

"Americans seem to me all to wear spectacles and chew gum," said the Arab. "Maybe they strain their eyes looking up at the tall buildings."



By Sgt. BARRETT MCGURN
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SAN FRANCISCO—Some of the foreign visitors at the United Nations Conference on International Organization thought the U. S. was the craziest country they had ever seen. Some of them thought it was heaven. But all of them were impressed and surprised by it—as impressed and surprised as the native San Franciscans were by them.

The most popular delegates from the glamor and far-away-romance angle were the Arabs with their flowing robes and beards and generally exotic exterior. American celebrity hounds jostled one another to look at the Aye-rabs from close up and said, to a man, "Sheeks, huh? How about that?"

The delegates from the Arabian nations went about their business undisturbed by all this attention. One of the Arabs, a Mr. Farid Zeineddine of Syria, paused long enough from his labors to describe his impressions:

"The Americans seem to me like a nation of people in spectacles, all chewing gum. Maybe they have to wear spectacles because the buildings are so high and they strain their eyes to see up and down them."

FROM the other side of the world, Creighton Burns, Canberra political correspondent of the Melbourne, Australia, *Argus*, was both impressed and distressed by American noises. "How loudly everybody talks," Mr. Burns whispered to another correspondent. The other correspondent was unable to hear Mr. Burns' whisper, but the Australian went on just the same.

"Everybody seems to be so assertive," he said. "The sirens at night keep me awake. They would seem to mean that there is an air raid, but no, it is just some motorcycle policemen escorting a conference figure through town."



"I do not care for the suits that you call zoot," said the Egyptian, "or for those very loud, flashy ties."



You Americans—

"Undue ostentation," said Mr. Burns, meaning that he preferred to sleep. "Prosperity. Noise. Money. Everybody is obsessed with money."

"Everybody talks about money. After I talk to an American five minutes he tells me his exact income, including withholding taxes. In Australia a man wouldn't tell his wife his income, if he could help it."

The standard question that ships' news reporters used to ask visiting celebrities in peace time—"What do you think of the American woman?"—brought ready answers from almost all the delegates. One thing you can say about the American woman, she attracts attention.

Our old friend Mr. Burns of Canberra and Melbourne had been a little surprised by a woman cable-car conductor he had seen in action. He wasn't so impressed by her being a cable-car conductor as he was by her quick command of loud profanity in getting her passengers to "kindly step to the back of the car, please."

"She had what was to me a very jarring accent and she was damning and cursing the passengers," Mr. Burns whispered excitedly. "Of course, I don't entirely blame her—the passengers were a noisy, pushing, discourteous lot. They don't seem to have learned the orderly practice of queuing up—taking one's turn. Otherwise decent people push and jostle each other to get on those cars. Nobody seems to stand aside for an elderly lady or a cripple. Noise."

A slightly brighter view of the feminine question came from a French newspaperman. "They are neat and most healthy," he said. "Maybe

a little bit hard." He thought that plenty of milk and good food had given them an edge on French girls, but he felt that, what with peace and all, the mademoiselles would snap back soon and that what he called their "superior clothes sense" would help them to look "nice and beautiful" in spite of their "tired little look."

Mr. Burns sprang back again. "I think they are a lot like the women of my own country," he said. "Almost every woman under 40 both here and at home makes herself up to resemble some screen star. And," Mr. Burns' voice rose with pleased surprise, "they succeed very well. I have had the pleasure of meeting several Hollywood actresses in person in their homes in San Mateo and the comparison they present with the young women who imitate them is not unfavorable."

DR. MOHAMMED AWAD, a professor of geography at Fuad University in Cairo, Egypt, was surprised at the women he saw unscorted on the streets. "At home we have abandoned the veil and the girls wear short skirts, but we still feel their place is in the home. You don't see many of them in the streets."

"But our women are very modern," he added hastily. "I have orders from my wife and daughter to bring them back American stockings and lipsticks and fountain pens. I now have all the lipsticks I need, but it is difficult to get the stockings—they are going to expect and I have had promised me only one fountain pen."

Azis Angelopoulos, correspondent for *Acropolis*, a Greek newspaper, liked it that he was unable to tell a rich girl from a poor girl. "They are dressed the same," he said happily. "I saw yesterday at the Fairmont Hotel about 50 cars arriving and hundreds of handsome girls got out of them. I do not know whether they were rich or poor. I cannot tell here. When I saw a

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group of working girls once, I thought it was a selection of aristocrats. It is because in America you have won the fight against poverty."

The wackiness of American salesmanship, which was pretty conspicuous in local advertising when the convention first opened, drew quite a lot of comment. An establishment selling automatic exercisers featured a window display with an Uncle Sam dummy jiggling all day long on a patent exerciser. A sign explained that exercise brings health, happiness, good will and the achievement of the very peace for which the delegates were searching. A Mexican delegate mused: "This may be the peace that follows nervous exhaustion, but is that a United Nations goal?"

A NEWSPAPER advertisement welcomed all delegates "to the Americas, to the United States, to California, to San Francisco and to the Moffatt & O'Connor Department Store." It had to be explained to some of the puzzled delegates that the department store had no particular connection with the State Department.

But most of the delegates insisted that the wackiness was all in good taste. "I don't see why the merchants shouldn't have a chance to benefit by the enthusiasm of local residents at conference time," said Dr. Awad. "The only things that overwhelm me are the suits you call 'zoot' and some of the ties with great colorful markings. In Cairo a woman could wear such a tie, but not a man. They would kill me on the streets if I came back wearing one." Dr. Awad's tie was a subdued chocolate brown with a small figured pattern.

Many of the visitors fully expected to be killed on the streets of San Francisco—in traffic jams. Dr. Lotfali Suratgar, an English literature professor at Teheran University and a secretary of

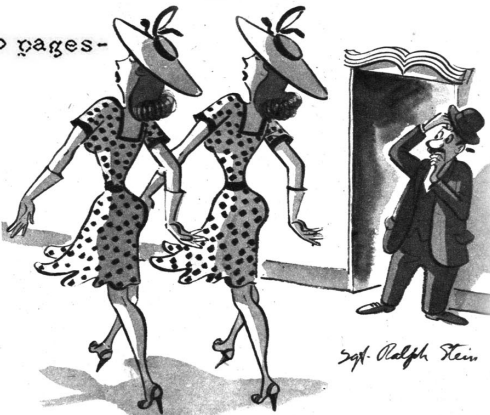
the Iranian delegation, described jaywalkers this way: "People run to their business regardless of the red dangers on the crossroads."

Maude Morris, stenographer of the Liberian delegation, was similarly terrified of cafeterias after having had her tray knocked out of her hand on her first visit to one. Incidentally, most of the foreigners commented on the abundance of food in America, though some were less happy about its preparation.

"Americans mix up on one plate food coming from different countries," said Mr. Zeineddine, the Arab from Syria. "Arabs like to keep rice on one plate, the stewed meat on another, the potatoes on a third." Unfortunately, no one thought to try the interesting experiment of handing Mr. Zeineddine a GI mess kit.

Egypt's Dr. Awad disliked America's "straightforward way of cooking" and the custom of adding such sweets as preserved pears to salads and meat dishes. "The Egyptian," he said, "is careful not to put sweet things with salty, and never with a meat dish."

But Dr. Awad did have a kindly word for the quaint old American custom of autograph-collecting. He claimed to admire autograph hounds for



Sgt. Barrett McGurn

The Greek correspondent was happy that he couldn't tell rich girl from poor girl: "Both dress alike."

palms even though he did hail from the mysterious East.

Another American asked Mr. Burns, "Don't you think you Australians would be better off under us than under England?" Burns' retort was short and to the point; he explained that the Aussies don't want to be "under" anybody, and that Australia, New Zealand and other Dominions in the British Commonwealth consider themselves fully independent right now.

For all their criticisms, most of the visitors seemed to like the States and Americans.

"America," said a French writer earnestly, "is the only country which has a consciousness of world responsibility. That is very important and very new. When you are in Europe, you feel you are a Frenchman or an Italian or some other nationality. Here, you feel you are people of the world, of mankind."

Red-headed Noureddeen Kahili, director of irrigation for Syria, had less reason to be enthusiastic. It was 9:30 A.M. and he had an untidy stubble on his chin. The hotel's barber had not shown up that morning. Despite his whiskers, Mr. Kahili admired the barber's independent spirit.

"What I like about Americans is that they are lazy," said Mr. Kahili. Apparently this was no crack at the missing barber, for he added hastily—"lazy in the sense that they like to make things with the least amount of work. That was my first impression of America—they shot my baggage in through a chute. In Europe it is always a 'hamal', a porter, who does that."

Husseyn Cahid Yalcin, editor of *Tanin* in Istanbul, Turkey, a bald, fatherly man of about 50, was most impressed by American courtesy. When he lost his way in the Georgetown section of Washington, D. C., an American soldier sent the whole evening helping him find his destination. The GI was shipping out the next day. "He gave up his last night to help a lost stranger," said the Turk. "It was the nicest thing that ever happened to me."

SHIVA RAO, New Delhi correspondent for *The Hindu* of Madras, India, had similar experiences. "During these three months I've been here," he observed, "I've had more evidence of what shall I say—of human fellowship than I've experienced in many other parts of the world. I mean it has been much easier for me to make friends because, by instinct, the American seems to me to be more (again he seemed to grope for the right word) more accessible than many European peoples."

From one very accessible citizen Mr. Rao found that Americans take it for granted that foreigners know all about the U. S. "For instance," he said, "as I was passing through Kansas City the other day a stranger started talking to me in the diner and began discussing a local election. He was so amazed that I didn't know all the details about the candidates on both sides.

"To him Kansas was the center of the world. Well, with all due respect," concluded Mr. Rao, "it isn't to me."

Mr. Rao undoubtedly has a point, though somebody should have warned him about Kansas.

The GIs from the U. S. have never been shy when it came to giving out with their opinions about people and customs in the foreign lands they've seen. Well, here's what some of the delegates at the San Francisco conference had to say about things in the U. S.



their curiosity and enthusiasm, explaining: "You must be enthusiastic to stand three or four hours to see a foreign delegate come in and out of a hotel." He was not even disconcerted by the fact that the fans obtained signatures from delegates and stenographers impartially.

Col. Cipriano Olivera, director of the school for officers in Uruguay, was impressed by "the modesty with which the Americans who have been in action speak about their actions." Similarly, Capt. Hector Luisi, Uruguay's under secretary of national defense, told of talking with GIs in bars and elsewhere and he liked the way they refused to "talk or fight their battles over again."

If the visitors were unfamiliar with some American customs and devices, they found natives of the U. S. doubly ignorant of the visitors' own countries. One San Francisco citizen was disappointed in Mr. Zeineddine when the latter admitted he could not read

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