

How England's New King Stopped a War

EDWARD VIII has become a king indeed. He has asserted himself as the most powerful monarch on earth. In doing so he confounded the most wily statesmen of Europe, including those of his own empire.

Moreover, he averted immediate European war!

These events have been shrouded in deepest secrecy, even though a portion of the drama was visible. The chancelleries of Europe know this story, and they are trying to measure and evaluate the new force that has come into world politics. Within innermost circles in London the facts are also known.

German troops marched into the Rhineland. Hitler was tearing up another scrap of the paper on which the Versailles Treaty was written. Here was potentially the greatest crisis since 1914. For here was action, a *fait accompli*—a thing done, such an event as starts troop movements, mobilizations, ultimatums, leading to war.

There were hurried foregatherings preliminary to a League meeting at Geneva. Most important was the swift departure of Captain Anthony Eden, British Foreign Minister, and colleagues for a "preliminary talk" in Paris.

Then suddenly it was announced that the meeting would not be held in Geneva but in London.

This by *order* of King Edward VIII!

Amazingly, the shift came on the order of a monarchy which for decades had given no orders. The Prime Minister is the master of Britain. The niceties of form are observed, but the rules of the game are well known, and were always quite rigorously observed by King George V.

However, on this occasion Prime Minister Baldwin and Foreign Minister Eden had been summoned to St. James's Palace. That much was recorded in the press. They found a new king who "told" them!—told his ministers what must be done, and made it stick. What arguments he used, or what pressure, no one knows; they must have been very definite. His conviction, in words attributed to him, was: "If the talks take place at Geneva, it means that another European war will be launched upon us within forty-eight hours."

The arrangements for shifting the fateful meeting to London were made so quickly that there was not even time to prepare special stationery. All that was used bore a League, Geneva, date line.

Why this veering? Quite simply because the wily M. Litvinoff, Foreign Minister of Soviet Russia, was pushing Europe toward the conflagration. His "case" was: "Hitler's action can be construed only as aggression, and the answer can take only the one form—war." To the French and British alike he made such representations. But Litvinoff and Eden have been, of late, the most spec-



EDWARD VIII



H.M. KING EDWARD VIII.

tacular diplomats of all Europe, and have been coming closer and closer together. And the whole shaping up of preliminary talks had been manipulated by Litvinoff toward a curt order to Germany to withdraw from the Rhineland within forty-eight hours.

That would have lighted the fuse. And the fiery and temperamental Mr. Eden might have furnished the match.

England's new king knew of all this. He knew also that there have lately been eight or nine cases of sabotage by Moscow agents, only two or three of which have been reported in the press. He knew that every Soviet ship which touches at an English port is under constant police surveillance to see that no more officers

of Russia's "shock troops" for use in other nations are smuggled into England. He was, in short, unable to see the picture of a "friendly" Soviet Russia as many in England and America see it.

And so that League Council meeting was held in London. What Eden had to say was strangely colorless. Litvinoff was subdued. The two sat side by side, as has been their custom in many conferences. Litvinoff's attitude was expressed in the declaration that the king was "blocking League of Nations justice." He declared further—as if implying better luck another time—that the League Council had not permanently moved to London.

"Even he," Litvinoff said, referring to King Edward, "cannot achieve that."

But it was not a mere change of scene which blanketed this worst crisis since 1914. King Edward VIII had given more instructions to his ministers. And they, and Litvinoff, and probably others, knew that he sat in his study during that meeting, listening via microphone to every word uttered!

And that is why war did not come to Europe.

That also is why statesmen today are taking into account a new force in world politics. As for Britons, those of the inner circles are said to be recognizing that, at the least, "another Edward" has come to the throne, and that his brother, the Duke of Gloucester, also must be reckoned with, because the duke was closely associated with him in the events recorded here.

Joachim von Ribbentrop, Hitler's ambassador at large, had been presenting Germany's case before the ministries of Europe. He had, of course, had his say in Downing Street. When the crisis had quieted, he was invited to the palace, where he was closeted for an hour and a half with Edward VIII. No one knows what went on, yet this is one more of many proofs that His Britannic Majesty is no mere symbol. Clearly, the world's most popular prince has become a real king.

THE END

EARL REEVES

Formerly Chief Correspondent of the International News Service in London

Liberty

JULY 25,
1936