

Founding the United Nations

overworked and fastidious *conferenciers*. As we approached in the late afternoon up the long avenue, we saw the ranch house set amidst a bower of trees, but when we debouched at the entrance instead of the subdued welcome of a luxury hotel we were brusquely but cheerily propelled by a stout and thug-like individual towards a swaying toll-gate which opened to admit us one by one on payment in advance for the period of our stay. Once in the entrance hall we found ourselves in the midst of an animated crowd, but what was unexpected was that all the men were sailors and young sailors at that, while the women were equally young and some strikingly luscious. This throng, exchanging jokes, playful slaps on bottoms and swigs out of beer cans, filtered off from time to time in pairs to mount the noble staircase leading to the rooms above. Our diplomatic quintet stood together waiting for guidance among the jostling throng and were soon the objects of remarks. "Who the hell are those old guys?" Finally, seeing that no one was coming to our rescue we set off up the stairs, luggage in hand to inspect our rooms. Mounting floor by floor we found all the bedrooms in a state of active and noisy occupation, until we reached the top floor where we encountered a large female of the squaw variety. As she appeared to be in charge of operations we enquired for our rooms to find that only three rooms were available for the five of us.

It was decided among us that the French Ambassador should have a room to himself, while Jean Désy and Hume shared one and Norman and I the other. In our room we found an exhausted maid slapping at some dirty-looking pillows as she replaced them in position. This is the fifth time I have made up this bed today," she observed. "Are you two *men* sharing this room?" With a look beyond surprise she withdrew. Norman seemingly not in the least disconcerted sank with a sigh into the only available chair and addressed himself to the evening paper. The other members of our party were less philosophical. Hume and Jean appearing in the doorway rounded sharply on me. "Why had I lured them into this brothel? Was this my idea of a joke?" I suggested that we should all be better for food and drink and we descended into the dining-room, a vast, panelled interior already packed with couples dancing to a blaring radio. After a lengthy wait we were squeezed into a corner table where we were attended by a motherly-looking waitress. "Who are all these girls?" I asked her. "And why all these sailors?" "Well, I guess you might call it a kind of meeting place for the boys off the ships and the girls who work near here in an aircraft factory." Meanwhile the French Ambassador was beginning to show signs of controlled irritation as he studied the menu that had been handed to him. Adjusting his spectacles he read out, "Tomato soup, hamburger delights, cheeseburgers, Hawaiian-style ham with pineapple." "For me," he announced, "I shall have a plain omelette." At this Jean Désy, in an attempt to lighten the gloom which was settling over our little party, clapped his hands together and in an almost boisterous tone called out to the waitress, "The wine list at once — we shall have champagne." "Wine list," she said, "I do not know anything about any list but we have some lovely pink wine — it is sparkling, too." "Bring it," said Jean, "and lots of it." It was not bad — both sweet and tinnily but it helped. For a few moments our spirits improved

and we began to laugh at our predicament. Then came the omelette. The Ambassador just touched it with the prong of his fork and leaned back in his chair with an air of incredulity. "This is an omelette!" He raised his shoulders with a shrug to end all shrugs.

At this Jean Désy, perhaps stimulated by the wine or pricked by embarrassment at having exposed his French colleague to such an experience, seized the plate with the omelette upon it and said, "I shall complain to the chef myself about this outrage." With this he hurled himself into the mob of dancers and made for a swinging door leading to the kitchen. Some uneasy moments passed at our table, then the swinging door swung open. Jean still holding the plate with the omelette upon it was backing away before an enormous Negro who was bellowing above the music, "Get out of my kitchen. Who the hell do you think you are? Bugger off! Bugger off! Bugger off!" Jean returned to our table. "I shall report him," he said — but it was difficult to know to whom. Soon afterwards we repaired to our rooms. As I left the dining-room I heard a girl say to her sailor companion, "Those are a bunch of old fairies sleeping together — the maid told me." The sailor spat, not actually at us, but on the floor quite audibly.

The night was an uneasy one for me. I was kept restlessly awake by the beery hoots of laughter and the moans and murmurs of passion from the next room. Norman settled into his bed and slept peaceably with his deaf ear uppermost.

When I looked out of the window in the early morning the sun was shining, and a troop of sailors and their girls mounted on miscellaneous horses were riding by towards the adjoining fields, thus proving that horseback riding was as advertised one of the facilities of the ranch. Two small figures, Jean Désy and the French Ambassador, the latter sealed into a tight-looking overcoat, were proceeding side by side down the avenue. I later learned that they were on their way to Mass at a neighbouring church.

By mutual agreement for which no words were needed our party left the ranch before luncheon and returned to San Francisco.

On the way back in the car the French Ambassador raised the possibility that one of the assiduous gossip writers of the San Francisco press might learn where we had spent the week-end and he asked what effect this would be likely to have on the prestige of our respective delegations and indeed on our own reputations. My own colleagues reassured him by saying that in the event of publicity the episode could be attributed to my misleading them owing to my innate folly and vicious proclivities. This seemed to satisfy him.

18 June 1945.

The Conference is on its last lap. The delegates — many of them — are quite punch-drunk with fatigue. Meetings start every day at 9 a.m. and go on until midnight. In addition, we are having a heat wave. The committee rooms are uncomfortably hot and the commission meetings in the Opera House are an inferno. The heat generated by the enormous klieg lights adds to this and the glare drives your eyes back into your head.