

SPLENDID ENCOUNTERS XII

FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT

DECEPTION, BRIBERY AND VEILED THREATS IN EARLY MODERN DIPLOMACY



Faculty of History
University of Warsaw



22-24 SEPTEMBER 2025 | WARSAW, POLAND

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In the autumn of 1635, an Italian named Antonio della Valle arrived at the English court, presenting himself as a diplomat in the service of the Polish king, Vladislaus IV. He claimed his mission was to negotiate a marriage between the Polish monarch and Charles I's niece, Elizabeth, the Princess Palatine. Introduced to the court's elite by the Venetian ambassador, Anzolo Corroero, della Valle even stayed at Corroero's residence for a time. For weeks, he deceived everyone – diplomats, court officials, and even the king, who granted him an audience.

Eventually, the fiction unravelled and the truth emerged: Antonio della Valle was, in fact, Antonio Fulgentio, a notorious grifter implicated in numerous scandals. Upon the revelation of his true identity, he vanished without a trace—taking with him not only the trust of the English court but also the credibility of Ambassador Corroero. This case is but one example of the intricate web of deception, bribery, and manipulation that helped to shape early modern diplomacy. From forged credentials to veiled threats, duplicity and deceit were often a necessary – or unavoidable – tool in the hands of diplomats.

The 12th Splendid Encounters. Diplomats and Diplomacy in the Early Modern World conference aims to stimulate discussion of deception, threats, bribery, double-dealing and other forms of dishonesty in diplomacy in global contexts from c.1500 to c.1800. Therefore, we invite submissions related to these issues from scholars at all stages of their career, but especially proposals addressing the following topics:

- Diplomatic scandals involving deceit and underhandedness, and their consequences,
- Various aspects of bribery and blackmail
- Diplomats as double agents
- Theft, lawbreaking, and attempts to assert diplomatic immunity against the force of the host state's law
- Deception in negotiations and other diplomatic activities
- Feigning authority and credibility – impostors and false diplomats,
- Threats and coercion in diplomatic relations

Please send an abstract of up to 250 words for twenty-minute papers and a short biographical note to splendidencounters12@gmail.com. The deadline for submission is 19 March 2025. The applicants will be notified of the acceptance of their proposal by 30 April 2025. All queries should be directed to Dr Anna Kalinowska, Dr Rafał Waszczuk or Klaudia Kuchno.

Splendid Encounters is a series of international and interdisciplinary conferences that aims to bring together scholars from different fields of study to consider diplomacy and diplomatic activities in the early modern period within the broadest possible framework. After eleven successful meetings in, among others, Vienna, Florence, Bath, Budapest, Prague, and Lisbon, we invite you to join us for another event, this time co-hosted by the University of Warsaw, Faculty of History and the Institute of History of Polish Academy of Sciences..

SPLENDIDENCOUNTERS12@GMAIL.COM

PLEASE BE ADVISED THAT A CONFERENCE FEE OF MAX. 40 EUR,
COVERING THE CONFERENCE PACKAGE AND COFFEE BREAKS, MAY APPLY.