

22 May 1945.

The back-drop of San Francisco is gloriously irrelevant to the work of the Conference. The people of the town regard the whole proceedings with mixed benevolence and suspicion. Here is an opportunity to make the rest of the world as free, rich and righteous as the United States but it is hindered by the machinations of evil men. Of the uncertainties, worries and fears of the delegates they have no idea.

The day is spent in a series of committee meetings which are teaching me several things — the necessity for patience. It is wonderful to see quick-minded men sitting quite still hour after hour listening to people saying at almost infinite length things which could be said in a sentence or two. One becomes, I suppose, inured to boredom. And in combination with this patience the old hands have great quickness. They have been playing this game so long that they know instinctively by now when and where and how to play the rules of committee procedure or to catch the point of some quite discreet amendment to a motion. They are always on the alert for such things even when they seem to be half-asleep. All this is rather fascinating to a tyro. These are the tricks of the trade. Most men of my age and length of service know them well already.

23 May 1945.

The Conference atmosphere is thick with alarm and despondency about Russia. Wherever two or three are gathered together in the hotel bedrooms and sitting-rooms, where more unbuttoned conversation is permissible there you can bet that the subject is the U.S.S.R. — speculation about their intention, argument as to the best way of dealing with them — whether to be tough and, if so, when — gloomy realisation that by unscrupulous conference tactics they may be courting and perhaps winning the favour of the “working masses.” This fear of Russia casts its long shadow over the Conference. Meanwhile some of the Latin American and Middle Eastern States, by their verbose silliness and irresponsible sniping, almost induce one to believe that there is a good deal to be said for a Great Power dictatorship. But the Great Power representatives have no eloquent, authoritative or persuasive spokesman in the more important committees. They repeat, parrot fashion, “Trust the Security Council. Do nothing to injure unanimity.” There are no outstanding speakers — Evatt of Australia has ability — Berendson of New Zealand has eloquence of a homespun sort — Rollin, the Belgian, has a clever, satirical mind (I take names at random) — but there is no one of whom you say — a great man — and few indeed of whom you say — a fine speaker.

The British Delegation seems pretty thin and undistinguished now that Eden and the other senior Cabinet ministers have gone. Cranborne is skilful and authoritative in committee — Halifax does not attend — Cadogan seems a tired, mediocre *fonctionnaire*. Webster is always at his elbow with an impressive memory (he can quote the documents of the Congress of Vienna, of the Paris Conference, of the Dumbarton Oaks meeting). His heroes are Castlereagh and Wellington. He takes a donnish pleasure in argumentation