

Founding the United Nations

Soviet officers sit isolated (by their own choice) at restaurant tables and are stared at as if they were wild animals. They are painfully self-conscious, quiet, dignified — determined not to take a step which might make people laugh at the beautiful Soviet Union. The crowds throng outside the hotel to see Molotov, that square-head is much more of a sight than Eden. He is power. When he came into the initial plenary session he was followed by half-a-dozen husky gorillas from N.K.V.D. The town is full of stories about the Russians — that they have a warship laden with caviare in the harbour, etc., etc.

Meanwhile the local Hearst press conducts an unceasing campaign of anti-Russian mischief-making — doing their damndest to start a new world war before this one is finished.

The Conference arrangements have so far been conducted with characteristic American efficiency. The Opera House in the Veterans' Memorial Building where the sessions are to be held is like something out of a Marx Brothers' film. A mob of delegates, advisers and secretaries mill about in the halls asking questions and getting no answers. Where are they to register their credentials? Why have no offices been allotted to them? Where are the typewriters they were promised? To answer them are half-a-dozen State Department officials white with strain and exhaustion who have themselves not yet got office space, typewriters or the remotest idea of how the organisation is to work. Meanwhile, American sailors are shifting office desks through too-narrow doors. The San Francisco Boy Scouts are shouldering and ferreting their way among the crowd (what they are doing no one knows). Junior League young socialite matrons of San Francisco dressed up in various fancy uniforms lean beguilingly from innumerable booths marked "Information," but as they charmingly confess they are just "rehearsing" at present and can no more be expected to answer your questions than figures in a shop-window. All the babble of questions goes on to the accompaniment of hammering conducted in all keys by an army of workmen who are putting up partitions, painting walls, eating out of dinner-pails, whistling, sitting smoking with the legs outstretched in the over-crowded corridors. The only thing that is missing in this scene of pandemonium is Harpo Marx tearing through the mob in pursuit of a pair of disappearing female legs.

28 April 1945.

Second meeting of the plenary session again in the Opera House with powerful klieg lights shining down from the balcony into the eyes of the delegates, dazzling and irritating them. The session is declared open by Stettinius, American Secretary of State, who comes on to the dais chewing (whether gum or the remains of his lunch is a subject of speculation). His manner is one of misplaced assurance — unintentionally offensive. (Although the newspapers have described him as handsome, he looks like something out of the bird house at the zoo - I do not know just what — some bird that is trying to look like an eagle.) He makes the worst impression on the delegates. He reads his speech in lay-preacher's voice husky with corny emotion. The Chilean Foreign Minister reads a tribute to Roosevelt which being translated consists of an elaborate metaphor (which gets completely out of control as he goes

along) comparing Roosevelt to a tree whose foliage spreads over the world which is struck by what appears to be the lightning of death but is actually the lightning stroke of victory so that its blossoms, while they may seem to wither, are brighter than ever.

Then comes along Wellington Koo of China, a natty, cool, little man in a "faultless" business suit who reads a short speech about China's sufferings, written in careful English. After him Molotov mounts the tribune in an atmosphere of intense curiosity and some nervousness. He looks like an employee in any *hôtel de ville* — one of those individuals who sit behind a wire grille entering figures in a ledger, and when you ask them anything always say "no." You forgive their rudeness because you know they are underpaid and that someone bullies them, and they must, in accordance with Nature's unsavoury laws, "take it out on" someone else. He makes a very long speech in Russian which is translated first into English, then into French, and turns out to be a pretty routine affair. The delegates are by now bored and dispirited. Then Eden gets up and at once the atmosphere changes — you can feel the ripple of life run through the audience as he speaks. It is not that he says anything really very remarkable, but he sounds as if he meant it — as if he believed in the importance of the Conference and the urgency of the work to be done. He is quite beyond his usual form, moved outside himself, perhaps, by exasperation at the flatness and unreality of the proceedings.

I have developed a sort of rash on my chest and rather all over. I am not disturbed by this, as I have always been a great itcher, but the dolt of a hotel doctor has diagnosed it as measles, which must be a medical impossibility as I have had ordinary measles once and German measles twice. However, the doctor is insistent that it is measles. He said he hoped I knew that it was contagious and might spread rapidly in the delegation. I propose to disregard this.

30 April 1945.

Miss Smithson, my secretary, say that agencies — the hotel authorities? or F.B.I.? — have put up a small photograph of me in the women's washroom with printed underneath, "Avoid contact with the above person who is suffering from a contagious disease." This will cramp my style in personal and diplomatic contacts.

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. They can swallow any amount of this sort of thing — "The Conference is the greatest human gathering since the Last Supper." In the end their appetite for ballyhoo is rather frightening.

But no one could resist the town itself or the luxuriantly beautiful countryside around it, or the spontaneity and chattiness of the inhabitants, or the beauty of the girls — who seem to unaccustomed eyes a race of Goddesses. The town is indeed remarkable for this tall radiant race of