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The images below are taken over from the book entitled "Official Suits in Serbia in the 19th and 20th Century", published by the Historical Museum of Serbia and the Gallery of the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts, 2001

Introduction

The history of diplomacy shows that special attention was given in the past to the ranks of diplomatic representatives. Irrespective of the kind of mission they were charged with the diplomats always sought to be accorded a higher rank that ensures the right of precedence on the occasion of the audience with the sovereign, at ceremonies and during other manifestations in the Receiving State.

In the course of the XVII, XVIII and XIX centuries, there were continuous arguments and conflicts with absurd and sometimes tragic consequences because of disputes about the rank that the diplomatic representatives claimed for themselves.

The diplomatic envoys coming from big and militarily strong states demanded a higher rank for themselves, considering that they were protecting the interests of their country in this way, and the prestige of the sovereign who appointed them to perform diplomatic functions.

The diplomats of France and Spain were the most persevering in skirmishes about the diplomatic rank. There is a number of anecdotes and jokes about the incidents among them in the attempt to resolve the problem. The conflicts ceased with the coming to power of the Bourbon dynasty in 1871, when France succeeded in gaining great Power status on the international scene, thus pushing Spain into the background.

Conflicts over the rank of diplomatic representatives are a matter of record also in our lands. At the Congress held in Sremski Karlovci in 1699, all the delegations attending the gathering, i.e. the delegations of Turkey, Austria, Poland and Venice, claimed the right to the highest rank. All of them demanded the right to be the first to enter into and to exit from the conference hall. Having in mind the fact that it was not possible for all the delegations to be accorded the highest rank, there was a risk that some participating delegations might leave the Congress. It was necessary to find a solution that would satisfy all. Opening four entrances to the conference room in which the sessions were held solved the problem; thus, the delegations entered the conference room at the same time.

In addition to the diplomats, the rulers-monarchs also claimed the right to a higher rank for their diplomats vis-a-vis the states with republican system of government.

Considering that "the problem of rank" had existed for a very long time, and that conflicts and controversies were impossible to avoid, it was essential to establish rules that would be binding upon all.

The participants in the Congress of Vienna - Austria, France, Romania, Russia, England, Prussia, Spain, Portugal and Sweden signed the Rules related to the rank of diplomatic agents (*Règlement sur le rang des agents diplomatiques*).

In order for the Rules to be enforced in practice and to be binding upon all, the plenipotentiaries of the signatory Powers of the Treaty of Vienna also addressed other sovereigns asking them to sign and apply the adopted document.

The Rules established three categories of diplomatic agents. The first category was comprised of ambassadors, legates and nuncios; the second - included ministers (heads of legations) and others; the third - *charges d'affaires*.

The first category of diplomatic agents alone had a representative capacity, which implied contact with the sovereign, the title of Excellency and some other privileges that were accorded to all diplomatic representatives with the passage of time.

The rank was granted to diplomatic agents according to the date of notification.

The Vienna Rules, and the amendments thereof adopted in Aachen, resolved centuries old disputes about the rank of the diplomatic agents and diplomatic etiquette.

The right to determine the category of the diplomatic agent was left to the states themselves.

But a new diplomatic problem was in sight. The great Powers were against the right of small countries to send ambassadors, that is, representatives of the first category. They considered that this right belongs exclusively to them. The problem was surmounted by the application of an unwritten rule to the effect that states should send to one another envoys of the same rank.

In addition to privileges and immunities, the diplomatic-consular officials had a number of obligations deriving from their functions. One of these obligations was the wearing of diplomatic-consular uniforms on ceremonial occasions abroad and, when so determined by the minister of foreign affairs, also at home.

In view of the traditional reliance on the Vienna Rules, the ranks of diplomatic agents also served for the categorization of uniforms. Since the Rules were amended to include the titles of consular officers, there were four categories of diplomatic-consular agents and four types of diplomatic-consular uniforms.

The wearing of diplomatic-consular uniforms was accepted by representatives of all countries with the exception of those of the United States of America. Namely, by a law adopted in 1867, the US prohibited the wearing of official outfits by its diplomatic-consular agents. A possibility was left though that, if the diplomatic etiquette of the Receiving State so requires, the diplomatic agents of the United States may wear evening suits, short coat (*culotte courte*), including gold buckles on their shoes.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of each country thereof determined the kind of diplomatic-consular uniform and the use.

Official Suits in Serbia and Montenegro in the XIX Century

In the XIX century, official suits were introduced in Europeanized Serbia and Montenegro. The obligation to wear official suits was binding upon military persons, police officers, customs officials, finance officials, firemen, postmen, railway workers, sailors, miners, forest rangers, educationists, members of sports associations, clerical representatives, and diplomatic agents.

All official clothes had something in common and that is that they retained traditional elements, but also followed trends in neighboring countries and Europe at large, from the choice of material to the minutest decorative details.





~~For more information on the history of diplomatic suits, please visit the website of the International Diplomatic Suits Association (IDSA) at www.idsa.org.~~



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Uniform of the 1st Secretary and Consul (1851) without embroidery gold



TALE COAT - No embroidery on the breast pieces or the cuffs
TALE COAT - No sword cane, gloves and shoes the same as
Uniform of the IV Category - Secretaries, Vice-Consuls and Clerks (1931)

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