

LITVINOV WINS COVETED HONOR FOR DIPLOMACY

Russian Foreign Affairs Commissar Accorded New Recognition.

BY MILTON BRONNER
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LONDON, Aug. 7.—Round-faced, rosy-poly Maxim Maximovitch Litvinov, who usually wears a broad smile as well as a big black hat with a big round brim, was working for Russia at an international conference at Montreux recently, while his fellow members in the Soviet government at the earnest behest of Boss Stalin made the absentee a member of the coveted Order of Lenin.

They might have conferred upon him the Order of the Red Banner or the Red Star, but they all thought the best was none too good for their very successful Commissar of Foreign Affairs. It was as if the King of England bestowed the Order of the Garter or the President of France the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor.

Often Ousted as Undesirable

It was just another big "up" in the life of this man whose see-saw career has been full of ups and downs. He might have been a Rabbi in an obscure Polish town like one of his kinsmen but like the foreign affairs of one of the most powerful countries on earth. He has starved in garrets and feasted in mansions. He has been booted out of European countries as an undesirable citizen and received back into those same countries with soldiers presenting arms in his honor.

He was once the guest of King George of England—in Brixton prison, eating jail fare off tin plates. He has also been the guest of King Edward VIII—in Buckingham Palace, eating a very good lunch off the famous palace plate. In the past, he had frigidly been told by British officials where he got off. Years later with equal arctic coolness he had the pleasure of telling a British ambassador in Moscow that his majesty's servant was not dealing with beggars and had better mend his manners.

Served in Czar's Army

The honor which was conferred upon Litvinov was intended as a birthday present for his sixtieth anniversary. He was born in the town of Bialystok, the family name really being Wallach. His people were moderately well-off and the boy got a secondary school education, then served his time in the Czar's army. By the time he was 22, he was a full-fledged Socialist and revolutionary with the dreaded Okhrana—the secret police—having its eye on him. He was arrested numerous times and harshly treated. In 1901 he was again arrested, this time for running a secret printing press in Kiev. Two years later he made a daring escape from prison and, for a time, lived abroad.

He came back to Russia and, when the Socialist Party split, he joined the Bolsheviks. In St. Petersburg he served on the same revolutionary paper as Lenin, whose faithful lieutenant he became. He crossed and recrossed many frontier lines in tropic with fake passports and bearing false names such as Pinkenstein, Louvigne, Pouchet, Felix. Abroad, he purchased arms for the followers of Lenin. In 1907 the Czar's government seemed to have things firmly in hand. Russia was an unhealthy place for a revolutionary. Many other countries would not have him. So Wallach, now Litvinov, landed in England where he eventually married an English woman, Miss Ivy Low, sister of two celebrated English newspaper men.

Held as Hostage in Britain

In London for a considerable period by day he worked as a book-keeper and teacher of languages and by night as an active agent of the Bolsheviks. In 1918, when the Bolshevik government had been in power in Russia, for some time, Trotsky named Litvinov as Russia's ambassador to England. As Britain had not recognized the Soviet government, it did not recognize Litvinov as an ambassador. In fact, it did not know what to do with him. But in the following September it found a very good use for him. Some Britons had been arrested in Moscow. The British promptly arrested Litvinov. When the Britons were released, Litvinov got his freedom back. Also he was booted out of the country.

He went straight back to Moscow where he was made Assistant Commissar of Foreign Affairs. Six years ago he was made Commissar. He has been in many ways the most successful foreign minister in Europe. When the world economic conference was held in London several years ago, smiling Litvinov sized it up as a mere foundry for the spilling of hot air. He left his fellow delegates to their idle oratory. He got busy in other quarters and, when the conference broke up a complete failure, Litvinov returned to his country with an armful of non-aggression pacts he had signed with various countries bordering on Russia.

Germany Is His Main Worry

It was largely his diplomacy which led to a resumption of diplomatic relations between the United States and Russia, to Russia's entry into the League of Nations and to the defensive military pact between France and Russia. Lots of successful Russian political servants have one big nightmare, whether they still find favor with Stalin. Litvinov has no worry on that score. The big boss calls him the leader of Soviet diplomacy and the indefatigable fighter for the cause of peace in the interests of the workers. No, Litvinov has another nightmare. His name is Germany of the Nazis. His whole diplomacy today is shaped so that Russia will not have to face militarized Germany alone.

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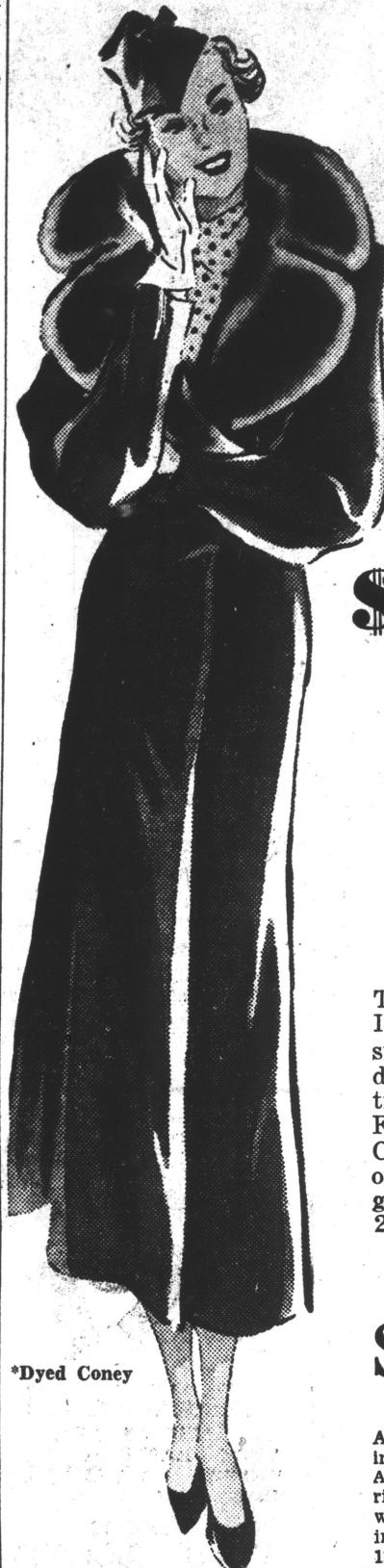
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