

# News from the colony

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# LIFE AS A SWISS DIPLOMAT'S WIFE

In line with its new policy of enriching its activities by a more frequent participation of the fair sex, the City Swiss Club had the bright idea for its February meeting at the Dorchester, of inviting Madame Paula Thalmann as an after-dinner speaker, both of unusual interest and charm. It proved a great success — not least thanks to the presence of numerous other members' wives and a particularly good dinner.

Madame Thalmann's delightful talk on her life as a Swiss diplomat's wife was laced with witty asides: such as her introductory remark that the President, as a very wise man, had evidently found out that the best way of running a men's club is to let in the ladies. Glamorous as the life of an ambassador's wife may appear, she said, it also requires much hard work and self-discipline. Apart from her demanding share in her husband's social obligations, she has to adapt her mode of life to one foreign country after another, bring up her children and look after the household just like any other wife of say a Swiss firm's representative abroad. The ambassador and his wife must be able to count, in particular, on the good will and assistance of the Colony so generously shown to them during their first year in London. Without any other contract than her marriage tie the ambassador's wife fulfills a function, in the words of a

fellow diplomat, which would be amply paid by any private employer. Far from such bounty Mme Thalmann had to give up her work as a dentist which the Political Department regarded as detrimental to her husband's career!

Mme Thalmann's cooking experience in Paris, the place of her husband's first appointment abroad, proved a big help in his later career, as the way to a diplomat's, as well as any other man's heart, notoriously is largely through his stomach. The Thalmanns' next post, this time as chargé d'affaires, was in Prague, the so-called Paris of the East — but rather more East than Paris, however beautiful this baroque capital and the countryside of Czechoslovakia undeniably are. Three years back home at Berne enabled Mme Thalmann to devote more time to her children as a welcome consolation for the loss of all allowances for representation abroad.

There followed five happy years in Washington with Monsieur Thalmann as Deputy Head of Mission where his wife — apart from their more important relations with the Eisenhowers, the Johnsons, the Nixons and the Fords — busied herself with a mixed club of senators' and diplomats' wives, as well as with the "Club der Stauffacherinnen" of patriotic ladies, whose average age was over 60. With particular pleasure Mme Thalmann re-

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called an opening of the Maryland Annual Tobacco Fair, performed by her husband generously distributing Swiss watches, in return for which, not to mention the publicity value to our industry, she was presented with an outside Maryland ham.

Of their later stay in New York, where Monsieur Thalmann was accredited to the United Nations as Permanent Observer and Ambassador from 1961 to 1966, the speaker remembered with special pride meeting the famous Swiss bridge-builder Othmar Ammann and helping to establish friendly relations with the third-world by giving her expert advice to newly arrived wives of its delegations. Ten more years of the Thalmann's life were thereupon spent in Berne, where Monsieur Thalmann rose to become Head of the Political Division before his appointment as Ambassador to the Court of St. James's.

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