

The San Francisco Blues

by Joseph Starobin

SAN FRANCISCO.

IT WAS the easiest thing in the world for a reasonably sensitive, reasonably progressive American out here to bury his unhappiness at the bar of the Palace Hotel last Monday evening.

The bar is a peculiar institution. It is not only a well of liquid refreshment. It is a market - place, a source-spring of information, the appropriate scene to make speeches and confessions, to commiserate and debate.



And on Monday night there was a general temptation to commiserate in public. That was the day when the United States insisted upon seating fascist Argentina, when the Soviet Union put up a dramatic fight for the principles of Crimea, when Edward R. Stettinius exhibited the many defects in his makeup.

Kleig Lights and Secret Diplomacy

The older newspapermen were quick to say that San Francisco on that day looked exactly like Geneva, the seat of the old League of Nations. Except, as one Frenchman added, "we were accustomed in Geneva to see nasty things happen behind the scenes. In your country, you prefer the Kleig lights."

Personally, I do not like to discuss political problems in terms of optimism or pessimism. That is not the real choice. Suppose it were true—and it is not true—that this conference is busting up and the hope of world peace and prosperity is a delusion. In such a case, people who are pessimistic are people who evade their own responsibility to change the direction of events. If you are really fighting for something, you are always optimistic even when you are losing.

Without Perspective And Unstable

What really happened here last Monday is that all the dangerous trends and confusions in American foreign policy were laid bare. We must see these trends clearly and judge them ruthlessly. But we must be careful not to

make sweeping and unfounded judgments as to how durable and lasting these trends will be.

My opinion is that any American foreign policy which welcomes Argentina and rejects Poland in world affairs is a policy without perspective. It leads nowhere. The further we go, the more costly to our prestige and our interests the process of turning back will be.

What does it mean—to welcome Argentina? Are we going to win her to democracy by embracing her at the very moment when her fascist forces are trying desperately to escape the effects of the collapse of Hitlerism? That was Nelson Rockefeller's line, trying to explain to the American correspondents.

We will do nothing of the kind. We will dismay the democratic forces in Latin America. We will sharpen the antagonism between Argentina and her neighbors, who are now more fearful than ever. We will be less able to expand trade, to industrialize the hemisphere, to raise living standards when we bolster a regime which is antagonistic to all that.

Prestige in Latin America

We will not beat the British in this game either; they are much more adept at it than we are. And those who think of American influence in South America as competitive with the Soviet Union's, let me urge them to talk to Latin American democrats here. The prestige of the Soviet Union has increased a hundred-fold overnight in Latin America.

And what does it mean to reject Poland? It means, if continued for very long, that all of Europe will shy away from the United States like a plague. The horrible unhappiness of the French delegation here—which is not a very representative one, either—is proof of the fact that even western Europe knows that recognition of Polish democracy is the keystone of European democracy. What do you gain if

you reject Poland? Nothing. American policy becomes merely an obstacle which the European peoples will thrust aside.

So we have a "hemisphere bloc," and we have capitulated to its most unstable elements. But the voting on Argentina showed that a hemisphere bloc is not enough for any American foreign policy with world pretensions. Nineteen American republics voted with us, as did eight more countries linked with the British Empire. Nineteen out of 46.

What Will Happen Tomorrow

But let us ask ourselves what will happen tomorrow when two more Soviet republics take their place in world affairs, and later when Finland, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Austria, Albania and Italy come into the world organization.

When that happens, it is certain that Norway, Belgium, Greece, Iran and France will vote and continue to work with the Soviet Union. You will find that whereas 33 percent of the nations here declined to vote against the Soviet Union last Monday, at least 45 percent will decline to vote against the Soviet Union a year from today.

The policy of "blocs" is therefore a snare and a delusion for the United States. By that I do not mean that our other great allies will form rival blocs. I am simply saying that the world which is now coming out of the war cannot possibly be pro-American at any point where the United States is anti-Soviet.

There is no stable policy in it for the United States. And any policy which has no perspective of stability is short-sighted and stupid. Those Americans among us who are proud of our country's power, who want to use it wisely in our own interests, will have to mull over these facts. And responsible American leaders in all fields will have to say out loud that America must retrace its steps quickly.

— Worth Repeating —

JOY at the victorious progress of the Red Army in Berlin is expressed by the London Daily Express of May 2 airmailed here: The crunch of the Russian tanks on the rubble of this most hated of all cities is music in their ears (the Russians'), and in the ears of all the world.