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FAREWELL TO OUR AMBASSADOR

Dr. Ernesto Thalmann, Switzerland's Ambassador to the Court of St. James for the last four years, left us at the end of November to retire to Switzerland.

He considers his London posting to have been the climax of a distinguished diplomatic career, which began in 1941 when he entered the Federal Department of Public Economy.

Their many appointments abroad took Dr. Thalmann and his wife to Paris in 1949, Prague (1952), Cairo (1956/57), Washington (1957). In 1961 Dr. Thalmann was appointed as Permanent Observer to the United Nations in New York as well as Ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary.

In 1966 Dr. Thalmann returned to Switzerland as Chief of Division for International Organization Affairs of the Federal Political Department and in 1971 he was appointed as Secretary general of the Federal Political Department and Chief of Division for Political Affairs.

Highlights of his career included his fact finding mission to Jerusalem as Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the United Nations in 1967, after the Six-Day War. Incidentally, Dr. Thalmann's mission in Israel is mentioned in U'Thant's memories.

In a last interview with the Swiss *Observer* immediately prior to his departure Dr. Thalmann described his four years in Britain as an "entirely happy and satisfactory experience." Occasionally it was hectic, but on the whole he encountered no unsurmountable obstacles.

He was impressed by the human warmth generated in the Swiss community in Great Britain and the will to contribute to the well-being of the Swiss over here.

During his stay he developed a great admiration for the British mode of life and found that the British individual on the whole enjoys more personal freedom than for instance in Switzerland where everyday life tends to be a little more regimented.

Ambassador Thalmann, having met a wide variety of people from all walks of life, and looking back on all the contacts he made, considers himself particularly fortunate to have made the acquaintance of Archbishop Bruno Heim, Apostolic Delegate to Britain, whom he describes as a "marvellous character", Sir George Thomas, Speaker of the House of Commons, Lord Sandford, President of the Anglo-



Swiss Society and Cecil Parkinson, Chairman of the Anglo-Swiss Parliamentary Group.

Ambassador Thalmann found the choice of cultural events in London almost bewildering and said that he probably did not attend quite as many theatre performances and concerts as he might have wished, out of sheer lack of sufficient time also since he always needed a fair amount of time for himself to recuperate and read. His taste runs mainly to political literature — partly out of professional necessity. For example he finds "The Third World War" by General Sir John Hackett particularly interesting.

He also confessed that he quite enjoyed the few times he sneaked off to that great British institution, the pub.

During his diplomatic career Ambassador Thalmann has watched diplomatic tasks become more specialised and to an extent dealt with by organisations set up for specific purposes — such as trade negotiating commissions. In this respect the influence of an ambassador may today be not of such a direct and exclusive nature as was

the case before the last war and earlier. But on the other hand international relations have become so complex and dense that a permanent representative of a country has his importance in originating new concepts and co-ordinating diplomatic tasks. The Ambassadorial scope of action has definitely increased, shared with specialists in their respective fields.

It was evident that Ambassador Thalmann is very much a family-man, much preferring to talk about his family than to make comments which might have political overtones.

He is obviously proud of his three children; his eldest son is stepping in his father's footsteps, having embarked upon a diplomatic career. His daughter Anne-Marie has completed her philosophy studies and just started her training with the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva. His youngest son studies medicine.

Dr. Thalmann and his wife are both very much looking forward to being able to spend more time with their first little granddaughter, who is just two years old.

There may be things in England Ambassador Thalmann will miss back in Switzerland, but as well as memories there will be objects to remind him of his time here. He admitted to having a weakness for old English furniture and has collected some pieces which travelled to Berne with him.

Ambassador Thalmann said that he can appreciate some modern art, but on the whole prefers "the classics" in the wider sense. Sadly the painting "Theseus and Ariadne" by J. H. Füssli (1741-1825), which was a personal loan to Dr. Thalmann by the Art Museum Zurich will also leave the Swiss Embassy.

Dr. Thalmann has a very favourable opinion of the *Swiss Observer*, which, according to him offers "something for everybody". For my part I was very grateful for the support of our publication and the sympathy I experienced from Ambassador Thalmann and Mme Thalmann.

May I be allowed to say "thank you" to both of them on behalf of the *Swiss Observer* and its readers for such a gracious "reign" and the memories of so many a cordial occasion. Our very best wishes for a happy retirement go with them to Berne.

Here in London the "show must go on" as Dr. Thalmann so aptly concluded his speech on the occasion of the Annual Banquet of the City Swiss Club on 16th November.

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CERCLE GENEVOIS

The Escalade dinner will take place this year at the Valchera's Restaurant, 30 The Quadrant, Richmond, Surrey, on Wednesday, 12th December, at 7.30 for 8 p.m.

The price per head is £10.00, including wine.

For any information, please ring Mrs. S. Allan, Tel. Watford 21704, or send her your cheque to 64 Woodland Drive, Watford WD1 3BZ.

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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

Mario Schneebeli leaves London

Mr. Mario Schneebeli, who was an Assistant Manager of the London Branch of the Swiss Bank Corporation, left London in September for Basle after 25 years.

During his time in London he was President of the Swiss Benevolent Society, Vice-Chairman of the Swiss Mercantile Society, Vice-President of the Swiss Catholic Mission, Trustee of the Swiss Youth Club, Council member of the N.S.H. and a member of various other Swiss organisations.

Mr. Schneebeli was a very active member of the Swiss community here and we owe him a great debt of gratitude for his devoted work for the benefit of many.



Mr. Urs Karli was born in Basle but did most of his schooling in Berne. After having served a few years with the Department of Finance, he joined the Foreign Service after the war. He spent the major part of his career overseas and in English-speaking countries, with the exception of his previous posting which was Madagascar.

His wife and he are glad to be back in Europe and particularly in England, since Manchester was the post they were hoping for — they have two adult children, both married, a daughter living in Switzerland and a son in Canada.

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