

III ENTERTAINING

1 Introduction

Too often, people outside the foreign service imagine that its agents lead a life of leisure: "Receptions and dinners every day — they can't get much work done!" If only it were true! The fact is that the social round is part of the diplomatic function; the events are organized for a purpose*. The diplomat gives or attends a reception to broaden his contacts and his influence in the country to which he is accredited. Meeting local dignitaries or colleagues socially paves the way for later discussions at more official levels. The diplomat asks questions about the country and about matters of current interest in order to better understand what is going on and to report accordingly to the Department of External Affairs in Ottawa. At the same time, he is working to promote Canada's interests. Whatever the circumstances, an initial contact at a social level usually makes it easier to obtain desired results.

A diplomatic agent and his spouse are not usually expected to organize a reception or a dinner as soon as they arrive at a post. They have from six weeks to three months to settle in and get accustomed to the social life and customs of the country. This gives them time to choose the type of social activity best suited to their rank and the food and drink appropriate to the country, and to prepare as well as possible for the receptions they will host.

2 Types of receptions

(a) *Official receptions*

In diplomatic missions, an official reception may take place at lunch, in the afternoon, at dinner, or in the form of an evening reception.

Afternoon receptions are generally held on the occasion of a national day, the arrival of an important visitor, a conference or the like. Official luncheons and dinners are given in honour of the Head of State,

* In this connection it is important to remember that a diplomat will never be criticized for switching to mineral water or fruit juice after drinking a glass of champagne or a *vin d'honneur* at a reception.