

► *Harry Hopkins, a unique figure among war leaders.*

## THE MAN WHO KNOWS ROOSEVELT

BY ROBERT HUMPHREYS

WHEN a lifelong social worker, untutored in world affairs, holds second chair in a nation's councils of war, hops oceans on missions that shape history, and becomes the intimate of the two most powerful men on earth — Roosevelt and Churchill — there must be a reason. But the reason is as elusive as the man himself. The fact is that Harry Hopkins has few earmarks of greatness, yet he possesses a rare faculty for circulating within the orbit of greatness in others. Like the electron within the structure of a molecule, his force is more evident than his presence, his qualities less obvious than the power he exerts.

Ask Harry how he arrived at his present awesome station in life and the reply will probably be unsatisfying, because he is as puzzled as anyone. Put the same question to the ordinary Washington politico, and he will ascribe the miracle to

an "in" with the President — which is merely rephrasing the question rather than answering it. Ask Harry's former associates in WPA and the Department of Commerce, and they will say that a brilliant mind, an amazing capacity for hard work and an unflagging devotion to Franklin D. Roosevelt comprise the answer.

The doubt, however, is only as to how he got there. There is no shadow of doubt that he is there: that this son of a humble Iowa harnessmaker is the President's closest friend and adviser, as well as one of the few Americans who has real influence with Prime Minister Churchill. So easygoing and harmonious are his relations with these men that neither they nor he know exactly the measure of his contributions in fashioning war policies.

There is ample evidence, for instance, that Hopkins has been Russia's most ardent and effective

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champion at Anglo-American conferences. Only slowly and only recently has his faith been clouded by Stalin's aloofness. As a consequence, he has retreated somewhat from the far reaches of the limb on which he found himself.

On the domestic scene, the Hopkins touch is equally potent. He has been the President's principal strategist since the star of James A. Farley dimmed, and few political maneuvers have been undertaken without his advice. A good many of them, indeed, were born in his agile mind. It is generally accepted that if FDR seeks a fourth term, Hopkins will again assume his third-term rôle of field marshal general of the campaign next year.

Oddly enough, as Hopkins' power has grown, public interest in him has declined. Where his name once commanded headlines as the munificent administrator of nine billion dollars in relief funds, it is now seldom mentioned. His specific weight in our country's domestic and global affairs is much greater than it was when he earned the sobriquet of "the greatest spender in history," but his rôle is less public and less spectacular.

At the moment, official directories assign four titles to Hopkins: Chairman, The Munitions Assignments Board; Member, Central

Committee, American National Red Cross; Trustee, The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library; and Special Assistant to The President. Only the first vests any direct power in him; only the last any salary — \$10,000 a year. From 1940 to October, 1943, he lived in the White House as a guest of the Roosevelts, but Hopkins shrank from listing the fact and the directories are silent on this point. But it is a vital point.

When Harry Lloyd Hopkins, clad in a dressing gown, started down the hall to President Roosevelt's bedroom it might mean that on the morrow an administrative head would roll, or that a thousand more planes would be earmarked for the Eastern Front in Europe, or merely that the Chief Executive would hear the latest joke from Harry's ribald assortment. Where others had to outline their proposals on a crowded schedule regardless of the President's mood, Hopkins alone could select the moment of leisure or high spirits most conducive to his purposes.

Mr. Roosevelt has publicly called Harry "my eyes and ears," and has dispatched him on vital missions to London and Moscow. He had him along at Casablanca and Quebec. In the privacy of the White House, Harry the Hop is the equal of Mr.

Roosevelt at horseplay. The confidences and tasks reposed in him by the President can, under the circumstances, only be conjectured. But obviously Hopkins has done much to ease what Thomas Jefferson called the "splendid misery" of the Presidency.

For a man who is thoroughly at ease in the presence of kings or dictators, tycoons or slum dwellers, Hopkins is a sight to behold. He is gangling, squint-eyed, lantern-jawed, and lop-eared. He dresses with infinite indifference, wears an old felt hat in preference to one given him by Churchill, and takes off his shoes when his feet hurt him. His health is wretched. Army, Navy, White House and Mayo Clinic physicians have all taken something or other out of his abdomen. He has undergone so many treatments that neither he nor his doctors can remember who administered which.

His life has been a maze of contradictions and improbabilities. Though a social worker and New Dealer, his friends have not been radicals and reformers but men of wealth — currently the list is headed by Barney Baruch, Jesse Jones, John Hay Whitney, W. Averell Harriman and John Hertz. Though he has had direct control of more money than any man in

history, his own finances have always been in shambles. The all-time dispenser of dole, he has been on dole himself twice in the last five years, his friends having made up purses in 1938, and again in 1940, to keep him afloat.

Because his conscience is clear, he has been hurt by questions about the propriety of a man so close to the President accepting these and other gifts. The jewels bestowed upon the new Mrs. Hopkins as a wedding gift by Lord Beaverbrook, at a time when Harry was supervising lend-lease and Beaverbrook was seeking it, caused a journalistic flurry. Less publicized, but more resented in press circles, was Hopkins' refusal to discuss his official visit to Moscow with newsmen, only later to sell the inside story to a national magazine for cash which he pocketed.

Though Hopkins' objectives have often been high in the idealistic stratosphere, his methods have as often lacked the loftier attributes. He has a native addiction to the direct approach, the shortest distance between two points, that occasionally evokes more gossip than admiration.

Back in 1933, when he was struggling to get relief under way, he shocked a colleague by remarking, "You know, I'd damn well be in

favor of hiring industry to give these people jobs if I thought it would work." Five years later, Hopkins, although pledged to strictly non-political conduct of relief, unhesitatingly made political speeches in his eagerness to rid the New Deal of its enemies in Congress. In 1940, convinced that the United States should join in the battle on Hitler, he preached war so outspokenly in private that many feared a leak into the public prints might damage the President's third-term campaign, then in full swing.

This talent for cutting through to his destination has been the dominant characteristic of his career.

## II

Hopkins was born in 1890 in Sioux City of a garrulous, yarn-spinning father who alternately fancied himself as a bowler and a candidate for Congress, and of a deeply religious mother who strove mightily to bring up five children on the meager income which her husband's shaky harness business provided. Most of Harry's education was obtained in the public schools and college of Grinnell, Iowa, where his family moved when he was eleven. As a homely, long-legged boy, Hopkins affected a sarcastic amiability which made him the envy of slower-

witted youngsters. This "worldly" air, a small talent for basketball and tennis, and a flare for campus politics caused him to be rated a "leader" in college.

Graduated *cum laude*, young Harry was talked out of a journalistic career in Montana by a member of the Grinnell faculty who had a job for him in a summer camp operated by a New York social settlement, Christodora House. His acceptance catapulted Hopkins into the social service field for a twenty-year stay.

New York fascinated him and he speedily elevated himself from job to job until by 1924 he was drawing \$10,000 a year as head of the New York Tuberculosis Association. Politics provided a parallel attraction. Taking off with the Bryanism of his father, Hopkins first sampled the socialism of Morris Hillquit, then the principles of Woodrow Wilson, next the liberalism of the elder La Follette, only to return to the Democratic fold out of admiration for Al Smith. His foray into socialism he explained to an inquiring Senate committee in 1939 on two grounds:

First, I was profoundly moved by a desire to keep us out of war. I thought the forces moving to get us into the war were sinister, and I did not like them. Second, I had a great desire to see a decent administration of govern-

ment in New York City. I was a young man in those days and I was expressing my idealism in that way.

His idealism, feeding on disgust with the miseries of city slums, did not, however, lessen the attraction of the rich man's world for Hopkins. The unvarnished fact is that Park Avenue had more lure for him than Union Square and its environs. A devotee of horse racing, poker, bridge and the wine cellars of the élite, Hopkins acquired a lingo that was a fancy mixture of profanity, bad English and good slang. He could be ingratiatingly gentle or as hardboiled as a hack driver. It shocked people, but it also fascinated them—which is what Hopkins thought it would do. He was a reformer who did not talk the professional language of uplift.

At the same time, Hopkins' earnestness in his ministrations to the underprivileged impressed those who worked for him. His deep-seated belief that the poor should share in the wealth of the world was so intense that radicals mistook him for one of their own. But Hopkins was not fighting capitalism or the American system; he simply thought they ought to function more justly and less painfully.

By 1930, he had drawn the attention of Governor Franklin D.

Roosevelt and his wife, and was soon a member of the New York State relief organization. He was so little known nationally that his appointment three years later as the New Deal relief administrator caused press services to query their New York bureaus for biographical material. But Hopkins quickly shattered any idea that he would remain in obscurity. Through all his five years as the Kris Kringle of the New Deal, Hopkins kept the press on its toes with such phrases as "too damned dumb," "stop lousing up my office," and "the hell they won't shoot Santa Claus." He sweated, swore and swashbuckled his way through Washington's red tape, bawled out greedy local politicians by the score, and defied all and sundry to find any politics in the WPA.

Although he constantly issued orders to his aides to "keep their lips buttoned and stay out of politics," his own itch in the same direction led him into a good many indiscretions. He barged into the very middle of the Supreme Court fight with a militant speech in the President's behalf. He took an active part in the abortive 1938 "purge," and finally got himself quoted as saying to a fellow horse-player that the New Deal was "going to spend and spend, and

tax and tax, and elect and elect" until he, the horse-player, was dead and forgotten. Hopkins later denied on a strict cross-your-heart basis that he ever said such a thing, but the damage was done.

The Kentucky primary scandals which involved the WPA in 1938 proved too much and Hopkins suddenly found the whole relief program falling in about his ample ears. The "heat," as he called it, was on and he resigned. His second wife had died the year before, leaving little Diana Hopkins in the care of Mrs. Roosevelt, and Hopkins himself was ill and weary.

### III

A widely-publicized retinue of doctors went to work and managed to get him on his feet again. For some reason never made clear, probably for no more serious reason than friendship, Mr. Roosevelt on Christmas Eve, 1938, appointed Harry to the post of Secretary of Commerce. The nomination provided a field day for the Senators who had to confirm or reject the appointment.

Summoned before the Senate Commerce Committee, Hopkins gave his inquisitors a three-day performance that has seldom been equalled in Washington. Constantly employing grammar of the "that"-

for-"who" variety, Hopkins wrought such gems of prose as "I don't duck anything that happened in my shop," "they threw everything at each other but the kitchen stove," and "he was certainly dishin' it up." As to his political beliefs, Hopkins kissed the book. He defied the Senators to find one utterance showing he had designs on the capitalist system. He pointed out that he had repeatedly endorsed the two-party system and had denounced totalitarianism as a possible form of American government.

Hopkins expressed conviction that as Secretary of Commerce he could be counted on to look out for business just as diligently as he had WPA enrollees. "I am going to enjoy this," he exuded at one point. He agreed that investments had to be stimulated if real recovery were to be attained. Concerning labor, he said:

"I believe in unions. I do not believe in sit-down strikes. I have no reservations about that. I think it is bad business."

The effect, when combined with his frequent confessions of political improprieties which he wouldn't commit "if I had it to do over again," was completely disarming. Gray-headed Senator White, a dyed-in-the-wool Maine Republican, spoke the committee's senti-

ments when he asserted "that after listening for twenty-one years to Congressional witnesses I am about ready to award you, Mr. Hopkins, first place." The confirmation vote was a landslide.

It must be recorded that Harry was a flop as Secretary of Commerce. First, he was bitten by the idea that he might be the Democratic Presidential nominee in 1940; next his health became steadily worse; and finally, as a member of what he termed the President's "team," he had to take over the management of the third-term campaign. As a political strategist, he was considerably short of a wizard, but Mr. Roosevelt was satisfied and that was what counted. Hopkins resigned his Cabinet post in the fall, and Mr. Roosevelt, in a "Dear Harry" letter, laid the groundwork for the next job, that of "special assistant to the President."

In January 1941, Hopkins took the first of his several transatlantic trips as the President's personal emissary. The mission was to discover who was who in Britain. Completely captivated by Churchill and the British people, Hopkins came back with a glowing report. In subsequent months he visited Stalin, and made a similarly enthusiastic report. Hopkins helped arrange, and attended, the famous

Roosevelt-Churchill meeting at sea. He soon won the accolade of the President's "ace reporter." His endeavors were simultaneously accompanied by a steady withdrawal from the limelight and an increasing concentration on service as the President's "buffer" — Hopkins' own word for his rôle.

His supervision of lend-lease and his subsequent chairmanship of the Munitions Board gave him a powerful grip on the distribution of war materials to the various theaters of war. Although disposed to follow the lead of American military men, his own influence was soon discovered to be extensive.

Today, at fifty-three, Hopkins has dedicated himself completely to total prosecution of the war. His easy banter with the occupant of the White House still charms the President, and Harry's new wife, Louise Macy, former Paris editor of *Harper's Bazaar*, adds to the warmth of the Roosevelt hearth. But Hopkins is discovering that the price of power is pain. Many ultra-conservatives, suffering more from bitterness than knowledge, still view him as a dangerous left-wing influence upon the President. At the same time extreme New Dealers burn with suspicion that Hopkins has led Mr. Roosevelt into forsaking the New Deal.

Mrs. Roosevelt makes no secret of the fact that she believes Harry has lost much of his "do-good" outlook. Tommy Corcoran says it was Hopkins who eased him out of the White House inner circle. Vice-President Wallace suspects his fellow-Iowan of promoting his removal as head of the Board of Economic Warfare. Old friends of Hopkins, including such formerly staunch supporters as the extreme left-winger Aubrey Williams, find him too frequently inaccessible.

Members of Congress, with whom he has never been very popular, fear and resent this man whom they never see but who conceivably can upset their well-laid plans with little more than a casual remark to the President. Republican members in bitter moments murmur glumly about "the Rasputin of the White House." Derogatory anecdotes about Harry Hopkins and his ways are swapped in certain circles in tones of alarm touched with glee. In short, the pack has turned on Harry.

Let it be noted, however, that few men in public life are of tougher fibre or of a more resilient nature than the resourceful Hopkins. Twice, physicians have despaired of his life, but he has lived. Twice, Washington observers have declared Hopkins politically dead,

but he has bounced back to even greater heights of power. While it must be conceded that much of his influence derived from his residence at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, nobody realizes more than his enemies that Harry, operating from any address, is a man to be reckoned with.

Hopkins has watched the epic events of American participation in history's greatest war from a choice front-row seat. On countless occasions, such as the Sunday afternoon when the news of Pearl Harbor was phoned to Mr. Roosevelt, he has been the only witness. In hundreds of instances Hopkins himself has been a principal actor. When the record of the war is finally written, the chronicler will have no better source than Harry the Hop — the strange combination of politician, do-gooder, administrator and playboy whose footprints are all over three Roosevelt terms and may be over a fourth.

His ambition, friends say, is to edit a national affairs magazine once the peace is won. If he proves to be the "reporter" Mr. Roosevelt has acclaimed him to be, the world may read an amazing story once the seal of secrecy is broken. Not the least amazing will be the inside story of his own power and his own rôle if he chooses to tell it.



# OUR FOREIGN POLICY GOES REALIST

BY KINGSBURY SMITH

A NEW American peace plan based on "realism" rather than "idealism" is emerging in Washington.

The crusading spirit of the Sumner Welles school of thought is giving way to the more cautious conservatism of Cordell Hull. It may justly be said that the American Government is now out to accomplish in the postwar world what it believes *can* be accomplished, rather than all it might like or prefer to see done.

The hopes of the Wallace-Welles group of postwar planners that the United States would assume the leadership in enforcing the principles of the Atlantic Charter throughout the world are fast fading. The conflict now is regarded as a war of survival rather than a crusade to establish immediately a new democratic world order all over the globe. The chief postwar objective is the prevention of future world conflicts through joint action by the major allied powers to restrain aggression. We are fighting now:

(1) To crush Nazism and Japanese militarism.

(2) To win the war quickly and with the least possible cost in human lives.

(3) To restore law and order, and establish what Secretary of State Hull calls the "peaceful processes" of settling international problems.

The American Government has not abandoned hope of a better world order, but it favors political and social changes being made by the evolutionary methods of constitutional procedure rather than by revolutionary movements or force of conquest. Secretary Hull is now of the opinion that advances in political freedom, economic betterment, social justice and spiritual values must be achieved by each nation primarily through its own wise policies and actions.

This is in sharp contrast with the contention of Sumner Welles, who, before he resigned as Under-Secretary of State, said the principles of the Atlantic Charter must "be guaranteed to the world as a