

A Diplomatic Custom in Muscovy

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Since the Tatar invasion in the 13th century, most Russian principalities, except Novgorod, have existed without direct contact with European countries for nearly two hundred years. Only in the 15th century did Russia begin to re-emerge on the map of Europe. During the reign of Ivan III (1462-1505), the Muscovite state not only retained or strengthened her political and economic relations with neighboring states but also established direct new diplomatic contacts with the Italians, Mordavians, Hungarians and the Germans of the Holy Roman Empire.¹ It is not therefore a random coincidence that travel accounts on Russia by European visitors began to appear in the 15th century.² In the 16th and 17th centuries, we find many Germans, English, Dutch, Italians and French who visited Muscovy as diplomats, merchants or tsar's servitors and left us many interesting accounts of every political, economic, religious and cultural aspect of Muscovite society.³

In Muscovite Russia they found a strikingly different society from Europe and were strongly impressed by a number of social customs unfamiliar to them. Of the many Muscovite customs and practices that they illustrated from their personal experience, perhaps the diplomatic custom and ceremony relating to the reception of foreign embassies was one of the most curious themes that attracted their attention.⁴ In this paper our attention will mainly be focused on a traditional Muscovite diplomatic custom: the practice of providing foreign

1 For Ivan III's foreign policies, see Bazilevich, K.V., *Vneshniaia politika Russkogo tsentralizovannogo gosudarstva. Vtoraia polovina XV veka* (Moscow, 1952); Vernadsky, G., *Russia at The Dawn of The Modern Age* (New Haven-London, 1959).

2 In the 15th century we can enumerate only two accounts by Italians (Contarini and Barbaro) and one by a Frenchman (Ghillebert de Lannoy). see, Kliuchevskii, B.O., *Skazaniia inostrantsev o moskovskom gosudarstve* (Petrograd, 1918), p. 12; Skrzhinskaia, E.Ch., *Barbaro i Kontarini o Rossii. K istorii italo-russkikh sviazei* (Leningrad, 1971), pp. 5-28, 64-96.

3 The accounts of the 16th-17th centuries are too numerous to list all of them. Kliuchevskii in his monograph on this theme used seventeen and fifteen accounts for the 16th and 17th century respectively. see, Kliuchevskii, B.O., *op. cit.*, pp. 5-24. But the most important work on 16th-century Muscovy is: Sigismund von Herberstein, *Rerum Moscoviticarum Commentarii*. Herberstein, a Hapsburg envoy, conducted two missions during the reign of Vasili III, the first from Emperor Maximilian I and the second from King Ferdinand I. This work has numerous editions and has been translated into a variety of languages. We consult here a recent Russian edition: Herberstein, G., *Zapiski o Moskovii*, ed. by V.L. Ianin, A.L. Khoroshkevich and others (Moscow, 1988). For the 17th century, perhaps the account of Adam Olearius, a secretary of Holstein envoy, is one of the most excellent and preferable works. Here we use S. Baron's English edition cited in note 4.

4 Good descriptions of receiving foreign embassies in Muscovy are found in the accounts written by Herberstein, Possevino, Olearius, Meyerberg and others. see, Herberstein, G., *op. cit.*, pp. 204-227; Possevino, A., *Istoricheskie sochneniia*

ambassadors with food, drink, lodging, guides and transport during their stay and travels within the territory of Muscovy.

Although it is by no means unusual to see this custom's parallels in the East, for most of the European diplomats it was of great rarity and seemed to be worth recording. Accordingly, European visitors' accounts of travel to Muscovy almost invariably refer to this peculiar practice.⁵ In addition to these accounts by Westerners, we can also consult an interesting book on Muscovy by a native official of Muscovite diplomatic service in the mid-17th century: G.K. Kotoshikhin's *O Rossii v tsarstovanie Alekseia Mikhailovicha*.⁶ After working for over twenty years in the Ambassadorial Chancellery (*Posol'skii prikaz*), he left Muscovy to be enrolled in Swedish service and wrote this book in 1666 while in Stockholm. His work as a whole has been recognized to be a reliable source of information.⁷ He devoted three of thirteen chapters of this book to the foreign affairs and diplomatic customs of the Muscovite state.⁸ In view of the fact that he used to be a native Muscovite as well as a well-informed professional diplomatic servitor, we should consider his information in these chapters to be most reliable. This paper is simply meant to examine some information presented in the Westerners' travel accounts and in Kotoshikhin's work, and to outline the basic historical background of above-mentioned diplomatic custom in Muscovy.

I

In the Muscovite Russia of the 16th and 17th centuries, the central government institution responsible for administering foreign relations with all neighboring states was the *Posol'skii prikaz* (Ambassadorial Chancellery). This institution came into existence in the middle of the 16th century (at that time it was called *Posol'skaia izba*) and was replaced by the *Posol'skaia kantseliariia* at the beginning of the 18th century. This *prikaz* had jurisdiction over the work of receiving foreign ambassadors and organizing Russian embassies to foreign countries, translating foreign letters into Russian and vice-versa and compiling every kind of diplomatic document. In addition to these duties, it also administered the affairs of foreign merchants who were living in or visiting Moscow, the Don Cossacks, and the most privileged Tatars who entered tsar's service after the Russian annexation of Kazan, Astrakhan and Siberian Khanates and those who were granted *votchiny* or *pomest'ia* in the districts around Moscow or in the five towns over which the *Posol'skii prikaz* had jurisdiction: Biaz'ma, Romanov, Elat'ma, Kasimov and Elaktura. Negotiations for ransoming Russian

o Rossii XVI v., ed. and transl. by L.N. Godovikovoii (Moscow, 1983), pp. 51-56; Olearius, A., *The Travel of Olearius in 17th-Century Russia*, ed. and transl. by S.H. Baron (Stanford, 1967), pp. 40, 48, 44-48, 56-66. General analyses of these receptions are given in: *Kliuchevskii, B.O., op. cit.*, pp. 41-73.

⁵ Herberstein, G., *op. cit.*, p. 205; Possevino, A., *op. cit.*, p. 52; Olearius, A., *op. cit.*, pp. 40-42; Margeret, J., *The Russian Empire and Grand Duchy of Muscovy*, ed. and transl. by C.S.L. Dunning (Pittsburgh, 1983), p. 42

⁶ Kotoshikhin, G., *O Rossii v tsarstovanie Alekseia Mikhailovicha*, ed. by A.E. Pennington (Oxford, 1980).

⁷ Evaluation of his work as a historical source was given in: Uroff, B.P., *Grigorii Karpovich Kotoshikhin, "On Russia in the Reign of Alexis Mikhailovich": An Annotated Translation* (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, 1977), pt. 1, pp. 17-29.

⁸ Chap. III-V. see, Kotoshikhin, G., *op. cit.*, pp. 49-84.

prisoners who were in foreign countries such as Crimea or Turkey were also conducted by this *prikaz*. The ransom money was collected each year by other chancelleries throughout the entire Muscovite state and turned over to the *Posol'skii prikaz*. It should be noted that this central institution also had control over the state seals that were affixed to documents sent to neighboring states as well as to charters granting domestic estates to any servitors.⁹

How many and what kinds of servitors were working in the *Posol'skii prikaz*? According to Kotoshikhin who used to be an official of this chancellery in the mid-17th century, the staff number of his time was more than one hundred and thirty. It consisted of a Duma secretary (*dumnoi d'iak*), two secretaries (*d'iaki*), fourteen undersecretaries (*pod'iachii*), about fifty translators (*perevodchki*) and seventy interpreters (*tolmachi*).¹⁰ Among a lot of *prikazy* (there were 43 *prikazy* in the 1660s) which varied widely in size and importance¹¹, the *Posol'skii prikaz* was obviously one of the largest and the most important central bureaus in the Muscovite government. In fact, at least one of the Duma secretaries (generally only 2 or 3 people occupied this post in the 16th and 17th centuries) who acted as members of the boyar Duma and were considered a sort of state chancellor, was appointed exclusively from the secretaries (*d'iaki*) who headed the *Posol'skii prikaz*.¹² Foreign embassies transacted their business mainly with the Duma secretary, secretaries and senior undersecretaries of this chancellery. Secretaries and senior undersecretaries comprised the top and middle level managing staff in every function of this *prikaz*.

On the other hand, those from the very common staff categories such as translators, spent most of their 12-hour work day doing routine desk work and miscellaneous services in the Moscow office. Almost every day translators (their yearly wages ranged from 40 to 100 rubles in 1660s) engaged in translating a lot of diplomatic documents written in Latin, Swedish, German, Greek, Polish and Tatar languages. Interpreters (their yearly wages ranged from 15 to 40 rubles in the same period) had to work day and night in 24 hour shifts. In turn ten interpreters were always obliged to remain in the office, and were sent on various errands, or attached to foreign ambassadors for interpreting purposes and for supplying them with food and drink.¹³

9 Kotoshikhin, G., *op. cit.*, pp. 99-100. For further discussion on the function of this chancellery, see S.A. Belokurov, *O Posol'skom prikaze* (Moscow, 1906).

10 Kotoshikhin, G., *op. cit.*, p. 99. For a discussion generally on the characteristics of staff of the 17th-century *prikazy* (*prikaznye liudi*), see Plavsic, B., Seventeenth-Century Chanceries and their Staffs., in: *Russian Officialdom: The Bureaucratization of Russian Society from the Seventeenth to the Twentieth Century*. Ed. by W.M. Pintner and D.K. Rowney (The Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1980), pp. 19-45.

11 Changing numbers of *prikazy* in the 17th century are given in: N.F. Demidova, *Sluzhilaia biurokratiia v Rossii XVII v. i ee rol' v formirovanii absoliutizma* (Moscow, 1987), p. 23, Table 1. According to Kotoshikhin, there were altogether 42 *prikazy* in Moscow. Actually, however, he mentions only 38 *prikazy* in chapter VII. Kotoshikhin, G., *op. cit.*, p. 97-131. See also, Olearius, A., *op. cit.*, p. 221-226. On the emergence and the development of *prikaz* system in the 16th century, see Leont'ev, A.K., *Obrazovanie prikaznoi sistemy upravleniia v russkom gosudarstve. Iz istorii sozdaniia tsentralizobannogo gosudarstvennogo apparata v kontse XV-pervoi polovine XVI v.* (Moscow, 1954). For the *prikazy* in the 17th century, see Ustiugov, N.V., *Evolutsiia prikaznogo storoiia russkogo gosudarstva v XVI v.*, in: *Absoliutizm v Rossii (XVII-XVIII vv.)* (Moscow, 1964).

12 Bogoiavlenskii, S.K., *Prikaznye sud'e XVII veka* (Moscow, 1946), pp. 127-131; S.A. Belokurov, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-130.

13 Kotoshikhin, G., *op. cit.*, p. 99.

One of the most important services carried out by this chancellery was sending its staff (secretaries, undersecretaries, translators and interpreters) as members of embassies sent to foreign countries. They accompanied the ambassador (*posol*), emissary (*poslannik*) or courier (*gonets*) and assisted his diplomatic activities according to their own post and function. Another service performed by the *Posol'skii prikaz* of the same or of even more importance was receiving foreign embassies. The practice of providing foreign embassies with food, drink, lodging, transport and escort during their stay, occupied a very important part of the Muscovite diplomatic custom of receiving them. It means that the Muscovite rulers, as often is the case in Eastern countries, defray all the expenses for both provisions and domestic transport of envoys sent by foreign rulers, and also furnish an escort while the visitors remain within their domain. This fact symbolically expressed that the received foreign envoys were the guests of the Muscovite sovereigns. Accordingly, every facility was to be provided to them in the name of the Muscovite ruler, and the *Posol'skii prikaz* always acted as a Tsar's agent in organizing and administering the reception.

II

The reception of foreign embassies begins at the border where they were expected to come into the Muscovite territory. When foreign ambassadors reach the frontier, they must inform the Muscovites of their business, and have to then wait (sometimes for a long time) until the Tsar and the governor (*voevoda*) of the nearest provincial town send a *pristav* (conductor and overseer) with some other officials and soldiers to receive and escort them to Moscow. Usually the above-mentioned governor of the provincial town appoints a *dvorianin* as *pristav*¹⁴. Food and drink are also sent with him to welcome them. When the welcomer's party arrive on the border, a fully dressed *pristav* meets the ambassadors, and makes a speech in Russian telling them that the Tsar has sent him there to receive them, and to furnish the mission with provisions, boats, wagons, horses and everything they need until they reach Moscow. Of course official interpreters from the *Posol'skii prikaz* help their communication. After the welcome ceremony at the border is over, the foreign embassies, guarded by the Muscovite musketeers (*streltsi*), continue their journey to Moscow on the sleighs (or wagons) and horses (or boats) prepared by the Muscovite government. The *pristav* is responsible for feeding and protecting the embassies all the way to the capital.¹⁵ Above all they place great importance upon provisioning (*korm*) for them. Food must be furnished to foreign ambassadors, the guests of the Muscovite sovereigns, invariably in the name of the Tsar.

Kotoshikhin made no mention of the kinds of food and drink given to ambassadors for the journey to Moscow. But Herberstein who visited Muscovy during the first half of the

14 In Muscovite time, the name *pristav* was applied to various kinds of administrative and judicial officers. It was often applied to the official who was assigned to visiting foreigners as both their protector and watchman. So their basic function was either protective or coercive, or both.

15 On the receiving of ambassadors at the border, see, Kotoshikhin, G., *op. cit.*, pp. 73-74; Olearius, A., *op. cit.*, pp. 47, 87-88; Kliuchevskii, B.O., *op. cit.*, pp. 44-45.

16th century, listed the items supplied by a clerk every day. They are: beef, fat, a sheep, two hares, six cocks, green vegetables, oats, cheese, salt (once a week), pepper, saffron, fish, vodka, mead of three sorts, beer of two sorts and so on. These were brought to him by two carts every day.¹⁶ Generally food should be accommodated in kind. In the case of Olearius who visited more than a century later, however, on the way to Moscow the *pristav* asked the ambassadors whether they wanted provisions prepared by Russians or preferred to receive money given by the Tsar instead. They preferred the money and purchased food and drink themselves.¹⁷ Christian ambassadors were provided with alcoholic beverages and ham, but they were never offered to Mohammedan Tatar ambassadors. On the way to the capital *pristav* accompanied them to the nearest provincial towns such as Novgorod and Smolensk. The governor (*voevoda*) and every rank of official in the town welcomed them together with a number of citizens. Antonio Possevino, a Papal envoy who visited Muscovy in the beginning of the 1580s, wrote that his embassy was received into the fortresses at Smolensk and Novgorod with the highest honors and a salute from a huge cannon.¹⁸

When foreign embassies or Muscovite officials traveled on the domestic highways, they could quickly and easily follow the routes using the post-station (*Yam*) system which Muscovy had established to facilitate official travels in all parts of its territory. Good descriptions of this system are found in Herberstein as well as in Olearius.¹⁹ In various places along the highways there were *yam* post-stations and settlements (*iamskie slobody*) where a certain number of peasants (*yamshchiki*) were always keeping 40, 50 or more horses, and provided official travelers with fresh horses and food at any time upon receipt of the Tsar's order. When an envoy party traveled using the *yam* system, the *pristav* of the envoy sent someone ahead to tell the next station of the party's approach. As soon as the party arrived at the station, whether during the day or at night, their horses' saddles and bridles were removed and were placed on new horses. On average the *yam*-stations (or settlements) were placed 30 to 50 versts apart from one another.²⁰ Therefore, whenever the horses were tired, the envoy party arrived at another *yam*-station and settlement, where *yamshchiki* were obligated to be ready to leave their houses at any time of the day or night if their duties required it. In this way an Herberstein's servant once traveled from Novgorod to Moscow, a distance of 600 versts, in 72 hours. Gustav Alef states that nothing comparable to this speed of travel was recorded for the West in the 15th-16th centuries.²¹ Thus in passing from *yam*-station to *yam*-station, parties of foreign embassies could easily cover the distance from the border to Moscow.

16 Herberstein, G., *op. cit.*, p. 205.

17 The embassy as a whole received two rubles and two kopeks a day, and every member of the delegate was allowed a share proportionate to his rank. see, Olearius, A., *op. cit.*, p. 48.

18 Possevino, A., *op. cit.*, p. 51.

19 Herberstein, G., *op. cit.*, pp. 122-123.; Olearius, A., *op. cit.*, pp. 180-181. cf. Standen, Heinrich von, *The Land and Government of Muscovy, A Sixteenth-Century Account*. ed. and transl. by T. Esper (Stanford Univ. Press, Stanford, 1967), pp. 11-12, 39, 102.

20 Uroff, B.P., *op. cit.*, pt. 2, p. 510. cf., Kotoshikhin, G., *op. cit.*, pp. 123-124.

21 Herberstein, G., *op. cit.*, p. 123; Alef, G., The Origin and Early Development of the Muscovite Postal Service, in: *Rulers and Nobles in Fifteenth-century Muscovy* (London, 1983), VIII, p. 1.

As some historians point out, the Muscovite yam system in the form of relay stations placed along the main ways of the realm, took shape during the reign of Ivan III (1462-1505), whose government had to facilitate administrative centralization of his state after accomplishing the unification of northeastern Russia.²² Also his successors continued adding yam-stations along important routes and improving the system as a whole. Undoubtedly Ivan III's government followed the Tatar example in creating this efficient communication network throughout its extended domain.²³ The Mongol yam system, the fastest and most efficient communication network across the Eurasian continent in the pre-modern world, was all carried at the expense of the state. As Marco Polo and William Rubruck described, the Mongol postal stations provided not only its own officials but also foreign ambassadors with sufficient horses, wagons, lodging, food and other necessities. According to Tatar diplomatic protocol, rulers must exchange their ambassadors, each supporting the ones sent by the other foreign ruler. The Muscovite yam system that was patterned after that of the Mongols, therefore, provided analogous functions.

III

The ceremony of an embassy's entry into Moscow and the ambassadors' reception was elaborately and solemnly represented. People of every rank in the city were ordered to be well-dressed and present at the welcome. According to Olearius, as the embassy drew nearer the city, various groups of well-dressed people met and welcomed the party. At a few kilometers out of Moscow the embassy was met by four thousand mounted people who were expensively dressed and drawn up in fine ranks on either side of the road. The embassy proceeded between them.²⁴ Outside of the outer-most city-walls (*Zemlianoi-gorod*), the ambassadors were met and greeted this time by two brilliantly-dressed *pristavy* (a man of high rank and a secretary). They had just been assigned to the ambassadors as their *pristavy* in Moscow. The senior *pristav* delivered a speech of welcome and informed the ambassadors that by the Tsar's order the two were to provide them with everything they need during their stay in Moscow.

The degree of honor (*chest'*) rendered to an ambassador was shown, among other ways, by how far the Muscovite people went out of Moscow to meet him. Distance from Moscow's city-wall to the place where the welcome-ceremonies by the *pristavy* took place also depended on the ambassador's dignity, that is, on the degree of respect paid to the ambassador's country or his sovereign. In Muscovy the rulers of Poland-Lithuania were

22 Gurlind, I. Ia., *Iamskaia gon'ba v Moskovskom gosudarstve do kontsa XVII veka* (Iaroslavl', 1900). p. 41 ff.; Alef, G., *op. cit.*, pp. 5, 8. Eroshkin, however, suggests that the Russian yam system emerged during the period of feudal fragmentation. see, Eroshkin, N.P., *Istoriia gosudarstvennykh uchrezhdenii dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii* (Moscow, 1968), p. 43.

23 Alef, G., *op. cit.*, pp. 1-15.; Halperin, C.J., *Russia and the Golden Horde, The Mongol Impact on Medieval Russian History* (Bloomington, 1987), p. 93.

24 Olearius, A., *op. cit.*, p. 57.; A good description of the greeting of ambassadors outside Moscow and their entrance into the city is also found in the account of Poland-Lithuania's embassy in 1667. see, *Istoricheskii raskaz o puteshestvii pol'skikh poslov v Moskoviiu, imi predpriniamom v 1667 gody, Proezzhaia po Moskovii. Rossiia XVI-XVII vekov glazami diplomatov* (Moccow, 1991), pp. 321-322. see also, Kliuchevskii, B.O., *op. cit.*, pp. 46-51.

esteemed higher than the kings of Sweden. Lithuanian ambassadors were therefore met by their *pristavy* “in a musket shot’s distance” from Moscow’s city-wall, while Swedish ambassadors within ten to fifteen *sazhen* (about 20–30 meters) from the wall.²⁵ After this ceremony was over, a throng of the Muscovites on horseback accompanied the embassy into the city and to the Ambassador’s Court located in Kitai-gorod near the Kremlin.²⁶

In Eastern Europe, standing embassies or resident-type of ambassadors were not known in the 16th-17th centuries. The old type of diplomacy prevailed, in which rulers occasionally exchange their envoys according to the need. Therefore no European countries, with a few exceptions, had the right to maintain their permanent diplomatic representatives in Moscow in the 16th-17th centuries. As a result, most western embassies were obliged to occupy the Ambassador’s Court or other buildings that were founded by the Muscovite government as a lodging facility for foreign diplomats in Moscow.²⁷

However the compound of the Ambassador’s Court was kept under strict observation by the Muscovite officials so that none of ambassador’s delegation could leave and no stranger could enter. Foreign ambassadors and their suite staying there were attended by serving people, and Muscovite interpreters staying with them in the Court dispatched musketeers to buy anything they requested. In addition, ambassadors were visited everyday by two *pristavs* who were assigned to take care of them. But the activities of a foreign embassy’s retinue was strictly restricted within the compound. The gates of the Court and the houses within it were posted with some dozens of musketeers (*streltsi*) so that the foreigners could not come into contact with any Muscovites or with any other strangers.²⁸

According to Kotoshikhin, for an ambassador (*posol*), a captain (*sotnik*) with 100 to 50 musketeers was stationed in proportion to the number of an ambassador’s suite. For an emissary (*poslannik*) 30 to 20, and for a courier (*gonets*) 12 to 10 musketeers were stationed also depending upon the number of his suite. Neither ambassadors nor their attendants were given permission to go out of the Court alone. When a member of the embassy went out of the Court for diversion, or to purchase something in the marketstalls (*riady*), they were always accompanied by musketeers. Kotoshikhin points out that these guards are for the honor and protection of the embassies.²⁹ Actually, however, most foreigners had the feeling as though they were under arrest or had become prisoners. Above all, Polish-Lithuanian ambassadors and their retinue were placed under the closest surveillance in the 16th century because of the constantly strained relation between Muscovy and this country. They were

25 Iuzefovich, L.A., *Russkii posol'skii obychai XVI veka*, *Voprosy istorii*, No. 8, 1977, p. 116.

26 The Ambassador’s Court (*Posol'skoi dvor*) was located on the corner of present-day *proezd Vladimirova*. A picture of this building in the 17th century is found in: *Al'bom Meierberga, Vidy i bytovye Rossii XVII veka* (St. Petersburg, 1903), Plate 63.; Adelung, F., *Al'bom Meierberga, Vidy i bytovye Rossii XVII veka. Ob'iasnitel'nye primechane k risunkam.* (St.Petersburg, 1903), pp. 95-97. On this Court see also, Kliuchevskii, B.O., *op. cit.*, pp. 51-4.; *Istoriia Moskvy v sheti tomakh*, t. 1, (Moscow, 1952), p. 561.

27 Crimean Khanate, Nogai Horde, and the Kalmyks had their own permanent residence in Moscow in the 17th century. see, Kotoshikhin, G., *op. cit.*, pp. 82-83. Relating to European countries, few maintained their permanent representatives. England acquired the right to keep an agent in Moscow in the 16th century, but lost it with the expulsion of the English merchants in 1649. Sweden, Denmark, Poland had the same rights in the 17th century but they did not continue for a long time.

28 Olearius, A., *op. cit.*, pp. 58, 180.; Kliuchevskii, B.O., *op. cit.*, pp. 54-56.

29 Kotoshikhin, G., *op. cit.*, p. 82.

completely isolated from the surrounding world. Not only were none of them allowed to go out of the Court, but also anyone who tried to talk with them was arrested and turned over to the *Posol'skii prikaz*.³⁰ Ambassadors of other countries were guarded less strictly, but they were also not permitted to go out of the Court at all before they had their first public audience with the Tsar.

IV

Ambassadors and their suites were supplied with plenty of provisions for their daily subsistence during their stay in Moscow. According to Olearius, the Holstein's embassy that consisted of 34 people and visited Moscow in the year of 1634, daily received: 62 loaves of bread, a quarter of beef, 4 sheep, 12 chickens, 2 geese, 1 hare, 50 eggs, 10 kopeks for candles, and 5 kopeks for the kitchen. Weekly they received: 1 pud of butter, 1 pud of salt, 3 buckets of vinegar, 2 sheep, and 1 goose. As for beverage they were supplied daily: 15 tankards of various drink (3 vodka, 1 Spanish wine, 8 mead, 3 beer) for ambassadors and their associates, 1 barrel of beer, 1 cask of mead, and 1 cask of vodka for their attendants. In addition, on the first day of an ambassador's arrival, on large religious feasts and on the days when ambassadors had an audience with the Tsar, or negotiated with the boyars, or saw the Tsar in processions, they were furnished with twice the daily amount of food and drink listed above. This food and drink was brought into the Ambassador's Court by scores of men every day. Also, on days when ambassadors appeared before the Tsar for their audience or dismissal, a high ranking courtier was sent to the Ambassador's Court after they returned to their residence with a banquet of food and drink from the Tsar's tables.³¹

The quantity and kinds of food and drink supplied to ambassadors depended not only on the size of their embassy but also on the degree of honor or respect rendered to the ambassadors' countries. In fact, Kotoshikhin pointed out that the Persian, Polish and English ambassadors were given more food and drink than Swedish.³² The Tsar's favor and disfavor could also be shown in the quantity and quality of provisions for the ambassadors. Antonio Possevino, who was sent to Moscow in 1581 as the personal emissary of Pope Gregory XIII, was provided with the most expensive foods, even including spice, and the Tsar sent him food from his own table every day.³³ In contrast with this, the Lithuanian ambassador who did not follow the Muscovite ceremonial custom when he entered Moscow in 1563 was supplied by the Tsar's order with food scarcely satisfying his embassy's need. Provisions were reduced by half for ambassadors who refused to recognize Ivan the IV as Tsar. Iuzefovich cited a case where in a similar situation an embassy was given neither food nor water for an entire two days.³⁴ Therefore, the Muscovite custom of providing foreign

30 Iuzefovich, L.A., *op. cit.*, p. 117.

31 Olearius, A., *op. cit.*, pp. 58, 96.; Kliuchevskii, B.O., *op. cit.*, p. 57; Kotoshikhin, G., *op. cit.*, pp. 76, 78. On the Tsar's banquet for foreign ambassadors, see also Kliuchevskii, B.O., *op. cit.*, pp. 65-71.; *Proezzhaia po Moskovii. Rossiia XVI-XVII vekov glazami diploma-tov* (Moscow, 1991), pp. 331-335.

32 Kotoshikhin, G., *op. cit.*, p. 76.

33 Possevino, A., *op. cit.*, pp. 52-53.

34 Iuzefovich, L. A., *op. cit.*, p. 117.

embassies with food and drink could be, in certain cases, a means of punishing or coercing those who behaved contrary to the Muscovite rules, custom or the Tsar's will.

The food and drink provided for their daily subsistence was probably prepared and furnished by the officials of the *Posol'skii prikaz*. The expenses needed for supplying them, however, were not defrayed by the *Posol'skii prikaz* but by the Great Revenue Chancellery (*Prikaz Bol'shogo prikhoda*). The latter institution had administrative responsibility for collecting the tax imposed upon the popular inhabitants for the upkeep of the yam system, and also for overseeing the revenue derived from customs duties and various commercial taxes on shops (*lavki*), market halls (*gostinye dvory*), wine-cellars (*pogreby*) and measures (*mery*) used for selling merchandise.

In Kotoshikhin's time the yearly revenue of this chancellery amounted to 500,000 rubles, which constituted a significant part of the entire state budget.³⁵ The revenue of this chancellery was spent on foreign ambassadors and their suites as well as on other foreigners such as Greek ecclesiastics, and Persian and Greek merchants. In Muscovy the entire subsistence consisting of bread, meat, fodder, firewood and more was also supplied to some foreign merchants who were staying in Moscow. Monetary wages for the Cossacks and foreign employees like translators and interpreters, as well as the expenses of the Muscovite embassies sent to foreign countries were also paid from the revenue of this chancellery.³⁶ In short, considerable part of the work over which the *Posol'skii prikaz* administered was carried on at the expense of the Great Revenue Chancellery.

We have no data here to know how much money or what percent of the budget of the Great Revenue Chancellery was spent yearly on feeding and entertaining foreign embassies at that time. But the foreign diplomats who had visited the Tsar and stayed in Muscovy fully realized for themselves that it was quite an expense. Explaining the Tsar's annual expenditures, Olearius indicated this fact as follows: "Large means go for the embassies of foreign rulers that often visit him. Sometimes two, three, or more such embassies are in Moscow for an extended period, and so long as they remain within Russia's borders they are maintained free of charge."³⁷ Therefore it is understandable that Iurii Krizhanich severely criticized the foreign diplomats who, after staying for a long time in Moscow at the Tsar's great expense, returned home and wrote books insulting Muscovy and the Muscovites.³⁸

V

L.A. Iuzefovich indicates that the Muscovite diplomatic custom had been formed throughout the course of a few centuries, borrowing from the practices and protocols of various countries such as Russia of the appanage regime, Poland-Lithuania, European countries, the Byzantine Empire and the Tatar Khanates. V.I. Savva, however, in his study of the Muscovite diplomatic ceremonies stressed elements borrowed from Byzantine

35 Kotoshikhin, G., *op. cit.*, p. 118, cf., Uroff, B.P., *op. cit.*, pt. 2, p. 490.

36 Possevino, A., *op. cit.*, p. 56; Kotoshikhin, G., *op. cit.*, p. 119.

37 Olearius, A., *op. cit.*, p. 200.

38 Krizhanich, I., *The Politica of Iurii Krizhanich*, transl. by J.M. Letiche & B. Dmytryshyn (New York, 1985), pp. 144,

practice. Also, according to N.I. Veselovskii's monograph, many of the diplomatic customs described in the Kotoshikhin's account were of Tatar origin.³⁹ In any case, some of Muscovite diplomatic protocol seems to be conspicuously of Asian origin. For instance, rulers continually kept contact by exchanging gifts through their envoys. Foreign envoys had to present themselves on their knees before rulers without bearing weapons. In fact, the latter practice presented a serious problem for European envoys, mostly sword-bearing nobles.⁴⁰ Every diplomatic negotiation was necessarily preceded by lengthy greetings, questions about the ruler's health and a ceremonial banquet.⁴¹ Finally ruler's envoys were invariably provided with everything they needed by the host country as long as they remained within its borders. Needless to say that this last diplomatic etiquette was also un-European.⁴² Given the relative importance of Russia's relations with its eastern and southern countries until the 17th century, it is natural that Muscovite diplomatic protocol was strongly affected by a lasting influence of oriental neighbors.

In some eastern countries, foreign envoys were supported by the host rulers and also given permission to engage in tax-free trading in the local markets. Embassies' subsistence was supplemented with their trading activity. Actually in the 17th centuries the Muscovite rulers sent their envoys to Persia very frequently, who along with performing minor missions at the Shah's court, always engaged in profitable trade at the market there. In addition to these envoys, the Tsars sent their own merchants thereby monopolizing the Persian silk trade. The Shahs also supplied full maintenance for the Tsars' envoys and merchants.⁴³ The Persian Shahs, in their turn, also frequently sent their envoys accompanied by merchants to Muscovy. As a matter of course, all of them were supported by the Tsars.

In Muscovite diplomacy three ranks of diplomats were employed: ambassadors (*posoly*), emissaries (*poslanniki*) and couriers (*gontsy*).⁴⁴ Since ambassadors, the envoys of the highest rank, had to be accompanied by a larger retinue than did emissaries and couriers, their missions were the most expensive. As Kotoshikhin indicated, ambassadors were accompanied by suites consisting of 40 to 100 people in the 17th century, while emissaries were sent with 15 to 30 attendants, and couriers with 8 to 10.⁴⁵ Yet these expensive embassies accompanied by ambassadors, rather than by emissaries or couriers, were often sent on long and costly journeys to Turkey and Persia. Probably this will be explained not only by the

39 Iuzefovich, L.A., *op. cit.*, p. 115.; Savva, V.I., *Moskovskie tsari i vizantiiskie vasilevsi. K voprosy o vliianii Vizantii na obrazovanie idei vlasti moskovskikh gosudarei* (Khar'kov, 1901), pp. 176-270.; N.I. Veselovskii, *Tatarskoe vlianie na posol'skii tseremonial v moskovskii period russkoi istorii, Otchet Sv. Peterburgskogo Universiteta za 1910*, pp. 1-19.

40 Zabelin, I.E., *Domashnii byt russkikh tsarei v XVI i XVII st.*, part. 1, 3rd. ed. (Moscow, 1896), pp. 280-81.

41 For an ambassador's audience, banquets and other ceremonies at the Tsar's court, see, Kotoshikhin, G., *op. cit.*, pp. 74-84.

42 This custom was also observed in 15th century Novgorod. When Ghillebert de Lannoy, a French diplomat and traveler, visited Novgorod and stayed there nine days in 1413, every day the archbishop of Novgorod (the symbolic head of this city-state) sent him more than 30 men with bread, meat, fish, hay, oats, beer, and mead. This is the same custom that was found in Muscovy. Therefore we can not consider this diplomatic custom to be peculiar only to Muscovy.

43 Olearius, A., *op. cit.*, p. 179.

44 Kotoshikhin, G., *op. cit.*, pp. 54-73; Possevino, A., *op. cit.*, p. 56. These three ranks of diplomatic envoys seem to be adaptations of Western diplomatic terminology. see, Uroff, B.P., *op. cit.*, pt. 2, p. 394. note 2.

45 Kotoshikhin, G., *op. cit.*, p. 55. see also S.A. Belokurov, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-67.

relative diplomatic importance Muscovy attached to these countries but also by the fact that immense expenditures involved in sending big embassies could be compensated for by host rulers' support as well as by the tax-free trading activities carried out by the members of the Muscovite embassies. In contrast to this, ambassadors with large suites were rarely sent to remote western countries. In the 16th century, Possevino recorded that ambassadors with large retinues were seldom sent further than Poland because long journeys required great expenditures. In the 17th century, Kotoshikhi pointed out that no ambassadors had been sent to the Holy Roman Empire for a long time because the long journey of the embassy accompanied by a large retinue would require great expenditures.⁴⁶ It is very probable that in saying this he kept in mind the fact that in western countries all of the traveling expenses and living expenses during embassies' stay had to be defrayed by the Muscovite government. In addition, it was difficult to fully compensate for these heavy expenditures through the trading activities carried out by the members of the diplomatic delegation.

This does not mean, however, that no ambassadors with large retinues were sent to any western neighbors. According to Possevino, ambassadors were usually exchanged between Lithuania-Poland and Muscovy attended by 100 to 200 people, including merchants. He critically referred to the fact that the Muscovite envoys brought merchandise with them and subsequently trafficked in goods in Lithuania-Poland. Possevino criticized this as improper in view of their own diplomatic missions and responsibilities. In his *Moscovia* he reported an interesting case that he himself observed at Kiverova Gora, the village where a negotiation between both countries took place in 1581-1582.⁴⁷ When the Muscovite ambassadors arrived there with a suite of 300 people, they opened shops, and between the peace treaty negotiating sessions, diligently engaged their people in trading and bartering with the Poles. They soon also began receiving provisions and food already cooked and preserved well by the cold from Novgorod, which was located 200 miles away from the place of negotiation.⁴⁸ Therefore it is obvious that the Muscovite delegations were supplied with no provisions from Lithuania-Poland at that time, but were allowed to engage in trade in order to compensate the heavy expenses needed for the delegations. Kotoshikhin also wrote in his account that large embassies with ambassadors were usually sent to Lithuania-Poland. Therefore the same situation that was observed by Possevino in the 16th century probably still continued in the 17th century.

VI

In the 17th century, Muscovy had diplomatic relations with the Holy Roman Empire, Sweden, Lithuania-Poland, England, Denmark, Holland, the electors of the Holy Roman Empire, Turkey, Persia, the Crimean Khanate, the Kalmyks and others. Therefore the Tsar

46 Kotoshikhin, G., *op. cit.*, pp. 54-55.

47 Possevino, A., *op. cit.*, p. 56. This is one of the "s'ezdy" that were held near the common border of the two negotiating parties. Muscovy sometimes had bilateral meetings with neighboring countries such as Lithuania-Poland and Sweden at or near the common frontier. Such meetings were called "s'ezdy" (congress). see, Kotoshikhin, G., *op. cit.*, pp. 54, 64-65.

48 Possevino, A., *op. cit.*, p. 56.

sometimes sent his embassies to the rulers of these countries with a generous gift of Russian furs such as sable, marten, ermine, black fox, fox, beaver and so on.⁴⁹ Besides the furs for gifts to rulers, however, the Tsar's envoys invariably had to bring with them a certain quantity of furs to put on the market of the foreign country. The Tsar trusted his envoys with selling his furs in its market. For example, when furs worth 1000 rubles were presented to the Holy Roman Emperor, another 300 to 400 rubles worth of furs were brought with the envoys for the Tsar's business. While the King of Poland was presented with 3000 to 5000 rubles worth of furs, the ambassadors brought with them another 2000 rubles worth for sale. When 5000 rubles worth of furs were presented to the Sultan of Turkey, another 10000 rubles worth of furs were distributed on sale to compensate costly traveling expenses and for ransoming Russian captives in Turkey.⁵⁰ In this manner most Muscovite envoys took some Russian merchandise with them and more or less engaged in trading business in foreign countries along with their proper diplomatic activities. We don't know, however, to what extent the profit from this trade covered the expenses needed for their embassies. As we can see from Kotoshikhin's explanation, Muscovite envoys and their attendants such as secretaries, undersecretaries, translators and interpreters were given two years' wages in accordance with the norms for salary before being sent to foreign countries.⁵¹ They also received one extra year's wages in order to equip themselves for a trip. In addition, the Tsars also granted them a certain amount of furs in kind depending upon their rank and function. These furs were probably also sold in foreign countries. Before leaving Muscovy, envoys and their suite were also given a supply of grain, meat, fish, vodka, mead, beer and so on by the Tsar. However these articles of food and drink were granted in very small quantities only for ceremony's sake. In any case, they were far from being sufficient for their diplomatic missions to foreign countries.

As long as the Muscovites continually provided foreign envoys with provisions, transport and guides, they also expected and requested the same things from other host countries. In fact, Muscovite envoys were generally given instructions among others to send an intelligent attendant together with a translator to the governor-general and obtain a *pristav*, food and drink, transport and guides when they entered the foreign country to which they had been sent by the Tsar.⁵² Even when Muscovite envoys entered Lithuania-Poland in transit from Muscovy to other European countries, they accused the Polish king of disregarding the custom of supplying them horses and food.⁵³ Differing from Muscovy's eastern or southern neighbors, however, the Western countries did not always offer them the same benefits as their own envoys were given in Muscovy. It was natural that Muscovite envoys could not understand the reasons why the host rulers in Europe would not reciprocate.

In Possevino's account we find the experiences he had with Istoma Shevrigin, Ivan IV's first envoy to the Papacy in Rome and to the Holy Roman Emperor in Prague, and with

49 Kotoshikhin, G., *op. cit.*, pp. 69-73.; Olearius, A., *op. cit.*, p. 179.

50 Kotoshikhin, G., *op. cit.*, pp. 69, 71.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 60.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 61.

53 Possevino, A., *op. cit.*, p. 58.

other Muscovite diplomats who came to Europe. According to Possevino, whenever Muscovite envoys arrived at the court of a European ruler and failed to receive free horses, lodging, food, escorts and gifts, they immediately began to praise their own sovereign's benevolence, generosity and greatness up to the heavens, and accused the host ruler of being miserly or poverty stricken because he treated them badly.⁵⁴ Knowing of the experiences of Istoma Shevrigin, Possevino persuaded Ivan IV not to send more than ten men when the Tsar decided to send a second delegation to the Papacy. Accompanying Yakov Molvianinov, the second Muscovite envoy to Rome, Possevino followed his long return journey through Livonia, Poland and Germany to Italy in 1582. He was convinced that it would be very difficult for him to accompany and conduct Ivan IV's envoy to the Papacy if his delegation consisted of 100 or 200 people, who had to be supplied with free provisions on a long journey to Rome. At the same time Possevino was afraid that unless all benefits were given to them for nothing, the Papacy's immense diplomatic efforts relating to Muscovy would turn out to be of no avail because of their ill-feeling.⁵⁵ It should be noted here, however, that despite Possevino's consideration of these problems, Yakov Molvianinov's delegation actually had great difficulty in obtaining provisions and transport all the way from Poland to Rome.⁵⁶ Also, in the 17th century, the Muscovite envoys often encountered similar difficulties to those experienced by Yakov Molvianinov in the 16th century no matter where they were sent in the West.⁵⁷ Therefore, as Kotoshikhin indicated, in that century Muscovite ambassadors with large retinues seldom went further than the territory of Poland.

54 Possevino, A., *op. cit.*, p. 57.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

56 *Ibid.*, p. 242.

57 *Putshesviia russkikh poslov XVI-XVII vv. Stateinye spiski.* (Moscow-Leningrad, 1954), pp. 230-33, 237-40, 285.