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The Landmarks of Federal Hill: Description of the duties and activities of the Italian Vice Consulate office of RI

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The Landmarks of Federal Hill

By Comm. Joseph R. Murate-C (C) 1979

Due to the many inquiries received as to the duties and functions of a Consular Office and Vice Consular Office, it appears appropriate that the following article be written.

As a background to the structure of a Vice Consular Office:

In America, as in other nations who have accredited foreign representatives in other countries, Italy has an Ambassador to the United Nations, an Ambassador to the United States, a Consul General’s Office in Boston, Los Angeles, Philadelphia and San Francisco, and a Consulate in New York.

A Consul General, a Consul and a Vice Consul are the official representatives of a foreign nation. Each is always under the jurisdiction of the channel above in a chain of command that is under the authority of the Ambassador.

The Consul General and Vice Consul represent a nation in all matters, either legal or ceremonial.

Some of the duties are the following, however are not only limited to these functions.

Italian who are subject to military duty and who are still Italian subjects (for example students on visas in America), must periodically report to register at a Consul General or Vice Consul’s Office.

Passports of Italian subjects originate in a Vice Consul or Consul General’s Office. They are processed in a Consul General’s Office and countersigned by a Vice Consul General or a Vice Consul. They must be claimed by person by whomsoever the passport is issued to.

Any legal document to be used in a foreign country must be prepared in the language of that country, witnessed by at least two persons, notarized by a notary public, registered within that state and recognized by the Consulate or Vice Consulate Office.

These documents are legalized by placing of the Vice Consul or Consul General’s Seal of Office and the appropriate documentary stamps and a protocol number assigned to it.

Then this document is considered in form (or legalized) and will be recognized by the foreign country as a legal document.

Documents that require legalization include birth certificates, death certificates, marriage certificates, power of attorney, limited power of attorney, divorce decrees, requests for pensions, requests for decorations, certificates of existence, and any act, transfer of authority, or request for transfer of real estate, or any document having legal bearing.

Whenever a ship of foreign registry enters a local port, their supply of liquor and tobacco is sealed on the high seas, to insure payment of Federal Tax Stamps.

Upon docking within the territory of a Consul or Vice Consul, the captain of the ship must present himself, together with all of the ship’s registries, documentation, and the personnel libretto, or cards of registry, to the nearest Consulate or Vice Consulate Office.

If any crewmember is sick, has a legal problem or cannot continue on with the voyage, he is returned to the port of registry directly from that port, and a replacement obtained in order that the ship may have its full complement.

If a crewmember is ill, has a dental or legal problem, a Vice Consul or Consul Office has fiduciary physicians, dentists and attorneys, who have been appointed by him to treat, render opinions and return the crewmember to his port of embarkation.

If the ship is to remain in port a few days, the Consul or Vice Consul will issue three day passes to the crewmen for liberty within that territory.

The log and documents of that ship must be recorded as having docked within that territory, the crewmembers’ librettos must be countersigned and stumped with the Seal of the Office.

The ship’s registry must have documentary stamps affixed to it based on the void weight of the ship.

Should there be a legal question as to the proper entry of that ship, the matter is referred to the Consul General for determination.

Documentation for provisions for the ship is required in order that the ship’s supplies may be replenished and the provisioner satisfied that payment will be made.

Should there be any immigration irregularity with crewmember or his documents, the Vice Consul or Consul will monitor the irregularities directly with the local Immigration and Naturalization Offices.

If the problem cannot be resolved, he will arrange for immediate return and replacement through channels.

Should a foreign subject leave instructions of their desire to be buried in their homeland, the lengthy and complicated procedures required for the shipping of the remains of a body to a homeland must be followed in order that the remains may be delivered with dignity and in accordance with the customs, regulations and health regulations of American and the homeland.

Students attempting to enter colleges in a foreign country, many times inquire for procedures at a Vice Consulate Office for assistance.

However, all of these functions are carried on in a Consul General’s Office where career technicians are provided to screen, process, correspond and make determinations.

Consul Generals, Consuls and Vice Consuls act as hosts for dignitaries, naval exchange ships training at nearby installations, and represent their
country at ceremonial functions whenever requested by the Ambassador or Consul General.

They act as interpreters for the courts and other governmental agencies whenever Consular matters require or whenever requested to by local competent authorities.

A Consul General or Consul are career diplomats and usually are appointed to an assignment for a period of seven years then either recalled or transferred to another assignment.

A Vice Consul is nominated and recommended by a Consul General to the Ambassador within whose office the nominee is processed for legal and security clearance.

Then the nomination is presented to the President of that country, who recommends the nominee and is appointed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

In due course, he is later sworn in by the Consul General of that jurisdiction where he is to serve.

Whenever an Ambassador is appointed to a nation, he presents his Credentials of Office to the President or to the head of that nation.

Whenever a Consul General, Consul or Vice Consul is appointed, his or her credentials are sent to the governor of that state, within which the office is to be located. The following is a typical Credential of Office.

DECREES OF NOMINATION

TO THE HONORARY

We, ............... Consul General of ............... in Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A., by virtue of the authority that has been granted by Article No. ... of the decree of the President of the Republic, January 5, 1967, No. 18, published in the Official Gazzeta No. 44, dated February 18th, 1967, and the authorization received from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, through special telegram XXXXXXX dated ............... WE HAVE NOMINATED AND WILL NOMINATE

Mr. ............... Consul in ............... (city and state), bestowing on him the authority to execute the duties, and to enjoy the prerogatives connected to such appointment.

Meanwhile, we direct all Nationals, and others who find themselves under the jurisdiction of the .......... Republic, to recognize the named, as our .......... .......... Consul. We pray the qualified authority, to permit him the freedom to exercise his duties, to make him enjoy all inherent privileges and prerogatives, and to give him help, assistance, and protection in whenever and whatever circumstances he may need.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF WE issue the present certificate, by us signed and secured, with the Seal of the General Consul, State of .......... Date .......

A Vice Consular Office in Rhode Island was opened in 1973 at 426 Broadway, Providence, and later moved to Atwells Avenue.

In the absence of a Consul General, Consul or Vice Consul, in some instances, a Consular Correspondent is appointed without Territorial Competence (territorial authority for a specific state).

However, a Consular Correspondent is the direct link with the Consular Service for that jurisdiction and the protocol of Consular functions are carried on through the Consular Correspondent.

A Consular Correspondent does not have Territorial Competence or jurisdiction, cannot legalize or seal any documents, and all legal functions must be referred to a Consulate or General Consulate Office.

A Consular Correspondent facilitates the procedures required for the accomplishment of Consular functions.

I hope this brief resume has answered some of the more common questions asked regarding the structure and functions of a Consul General, and a Vice Consul holding Territorial Competence (territorial authority).