

Diplomacy After Hours

Austin F. Cross

I WAS standing in a corner at the Russian Embassy, wearing my old Brantford-bought Tuxedo, quietly absorbing some ice water. Donald Gordon, then head of Wartime Prices and Trade Board, put down his glass of orange juice. Sweeping his eyes casually my way, he said:

"Get my hat, please."

He had taken me for one of the Soviet's hired hands, who are usually dressed in incredibly bad fitting dinner clothes. But I was not offended that short-sighted Donald Gordon mistook PUBLIC AFFAIRS' diplomatic correspondent for a bouncer. It was the old fashioned Brantford "tux" that did it.

Next day Dover's rang up a sale for a new dinner coat.

But that's the diplomatic beat. Surely in all Ottawa nothing so glamorous, nothing so intriguing, nothing so absorbing, nothing so impossible as the diplomatic beat.

You could call me a refugee from the Striped - Pant Front. Don't get me wrong. I like the job. One day Mikhail Degtiar, late Soviet *Chargé d'affaires* and I are wise-cracking around a vodka bottle. Another time, it is the Irish Embassy, and soutanned priests: "Good day, Father, nice to see you, Father, goodbye Father." Then it could be Tito Land, with Mato Jaksic, who reminded you of *defenestrated* Jan Masaryk, talking about the days of Archduke Charles, Prinkep, and the bomb that started World War I. You dine at

the Italian Embassy, and study the series of wine glasses before you, while the plenipotentiary nibbles short bread and explains Italian policy. It could be the French, with their building by Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer, their paintings by some mad man, and their eye-smiting labyrinth of rooms in cow hide, rooms in birch bark, rooms in—but what is this, Homes and Gardens? There might be a realistic chat with the sober Dutch, you could be trying to get a colour story about a hit-and-run-Argentine diplomat, or there is time for ogling the beautiful girls who work for the Pakistan High Commissioner. It could even be dark-skinned Monsieur Cantave, of Haiti, struggling with you in English, while you struggle with him in French. Don't get me wrong. I like my work.

Caviar and Vodka

I SUPPOSE I should start with the Russians, because everybody wants to know about them. What are they like? Well, I have lived through several dynasties, I have been "in" with them, I have been "out" with them. Like an old time Graham MacNamee broadcast, he's up, he's down, no, he's up again.

I perhaps had my most active period with the Russians during the stay of Mr. Degtiar, the *Chargé d'affaires*. A tall handsome man, he had pink cheeks, blue eyes, and blond hair. He was a fine figure of a man. He had a good sense of humor, a

surprising perception. He liked people. For that matter, so do all Russians. Paradoxical as it may sound, the Russians are very fond of people. Only thing is, they are mostly afraid of them. Generally speaking, you get along with the Russians by immediately choosing non-controversial subjects like your family and the weather.

Degtiar and I have had some funny episodes. Once we went down to call on him. A fellow newspaperman said he had tried to call on the Soviet Embassy in Washington and ruefully reported: 'I didn't get to first base.'

I promised him we not only would get to first base but we'd get all the way home. So we did. Out came the vodka, out came the caviar, out came some wonderful bread. We toasted non-controversial people. My guest insisted on toasting "Churchill". Tovaritch Degtiar saw the funny side of it, and I would immediately follow up with a safe toast, say, "Molotov". Each toast would see my western friend crying "Churchill" with my fast follow up of "Russian Embassy" or "1951" or something that got us by. What I am stressing is that Degtiar saw the humour of the situation, and so did we all. The Russians can still laugh.

Today we have Leonid F. Teplov, who at first glance seemed a mere Milquetoast. Yet it was Teplov who broke the silence of seven years, and went off to Toronto to speak in Massey Hall on behalf of Russia. Never know looking at a frog how far he can jump.

My contact man is the hard-boiled realistic Vladimir P. Bourdine, first secretary. Fluent in English and French, some claim he is the Soviet Hatchet Man. For my part, I find his company stimulating, and he knows the answers. You can express yourself freely to him and he listens freely. I do not solicit his views because I realize how he stands. With the other Russians I exchange pleasantries, but I cannot say I ever saw much of them. That is because the occasions to meet them are rare enough. Mostly I take the Soviet Embassy in stride as I do the other diplomats, depending on the number of cocktail parties or whether they are in the news or not.

PEOPLE say to me: "How can you get along with these Iron Curtain people?"

My answer to that is something like this: if you are a staunch Protestant, you do not go up to a devout Catholic and say: "I don't like your Pope". You take the attitude that the Catholics are here to stay, that you have to live with them, and generally speaking, there are a lot of Catholics you like better than a lot of Protestants. In any event with an R. C., you just never get around to papal infallibility, you don't say: "let's chat about transubstantiation". Similarly, when you are with the Iron Curtain, you might perhaps sidestep the Korean issue.

A French diplomat once told me: 'In Australia, there are two words I was told never to use, 'convict' and 'colony'. A sane Canadian would hardly bring up Siberia and salt mines.

The Russians just as ourselves, like people, like life. But the Soviets have to be guarded, and they cannot be blamed if they do not trust us completely. It is a mutual distrust, and it puts a strain on a lot of people. I like the Russians personally. I know them to be communists. So what? They know me to be against communism. So what?

They used to entertain in the grand manner. They threw the place wide open, and had bars on all three floors. What with the generosity of the hosts, and the warm air, many a lady found the situation too much for her. One season, there was a powder room where some of our society were permitted to lie down on the floor till their attack of the vapours passed. In the days when glacial-eyed, high-cheek-boned Gusev was ambassador, Russians were our darlings, and the parties were wonderful affairs. Indeed, the next regime with Ambassador Zarubin in charge, saw plenty of *haut monde*. His Excellency would receive in the front room to the right of the hall, and then the guests would pass through to the first buffet. But for the special names at the Ambassador's elbow, a special little buffet with super special liquors, reposed. For instance, if the Prime Minister came along, he would be asked to pause and have a toast. Like as not, our photographers

would be permitted in, and get a good picture. Indeed, as late as last winter, Prime Minister St. Laurent and Plenipotentiary Degtiar were snapped under the picture of Stalin in the grand hall. Hollywood boasts of few actors as good as we have at diplomatic parties.

The guests mill around in the great hall down stairs, or have the advantage of three to four buffets on the ground floor. Best one, and coolest, is in the green house on the south side. It was there that Donald Gordon flagged me down and sent me for his hat.

But should you tire of the ground floor's epicurean delights, you could go to the second. As you made your way slowly upstairs, you said 'Hello' to people you had already seen on the ground, others you would ultimately see again on the third. Having made the rounds of the second floor, you are now fortified for the third floor. There too, you would see faces you had previously noted on the other two.

THE Russians figure that the best way to entertain you is to entertain you. They know they cannot provide any diplomatic twitter, they are all too aware of the Grand Canyon that divides the Iron Curtain from the Atlantic Pact world, so the easiest way to do is to feed the people, to pass out the drinks, and hope that the people will amuse themselves.

The Russki are renowned for their buffets. They do things the Russian way, and work miracles with fish. Or if your taste runs to caviar, you can have half a dozen kinds, and it is just as plentiful as if it had been scooped up from the bottom of the Rideau River with a dredge.

One day with the Russians I went into ecstasies over a fish. In my delicatessen delirium I fancied it specially imported from the banks of the Volga.

"I tink we get him in By Ward market," said one lesser functionary.

There went my culinary romance. For while it is true they do import some canned fish, most of the piscatorial delicacies are strictly A & P. It is the Soviet chef who does the rest.

There are salads and ices and jellies, the like of which you never saw. I don't

know how Lucullus made out back in the days when Rome was in the Big League, but anybody with a Soviet invitation card has himself a buffet out of this world.

The Russians used to invite everybody. Now they only invite whom they can trust, or whom they like. These friends might roughly be divided into two parts. There are those who are known sympathizers, say like the staff of *The Canadian Tribune*, a reddish paper. The others are those who are completely non-communist, but who are not nasty about it. This is a good generalization, for instance; it is conceivable that *The Toronto Star* would be invited, *The Toronto Telegram* would not. But I have known of French newspapers being invited, and accepting. The Russians, hard realists that they are, know how we Canadians stand. All they expect is that we do not take nasty cracks at them in our press. Hit them hard on the doctrinaire front, if you like. But they don't particularly like lies. I do not suppose I can get anywhere with this theme, but I do want to indicate that they pick and choose their friends, and I, as a continuing Methodist get invited, where perhaps some avowed left winger doesn't. who gets asked is the Russians' own business and they attend to it.

AT non-Iron Curtain embassy parties, they sometimes form a little knot all by themselves, but are very gracious if anybody talks to them. I usually manage to keep conversation on a light level, and we avoid controversial subjects. Personally, I find all the Iron Curtain diplomats friendly enough. But they know where I stand, I know where they stand. So we get along.

This is as good a place as any to tell a story about a certain Iron Curtain diplomat and a certain highly placed government official. It is apochryphal, maybe, but I am told by some that it really did happen.

The Slav had drunk a lot, and so had a Canadian. One bet the other that he could drink him down, each in his own beverage. It was agreed. So the Slav drank vodka and the Canadian drank Scotch. They drank and they drank. The Canadian re-

nowned for his prodigies of wassail, felt himself slipping. Knowing something of these things, he could not fathom how his drinking *vis-a-vis* could still stay up and swallow that much.

Then getting pretty tight, he suggested that on the next drink, maybe the 11th, they would switch glasses. This brought a sharp protest from the Slav. However, with a quick alcoholic burst of intuition, he grabbed the other fellow's drink as soon as he put it down.

Then he downed the vodka. It was nothing but water!

Warsaw Concerto

I HAVE seen the Poles go from the Far Right, to the Far Left. This has been an interesting experience. They have a Legation on Carling Avenue, in Ottawa's snooty Glebe, and they also have a residence in equally snooty Sandy Hill. Cocktail parties are held at 323 Stewart Street. I suppose my special "in" with the Poles goes back to the fact that I was in Poland in 1938, and have always kept up my contacts with them. In these days, the Poles are supposed to be all communists. But I put a twist to the oldie when I say: "Scratch a communist, and find a Pole!" The soul of a Pole is indestructible, whether he is making obeisance to the Kremlin, or Rome.

I got along fine with Dr. Fiderkiewicz, who quit his medical practice in Boston in 1922, to go back home to Poland. He got badly mussed up in concentration camp, but was the first Polish minister to Ottawa we had after the London Poles folded. It was Dr. F. who filled in the story of the Polish treasure being stolen, to give me a world scoop. He was next sent to Hungary, and as I flew over Budapest Easter Monday, 1949, I wished, that sunny morning, that my Czech plane would come down in Budapest long enough for me to visit with my old Carling avenue friend.

He was followed by Eugeniusz Millnikiel, a blue-eyed blond who seemed a bit bewildered, but who was graciousness itself to me. The scuttlebutt has it that

he was not the real boss, but that the trigger man, or political commissar, was somebody holding a lesser station. I wouldn't know, I just repeat what people tell me. Then since he could not clean up the Polish treasure mess, which is of course, of Premier Duplessis' doing, they decided they would punish Canada, take away Ambassador Millnikiel and send a *chargé d'affaires*. Whether to slap our wrists a little harder or not, I cannot say, but they recently despatched a *chargé* who cannot speak English—or couldn't when he got here. He is a delightful person, Eugeniusz Markowski, who arrived in Ottawa from Rome. We get along on my Lisgar Collegiate French, just dandy.

But by far the most glamorous thing that ever happened on the Embassy beat was when rosy-cheeked, black eyed, pretty-bosomed, gorgeous hipped Danuta Witezak arrived. She was the press attaché. One look at her, and who the—pardon, who cared what the ambassador looked like? She was the pin-up girl of the diplomatic corps, and our own Canadians in External Affairs sighed softly when they thought of her. She had lost a husband in the war, preferred not to speak of her war years, and enthused over life in Canada. In due course, she moved to the Polish Information centre in New York, where somewhere around 50th street, her beauty was wasted on the local hillbillies. I say 'was,' for she is now married happily. I think has a baby, and so the glamorous Danuta disappeared from diplomacy.

Replacing her was a man I always called Mr. Smith, but whose real name was Mysak. A wistful, soft spoken Pole, his job was hard, since the *Alpha* and *Omega* of the whole Polish mission in Ottawa was to get the Polish treasure back. He and his beautiful wife went home last December, and since then, Polish Information has more or less languished.

You ask me about their parties; well the Poles too, have vodka. Better than Russian vodka, say the Poles proudly. A Pole says everything proudly. They also have those fancy buffets, those Slavic delights. But of course, nobody can beat the Russians at this sort of thing.

People From Prague

THE Czechoslovaks these days are also operating on a limited scale. The big house 171 Clemow avenue, which once played host to Edouard Benes, which ran the whole gamut of middle-road democracy to left side Marxianism, is not as gay as it was. But then, it is not a Legation any more, until a proper minister has arrived. The Czechs have been getting by with a *chargé*, for a couple of years now. In a word, Klement Gottwald has not seen fit to send a minister to Ottawa, and we too are staggering along with nobody in particular in Prague.

The Czechs are the Scots among the Slavs, realistic, practical, less excitable, not so flamboyant. It is hard for me to write of the Czechoslovak Legation, because of the kindly ghosts of yester-year. One Christmas, for instance, the Crosses took over their Siamese cat to play with Mischa, the Czecho-Clemow cat of the Pavlaseks. Again, there were the brief days of Frantisek Nemecek, now an operator of chain store pastries in Ottawa. After Gottwald came Klima, handsome, discreet, almost inscrutable. He popped and now we have Zdenek Roskot, a blond C. d'A. with whom I get along well. I tried out my German on him at the Pakistan doings when Mahomet Liaquat Ali was here, and he responded by telling me a joke in German. The last party the Czechs had was a lot of fun. I talked French to the Pole, Markowski, drank a toast with the Russian *Chargé*, and generally speaking, kept up a bantering with V. P. Bourdine, Russian First Secretary, and anybody else who wandered into our circle. Plenty of flowers, plenty of buffet, plenty of fun.

Diplomatic 'Deviationists'

WE now come to the strange case of Tito. In the earlier days after the war, The "Jugs" as they are known in our set, were the Hatchet Men for Russia. Their news releases were supposed to be Moscow inspired. I remember one referred to a *Toronto Globe* story as "Old Lies" and another described somebody here in Canada as "Goebbels' Heir."

One day, however, the whole pack of these "Jugs" up and left, and I never saw hide nor hair of them afterwards, except the press attaché. He turned up, not at a Yugoslav do, but a Russian shindig. He said he was living in Toronto. I forget his name, but he was a nice chap, married to a Scots wife. He had a job to do for the old Tito mob, and he did it. Well, all that crowd cleared out, and there were all kinds of stories, that the previous *Chargé* had gone back to Russia, and not Yugoslavia, and so on. But I would not place too great credence in such yarns.

All I know is that the next man, Mato Jaksic, was a loyal and able advocate of his chief, Tito. He has been most cooperative, and enabled me to get a visa for Yugoslavia in 1949. I was there on Easter Sunday, among other days. Then Jaksic went home. I did not even get to know the next man, let alone pronounce his name. So Prebe—something or other has returned to Belgrade and the new *chargé* Slavko Zecevic is frankly a stranger to me. But they give good parties down at 17 Blackburn avenue, and the invited list is much more comprehensive than when Moscow reputedly "vetted" the names first.

Once upon a time at a Yugoslav party, you could count on a big display of flat-pauletted soldiers from the Soviet Embassy. Now, to the best of my knowledge, the Jugs and the Russkis never show up at each other's parties. They are the bitterest enemies in the whole diplomatic circle.

At the Yugoslav affairs, which have swung in my time along the Striped Pant front from far right to far left back to a little to the right of farthest left, the guest list has varied too. I know, for instance, I was off the list in the farthest left days. The Jugs in those times ran a closed shop on cocktail parties.

One of the picturesque features of the Yugoslav feasts is that you may get the atomic bomb served to you in a blue bottle. It will be labelled *slivovic*, and it will be described in the normal way as prune brandy. This is perhaps the Hans Christian Anderson manner. *Slivovic* is only for the initiated. You will also note that the bottles may have the Cyrillic script

instead of the Latin, a reminder once more that while the Croats and Slovenes took on the new fangled Latin script, the tough Serbs stuck with the old funny letters of the Russians, with Serb improvisations.

Today Yugoslav parties are a mixture of Belgrade cuisine and Morrison-Lamothe catering. Thus you get semi-oriental dishes mingling with Oxford Group recipes.

Well, that's the Slavs, the most interesting lot we have in diplomatic row.

That Latin Look

NOW, let's have a look at the Latins. Latins, like saints and sinners, come in different grades. By far the most interesting of the Latins have been the Argentines. For one thing, they have provided the most colour. They had the greatest swank. They produced some of the biggest fools. Latterly, they have sent us some of the nicest people.

Argentina was in the diplomatic dog house for more than a year a while back. Edouardo Vivot, a suave plenipotentiary, for instance, could not talk officially to our government for most of the time he was here, because he was not officially accredited. We (Canada) had to buttonhole him, and he, us, when nobody was looking.

Though he was never here officially, he lived in some splendor at the Chateau. (Diplomatically true). If you want to know how a man is getting along, one test is to see how the waiters handle him. The day I went into lunch with him at the Chateau, though others waited for tables, and ordinary Canadians grovelled before the *garcon*, Vivot and I were bowed in, personally escorted by two functionaries at least, to the choicest table in the middle of the room, and I was waited on with such solicitude and unction as had not come to me since I lunched once in Montreal with Jos. Simard, King of the St. Lawrence.

Canada had to be punished for snubbing Edouardo Vivot, and so they sent *Senor* Leguisamon. To him nobody paid any attention. But the *Senora*, said not to have lacked favour in the eyes of President Peron (with her chassis and class she would

not lack favor in any male's optics) she nevertheless made a big reputation for herself with her hats. Women writers wrote themselves into ecstasy over her lids. Gentlemen reporters merely laughed. Once, I remember, at a Chateau function, where the *Senora* wore a long pink beehive, which, with ruching, and standing about a foot high, nodded as she spoke. This, with a twitch from her girdle on the other side, pretty well robbed the rest of the party of anything to look at. The story goes that Argentina sent *Senor* L. here just to patch up some deal with Canada, and then despatched him to France.

It was sometime after this that we were visited by what must be the worst diplomat ever to come to Ottawa. He was a certain Mr. Rodriguez. I cannot go over his whole panorama of achievements, but I might highlight him a bit. First, he took part in a hit and run accident. Instead of squaring things, he wanted the Canadian Government to accept the version that this girl on crutches walked into his Cadillac. Then, to make matters worse, he asked for, and got, an apology from the Ottawa police for being bothered. He also bamboozled External Affairs into playing bus boy to his whims.

THE Argentine plenipotentiary's next public appearance was when he was accused in the Ottawa Journal of beating some dogs to death. The Humane Society took the view that this was what seemed to have happened. Once more, the Canadian government had to go and fuss around him, and tell him it was nothing really. Once again, the police had to be called off, once more, the Canadian government made a horse's neck of itself.

But finally the brave *Senor* went too far. He insulted the chief representative of another country, sneeringly called it "a nigger republic" and piled on a few other cheap jibes. Thus it came about that the representative of this small country challenged him to a duel! Of course, the press had a field day. We loved it, and everybody who knew the Argentine was all for the other fellow. As it turned out, this was *finis* for Rodriguez, and they sent him to China.

I did not so much mind that the ambassador more than once demanded of Hon. L. B. Pearson that I be put in jail. I was not too depressed when he urged that I be stopped from writing about him. What amazed me most, however, was that not only could this asinine character not speak either French nor English, but was a little deaf as well. So Peron packed him off to China, and immediately the Chaing-kai-Shek administration began to fall to pieces. Our estimable friend turned up at 20th Century-Fox studio in Los Angeles the same day I did, en route home, from China. As the Argentines now say politely:

"He is no longer in the foreign service."

As if to make up for this arrogant buffoon, Argentina sent a delightful ambassador, Senor Mellid. His wife was a sculptor, and when we went to the embassy on Landsowne Road, in Rockcliffe, one of the delights was to go and look at Senora Mellid's miniature sculpturings. One of her best was that of the little boy who delivered the Evening Citizen to her door. Both Senor Mellid and his wife were a charming addition to local society, and we were all sorry when they went.

The new man Augustin Nones Martinez is the first who could speak idiomatic English, for a long time. But he is a regular fellow. An interesting phase of his career here is that he flies the Argentine flag outside his window at 193 Sparks street, and that he and his staff seem to have the finest Cadillacs in Ottawa. (The story of embassy cars, their special Ontario licenses beginning with 9M, their little "CD" discs, and other *obiter dicta* could be an article all by itself!)

I was surprised the other day to find out that the new Argentine ambassador had taught Spanish in Japan, and also spoke some Japanese. I believe he was also a journalist in his day. In any event, both he and his predecessor have been such fine people that they have removed the unpalatable taste of the hit and run, duelling, dog beater.

South American diplomat here the longest, and enjoying the widest possible esteem was the Brazilian, Dr. Acyr Paes, a short, slight man with plenty of brains,

and a beautiful wife who looks as you think a South American lady ought to look. They had been here long enough so that their youngest child could speak Canadian slang. He remained to become finally *Doyen* of the Diplomatic Corps. Then one day came the inevitable notice to come home. I can recall no ambassador in my time that had as many farewell parties, and so sincerely tendered. These were no mere *pro forma* good-byes. It was no parchment and embossed *por prendre conge* over the *decolletage* and *demi tasses*. The Canadians liked the little guy. To all that I add my own wistful "Good Bye, Doc."

FOR a whole epoch now, I have been off the Peruvian lists. Don't ask me why. One ambassador has come, had his term, and gone home, without my so much as having laid eyes on the man. Dr. Luis Cuneo-Harrison, O.B.E. may well be back in Lima, but for all his being in Ottawa, he might just as well never have left Lima. This makes you begin to wonder how the one diplomat gets to know you, and you him. Then comes another man you wouldn't know if you saw even after a year in Ottawa. Yet that's the way it is with diplomats and deadline scribes like myself. It may be that the Peruvians did not know how to go about compiling a social list. I know I heard one society lady exclaim at my last Peru "Do" that hot summer night;

"What a lot of nobodies there are here."

I looked around, and sure enough there was almost nobody I knew or had even seen before. The poor Peruvian must have padded the list with everybody from the district who spoke Spanish. Then apparently along came another ambassador, and I didn't make that list. Yet strange are the ways of diplomacy, and it would not surprise me if I bounded back into the Peruvians' front parlor on some list soon. I was dropped anyway. Why, I'll never tell you. In 1949 I am on; in 1950 I am off. That's the Latins for you.

Wasn't it the Cheshire Cat that faded and then reappeared just as if he had never been away? It seems to me that is the way it was with said feline in Alice in

Wonderland. Well, that is how it has been with the Cubans. They had poked along as merely non diplomatic folk, for years, and a consulate was good enough for them. Next thing I knew, we had hustled off Emile Vaillancourt from Montreal to Cuba and they in turn had exchanged amenities and were therefore diplomatically represented. Then shortly after I had called at the Legation, there was hardly a Cuban in town who had the power to say yes or no. What had happened apparently had been this. As so often happened, this Cuban did not like Ottawa. The Latins mainly despise Canada and to them we are about on a par with Lower Slobovia. So our Cuban had gone home. But the house had been his own personal purchase, and was not officially a legation. So with the minister gone, the legation was gone.

But now in 1952, the Cubans have bounced back. Only before His Excellency Delfin H. Pupoy Proenza could get here, there had been a quick *coup* and a new president, Batista, was on top. There was some speculation as to whether or not the new man was really an ambassador (they stepped it up one, and Cuba and Canada now swap ambassadors, top tier stuff) or was merely the late ambassador. But Pupo said he was the real goods, he said he was a personal pal of Batista's and he promised the reporter a bottle of rum. That made it official.

I will not mention the country, but there was one lusty Latin here who used to have ideas. The curvaceous lady reporter who used to cover the beat usually managed to keep a table between herself and the plenipotentiary. When he started round to her side, she started to his. Thus, to save her honour, as the saying goes, she had to keep acting out the old "Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush." It is on record that the ambassador never caught the lady.

Another time, with another lady reporter, the ambassador was always asking her, instead of myself, whose business it was to cover the beat to his parties. And he was always suggesting swimming parties. I might add, he never got any notions about going swimming with me.

Now I am not saying that the South Americans are always *cherchez-ing les femmes*, but a few of them seem to have had that idea. Sent here to look after their country's interests, they seemed to forget all that, when a lady crossed their path. Then, like Harpo Marx, they had to chase the lady.

Scandinavian Smorgasbord

WE now come to another genre, the hard-working competent, interesting, Scandinavians. Dr. George B. Holler, the Danish minister, was in Canada almost 20 years. Papa, mama, and son all used to eat every day at lunch in the main dining room of the Chateau. Delightful people, they could have stayed on forever as far as Canada and Ottawa were concerned. But Dr. Holler's time to retire finally came, and we were all sorry to see them go. He seemed content, after earlier years in Russia, to run out his string in the tranquil back waters of Ottawa, rather than seek an appointment in the swirling intrigue capitals of Europe.

It began to look as if the Swedes too would pile up a long distance record. Or as some people who don't like Ottawa say, pile up an endurance record. Per Wijkman, the Swedish No. 1 in Canada spent about 15 years altogether in Canada, and approximately 10 of them in Ottawa. Mrs. Wijkman, by the way is a sister to Henry Wallace, 1948 presidential nominee of the Progressive Party when he ran against Harry Truman. The Wijkmans seemed to like Ottawa. He was what might be called a "correct" diplomat. He stuck by the rules. But his cocktail parties were delightful, and usually took place out on the lawn overlooking the Ottawa river. Of some interest is the fact that Sweden, being nearest neighbor to Russia, (nearest and still not under Soviet control I mean) the Swedish Legation is punctiliously polite to the Soviet hierarchy when they come for a sip of something. On the less grim side, I once heard a now-departed Latin diplomat date up a now-departed Slav diplomat's wife, down at the foot of the garden. How it all came out I never heard. Anyway, just as when it seemed

that the Wijkmans would live out their string in Canada as did the Danish Hrollers, they were transferred to Pakistan. Of this I am sure, no matter where the Wijkmans go, they'll never get a finer place to live than 720 Manor Road, Ottawa.

TO wind up the Scandinavians, let us consider Daniel Steen. He came to Montreal from London more than 20 years ago, and arrived in Ottawa only fairly recently. He too has settled down to live our fairly dull Ottawa bourgeois life, and for a man who once loved the glamor of big capitals, this has surprised many of his earlier acquaintances. My guess is that for Daniel Steen, this is the end of the run.

As to dietary propensities of the Scandinavians their entertaining is sometimes done at the Chateau, and so the food is strictly *maitre d' hôtel*. Nor do I recall any great *smorgasbord* down at the Swedish mansion on Manor Road. Yet at Christmas time, there was Yule glug a-plenty *Chez Wijkman*, and the biscuit that goes with it was done, Swedish style.

The Finns were represented by U. V. Toivola. When he was recalled he said: "No!". What was back of all this one can only guess, but a good conjecture is that having savoured the air along the Rideau Canal he had no desire to sniff the ozone in Helsinki, so close to the Soviet border. At least that's what I was told.

Toivola, a picturesque-looking man with ruddy complexion and a leonine mop of hair, also contributed a little stimulus to the rather dull annals of births, marriages and deaths, by marrying a beautiful blond young girl, while in Ottawa. Of some interest to many Canadians is the fact that he lived in the old home of the great Canadian poet, Duncan Campbell Scott. Of even more interest, perhaps, is the fact that the Turks were also after 108 Lisgar Street. Dr. Scott, therefore, had a choice between the Turks and the Finns for his old home and chose the Suomi. Although a much gayer crowd now throng through the halls that once knew John Masefield and Rupert Brooke, nevertheless, the kindly ghosts of poets seem to hover at times over the place.

It is said that bachelors have the best cooks. I had a lunch more than once with Mr. Toivola when he was a widower, in his home at 108 Lisgar Street, and I regarded them as among the most outstanding meals I have eaten in Ottawa.

Vive la France!

THE French really have the place to entertain. How many millions it cost, I forget. But it's the only place in Ottawa that was actually built as an embassy. It has rooms a hundred feet long. It had picture windows almost a generation ago. It has verandahs and grand marble stairs and rooms in the grand manner that make you expect that Marie Antoinette will enter on her sedan any moment, and begin to cry: "Let them eat cake".

It is my humble opinion that no ambassador since the war has been able to handle the French embassy in the style it should be handled. The John Street palace takes money, heaps of it. The Hauteclouques arrived with poor, cheap clothes that looked as if they had been bought in a bargain basement, yet doubtless, the best they could buy in France at that time. It was not long before they got some *haute couture*.

Where the ambassador went aground was when he ran a picture called "Les Enfants du Paradis". It was banned by the Quebec censors, and thus a whispering build-up far beyond its merits was given it. Actually, the film was poor, and dealt with the paid admissions in the balcony, to what we used to call "the gods." Anyway, Hauteclouque, like all previous French ambassadors, was regarded as primarily an ambassador to the Province of Quebec, and only incidentally, to Canada. If he could not satisfy French-speaking Canada, his usefulness was ended. Face was saved when Hauteclouque was promoted to Brussels.

The next man was Francisque Guay, a bearded politico and savant who apparently had no money. The government made sure he had been O.K.'d by the church, and there never was any trouble on that score. Guay busied himself with studying Canada. He scurried from one end to the

other. Indeed, he learned so much even in so short a time, that when he got back home, he wrote a book about Canada. A good one, too.

They say he was furious when he was recalled, because he liked the job. My guess was that he never had it so good, as the GI's used to say. But it was inevitable that he was hustled in to appease those affronted by Hauteclouque's movie, and that sooner or later a real career diplomat would be moved into the breach. Thus we got Hubert Guérin. I would have thought that Guérin would have known all the answers. But one day, when he invited the press, he served them, of all things, Canadian whiskey!

France, renowned for her wines, France, reputed always to do the right thing, did not even bother with Scotch, as even the lowliest host would do, but served up cheap Canadian whiskey. The boys, used to the best at other embassies, commented on it fairly freely. But they drank it just the same.

TO show you that the French can really turn it on, you should have seen the party the night the Embassy entertained President Auriol. I would think that of all the parties I ever saw in Ottawa, this was really supremely the best. Prime Minister St. Laurent looked radiant in white tie and tails. Bishops and archbishops in silk and scarlet, lent the color of the cloth. The military put on their most brilliant uniforms, with all the medals up, the most spectacular decorations. If the air force and navy vied with the army, consider also the kaleidoscopic effect of the foreign military attachés. There were the flat epaulettes of the Russians, the fancy dress of other Slav soldiers. Even the Yanks knew a trick or two about dolling up. Ambassadors were a dime a dozen and all at their most spectacular. Cabinet ministers did the best they could with what they had. Last but not least, were the ladies, ruining the old man's bank roll with Schiaparelli, Dior and Fath. Neck lines plunged and plunged and plunged. Male eyes popped and popped and popped.

But here is the payoff. For the poor

press *moujiks* of Ottawa, ordinary bad booze had been good enough. But for this *haut monde* out came the vintage champagne, the bottled sunshine of France was broken out in sparkling colors, and if it came to staid old whiskey, it was Scotland's rarest distillations.

The staircase thronged with a breath-taking crowd, the seemingly endless but always eye-smiting rooms thronged with people acting as if this was really over their heads, and the whole show looked less like something that was actually happening in Ottawa than in Hollywood. As I surveyed this ecstatic throng, I expected to hear Cecil B. deMille come over the microphone: "Just one more take".

Yes, the French can really do it up right when they want to.

Italian Hospitality

THE Italians are as smooth as syrup. Also they seem to have a real down to earth common sense you do not expect from so traditionally mercurial a people. I find the Italians as efficient and practical as Scots. Here at the Italian Embassy you get the best food of all, if you have a sit-down meal. White-gloved waiters serve chefs' dreams, and the glasses are appropriately filled to accompany the current courses. They seem, incidentally, to do much more with their wines than the French. Except for the Auriol affair, the French never really got going since the war. But the lunches for twelve or more, served at 5 Blackburn Avenue, are really a gourmet's rave.

Not the least interesting thing at the Italian Embassy during the regime of the just departed Ambassador di Stefano was this: there reposed on the mantel in the living room an ancestor of Madame Stefano who is—a saint! A great, great, great and many greats, uncle of hers, he died a bishop and was canonized.

Di Stefano was remarkable in that he spoke Russian. For that rare gift, he was rewarded with an exciting post. He was made Ambassador to Moscow. I was down at his farewell dinner, served in an empty house, with all the furniture

already Moscow-bound. Thoughtfully, however, the dishes remained with the embassy and so we had a rare meal, with special fried artichokes, and other exotic palate teasers. The Italians are good to the last, when it comes to the calories.

An amusing thing happened to me at this luncheon. I have always been partial to what we call French peas. I was extremely taken by some very fine and very sweet French peas, and sought more information. If those rare peas could be

bought at some exclusive delicatessen in Ottawa, I was going to have some, I asked an Italian *attaché* if I could get the name of the peas and find out where they were sold, if they were sold, in Ottawa. His answer was to bring in the label off the can.

Judge my surprise when I found that the rare and exotic "French" peas came out of a can labelled *Aylmer!*

Must be something in Italian cooking after all; the Aylmer Peas never seemed to taste like that on Sparks Street.

Diplomacy After Hours is the first of a series of two articles in lighter vein on the Diplomatic Corps in Ottawa. The second article in this series will appear in the Summer, '52 issue of PUBLIC AFFAIRS.

Freedom vs Security

In any large scale activity involving the interplay of many people standards tend to become debased to the level of the lowest. This is obviously what is happening in our society. The exceptional man prefers freedom to security; the mediocre man prefers security to freedom—security at the expense of freedom is what we are getting. The exceptional man finds his highest values in the satisfaction of the creative impulse, while the highest good of the mediocre is creature comfort—we are getting a society in which the supreme good, to which the government should bend all its efforts, is raising the standard of living.

PERCY WILLIAMS BRIDGMAN