Madrid, a diplomatic city in the seventeenth century Diana Carrió-Invernizzi, Consuelo Gómez, Ángel Aterido (coords.) CULTURE & HISTORY DIGITAL JOURNAL 11(1)

June 2022, e004 eISSN: 2253-797X

doi: https://doi.org/10.3989/chdj.2022.004

Residences as instruments of power: Venetian ambassadors' houses in Madrid during the reigns of Philip IV and Charles II

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Submitted: 10 March 2020. Accepted: 4 February 2021.

ABSTRACT: Against the traditional vision, the relations between the Spanish Monarchy and the Republic of Venice improved significantly during the second half of the 17th century. Once again, the war against the Ottomans in Candia (1645-1669) forced the *Serenissima* to look for the support of the Catholic King. For this reason, the role played by their ambassadors in Madrid, with a view to achieve the necessary assistance of Philip IV, became essential for the Venetian interests. At the same time, they pursued to ensure a relevant and closer position to the principal nucleus of power in the Spanish court. Accordingly, the continuous disputes with the members of the Spanish institutions with regard to their lodging become an essential field of study to measure the degree of influence, supremacy or immunity of these legates during the reigns of the two last monarchs of the House of Austria.

KEYWORDS: Ambassadors; Venice; Dwellings; Junta de Aposento; Immunity; Representation.

Citation / Cómo citar este artículo: Quiles Albero, David (2022) "Residences as instruments of power: Venetian ambassadors' houses in Madrid during the reigns of Philip IV and Charles II." *Culture & History Digital Journal*, 11 (1): e004. https://doi.org/10.3989/chdj.2022.004

RESUMEN: Viviendas como instrumentos de poder: las casas de los embajadores venecianos en Madrid durante los reinados de Felipe IV y Carlos II.— Frente a la visión tradicional, las relaciones entre la Monarquía Hispánica y la República de Venecia mejoraron notablemente durante la segunda mitad del siglo XVII. Una vez más, el inicio de la guerra contra los otomanos en Candía (1645-1669) obligó a la Serenísima a buscar el apoyo del Rey Católico en el Mediterráneo oriental. De este modo, el rol de sus embajadores en Madrid, con vistas a lograr el necesario apoyo de Felipe IV, se volvió vital para los intereses venecianos. Al mismo tiempo, con el fin de alcanzar sus metas, estos buscaron granjearse una posición relevante y cercana a los principales núcleos de poder de la corte española. En este sentido, su turbulenta relación con las distintas instituciones hispanas a la hora de concretar su aposento, asunto sobre el que versa este artículo, se torna en un campo de estudio esencial con el que medir el grado de influencia, preeminencia o inmunidad de estos sujetos en la corte española durante los reinados de los dos últimos monarcas de la Casa de Austria.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Embajadores; Venecia; Residencias; Junta de Aposento; Inmunidad; Representación.

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The main aim of this paper is to address the life of those who represented the Republic of Venice in Madrid in the 17th century. To this end, we consider that diplomatic history during the Early Modern period should not be elaborated from a purely political perspective. It ought to be constructed from a wider approach that let us impinge on the socio-cultural relevance of the diplomatic corps in the courts of Philip IV and Charles II (Álvarez-Ossorio Alvariño, 1991; Burke, 1993).

The New Political History brought to light the need of revising politics and diplomacy from an interdisciplinary perspective (Miranda Rubio, 1994). As a result, it seems necessary a methodological approach that focuses on the study of many formal and informal aspects of ambassadorial life: not only protocol, ceremonial or precedence, but also political networks, residences or gift exchanges (Carrió-Invernizzi, 2013, pp. 102-106; Franganillo Álvarez, 2013, pp. 129-130).

In recent years, many scholars have reported the complexity of diplomatic practices – from the role of the legate to the significance of objects – and their differences according to the place where they took place (Watkins, 2008; Carrió-Invernizzi, 2014; Hennings and Sowerby, 2017; Hernández Sau, 2018).

Taking this into consideration, diplomats' dwellings in the Spanish court have not received enough attention in previous studies of the *aposento* (abode) in Madrid during the Early Modern period; with the exception of the works of María José García Sierra's about extraordinary ambassadors (García Sierra, 1994) and Sarah Pelletier-Pech's regarding to residences as a refuge for criminals (Pelletier-Pech, 2010). Meanwhile, many others have focused on those who were part of the Royal Households or the Councils, especially after the ordinance approved by Philip IV in 1621 (Bermúdez, 1738; Corral, 1976, 1982; Oliver et al., 1982; Marín Perellón, 1989, 1990, 2015; Negredo del Cerro, 1992, 1999, 2002; Molina Campuzano, 2002; González Heras, 2016).

Thus, the study of how the residences of the Venetian representatives in Madrid were allocated during the seventeenth century becomes the main aim of this paper. With this in mind, we will pay particular attention to the mechanisms they used to ensure their supremacy, influence or immunity and how the Spanish authorities responded to their claims. Because every behaviour, gesture or disobedience hid a message that we, as historians, must interpret.

ARENAS OF POWER IN THE SPANISH COURT: THE PRESENCE OF THE VENETIAN AMBASSADORS IN MADRID

From the beginning of the 16th century, the embassy of the Serenissima in Madrid had the original mission of figuring out the real ambitions of the Spaniards on Italian soil; in view of the fear that Spanish expansionist policy awoke in the Venetian patriciate since the time of Charles V (Levin, 2005, pp. 13-42). For this reason, it was essential to commit the embassy to someone appropriate, who

would have to be able to turn on the necessary machinery to obtain such appreciated information for his Republic (Andretta, 2000, pp. 79-89; Preto, 2004, pp. 87-94; De Vivo, 2007, p. 19).

Approximately, a year after their election in the Senate the republican legates started their journey to Naples. There, everything was arranged by its viceroy to begin the passage to the Iberian Peninsula in one of the ships that were closer to depart (Queller, 1966, pp. 38-39; Campana, 2001, pp. 45-46).

Before their first entry, the envoys had to announce their arrival to the secretary of state in charge of the foreign affairs, who provided the passports for all the entourage. Once in the city, the ambassadors –after the ceremonial approved in 1651– settled and gave an account of it to the *conductor de embajadores* (ambassadors conductor) who arranged all necessary for their first public entry (Rabasco Ferreira, 2017, pp. 37-38).¹

It followed a strict ceremonial where everything was defined until the arrival of the diplomat to the *cámara de embajadores* (ambassadors chamber). From the first moment, diplomacy's theatrical facet was revealed because, as Antonio M. Hespanha pointed, protocol in Baroque courts was based on the creation of a properly appearance – what he called simulated dissimulation – that replaced one's identity (Hespanha, 1993, pp. 177-181). A behaviour that certainly camouflaged natural attitudes, which was also valid for ambassadors as an essential part of the court system (Frigo, 1991, pp. 132-133; Martínez Millán, 2016, pp. 23-25; González Heras, 2019, pp. 183-187).

For this reason, the procedure followed during the reception of the Venetian envoys was stipulated with great precision and, over time, in the image of those prerogatives dispensed to the representatives of the Holy Roman Empire, France or England for court ceremonies; as Marin Zorzi and Caterino Belegno claimed to the Spanish king (Pérez Bustamante, 1945, p. 7).

First of all, it was determined that they had to be assisted by "un coche redondo de la Real Caballeriza con cuatro caballos y caballo para su persona y otros diez y ocho de que necesita su familia, en la forma que se estila con ministros de su grado." At the same time, it was disposed a great entourage composed by several *gentileshombres de boca y de casa* who escorted the new diplomat along his route. In this regard, we have the instance of the arrival of Carlo Contarini at the end of 1670. It illustrates how they were placed across the streets, and with such information we can envision the itinerary followed until the Alcázar (Table 1).

Once there, the representatives were accompanied by the *conductor de embajadores* to the chamber where they would be received by the king. During the encounter every single detail was perfectly described in the protocol stipulated for these audiences: from those who could remain in the room until the distance that should be preserved by the envoys at any time. In the same way, ordinary legates had the possibility of covering in front of the sovereign, but they could not address to him directly. Therefore, the

Table 1. Gentileshombres de boca and cámara to accompany the Venetian ambassador, Carlo Contarini, during his first public entry, 1670

Entourage members	Street			
Gentileshombres de boca				
Juan de Villarroel	San Bernardo			
Carlos Briceño Coloma	De la Madera Alta			
Francisco de la Cerda	Santa Bárbara			
Fernando de Soto y Baca	San Bernardo			
Varón de Arquen	San Felipe Neri			
Pedro de Chaves	Del Barquillo			
Julio de Miranda	De la Reina			
Diego Pamo de Contreras	Noviciado			
Francisco Tursis	De los Agonizantes			
Julio de Idiáquez y Sasi	Marqués de Monasterio			
Francisco de Herrera, corregidor de Madrid	Postigo			
Joseph San Vitoria	Más abajo del corregidor			
Manuel Duque de Estrada	Fuente de Leganitos			
Gentileshombres de casa				
Cosme de Bustamante	Arenal			
Julio de Echaus Del Reloj				
Joseph Opoacuriarrain	De las Infantas			
Julio Morante En las Capuchinas				

Source: AGP, Reinados, Carlos II, caja 90, exp. 3, Reception and lodging of the ambassador of Venice, Letter dated on December 14th, 1670. Also, for public entrances during the reign of Philip IV see María José del Río work (Río Barnedo, 2000, pp. 173-204).

only contact between them was the instant when credentials were delivered.³

Furthermore, diplomats had access to the greatest meeting point with the ministers of the Spanish Monarchy: The Royal Chapel (Bravo Lozano, 2015). There, the Venetian envoys, as representatives of an independent republic, placed a prominent place in the bank reserved for ambassadors. At the chapel, they were just preceded by the apostolic nuncio, located in first place as member of the Church, the imperial envoy and the French one (varying the presence of the latter according to the wartime). Hieratic differences clearly drawn towards prevent the continuous disputes for the precedence between diplomats, which had a strong political and symbolical resonance in the European courts in the course of the Early Modern period (Bély, 1994, 1999, pp. 397-407; Visceglia, 1997; Levin, 2002).

Simultaneously, we must mention briefly the formal and informal encounters kept by the representatives of Venice and other ministers.⁴ During this period, their weekly meetings with Luis de Haro were essentials to obtain information (Valladares, 2016). Philip IV's *valido* was until his death the main intermediary between the Catholic King and the diplomats of the Republic of San Marco.⁵ From now on, the duke of Medina de las Torres and the count of Castrillo – pointed by the Venetian am-

bassador and the nuncio as best situated to succeed Haro⁶ – continued with the conferences held with the agents of the *Serenissima* in Madrid. A practice that similarly happened in the Parisian court with the cardinal Mazarin as prime minister of Louis XIV (Andretta, 2010, pp. 195-198)

Moreover, if the envoys wanted to hear about the most sensitive information – that under no circumstances would be obtained through the official channels – they needed to activate a wide network of informants and spies that began with the ambassador itself (Preto, 2004, pp. 197-209). A good example of this is the testimony of Marin Zorzi, who took advantage of a visit to the regent in the last days of 1665 to organize a meeting with the *aya* (governess) of the young king and the queen's butler. Clearly, with the goal of elucidating the opinion of Mariana de Austria and her inner circle in capital matters for the Venetian patriciate such as the help they were waiting for the defence of the kingdom of Candia, besieged by the Ottoman Empire since 1645.⁷

Precisely, the negotiation of these aids constitutes –together with the obtention of information and representation labours– the capital task of the republican legates between 1645 and 1669 (Contini, 2001; Andretta, 2010; Petitjean, 2013). As a matter of fact, as happened during the 16th century, the confrontation with the Sublime Porte was the most meaningful meeting point between Venetians and Spaniards. Although, mutual distrust always remained in the spirit of the rivalry held on the Italic Peninsula (Andretta, 2006, pp. 173-174). Nevertheless, Venetian patricians little could expect from the Emperor or the French king in a war against the infidels in view of the successive truces and peace treaties they had signed with the diwan (Setton, 1991, pp. 131-133; Türkçelik, 2015). They could only turn to the Catholic King and the Holy Father, with whom they had maintained several rifts during the first half of the century, modifying their diplomatic strategy until then (González Hontoria, 1945; Benzoni, 1988; Andretta, 2008; Maréchaux, 2012).

In the light of the above, a revision of the antagonistic relation between the Republic of Venice and the Spanish Monarchy after the Peace of Westphalia is required, because it supposed a breakthrough in the reports between the European powers (Andretta, 1978; Quiles Albero, 2018; Rivero Rodríguez, 2018). As a result, traditional postulates of the Italian historiography, dragged from the 19th century, are just a decontextualized extension of the disputes maintained during the first decades of the seventeenth century. Ideas defended from a nationalist perspective that has identified as negative – *leyenda negra* or

black legend – everything related with the Spanish presence on the Italian Peninsula (Croce, 1917; Pepe, 1952), blurring the multiple meeting points that recent researches are trying to highlight (Villari, 1977; Galasso, 1990; Fasano Guarini, 2008).

THE VENETIAN AMBASSADORS AND THE PROBLEMS RELATED WITH THEIR RESIDENCES IN MADRID

It is time to analyse the presence of the Venetian agents in the Spanish capital during the seventeenth century (Table 2). The primary sources we have found for the study of their dwellings –all of them for the period 1638-1669–have been obtained from the institutions directly linked to the care of the ambassadors: the Council of State, manager of the foreign policy in the Hispanic Monarchy (Barrios Pintado, 1984); the *Junta de Aposento*, as we previously said responsible for ensuring the habitability of the homes for foreign envoys; and the *Sala de Alcaldes de Casa y Corte* (Ezquerra Revilla, 2015; Pablo Gafas, 2017).

The *consultas* arising from these institutions show the continuous problems with the legates of the Republic, who had considerable difficulties to adjust to a lifestyle quite

TABLE 2. Residences occupied by the Venetian ambassadors in Madrid between 1635 and 1669

Ambassador	Period	Residence	Owner	Price
Giovanni Giustinian	1635-1638	San Bernardo Street	Alonso de Villarroel	12,500 reales de vellón
Alvise Contarini	1638-1641	San Bernardo Street	Alonso de Villarroel	12,500 reales de vellón
Nicolò Sagredo	1641-1644	San Bernardo Street	Alonso de Villarroel	12,500 reales de vellón
Girolamo Giustinian	1644-1648	San Bernardo Street	Alonso de Villarroel	12,500 reales de vellón
Pietro Basadonna	1648-1652	Pedro de Baeza Street	Brothers of the marquis of la Rosa	1,200 ducats
Giacomo Querini	1652-1656	Pedro de Baeza Street	Brothers of the marquis of la Rosa	1,200 ducats
Domenico Zane	1656-1658	Pedro de Baeza Street	Brothers of the marquis of la Rosa	1,200 ducats
Giacomo Querini (ex- traordinary)	1659-1661	Valverde Street	María Bichón	Exempt
Giorgio Corner	1661-1663	Valverde Street	María Bichón	12,000 reales de vellón
	1663-1664	Seven Chimneys House	María de Sande y Mesa	Unknown
Marin Zorzi	1664-1667	Mira del Río Street	Brothers of Diego del Corral	Unknown
Caterino Belegno	1667-1670	Mira del Río Street	Brothers of Diego del Corral	Unknown
	1667-1670	Seven Chimneys House	María de Sande y Mesa	Unknown

different from the one they followed in the city of Venice. There, as members of the dominant elite, they lived on sumptuous palaces, designed for the families registered in the *Libro d'Oro* (Canali and Curti, 1988). On the contrary, the *casas principales* (main houses) yielded to them in Madrid – in many cases owned by prominent members of the Royal Households or the Councils – were the same that occupied the nobility, in the absence of grand Baroque palaces within the framework of the city until the middle of the 18th century (González Heras, 2012, 2014, pp. 88-105).

In fact, Madrid's population growth since the arrival of the court in 1561 was not followed by urban improvement (Marín Perellón, 1989, p. 82). Nonetheless, not every place was suitable to receive the European representatives. At all the times, the aposentadores de Borgoña (lodging masters of Burgundy) were urged to rent properties at the level of those who had to be accommodated.8 On top of that, when members of the European royal families went to Madrid – as the prince of Wales in 1623 or the duke of Modena in 1638 – even the Alcázar was prepared for their stay (García Sierra, 1994, pp. 741-748). Likewise, after the construction of the Buen Retiro Palace, its halls and gardens became the perfect location to entertain and impress foreign guests. In fact, this was one of the main reasons why Olivares -first valido of Philip IV- conceived this Royal Site (Simal López, 2017).

In light of the above, to defray rents –priced by de *Junta de Aposento*– ambassadors received 800 ducats from the Royal Treasury each year. A quantity that was quite insufficient, considering that the average rental price of the dwellings was 1,200 ducats per year. Hence, they had to look for alternative formulas to cover or, as we will see, avoid the payment of the remaining amount.

It is necessary to add that the problems when it comes to the lodging of the Venetian diplomats apparently began after the departure of Giovanni Giustinian in April 1638 (Gullino, 2001). This prominent patrician had been since 1635 in a house near to San Bernardo Street, 9 owned by Alonso de Villarroel and appraised at 12,500 *reales de vellón* per year. As usual, it was stipulated that 800 ducats (8,800 *reales*) would be paid by the Royal Treasury. Meanwhile, the rest (3,700 *reales*) would be covered exceptionally through the *gasto secreto* (secret expenditure), as the king himself pointed out. 10

Alvise Contarini – Gustinian's successor and later 105th dux of Venice – connoisseur of how good for its fortune would be to dwell in this residence in such conditions, rejected the rest of those that were offered to him (Benzoni, 1983). The owner addressed a high number of requests in order to vacate the property after the departure of the outgoing ambassador, but Contarini occupied the house in San Bernardo Street with no permission as soon as he reached the city. Finally, with the aim of avoiding a diplomatic row, the Catholic King accepted the stubbornness of the legate and ordinated the continuity of the house payment on the same terms until then.¹¹

In subsequently years, the Venetian ambassadors took twice again the residence without any permission. It was

the case of Nicolò Sagredo in 1641 and Girolamo Giustinian in 1644 (Gullino, 2001; Negruzzo, 2017). The orders of the *Junta de Aposento* were ignored, as well as the wishes of the owners to recover it. This complex situation let us see how important was to avoid an incident with the envoys of the Republic of Venice. With this in mind, we can largely understand why the costs of their lodging were systematically paid by the crown.

In the end, after a decade of continuous troubles, the legates of the *Serenissima* left the dwelling. In 1648, when Pietro Basadonna came to the Spanish court (Benzoni, 1970), a new residence was arranged for him in Pedro de Baeza Street, whose owners were the brothers of the deceased marquis of la Rosa.¹³ It cost amounted to 1,200 ducats per year, that once again would be paid on the same terms by the Royal Treasury.¹⁴ It is possible that Spanish authorities wanted to avoid new problems as those happened with his predecessors and dissuade him from illegally holding the homestead.

Despite all of this, once in the abode, their proprietors soon pointed that the Venetian representative had to leave it as soon as possible, by virtue of the right of lodging exemption they possessed (Oliver et al., 1982, pp. 16-21). This position disconcerted the members of the *Junta de Aposento*, because many ambassadors had sojourned there before. For this reason, it is highly likely the existence of secret motives that justify the attitude of the landlords. In particular, the desire of avoiding the repetition of the situation happened at Alonso de Villarroel's house.

Right after, Basadonna showed his refusal to abandon the place. He argued the disastrous state of the household after the departure of its previous inhabitant, the duke of Ariscot, and all the necessary improvements he had to defray, appraised in 1,000 *reales de a ocho*. ¹⁵

The homeowners' pretensions kept on after the arrival of a new legate, Giacomo Querini, by mid 1652 (Benzoni, 2016). This time, the *Junta de Aposento* and Philip IV agreed with their claims. The monarch itself justified the early exit of the Venetian diplomat on the face of respecting the determination of the landlords. He even rejected the instances of the ambassador, who alluded to Venetian custom for justifying his obstinacy.¹⁶

But Querini ignored the royal orders and broke into the dwelling as soon as he arrived at the villa, emulating the strategy followed by his countrymen some years ago. Before, his predecessor had rejected every single house offered by the *aposentadores de Borgoña*, including one in the Premostenses Street (actual Isabel la Católica Street) whose proprietor was secretary Antonio Alosa (Gea, 2006, pp. 62-65).¹⁷

In September 1654 the Senate designated a new ordinary ambassador for the Spanish court: Domenico Zane (Barozzi and Berchet, 1856, vol. I, pp. 257-258). From the moment of his election, Zane expressed to the marquis of La Fuente, the then Spanish representative in Venice, his desire of remaining in the same house inhabited by Basadonna and Querini until then. La Cerda's brothers quickly refused, alleging that 4,000 ducats were owed from the rental payment and they still wanted to sell the place. Fur-

thermore, they alluded to the words of the *aposentadores*, who promised it would be released after the departure of Querini. Therefore, they rapidly started to look for a new residence before Zane's arrival, because they were perfectly conscious that once installed nothing could be done to get him out.¹⁸

But once again the outgoing ambassador, who ultimately had to accept the house, did nothing but hindering the process. As a result, when Zane came to Madrid in the last days of 1655 a place for him had not been arranged yet and the legate occupied his predecessor's one. Nevertheless, in order to regulate the rental payment, Philip IV ordered that the 800 ducats given by the Royal Treasury were delivered directly to the ambassador. He would be the responsible of handing over them to the landlords, adding the remaining amount out of his own pocket.¹⁹

Finally, the property was unoccupied when Zane left the city at the beginning of 1659. Since then, the embassy remained vacant until the end of the year. At that time, an extraordinary ambassador arrived to congratulate Philip IV for the signing of the Peace Treaty with France [November 7th, 1659]. Once Spanish battle lines had been reduced, the Senate dispatched once again Giacomo Querini to Madrid in order to seek the necessary support of Philip IV in Candia (Barozzi and Berchet, 1856, vol. I: 311-312). He resided in a minor estate in the Valverde Street, priced at 12,000 *reales* per year, whose landlady was María Bichón.²⁰

Meanwhile, the fact he was an extraordinary envoy could have been decisive to do away with the occupation perpetrated by his forebears. Within the different grade of representativeness, these agents were chosen to fulfil specific missions in a rather short time. Consequently, their status was immediately lower than that of the permanent ones (Campana, 2001, pp. 44-45). In addition, the mere fact the aposentadores talk about this residence as a set of minor houses let us see that, with respect to the lodging, almost in this case the treatment given to the short-term envoy was quite different than the standards followed with those who covered the standing seats. But it remains the case that, as usual, the maintenance expenses during Querini's longer than expected stay in Madrid – 3 years – were paid for in full by the Royal Treasury (García Sierra, 1994, pp. 741-742).

It was not until 1661 that the Republic selected a new ordinary ambassador. The chosen was Giorgio Corner who directly moved into the house sojourned by Querini until then (Derosas, 1983). With respect to his rental, apart from the 800 ducats traditionally reaped by the crown, the ambassador by itself had to supply the 3,200 *reales* remaining.²¹ In this way, this evidence suggests that the practice of settling one part of the leases through the secret expenditure was coming to an end. Not coincidentally, at that moment the economic situation of Castile was extremely delicate, as a result of the recent bankruptcies of 1647 and 1652 (Álvarez Nogal, 1997). A consequence of the high expenses to maintain the relentless wars in practically all the territories of the Spanish Monarchy during this period (Maffi, 2014, pp. 514-516).

Before long, new conflicts arose with the new Venetian legate. In the middle of March of the following year a palafrenero (groom) of the embassy was arrested by the Sala de Alcaldes de Casa y Corte. After hearing about what happened, Corner went to the Alcázar to express Philip IV his disagreement with such decision not only against a servant, but also in defiance of the Venetian Republic. As he saw it, this offence was an attack against his immunity, and he would not assist to the Royal Chapel or any other public ceremony until the liberation of his "relative."22 This case is a typical instance of the continuous disputes to expand the area of immunity of the Venetian ambassadors. Such pretensions were continuously putted down by the Sala de Alcaldes, constraining the diplomatic invulnerability within the ambassadorial residence in 1648 (Pérez Bustamante, 1945, p. 7; Hugon, 2004, pp. 130, 211; Barrio Gozalo, 2007, 2013, pp. 151-201; Pelletier-Pech, 2010).²³

In order to de-escalate tension, at the end of March the ambassador's groom was released.²⁴ Along the three weeks of his confinement, the continued visits of the duke of Medina de las Torres to the Venetian legate –after Haro's dead lead counsel of Philip IV in foreign policy (Stradling, 1976) – reveal the desires of the Spanish court to solve this diplomatic row as soon as possible.

But a few months later, once the affaire with the *Sala de Alcaldes* was solved, Giorgio Corner expressed to Philip IV "gl'incomodi che risente con patimento nella casa dove abita e che mutatoli all'hora il signor marchese di Velada da quella delle Sette Chimenee supplica Vostra Maestà destinargli la casa stessa."²⁵

The Council of State and the *Junta de Aposento* carefully analysed the proposal. Certainly, the Seven Chimneys House, as it was known, had been recently unoccupied by the marquis of Velada, former governor of Milan. Nevertheless, its landlady, María de Sande y Mesa, quickly rented it to a nephew, Juan de Carvajal and Sande (Sáinz de Robles, 1973, pp. 142-143). Therefore, the aspirations of Corner seemed to fall on deaf ears.

Right away, they requested the legate to propose other abodes that suited him better, promising the grant of the first available. Even more, the dwellings he wished-for did not seem adequate to the *aposentadores*. One of them was in an excessively public area – the Carretera de San Jerónimo Street – while the other was priced at 18,000 *reales* per year, closer to the Maravillas Convent

Shortly after, the situation became critical when the ambassador discovered that Carvajal had not inhabited the Seven Chimneys House, as it was firstly announced. Instead, the marquis of Galara, regent of the Council of Italy, was who finally occupied it. The Venetian legate considered it an offence, because he had required the house in first place and he was clearly a higher lever minister. For this reason, he called for the immediate exit of Galara to be able to take up the residence. Something unanimously discouraged by the councillors of State and the *aposentadores* of Burgundy in charge of this negotiation.²⁶

Thus, the problem with the Seven Chimneys House is directly related with the continuous precedence disputes. The Venetian diplomat represented and embodied his Republic. For this reason, this formal issue concealed a major one linked to the status of each individual in the court and the place that, according to the ceremonial, he held in accordance to his political primacy (Rivero Rodríguez, 2000, pp. 13-15; Gantet, 2003, pp. 42-45; Álvarez López, 2008, pp. 130-136; Tercero Casado, 2012).

On the other hand, it is also possible that, in the view of the past events with the previous Venetian legates, the owner tried to prevent the entrance of Corner to the Seven Chimneys House, pretending the presence of her nephew to this end. Accordingly, a letter of the *aposentador mayor* to Philip IV reinforces our scenario when he says that the Venetian legate "anda con tanta cautela en esto de su alojamiento que piensa con pedir orden a Su Majestad para que se le dé casa, meterse de golpe en ella y luego no ser posible ni pagarla ni que la desocupe. Como se vio en la casa de don Juan de Villarroel, en la de don Fernando de la Cerda y en la que hoy habita."²⁷

But finally, against all odds, the king ordered the marquis of Galara to leave the abode because his inability to "excusarse el hacer al embajador esta gracia por ser ministro público y de una República tan benemérita."²⁸

As a result, the deep desire of Philip IV to ingratiate himself with the Republic resulted in the meeting of Corner's demands, who finally occupied the Seven Chimneys House in March of 1663. He resided there until his transfer to the Imperial court in the summer of 1664. Martin Zorzi, his successor, did not inhabited this residence (Barozzi and Berchet, 1856, vol. I, pp. 329-330), yielded to the English ambassador – Richard Fanshaw – that same year. For Zorzi was disposed another dwelling in the Mira del Río Street (today Mira del Río Alta Street) whose landlords were the brothers of Diego del Corral. A place occupied by the ordinary ambassador until his departure in the middle of July 1667.²⁹

The same residence was prevented for the new envoy, Caterino Belegno (Torcellan, 1970). Even so, in October of 1667 he let the regent queen know the poor state of the building, which had a detrimental effect on his health. For this reason, he applied for a new residence in accordance to his grade. Finally, after rejecting some of those offered, he installed in the Seven Chimneys House, where Corner lived a few years before him.³⁰

Afterwards, in April 1669, the ambassador was asked to leave the residence, since Mariana de Austria wanted to buy it to locate there the future extraordinary ambassadors arrived at the court. Eventually, this settlement agreement did not result, so it seems that Belegno continued in this house until his journey back to Venice on May 1st, 1670.³¹

CONCLUDING REMARKS: THE STRENGHT OF THE VENETIAN REPUBLIC IN THE SPANISH COURT

Lope de Vega talked about Madrid as an "archivo de naciones" (nations archive). A city that maybe was not the most beautiful, but it was the one that everyone had to go through since it was the seat of the Spanish court and where, politically speaking, everything happened (Hortal Muñoz and Labrador Arroyo, 2014, p. 444).

Meanwhile, the research theme we have broached here is just a small sample of a common practise in all European courts. In Paris, London, Vienna, Rome, Turin or Venice it was tried to ensure the comfort of the remaining powers envoys at all times. It was not only necessary to please, it was also crucial to fascinate all those ambassadors or diplomatic agents – within their several meanings – who came into contact with these centres of power. They were always aware of the treatment received in their personal capacity, and if etiquette was equally implemented with the remaining representatives and public ministers (Hugon, 2004, pp. 231-232).

In the case of the legates of Venice, we have seen how difficult was to satisfy their continuous requirements. The underlying problem was that they came from a site that has amazed everyone who has uncovered its canals and palaces throughout history. Consequentially, the issues stemming from their settling process were an unequivocal demonstration of their difficulties in accommodating to a quite different mode of habitability in Madrid.

Even further, their relentless claims for maintaining their status and authority within the Spanish court highlight the immunity they enjoy by virtue of the consuetudinary *ius gentium* (Frigo, 1991, pp. 230-239). The *Sala de Alcaldes de Casa y Corte* tried to limit their margin of manoeuvre to the ambassadorial residence many times. However, the cohesive and defiant attitude maintained by the Venetian envoys is an unequivocal proof of their prominence in the court of the Spanish Monarchy.

There, the meaningful role they represented presents many more similarities with the envoys of the Holy Roman Empire, the French Monarchy or the Holy See than with those of the Italian states. After all, unlike Genoa, Mantua or Tuscany, Venice was not an Imperial or Spanish fiefdom (Volpini, 2014, 2018). For this reason, the symbolic take-over of the urban area in Madrid by their legates that we have analysed in this paper supposes an instance of their primacy as representatives of a catholic and independent republic. From this, it follows that both Philip IV and Mariana de Austria made substantial efforts to defuse the continuous tensions between the Venetian ambassadors and the main institutions of the Spanish Monarchy, with a view to minimize the impact of these disturbances in their relations with the Serenissima.

To conclude, reference should be made to the inhabitants of the villa. Specially to all those landlords and landladies who have been part of our subject matter. They made everything possible to avoid renting their dwells to such uncomfortable inhabitants, whose reputation for bad debtors and home usurpers rapidly spread out. Hence, tricks and loopholes as introducing false tenants or the proliferation of the famous *casas a la malicia* (spiteful houses) were a common practice throughout Madrid during the Early Modern period.

AKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper has been possible thanks to a FPI-MINE-CO 2016 research contract, which is included within the aid to PhD students formation, contemplated in the *Subprograma Estatal de Formación*, the Programa Estatal de Formación, and the *Programa Estatal de Promoción del Talento y su Empleabilidad*. It is also framed in the *Plan Estatal de Investigación Científica e Innovación* (2013-2016) financed with resources of the European Social Found, within the project HAR2016-68946-C3-1-P.

It is also part of the investigation developed by the members of the Instituto Universitario la Corte en Europa (IULCE) of the Autonomous University of Madrid in collaboration with other universities, within the current project "Madrid, Sociedad y Patrimonio. Pasado y Turismo Cultural" (MASOPA-CM Ref. H2019/HUM-5898).

NOTES

- 1 Archivo General de Palacio, Madrid [AGP], Adm. General, leg. 939, exp. 48, parts I, II and III, Ceremonial followed at the entrance of ordinary ambassadors, second half of the 17th century.
- 2 AGP, Reinados, Carlos II, caja 78, exp. 16, Procedure for the reception of the Venetian ambassador, Letter dated on August 20th, 1688.
- 3 For this reason, they are called "embajadores que se cubren." AGP, Histórica, caja 53, exp. 1, fols. 12v-13, Ettiquete aproved in 1651: about the ambassadors that can cover; Adm. General, leg. 939, exp. 48, chapters 4, 8 y 11, Ceremonial followed at the reception of ordinary ambassadors in times of Philip IV.
- 4 In the mentioned ceremonial was left at the will of the ambassadors "visitar a los consejeros de estado y también al de estos el visitarle a él antes, dándose igualmente la puerta y la silla en sus casas, como también con el secretario de estado." AGP, Adm. General, leg. 939, exp. 48, chapter 19.
- 5 This is evidenced in the *dispacci* sent to the Senate between 1643 and 1661. Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Venice [ASV], Senato, Dispacci, Spagna, filze 78-93.
- 6 Archivio Apostolico Vaticano, Rome [AAV], Segr. di Stato, Spagna, leg. 126, fol. 317-318, Letter of the nuncio in Madrid, dated on November 23rd, 1661.
- 7 ASV, Senato, Dispacci, Spagna, filza 103, fol. 276, dispacci of the ambassador Marin Zorzi to the Senate, dated on December 9th, 1665.
- 8 The Aposentadores de Borgoña, eleven in total, were responsible for giving room to the ambassadors and foreigners arrived in Madrid since 1621. They had three books: one where they wrote all the houses, another with the property titles and a third one in which all the foreign visitors who had been given lodging were listed. Finally, they had the obligation to visit the town every six years, as well as those in charge of the courtier's quarters.
- 9 In the consulted sources there is no evidence if it refers to the Convalecientes de San Bernardo Street or the ancient San Bernardo Street, closer to Alcalá.
- 10 Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid [AHN], Fondos Contemporáneos, Delegación de Hacienda, Madrid Histórico, leg. 142/1, fol. 54, Consulta of the Junta de Aposento to the King, dated on July 20th, 1652.
- 11 AHN, Fondos Contemporáneos, Delegación de Hacienda, Madrid Histórico, L. 6, fol. 36, Report of the Council of Cámara de Aposento, dated on November 6th, 1642.
- 12 AHN, Fondos Contemporáneos, Delegación de Hacienda, Madrid Histórico, leg. 142/1, fol. 54, Consulta of the Junta de Aposento, dated on July 20th, 1652.
- 13 In reference to the ubication of this house, we have not been able to find in Texeira's map any reference about a street named that way. However, its proximity to the Carmelitas Descalzos Con-

- vent is mentioned in the sources we have handled, so we suppose that it may have been closer to the Alcázar.
- 14 AHN, Fondos Contemporáneos, Delegación de Hacienda, Madrid Histórico, leg. 145, fol. 114, Consulta of the Junta de Aposento addressed to Philip IV, dated on June 25th, 1648.
- 15 AHN, Fondos Contemporáneos, Delegación de Hacienda, Madrid Histórico, leg. 140/1, fol. 128, Consulta of the Junta de Aposento addressed to Philip IV, dated on April 12th, 1649.
- 16 During this period, the Spanish ambassadors in Venice resided closer to the parish of *San Geremia*. An area away from the nerve centre of the Republic the Doge's Palace in the northern area of the *Sestiere di Cannaregio*. In it, the diplomats enjoyed an important immunity since they had a privileged area called *lista*, in which the Venetian police (*sbirri*) could not intervene (Infelise, 2007: 70-71). AHN, Fondos Contemporáneos, Delegación de Hacienda, Madrid Histórico, leg. 142/1, fol. 54, *Consulta* of the *Junta de Aposento* dated on July 20th, 1652.
- 17 AHN, Fondos Contemporáneos, Delegación de Hacienda, Madrid Histórico, leg. 142/1, fol. 73, Consulta of the Junta de Aposento addressed to Philip IV, dated on December 5th, 1652.
- 18 AHN, Fondos Contemporáneos, Delegación de Hacienda, Madrid Histórico, leg. 140/2, fols. 312 and 346, *Consultas* of the *Junta de Aposento* addressed to Philip IV, dated on March 12th and August 11th, 1655; leg. 142/1, fol. 148, *Consulta* of the *Junta de Aposento*, dated on May 10th, 1655.
- 19 AHN, Fondos Contemporáneos, Delegación de Hacienda, Madrid Histórico, leg. 142/1, fol. 148, Consulta of the Junta de Aposento addressed to the king, dated on May 22nd, 1655.
- 20 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Venezia, leg. 93, fol. 599, Letter of the nuncio in Venice, monsignor Altrovi, dated on August 30th, 1659; AHN, Fondos Contemporáneos, Delegación de Hacienda, Madrid Histórico, L. 7, fol. 61, Report from the *Cámara de Aposento* Council, dated on January 13th, 1660.
- 21 AHN, Fondos Contemporáneos, Delegación de Hacienda, Madrid Histórico, L. 7, fol. 118, Report from the *Cámara de Apo*sento Council, dated on November 11th, 1662.
- 22 It is usual to find in the primary sources references about the servants of the embassy as relatives of the ambassadors. AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Spagna, leg. 128, fol. 91, Letter of monsignor nuncio, dated on March 11th, 1662. Also, AHN, Consejos, Consejo de Castilla, Sala de Alcaldes, L. 1247, fol. 68, court case against the servant of the ambassador of Venice, year 1662.
- 23 The initiatives of the *Sala de Alcaldes* to make sure Venetian diplomats understand the limits of their immunity a prerogative restricted to the building of the embassy were constant during the second half of the 17th century. AHN, Consejos, Consejo de Castilla, Sala de Alcaldes, L. 1256, fol. 93 (year 1671); L. 1269, fol. 219 (year 1684); L. 1285, fol. 422-428 (year 1700).
- 24 AAV, Segreteria di Stato, Spagna, leg. 127, fol. 153, Letter of monsignor nuncio in Madrid, dated on March 31st, 1662.
- 25 AHN, Estado, L. 733, Letter of the Venetian ambassador to Philip IV, undated, year 1662.
- 26 AHN, Estado, L. 733, *Consulta* of Council of State to Philip IV, dated on July 29th, 1662.
- 27 AHN, Estado, L. 733, Letter of Juan Girón de Zúñiga, aposentador mayor, to Philip IV, dated on August 3rd, 1662.
- 28 AHN, Estado, L. 733, Letter to the marquis of Galara, dated on September 19th, 1662.
- 29 AHN, Fondos Contemporáneos, Delegación de Hacienda, Madrid Histórico, L. 7, fol. 148, Report of the Cámara de Aposento Council, dated on February 6th, 1664; fol. 277, Certification of the Cámara de Aposento Council, July 8th, 1667.
- 30 AHN, Fondos Contemporáneos, Delegación de Hacienda, Madrid Histórico, leg. 144, fol. 75, Letter of Mariana de Austria to the *aposentador mayor*, dated on October 30th, 1667; fol. 84, Letter of the queen to the *Junta de Aposento* with another of the Venetian ambassador; fol. 97, Letter of the regent queen to the *aposentador mayor*, dated on January 23rd, 1668.
- 31 ÁHN, Fondos Contemporáneos, Delegación de Hacienda, Madrid Histórico, leg. 141.1, fol. 97, Report of the *Junta de Aposen*to, dated on April 2nd, 1669.

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