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BOOKS

THE WAR LEADERS

THE WHITE HOUSE PAPERS OF HARRY L. HOPKINS (Vol. 2), by Robert E. Sherwood; Eyre and Spottiswoode. English price, 25/-

(Reviewed by F. L. Combs)

MANY men have greatness thrust upon them and most rise to it, if not to any great height. A great occasion made that great man Lincoln, who at the outset of his presidency was regarded by good judges as quite an ordinary machine politician.

A world in turmoil between 1939 and 1945 provided a stage for three men whom history will regard as great: Roosevelt, Stalin, and Churchill. They had various outstanding abilities, but it was their moral stamina, their power to stand up to a gruelling endurance test, that proved their greatness. All three were up to their eyes in trouble in the middle of 1942. Unexpected reverses in Egypt were a body blow to Churchill and he had to return from Washington to England to face a critical House of Commons. Pugnacity was his supercharger and on this, as on other occasions, it did not fail him. From a House that might have risen in revolt he got a majority on a vote of censure of 473 to 25. Roosevelt's difficulties at the moment were also political and similar to Churchill's. Stalin was face to face with the tremendous hazards of Stalingrad. This was a time for all three

to keep the ship's head to the wind and ride out a storm that could not be ruled, and they did it.

The sub-title of Robert Sherwood's book is "an intimate history" and it lives up to it. It may be doubted if Boswell brought his subject closer to his readers. Roosevelt is easy. For all and sundry with whom he comes into contact he appears "familiar as his garter," though Sherwood remarks of him, "I could never really understand what was going on in the heavily forested interior" of his mind. Churchill was the most unpredictable; he could be a rogue elephant and yet yield a point he had stubbornly and indomitably battled for, and in every day affairs he had his own wilful, not to say, eccentric ways. For instance, he washed down breakfast in bed at Casablanca with a bottle of wine because he so chose.

Stalin is revealed as the arch realist. Endlessly patient, if at times brutally forceful, he possessed to an even greater extent than Roosevelt the gift of sizing up men and things and seeing them exactly as they were. In the minds of these three men the tremendous drama of the war thundered on and they had, particularly in 1942, to brace themselves to face perils and difficulties that came close to being catastrophic. Beyond question they did so, and in the main the politician of genius in each was used to do the bidding of the statesman. They had to make the big decisions and in doing so—*anxious task*—to stake position and reputation on the actions and decisions of other men.

Yet they neither were nor posed as demi-gods. When they relaxed, their behaviour and talk was such as one might hear in any club or on any bowling green. As a glooming introvert, the difficult, disliked De Gaulle stood out as sharp contrast.

THESE Hopkins' papers will be used by historians as evidence in regard to many momentous and hotly debated issues, for Hopkins wrote for the record; but they also supply the trivia that are the essence of biography: Roosevelt remaining seated before a congressional audience because, as he explained, he could speak better relieved of the ten-pound weight of steel on his powerless legs; Churchill, "the world's worst patient, restive and cantankerous and constantly calling for the forbidden cigars"; Churchill at Teheran "employing all the debater's arts, the brilliant locutions and circumlocutions of which he was a master and Stalin wielding the bludgeon, with relentless indifference to all the dodges and feints of his practised adversary."

The book, while providing first-hand documentation of its great theme, abounds in Boswellian passages that make vivid the human, sometimes all too human, traits of the leading actors.

Roosevelt's collapse was physical. This man who had to be wheeled about and carried aboard ships and aircraft "had had bearing down upon him his mind, the mind of one man, the fears and hopes of hundreds of millions of human beings . . . until the pressure was more than mortal could withstand and then he said, "I have a terrific headache," and then lost consciousness and died. "A massive cerebral haemorrhage,"



HARRY HOPKINS

"These papers will be used as evidence"

said the doctors. Says the author after referring to this great president's physical disabilities, "He was (notwithstanding) spiritually the healthiest man I have ever known."

There will be hundreds of books about the war. It may be doubted if any of them will recount as straightforwardly, veraciously and impartially, and with such inside knowledge of what was going on in the highest quarters, the deeds and utterances of the men who had, to the limited extent humanly possible, to guide its course. With such books available the fault is in ourselves not in our stars if we fail to understand the history of our own times.

CASE NOTES

MY FATHER'S SON, by Richard Lumford; Cape. English price, 10/6:

RICHARD LUMFORD'S father was a psychopath. Richard Lumford's mother was psychotic. Not unnaturally, Richard Lumford was fairly neurotic himself. He had, as a friend told him, "got his centre wrong," and this book is his own account of his dim, unreal life, and his search for someone or something on which he could centre himself.

He had enough money to allow him idleness, and thus he was able to concentrate exclusively on himself and his symptoms. They were typical enough. He had "virtually no interest in marriage or ordinary adult life." He joined the R.A.F., and found there a temporary haven, because he was able to sink his inadequate individuality in the mass. He found comradeship, but comradeship in the R.A.F. rested largely on danger and apprehension of death; "Thus the two feelings reacted upon and stimulated one another; fear of dying made me love the more, and the more I loved the more I was afraid to die." He resolved this conflict by going down with tuberculosis, often a physical manifestation of a strong unconscious fear of life. But that was only a temporary solution: "My central problem was inescapable—the problem of how to find love and the sensuous world, of how to relate myself to direct and lyrical experience; and I was starved of sensation . . . so desperate in the agony of my detachment I could have embraced a stone."

He tried psycho-analysis and it helped him considerably, enabling him to sort out and classify his conflicts like pinned butterflies in a glass drawer, but it is

(continued on next page)

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