

Ambassador is leaving us

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AMBASSADOR IS LEAVING US

Dr Albert Weitnauer, Swiss Ambassador in London since the beginning of 1970, will be leaving us to assume the new and heavy responsibilities of General Secretary, Director for Political Affairs at the Political Department from 1 January 1976. This change of posting is part of an important reshuffle among top Swiss diplomats in which Mr Ernesto Thalmann, present General Secretary and Director for Political Affairs, will come to London as Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador to Great Britain, and Mr Raymond Probst, presently Delegate to Commercial Agreements, will become Switzerland's new Ambassador to the United States in succession to retiring Ambassador Felix Schnyder.

The switch of duties between Dr Weitnauer and Mr Thalmann has been made following the wishes of the two men. Mr Thalmann, who had been General Secretary of the Political Department since August 1970, will be relinquishing a job reported to be extremely demanding. The man who holds it is, after all, the highest civil servant in the diplomatic service. This distinction will now befall on Dr Weitnauer, who had already held top negotiating jobs prior to his coming to London as Ambassador.

Commenting on the news of the reshuffle, Swiss newspapers laid emphasis

on Dr Weitnauer's qualities as a "thinker and a great negotiator". The *Journal de Genève* noted that he had been part of the negotiating force created in Mr Schaffner's days to conclude Switzerland's major commercial agreements with the outside world. It also noted that the crucial job of Head of the Commercial Division had eluded him and had been given to Ambassador Jolles, who negotiated Switzerland's Association Treaty with the Common Market.

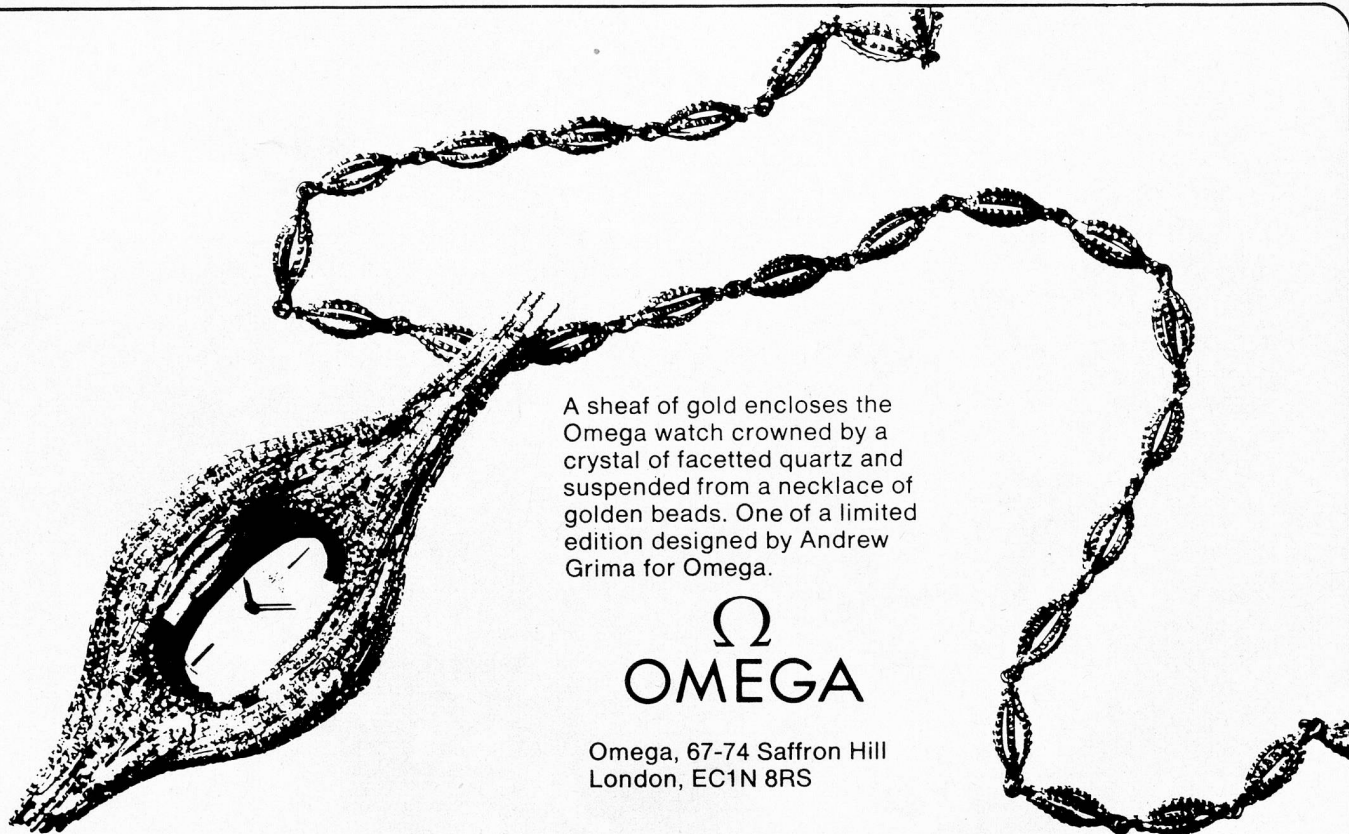
Dr Weitnauer's nomination to this most important new job, which will keep him in daily contact with Federal Councillor Pierre Graber, can therefore be considered as the normal conclusion to a distinguished career. The *Journal de Genève* said that Mr Graber had the "lucid tendency to name to the highest job those who, at a given time, can bring the most."

Born in 1916 and hailing from Basle, Dr Weitnauer studied in that city and obtained a Doctorate in Law from Basle University in 1940. He entered in the service of the Confederation the following year, working for the Federal Office of War Economy, and ending as Assistant Director of this department before switching to the Commercial Division of the Federal Department of Public Economy where he was promoted Head of Section in 1950 following a brief

posting in Washington. From 1953 to 1954, he was Counsellor in charge of economic and financial questions at the Swiss Legation in London, and held a similar post in Washington from 1954 to 1958.

Having been called back to Berne in October 1958, he was appointed by the Federal Council as delegate to Commercial Agreements from 1 January 1959. The following year he was awarded the title of Plenipotentiary Minister and at the beginning of September 1966 he was named, in addition, as Special Delegate of the Federal Council to Special Missions with the status of Ambassador.

As for Mr Thalmann, he was born in 1914 in Bellinzona, although his family originates from Bertshikon (Zurich). After having obtained a Doctorate in Law from the University of Zurich, he entered the Political Department in 1945 and was successfully posted to Berne, Paris and Prague. From 1954 to 1957 he was assistant Head of the Division for the administrative affairs of the Political Department. He was made Counsellor at the Embassy in Washington in 1957 and received the title of Minister three years later. In 1961 he was accredited as Switzerland's observer to the United Nations with the status of Ambassador.



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Back in Berne in March 1966 he took charge of the Division for International Organisations at the Political Department. In 1967 his services were placed at the disposal of Mr Kurt Waldheim, General Secretary of the United Nations, for special missions in the Middle East. In August 1970 he was named General Secretary of the Political Department and Head of Political Affairs.
PMB

MESSAGE FROM YOUR EDITOR

I am sure that every member of the Swiss Colony in the United Kingdom will be saddened by the news that our Ambassador, Dr. Weitnauer, is to leave us at the end of this year.

Let us take this opportunity of thanking him most sincerely for the help and guidance he has so generously given to all the Swiss Societies in this country.

I am sure I speak for all of us when I, through the columns of *The Swiss Observer*, offer Dr. Weitnauer our sincerest congratulations on his important new appointment – even though his gain is our loss!

Dr. Weitnauer delivered a short speech at the Eglise Suisse in London on the occasion of the 1st August celebrations held there. The text, along with reports of the celebrations held in various parts of the country, will be published in next month's issue.

The July edition carried a report of Dr. Alfred Aebi's address to the NSH on Swiss Security Policy. Unfortunately, space does not permit publication of his text in full as promised, but a copy will be supplied on request to any reader who would like one.

Finally, please accept our apologies for the late appearance of this month's issue. I am sure you will appreciate the production problems caused by holidays and other factors which are almost inevitable during the summer months.

W.G.S.

NEWS FROM THE COLONY

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

On 7 September Mr Charles Fairweather, of Oban, 23 Penbury Grove, Bexhill-on-Sea, will be celebrating his 85th birthday.

Mr I. G. Michel will be 67 on 8 and Mr P. H. Haberstich 76 on 9 of the month. Mrs N. Towers will have her 77th birthday on 10 September, and Mr W. B. Sigerist (Terriet, Vaud) will be 84 on 23. Mr M. Rothlisberger will be 76 on 25 September.

Mr and Mrs H. Humbel will have been married for 37 years on 24 September.

To all these readers and any others who will be celebrating birthdays and anniversaries shortly, we send congratulations and best wishes.

OBITUARY

It is with deep regret that we announce the death of Mr J. Oertli, of 13 Osidge Lane, Southgate N14 5JD. An obituary will follow in the next issue.

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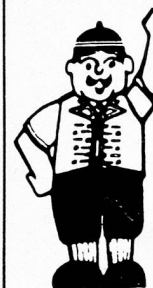
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