

Woman diplomat new envoy to Switzerland

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WOMAN DIPLOMAT NEW ENVOY TO SWITZERLAND.

Frances E. Willis, a woman career diplomat who has been assigned to Finland for the last two years, has been nominated as Ambassador to Switzerland, as mentioned in a previous issue of the "Swiss Observer".

President Eisenhower sent to the Senate her nomination to succeed Richard C. Patterson, a career officer who has held the top post in Switzerland since 1948. He is expected to be reassigned.

Miss Willis, fifty-four, joined the State Department in 1927, and has been Counsellor of Legation at Helsinki, Finland, since 1951. A native of Redlands, Calif., she has had extensive experience in diplomatic posts abroad.

Her prospective appointment was reported by diplomatic officials several months ago, but at that time Miss Willis said she knew nothing about it.

She has a rank of Class 1 Career officer. A graduate of Stanford University, she has served with the American Embassies in Spain, Great Britain, and Finland.

She is the first woman career diplomat promoted by the State Department to a top post in many years.

Both, The New York Times and the New York Herald Tribune carried editorials July 13 on the nomination of Frances E. Willis.

Said the Times:

"For the first time in its long and cordial relations with the Republic of Switzerland, the United States will now be represented in the capital of that sturdy little nation by an Ambassador. This is the result of a recent agreement between the Swiss and American Governments raising our mission in Berne from the status of a legation to that of an Embassy.

Another precedent also will be set. For the first time we are to be represented in Berne by a woman. The new, and first, Ambassador to Switzerland will be Miss Frances E. Willis of California. Miss Willis is a diplomat of wide experience. A graduate of Stanford University and a one-time instructor at Vassar College, she has been since 1927 a member of the Foreign Service. She is the first American woman to be promoted to Officer Class 1, the highest career post, and has seen duty in several South American capitals and in Madrid and London, where she held the rank of a first secretary.

At Berne Miss Willis will replace Richard C. Patterson Jr., retiring United States Minister. She

will profit from the fine record Mr. Patterson made there and from the new prestige which he won for the United States. It is in no small degree one result of his efforts that our legation at Berne has been raised to the status of an embassy."

And the Herald Tribune commented:

"The nomination of Frances E. Willis as United States Ambassador to Switzerland marks the first time that a woman has gone up to this high post through State Department channels. It is only the third time that an American woman has been named to a full ambassadorship. Miss Willis has had a career of unusual distinction in the State Department, after having started as instructor in Vassar College. Her nomination is sound not only because of her own merits but because it will provide an incentive to other women serving in her field.

That Miss Willis should be named to the post of Ambassador in Switzerland presents something of a paradox; for Switzerland does not have woman suffrage. Professor William E. Rappard, the great Swiss political scientist, explains how it happens that so progressive a democracy lacks what seems to us a wise reform. Switzerland, he says, is neither an aristocratic nor a proletarian country; it is governed by its middle class. "Now all history and all geography show," he comments, "that woman comes to her political rights in the drawing room and in the workshop long before she does in the kitchen."

Professor Rappard is undoubtedly correct; but the kitchen, as we have observed it, is in this epoch a far less isolated or backward spot than it has been formerly. Perhaps a Swiss movement for women's political rights will yet blossom. Perhaps Miss Willis' example will be a discreet encouragement. In any case, we are confident she will be welcomed for her experience and her proven competence for the post.

(*Amerikanische Schweizer Zeitung*).

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

Our next issue will be published on Friday, August 28th, 1953. We take this opportunity of thanking the following subscribers for their kind and helpful donations over and above their subscription: J. Dubs, J. F. J. Ammann, H. Andrea, Dr. Ch. Hagenbach, W. Schlapfer, H. Koch.

The Editor will be abroad from August 21st — September 14th, 1953.

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