

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL RESIGNS.

On April the fourth, an epoch in British history ended with the resignation of Sir Winston Churchill as Prime Minister. That morning crowds gathered in Downing Street to try to catch a glimpse of the great Englishman. For the last time the cabinet is summoned by the man who had led us to victory in the war. Sir Anthony Eden was there, Sir Winston's right hand man for so long, he was now to be his successor.

Colleagues he had inspired in office came to take their farewells. Some had not been born when he first entered Parliament; many were in swaddling clothes when he first became a Cabinet Minister.

The crowd watches the Ministers leave, sad-faced at the parting. It is fifteen years since Sir Winston first came to Number Ten, now he relinquishes the role of Her Majesty's first Minister.

With the characteristic cigar clutched in his hand, the ever green man of eighty years and four months sets out to tender his resignation to the young Queen. The man who in 1940 had said that he had nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat has paid his part of the bargain in full.

It has always been Sir Winston's habit, when Prime Minister, to have an audience of the Queen on Tuesday night at Buckingham Palace, but this is the last. Now the man who through the darkest days of war would report regularly to the sovereign all the great affairs of state; all the triumphs and all the failures, is no longer Prime Minister.

The night before, he had been host to the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh at Ten Downing Street. He wears the sash of the Garter. When he was made a Knight of the Order in 1953, he became only the sixth commoner this century to be so honoured. King George the sixth had offered it to him in 1945, but he had then asked leave to decline it.

Sir Winston took an important part in the ceremonies attending the Coronation, and has probably been nearer to the Sovereign than any Prime Minister for many years. In proposing her health at the dinner, he spoke of the brilliant opening of the Queen's reign and called her the young gleaming champion of the wise and kindly way of life.

Over thirty guests attended the dinner, many of them colleagues who had served with him in the war.

The statesman, who had served as a subaltern in the reign of the Queen's great great grandmother, and who had served in political office or Parliament in the five reigns since, has his last public leave taking of the Queen as Prime Minister.

And so into a well earned retirement goes this great Englishman. A man whose deed and words will live as long as the English tongue is spoken. Honoured alike by political opponents as he is by his political colleagues. And now upon the shoulders of Sir Anthony Eden falls the role of the Queen's first minister. Long versed in the affairs of state, we wish him well in the heavy tasks that lie ahead.

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