

Nouvelle société helvétique

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1958)**

Heft 1315

PDF erstellt am: **21.07.2024**

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NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE.

(London Group).

An address by the Swiss Ambassador.

On Tuesday, 18th February, the Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur Armin Daeniker, gave an address on "Glimpses of Diplomacy To-day", at the Swiss Hostel, 9 Belsize Grove, N.W.3.

Mr. W. Renz was in the Chair, and there were well over two hundred members and friends present.

In introducing the speaker to the audience, the President voiced his own and the members' appreciation that in spite of the Ambassador's heavy engagements he could spare the time to address the members of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique on such a topical subject.

M. Daeniker said in the introduction to his speech that one encounters still a large amount of ignorance on diplomacy and even prejudice, although the general respect for diplomats had improved since the days when the Byzantine ambassadors were received by the Seldjouk Turks with tribal wizard dances and a frenzied beating of tambourines in order to mitigate the dangers of infection, or when the envoys to the Tartar Courts were made to pass through fire before being allowed into the Khans' presence. Later, magic was replaced by suspicions; envoys were often received with mistrust. Diplomats were also accused of laziness; the public forming its opinion from Talleyrand's much misunderstood dictum "Surtout pas de zèle" or the descriptions of diplomatic cocktail parties and receptions in the popular press.

The truth, as M. Daeniker explained it, is quite different: "A modern diplomat must penetrate the secrets of parliamentary life as well as the mysteries of modern journalism. He must know the operating conditions of international high finance as well as the needs of industry in its international relations, its influence on international policy, and of the world of trade unions. . . To-day it needs wide interests, a solid cultural background and an open mind to do the work of a diplomat." M. Daeniker stressed the fact that whereas the furtherance of national interest must always be the ultimate aim of diplomatic activity, honest methods and respect for the nations with whom he has to deal will be the means to secure any success. As in commerce, common sense should be the main instrument of diplomatic activity, which assumes that a compromise between rivals is mutually more profitable than a brow-beaten opponent.

The main part of M. Daeniker's talk was dedicated to Switzerland's foreign policy and Swiss diplomacy. He pointed out that we have to distinguish between the determination of a political course and its implementation. The former lies with the central authorities; it is the Federal Council which, under the supervision of parliament, takes all decisions on foreign policy. Both chambers of parliament have standing committees for foreign affairs.

The Political Department on the other hand is the instrument through which the Federal Council conducts its foreign policy at home and abroad. Its tasks are to safeguard the country's independence, neutrality

and security, to organize our representations abroad and entertain relations with foreign missions in our capital. The Political Department has further to watch over our foreign relations and to keep the Federal Council informed on the political situation in the world. It must also provide for the protection of our nationals and Swiss institutions abroad. It conducts negotiations and prepares treaties with foreign governments and maintains and develops our relations with the numerous international organisations. The Political Department has three services: the departmental branch, the diplomatic and the Consular branch. Their personnel is interchangeable and comprises to-day around 1,200 persons. The expenses for the Department and the foreign service will according to this year's budget amount to about 44 million francs.

The Ambassador called representation, observation, negotiation and protection the four principal functions of the diplomatic service. Speaking on the first point, he gave a historical sketch of Switzerland's foreign service, which increased from two legations (at the founding of the Confederation) to fourteen legations (in 1918), and to forty-nine diplomatic posts and four delegations of diplomatic character at the beginning of this year. Speaking of the recent change in the status of many of our diplomatic posts from the rank of legation to that of embassy, M. Daeniker explained that the category of ambassador had during

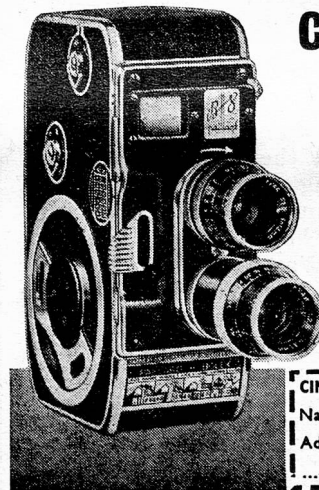
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the 19th century been reserved to the five great signatory powers to the Treaty of Vienna only; this state of things had however been completely altered during the last forty years, especially since 1945. Many nations, in particular those who have recently gained independence, insisted on being represented by ambassadors. Over seventy-five states have Ambassadors accredited to the Court of St. James and only seven countries are still represented by Ministers in London. The Ambassador then discussed some of the special tasks which fall to a *chef de mission*. He pointed out that when reporting on political matters it is not his job to compete with the admirable and very prompt work of the press correspondents. He has rather to weigh the facts in relation to Swiss interests and to supplement the press reports with more private information. The task of negotiation, which in former centuries was one of the envoy's main duties, is nowadays often performed by specialists sent out for the occasion by the interested departments of the government. Questions of international politics, on the other hand, are very often dealt with at the highest level by foreign ministers or heads of state. The diplomat's task is then to prepare the meetings, to warn and to advise, and to keep in contact with the people responsible to conduct the negotiations for the country to which he is accredited. If conferences fail, it is for them to gather the pieces and to tie the broken threads. Referring to "the curse of cocktail parties", M. Daeniker expressed his agreement with the words of the former Permanent Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office, Lord Strang, who described them as a clearing-house or exchange market

for political rumours, providing an excellent opportunity to deal quietly and informally with a lot of minor business.

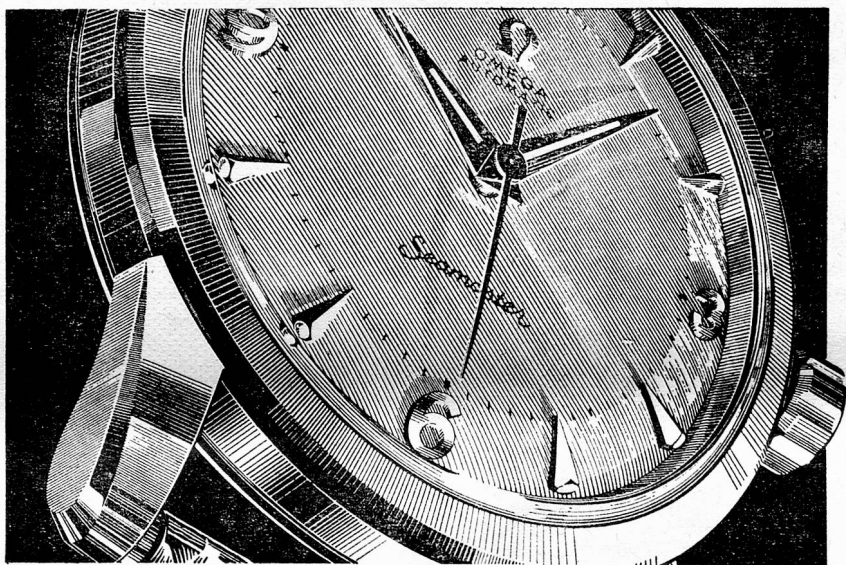
The Ambassador concluded his remarks on diplomacy with a few reflections on the protection of Swiss citizens in foreign countries in time of war, as well as in time of peace. This is not only an administrative duty, but can sometimes entail much active and humanitarian labour. He told us of the times during the last war when he had to house and feed and generally shepherd the whole Swiss Colony of over a hundred persons for many weeks in his residence in Teheran.

"At all times and in all respects the ultimate aim of the work of a diplomatic mission should be to uphold the dignity of the nation which it represents, to maintain its good name, always alert and ready to refute attacks on its reputation and prestige, to see that its material or moral interests do not suffer, to intervene whenever conflicts or difficulties arise and to assist everywhere in order to bring to full fruition any initiative which tends towards closer relations between the two respective countries."

Long and loud applause acknowledged the very interesting address of the Ambassador, which was followed by a short discussion.

Mr. Renz warmly thanked Monsieur Daeniker for his excellent *exposé*. The N.S.H. is to be heartily congratulated on having given us an opportunity of listening to a talk of such great interest.

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