

THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION

NEW YORK

JOHN MARSHALL
Director, Villa Serbelloni
Bellagio
(Lago di Como, Italy)

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CWC	MAR 10 1961	6266	3/13/61
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Admin

Dear Charles,

OCT 11 1961

Chauncey Belknap has written me two letters expressing concern lest anything we do here jeopardize our chances of getting formal recognition in Italy along the terms which he and Dean laid out in mid 1959. I have taken those letters very seriously and will certainly avoid doing anything to get the RF into difficulties but I thought I had better make my replies through you so as to bring you up to date on what is our most vexing and recurrent problem.

John interpreted the visit of the Bellagio Maresciallo as an indication that Rome was beginning to take more interest in our petition and in our legal status in Italy but I have too little knowledge of all that background to be sure that this is indeed so. All I know is that Rome asked the Maresciallo to make inquiries around here and to send back some kind of report. He asked John the questions and may have gotten what he wanted but I hope he won't get into trouble because it is now known that he got his answers here. He has been a good friend of the Villa.

What is happening, I think, is that the smaller officials at Como and at Menaggio are beginning to worry because they can find no evidence in their records that the RF has a legal entity or is a "juridical person". This is becoming more apparent as new problems arise, such as the registration of Villa cars in the name of the RF, the registration of employees as household or grounds personnel for social security purposes, the purchase of a tricycle truck, etc. Of the problems I know about, the oldest one is that of the cars which, up until a few weeks

ago were still registered in the name of the Princess, This had caused trouble at the Swiss/Italian frontier late last year and John got a Bellagio notary, (as is the custom in Italy, to make the necessary moves for the transfer of ownership. The thing dragged on and on, the notary made at least five visits to various offices in Como and Menaggio, and finally got all our cars registered in the name of the RF two weeks ago - but don't ask me for details. Incidentally, we had to pay a tax on each transfer, doing so under protest and with the right to appeal.]

Probably older, though not for me, has been the business of registering our various employees as household and/or grounds personnel. Discussion about household employees started at the beginning of 1960, according to Miss Commeno, and John referred it to Avv. Braschi who made provisional agreement that we would pay social security - at the rate of an Ente Morale - pending final settlement of our own status in Rome. No payments were made since the matter dragged on and on, but at the beginning of the year Braschi's assistant went to Como and got things started again. On March 2 the Inspector of the Previdenza Sociale finally came here to go over our list of such employees and to calculate the amount of social security payment we owed from August 1, 1959 to February 28, 1961. Having in mind Chick's warning about jeopardizing our Rome approach I made the Inspector remove any reference to our status in Italy, other than that we were the present owner's of the V.S., before I signed the report he had prepared (Braschi's assistant who saw the report Saturday said it was quite correct and quite innocuous).

While he was here the Inspector of the Previdenza Sociale said that he was accepting the fact that none of our grounds personnel need to be registered as household employees as long as the Villa was itself registered as a rural property. This Braschi had already established and he will provide the necessary statement. (See letter I sent to Jess Perry on February 8). The social security for the grounds people has been paid to date because unlike the Previdenza Sociale the office of the Contributi Agricoli Unificati had simply crossed out the Princess' name and put in our own so that they could continue sending us bills. There will be some additional payment for increased salaries but not much.

Next we had trouble about the tricycle truck which John had ordered in Lecco before he left. The company was prepared to supply it as soon as we obtained a license (immatriculation) and the necessary plates. This we were unable to procure because the RF is not a legal entity in Italy, and the company cancelled the order. It was a more complicated matter than just the transfer of the cars we already owned and since it involved directly our legal status I referred the matter to Braschi on February 28 (copy enclosed). We are probably stymied on this although Braschi's assistant thinks some temporary solution may be possible. Anyway I shall stay out of it completely and we will have to continue hiring the services of a truck.

I don't know what will happen if, as Jesse Perry will have explained to you, we find a purchaser for the hull of our boat and the old motor. The Bellagio notary who arranged for the transfer of ownership of our cars said he could not do the same for the boat without some formal document of ownership signed by the American Consul in Milan. If we can't prove we own the boat we can't sell it and we'll have to tow it back here as junk or have to pay storage on it at the boatyard after April 30th. Jesse has suggested that we pay for cutting lumber out of our hurricane-felled trees by bartering the remaining trunks we will never be able to use, but again this is a form of sale and I suspect we may have trouble there also.

In his letter of February 27, Chick properly expressed concern about my use of the expression "Ente Morale Americano" in the February 8 letter to Jesse Perry. This was the expression used by Braschi when John and I called on him in January and is not equivalent to "Ente Morale" which is something which I, too, would greatly fear for I know that it usually requires Italian representation on the directive board of the organization concerned - as is the case with the Zoological Station at Naples and other similar institutions in this country. According to de Liberis, Braschi's assistant, who was here for lunch on Saturday, there is no such thing as an "Ente Morale Americano" in Italy but that is apparently what the lawyers want to see passed as law in Rome to help us out. It would, as I

understand it, give the owner legal standing in this country as a juridical person or as a recognized non-profit foreign organization able to operate in Italy without Italian representation. I realize that this is completely outside my jurisdiction or competence and I would like to have you assure Chick that I will not meddle in this or use the expression even in writing to Braschi. Do tell him also that I have taken comfort in his two letters as tangible evidence that this - our major headache at the moment - is not being forgotten in New York.

Flora writes me that you are still hoping to come here soon. That is grand news for I know how much of an impact the Villa will make on you at this season. For me it would be a great comfort to feel that you have become really acquainted with the place before the start of our busy season and all the small problems that will bring. Jesse has no doubt already brought you up to date on our activities so all I need to add is that Lane and Cipolla have become most enthusiastic about a possible Master-Fellow meeting here in mid July. Before they left they had prepared a long list of possible participants and will eliminate and add names as they continue their discussions in Venice. I hope to have further details for you on all this in a couple of weeks. All the rest seems in good order as far as program goes.

We have also made much progress on the water works and unless an unexpected snag comes up we ought to have good safe drinking water in the Villa, Bristol and Maranese by the time the big St. Catherine's College group arrives on April 5th. Getting the more efficient pump installed at the lake intake and taking the water to other buildings will take a little longer but can be completed before we house guests at the Sfondrata and Casa Rossa. I don't dare push too hard on the sewage disposal lest it slow up the water installation but I hope the contractor will start on the Imhof septic tank this week. The rest of that job, when we get additional funds, will be relatively simple, relatively being the operative word for our own personnel already has almost all it can handle and we may have to hire extra labor.

Do let me know when I can begin rolling out the red carpet!

Cordially,

Gerard
(Gerard R. Pomerat)

Mr. Charles W. Cole
The Rockefeller Foundation
New York