

# The Case of W. Averell Harriman

by Joseph Starobin

**T**HE case of W. Averell Harriman, our ambassador to the Soviet Union, deserves continuing attention and study. You will recall that Mr. Harriman's name figured in the news this week when Johannes Steel, the radio commentator, disclosed a story which has been widely known during the entire San Francisco conference. It is the story of how Harriman has come to the conviction that the "interests of the United States and the Soviet Union are irreconcilable." According to Steel, this remark was made to a distinguished columnist of a New York morning newspaper.



The fact is that many newspaper men at San Francisco have known for weeks of Mr. Harriman's violent turn against the Soviet Union. That turn was expressed in several off-the-record conferences with the heads of the big wire services, some of the big publishers and a few select newspapermen. These conferences were in part responsible for the cyclones of anti-Soviet pressure which are still being registered—weeks later—in the pages of the press.

It will give you an idea of how Mr. Harriman feels these days to tell another story that has gone the rounds at San Francisco. It seems that after a particularly violent discussion of the Far East in relation to the Soviet Union, Mr. Roy Howard, of the Scripps-Howard press, piped up and said: "Mr. Ambassador, judging from what you say, we should be sending lend-lease to Japan rather than to the Soviet Union." Mr. Harriman gasped, and attempted to offset the impression created. But you can imagine what he actually did say if Howard was able to draw such a conclusion.

## What Harriman Reveals

Johannes Steel has called for the withdrawal of such an ambassador. But I should like to pause for a moment on the entire phenomenon of Harriman. There

is food for thought here in connection with all of our present problems. It bears also on the discussion which I assume will develop shortly in an organized and public manner on the Duclos article.

For Mr. Harriman is a well-known industrialist, of the famous railroad family. He is a businessman, and was, if I remember correctly, a moving figure in the "Businessmen for Roosevelt" committee last November. It cannot be denied that he—and forces for whom he speaks—wanted to defeat Hitler. They were supporters of the war effort, and supporters of close collaboration with the Soviet Union to defeat Germany.

Yet, no sooner is Germany defeated but what Mr. Harriman discloses a profound hostility toward the Soviet Union. Like many men of his kind, he is gripped with a feeling that the emergence of the Soviet Union as a great power suddenly presents men of his kind and class with a fateful world decision.

He is gripped by fear that world relations may be in the process of decisive change especially if the Soviet Union takes a full part in deciding the outcome and settlement of the war in Asia. What Mr. Harriman—a "progressive capitalist" and erstwhile supporter of Roosevelt—feels is expressed cynically, and with exceptional fright by Mrs. Clare Boothe Luce.

The congresswoman from Connecticut has suddenly attained the shrillness and insight of her well-known enemy, Dorothy Thompson. They cry for war

with Russia now—before it is too late. They throw all caution to the wind. They urge support for every politician of every European land, including Germany and Austria—who can help contribute to the "inevitable" battle of the two worlds."

## Was Not Anticipated

I am not estimating how decisive the Harriman forces may be. I am not suggesting that they cannot be defeated. I am not speculating on how widespread is their actual influence in the State Department. I am not even asserting that Mr. Harriman's feverish convictions cannot be changed by events.

But we must in all seriousness mark this phenomenon well. It is something new and something which we did not anticipate. It lies at the bottom of the recent zig-zags and lightning flashes in American foreign policy. Not everyone who was anti-Hitler was anti-fascist. Not everyone who was anti-Hitler is pro-Soviet. Not everyone who was compelled to cooperate with the Soviet Union in Europe wants to do the same in Asia. And not everyone who was compelled to cooperate in wartime will necessarily—by some overriding necessity—cooperate in peacetime.

Another ambassador to the Soviet Union, as we know, turned out to be a strange and sinister character. Harriman may be a case in point. He merits particular study and attention as a significant weather-vane of disturbances in our political stratosphere.

## Worth Repeating

THE ATTITUDE of the United States delegation at San Francisco was strongly criticized by Plain Facts, official organ of the Tarrant County Labor Congress, composed of AFL, CIO and railroad brotherhood unions, which is published by District Lodge 776 of the International Association of Machinists at Fort Worth, Tex., and which said the following on Poland: Our nation is asking that the [London] exile government be admitted, the members of which fled the country when the fighting got hot and found asylum in England. They represent the landed aristocracy, who held 75 percent of the land and kept the tillers in a state of serfdom. The provisional government has rallied around all segments of the nation's citizens and has instituted a democratic home policy.