

Halifax Has Made Many Friends Here

Rumor Ambassador Will Be Recalled, Therefore, Arouses Incredulity; Most Popular Envoy in a Long Time

By Hope Ridings Miller

LORD HALIFAX'S reply, "I hope so," when asked the other day if he was going to remain in the United States, hasn't done much to stem Washington table talk to the effect that he will soon be recalled.

About four months ago I first heard the rumor that the first popular Ambassador Britain has had here in many years was to be replaced. Couldn't believe my ears then. Seemed to me both Lord and Lady Halifax were doing much too good a job; were making friends with Americans who for a long time had been coldly brushed off by predecessors at the British Embassy; and were establishing a new high in friendly relations with persons of low and high degree all over the United States.



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Yes, I know the British Embassy telephones are still answered in as chilly a fashion as ever, and that a straight question, no matter how innocuous, put to almost anybody who picks up the receiver there is still the rarest thing you can imagine.

A FEW DAYS ago a local newspaper woman, who, incidentally, is as pro-British as anybody I know, had what she called "a typical British Embassy telephone experience" that almost caused her to withdraw her allegiance to that empire upon which the sun never sets.

Her question was a simple one. "Can you tell me," she asked, "how long Lady Mountbatten will be in town?"

"Who wahnts t'know?" came a counter question, in tones calculated to chill a fur-bundled Eskimo.

She replied she was Miss So-and-so, of such-and-such a newspaper.

"Yes? And what-jah wahnt t'know?"

"I wanted to know," she went on evenly, carefully curbing her mounting emotion, "when Lady Mountbatten is leaving Washington."

"I cahnt say," came the clipped answer, followed by a slamming down of the receiver.

Subsequent calls to higher-ups at the embassy finally resulted in an answer. Lady Mountbatten was leaving Washington that evening.

I CITE this incident because so many have been reported to me in the past few weeks. They indicate that, so far as the average person who calls the embassy is concerned, the reception in general is no better than it used to be. But everybody who has had a chance to meet Lord and Lady Halifax (and who hasn't?) seems to be of the opinion that any curtness or lack of cooperation at the British Embassy now definitely does not work down from the top.

The minute Lord and Lady Halifax arrived in Washington, they began making friends. They refused to settle smugly behind the barricade of reserve that old-timers here had come to expect of British diplomats. Newspapermen soon found that the ambassador would at least make an effort to answer any question they put to him. Lady Halifax speedily endeared herself to ladies of the press, not only by giving a party for them, but by granting interviews and eschewing the condescending attitude that had come to be expected of British Embassy chatelaines. Having seen extensive service on the boards of charitable organizations in her own country, she sought to follow the same interests here—she did, that is, when she had a free moment to spare from appearing at British benefits. You know the rest of the story. You know that by and large Lord and Lady Halifax have won their way straight into the heart of Washington as a whole. Then why is he to be recalled—if he is? When is he to leave? And who is to be sent in his place?

I-HEARD ALL three questions answered over a dinner table the other evening. The man talking was a Person of Importance, and he made his comments sound doubly significant by prefacing them with that old familiar tune: "This, of course, is off the record. Or, rather, if you quote me—don't use my name."

Halifax would be recalled in due time, he prophesied. "Not just at once, but in a comparatively short time. He's just not the type of man Britain needs here now. A little too conservative. Not quite enough push. Not quite in tune with the Ameri-

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