

Real Story of Harry Hopkins: Behind the 'Mystery Man' Myth

How Power Is Exercised in Close Daily Contact
With the President



HARRY HOPKINS

JAMES BYRNES

... neither works underneath a throne

Influence on major policies, but small part in selecting State Department appointees

Harry L. Hopkins, the White House mystery man, is a target again. He is called a Machiavelli who is turning the Government conservative. His critics say he has quit the New Deal and become a friend and intimate of the wealthy. They accuse him of dictating the choice of wealthy men to run America's foreign policy. They say he is causing President Roosevelt to hitch American foreign policy to the British kite.

All of these, and other, accusations add up to the charge that Mr. Hopkins has fallen heir to vast new areas of power. They hint that the White House is teeming with palace intrigue, that Mr. Hopkins guards the door to presidential decisions, that policies are shaped in Mr. Hopkins's office and jobs are handed out there. The hints are elusive. But they, as much as anything else, helped along the split in the Senate over confirming Edward R. Stettinius's team of State Department aides.

The real story of Mr. Hopkins's work is far less dramatic. He does not work underneath a throne. He works at a desk in a small office in the east wing of the White House, not far from the office of James F. Byrnes, the War Mobilizer. Close at hand is a vacuum jug and glasses. The jug contains water, not a mysterious concoction conjured up out of the 13th century.

Here, Mr. Hopkins sees Government officials, private citizens, various others whom he needs to see to do the assortment of jobs that fall into his hands. He long ago gave up seeing newspapermen because his chief work is that of chairman of the Munitions Assignments Board, which divides war materials between the United States and Great Britain. He works closely with the Combined Chiefs of Staff, has to be fully cognizant of the over-all war plans. That work is highly secret. In all of his dealings with newspapermen in Washington, Mr. Hopkins had a reputation for plain speaking. When his work be-

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came something he could not talk about, he stopped seeing them.

Mystery man. The fact that he became inaccessible helped to foster the idea that he dealt in mysteries. Added to this was his long residence in the White House while ill. There, he and his daughter, Diana, dwelt as part of the family. Mr. Hopkins often was the last person to see the President at night, one of the first to see him in the morning. Mr. Roosevelt laughed at criticism heaped upon Mr. Hopkins for living there. This criticism became particularly pointed after Mr. Hopkins married, and his wife went there to live with him.

The situation became one of acute embarrassment to Mr. Hopkins. He had a feeling that the American people don't like an outsider to live in the White House. This dislike on the part of the public might prove a hindrance to the President in a campaign for re-election. Long before the campaign shaped up, Mr. Hopkins and his family moved into a house in Georgetown. They still live in Georgetown.

Unbroken friendship. But the close contact and friendship between Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Hopkins were not interrupted by the removal of the latter from the White House. Mr. Hopkins never is any farther from Mr. Roosevelt than reaching distance. The Hopkins telephone is linked to the White House switchboard. Mr. Hopkins always has access to the presidential ear. He talks over each day's work with Mr. Roosevelt, knows presidential decisions in advance.

So well does he know the inner channels of the President's mental workings that Mr. Hopkins often can say in advance what a presidential decision will be. They have worked together so closely that their minds run in the same groove on many subjects. But Mr. Hopkins knows where the differences lie. He once told a newspaperman that one of the New Deal works programs would be approved. The correspondent wrote the story, but nothing happened for months. When he went back to Mr. Hopkins, the latter told him that the announcement was being made by the White House, that the delay was due to the fact that Mr. Hopkins had not taken the matter up with the President. But Mr. Hopkins told the reporter, he had known all along that it would be approved because he and the President thought alike.

In the war, this has not always been true. Mr. Hopkins has had his lost causes. He put the war at the top of everything else in May, 1940, when Hitler moved into the Low Countries. This was long before Mr. Roosevelt scrapped the New Deal. But New Dealers who took proposals to Mr. Hopkins found him cold to them.

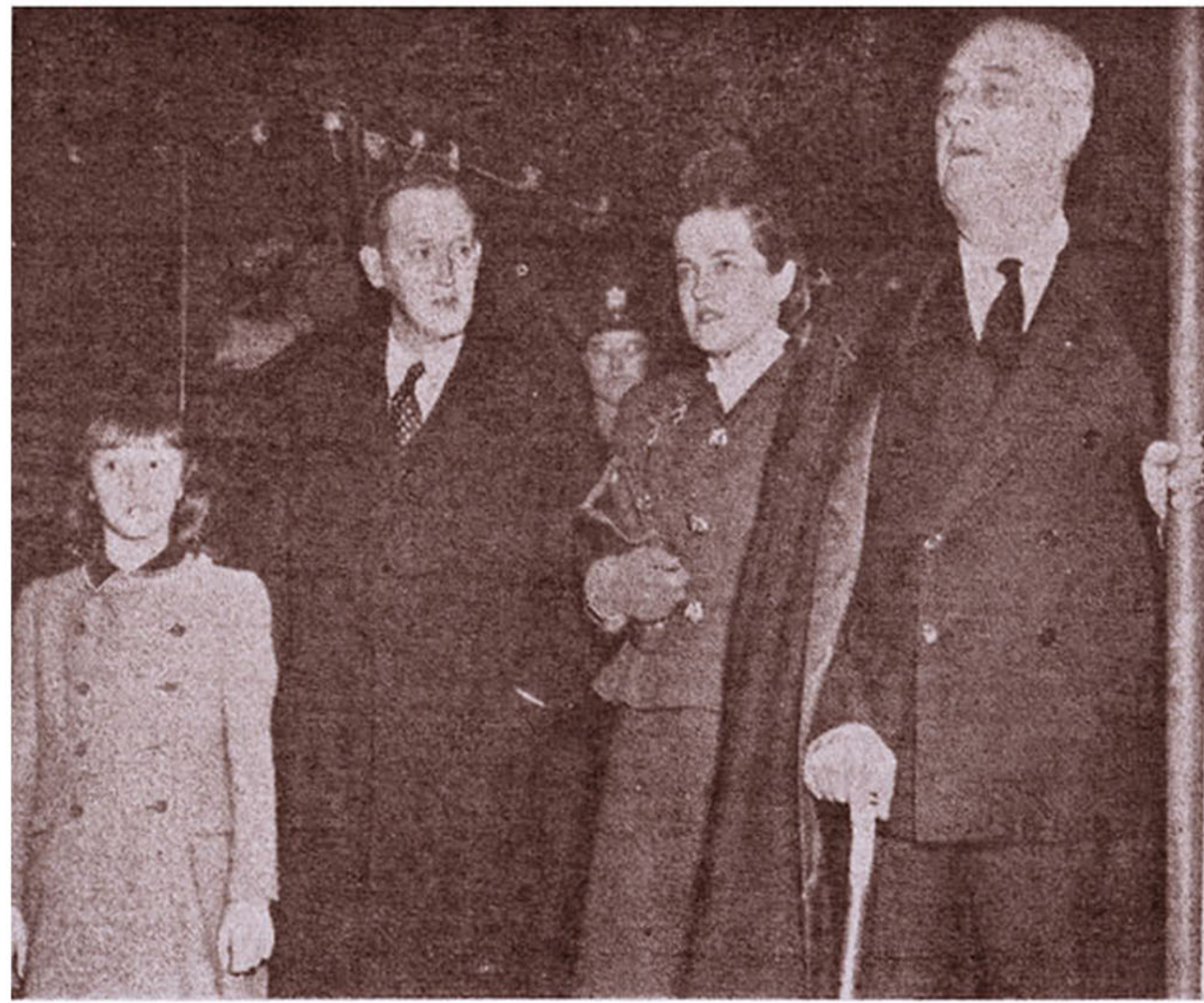
And, at about this time, he and Thomas G. Corcoran, another presidential intimate, severed relations so abruptly that the New Deal bloc was split. Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Corcoran still are not on friendly terms. As a group, the New Dealers have been ineffective ever since.

One of the main arguments that

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TOGETHER: IN THE EARLY NEW DEAL DAYS



TOGETHER: IN THE LATER WAR DAYS

... to be the President's alter ego is Mr. Hopkins's only reported ambition

Mr. Hopkins lost in the early days of the war was over the type of man-power controls that should be used. Mr. Hopkins thought they should be rigid, through a national service act. Mr. Roosevelt thought this was unnecessary. Mrs. Roosevelt, Bernard Baruch and organized labor argued against it. Mr. Hopkins lost.

Business contracts that Mr. Hopkins had formed while Secretary of Commerce were drawn upon for information to aid the President in maintaining good relations with business for the conduct of the war. The complaints of the New Dealers now are that Mr. Hopkins has fallen under the spell of his wealthy friends.

But Mr. Hopkins has no illusions. He thinks 60,000,000 jobs can be assured after the war. But that will call for a better-planned economy, plus a broad use of the insurance principles underlying the Federal Housing Administration, to provide funds to spur private enterprise. And the basic Hopkins social philosophy still demands better medical care, public housing and a broader old-age pension plan. These will not be too popular among some of his present friends.

Stettinius appointment. Mr. Stettinius is one friend who may feel differently. His background of interest in social affairs reaches back to his college days. His close relations with Mr. Hopkins reach back through the period when he was Lend-Lease Administrator, a post for which Mr. Hopkins had proposed Mr. Stettinius.

When the time came to choose a new Secretary of State, the opinion at the White House was that Mr. Stettinius had done a good job, had a good understanding of international affairs and would be able to work well with Mr. Roosevelt. But not even Mr. Hopkins knew that Mr. Stettinius would get the post until shortly before the appointment was made. This was a field in which Mr. Roosevelt had

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an especial interest. To those who know the President best, the idea that anyone could dictate his appointment of a Secretary of State is laughable.

Assistant secretaries. Mr. Stettinius made up his own list of assistant secretaries. That list included other names besides the ones chosen. Mr. Hopkins saw the list before the appointments were made. But Mr. Roosevelt took the Stettinius list, juggled it about, added at least one, perhaps two, names of his own and made the appointments. Here, again, no one dictated the appointments that the President made.

Mr. Hopkins did favor the selection of William L. Clayton as an Assistant Secretary of State. His view was that Mr. Clayton would bring a hard-headed business practicality into America's postwar foreign relations that could be made to serve a good purpose for the country. Mr. Clayton and Mr. Roosevelt see down the same line on foreign trade. Mr. Clayton, a free trader, is expected to work just as hard as did Secretary Hull for the removal of trade barriers.

The Hopkins job is considerably broader than his official title of Special Assistant to the President implies. He does all sorts of work, assigned and voluntary, for Mr. Roosevelt, in addition to his Munitions Assignments Board task. Some of this work is in the domestic field, some in the sphere of international affairs. He traveled to England and Russia for Mr. Roosevelt early in the war to study the needs of those countries.

In the domestic arena, Mr. Hopkins takes numerous burdens off the President's shoulders. He has friends and unofficial aides in various departments of the Government. He tries to keep his eye on trouble spots, bring together information and be ready to give Mr. Roosevelt a report when the problem comes to the White House for settlement. Here, his work sometimes brings him athwart the course of other officials. And that is no aid to popularity. This is work which could be done only by a man who held the complete confidence of the President. For the manner in which information is given often guides the way to a decision.

Prized friendship. Above and beyond his work or any titles, Mr. Hopkins prizes his friendship with Mr. Roosevelt. Friends say he holds no other ambition than to be the President's alter ego. If jealousy could creep into the Hopkins mind, this would be the corner from which it would emerge.

One story in Washington is that Mr. Hopkins helped to block the selection of Mr. Byrnes as Democratic vice-presidential candidate and again as Secretary of State. Only Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Roosevelt could know the truth of that story—and they keep their conversations private. But Mr. Hopkins has a high regard for Mr. Byrnes. He thinks the job Mr. Byrnes is doing now is the most important on the domestic front; that it is one which Mr. Byrnes is doing well and in which he should be kept in spite of his wish to quit when the war in Europe ends.

The chief fear that Mr. Hopkins has is that, one of these days, Mr. Roosevelt

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will believe some of the stories that Mr. Hopkins is making decisions that overstep unmarked boundaries set by their friendship. His value to Mr. Roosevelt depends upon the confidence that lies between them. It has lasted for 12 years. Mr. Hopkins wants it to continue.



(images added)