

2017

4

Subject: Conversations with Edward after his abdication.

*Vienna*  
We did not meet King Edward until after his abdication when he arrived in Vienna where I was, at the time, Minister. We had not had the opportunity of meeting and knowing him during his visit to the Argentine which took place shortly before our arrival there in 1928. He had been making a number of trips to various countries and their principal objective was the ~~building~~ <sup>prompting</sup> up and promoting of British trade and prestige. When we arrived in Buenos Aires we heard many echoes of his visit which had been a very successful one as, so far as I know, they were everywhere else that he went. At the time of his visit to Buenos Aires the first Secretary of our Embassy was Bennie Thaw, who was married to Consuelo Morgan, the daughter of Edward Morgan, an old friend of ours. Thaw had been Secretary of the Embassy in Brussels while we were stationed in Antwerp before going to Buenos Aires. Consuelo was a very charming and a very beautiful woman. The one unhappy memory we found of Edward's visit to Buenos Aires was that during his stay he had shown a great deal of attention to Consuelo and this did not please many of the young Argentine beauties who had replenished their wardrobes in Paris for the visit.

Although we had not met King Edward before he arrived in Vienna after his abdication in late December 1936, we had a number of friends who were his friends. We had a great deal of sympathy for him and my wife in particular had a great deal of admiration for him. We followed the events leading to his abdication with much distress.

The day after the abdication the British minister in Vienna, Sir Walfred <sup>and</sup> Selby, who was a very close friend of ours, called on me and said that Edward was arriving there and would stay with Baron and Baroness Rothschild at their place, some distance outside of Vienna. He himself had a great deal of feeling and sympathy for the King. He said he wished to do everything to make these days in Vienna as easy and as

*as possible*  
pleasant for him. He was sure I would be able to help him in this as would my wife. I told him that I was sure he knew what our feelings were and that while I did not see that there was much that we could do he could depend on us to do anything we could to help him.

The Sunday of Christmas was approaching. The British Minister asked me whether I would be willing to read the first or the second lesson during the service. He would be very happy if my wife and I would occupy the usual pew on the left-hand side in the front, which was reserved for the American Minister and his family. Edward and he and Lady Selby would occupy the front pew on the right-hand side. Edward was going to read one of the lessons, would I read the other. I told him that I would be very happy to do so. Selby asked me if I was sure that that would be pleasing to my government - he was referring to the emotions and feelings which had been raised in so many places. I told him that I did not think that it was a matter of any concern to my government what I did in a matter of this kind and, in any event, I was very happy to do it as it was one way of showing the Archbishop of Canterbury, for whom I did not have any particular feelings of respect, how my wife and I felt about the whole matter. The little English church in Vienna is just across from the old Embassy residence. It was a cold morning and it was snowing a little. The church, of course, was full. When I noticed what the two lessons were and that they both contained about as many difficult names as can be found in any chapters in the Bible, I was wondering how I could stumble over some of them. It was perhaps one of the services in a church which affected me more deeply, or at least caused certain emotions, than any other that I had ever attended. When the rector read the service and the prayers, there was substituted, of course, for the first time, the name of the new King. Edward seemed to be completely collected and calm and read the responses

in a clear unemotional voice. When I had to read the lesson it was not only the difficult proper names but also a certain emotion which made me stumble through it. Edward read the lesson pronouncing some of these almost unpronounceable names, or at least those unfamiliar names to most of us, without halting; it was a perfect performance.

After the church service Selby asked us to cross the street to the Legation for lunch with them and the King. There was, I recall, only Selby and Lady Selby and the King and my wife and myself and one of the young honorary attachés of the Legation. Edward and I crossed the street from the church to the residence, and immediately we reached one of the large living-rooms he led me to a sofa and began to engage in lively conversation with regard to the American press. It was the only one thing on which I ever found him bitter during the many conversations which we had later during his stay in Vienna. He asked me many questions about certain newspapers in the United States. When luncheon was announced we got up and he said, I believe almost textually: "It is because of the American newspapers that I am here today".

After luncheon we engaged in further conversation and I told him that I congratulated him on the way he had read the lesson assigned to him at the service that morning. He looked surprised and asked me why I considered it unusual. I told him that as a boy I had been a great reader of the Bible and I still read it a good deal but that some of these biblical names were, for me, unpronounceable; he seemed to be entirely at home <sup>with</sup> ~~in~~ them. He said: "Why shouldn't I be? Almost from the time that I was able to talk I had a lot of the Bible every day and had to read a lot of it out loud".

It was only a week or so after Edward had arrived in Vienna and was staying at the home of the Rothschilds that <sup>Baroness</sup> Kitty Rothschild came in to see me. She said that there was an impossible situation at

their home in the country. The Austrian government had been very kind in giving them some patrols so that they would not be molested but notwithstanding this, newspaper reporters crawled over the walls, roamed through the gardens, and that morning one of them, she found, had climbed the vines and was looking into either her bedroom or bathroom window, I do not recall which. She said unfortunately she had to tell me that most of them were our fellow countrymen - she was, I believe, born in Philadelphia. She wanted to know what I could do about it. I told her I felt pretty sure that it was not the American correspondents of the news agencies of responsible papers stationed in Vienna. They were probably special correspondents and it would be difficult to deal with them. With the help of the American newspaper men in Vienna, who did not of course approve of any such practices, we were able to see that they were not molested further in this way. She said that she foresaw that they were going to have really one problem. Edward, of course, had no sense of money and he was on the long distance telephone for hours every day since he had arrived. He would call his mother and have very long talks with her. He would call his brother, the King, and talk with him at great length. Baroness Rothschild said laughingly: "You know, we are not among the rich Rothschilds and these telephone bills appal me a bit". I told her that I did not think she had to concern herself about that as I was sure that that sort of thing would be taken care of in due course.

I am not a judge as to what the feeling was in England at the time with reference to the King, but I did get reflections of the harsh attitude which the government was showing towards him. He had come to Vienna with only a very small retinue. Two of his most faithful equerries who were fine upstanding young men had accompanied him. After the King had been in Vienna for a few weeks Selby told me that both of these



equerries had received instructions by cable from London to return. If they did not return their status in the British government or in the civil service or whatever it was would be imperiled. There was nothing for them to do but to return because Edward was not in a position to take care of them financially; besides that, he had had to advise them to return as they should not risk their future. Selby went on to say that Edward would need an experienced secretary and would need one immediately as these young men were returning almost at once. Selby said that the King wanted Dudley Forewood, a young honorary attaché of the British Legation in Vienna, to act as his secretary. He had tried to explain to the King that it would be quite impossible, for while Forewood was a splendid young man he was very young and didn't know the world and would not be able to do any of the things which a secretary would have to do for him in Vienna.

Selby said he wished me to help him in this matter. He had done everything in his power to persuade the King that young Forewood was not the man for such a post no matter what his other capacities were. He thought that whatever I might say to the King might be helpful in this respect. By that time we had had a number of conversations usually in the British Legation. Selby arranged for us to see each other there. I told the King that I understood he wished to engage young Forewood as his secretary. I said that I could quite understand how he was attracted by the young man for he had a very pleasant personality and would undoubtedly develop into a very useful public servant. He was, however, very young; he did not even yet know Vienna very well. My wife and I were very fond of him; he was in our house a great deal as we had several of our nieces staying with us. What he needed was someone who knew people and how to take care of them - someone to stand between him and the hordes of people who were trying to press in on him. It required a

person of understanding and experience. If Forewood were ten years older he would probably be an ideal man. The King kept insisting what pleasant manners Forewood had and that it seemed to him that he was just the person for the post. The conversation dragged on and I made no progress. I felt that I had to be insistent because the matter was important for the King. Besides that I wished to be helpful to Selby whose problems would be very much multiplied if the King did not have a proper secretary. Finally Edward turned to me in desperation and said somewhat the following: "You are telling me that I don't know people - that I'm no judge of people. How should I be a judge of people? From the time that I was able to get around as a very young child, whenever I learned to know anybody I was told all about them before I met them. I've never had the chance to form my own opinions about people. They were always made for me". In spite of the many tragic aspects surrounding his life at the time and his many preoccupations, Edward was always calm and contained but he said this with a great deal of bitterness. I had never *really* appreciated before how little opportunity persons in great positions, such as he was, have to form their own opinions about people. It made me feel more kindly than ever towards him. Selby and Lady Selby did everything in their power to make the life of Edward in Vienna pleasant. They had dinners and luncheons at the Legation residence. They did everything they could to ease some of his problems. Edward carried himself very well and rapidly gained the sympathy of all classes of the population in Vienna.

It was, I believe, several months after Edward had been in Vienna that Selby told me that the financial problems of the King were becoming serious. The British government had so far made no allowances or provision for him. He felt sure that it would be done in due time but in the meantime the situation was very embarrassing. He felt that

no matter how his government might feel about certain aspects of the whole matter, that they were treating the King in a really very shabby way. He had quite unhesitatingly told his government what he thought about it and that adequate provisions should be made without delay. He had suggested that someone come to Vienna to look into the matter and to talk with him about it. He had just had word that Amery, who was I believe then Minister of Colonies, was coming to Vienna. He wanted to know if after he had talked with Amery I would be willing to do so. I told him that I doubted that anything I might say in the matter would be helpful and whatever I said would have to be, of course, in a purely personal way. Selby said that there were certain people in the government in London who had a good deal of regard for me and that anything that I would say to Amery would carry a good deal of weight with him and with at least some of his colleagues in the government in London. I told him that I would be very glad to see Amery. I think he came to lunch at our residence; in any event we had a long talk in the library of the residence. Amery asked all sorts of questions; he asked me what my own views about the matter were. I told him that I could only express my personal views. I did not know how much use they had. I said that it was my opinion that whatever the circumstances surrounding the abdication had been and whatever the feelings were which might exist among a part of the British people and among certain members of the government, that all of them would regret it later if they did not now do something to make adequate provision for the King. I did not know what properties he had; I did not know what access he had to funds. All I knew was that he was very hard up and that he was living very modestly and largely on the bounty of Baron and Baroness Rothschild. That sort of thing I did not think was in accord with the way the British government handled things of that kind. I told Amery that feelings naturally



ran high but that one thing that I thought any government in these circumstances should bear in mind was that for many years the King had visited all over the world as Prince of Wales. I said that in my country and in many others there was a very deep feeling of respect and admiration for the King. Of course, feelings were mixed. It could not be forgotten, however, that the press already had got hold of this difficult financial situation of the King and that the government in London was not doing anything about it. This under any circumstances was certainly not good for the prestige of any country or for any individuals responsible for it. I thought certain personal feelings had to be forgotten. We had a good deal of conversation along this line and Amery thanked me for having talked with him about this matter in this personal and frank way and said that it had been very helpful. It was shortly thereafter that some provision was made for the King. As I recall the original provision was pretty shabby but it did at least put him into a position where he was not living on the bounty of others. Certain adventurers who later came into his life and who were thinking only of themselves were only too eager to make offers of help of various kinds to the King.

On various occasions when we saw each other the King spoke freely about the divorce proceedings of Mrs. Simpson and of their approaching marriage. Just about the time that he left for France in order to go to the home of an American where Mrs. Simpson had gone after the divorce, or perhaps even before, my wife and I left on a trip to the United States. When we returned to Vienna weeks afterwards, Edward had just returned with his wife. A few days after our return the Brazilian Minister in Vienna, Sam Gracie, and his wife, who was of English origin, gave a small dinner at the Brazilian Legation for the King and his wife. The Gracies had invited only the King and his wife and a young secretary



of the Italian Embassy whose wife was English, and ourselves. The Gracies had two charming daughters and a niece who stayed with them during the time that he was Minister in Vienna and they, of course, were present at the dinner. I found myself seated at her side. We had a very pleasant general conversation until almost at the beginning of the dinner she began to talk about the American press. She was very explicit in many ways and she could not have talked in a more bitter way. The King who was seated practically opposite her was listening to every word that she said to me and kept nodding his head. It was rather an embarrassing conversation because it was rather purposeless.

After dinner, as coffee was being served, I was told by our host that a secretary of Dr. <sup>Schuschnigg</sup> ~~Schuschnigg~~, whom I knew very well, was in one of the Legation offices on the ground floor and wished to see me as he had an urgent message from Chancellor Schuschnigg. I saw the young man and he gave me a message to the effect that the Chancellor had just had news that there had been a train wreck near Salsburg of one of the trains from Germany to Italy and that some of the cars had been broken open in the wreck and they contained the material which the Chancellor and I suspected they did. The Chancellor wished me to have this information immediately.

Some time before, Chancellor Schuschnigg had told me that he was a good deal disturbed by reports to the effect that sealed cars passing from Germany to Austria into Italy and destined for the south of Italy almost certainly contained naval shells manufactured in Germany and which were intended for a deposit of these naval shells at two ports in the south of Italy. The idea was that this depot of shells was being established so that there would be an available supply for German warships in the Mediterranean in case of need. The Chancellor told me that although they felt pretty sure that these sealed cars contained

these shells there was no definite way in which the Austrian government could do anything about it. These cars were going through Austria in transit from Germany to Italy; they were sealed. The Austrian government had no right to subject these cars to any customs examination.

He said that Austria did not wish to be a party to this traffic. They had done so far nothing to try to stop it. If, of course, they knew that the cars contained these naval shells they would be able to stop it. He said that if there should be an accident on the railway and some of these sealed cars should be wrecked in the accident the cat, of course, would be out of the bag.

When I returned to the living-rooms of the Legation, the King engaged me immediately in conversation. The conversation began to turn on the relations between Italy and Germany. I was very guarded in any remarks which I made, particularly as the Secretary of the Italian Legation was there. ~~While~~ We were seated in a room off the main drawing-room, I could see that the King was rather curious to know why Schuschnigg had sent somebody to see me. He had been apparently told by the Brazilian Minister why I had left the room. I do not know why I committed the indiscretion but it is one of those things that one does and I simply mentioned to the King that there had been a railway wreck near Salsburg and that some sealed cars in transit from Germany to Italy had been found to contain naval shells. He was very interested in this but I gave no details. Shortly thereafter I saw him in conversation with the Secretary of the Italian Embassy who almost immediately excused himself saying that he had to return to the Legation and do some work. We all knew that the Italian Minister in Vienna at the time, Mr. Preziosi, who was a very amiable gentleman and had extraordinary hours of work. He sometimes worked and he kept his secretaries with him until three o'clock in the morning. It was, therefore, nothing unusual that this Italian Secretary

should say after dinner that he had to go back to the Legation to work with the Minister. I couldn't help but smell a rat.

The next day about twelve o'clock the Military Attaché of our Legation brought in to me a decoded telegram which Preziosi had sent the night before to the Foreign Office in Rome, saying that at the dinner the evening before King Edward had said to his secretary that this accident had taken place at Salsburg and that the cat was out of the bag so far as the naval shells were concerned. While we in our actuation in the Legation in Vienna were very careful in all that we did those days, it was our duty to follow developments in Austria very carefully which we did. Like, I suppose, every other important legation in Vienna in those days, we were able from time to time to get hold of cables which were sent out by the various missions. This particular cable had been secured by our Military Attaché as I had asked him to be on the lookout for anything going out from the Italian Legation that day.

In those days, although there was a good deal of tension between England and France and Italy, and although we at home were following the activities of the Italian Fascist government very closely not only at home but in Africa and elsewhere, we had very friendly relations with the Italian Legation. The Minister, as I have said, was a career diplomat who, I am sure, had absolutely no sympathy either with the Nazi government or with any of its works. How much he was in accord with the Fascist regime in his own country I do not know. He served his government usefully in Vienna and I think his actuation was in the interest of Austria and of maintaining the peace. He was a perfect representative in Vienna of the Italian policy of maintaining the integrity and sovereignty of Austria. We had many interesting conversations from time to time and I always found him a most correct, understanding, and discerning diplomat.

When I first arrived in Vienna towards the middle of 1934, the support of the Italian government to the Austrian government and against Nazi infiltration in Austria was clear cut, powerful, and extremely helpful. At that time Mussolini was still holding his own in the unholy alliance between himself and Hitler. As I believe I have elsewhere noted, Mussolini was of the opinion that he would be able to remain the stronger of the two in this combination because he was the saner of the two. There were few of us who had any illusions as to what would ultimately happen; as the military power of Germany grew Hitler became more and more arrogant in his dealings with Mussolini. It will be well recalled that there was a moment when Hitler was about to intervene forcibly in Austria, and even Goering and some of his associates believed it was premature and inopportune. It was at that time that the strong and firm stand that Mussolini took in making it clear to Hitler that if there was any intervention by Germany in Austria, that the Italian troops would march, that had a tremendous effect. That, however, was the high point in the story of the Italian support of the Austrian government. As time went on Mussolini became more and more the smaller figure in the alliance between him and Hitler, and the pre-occupations naturally of the Austrian government increased. The Austrian government was convinced that England and France would not intervene in case of direct intervention by Germany in Austria. Selby, the British Minister, and Peaux, the French Minister, made almost daily or at least three or four calls a week at the Foreign Office in the Ballhaus Platz, and showed their friendly interest in the maintenance of the Austrian government, but as time went on their language too began to weaken as the Chamberlain government more and more proceeded towards the line of Munich. Already well before the death, that is, the assassination of Dolfuss, he had become fully aware of the realities of the situation and



was convinced in his heart that England and France would not directly intervene in case of attack on Austria and that the Italian support, while still strong, was growing weaker. The real bond of personal feeling which existed between Mussolini and him, he knew, would not be sufficient to maintain the Italian attitude in the firm position that it had been. When Schuschnigg became Chancellor he, like Dolfuss, felt that he could talk with me about these things and opened his heart. They knew that they were far away but they had great confidence in our country. Instinctively they seemed to know that when conflict came that we would be in it and that we would carry the burden of it and that our attitude towards Austria was and would be friendly. In none of these conversations with Dolfuss and Schuschnigg and other Cabinet officers did I have to go beyond the limits of discretion and of my instructions. They did not expect me to say much <sup>on the matter of support.</sup>. They were interested in talking to me, making their problem clear to our government, and letting our government know every detail that might interest us of what was happening in German-Austrian and German-Italian relations.

It was shortly after this dinner in the Brazilian Legation, to which I have just made reference, that I received my instructions to return to the United States for service in the Department in Washington. Since the time that we then left Vienna neither my wife nor I have had the opportunity of seeing the Duke of Windsor. Years later when I was in Mexico as the head of the Mexican Light and Power Company, the Duke and Duchess came to Mexico City for a visit, but it so happened that my wife and I were in the United States. They came, I believe, in the **railway** car of Mr. Young, a financier and railway man of sorts, who I suppose was endeavoring to improve his own position by being host

to the Duke and Duchess. In view of the affection which we both had for Edward, my wife and I were happy that we were not in Mexico City when this visit took place. We would have been glad to see him but we had no interest in the people with whom he was more and more becoming surrounded.

At an earlier place in these notes where I speak of the luncheon on Christmas Sunday after his arrival in Vienna and after the abdication, there should be inserted a note to the effect that during the conversation that we had in the British Legation immediately before luncheon Edward asked me what I thought of his abdication speech. I was a little surprised by his blunt reference to it. I told him that it was a very moving speech, I said that it was really a great speech. It was very well done. He seemed to be greatly pleased by these observations and said with rather a wry smile: "I wrote most of it and Winnie wrote the rest".

207a

2

Subject: The following is a supplement to the memorandum on conversations with King Edward in Vienna.

At the end of the notes on the conversations with King Edward in Vienna I state that at lunch following the church service on the Sunday after his arrival in Vienna, following the abdication, Edward asked me what I thought about his abdication speech.

In the issue of the United States News and World Report of April 15, 1955 there is an article on Churchill in which there is a paragraph which reads as follows:

"There were long consultations. Churchill advised patience, wanted time to take its effect. Edward chose, instead, to abdicate and to prepare the draft of his famous address of farewell. Churchill went over it with a vigorous pencil, adding rolling Churchillian phrases. Later, listening at the radio, he is said to have commented on Edward's unexpected abilities as a speech writer."