

Founding the United Nations

British — like the British they hew closely to the party line of support for the Great Power veto while allowing the impression to be disseminated among the smaller countries that they do so reluctantly, that their hearts are in the right place but that they dare not say so for fear of the Russians bolting the organisation. One incidental result of this line which the British and Americans may not contemplate is to increase the prestige of Russia. The United States delegation as a whole is no more impressive than the British. There does not seem to be much attempt to understand the viewpoint of the smaller nations or to produce reasoned arguments to meet their objections. On the other hand, the Americans are extremely susceptible to pressure from the Latin Americans who are not doing at all badly out of this Conference. The only American advisers I know are the State Department Team — shifty-eyed little Alger Hiss who has a professionally informal and friendly manner — which fails to conceal a respectful and suspicious nature said to be very anti-British — Ted Achilles, slow, solid, strong physically as an ox, a careful, good-tempered negotiator and a very good fellow — I should not think much influence on policy.

The U.S.S.R. have achieved a most unfavourable reputation in the Committees. This does not result from dislike for the methods or personalities of individual Russians — so far as the Conference is concerned there are no individual Russians — they all say exactly the same thing (and needless to say this goes for the Ukrainian and Bielo-Russkis). All make the same brief colourless statements — every comma approved by Moscow — from which every trace of the personality of the speaker has been rigorously excluded. Their reputation is one of solid stone-walling and refusal to compromise. On the other hand, they are continually blackmailing other governments by posing as the protectors of the masses against reactionary influence. This they have done so effectively that it is quite possible for them to produce a record at the Conference which would show them battling for the oppressed all over the world. The insincerity of these tactics is patent to those who see them at close quarters, but will not be so to the public for whom they are designed. They have great political flair — envisage every question not on its merits but entirely from the political point of view. This causes acute distress to (a) the legalistically-minded Latin Americans, (b) all social crusaders and liberal internationalists who see “power politics” invading every aspect of the new organisation, the social, humanitarian and even purely administrative.

The intellectual defence of the Dumbarton Oaks proposals has been left to Wellington Koo, which is rather hard on him, as he had nothing to do with drafting them. (At the Dumbarton Oaks Conference in August 1944, the four Great Powers — Great Britain, China, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. — agreed on a draft text for the creation of the United Nations.) I sat opposite him and he fascinated me — he looks like a little lizard, darting lizard eyes and nose down close to his papers. When he speaks he displays a remarkable collection of *tics nerveux* — he blinks rapidly and convulsively, sniffs spasmodically, clasps and unclasps his immaculately manicured little hands, pulls at the lapels of his coat and continually removes and then readjusts his two pairs of spectacles. This pantomime does not in the least mean that he is nervous of the work in hand — he is a

very experienced professional diplomat, quick-minded, ingenious and conciliatory. But, of course, he has not — any more than any of the other Great Powers' delegates — the moral authority, eloquence and vigour which would be needed to carry the Conference — it would take a Roosevelt or a Churchill to do that — or perhaps Smuts. The Chinese are an endearing delegation, polite and humorous — but then are they really a Great Power?

The French are among the disappointments of this Conference. The Big Power representatives, however undistinguished individually, *do* represent Power and so carry weight. The French are in the position of having to depend on their tradition, their professionalism and that assurance of tough and violent precision in language which have always been at their command in international gatherings. But it is just this assurance that they lack. The French delegation here reinforce the painful impression that I formed in Paris — they seem to be *détraqués*. You do not feel that they have France, *la grande nation*, behind them. They are full of *petits soins* and handshakes to other delegates. They are full of schemes and combinations and suspicions. But there is no steadiness or clarity in their policy. They have no one who is a connecting link with the past and who still retains faith and vitality. The national continuity has been broken. They seem just a collection of clever, amiable, young Frenchmen — and old Paul Boncour is too old and too tired — so is André Siegfried. In fact, you can see the effects of fatigue in the drained faces of almost all the European delegates. Europe (I do not count Russia) is not making much of a showing at this Conference.

In our own delegation Norman Robertson and Hume Wrong are the two most influential senior officials. There could hardly be a greater contrast than that between them. Hume (under whom I worked when he was Counsellor at our Legation in Washington), pale and fine featured, stroking the back of his head with a rapid gesture which suggests mounting impatience. He inspires alarm on first encounter — an alarm which could be justified as he is totally intolerant of muddle, inanity or sheer brute stupidity. He has style in everything from the way he wears his coat to the prose of his memoranda. He is a realist who understands political forces better, unfortunately, than he does politicians themselves.

Norman understands them very well and has influence with the Prime Minister, but what does not Norman understand? His mind is as capacious as his great sloping frame. He has displacement, as they say of ocean liners, displacement physical and intellectual and he is wonderful company with his ironic asides, his shafts of wisdom and his sighs of resignation.

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We are still tormented by the feeling in our dealings with the Russians there *may* be an element of genuine misunderstanding on their side and that some of their suspicions of some of our motives may not be so very wide of the mark. They on their side seem untroubled by any such scruples. They keep us permanently on the defensive and we wallow about clumsily like some marine monster being plagued by a faster enemy (a whale with several harpoons already in its side). Yet they do not want or mean war.