Friction between Office, Scholarship and Religion: 
The First Years of the Paris Embassy (1635–40)

Entree

When Grotius made his solemn entrance to Paris from Saint-Denis as Swedish ambassador on 2 March 1635, the official Gazette de France, a mouthpiece of Richelieu, devoted a short article to the ceremony. With the usual contemporary interest in the pomp and splendour of diplomatic protocol, it reported that the new ambassador, ‘one of the most learned men of his age’, had been escorted by a procession of sixteen coaches. A visit to the court was on the programme in the next few days. It took place on 7 March, at Senlis or more probably in the nearby castle of Chantilly. In his letters, including those to Sweden’s ruler, Queen Christina,1 Grotius emphasized that he had been received with the honours befitting a royal ambassador. He was led along a hedge of guards2 before the King, who immediately addressed him. Grotius then replied in a speech, the text of which has been preserved.3 (see ILLUSTRATION 88).

To bring out the brotherhood in arms between France and Sweden, the speaker went back about twelve hundred years, to the time when the Franks and the Goths had fought together against the Roman Empire. This kind of rhetoric was part of the ceremonial of an ambassador’s first reception. Of course Grotius knew very well that the problems that would determine the relationship of the two countries following the death of Gustavus Adolphus would have to be settled in tough diplomatic negotiations. It is unfair to accuse him of unworldliness, as if he were unaware that politics obeyed other laws than those of ‘aesthetic and historicizing philology.’4 The audience passed off without a hitch. Even before the envoy had said a word, he was allowed to put his hat back on, and whenever he took it off while speaking, the King courteously did the same. That was not all, for Louis even ‘embraced me warmly,

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1 BW V, no. 1998, 8 March 1635.
2 Cf. BW VIII, no. 2996 (p. 169), to N. van Reigersberch, 18 March 1637. For the ambassadors of kings and of the Republic of Venice, the royal guard turned out; the envoys of the Electors, the Duke of Savoy and the Dutch Republic had to do without this honour.
3 Erroneously published as a letter in BW V, no. 1964.
4 S. Goetze, Die Politik des schwedischen Reichskanzlers Axel Oxenstierna, pp. 143–144.
calling me by name'. Did the King know that *De iure belli ac pacis* had been dedicated to him? After the audience Grotius enjoyed a splendid banquet, prepared specially for him.\(^5\)

Grotius had entered Paris in style, as diplomatic protocol demanded, visited the French King and taken up residence in a place that matched his new dignity. He sent letters to his relations in France and the Republic to announce his promotion.\(^6\) For its part, the Swedish government paid him a salary that enabled him to perform his tasks: an annual salary of 6000 *reichsthalers*, plus a further 2000 *reichsthalers* as a Crown counsellor, and expenses.\(^7\) Equivalent to 20,000 guilders, this was a gigantic honorarium, provided of course that there were no problems cashing the quarterly or half-yearly bills of exchange. Grotius sent to Holland for a hatchment bearing his family coat of arms, intending to have it applied to his coach and tableware.\(^8\) Without too many scruples he also defined his position *vis-à-vis* Johan Heppe, the Swedish resident in Paris, and wrote to Oxenstierna criticizing his colleague's actions. These letters give the impression that he wanted Heppe out of the way, because he felt that the resident was thwarting his plans. He was annoyed by Heppe's resistance to being recalled; the resident wanted to remain in Paris to represent the interests of the German Protestants. To Grotius' relief, Oxenstierna terminated Heppe's employment in Swedish service when he visited Paris,\(^9\) and left Grotius with the field to himself.

If his entrance and first reception had been glorious, the everyday reality soon proved much more sombre. Grotius was to spend ten more years in Paris,

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\(^7\) *BW XVII*, no. 1964A, no. 3 (pp. 369–371), Letters of appointment and instructions of ambassador Hugo de Groot.

\(^8\) For this see the correspondence with Willem de Groot, among others the letters of 20 April, 11 May, 28 May (*BW V*, nos. 2063, 2091, 2122) and 5 June 1635 (*BW VI*, no. 2131). The coat of arms consisted of a combination of three birds and three globes with a star, which was to symbolize the connection with the old French family of Cornets. See E.A. van Beresteyn, 'Fragmentgenealogie van het geslacht De Groot', col. 181.

\(^9\) *BW V*, no. 2084, to N. van Reigersberch, [9 May 1635].