

In the sphere of diplomacy



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Our Diplomats' Day

**BY AMBASSADOR EVGENY
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On the 10th of February diplomats of our country celebrate their professional day – Diplomats' Day, which was established by a presidential executive order in 2002 on the occasion of the bicentenary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia.

The date itself is closely connected with the history of the nation's first permanent foreign affairs agency – the Ambassadorial Department (or "Posolsky Prikaz" in old Russian). On that day in February 1549, the Ambassadorial Department, established by Czar Ivan IV 'The Terrible', was first mentioned in official chronicles.

Of course, Russia's external relations are much older and can be traced back to the earliest years of Russian statehood. For instance, the "Agreement on Peace and Love" between Ancient Rus' and Byzantine Empire was signed in 860, manifesting international recognition of the emerging Russian State. The envoys of Russian principalities became frequent guests at the courts of the Medieval Europe.

However, increasing feudal division of Russian lands along with a failure to withstand the Mongolian invasion in the 13th century, which resulted in partial loss of their sovereignty under the yoke of the Golden Horde, negatively affected the

development of external links. It was not until the formation of a stronger unified state under the Grand Princes of Moscow when the Russian diplomacy attained its sustainability.

By the 16th century, Russia was growing as an influential power seeking to expand its international ties. It became necessary to establish a special office responsible for the supervision of external relations and interaction with the diplomatic corps. Upon the establishment of the Ambassadorial Department in 1549, the diplomatic service became an integral part of the government structure. The Department successfully managed the Russian foreign policy throughout the 16th - 17th centuries, and the first permanent Russian diplomatic missions abroad opened during the 1600s.

As the part of a comprehensive administrative reform initiated by the Emperor Peter the Great, in 1718-1720 the Department was transformed into the Collegium of Foreign Affairs. This marked the formation of the Russian Empire and the emergence of Russia as a Great European power. The constellation of talented diplomats serving within the Collegium laid down the basic principles and methods of the Russian diplomacy.

Finally, in 1802, the modern institution to manage external relations – the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – was created by the manifesto of Emperor Alexander I. By the

start of the World War I in 1914, Russia possessed a wide network of diplomatic and consular representations all over the world. In 1898, diplomatic relations between Russia and Ethiopia were established and the first Russian diplomatic mission arrived in Addis Ababa.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (in 1917-1946 – the Peoples Commissariat for Foreign Affairs) upheld state interests at every turning point of Russian and global history. Soviet diplomacy made crucial contributions to the strengthening of the anti-Hitler coalition during World War II and creation of the United Nations Organization, bolstered the UN authority in governing international relations, fought for peace and disarmament, promoted decolonization processes.

The present-day Russian diplomatic service carefully preserves, thoroughly studies and develops its historical heritage, taking it into account in its day-to-day work to promote an objective perception of Russia's active foreign policy, which over the centuries has not only ensured our country's role as an initiative participant in international processes, but also served as one of the important guarantees of its security. The introduction of a professional holiday dedicated to the Russian diplomatic service testifies to the high public recognition of the diplomat's profession, to the importance attached to the foreign service by the country's leadership.

The holiday is also a tribute to the veterans who defended the interests of our Motherland with dignity during difficult periods of both Russian history and international relations. On this day, employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs lay flowers at the graves of prominent Russian diplomats buried in Russia and abroad. Among them was Mr. Konstantin Lishin, Head of the Russian Imperial Mission to Ethiopia, who passed away in Addis Ababa in 1906. This holiday is an occasion for us to remember the past and think about today and tomorrow of our diplomatic service.

The establishment of this holiday contributes to raising the prestige of the Russian diplomacy, encourages the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia and its missions abroad to improve constantly their professional skills. A diplomat of our times is completely different from the one of the past centuries. Modern diplomacy has become by far diverse and dynamic. It requires a wider range of knowledge in various fields such as environmental issues, climate change, human rights, fighting terrorism and many others. While its methods evolve towards multi-vector networking, the chief task – to ensure favourable external conditions for the national development – remains unchanged.

And, of course, this day reminds us once again of the enormous responsibility that the Diplomatic Service has before the state and society, before every Russian citizen. Today we are fully committed to preserving and developing the traditions for which

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Our diplomacy has long been based on these values. They include devoted patriotism, high professional culture, profound knowledge of international relations and respect for the countries of posting.

Today, Russian diplomacy is making a significant contribution to strengthening peace, resolving important regional and global issues, and promoting cooperation with our foreign partners. In the current difficult situation, when international security and the rule of law are undergoing serious tests, the diplomats are faced with important, ambitious tasks.

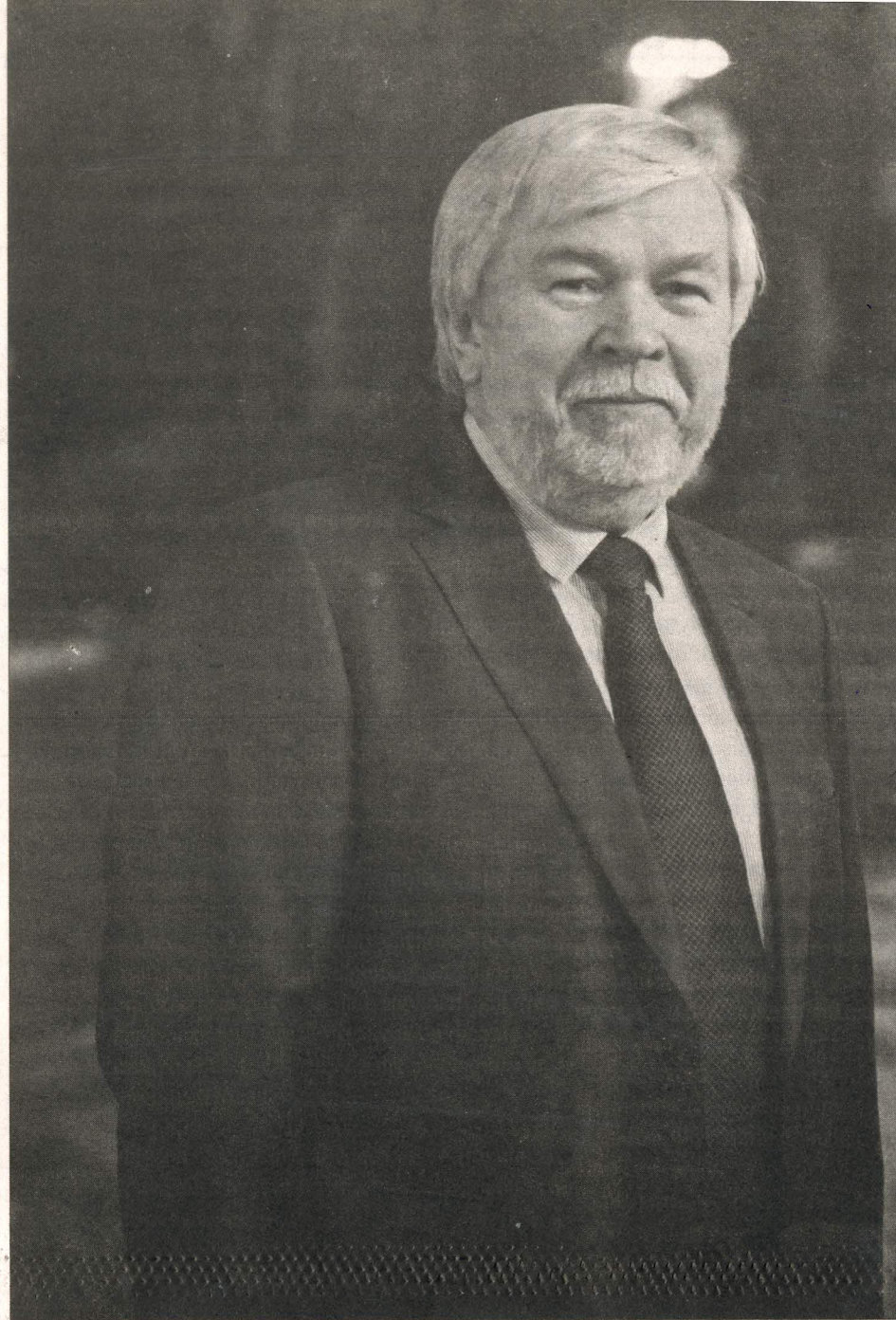
In particular, it is essential to uphold the basic principles of international law and the backbone role of the United Nations to achieve integrity of the world community in the fight against the terrorist threat. Great attention is required to maintaining strategic stability, given that the arms control and nonproliferation regime is now challenged. It is essential to cooperate for peaceful resolution of numerous crises and conflicts, to promote reconciliation and sustainable peacebuilding.

Russia has consistently advocated respect for sovereignty and the right of peoples to determine their own destiny. We reject hidden agendas and do not seek one-sided advantages for ourselves.

It is a great privilege for me to represent Russia as an Ambassador to Ethiopia - a beautiful country with a rich history, unique and diverse cultural heritage. The members of the Embassy staff are proud to live and work on hospitable Ethiopian soil. We faithfully aspire to develop and multiply the glorious traditions of centuries-old friendship between our brotherly peoples, to promote further strengthening of productive and mutually

beneficial bilateral cooperation.

The Grand Chancellor of the Russian



Empire Alexander Gorchakov once emphasized that "there are no divergent

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interests that cannot be reconciled by working zealously and hard ... in the spirit of justice and moderation". This approach will continue to underpin the efforts of the Russian Federation to build equal and mutually beneficial relationships with all its partners.

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