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George S. Messersmith

AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL

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A Suggestion for Officers on Leave

Perhaps one of the remarks most frequently made by Foreign Service officers is that the general public at home is so little aware of the duties performed by the Foreign Service, and, if the many useful things which we do were known to our people the support which the Service receives and the encouragement given to it would be very much greater, and conditions in the Service thereby improved making even better results possible. A great many of these officers who so freely make this statement do not seem to realize that to a very considerable extent they themselves may be to blame for the Service not being better known. I am inclined to believe that it is the same old story of our complaining about a situation for which we may be responsible.

It is true that our people do not know just what our Foreign Service does do. At least they have a very vague and incomplete idea of our functions. There is a sort of an idea that diplomatic officers have something to do with politics, that they associate more or less with the aristocracy in the capitals, and that they must lead a very nice and comfortable sort of life. As to a consular officer, the most general reaction is that he is the person you go to when you get in trouble abroad and is the one who gets you out. I
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have had some of my friends who are very well informed about all sorts of things ask me seriously just what I really did do, and I am sure that in this respect my experience is not unique.

As a matter of fact there is probably no officer of our Government who has to perform so many and so diverse functions as the consular officer in the Foreign Service. The fact that while we are officers of the Department of State we are really also at the beck and call of every other Department and independent commission or board under the Federal Government, of every business man, and of practically every citizen in the country desiring our service, is not realized. The fact that every seaman shipped and discharged on American vessels in foreign ports must be paid off through the Consul, that we care for shipwrecked, sick and destitute seamen, and transport them to the United States in certain cases, that we look after them in jails and hospitals, that we act as a sort of a mentor for them, is not understood. It is news that we give bills of health to every American and foreign vessel proceeding to an American port in order to protect the health of our ports, and that we must examine and visa the crew list of all vessels proceeding to the United States in order to prevent violation of our immigration laws. In addition to this, it is little appreciated that in all the seaports of the world American consuls keep in touch with shipping conditions, cease no movement of cargo, entries and clearances, freight rates and freight policies, and all that pertains in general to shipping in order that reports may be prepared on these specific aspects, and transmitted to the Department of State where they are given publicity through other Departments for the use of our shipping interests.

Nor is it understood that we prepare at regular intervals for all the ports of the world detailed reports on fuel facilities and fuel prices, so that our ships may always know where fuel is available and at best prices. Our Navy depends upon the consular officers for the compilation of its port directory which gives accurate information concerning all the ports of the world, so that in time of peace or war whenever the naval vessel desires to go into that port she knows all about the approaches of and the depth of the harbor, the docks available, and all other imaginable data such as, to what hospital on shore sick seamen can best be sent and where there is a baseball field available for the crew.

The services which we perform for the Treasury Department are so numerous that they are difficult to enumerate. We keep in touch with the prices of all goods produced in our respective districts exported to the United States, so that we can properly certify the many invoices which are presented to us from day to day, for every shipment of goods going to the United States valued at \$100. or over must be accompanied by a consular invoice. In 1927, -----invoices were certified by the Service. It is these invoices which customs officers at ports of arrival use in collecting the duties imposed by our tariff. We see that American living abroad get their income tax declarations and certify their signature thereto. We keep in touch with all kinds of illegal traffics such as liquor smuggling, diamond smuggling, and the traffic in narcotics, and furnish information to the Treasury so that smugglers and shipments may be apprehended or seized. We furnish every week a report on the sanitary condition of

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our district, which is for the use of the Public Health Service, and our Government thus has first-hand and accurate information concerning the health of practically every section of the world. We cooperate with Treasury agents and the Tariff Commission in their work abroad in connection with the protection of our revenue. In certain cities the consular officer cables regularly the bank rate and other financial data for the information of the Treasury.

For the Department of Agriculture we prepare regular reports and cables on crop conditions and food requirements in foreign countries, so that our farmers and our exporters of food products may know what market there is abroad for American grains and for raw material such as cotton, and at the same time so that they may know what ^{the} conditions are in other countries, the products of which will be competing with ours on foreign markets. We telegraph immediately the outbreak of epidemics of such diseases as foot-and-mouth disease and anthrax, and carry out under rules prescribed by the Department of Agriculture the disinfection abroad of such articles as hides and skins and certain fertilizers material exported to our country. We have many duties to carry out for them in connection with the exportation to the United States of life animals and plants, in order to prevent the introduction into the United States of diseases which may be prevalent in our district. Some of the useful plants now forming a big crop in the United States were originally introduced through the activity of consular officers in far distant places, who believed that these plants could be adapted to our conditions and needs. While the Department of Agriculture has a few specialists stationed in various parts

various parts of the world we cooperate with them, but it depends almost entirely upon us for information concerning agricultural conditions and farm markets abroad.

For the War Department we prepare reports on such subjects as commercial and military aviation. We look after old pensioners residing in our districts, and they secure their pension checks through us.

For the Navy Department we furnish the material for the port directory already mentioned and we look after naval vessels in foreign ports. The duties in this connection are frequently onerous and difficult. We give information concerning fuel facilities and fuel prices so that our naval ships will know just where, and how much coal or oil they can get. We look after Navy pensioners, and from time to time prepare very complete reports on certain industries in our district which are of particular interest to the War and Navy Departments. During the last war our consular officers in various parts of the world were able to find and to buy for both the War and Navy Departments raw materials which were much needed, and secured them under very advantageous conditions.

For the Department of the Interior we make examinations of pensioners and report the results, certify applications for new pensions or changes in pensions. Persons desiring patents abroad come to the Consulate to have their patent applications prepared in the form required by the Patent Office. We perform a variety of services for the Interior Department, particularly the preparation of reports on

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such subjects as educational systems and conditions abroad, and other particular aspects of the social or economic life of the people among whom we live.

For the Veterans' Bureau we act as their intermediary in the care of beneficiaries living abroad. Their compensation checks are transmitted through the Consulates and we look after the health and welfare of those residing in our district. We may have to put them in hospitals or sanitariums and see that they have proper treatment, and buy them a new artificial leg or arm as they may be needed. We conduct examinations of all beneficiaries at the request of the Bureau.

It would be easy to add to the foregoing, but it is sufficient I believe to show that we are at the beck and call of practically every Department and organism of our Government which transmit their requests to the Department of State, and these requests come to us as instructions. Some of these duties for other Departments are prescribed in the statutes, while others have grown up originally and in a common sense way, as it is evident that the gathering of information and the performing of services abroad for our Government should be concentrated in one service rather than in individual services for every branch of our Government.

The wide variety of our work in connection with passports and visas is little understood. American citizens residing abroad or travelling make their passport applications to American consuls, who issue them passports. Those residing abroad are supposed to register, so that, not only for the protection of their citizenship in case of naturalized citizens, but also so that necessary information

information may be available in case anything happens to them, we keep in touch with the prolonged residence of naturalized Americans, and, if necessary, make the necessary reports thereon so that citizenship may be cancelled where circumstances make it necessary. We are constantly called upon to protect not only the interests of American firms but also of private citizens. An American firm may have difficulty with another firm, or with the local authorities, or with individuals, and the influence and intervention of the Consular officer may be sought and in most cases is very effective, not only avoiding annoyance but in many cases appeal to the courts. Americans living in the district or travelling may become ill and need hospital attention or medical or surgical care. The consul attends to this, and in case they should become ill or die takes possession of their effects and settles the estate if the local law permits. An American may get into conflict with a shopkeeper or with the police, and the consul intervenes to protect his interests. This one aspect of our work which is best known to our people is in many respects one of the least important of our activities.

In connection with our immigration laws the duties of consuls are particularly important. Under our laws all the aliens proceeding to the United States, either for business or pleasure or for permanent residence, must have a visa of the consular officer of their district. The visa is not a guarantee that the alien will be admitted into the United States, and until recently many people were turned back at ports of arrival, because they were found inadmissible under our laws. Now through the cooperation

cooperation of the Public Health Service of the Treasury Department, and of the Immigration Bureau of the Department of Labor, a Public Health Service surgeon and an immigration officer are attached to those Consuls as technical advisers at points where the granting of visas to emigrants has been largely centralized. Now when a visa is granted by a consular officer it is practically certain that the applicant will be admitted on arrival at an American port, as he has already passed all the tests under conditions which make possible even a more complete and thorough examination than that formerly given at our immigration stations. This system works very admirably from the point of view of the emigrant and of foreign countries and is a splendid thing for our country, as it means that we get better immigrants and that the harrowing incidents which did arrive at times at ports of entry no longer take place. We grant of course visas to business men and to people travelling for pleasure to the United States, or who are passing through the country in transit to some other. We examine into their cases thoroughly but promptly, and a visa is given in bona fide cases without delay. We treat such people with every consideration and with as little red tape as possible, so that they may not have wrong ideas concerning our country before they even set out for our shores, and I may say that there is no country with an immigrant problem which handles immigration and immigrants with such care and consideration as we do. The simplest emigrant is treated with courtesy and his case is gone into thoroughly by an American who knows his language and who

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arrives at the facts. While we are not governed by sentiment and resolve doubts in favor of our country, the emigrant is given a fair hearing and a fair show.

One of our important activities and one that the public knows least of, is the important duties which we render to American trade and commerce, particularly to the expansion of our export trade abroad and the protection of the trade already established. I can best illustrate the variety of this work by showing what is specifically done in one consulate. This office prepares every month a very complete report of some fifty pages and of seventeen sections on market conditions in at least seventeen different products or classes of products in which American business men are interested from an import or export point of view. The information for this report is gathered directly by the Consulate from important business men with whom it has established contacts, and the information therefore is first-hand, usually accurate, and worth while. In addition this office prepares a weekly report on the grain market in the district for the Department of Agriculture, this report being specifically interesting due to the market for American grains in a city in this district. Every month this office prepares a report on cement, as well as one on brick, as American manufacturers are particularly interested in these industries in this particular country for the time being. In addition to these reports it prepares every year a general summary of market conditions in the particular markets in the country in which we are interested, and prepares also annually a complete review of commercial, economic, industrial, financial and

and social conditions in the country.

The above reporting is all rendered at regular intervals and is for the most part what we call "called-for reporting". In addition to such called-for reports, the office prepares an average of at least one important voluntary report a week, such reports covering special aspects of the trade of the country, or taking the form of a commodity report on a specific article in which an interest has been expressed or in which the consular officer believes some American business men would be interested. These reports whether called for or voluntary are transmitted to the Department of State, which forwards them to the Department of Commerce for distribution to interested parties in the United States.

We receive daily many trade letters from firms in the United States, asking for specific information with regard to openings for American goods or for information concerning conditions in specific trades. These trade letters as a rule require original investigation and very often they are practically a complete report running from eight to sixteen pages. These letters are accompanied by lists of firms to which the inquirer may write in the furtherance of his business. All such letters are transmitted to the inquirer by the Consul, through the Department of State, in triplicate, the Department sends the original to the inquirer, keeps the duplicate for its files, and sends the triplicate to the Department of Commerce, which often finds information therein of so much interest that it makes copies and sends them to its various officers throughout the United States so that the contents may be familiar to the persons in their respective areas interested in such data.

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The number of these trade letters written by Consuls in the course of a year is very large.

In addition we keep in touch with foreign merchants and whenever there is an opportunity for the introduction of a specific American article we prepare so called "Trade Opportunities" which we transmit to the Department of State, and it forwards them to the Department of Commerce for publication in Commerce Reports. Practically all the trade opportunities which reach American business men from abroad in this way are submitted by consular officers.

One of the very useful services rendered by consular officers, is the preparation of World Trade Directory reports. These reports give complete data, some of which is confidential, on all the principal firms in the consular district. The information therein is gathered from many sources and is usually reliable and particularly valuable to American firms. Up to date some.....World Trade Directory reports have been furnished by consular officers from all over the world. These reports are immediately transmitted, on receipt by the Department of State, to the Department of Commerce and the Department of Commerce maintains an index. An American exporter or manufacturer desiring information concerning a foreign firm can secure it very quickly by writing to the Department of Commerce. Whenever changes take place in the reputation or in the standing of a firm or in its organization or business, a revised form is transmitted by the Consul, and when it goes out of business or fails a new report is likewise submitted. Similarly, the consul is on the qui vive to note
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the organization of new firms and immediately sends a W.T.D.

American Consuls also serve a very useful purpose in acting as an intermediary in settling trade disputes. Very frequently an American exporter or importer may have difficulties with a foreign firm concerning a shipment, which can easily last a long time and occasion a lot of loss. Sometimes when correspondence is passing between the two parties the goods may spoil but the amount would not be sufficient for the American business man to actually make a trip abroad. The consul is often able to settle such disputes or to recommend a compromise which is in the interest of both parties. When he considers it advisable he can recommend legal action for the enforcement of the rights of the American firm, but he can frequently save the American firm much money in the way of useless court costs and lawyer's fees.

But aside of all this work it must be remembered that American firms and American industries are becoming more and more established in foreign countries. Here they come in conflict and competition with foreign interests with foreign customs and with foreign laws. Not infrequently the American firm finds that its business is greatly facilitated through the advice which it receives from the consular officer familiar with local customs and laws, and he is often able through the prestige which he has established to secure for them concessions, combinations and privileges which greatly facilitate their operations, which they, of their own accord might not have been able to get except after a considerable period and probably not at all. It is sometimes necessary to intervene in matters

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of customs, or where the local firm runs counter with the local law or officials. Such difficulties are generally due to misunderstandings but a consular officer can straighten these out in most instances. The officer is keen to note any opportunities which there are for advancing the interests of American firms already established in his district or for the coming of new firms, or for the introduction of a new line of goods.

One of the reasons why these varied and most useful and effective activities of consular officers are so little known, even to many business men, is that the information collected by consular officers does not reach the business men as a rule through them or through the Department of State, but through the intermediary of the Department of Commerce and through its branches in the United States. The trade letters prepared by consular officers are the only thing in the way of a report sent by the Department of State directly to business men. Called for and voluntary reports, and World Trade Directory reports and trade opportunities, and correspondence in connection with the settlement of trade disputes generally reach the interested persons in the United States through communications from or publications issued by the Department of Commerce. While credit is given for a good deal of this information in such communications and publications, even though the fullest and amplest credit is given, the business man is not so much interested in names as he is in the information. He knows that he gets the data either in a letter from the Department of Commerce or in a bulletin or publication issued by the

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the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce of that Department. He confounds the work of consuls with the work of the Bureau itself, and is led to the assumption, which is more or less natural, that the information which the Bureau publishes or furnishes is gathered by it. Our Service therefore does suffer and the Department of Commerce gains prestige through the work of our officers. Certainly no less than 90 per cent of the reports issued by the Department of Commerce originated from consular officers under the direction of the Department of State. All World Trade Directory reports and information based thereon is furnished by consuls and practically all trade opportunities come from them. The great bulk of the information distributed therefore to American trade with regard to conditions abroad comes from consular officers. It seems perfectly right and proper that the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce of the Department of Commerce should serve as the distributing medium for commercial information gathered abroad. There is no reason why the Department of State should directly publish the material from consular officers.

The Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce has established a series of commodity offices in the Bureau at Washington, which are carefully considering reports from the field and it has established offices in practically all of the big commercial cities of the United States. The reports from consular officers and from commercial attaches are digested in these commodity divisions and the information sent out directly to certain parts of the trade from Washington, but in most cases the information is transmitted to the various Bureau Offices which maintain indexes of the persons in their district interested in certain data.

data. A machinery therefore has been established for digesting and getting to the interested persons the material gathered abroad. This is a vast improvement on the former situation, when excellent reports written by consular officers were really useless and fruitless because there was no means available either in the Department of State or in the Department of Commerce to give the proper publicity. Whenever the information submitted is suitable for publication in trade journals or newspapers, it is given to them either by the Bureau in Washington or by its representatives in the various cities throughout the country. It is obvious that a good deal of material thus distributed loses its identity, and, even though the Department of Commerce may be most meticulous in its desire to give full credit to consular officers, it would be evident that unavoidably certain material would lose indication as to its origin and ^{the} identity of the officer preparing it. It would be carrying egotism and pride in work too far for an officer to hope that his name is attached to every piece of his work that reaches the trade. The name after all is not important. It is the information which counts.

What is of course important is that the business public should realize that though this information is distributed in such an effective way by the Department of Commerce, at least 90 per cent of it comes from consular officers who are not officers of the Department of Commerce but who are officers of the Department of States and who have many other functions for other branches of the Government and under our statutes. It is to the eternal credit of our consular officers that with all the great variety of work which they have had to do, they have

have been able to produce such a high quality of commercial reporting. It is essential that our business men should realize that not only does 90 per cent of the material which they get from the Department of Commerce originate with consular officers, but that the great burden of finding new markets and of protecting existing markets and our commerce interests abroad genereally rests upon our consular officers, and that it is they who carry on our trade promotion work in every power of the world. Now this is what has been lost sight of, and while some people are inclined to blame the Department of Commerce, I am personally of the opinion that it is more a question of fate and circumstance. To a very considerable extent Commerce has endeavored to give credit to our consular officers, but the American Business man naturally thinks of the instrumentality through which he gets the information and many of them think that consular officers are under the direction of the Department of Commerce. Business men are more and more appreciative of the excellent information which they are getting from abroad and they naturally show this appreciation, but it has taken the form of recognition of the work done by the Department of Commerce and the major part played by consular officers in this connection has not been understood or realized. The Department of Commerce has reaped the benefit of the work done by the consular officers under the direction of the Department of State in the form of increased popularity, and consequently increased appropriations, While the general public not realizing the major part played by consuls in securing this information has been slower in its support of necessary money for the Consular Service. In other words, the

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Department of Commerce has been able to secure from Congress increasingly liberal appropriations for the use of this digestive and distributing system in the United States and also for its new Foreign Service. Through these increased facilities for digesting and distributing material, its capacity for usefully using such material has increased and its demands upon the consuls are steadily increasing. On the other hand, however, the Department of State has not been able to get for its Foreign Service the appropriations absolutely needed not only for expanding its service to meet these needs, but also it has not been able to get sufficient funds for clerical help and for increasing salaries to keep them on the level necessary for the contentment of officers faced with the steadily increasing cost of living, and with the more difficult conditions abroad.

This situation is anomalous and unjust, and I personally am convinced that if brought to the attention of American business men and to our people in general, they will be the first to correct it. Now the question is how this has to be done, and this is the idea I should like to bring to the attention of my colleagues. I think the remedy lies largely within our own application.

This is to be followed by a statement as to how consular officers on leave should use every opportunity to speak before chambers of commerce, Rotary clubs and other business organizations, should write in their local papers articles with reference to the Service and its work, and in general seize every opportunity to give publicity of the proper kind to the work done by the
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In other words, they cannot leave this to a few people to do but each one when he has the opportunity must do a share.

George S. Messersmith,
American Consul General.

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