), *Repertorium der diplomatischer Vertreter alle Länder*, 3 vols., Berlin, 1936, vol. 1: 1648–1715 – which is not always reliable.

¹¹ D. Frigo, *Principe, ambasciatori e 'jus gentium'. L'Amministrazione della politica estera nel Piemonte del Settecento*, Rome, 1991; Quazza, *Le riforme*, vol. 1, pp. 97ff.

¹² A. Ruata, *Luigi Malabaila di Canale. Riflessi della cultura illuministica in un diplomatico piemontese*, Turin, 1965; G. P. Romagnani, *Prospero Balbo. Intellettuale e uomo di stato (1762–1832)*, 2 vols., Turin, 1988–90. Cf. also P. Dagna, 'Un diplomatico ed economista del Settecento: Carlo Baldassare Perrone di San Martino (1718–1802)', in Dagna et al., *Figure e gruppi della classe dirigente piemontese nel Risorgimento*, Turin, 1968, pp. 9–46. The *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani (DBI)* has entries on the following Savoyard diplomats: Aigueblanche, Aix, Arvilliers, Balbo, Borgo, Borrè, Breglio, Brema, Canale, Carron de San Tommaso, Castellar, Chialamberto, Damiano, De Gubernatis. For Count Carlo Montagnini di Mirabello, cf. Beales and Hochstrasser, 'Un intellettuale piemontese'.

in Turin that the King of Sardinia's subjects were very aware of the advantages gained with England's help, 'it being no more than what had occurred within their own days and the remembrance of which was fresh among them'. Ormea wanted English support against Spain,¹³ but his words were no mere 'invention of tradition'. Throughout the eighteenth century, Savoyard monarchs and ministers looked to England to help them, sometimes as strict allies, face those powers which Sardinia alone could not oppose and to provide the resources which the Savoyard state lacked. English ships and subsidies were invaluable during the wars fought between 1690 and 1748; and in 1713 Victor Amadeus could not have reached his new island kingdom of Sicily without the British fleet. One of the themes of this essay being that foreign and domestic affairs were not separate spheres, it is also intended as a contribution to an understanding of the larger Savoyard state and society in the eighteenth century. It is therefore less a narrow study of the evolution of diplomatic relations between the two states than an attempt to address some issues neglected by traditional accounts of the subject. It also draws extensively upon the reports of successive English ministers from Turin, which provide valuable information about attitudes and developments in the Savoyard state which is not always to be found in Savoyard sources.¹⁴

Between 1684 and 1798 the Savoyard diplomatic presence in Europe, measured in terms of resident diplomats, grew enormously, as did the foreign diplomatic presence in Turin. In 1684, reflecting the rather narrow range of Savoyard interests, and his status as a French satellite, Victor Amadeus II had only five ministers resident abroad: at the French, Bavarian and Roman courts, at the Imperial Diet at Ratisbon and in the Swiss Catholic cantons. One hundred years later, reflecting the escape from French tutelage and the recognition that events in more distant parts of Europe could affect Savoyard interests and security, that number had nearly trebled, with Sardinian ministers resident at the courts of France, England (since 1690), Spain (1690), Austria (1690), the Two Sicilies (1752), Portugal (1762), Prussia (1774), Saxony (1782),

¹³ Allen to Newcastle, 19 April 1732, Turin, SP 92/33.

¹⁴ F. Sclopis, *Delle relazioni politiche tra la dinastia di Savoia ed il governo britannico (1250-1815)*. *Ricerche storiche*, Turin, 1853, remains a valuable survey of the Anglo-Savoyard relationship (focussing on the eighteenth century). Cf. G. Symcox, 'Britain and Victor Amadeus II or the Use and Abuse of Allies', in S. B. Baxter (ed.), *England's Rise to Greatness 1660-1763*, Berkeley and London, 1983, pp. 151ff. and J. Black, 'The Development of Anglo-Sardinian Relations in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century', *Studi Piemontesi*, 12 (1983).

Russia (1783); and in the republics of the United Provinces (1690), Genoa (1727), Venice (1741), Geneva (1782); and at Rome and the Imperial Diet at Ratisbon. Growth was neither uninterrupted nor complete. There were still many courts with which Turin had no contacts. However, by 1789 the court of Turin had established permanent contact with the leading European courts, and its most important 'Italian' neighbours, in a way which could not have been foreseen in 1684; while the resident diplomat was increasingly the sole agent of its relations with these states.¹⁵

Typically, relations with England were unbroken after 1713, although the Mearns affair (1773–4), in which the British government pressed for the return to her father of the daughter (who had converted to Catholicism) of a British subject resident at Nice, briefly threatened a serious rupture.¹⁶ In the later eighteenth century successive envoys resided in Lincoln's Inn Fields (in or about what became Sardinia Street). There were sixteen Savoyard resident ministers in London between 1690 and 1798: Count Filiberto Sallier de la Tour (1690–6), Count de Briançon (1705–8), Count Annibale Maffei (1710–13), Francis Eleazar Wicardel de Fleury, Marquis de Trivié (1713–16), Count Joseph Piccone Bertrand de la Perouse (1716–19), Ercole Tommasso Roero, Marquis di Cortanze (1719–25), Victor Amadeus Marquis Seyssel d'Aix (1725–9), Cavaliere Giuseppe Ossorio Alarcon (1729–49), Count Carlo Baldassare Perrone di San Martino (1749–55), Count Francis Joseph de Viry (1755–63), Marquis Filippo Ferrero della Marmora (1763–6), Count Joseph Maria Viry de la Perrière (1766–9), Count Filippo Maria Giuseppe Ottone Ponte di Scarnafigi (1769–74), Victor Amadeus Sallier de la Tour, Marquis de Cordon (1774–84), Cavaliere Nomis di Pollone (1784–7) and Count Filippo di San Martino di Fronte (1787–99 and 1802–12). Between 1690 and 1713, but rarely thereafter, the resident minister was sometimes supplemented by an *ad hoc* mission, for example that of the Marquis di Buttigliera, sent to London (1695) to condole with William III on the death of Queen Mary, and to press the King on other, political issues.¹⁷ None of the envoys to London was recalled, as was the Marquis di San Tommaso from Vienna (1719, for plotting against Prince Eugene) at the request of the court to which he was accredited. However, la Perouse was suspected by English ministers of Jacobite

¹⁵ This paragraph is based on the published lists of Savoyard diplomats cited above, on the despatches of English ministers from Turin in SP 92 (Sardinia), *passim* and (from 1782) FO 67 (Sardinia), and on Frigo, *Principe*, pp. 167ff.

¹⁶ C. Denina, *Istoria dell'Italia Occidentale*, 6 vols., Turin, 1809, vol. v, pp. 90ff.

¹⁷ Storrs, 'Diplomatic Relations between William III and Victor Amadeus II', pp. 261ff.

plotting, at a sensitive time (that of the Sicily–Sardinia exchange). Despite Victor Amadeus' repeated requests for proof of the Count's supposed plotting, and promises to punish him if such proof were forthcoming, George I's ministers were unable to produce it. Nevertheless, Victor Amadeus clearly thought it would be politic to recall la Perouse. Ossorio (whose own relations with the English government were undermined by his links with the parliamentary opposition to Walpole early in the 1730s) was removed from London in 1750 to head the embassy to Madrid to negotiate the marriage of the future Victor Amadeus III. Some diplomats, perhaps fearing the worst, secured their own recall on health grounds, as did Count Perrone, although he was not alone in also wishing to return home to look after his estate and private affairs. Only Briançon's mission was cut short by death.¹⁸

When the system of resident diplomats emerged in the fifteenth century the basic distinction had been between ambassadors (ordinary and extraordinary) and lesser ministers (residents). By 1713, this had evolved into a much more complex hierarchy. In the best-known diplomatic manual of the age, *De la manière de négocier avec les souverains* (1716), the French foreign office official, François de Callières, set out the hierarchy: ambassadors; envoys extraordinary; residents; secretaries; agents. The relatively new rank of envoy extraordinary was particularly favoured from the later seventeenth century, and was increasingly distinguished from the resident, a rank falling rapidly in status.¹⁹ Most of the men sent to the French and Spanish courts by Victor Amadeus II and his successors between 1713 and 1798 went as ambassador. In part this was due to the granting by Versailles and Madrid to his ambassadors of the honours normally accorded those from crowned heads. It probably owed something, too, to the fact that Victor Amadeus' daughters had both married into the House of Bourbon, links which were renewed after 1748, when it also reflected political realities and the requirements of policy. Ambassadors were sent much less frequently to other courts and republics, although by the end of the century it was usual to send one to Vienna. Victor Amadeus sent Trivié as ambassador to London (1713), to assert his own new royal dignity, but no more

¹⁸ *DBI*, 'Carron'; Victor Amadeus to Cortanze, 10 Jan. 1720, Turin, Archivio di Stato, Turin (AST), Lettere di Ministri (LM), Gran Bretagna (GB), mazzo (m.) 24 (Victor Amadeus' links with the Jacobite court in exile are hardly treated in the secondary literature, but see H. M. C. *Stuart Papers*, vols. II–V); Quazza, *Il problema*, p. 228; Dagna, 'Un diplomatico', pp. 35ff.; Maffei to Lord Chamberlain (asking that Briançon's body be left temporarily in Westminster Abbey), 26 July 1710, SP 100/29.

¹⁹ François de Callières, *The Art of Diplomacy*, edited by H. M. A. Keens-Soper and K. W. Schweizer, Leicester, 1983, pp. 101ff.; Horn, *British Diplomatic Service*, pp. 44ff.; Frigo, *Principe*, pp. 177 and 229ff.

ministers of this rank were sent there. Most Savoyard diplomats, including the other resident ministers sent to the English court between 1690 and 1798, had the rank of envoy extraordinary. A few received in addition the rank of minister plenipotentiary, which was sometimes given instead of that of envoy. It was also generally given to those entrusted with a specific negotiation, including Count de Front, appointed minister plenipotentiary to conclude the treaty of alliance with England (1793); and to those attending peace congresses.²⁰

This preference for envoys extraordinary was widespread in eighteenth-century Europe. For one thing, they were cheaper. Sardinian diplomatic salaries did not absorb a large proportion of the total budget but ambassadors were more expensive (see below). This was important to a regime preoccupied with its expenditure. Envoys were also less encumbered by ceremonial, but enjoyed the privileged access at court denied to ministers 'without character'. Broadly speaking, too, the Sardinian court, especially after 1713, would not send a minister to reside at a foreign court of a higher rank than that court sent to Turin. George I's failure to send anybody to Turin led Victor Amadeus II to replace Trivié (1716) by an envoy extraordinary, hoping that the King might reciprocate at this less exalted level. In the later 1730s and 1740s the Sardinian court was dissatisfied with the presence in Turin, following the departure of the first English ambassador, the Earl of Essex, of a mere resident secretary and *chargé*, Arthur Villettes. Villettes was regarded as of insufficient rank to reciprocate the presence of an envoy, Ossorio, in London and was denied the privileges enjoyed by ambassadors and envoys in Turin. This view, which was by no means peculiar to the Savoyard court, affected relations with other states. In 1779, since the Genoese had only a resident in Turin, Victor Amadeus III replaced his minister plenipotentiary in Genoa with a mere minister resident.²¹

Secretaries and *chargés d'affaires* (who had credentials from their prince and enjoyed a limited public 'character' but restricted access at court) and agents (who had no credentials but a private letter and no public character) were favoured where a court or republic had not recognized Victor Amadeus II (or his successors). Since the Dutch Republic refused to recognize him as King of Sicily, in 1713, Victor Amadeus replaced

²⁰ Cf. Bittner and Gross, *Repertorium*, and English diplomatic correspondence, SP 92 and FO 67, *passim*. Instructions given to successive envoys to England 1716–87, AST, *Negoziazioni*, Inghilterra; Frigo, *Principe*, pp. 167ff. and 229ff.; DBI, 'Borgo'.

²¹ Cf. Horn, *British Diplomatic Service*, pp. 42ff.; instructions for la Perouse, 1716, AST; Villettes to Newcastle, 19 Oct., 2 Nov. and 27 Dec. 1740, and 14 Oct. 1741, Turin, SP 92/43; Poyntz to Chamier, 3 Nov. 1779, Turin, SP 92/82; Frigo, *Principe*, pp. 229ff.

his envoy at The Hague, Del Borgo, with a secretary, Giovan Battista Despine. The secretary of embassy often filled in between residents of higher rank, ensuring continuity. Perrino, Trivié's secretary in London, remained there to guide Trivié's successor, la Perouse, in 1716. On the latter's departure, his own secretary, Noerey, acted until the arrival of Cortanze.²²

By 1798, a recently established network of Sardinian consuls abroad supplemented the diplomatic network. In 1796, the consul in London, Boyer, was entrusted with Sardinian interests there in the absence of the envoy, Count de Front.²³ However, the rapid growth of the Sardinian consular service was not accompanied by any reassessment of the role or status of consuls. Cordon's instructions (1774) clearly distinguished between the political functions of the envoy and the commercial ones of the consul. Regarding the consul's privileges, the King of Sardinia sought no more than what was laid down by past writers on the subject – Wicquefort, Wattel, Callières – or what was granted the consuls of sovereigns of equal status to the King of Sardinia. In 1778 an incident involving the wife of the Spanish consul at Nice and the local assembly of nobility crystallized contemporary discussion of the status of consuls. Following representations from the French and Spanish ministers in Turin that foreign consuls should enjoy a higher status than that assigned them by those past writers (when trade was not so highly regarded), Victor Amadeus III cited the low status of consuls in other states and would not innovate: consuls were ministers of secondary rank and could not enjoy the privileges of those of the first rank.²⁴

The emergence of a network of resident diplomats had been accompanied by the development of a valuable body of privileges. In this respect, although not legally incorporated, the diplomatic corps were like the members of any *ancien régime* corporation. Sardinian diplomats in London and other capitals jealously guarded their privileges (and were expected to do so by their sovereign). They complained to the Secretary of State in London that they had been obliged to pay import duties (Aix, May 1728) and that their servants had been wrongfully arrested (Ossorio, October 1741 and December 1745; Viry, June 1758). In July 1736 Ossorio complained that those who had committed 'outrages' in his embassy chapel, in his presence, the previous May, remained unpunished.²⁵

²² Victor Amadeus to Cortanze, 15 Feb., 6 April, 15 June, 23 Nov. 1720, Turin and La Venerie, AST, LM, GB, m. 24; Frigo, *Principe*, pp. 179, 190ff., 208.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 197ff. and 218.

²⁴ Instructions to Cordon, 1774; Poyntz to Chamier, 17 Oct. 1778, SP 92/80.

²⁵ SP 100/32–35 (complaints of Sardinian ministers in London).

The growing diplomatic community in Turin was equally determined to defend its rights. The expanding Sardinian diplomatic presence abroad was matched by a growing resident (foreign) diplomatic presence in the Savoyard state's royal residence and capital, Turin. In 1684, there were hardly any resident diplomats in Turin. One hundred years later there were resident ministers from England, France, the Emperor, Genoa, the Pope, Portugal, Prussia, Russia, Saxony, the Two Sicilies, Spain and Venice. This was certainly an achievement for Victor Amadeus II and his successors, tangible recognition of their achievement of power and dignity. It also furthered their efforts to embellish their capital and make it part of a larger European circuit.²⁶ But, as early as the 1690s, when foreign diplomats first appeared in numbers in Turin, it was evident that this growing diplomatic presence also brought new problems. In August 1770 the English envoy, Lynch, was refused entry into Turin on returning late from his country house, reopening a dispute between the diplomatic corps and royal officials who saw diplomatic privilege as a cover for tax fraud.²⁷ The existence of Protestant embassy chapels in Turin hindered the efforts of the Kings of Sardinia to eradicate Protestantism there. Clearly, the presence of the diplomatic corps represented a restraint of sorts on the 'absolutism' of Victor Amadeus II and his successors, typifying the interaction between the domestic and foreign spheres in eighteenth-century Piedmont.²⁸

Diplomatic expansion had important implications and consequences for existing administrative arrangements,²⁹ bureaucratic control of foreign policy increasing in the Savoyard state (as elsewhere) in the eighteenth century as relations became more continuous and their conduct more sophisticated. The expansion of Sardinian diplomatic representation

²⁶ For the arrival and departure of foreign diplomats and the growth in their numbers, cf. the English diplomatic correspondence throughout the eighteenth century, SP 92 and FO 67, *passim*; Frigo, *Principe*, pp. 229ff. For the development of Turin, cf. Symcox, *Victor Amadeus II: Absolutism in the Savoyard State 1675–1730*, London, 1983, pp. 42ff., 77–8 and 226–7; Villette to Newcastle, 25 Aug. 1736 and 14 Oct. 1738, Turin, SP 92/40, 41; Pitt to Wood, 17 Sept. 1763, Turin, SP 92/70; Trevor to Carmarthen, 10 July 1784, Turin, FO 67/4, 32.

²⁷ This sort of fraud was not unusual. In 1755, the Duchess of Devonshire sought to take advantage of the arrival of the new Sardinian envoy, Count Viry, to import goods duty free for herself: Count Perrone to Count de Viry, 5 May 1755, London, copy in SP 107/64.

²⁸ Lynch to Weymouth, 7 July and 11 Aug. 1770, Turin, SP 92/75.

²⁹ For the impact of the cycle of wars between 1690 and 1713 on the postal arrangements hitherto used by Turin and its diplomats abroad, cf. M. Abrate, 'Poste e valigia diplomatica negli stati sabaudi dalla grande alleanza alla pace di Utrecht', *Studi Piemontesi*, 4 (1975), pp. 255ff.

abroad generated a great deal of documentation: instructions, credentials, ciphers, correspondence, papers received from foreign envoys in Turin and so on. This growth of paper from the late seventeenth century onwards is reflected in the enormous increase in the main diplomatic collections in the Archivio di Stato in Turin. Typically, whereas six bundles sufficed for the correspondence between Turin and its ministers in London to 1685, another thirty-one were needed for that between 1679 and 1730 and a further sixty-eight from 1730 to 1814. Already by the end of Victor Amadeus II's reign the growth in the amount of material produced by the diplomatic (and domestic) administration was such as to necessitate reorganization (1731) of the royal archives.³⁰

Before 1717 foreign policy was simply one of the many responsibilities of the principal Secretary of State's office, there being no separate department of state in Turin responsible exclusively and solely for foreign affairs. Indicative of the extent to which the principal Secretary's office originated as one serving the person of the prince, and remained a ragbag of duties, is the fact that he was also crown notary, responsible for the most important private contracts of the royal family. During the thirty years or so before 1717 the principal Secretaryship was held by Carlo Giuseppe Vittorio Carron, Marquis di San Tommaso and (from December 1696) by his son, Giuseppe Gaetano Giacinto Vittorio, also Marquis di San Tommaso on his father's death (1699), his father having purchased the right to have Giuseppe succeed.³¹ But the office was not as important as the man. Although principal Secretary throughout the War of the Spanish Succession, Giuseppe never enjoyed the same influence with Victor Amadeus II as had his father. Resentment at the Carrons' hold on their office, the sheer growth in the business of the Secretary of State's office after 1690 – associated with the transformation of the Savoyard state both in Europe and at home after that date – the overhaul of most other of the major institutions of the Savoyard state (finances, Council of State, the system of intendants) to meet its new status and needs after 1713 all contributed to Victor Amadeus' decision to split the Secretaryship in 1717 between two First Secretaries, one responsible exclusively for internal and the other for foreign affairs (both

³⁰ 'Archivio di Stato di Torino', *Guida Generale degli Archivi di Stato Italiani*, vol. iv, Rome, 1994, pp. 377–8; *Il tesoro del principe. Titoli carte memorie per il governo dello stato* (exhibition catalogue), Turin, 1989, pp. 21ff. The category 'Olanda' (the Dutch Republic) includes correspondence from Savoyard ministers accredited both to England and the United Provinces. In general, cf. M. S. Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy 1450–1919*, London, 1993, pp. 41ff.

³¹ DBI, 'Carron'; Frigo, *Principe*, pp. 25ff.

with a place in the reformed Council of State). The Marquis del Borgo became the first of eleven First Secretaries for Foreign Affairs between 1717 and 1798, San Tommaso having 'resigned'. This division was largely modelled on France, where specialized departments of state had emerged in the later seventeenth century. It was also typical of a European trend and was remarkably 'modern' (particularly by comparison with England, where similar arrangements were not introduced until 1782).³²

As Symcox and others have observed, many of Victor Amadeus II's reforms required subsequent retouching and consolidation. There were frequent clashes between the two new First Secretaries after 1717 as they sought to define their areas of responsibility. This was inevitable in a state in which the distinction between domestic and foreign matters was not always easily drawn, and in which dealings with the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor could fit into either category, offering some scope – increasingly limited – for manoeuvre for the victims of Savoyard 'absolutism' (including many papal and imperial feudatories). These problems were partly resolved by the creation of joint committees, to deal with relations with Rome and the Emperor and with the frontiers (with Genoa, Geneva, France and the Milanese), which were still ill defined until the conclusion of a series of treaties in the second half of the eighteenth century. In January 1742, Charles Emmanuel III reformed all the Secretariats of State. However, the basic principle of the reform of 1717, specialization of function, was not altered. This was not the end of tinkering, but by 1750 we can speak of a Sardinian Foreign Office, both as an institution or office and as a location (part of the Royal Palace complex developed in Turin in the 1730s) where the Secretary's officials worked and where foreign diplomats could expect to meet the Secretary himself.³³

From 1717, the First Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs was the chief intermediary between the Kings of Sardinia and both their own

³² For Victor Amadeus' administrative reforms of 1717 cf. Quazza, *Le riforme*, vol. 1, pp. 55ff.; Symcox, *Victor Amadeus II*, pp. 190ff. G. Ricuperati, 'Gli strumenti dell'assolutismo sabaudo: Segreterie di stato e consiglio delle finanze nel XVIII secolo', *RSI*, 104 (1991), pp. 802ff.; and Frigo, *Principe*, pp. 28ff. (Henceforth, unless otherwise indicated, references to the First Secretary of State will be to the one responsible for foreign affairs.) For the European picture, cf. Anderson, *Diplomacy*, pp. 73ff.; M. A. Thomson, *The Secretaries of State 1681–1782*, 1968 (new impression), pp. 1ff.; and J. Rule, 'Colbert de Torcy, an Emergent Bureaucracy and the Formulation of French Foreign Policy 1698–1715', in R. M. Hatton (ed.), *Louis XIV and Europe*, London, 1976, pp. 260ff.

³³ Symcox, *Victor Amadeus II*, pp. 196, 223ff.; *Il tesoro del principe*, pp. 150–1; Molesworth to [?], 22 Jan. and 3 Dec. 1721, Turin, SP 92/30.

ministers abroad and foreign ministers in Turin. He received the monarch's orders for the despatch of letters, which his staff then drafted for the royal signature. He was also the link between the King and diplomat and the rest of the Sardinian bureaucracy. In 1729, when Ossorio was sent to London, Del Borgo signed the relevant letters to the Keeper of the Seals and the financial officials; and countersigned Ossorio's instructions from the King. Twenty-six years later, Ossorio, now himself First Secretary, supervised the minor administrative and financial tasks associated with Count de Viry's despatch to London. By then, the arrangements of 1717 were fully mature. Successive envoys were ordered to send their letters to 'our Minister and First Secretary of State for foreign affairs', or (Count Scarnafigi, going to London, 1769, there being no First Secretary at that time) to the 'first official'. The First Secretary was increasingly responsible, with the Royal Archivist, for the departmental records. The Marquis de Cordon, on his appointment to London (1774), swore to hand over to the Secretary of State on his return all the registers of his diplomatic correspondence in London. Ossorio, as First Secretary, asserted that only he should meet with foreign envoys. Finally, the secretaries of embassy, men like Despine and Noerey, were increasingly the instruments of the King and the First Secretary rather than of the envoys they worked for. Clearly, the office of the First Secretary was asserting a monopoly (under and in the name of the sovereign) in the conduct of foreign policy and control of its instruments and making these claims effective.³⁴

The First Secretary's office in Turin was also increasingly 'bureaucratic', with its total (between 1730 and 1798) of twenty-one subordinate secretaries and twenty-five under-secretaries to draft, transcribe and copy the diplomatic and other correspondence, under the supervision of an occasional 'first official' who liaised between the First Secretary and his staff. Typically, there were one first official, three secretaries and three under-secretaries, although the numbers varied. Salaries reflected the Office hierarchy, the secretaries receiving between 1,000 and 1,200 and the under-secretaries between 600 and 900 *lire* a year. These were supplemented by shares in the fees paid for documents they prepared. Each of the three secretaries was responsible for a distinct aspect of foreign policy: policy in general; relations with the states of northern Europe (including England); and relations with Spain, the Holy See and the Italian states. The office was increasingly professionalized.

³⁴ Instructions to envoys sent to London from 1713, AST, Negoziazioni, Inghilterra, *passim* (appended to most instructions are various documents relating mainly to emoluments); Rochford to Holderness, 9 Nov. 1751, Turin, SP 92/58; Frigo, *Principe*, pp. 190ff.

Two-thirds of these forty-six subordinate officials had law degrees. A career pattern emerged: a long apprenticeship as under-secretary or volunteer, promotion to secretary (or higher) and retirement on a pension or with some honorary post. By the later eighteenth century, a subordinate official could aspire to the post of 'first official' or *de facto* headship of the office under the First Secretary, as did Raiberti and Vuy. Some officials took up diplomatic appointments, including Count Ferrero di Lavriani, who was appointed minister to the Genoese Republic (1752) and Lisbon (1762).³⁵

The 'diplomatic' service also became more professional. Permanent legation archives were developed, returning envoys leaving their papers for their successors. (Inventories were attached to the instructions given envoys to London in the later eighteenth century.) There was no formal Sardinian 'school for diplomats', of the kind which briefly flourished in France between 1713 and 1721. However, Victor Amadeus II sent Ossorio to study in the United Provinces and to learn the job first hand at The Hague, in what may have been an emerging training and career structure. Equally important was the extent to which Victor Amadeus and his successors trained their envoys abroad by means of the original instructions and subsequent correspondence. Some diplomats were not successes. But those who performed well in their first post (Ossorio under Victor Amadeus II, Count Perrone under Charles Emmanuel III) might be promoted to one of greater responsibility and higher rank (in both these cases, to London). Some men spent years abroad, in one or more posts, including Count Ferrero de la Marmora (The Hague, London and Geneva) and Count de Viry (The Hague, London, Madrid, Paris). In the later eighteenth century, Counts Scarnafigi and de Front and Cavaliere Nomis di Pollone were all transferred from Lisbon to London, in part at least because of relevant experience acquired in the former post (see below). Six former diplomats became First Secretary of State for foreign affairs: Del Borgo, Ossorio, the Marquis de Saint Germain, and Counts Lascaris di Castellar, Viry and Perrone.³⁶

The diplomatic service and the First Secretary's office represented a small proportion of total expenditure but the expanding diplomatic organization contributed to the growing budget of the Savoyard state. From 1713, Sardinian envoys in London received 28,000 *lire* a year, plus

³⁵ Frigo, *Principe*, pp. 84ff.; Rochford to Holdernessee, 18 Nov. 1752, Poyntz to Chamier, 1 Nov. 1777, Turin, and Mountstuart to Hillsborough, 5 June and 20 Dec. 1780, all Turin, SP 92/60, 80, 83.

³⁶ Cf. Instructions, AST; Frigo, *Principe*, p. 184; Hedges to Newcastle, 4 Jan. 1727, Turin, SP 92/32 fol. 91; Dagna, 'un diplomatico', pp. 14ff.; Ricuperati, 'Strumenti', pp. 849ff.

5,000 (doubled in 1759) for the embassy chapel. They also received 8,000 *lire* for their journey to London and back and initial costs. By contrast, as minister without character at The Hague in the 1730s, Count Borré de la Chavanne received 9,000 *lire* (increased to 10,000 in 1740), which was just a quarter of what Count Canale received at Vienna. Victor Amadeus II had, typically, kept a tight rein on diplomatic expenditure. However, there was a growing awareness that salaries were inadequate and might undermine Savoyard diplomacy. (A secretary of Ossorio's had sold sensitive information.) Charles Emmanuel III allowed more in extraordinaries (and one-off cash gifts) to, for example, della Marmora in London; and finally in March 1774 Victor Amadeus III ordered a general increase in diplomatic and other salaries. Henceforth, the envoy to London received 40,000 *lire* a year, including his chapel allowance. This was still less than the Sardinian ambassadors to the French and Spanish courts, who received 64,000 and 50,000 *lire* respectively, but more than the envoys to Lisbon and Berlin (30,000 each), the minister at The Hague (16,000) and the resident in Venice (10,000). In 1776, the budget for ministers abroad was 371,000 *lire*, a threefold increase on 1689, roughly comparable to the growth in the overall state budget. (Just how promptly and regularly these salaries were paid was another matter altogether.) As for the First Secretary's office, after some fluctuations between 1713 and 1730, owing largely to the uncertain international situation, there was greater budget stability. In 1776 the Secretariat was allocated 48,000 *lire*, the main items being salaries and the posts, plus 14,000 *lire* in pensions.³⁷

Hitherto, we have considered the First Secretary's office and the diplomatic service as typical of the emerging bureaucracy traditionally associated with modern state formation in 'absolute' Europe. As recent research has shown, however, the reality was less clear cut, in the Savoyard state and elsewhere. The First Secretary's office reflects the continuing fluidity often revealed by such studies. In many respects, men were still more important than their offices and could, by force of personal ability and will, reshape departmental responsibilities and power. In the middle decades of the century individual ministers effectively re-created the dominance of the Carron de San Tommaso, and virtually fused the two secretariats into one again. The Marquis d'Ormea, Charles Emmanuel III's 'prime minister', dominated foreign

³⁷ M. Abrate, 'Elementi per la storia delle finanze dello stato sabaudo nella seconda metà del xvii secolo', *BSBS*, 67 (1969), p. 397; Frigo, *Principe*, pp. 139ff.; *DBI*, 'Borré'; N. Bianchi, *Monarchia piemontese*, pp. 59ff. Instructions to envoys sent to London from 1713, *AST*, *Negoziazioni*, *Inghilterra*, *passim*.

policy even before his appointment as First Secretary of State for foreign affairs in March 1732. Significantly, however, the formal distinction between the two Secretariats was not ended, this being the occasion on which the first 'first official' was appointed.³⁸ During Bogino's 'supremacy' (c. 1750–73), in contrast to the priorities of an earlier era, domestic issues were of much greater importance, and the First Secretary by no means enjoyed exclusive control of foreign policy.³⁹ This was not least because some of his own subordinates were the creatures of Bogino.⁴⁰ Ossorio's attempt (1751) to restrict contact with foreign envoys thus appears more as an attempt by a minister to secure his 'space' than the confident assertion of an acknowledged monopoly. Many diplomatic appointments of this era were regarded as defeats for the First Secretary and victories for Bogino.⁴¹ The post of First Secretary was sometimes simply left vacant, suggesting that the office could function without one. In December 1770, Count Lascaris (who was regarded as a creature of Bogino) was recalled from Naples to fill the post after four years in which the First Secretary's functions had been carried out by the 'first official'. The appointment was due as much to Charles Emmanuel's desire to have a man of rank witness the marriage contract of the Duke of Savoy's daughter as to the needs of the Secretariat, because, as Crown notary, the First Secretary retained functions attached to the pre-1717 office of principal Secretary of State.⁴²

The independence of the First Secretary was undermined, above all, by the monarch, particularly in the years immediately after 1717. Victor Amadeus II was very much his own foreign minister, determined to control his foreign policy and its instruments. After 1713, his envoys to the English court were routinely instructed to correspond regularly with his other ministers abroad, but not to inform them of important negotiations unless absolutely necessary, although this was as much a matter of secrecy as of control. He also used secretaries of embassy and envoys to spy on his ministers abroad to ensure their obedience. Del Borgo, First Secretary for the rest of Victor Amadeus' reign, was an experienced and intelligent diplomat, but was largely the cipher of a master who had even more extensive knowledge and understanding of foreign affairs and who was determined to retain control. In many respects del Borgo

³⁸ Frigo, *Principe*, pp. 59ff.

³⁹ Riciperati, 'Gli strumenti', p. 798 (and *passim*); and *DBI*, s.v.

⁴⁰ Cf. Rochford to Bedford, 10 April 1751, Turin, SP 92/59 (on the 'first official', Raiberti).

⁴¹ Cf. Rochford to Bedford, 14 March 1750, Turin, SP 92/58, for the appointment of Bogino's enemy, the Count di Monasterolo, as envoy to the court of Naples, to get him away from the court of Turin.

⁴² Lynch to Weymouth, 24 Oct. 1770, Turin, SP 92/75.

was merely a screen, keeping others at bay. Victor Amadeus 'trained' his own men and promoted those who pleased him (notably Ossorio). Typically, Victor Amadeus personally negotiated with the English envoy Hedges Sardinia's accession to the Alliance of Hanover (1726–7).⁴³ Equally typical was his interest in lesser details, including his diplomats' expenses claims.⁴⁴ Victor Amadeus also complicated matters following his abdication in 1730. In his determination to resume direction of the state he began corresponding with ministers abroad, effectively running a rival 'foreign office' from Chambéry until his permanent removal after an abortive coup in the summer of 1731.⁴⁵

Charles Emmanuel III's reign saw the First Secretary's office securing more independence, but it remained the King's instrument, not least because of the way officials and diplomats were personally bound to the King: newly appointed diplomats took an oath to the monarch, and were not thought to be properly in post if this was not sworn. Rivalries between successive First Secretaries and other ministers also favoured effective royal superiority.⁴⁶ Victor Amadeus III's accession saw monarch and court asserting themselves more completely. The English envoy, Trevor, was told in 1786 that Victor Amadeus III had negotiated secretly (unknown to his First Secretary, Count Perrone) with Joseph II, in something very like a *secret du roi* (i.e. a personal foreign policy run independently of the official foreign office).⁴⁷ Anyway, the official diplomatic network was not the monarch's only source of information. Members of the House of Savoy, married throughout Europe, could supplement, and even eclipse, the official structure. On the departure of the Chevalier de Morand as ambassador to Madrid in 1780, the English envoy in Turin noted that Perrone expected better intelligence from the correspondence between Charles III of Spain and his sister, Victor Amadeus III's queen. Another channel was Victor Amadeus III's correspondence with his married daughters, resident at the French court.⁴⁸ Subjects in foreign service could also supply valuable news.⁴⁹

⁴³ Cf. Hedges to Newcastle, 14 June 1727, Turin, SP 92/32.

⁴⁴ Del Borgo to Cortanze, 21 Dec. 1720, AST, LM, GB, m. 20.

⁴⁵ Victor Amadeus II to Ossorio, 1 Jan. and 5 March 1731 and Pettiti to Ossorio, 12 March 1731, Chambéry, SP 107; for Victor Amadeus II's interference after 1730 in the *perequazione*, cf. Symcox, *Victor Amadeus II*, pp. 230–1.

⁴⁶ G. Rice, 'Lord Rochford at Turin 1749–55', in J. Black (ed.), *Knights Errant and True Englishmen. British Foreign Policy 1600–1800*, Edinburgh, 1989, p. 96.

⁴⁷ Trevor to Carmarthen, 12 Jan. 1786, Turin FO 67/4.

⁴⁸ Bianchi, *Monarchia piemontese*, pp. 29–30; cf. C. Baudi di Vesme, 'Il "Parti Savoyard" a Versailles durante il Ministero Turgot (1774–1776)', *BSBS*, 62 (1964), pp. 5ff.; Mountstuart to Hillsborough, 16 Feb. 1780, Turin, SP 92/83.

⁴⁹ Cf. Essex to Newcastle, 17 Nov. 1734, Turin, SP 92/37 for letters received from a

The First Secretary himself sometimes ignored his master's envoys abroad. Ormea's personal contacts in Rome, made during his negotiation of the first Concordat (1727), enabled him to negotiate a second (1741) without the participation of the Sardinian resident in Rome, Count de Rivera. In December 1764, the Sardinian government communicated French naval intelligence to the British government not via its supposedly anti-British envoy in London, Ferrero della Marmora, but via the English envoy in Turin. In July 1777, Aigueblanche communicated the circumstances of the disgrace of the Count de Viry and Vuy to the English minister in Turin with the request that the information should not be divulged to the Sardinian envoy in London, Cordon, a rival of Aigueblanche's.⁵⁰ Personal antagonisms might reflect and affect dissent, or at least debate, within the 'absolute' state over foreign affairs. Ministers and others often had their own channels of foreign intelligence which, reflecting real division within the ruling elite, could also be used to communicate these differences. The abandonment during the War of the Polish Succession of Victor Amadeus II's 'tradition' of alliance with England and the Emperor against France created some unease and opposition. Marshal Rhebinder, banished (1733) to his governorship at Pinerolo in disgrace from the campaign in the Milanese, let Villettes know that he hoped 'England' would rescue Charles Emmanuel III from his error in joining the Bourbons. The Marquis di Cortanze, former envoy in London, and an advocate of the English alliance, shared these views.⁵¹ During the Seven Years War, too, English ministers in Turin were aware of the differences of opinion between Charles Emmanuel's ministers over whether to remain neutral (or to seize Piacenza).⁵² In 1769, Bogino and the future Victor Amadeus III were said to favour war over the French occupation of Corsica, whereas Raiberti (head of the First Secretary's office) and 'opinion' opposed it.⁵³

Other groups in the Savoyard state had their own foreign channels.

Piedmontese officer in the Elector of Bavaria's service, on Bavarian policy in the War of the Polish Succession.

⁵⁰ Dutens to Halifax, 5 Dec. 1764, Turin, SP 92/71; Poyntz to Chamier, 9 July 1777, Turin, SP 92/80.

⁵¹ Essex to Newcastle, 25 Nov. and 12 Dec. 1733, Turin, SP 92/35 fol. 312 and 18 June 1734, Turin, SP 92/37; Quazza, *Il problema*, pp. 201ff., discusses opposition to the war in the 1730s; D. Carutti, 'Il Maresciallo Rhebinder. Nota biografica', *CGP*, vol. VIII, pp. 155ff.

⁵² Dutens to Egremont, 13 Jan. and 20 Feb. 1762, Turin, SP 92/69.

⁵³ Lynch to Weymouth, 30 Aug. 1769, Turin, SP 92/74. Opposition and debate in the 1690s, 1700s and 1740s remain largely unexplored, but cf. Sclopis, *Relazioni politiche*, p. 86.

Despite formal prohibitions by Victor Amadeus II and his successors, their Vaudois subjects frequently took their grievances to the envoys of the Protestant powers in Turin. In December 1783 a Vaudois deputation visited Trevor, the English envoy in Turin, to thank him for the support of George III and the British nation.⁵⁴ Former diplomats had excellent opportunities to establish lasting contacts abroad. The Marquis d'Aix established links in London which he maintained on his departure. Nobles were privileged in this respect. They secured exemptions from the prohibition on meeting foreign diplomats in Turin, in order to practise their foreign languages (a useful preparation for diplomatic service). Nobles and foreign ministers residing in Turin often mixed socially, the Prussian envoy and the Cavaliere di Fresia coming to blows after a heated discussion about chemistry during a gathering in the home of the Marquis d'Aglié in 1778.⁵⁵ Although difficult to identify precisely, there are also hints of a 'public opinion' of sorts in Turin in the later eighteenth century, one stimulated by foreign policy issues. English ministers frequently reported broad Anglophile (and/or Francophobe) sentiment in Turin,⁵⁶ while the Mearns affair (above) stimulated interest in Turin and the Savoyard state at large, in an issue of both religion and foreign policy.⁵⁷

Recruitment and promotion in the diplomatic service and the Secretariat were rarely due simply to merit or experience. Older patterns of clientage survived within the shell of the bureaucratic state. The appointment of a new First Secretary might mean the replacement of existing staff by his own 'creatures'. Although able, Vuy's initial appointment and rise from under-secretary to 'first official' owed much to his connections with the Viry family and with the Marquis d'Aigueblanche (appointed First Secretary on Victor Amadeus III's accession, in 1773).⁵⁸ Few First Secretaries had much experience of the work of the Secretariat (rather than of diplomacy). As far as contemporaries were concerned, diplomatic appointments, too, were of creatures and relations by patrons and/or kin, which did not necessarily rule out merit. Victor Amadeus II appointed his creatures, notably Ossorio and, as First Secretary, Ossorio promoted his own. Count Lavriani's appointment to

⁵⁴ Rochford to Bedford, 24 April 1751, Turin, SP 92/58; Trevor to Fox, 27 Dec. 1783, Turin, FO 67/3.

⁵⁵ Poyntz to Chamier, 28 Jan. 1778, Turin, SP 92/82. In the 1780s, the English and Portuguese envoys attended the Turin salon of the Marquis Falletti di Barolo, Romagnani, *Prospero Balbo*, pp. 18ff.

⁵⁶ Mackenzie to Pitt, 1 Sept. 1759, Turin, SP 92/66; Mountstuart to Fox, 9 May 1782, Turin, FO 67/3.

⁵⁷ Lynch to Rochford, 8 Sept. 1773, Turin, SP 92/77.

⁵⁸ Bianchi, *Monarchia piemontese*, p. 43.

Genoa (above) was as much that of a confidant of Ossorio as of a 'professional' from the Secretariat.⁵⁹ Perrone's appointment as Regent of the Secretariat (1777) and First Secretary (1779) owed much to his connections with Ferrero della Marmora, the Lascaris family (into which Perrone married) and the influential Archbishop of Turin Rorengo di Rorà. Nomis di Pollone's posting to London (1784) was due in part to his brother's marriage to Perrone's daughter. Men were still appointed by patrons and relations (and expected to be so), not least because they were thought to be reliable. The professionals were still few in number. Most diplomats still came from and returned to other fields of activity, the court, the magistracy and the army. The missions of Cortanze, Aix and Perrone to London were episodes in more diverse careers, if 'career' is the right term. During the more than twenty years between his last mission and his appointment as Regent of the Secretariat (1777), Perrone held court and military office but lived largely in retirement, devoting himself to his estates. It would be wrong to deny the growing formalization, bureaucracy and professionalization, but these were only part of a structure still informed by older patterns of office holding, politics, government and allegiance.⁶⁰

The instructions given to successive Sardinian envoys to London reflect the growing formalization and also some of the broad characteristics and underlying assumptions of Sardinian diplomacy. Generally, those instructions, which were almost invariably in French after 1713, reflecting a general European trend towards the use of that language in diplomacy, were very long. They usually began by declaring that the individual concerned had been chosen for fidelity (1729), capacity and zeal already revealed. Mention was generally made of previous diplomatic service, but otherwise technical capacity was not mentioned. The minister involved was invariably said to have shown these qualities in 'our' service, i.e. in the personal service of the prince. Ceremonial and rank were among the issues first addressed, in great detail (see below). The envoys' main tasks were largely defined as discovering intelligence, maintaining good relations and 'insinuating' their master's interests. This might be in the context of a pressing political issue, the element of the instruction which changed most over time. Perhaps surprisingly, the space given to immediate negotiations could be relatively limited,

⁵⁹ Rochford to Holdernes, 18 Nov. 1752, Turin, SP 92/60.

⁶⁰ Poyntz to Chamier, 10 Sept. and 26 Nov. 1777, Turin, SP 92/80; Ricuperati, 'Gli strumenti', *passim*; Dagna, 'Un diplomatico', *passim*. For Ormea's promotion of his creatures, cf. Villette to Newcastle, 14 Feb. 1742, Turin, SP 92/46. Generally, cf. Frigo, *Principe*, *passim*.

although the survey of the politics and leading personalities of the foreign court in the instructions was in a sense part of this. Since most departing Sardinian ministers were given great bundles of papers, the relevance of these was often explained. The last part of the instructions dealt with correspondence, posts and ciphers. Only latterly (1774, 1787) were final *relazioni* formally requested of envoys. The instructions, which were generally well structured and to the point, were signed by the monarch and countersigned (after 1717) by the First Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Some ministers (Aix, 1725) received additional instructions, relating to immediate political issues. Others, especially if transferring in haste (Front, 1787), received interim instructions. Those envoys who took personal leave of the King might receive further oral instructions.⁶¹

While the instructions served immediate, practical purposes, they also represented a form of education and of control (especially under Victor Amadeus II) of men who might have little experience, particularly of the court in question, and reveal general attitudes towards diplomacy and its purpose. In the instructions given la Perouse (1716) Victor Amadeus noted the importance of uniformity of policy and method. The instructions helped achieve this. The importance of intelligence for right decision making was frequently asserted (1716, 1725); and the need (1716) to distinguish the truth from common report. The instructions sometimes gave advice both on what (sometimes very specific) to say to princes and ministers, and on broad negotiating approaches. These reveal much about Savoyard perceptions of foreigners. Ministers sent to England were generally given a preliminary sketch of the English character, and of the (turbulent) nature of English politics, with repeated warnings and advice on how to steer between the parties, which were expected (1787) to try to draw foreign ministers into their domestic squabbles. Successive envoys were told that the English could only be won by an open approach; that most resentments must be 'dissimulated' (i.e. hidden); and that they must constantly insinuate their master's interests, suggesting that contemporary criticism of Savoyard diplomats

⁶¹ This and the following paragraphs are based upon a survey of the instructions given to the ministers sent to London after 1713 in AST, Negoziazioni, Inghilterra, m. 1 and m. 1 d'addizione. I should like to thank the staff of the Archivio di Stato, Torino for providing photocopies of these. Cf. the instructions (1703–6) published in the CGP volumes, those (1713–19) published in Manno *et al.*, *Relazioni diplomatiche, passim*, and those given Cordon, going as ambassador to the French court (1788), in A. F. Trucco, *Il Marchese di Cordon a Vittorio Amedeo III. Corrispondenza inedita e cifrata*, Alessandria, 1909, pp. xxii *et seq.* Bianchi, *Monarchia piemontese* vol. 1, pp. 552ff. quotes extensively from instructions issued in the period 1773–89.

and diplomacy as characterized above all by 'dissimulation' (see below) had some force.

The instructions also reveal a great deal about Savoyard perceptions of Savoy's own place and that of England (and of its relationship with England) in the changing international scene. Broadly speaking, there was little advance on Victor Amadeus II's view, expressed in a survey of Savoy's place in Europe in 1684, that England and Sardinia were too distant to conflict (1755, 1774).⁶² (In fact, as we have seen, suspicions of Victor Amadeus II's involvement in Jacobite plotting, and his wife's Stuart descent, giving him an interest in the English succession, helped sour relations between the two courts after 1714.) However, and in contrast to the view that the princes of the House of Savoy took lightly treaty obligations, after 1713 Victor Amadeus II looked to England, as the principal architect of the Utrecht settlement, of which he was such a considerable beneficiary, to guarantee the latter, particularly against a resurgent Spain. The extent to which Victor Amadeus II was traumatized by and preoccupied with his treatment by the Quadruple Alliance is evident in the instructions given Ossorio (1729). Surveying Europe, he saw a restless Spain (governed 'despotically' by Elisabeth Farnese) as the main source of trouble. England and France wished only for peace, and were reluctant to take the necessary action. This explained the turbulent international scene since 1713, the admirable Peace of Utrecht being overthrown as short-term, contradictory solutions were attempted (particularly in Italy). Victor Amadeus believed that it was in England's interest to have a friend in Italy, because the dominance of Italy by any other power threatened the general European balance (not precisely defined) which it was in England's permanent interest to maintain.

The Sardinian ideal was clearly the 'Old System', the vehicle of Savoy's rise between 1690 and 1713. It was England's refusal to play its part (and the Bourbon attack on the Emperor) which forced Charles Emmanuel to join the Bourbons in the 1730s. The War of the Austrian Succession represented a resurrection of sorts of the 'Old System', which seemed triumphant in 1748. But not for long. In 1763, the defining preoccupation of Sardinian policy-makers in the later eighteenth century first appeared: the Franco-Austrian alliance. Not surprisingly, given the way it had undermined Sardinia's international position, this was regarded as unnatural in Turin, which constantly hoped for a resumption of the old Anglo-Austrian connection. By 1769 England's

⁶² A. Manno, 'Un mémoire autographe de Victor Amédée II', *Revue Internationale*, 1 (1884), *passim*.

apparent neglect of its own true interests (above all over the French acquisition of Corsica) made pointing these out one of the envoy's main tasks. It was asserted that England and Sardinia shared an interest in maintaining the liberties of Europe (not defined) against the Bourbon powers. By 1774, England was believed to have seriously declined from the days when it had opposed Louis XIV, largely because of its domestic divisions and difficulties. By 1784, the Sardinian government was unsure how far England's position as a power could sustain its recent defeat in America. Such perceptions were a crucial part of that process whereby the Kingdom of Sardinia abandoned its hopes of the 'Old System' and gradually accommodated itself again to its status of a century earlier, i.e. a French client. Nevertheless, Turin clutched at straws which might offer better future prospects, including (1787) an improvement in Anglo-Prussian relations.⁶³

As ordered, Sardinian diplomats maintained an intense and voluminous correspondence both with Turin and between themselves. The count de la Tour, between his arrival at The Hague in August 1690 and October 1696, wrote more than 450 letters (i.e. at least once a week, and often twice) from London or The Hague to at least one of San Tommaso and Victor Amadeus II (and frequently to both), in addition to his correspondence with other Savoyard ministers abroad and with the ministers of foreign governments. Between December 1719 and December 1720, the Marquis di Cortanze sent ninety letters to Turin (barely more than ten of them to the First Secretary, Del Borgo, the rest to Victor Amadeus). In return he received more than 120 letters, half from Del Borgo and half from Victor Amadeus. It has been calculated that between 1737 and 1773 Count Canale sent about 3,700 despatches from Vienna to Turin alone, i.e. about two a week.⁶⁴

Apart from Victor Amadeus II's correspondence with Trivié in 1713, which was in Italian, the correspondence of all the Savoyard ministers resident in London between 1690 and 1798 with Turin (and with each other) seems to have been conducted largely in French. This cannot be

⁶³ Cf. H. M. Scott, 'The True Principles of the Revolution: The Duke of Newcastle and the Idea of the Old System', in Black (ed.), *Knights Errant*. For use of the terms 'balance of power' and the 'liberties of Europe' by both Ormea and Charles Emmanuel III, cf. Quazza, *Il problema*, pp. 265–6.

⁶⁴ For analysis of de la Tour's and Cortanze's unpublished correspondence between 1690 and 1696 and in 1719–20, cf. AST, LM, GB and Olanda; and for Canale, cf. Ruata, *Luigi Malabaila di Canale*, pp. 151ff. Cf. the correspondence 1713–19 with Savoyard ministers at the French court, published in Manno *et al*, *Relazioni diplomatiche, passim*; and Cordon's correspondence from the French court from 1788, in Trucco, *Corrispondenza, passim*.

explained simply by the geographical origin of those diplomats, since not all came from the French-speaking Duchy of Savoy (see below). Even Ossorio (a Sicilian, whose instructions were in Italian) corresponded in French. A systematic survey of the materials in the Archivio di Stato might reveal some variation (in the 1690s the Savoyard ministers in Brussels and Vienna corresponded with Turin in Italian; and as First Secretary Aigueblanche, in 1773, seems to have corresponded with the Count di Rivera, at Rome, in Italian). But, as has already been noted, Savoyard diplomacy seems to have followed the European trend towards the greater use of French as the language of diplomacy in the eighteenth century: by contrast, most of the administrative and financial correspondence between the First Secretary's office and the other offices in Turin on a diplomat's appointment seems to have been written in Italian.⁶⁵

The practice of corresponding with both King and First Secretary remained a feature of Savoyard diplomacy throughout this period. That between the King and his envoy dealt with the essential political issues, and represented a constant updating of the original instructions to deal with a fluid situation. Equally importantly, it constituted an element of control by the monarch over his minister, who was allowed little independence, especially during Victor Amadeus II's reign. On occasion, Cortanze was told exactly what to say, how and when (1720). As with the instructions, too, the correspondence was an opportunity for the King to 'train' his minister, drawing attention to the implications of events and words and to the discrepancies between the statements of different (English) ministers. Even where the King had nothing important to say, he generally wrote to approve (or not) his minister's conduct. The correspondence, like the initial instructions, also offers insights into the attitudes or mentalities of both King and envoy. In December 1720, Victor Amadeus sought to refute English accusations that Giovan Battista Despine, secretary at The Hague, who had briefly passed through London en route to Lisbon (going under a false name) had really been in London to discover the 'mind' (or mood) of the nation (presumably in connection with some anti-government, perhaps even Jacobite plot).⁶⁶ He declared that that mood could not be assessed

⁶⁵ Cf. official documents attached to Instructions; Provana's French correspondence from Paris in Manno *et al.*, *Relazioni diplomatiche, passim*; and extracts from correspondence cited in Carutti, *Diplomazia*, vol. III, pp. 558–9; and vol. IV, pp. 107, 119–20, 545ff. (extracts from despatches). Cf. Beales and Hochstrasser, 'Un intellettuale piemontese', *passim*, for Montagnini's French correspondence and writings.

⁶⁶ In fact Despine went to Lisbon to discover more about the Infanta of Portugal, who was seen as a possible bride for the future Charles Emmanuel III: cf. D. Frigo, 'L'affermazione della sovranità: famiglia e corte dei Savoia tra Cinque e Settecento', in

in a few days – one of the reasons, no doubt, for the development of a network of resident ministers abroad. As for the envoy, in a character sketch of George II for Charles Emmanuel III, in 1732, Ossorio observed that the King sometimes acted more like a private man (i.e. sincerely) than like a prince.⁶⁷

The correspondence between envoy and First Secretary was rather different. For the envoy it was an opportunity to complain about pay and conditions, to comment on policy in a way he could not in his despatches to the King, and to maintain a presence in Turin while personally absent. For the First Secretary, the correspondence allowed him both to do official business – send new ciphers, request information which was not appropriate in a political correspondence (in 1720, for example, Del Borgo asked Cortanze for details of how the English customs treated the equipages of ambassadors) – and to keep individual ministers informed of developments in Turin and give friendly advice. The correspondence between the envoys themselves clearly served similar purposes. After 1730, and particularly in the Bogino era, the First Secretary may have gained more ‘space’ for himself, *vis-à-vis* the monarch, in this triangular relationship. However, the correspondence with the monarch was always the most important conducted by Savoyard diplomats abroad.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, Victor Amadeus II had given Savoyard diplomacy its distinct features, of which only a very brief idea can be given here. Some Sardinian diplomats were well versed in the *jus gentium*, or international law, Count Canale being occasionally consulted on the subject by the First Secretary. But the emphasis of Savoyard diplomacy was hardly ‘theoretical’ or technical except where necessary, for example in negotiating treaties, the lawyer Mellarède being included in the Utrecht negotiating team for just this purpose.⁶⁸ Generally Savoyard diplomats steered clear of the domestic politics – or opponents – of the court to which they were sent, for good reason. Indeed, Ossorio, Count Perrone and Count Viry in London become close confidants of government ministers. Successful Sardinian diplomats were hardworking, vigilant and persistent. They were not averse to using gratifications (or the promise of them) to help their negotiations. In 1696 Count Tarino, Victor Amadeus’ envoy in Brussels, promised an official there a gratification once troops intended for

C. Mozzarelli (ed.), *‘Familia’ del Principe e Famiglia Aristocratica*, Rome, 1988, vol. 1, p. 283.

⁶⁷ For Ossorio, cf. Quazza, *Il problema*; and *Le riforme*, vol. 1, p. 113.

⁶⁸ Gasco, ‘La politica sabauda’, pp. 317ff.

Piedmont had left.⁶⁹ But gratifications were not always appropriate and probably declined in importance as an element in diplomacy everywhere in the eighteenth century. Given, too, the limited financial resources of the Savoyard state, they cannot be said to have played a crucial role in Savoyard diplomacy. Enemies criticized, and admirers sometimes praised, Savoyard diplomats for their dissimulation, false bonhomie and endless intrigue.⁷⁰ In many respects, of course, these were the 'virtues' of the ideal courtier. It is not surprising that Lord Chesterfield should so praise Savoyard diplomats in a correspondence intended to instil those virtues into his son.⁷¹ These qualities undoubtedly brought Savoyard diplomacy some successes. Maffei, in London in the closing stages of the War of the Spanish Succession, for example, gained the confidence of English ministers by masking his master's resentment, to the latter's advantage, at England's projected separate peace. However, not all Savoyard diplomats and policies approved of the policy of dissimulation. In 1733, one opponent of the policy of negotiation with France (at the same time as Charles Emmanuel was negotiating with the Emperor), Del Borgo, objected that dishonesty in foreign negotiations was not good or right for a sovereign.⁷² Twenty years later, Perrone, who had (by constant and skilful pressure) forced the Duke of Newcastle to reveal details of the recently concluded treaty for the marriage of the daughter of the Duke of Modena with a son of Maria Theresa, blocking Savoyard opportunities in north Italy, argued that not voicing Turin's resentment at the treaty was counter-productive.⁷³ But the critics of dissimulation were not listened to. The Savoyard state was a small power in a difficult world and dissimulation was widely regarded by monarch and ministers as an important diplomatic tool.

Essentially, Sardinian envoys resident abroad after 1690/1713 had three functions: obtaining intelligence, conducting specific negotiations and representing their master. The first two have largely been dealt with. It only remains to note that the subject of negotiations covered a wide range of issues: the conclusion of alliances, the co-ordination of opera-

⁶⁹ G. Prato, 'Il costo della guerra di successione Spagnuola', *CGP*, vol. x, p. 242.

⁷⁰ Quazza, *Le riforme*, vol. I, p. 99; L. Namier, *England in the Age of the American Revolution*, London, 1961, p. 81; A. Ritter von Arneth and M. A. Geffroy (eds.), *Correspondance secrète entre Marie Thérèse et le Comte de Mercy-Argenteau avec les lettres de Marie Thérèse et de Marie Antoinette*, 3 vols., Paris, 1874, vol. III, p. 107, for criticism of Count Scarnafigi on these grounds.

⁷¹ Chesterfield, *Letters to his Son*, pp. 103ff. and *passim*.

⁷² Quazza, *Il problema*, vol. II, p. 201. ⁷³ Dagna, 'Un diplomatico', pp. 20ff.

tions in wartime, the payment of subsidy arrears,⁷⁴ and last but not least brides for the King of Sardinia and his children – an important factor in the House of Savoy's success in avoiding a potentially disastrous minority after 1684 (and a concern which set Savoyard policy apart from its republican but not princely Italian neighbours). In 1735, preoccupied with the question of the succession, following the death of Charles Emmanuel's second wife, and anxious for closer relations with England, Ormea briefly toyed with the idea of cementing the Anglo-Savoyard political relationship by a marriage alliance between the House of Savoy and the House of Hanover, although the scheme never materialised.⁷⁵ Savoyard diplomats also monitored Savoyard expatriates (including, in London, Victor Amadeus II's one-time collaborator in the struggle against the Church, Count Alberto Radicati di Passerano).⁷⁶

The third function, representation, brings us to the very important issue of ceremonial and dignity. International society, like society within individual states, required a generally acknowledged hierarchy if international relations were not to be reduced to a chaos of competing ranks. Although not new, this problem may have become more acute as the number of sovereign states increased after 1648. It was exacerbated by the growing differentiation between crowned and uncrowned heads in later seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe to the advantage of the former. Those who successfully asserted crowned-head status acquired greater prestige and status and opened up for themselves more possibilities. Crowned head status could also underpin claims to domestic sovereignty. There were some generally accepted principles according to which these contentious issues could be resolved, but there was still, too, much confusion and disagreement. Issues of this sort could even affect whether ministers were sent at all to foreign courts. The House of Savoy was crucially concerned about such issues, as English diplomats in Turin recognized. In 1726, the envoy, Hedges, observed that he had been 'dropped . . . into a court and city where . . . matters of ceremony are . . . of the greatest moment . . . The court here is

⁷⁴ For the pursuit of English and Dutch subsidy arrears after 1713, see L. Einaudi, *La finanza sabanda all'aprirsi del secolo XVIII e durante la guerra di successione spagnuola*, Turin, 1908, pp. 283ff.

⁷⁵ Villetes to Newcastle, 4 Feb. 1735, Turin, SP 92/37. Cf. Frigo, *Principe*, p. 22 (and *passim*) on the older, dynastic and patrimonial (rather than modern or modernizing) spirit which informed so much of Savoyard policy and practice in the eighteenth century.

⁷⁶ F. Venturi, *Saggi sull'Europa illuministica*, vol. 1: *Alberto Radicati di Passerano*, Turin, 1954, *passim*.

exceedingly apt to make difficulties about the least ceremony and if they get the least advantage they quote that for an example.⁷⁷

Long before the acquisition of a genuine kingdom and royal title in 1713, the princes of the House of Savoy claimed to be (and to have their ministers abroad treated as the representatives of) crowned heads. They had some success in asserting this status, particularly in the decades around 1700. Charles II of England granted (1681) the House of Savoy (i.e. its ministers in London) the treatment normally accorded (those of) a crowned head, the so-called *trattamento reale* and in the 1690s Victor Amadeus' allies in the Grand Alliance granted it, as did Louis XIV in 1696. In 1699 the Count de Prelà, sent to William III's court as ambassador, received a lengthy memorial on how he should expect to make his public entry, based on the Marquis di Prié's experience in Charles II's reign. The distinctions enjoyed by Savoyard ambassadors included being met at Greenwich by a member of the House of Lords. (The ambassadors of the Venetian republic, which – although a republic – enjoyed crowned-head status, and was particularly jealous of its claims *vis-à-vis* those of the House of Savoy, were only met at Deptford, nearer London.) If there had been changes since Prié's embassy, Prelà must follow the French ambassador's example and secure a certificate that no prejudicial precedent had been established.⁷⁸

The acquisition of a genuine kingdom and royal title at last in 1713 explains why, quite apart from their intrinsic value, Sicily (and later Sardinia) was so important, and why the Peace of Utrecht was such a triumph for Victor Amadeus. The subsequent expansion of Savoyard diplomacy owed something to a desire to assert this new status. Taking advantage of the privileges outlined in the memorial of 1699 in an impressive public entry was the main reason why Victor Amadeus sent Trivié to London (1713) with the rank of ambassador. Victor Amadeus was also anxious that the Kingdom of Sicily should enjoy its rightful place in the hierarchy of crowned heads. Trivié must therefore precede the representatives of the recently elevated crown of Prussia and the republics (with crowned-head status) of the United Provinces and Venice. Trivié took his public entry in May 1714 and later that year jostled with the Venetian ambassador for precedence at the coronation

⁷⁷ Hedges to Delafaye, 20 Dec. 1726, Turin, SP 92/32. On this subject, generally, cf. Anderson, *Diplomacy*, pp. 58ff.

⁷⁸ Storrs, 'Diplomatic Relations between William III and Victor Amadeus II', pp. 19 and 82; copy of Prelà's memorial attached to Trivié's instructions (1713). In general, cf. Frigo, *Principe, passim*, and R. Oresko, 'The House of Savoy in Search for a Royal Crown in the Seventeenth Century', in R. Oresko, G. C. Gibbs and H. M. Scott (eds.), *Royal and Republican Sovereignty in Early Modern Europe*, Cambridge, 1997.

of George I, the struggle to prevent other foreign ministers gaining advantage being one of the many fronts of the battle for rank.⁷⁹ Besides providing an arena for struggles of this sort, the English court also offered a new range of information and models to solve some of the problems associated with the new dignity and with the growth of Savoyard diplomatic and other contacts. In 1720 Del Borgo asked Cortanze for information as to whether English court ceremonial distinguished between the envoys of the Emperor and those of other princes. Formal diplomatic relations with Genoa were resumed in 1727 following an agreement that the Republic would treat Victor Amadeus' envoys as it did those of the King of England. In 1739, Charles Emmanuel III's Master of Ceremonies sought details of how his master's brother-in-law, the Duke of Lorraine (who was soon to visit Turin) was received at the English court.⁸⁰

Not all states recognized Victor Amadeus' royal title, which hindered and even temporarily interrupted relations with some states and courts, including the Emperor, Spain and some of Victor Amadeus' jealous Italian neighbours. Relations with Spain were complicated by Philip V's persistent refusal to address Victor Amadeus in official documents as 'Muy Poderoso', or 'Potentissimus', a title he gave to other kings. Significantly, Victor Amadeus' thought this an issue which must not be dissimulated, otherwise the slight might be repeated.⁸¹ By Victor Amadeus' abdication (1730) the issue of the royal title and recognition had largely been settled, although the exchange of Sicily for Sardinia necessitated some intellectual somersaults on the part of Turin. Whereas in 1713, as King of Sicily, Victor Amadeus told Trivié that he should take precedence in London over lesser crowned heads – including the then King of Sardinia Emperor Charles VI – by 1729 (following Victor Amadeus' exchange of Sicily for Sardinia) Ossorio's instructions argued that all crowned heads were equal, *vis-à-vis* uncrowned heads and republics. The court of Turin remained sensitive to supposed slights to its royal dignity for the rest of the century. In 1737, the Prince of Wales' omission of the usual 'Votre Majesté' in a letter to Charles Emmanuel III prompted a prolonged interruption of correspondence between the King of Sardinia and the heir to the British throne.⁸²

⁷⁹ Public Record Office (PRO), LC 5/3 fol. 22 (George I's coronation).

⁸⁰ Aix to Delafaye, 28 Oct. 1727 and Aix to Newcastle, 21 Oct. 1728, SP 100/32; Villetes to Newcastle, 28 Jan. 1739, Turin, SP 92/42.

⁸¹ Victor Amadeus to Cortanze, 22 June, Venaria, and 10 Aug. 1720, Turin, AST, LM, GB, m. 24; Provana to Cortanze, 27 April 1724, Cambrai, AST, LM, GB, m. 24.

⁸² Villetes to Newcastle, 17 April 1737, Turin, SP 92/41. Cf. Frigo, *Principe*, pp. 187, 273–4.

In the decades after 1748 many observers thought that the House of Savoy was 'grasping at honours' of the sort outlined above because it had no territorial aspirations or prospects. Among the court of Sardinia's successes in this respect was the grant of the *alternat* (whereby each contracting party in a treaty was named and signed first in one copy of that treaty, indicating parity between them) by the Spanish (1750) and French (1760) courts and the grant by the Papacy of privileges hitherto enjoyed by a small and select group of crowned heads. Treatment accorded the British court and other crowned heads became a benchmark of status. Thus the Venetian Republic's failure to send two ambassadors, the number it usually sent on the accession of the Kings of England, France and Spain (and of the Emperor), to congratulate Victor Amadeus III on his accession, caused another brief interruption in relations between Turin and Venice. However, although throughout the eighteenth century Savoyard envoys abroad were instructed to ensure that their own and (through them) their masters' dignity were not slighted, it is significant that in the new international situation after 1756 the need to maintain good relations generally resulted in instructions to the Sardinian envoys to London not to press disputes over precedence too far and even to try to avoid them.⁸³

Long before 1713 Savoyard foreign policy had concerned itself with economic issues. In the later seventeenth century, Charles Emmanuel II and Victor Amadeus had enormous success in making their dominions (above all Piedmont) a centre of silk production and export, although one dangerously dependent on the French market. In 1690 France was Savoy's main trading partner: Lyon took most of Piedmont's silk, supplying most of Piedmont's manufactured cloth needs in return. In the 1690s, however, Victor Amadeus came under growing pressure from the Maritime Powers to end all trade with France and to take more English cloth, in lieu of subsidies, to clothe his growing army. This scheme had a larger political object: aligning the Savoyard economy fundamentally and permanently with that of the anti-French coalition, at the expense of Louis XIV, whose political domination was attributed in part to French economic primacy. But Victor Amadeus' dominions were simply not developed enough to play the role expected of them;

⁸³ Rochford to Holderness, 20 May and 16 Dec. 1752, Turin, SP 92/60; G. Rice, 'Lord Rochford', p. 95; Mackenzie to Pitt, 29 March 1760, Turin, SP 92/68; Instructions, *passim*. For an earlier example of a Savoyard minister being ordered to avoid an embarrassing confrontation (with the representative in Madrid, 1735, of the King of the Two Sicilies, not yet recognized by Charles Emmanuel III), cf. Quazza, *Il problema*, p. 301.

and despite some increase in trade with England, the pattern of Piedmont's overseas commerce had not fundamentally changed by 1713. Thereafter, Victor Amadeus and his successors sought both to ensure the continuance of English demand (thus preventing the French from dictating to Piedmontese growers and exporters) and to stimulate domestic cloth production (at the expense of English imports). This was a constant preoccupation of Sardinian policy, and sometimes (as in the later 1720s and 1730s) seriously undermined relations with England. The issue was complicated by a determination in Turin not to allow the English to enjoy the privileges enshrined in a largely abortive trade treaty of 1669 (which the English had shown little interest in hitherto).⁸⁴

In the second half of the eighteenth century, Sardinian foreign policy was even more preoccupied with commercial issues. This was true of many other states at the time. In Sardinia's case it reflected the restricted scope for territorial expansion but also the need to reduce the enormous debts incurred during the War of the Austrian Succession and to find new sources of revenue in a state whose fiscal limits had largely been reached.⁸⁵ The generation after 1748 therefore saw an integrated programme of measures at home and abroad, whose objective appeared to be to diversify the Piedmontese economy and to make the Piedmontese a 'commercial people'. In 1749 Count Borré de la Chavanne was recalled from The Hague, where he was believed to have acquired valuable insights on economic policy, to implement a vigorous programme of economic reform and development. New initiatives included port and harbour improvements at Nice (the new port at Limpia) to promote trade, allowing the nobility of Nice (1749) to engage directly in trade (hitherto this had been permissible only indirectly) and reform of the coinage (1755). Above all there was Bogino's direction of the development of the hitherto largely neglected island of Sardinia.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ E. Stumpo, 'Guerra ed economia: spese e guadagni militari nel Piemonte del Settecento', *Studi Storici*, 27, 2 (1986), pp. 377ff.; C. Contessa, 'Aspirazioni commerciali intrecciate ad alleanze politiche della Casa di Savoia coll'Inghilterra nei secoli XVII e XVIII', *Memorie della Reale Accademia delle Scienze, Torino (MAST)*, series 2, 64 (1914), p. 1-50; Storrs, 'Diplomatic Relations between William III and Victor Amadeus II', pp. 284ff. and 322ff.; G. Symcox, 'Use and Abuse', pp. 163ff.; English diplomatic correspondence from Turin, 1721-40, SP 92/30-44, *passim*.

⁸⁵ There is no study of the impact of the Austrian Succession on Piedmontese finances and economic life to compare with those of Einaudi and Quazza on the Wars of the Spanish and Polish Successions, but cf. G. Prato, *La vita economica in Piemonte a mezzo il secolo XVIII*, Turin, 1908, *passim*.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 275ff.; Ricuperati, 'Gli strumenti' pp. 809ff.; Rice, 'Lord Rochford', pp. 100ff.; Frigo, *Principe*, pp. 197ff.; *DBI*, 'Bogino'; Villettes to Bedford, 20 April

This more vigorous economic policy clearly influenced Savoyard diplomacy. From the 1770s a number of Sardinian consuls were appointed abroad, including (1774) Boyer, a merchant (subject of the King of Sardinia) resident in London. Other measures included removing (at a price; this was typical of the difficulty in distinguishing trade promotion from mere revenue-raising measures) the duty known as the *droit de Villefranche*. This was redeemed by various states, including France (1753), England (1754), Denmark (1785) and Naples (1786). Reciprocal agreements were concluded with Maria Theresa (1763); the Elector of Bavaria (1772); and the Kings of Spain (1782), Portugal (1786) and Prussia (1798) for the abolition of the *droit d'aubaine* (escheat of a deceased person's goods) which was believed to discourage the settlement of foreign merchants. Apart from the frontier agreements concluded in the decades after 1748, these commercial treaties were the only international agreements concluded by the Kings of Sardinia in the second half of the eighteenth century before the political and military alliances of the 1790s. Other (abortive) projects to stimulate trade included a proposal (1764) that Charles Emmanuel acquire the Danish island of St Croix in order to break into the colonial trade; and a scheme (1765) for importing sugar, coffee and other produce and manufactures from Lisbon in return for grain from the island of Sardinia.⁸⁷

Among the most striking projects of the commercially inspired Sardinian diplomacy of the later eighteenth century was that to export Piedmontese wines to England, ousting Portuguese wines from this lucrative market. This was one of Count Perrone's dearest projects. While envoy in London (1749–55) he had Chavanne send him samples of Piedmontese wine, said to be not unlike the claret drunk in England. Unfortunately the consignment did not travel well. This same problem caused the failure of another attempt, in 1766–7, by the English merchant, Woodman. He had been greatly encouraged by the Sardinian government, which introduced him to several of those nobles who were large wine producers. The main difficulty was the poor communications between Piedmont and Nice (the King of Sardinia's only port, whence the wine would be shipped). Building a road through the mountains between Piedmont and Nice and improving the roads in the county of Nice (at their worse in winter, when the wines would have to be carried) was not just expensive. It also had strategic implications.

1749, Rochford to Bedford, 3 Dec. 1749, Turin, SP 92/58; Dutens to Halifax, 30 March 1765, Turin, SP 92/71.

⁸⁷ Dutens to Halifax, 3 Oct. 1764 and 3 July 1765, and same to General Conway, 3 Aug. 1765, all Turin, SP 92/71; Solar de la Marguerite, *Traité public de la Maison Royale de Savoye*, 8 vols., Turin, 1836, vol. III, *passim*.

Some ministers objected that improvements would make the Sardinian state more vulnerable to foreign conquest. Some thought that a route to an outlet on the Ligurian riviera might be the answer, but the Genoese refused the necessary territorial exchanges. Count Perrone's advent as chief minister, at the end of the 1770s, helped revive the scheme. In a significant recognition of the primacy of domestic policy (and of the unlikelihood of war against France) Victor Amadeus III approved the road in April 1780. Its opponents were promised a new fort at Saorge. In September 1780, Perrone instructed the Sardinian envoy in London, Cordon, to engage 'proper' people to come to Piedmont to taste the wines with a view to their export. The future trade was confidently valued at more than £400,000 a year which (with raw silk exports worth £1,000,000) would balance Piedmont's imports. In 1784, the Cavaliere di Pollone was appointed envoy to London. It was hoped that his experience in Portugal, and the knowledge of Boyer, the consul, would speed the project. However, the project did not succeed. Although nearing completion by the autumn of 1786, the road still had not connected Nice and the wines of Piedmont. These remained a largely home-drunk product, not least because the Anglo-French Trade Treaty of 1786 in fact opened the English market to French wines, while the Portuguese remained privileged in the English market.⁸⁸

Some progress was made. Foreign (especially English) manufactured imports into Piedmont and Piedmontese exports both grew in the 1780s. There were more foreign tradesmen in the Sardinian dominions and more Sardinians living abroad. (Sardinian diplomats acquired the new task of protecting these.) A primitive foreign tourism stimulated Nice's economy. However, the fundamental problems of the Piedmontese economy, notably its excessive dependence on silk, persisted. During the American War of Independence (1775–83), privateers disrupted silk exports from Nice to England. Since this was disastrous for all those in Piedmont (government, manufacturers, workers) dependent upon silk, Count Perrone sought to help local merchants in their efforts to evade the privateers, pressing the British government to allow silk imports in Sardinian vessels (in breach of the Navigation Laws). But the only solution to which they looked forward was the general peace (1783). This did prompt large commissions from England, increasing

⁸⁸ Prato, *Vita economica*, pp. 134, 314ff.; Dagna, 'Un diplomatico', pp. 24ff.; M. L. Sturani, 'Inerzie e flessibilità: organizzazione ed evoluzione della rete viaria sabauda nei territori "di qua dai monti" (1563–1798). Le trasformazioni del XVIII secolo', *BSBS*, 89 (1991), pp. 515ff. (for the roads). The progress of the wine project can be traced in the Instructions to envoys to London in AST, LM, GB, and in the English diplomatic correspondence from Turin from 1755, SP 92 and FO 67, *passim*.

silk prices. In 1785–6, silk exports were valued at 17,000,000 *livres* per year (France took 10,000,000 and England 5,000,000) of a total of 25,000,000 (the next largest export, rice, was put at less than 500,000 a year). But while values had increased since 1690, the basic structure of the economy remained largely unchanged. The commercial foreign policy of the later eighteenth century, associated above all with Perrone, had thus only partially succeeded.⁸⁹

Many of those who have seen ‘absolutism’ in the making in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have regarded the nobility as one of its main victims. Quazza’s study of the reforming era in the Savoyard state (c. 1713–40) is fundamentally influenced by this view. Quazza concluded that those reforms were the work of, and entrenched the position of, non-nobles (in alliance with the monarch). He also noted that many of the nobles we have mentioned in connection with Savoyard diplomacy in the eighteenth century were either themselves or through their families victims of Victor Amadeus II’s recovery of fiefs (1720–1) improperly alienated by his predecessors. This view has recently come under sustained attack, notably from Ricuperati. Indeed, it is increasingly apparent that nobilities throughout Europe were remarkably resilient in clinging to office and power, and that they were as much the collaborators with (and beneficiaries of) as the victims of absolutism.⁹⁰

The Sardinian diplomatic network in the eighteenth century amply supports this latter view, as Quazza himself recognized. Indeed, nobles were probably more in evidence in this sphere of government than in any other. Their share of diplomatic posts contrasted sharply with their minimal share (between 1 and 2 per cent) of the population of the state as a whole. The lower ranks of the Secretariat of Foreign Affairs were largely non-noble. Of thirty-six secretaries and under-secretaries employed between 1717 and 1798, nine were nobles, and only three of them ennobled in office. Virtually all Sardinian diplomats in the eighteenth century were nobles, and preponderantly old nobility (i.e. their nobility, or rather their fiefs/titles, were older than one hundred years or three generations, or they were well entrenched at court where this was the norm). Non-nobles might serve at the lower ranks, particularly as ministers

⁸⁹ Poyntz to Chamier, 18 Nov. and 12 Dec. 1778, and 16 June and 24 July 1779, Turin, SP 92/82; Trevor to Carmarthen, 7 Jan. 1786, Turin, FO 67/5; Bianchi, *Monarchia piemontese*, vol. 1, pp. 279ff.; Prato, *Vita economica*, pp. 313ff.

⁹⁰ Quazza, *Le riforme*, vol. 1, pp. 95 and 171; Ricuperati, ‘Gli strumenti’, p. 843. In general, cf. H. M. Scott and C. Storrs, ‘Introduction: The Consolidation of Noble Power in Europe c. 1600–1800’, in H. M. Scott (ed.), *The Nobilities of Europe in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, 2 vols., London, 1995, vol. 1, pp. 1ff.

without character, but the nobility (including old nobility) increasingly filled these posts as well. Emma Cucchi's analysis of fifty-four diplomatic appointments in the eighteenth century has concluded that thirty-six went to members of the old nobility, fifteen to those of more recent nobility, with only three ennobled in the course of their diplomatic career.⁹¹ Most of the prestigious posts (and many lesser ones) went to scions of the older, titled families. Savoyard diplomats of exalted ancient stock sent to London included Count de la Perouse, Marquis Seyssel d'Aix and the two Counts Viry de la Perrière. Of the eleven First Secretaries for foreign affairs between 1717 and 1798, seven (Del Borgo, Gorzegno, Ossorio, Saint Germain, Viry, Aigueblanche and Perrone) were old nobility. The nobility of the other four (Ormea – a lesser noble who had purchased his title in 1722 – Lascaris, Perret, Damiano) was more recent. Diplomacy and nobility were virtually synonymous, as is evident in the extent to which non-nobles, including Mellarède, were ennobled. But officials in other branches of the administration also received this promotion, old and new nobles fusing in a more comprehensive service nobility, or nobility of office. Indicative of the way a young Piedmontese noble of old family and ample resources was encouraged to travel and (implicitly) prepare for a diplomatic career was the ease with which Count Alfieri obtained permission to tour Europe in the 1760s.⁹²

The preponderance of nobles in diplomacy was not peculiar to the Savoyard state. One of the reasons for their pre-eminent position in this important area of the absolute state is undoubtedly that, in Piedmont as elsewhere, many nobles were acquiring a more technical, above all legal, education, mostly at the reformed University of Turin. This enabled them to compete more effectively in a world in which the law was ever more important. At least five of the First Secretaries and numerous diplomats, including Ossorio, had a legal training. This might, anyway, be what we should expect where a noble diplomat was from a senatorial background, i.e. had served in the Senate of Piedmont or in some other primarily legal office, or (like Nomis di Pollone), came from a family with such a background. However, it is by no means certain that a technical preparation was crucial to a first diplomatic appointment, or to success once appointed. Canale, who had a law degree, was sceptical about the need for any preparation for the diplomatic career. He knew no German before going to Vienna and

⁹¹ E. Cucchi, 'La Segreteria degli Esteri dello Stato Sabando', thesis, University of Turin, 1985–6.

⁹² Ricuperati, 'Gli strumenti', pp. 849ff.; Dagna, 'Un diplomatico', pp. 9ff.; J. Nicolas, *La Savoie au 18^e siècle. Noblesse et bourgeoisie*, Paris, 1978, pp. 783ff.; Frigo, *Principe*, pp. 119ff.; V. Alfieri, *Vita*, edited by A. Dolfi, Milan, 1987, pp. 101ff.

acquired none there. (This is not really so surprising given the preponderance of French, and to a lesser degree Italian, as the language of courts and diplomacy in the eighteenth century.) He also doubted the value of travel as training for a diplomat. More importantly, nobles were more likely to have that valuable experience and understanding of, and ease in, the world of courts where most of their work as envoys would be done, which their status and education as nobles gave them. The Turin Academy, founded by Victor Amadeus' mother in 1677, was widely admired for the 'noble' education it provided, attracting students from throughout Europe. Attached to the court, it also offered the possibility of catching the King's eye. Count Perrone was among those Sardinian diplomats who had attended the Academy. His career also reveals that court and army, too, were excellent apprenticeships for a successful diplomatic career.⁹³ Nobles often had a privileged apprenticeship to the diplomatic career, accompanying friends and relations on mission. Trivié's sons accompanied him to London in 1713, while the younger Viry's appointment as envoy to London was no doubt helped by his having accompanied his father there. Nobles also had the resources to bear the costs of diplomatic service, which could be very expensive, as Canale complained from Vienna in 1736. Equally important were patronage ties. Finally, with representation of their sovereign such an important aspect of the residential diplomatic system in the eighteenth century, this was far easier for those of elevated, noble origin to carry off. In the end, nobles got diplomatic posts partly because they were nobles, as Charles Emmanuel effectively admitted in urging Perrone's qualifications at the start of the latter's diplomatic career in 1745.⁹⁴

Sometimes it was difficult to find capable men to fill diplomatic posts. Counts Gaetano Emanuele Bava di San Paolo and Vittorio Alfieri both rejected a diplomatic career.⁹⁵ Generally speaking, however, few refused their King or patron and most diplomatic appointments were sought after. In 1755, Count Lascaris (then at The Hague) urged his own candidature to replace his brother-in-law, Perrone, in London; and in 1784 there were said to be three candidates to replace Cordon in London: Fontana, Breme and Pollone.⁹⁶ What drew nobles (and others)

⁹³ D. Balani, 'Studi giuridici e professioni nel Piemonte del Settecento', *BSBS*, 76 (1978), pp. 185ff.; Ricuperati, 'Gli strumenti', pp. 849ff.; Ruata, *Luigi Malabaila di Canale*, p. 62; Dagna, 'Un diplomatico', pp. 12–13; *DBI*, 'Aix'; E. Genta, *Senato e senatori di Piemonte nel secolo XVIII*, Turin, 1983, p. 269.

⁹⁴ Dagna, 'Un diplomatico', pp. 12ff.; Ruata, *Luigi Malabaila di Canale*, pp. 19ff.

⁹⁵ *DBI*, 'Gaetano Emanuele Bava di San Paolo'.

⁹⁶ Correspondence between Perrone and Lascaris, Aug. 1755, copies in SP 107/66; Trevor to Carmarthen, 24 April 1784, Turin, FO 67/4.

to diplomacy? Most saw their own advantage, or that of their family and friends. Canale, in Vienna, married into one of the most prestigious Hungarian noble families, acquiring a position at Maria Theresa's court. In this way he gained access to a much wider range of connections and opportunities for himself and his children than if he had remained in Piedmont. During his rather unusual thirty-seven-year residence in Vienna (1737–73) he to a very large degree 'went native'. Even if not paid highly or always promptly, diplomatic salaries were among the best in the Savoyard state. There were other financial rewards. These included the parting gifts from a sovereign to whom they had been accredited. Whereas the Kings of Sardinia in the eighteenth century usually gave portraits of themselves in a diamond studded frame to departing foreign ministers, the English monarchs gave cash presents. Trivié (1716), la Perouse (1719), Viry (1755) and Cordon (1784) all received £500. (In each instance 10 per cent was returned to the Master of Ceremonies.) Ormea's successful conclusion of the first Concordat (1727) brought numerous rewards (including the elevation of a cousin to the See of Alessandria and then to 'royal' cardinal and Ormea's promotion to First Secretary for domestic affairs). His conclusion of the second Concordat (1741) brought further rewards from the Pope (including the investiture of Ormea's son with one of the disputed fiefs). Diplomats and officials received other rewards from their own sovereign. Charles Emmanuel gave Ossorio (1750) an additional pension of 5,000 *lire* a year, and a commandery of the Order of Saints Maurizio and Lazzaro worth 3,000 a year. Perrone was promoted (1751) to cornet in a prestigious court regiment to stay in London. Cordon, before leaving for London, was promoted (1783) to major-general and commander of the Queen's Infantry regiment, worth 8–10,000 *lire* a year. Diplomacy might also bring the title of minister of state (Ossorio, 1750; Scarnafigi, 1783). Other Savoyard diplomats including Cortanze (1732), Aix (1737), Ossorio (1763) and Perrone (1779) received one of the most prestigious rewards the King of Sardinia could give, the Order of the Anunziata. Diplomatic experience, or rather the knowledge and understanding of an important foreign court like London, could contribute (in the case of Ossorio and Perrone) to the achievement of real power and influence in Turin.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Ruata, *Luigi Malabaila di Canale*, pp. 19ff.; Quazza, *Le riforme*, vol. 1, pp. 101–2 for salaries; PRO, LC 5/3–5 for gifts received by envoys to London; Rochford to Bedford, 21 March and 19 Dec. 1750, Turin, SP 92/58; same to Holdemesse, 1 Dec. 1751, Turin, SP 92/59; Dagna, 'Un diplomatico', p. 34; Trevor to Fox, 17 Dec. 1783, Turin, FO 67/5; Count Lascaris to Count Perrone, The Hague, 18 March 1755, copy, SP 107/63; Ricuperati, 'Gli strumenti', pp. 854, 855; Allen to New-

Monarchs needed nobles to staff the eighteenth-century diplomatic network and nobles could serve themselves by responding positively to that need. Some noble diplomats even sought to manoeuvre against their master. The most striking example of this is the position gained by Count Viry in London, partly due to his mediation (with Solaro in Paris) between England and France in the Seven Years War and his close contacts (above) with individual English ministers. Viry hoped to have his son replace him in London and requested permission to return home on the grounds of ill-health. Unfortunately, Charles Emmanuel III appointed Count Lascaris di Castellar, who had long sought the post, on the grounds that he was known to the English court, having accompanied his brother-in-law Count Perrone to London from Dresden (where Lascaris was studying law). His plans frustrated, Viry mobilized the English government on his own behalf. It was made clear to Charles Emmanuel that if Viry was replaced, his successor would not be welcome in London. The King of Sardinia yielded, but was determined not to yield to such encroachments on his sovereignty in the future. He resisted similar English pressure in 1768 on behalf of Viry's son. On this occasion, Raiberti noted that in all the time he had been in office (more than thirty years) no important affair had failed for want of preferring one man to another – further evidence perhaps that those in it certainly thought a general ethos and practice had emerged within the Sardinian diplomatic organization by the later eighteenth century and one which transcended individuals.⁹⁸

How closely did Savoyard diplomats in the eighteenth century reflect the geographical diversity of this composite state? Of the sixteen resident ministers sent to London between 1690 and 1798, half were from the Duchy of Savoy. This is perhaps surprising, given that Piedmont contained the bulk of the population of the Sardinian state, which it increasingly dominated. Piedmontese (including Ormea, from Mondovi) did take to diplomacy, but Savoyards may have been more inclined towards it. In the later eighteenth century, contemporaries spoke of a Savoyard 'party' in the sense of a distinct group of ministers and diplomats (including the younger Viry) from Savoy and reflecting the interests of the Duchy (in contrast with those of Piedmont) and opposed as such.⁹⁹ In fact, personal and other conflicts (e.g. between Viry and

castle, 16 July 1729, SP 92/33; Villettes to Newcastle, 11 Feb. 1741, Turin, SP 92/45.

⁹⁸ L. Dutens, *Memoirs of a Traveller now in Retirement Written by Himself*, 5 vols., London, 1806, vol. II, pp. 18ff. and 63ff.; Pitt to Mackenzie, 3 and 6 June 1760, SP 92/68. For Viry's role as mediator, cf. Carutti, *Diplomazia*, vol. IV, pp. 358ff. and Z. E. Rashed, *The Peace of Paris (1763)*, Liverpool, 1978, *passim*.

⁹⁹ Lynch to Rochford, 29 Sept. 1773, Turin, SP 92/77; Poyntz to Chamier, 20 Dec.

Aigueblanche) often cut across this 'Savoyard' loyalty. There were fewer diplomats from Nice (De Gubernatis, Caissotti di Chiusano), the Val d'Aosta and the 'new' territories (including, from the Lomellina, the marchese di Sartiranna and his son, the marchese di Breme). Such distinctions may be artificial anyway, given the drawing together of the noble elite into one Piedmontese/Sardinian whole. The Marquis d'Aix was of old Savoyard stock, but his mother came from an old Piedmontese family. His own marriage to Henriette dal Pozzo della Cisterna continued the process. Typical of the extent to which monarchs everywhere still drew their ministers from beyond their own territories and to which personal ties transcended geographical ones was the way some Sicilians remained in the service of the House of Savoy after 1720. Ossorio is the most striking but not the only example. In 1739, Charles Emmanuel replaced his ambassador in Spain by Don Emanuele de Valguarnera, a Sicilian, captain in his Horse Guards, and in his service since 1714. Although a 'national' diplomatic 'service' was emerging in the eighteenth century, composed increasingly of men from the dominions of the Kings of Sardinia, it was not national in the modern sense. Like the foreign policy of the House of Savoy throughout this period it was certainly not 'Italian' in any post-1861 sense. To modern eyes it could appear both cosmopolitan and based on older notions of personal loyalty and service.¹⁰⁰

What effect did increased foreign contact have on individual diplomats and on Sardinian state and society as a whole in the eighteenth century? One way of assessing this is to look at the attitudes expressed in the final *relazioni* required of Savoyard diplomats on their return home. Although in the case of Sardinian ministers sent to England, the requirement to produce *relazioni* was formulated in the instructions very late (above), they were in fact expected (and produced) long before. But *relazioni* varied greatly in nature and format. In general, the *relazione* was expected to be an account of a negotiation or mission, with some broader account and assessment of the court, government, personalities and military and other capabilities of the state concerned. However, there were many ways of doing this. Mellarède's four-volume account

1777, Turin, SP 92/81. This was not entirely new: in 1734, the Earl of Essex observed that all natives of the Duchy were naturally pro-French: Essex to Newcastle, 18 June 1734, Turin, SP 92/37.

¹⁰⁰ DBI, 'Aix'; Villettes to ?, 16 Sept. and 21 Oct. 1739, Turin, SP 92/42. Equally, Savoyard subjects could serve other sovereigns. Trivié, a victim of Victor Amadeus II's recovery of alienated fiefs, abandoned his service in disgust for that of the King of Poland, Frigo, *Principe*, p. 162.

of the Utrecht negotiations was largely a collection of the correspondence of the Savoyard team, though with some attempt at overview. By contrast, the *relazione* (1719) of the former ambassador to Madrid, the Abbot Doria del Maro, was very brief. He simply referred Victor Amadeus to his correspondence for details (of e.g. the ceremonial practice of the Spanish court) and apologized for not giving a detailed account of affairs, his main concern being to chart and explain the rise of Cardinal Alberoni. He also omitted the usual geographical, political and economic sketch, assuming that the Savoyard ministers who preceded and followed him in Madrid would adequately inform his master of these things. It is not surprising, perhaps, that Doria del Maro (who – like many other authors of *relazione* – was also justifying himself to his master, to whom the *relazione* was addressed) was not employed again as a diplomat by Victor Amadeus. By contrast, his successor, Count Lascaris di Castellar, gave a detailed account of his negotiations in Madrid (with references to his correspondence) and an assessment of the Spanish court and Spanish power in his *relazione*. Unfortunately, very few *relazioni* written by Savoyard diplomats on their missions to London survive, while that of the Marquis de Cordon (1784) was primarily an attempt to explain the origins of the American War and to explore the implications of Britain's defeat for its international role. For the historian seeking to understand the reaction of Savoyard diplomats to England, their extensive correspondence is a much better source.¹⁰¹

In 1727, after nearly forty years of close contact between the two states, the English envoy, Hedges, asserted that the King of Sardinia's subjects knew as much about Japan as they did about England.¹⁰² This was not really true then and became less so as the century progressed. It must be admitted, however, that the Savoyard diplomats privileged to see England (and other states) after 1690 rarely ventured outside the capital, except when travelling to and from it at the start and end of their mission, or when accompanying the court. (Count Viry was one

¹⁰¹ C. Baudi di Vesme, 'Le "relazioni" diplomatiche sarde', *BSBS*, 68 (1970), pp. 656ff.; C. Morandi (ed.), *Relazioni di ambasciatori sabaudi, genovesi, e veneti durante il periodo della grande alleanza e della successione di Spagna (1693–1713)*, Bologna, 1935; Gasco, 'La politica sabauda', *passim*; D. Carutti (ed.), 'Relazioni sulla corte di Spagna dell'Abate Doria del Maro e del Conte Lascaris di Castellar, ministri di Savoia', *MAST*, series 2, 19 (1861), pp. 107ff.; C. Miller (ed.), *La Relation du Marquis de Cordon envoyé du Roi de Sardaigne en Angleterre (1774–1784)*, Florence, 1932; G. Prato, 'L'espansione commerciale inglese nel primo Settecento in una relazione di un inviato sabauda', in *Miscellanea di studi storici in onore di Antonio Manno*, 2 vols., Turin, 1912, vol. 1, pp. 33ff.; Frigo, *Principe*, pp. 80ff.; *DBI*, 'Breme' (for *relazione* on Naples, 1786).

¹⁰² Hedges to Delafaye, 3 May 1727, Turin, SP 92/32, fol. 187.

of many Sardinian envoys at the English court to attend the King to Hanover after 1714.) Ossorio visited the country homes of the Dukes of Newcastle and of Richmond (both close to London) but no Savoyard minister visited Scotland. They knew and spoke of only England, except when Scotland or Ireland became political issues. In many respects, diplomats were likely to see less than the independent traveller, having to remain at the centre of business and intelligence, and within reach of the posts. (Count Vittorio Alfieri, on his four 'private' visits, in 1768, 1770-1, 1783-4 and 1791, visited Portsmouth, Bristol and Bath.) But, within those limits, enough could be seen to get an insight into local social and political structures. In the 1750s, Perrone attended parliamentary debates, read English journals and (like Ossorio and Viry) was befriended by English politicians.¹⁰³

The first reactions of a Savoyard diplomat to the Maritime Powers after 1690 were largely negative. In the 1690s, de la Tour found the Dutch Republic rather unnerving, because of its 'free' character and the inclination of its population to disorder, neither of which he appreciated very much. Contact with England prompted equally negative reactions. De la Tour constantly saw Parliament (an institution by now effectively dead in the Savoyard states) as factious, slow and as delaying other business. As for the English, they were a touchy, violent people. This view of England as a factious, violent polity and society was hardly abandoned in the eighteenth century. In 1713 Mellarède concluded that the nation's restless spirit made it impossible to lay down a long-term policy *vis-à-vis* the English court. Victor Amadeus seems to have hoped, in 1720, when the ministry was hostile, that the famed instability might benefit him. But the broad view remained unsympathetic. Canale, who knew England only through his reading, had no admiration for a polity supposedly bordering on the republican while in the 1770s and 1780s Britain's reputed instability offered an easy explanation for its apparent recent decline.¹⁰⁴

In 1739 Villettes observed that even the best-intentioned (Sardinian) foreign minister could not understand (and so appreciate) the English political system. This was prompted by Ossorio's reports on the Parliamentary debates on the recently concluded Convention of the Pardo, between Britain and Spain which although sympathetic towards

¹⁰³ De la Tour's correspondence in 1690s, *passim*; R. Halsband, *Lord Hervey. Eighteenth-Century Courtier*, Oxford, 1974, p. 260; Alfieri, *Vita*, *passim*; Dagna, 'Un diplomatico', pp. 20ff.

¹⁰⁴ De la Tour to San Tommaso, 21 Sept. 1696, Hague; same to same, 22 April 1695, London; Carutti (ed.), 'Relazione', p. 237; Victor Amadeus II to Cortanze, 24 Feb. 1720, AST, LM, GB n. 24; Ruata, *Luigi Malabaila di Canale*, pp. 103ff.; Instructions, AST.

Walpole's administration conveyed a negative impression of it. There may be something in this. Despite Quazza's positive assessment of the understanding developed by Savoyard diplomats of affairs in the states where they resided, the essentially pessimistic inspiration behind the Savoyard desire for foreign intelligence, always expecting the worst, may have impeded a full appreciation of British political life. Typically, in 1742, Ossorio's frequent and detailed reporting of the crisis surrounding Walpole's fall caused alarm in Turin, where it was feared that England would not be able to aid Charles Emmanuel. However, some diplomats returned home enthusiastic for England and its institutions. Cordon's *relazione* (1784) revealed great admiration for Britain, which had put up a good fight against a considerable array of enemies in the war just concluded. He believed that England's power was founded on 'effective vigour' coming from her national credit and the 'energy' of her constitution and that Britain would therefore triumph over the short-term setbacks represented by military and naval defeat and the loss of the American colonies.¹⁰⁵

Above all, Sardinian ministers admired Britain's economic success. This is especially true of Count Perrone, whose reaction to England underpinned many of his plans as chief minister to transform the Piedmontese economy and society. In his *Pensées diverses*, on ways to encourage Piedmontese trade, given to Charles Emmanuel on his return to Turin in 1755, Perrone advocated the adoption of commercial policies similar to those which had made England so prosperous and powerful. Other Anglophiles included Count de Front who sought (and secured, 1787) the London posting; Count Graneri, who as chief minister himself in the 1790s sought to transform Piedmont's economy along 'English' lines; and other reformers, including Count Galiani and Prospero Balbo. It was not even necessary to have seen England, since the opportunities of coming into contact with Englishmen (and women) in the Sardinian state itself were growing by the 1780s. Noble subjects of the King of Sardinia may also have admired a political structure which gave them an institutionalized political role. This was true of Alfieri. As his case shows, contact with England was not restricted to diplomats. The Chevalier de Revel, son of the Governor of Nice, also visited England (1786), carrying letters of introduction from some of the English at Nice.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Villettes to Newcastle, 4 April 1739, Turin, SP 92/42; same to same, 16 April 1742, Piacenza, SP 92/46; Miller (ed.), *Relation*, p. 27.

¹⁰⁶ Dagna, 'Un diplomatico', pp. 19ff.; Jackson to Fraser, 14 Nov. 1787, Turin, FO 67/5; Romagnani, *Prospero Balbo*, pp. 32ff.; Alfieri, *Vita*, pp. 117ff. and 313ff.; *DBI*, 'Balbo'; Trevor to Carmarthen, 9 Aug. 1786, Turin, FO 67/5.

But England was not the only state and society to excite Savoyard diplomats and others. Successive members of the Solaro family, on diplomatic missions to Paris, were more in touch with the French Enlightenment and its exponents. As for possible models of practical, 'enlightened' reform, other states to which Savoyard diplomats were sent were equally if not more exciting and appropriate in this respect than Britain. The Marquis di Breglio's mission to Naples (1718–20) brought him into contact with the vibrant intellectual life of that Kingdom, whence he recruited teachers for the newly reformed University of Turin. Perrone, whose interest in commerce pre-dated his posting to London, proposed during his residence in Dresden various projects to improve the Savoyard mining industry. (His own estates gave him a particular interest in the latter.) Before elevation to chief minister, Graneri resided at Madrid where the 1780s saw important experiments in state finance. Successive envoys in Lisbon observed a state and society which in some respects resembled Piedmont, not least in some of the problems it faced. Count Lascaris di Castellar was an attentive observer at Naples (1760–70) of the problems of that Kingdom and the attempts of reforming ministers to solve them. These too might be useful models for the King of Sardinia and his ministers. Generally speaking, not all of those diplomats were as 'closed' as Ruata claims Canale was to the new ideas made available by the expansion of the diplomatic contacts of the Savoyard state in the century after 1684, and which represented another area of fruitful interaction between the domestic and foreign spheres.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ DBI, 'Bogino', 'Breglio', 'Breme', 'Canale'; 'Castellar'; Dagna, 'Un diplomatico', pp. 14ff.; Ruata, *Luigi Malabaila di Canale*, pp. 206ff.; Ricuperati, 'Gli strumenti', *passim*; F. Venturi, *Settecento Riformatore*, vol. 1: *Da Muratori a Beccaria*, Turin, 1969, *passim*. Cf. the apparent sympathy of Count Rivera (Savoyard minister in Rome) for Carlo Denina (and the importance of the minister in Rome in negotiating matters relating to domestic censorship in the Savoyard state), in L. Braidà, 'L'affermazione della censura di stato in Piemonte dall'editto del 1648 alle costituzioni per l'Università del 1772', *RSI*, 103 (1990), pp. 781ff.

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