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America Abroad

Diplomatic Life Is No Longer The Fabulous Whirl Of Intrigue And Glitter It Used To Be

By Cpl. KLAUS MANN
Staff Writer

ROME

TO THE average American, an embassy is a glamorous and at the same time slightly sinister place—the brilliant scene of international scandals, intrigues, and romances. Life in diplomatic circles, as visualized by popular fancy, is a mixture of sophisticated merry-making and outlandish rituals in the eighteenth century style. Diplomats have nothing to worry about: They are "exterritorial." When war breaks out, they just burn their secret papers and ask haughtily for their passports. It's all very easy and a lot of fun.

This whole concept of embassy life, needless to say, is utterly obsolete and a little fantastic. Diplomatic missions, far from being centers of musical-comedy plots, are political and economic outposts of vital importance to the nation they represent—particularly so in times of great international changes and decisions. We are living in such a time, and the great changes now developing cannot but affect every country, including of course the U. S. With America's leading position in international politics unquestionably established, and with the American public gradually becoming international-minded, the functions and responsibilities of American representatives abroad are today more complex and more significant than they have ever been.

To the State Department, the end of the war does not mean a decrease of work; on the contrary, peace confronts our policy-makers and diplomats with a profusion of new tasks and problems. That is why the State Department needs and wants new men—some of whom it hopes to get from the Armed Forces. Just a few weeks ago, an official appeal was addressed to all soldiers "qualified and interested in making application for jobs in the Foreign Service." The Army men who responded to this appeal, and whose qualifications are up to Washington standards, may be looking forward to an interesting career, but they aren't in for a picnic.

THE EMBASSY of the U. S. in Rome is typical of this increased diplomatic activity. Not only did the State Department lose no time in re-opening this particular mission almost immediately after the liberation of the Italian capital, but the physical size and the work of the Embassy have also been considerably enlarged. Before the war, the American representative and his staff occupied only a comparatively modest building in the Via Boncompagni (near the Excelsior Hotel)—connected by a beautiful garden with the American General Consulate, Via Vittorio Veneto 112. Now a third building of more impressive dimensions, the Palazzo Margherita, has been added to the exterritorial realm of the Embassy. A stately, if not particularly handsome, structure, this palazzo was built for the Boncompagni family, later occupied by the Italian Queen Mother and subsequently taken over by the Fascist Confederation of Farmers. Then the American diplomats moved in, only five weeks after the triumphal entrance of American troops into Rome.

There is nothing glamorous or romantic about the strict daily routine to which these diplomats are subjected just as any other Government officials or the employees of any major firm. Instead of waltzes, champagne and gossip, there are long office hours, monotonous conferences, tedious statistics.

OUR EMBASSY in Rome is a complex setup divided into several departments. There are sections specializing in economics, politics, military matters, cultural relations, press

and consular affairs. All these branches are supervised and co-ordinated by the Ambassador who, in his turn, receives directives from, and transmits reports to, the State Department in Washington.

The present Ambassador of the U. S. to Italy is Alexander C. Stacks. A wealthy bachelor of 56, Mr. Kirk is a career diplomat with 30 years of practical experience in such centers of international political life as Berlin, The Hague, Tokyo, Mexico City, Washington, Moscow, and Cairo. Well acquainted with the capitals of the world in general, he feels particularly at home in Rome—having lived in this city with his mother for 10 years before the war. He returned almost as soon as Rome was liberated, and took over parts of the historic Palazzo Barberini as his private residence.

The sphere of Mr. Kirk's activities is not limited to the Embassy. He has also the official status of Political Advisor to the supreme Allied commander of the Mediterranean Theater and to the Allied Commission which collaborates with the Italian Government as the ruling body of the country; moreover, he represents the U. S. in the Allied Advisory Council for Italy, which includes Russian, British, French, Yugoslav and Greek members.

PERSONNEL of the Embassy, not counting the members of the Ambassador's personal household, includes at present 32 U. S. officers, 40 U. S. clerks, and 50 non-American (mostly Italian) employees—reception clerks, messengers, drivers, telephone operators, charwomen, and so forth. Also, there are about six American soldiers and two Navy men "on special duty" with the Embassy, in addition to the staff of the newly-assigned military attaché, Brig. Gen. Francis M. Brady of the Air Force.

Members and employees of the diplomatic mission don't live in the Embassy proper but are on their own. With the housing situation in Rome still rather critical, only about one-half of the staff has been lucky enough to find private residences. The others temporarily are billeted in requisitioned hotels—most of them at the Hotel San Giorgio. As for rations, the

Embassy people depend partly on whatever the local markets may have to offer, partly on the "courtesy of the U. S. Army."

IN CHARGE of administration is David McKee, Counselor of the Embassy, an oldtimer in the Foreign Service. The numerically strongest section is the one dealing with Economics—which is only natural, considering the vital importance and extreme intricacy of economic questions in postwar Europe. Ambassador Kirk is well aware of this pre-eminence. "There are only two considerations of primary significance in Europe now," he maintains. "Namely, the preservation of order, in a democratic understanding of the word, and the supply of food and materials so that people can work and earn money, and have something to buy with their money. The real basis for peace is not to be found in political programs or territorial arrangements. The real basis for peace is a prosperous, contented people."

The conditions of Italian economic life are studied and analyzed by a crew of experts under the direction of the Embassy's Chief Economic Advisor, Charles A. Livengood. There are special attaches for agricultural, mining, industrial, financial affairs, with another specialist concentrating on labor problems. The reports of these skilled observers influence the policy of the State Department which, in its turn, collaborates with other governmental departments and agencies in Washington. The findings of these specialized referees as regards, say, the coal situation in northern Italy or the shortcomings of the Italian transportation system have therefore a vital bearing on the supplies granted to Italy by American business or by Washington.

ANOTHER function of the Economic Department is to study and prepare the way for future U. S. trade in Italy. American business men interested in the Italian market will look to the State Department for information. It is Mr. Livengood and his collaborators who keep the State Department informed about the commercial

prospects and potentialities in this particular part of the continent.

Responsible for the Political Section is John Wesley Jones, First Secretary of Embassy—recently transferred to Rome from Washington. Mr. Jones' two collaborators are Robert McBride and Frederick Mascoll. These three gentlemen also assist the Ambassador in his capacity as Political Advisor to the Chief Commissioner, Admiral Ellery W. Stone.

Quite in keeping with the State Department tradition, the members of this political staff are extremely careful not to express any opinions or to reveal any details connected with their activities. They emphasize that the chief political representative is of course the Ambassador; it is he who handles the contacts with the Italian Foreign Office and who confers with Italy's Foreign Affairs Minister, Alcide de Gasperi. "We are just observers," the gentlemen of the Political Section insist. "Washington has to be kept informed about all things of political interest. It's our job to know what's going on."

OF A MORE tangible nature are the duties of another First Secretary—John Fletcher Huddleston, head of the Consular Section. This particular department—consisting of two Consuls, three Vice Consuls, five U. S. clerks, and 21 Italian employees—seems to be one of the busiest places in the whole busy U. S. Embassy.

The Consulate has indeed plenty of things to take care of. Its main task is to protect the various interests of U. S. citizens in Italy—dead or alive. When an American dies in this foreign country, it's up to the Consulate to see to it that he is buried in accordance with his religious faith and his financial affairs are handled in a correct fashion. As for the living, there are all kinds of requests and questions filed by the Consulate under the heading of "Welfare and Whereabouts"—such as the locating of missing persons, financial assistance in the form of Consulate loans, all kinds of property matters. The Consulate has to register the births of American babies and the marriages of American men

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Diplomatic missions have become political and economic outposts of vital importance.