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## On the Methods of Diplomacy

Clemanceau is reported to have said, upon the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, "God gave us the Ten Commandments and we broke them. Wilson has given us the Fourteen Points. We shall see. We shall see."

Whether he truly said these words or not, the fact that they are attributed to him tells much about American attitudes toward diplomatic relations between nations. The phrase, perhaps, that best expresses the American idea is Mr. Wilson's phrase - "Open covenants openly arrived at."

Foreign policy and diplomacy are spoken of so often together and the terms used so loosely that it is easy to think that they are the same things. This is not the case. Foreign policy, essentially, means that a government decides what it wants; how far it is prepared to go to obtain what it wants; and what it will settle for. Diplomacy is the general term for the methods and practices used to achieve foreign policy goals by negotiation.

Foreign policy receives a great attention in a democracy. ~~The opposition party claims to know a better policy; the newspaper and television pundit has made second-guessing an art form; the man in the street deploras the necessity of catering to some foreigners.~~

The methods of diplomacy whereby foreign relations are promoted are less well known. This is especially true

in the United States. Witness the indignation stirred up by the best-selling novel "The Ugly American". Yet as long ago as 1951, George F. Kennan, a distinguished career diplomat, had characterized our foreign relations as "diplomacy by dilletantism".

Possibly the reason for Mr. Kennan's strong phrase is fact that as a professional, he is appalled by the current disregard of traditional methods of diplomacy in favor of what is now termed "personal diplomacy."

Before we can examine this phenomenon of personal diplomacy it will be instructive to consider the traditional methods. Traditional diplomacy is derided in an egalitarian world for its formality, protocol, and seeming detachment from the urgency expressed by press and politician.

If traditional diplomacy retains old world airs that is natural because it was formed in the courts of kings, archdukes, and Holy Roman Emperors. Up to the Eighteenth Century, roughly, the king was the state and the affairs of state were the king's affairs. Court life, being highly formal, protocol was important. People took very seriously the order in which ball-rooms were entered, or places set at table. Such things were obvious signs of standing, a wordless yet effective way of indicating the status of alliances and the king's pleasure or displeasure. In diplomacy it is not only what is said or left unsaid; but what is done or left undone that shows

from where the wind blows.

And so today the diplomat is accredited by the head of state of his own country to the head of state of the country to which he is posted. More important, he represents the head of government who may be a different person from the head of state. He deals primarily with that representative of the host government responsible for external affairs. In most countries this person is called the foreign minister.

The diplomat to a first class power is an ambassador and his headquarters is an embassy. A lesser country would be served by a minister established in a legation; and the least important country will have only a consul operating from a consulate.

The ambassador is entitled by virtue of his rank to deal directly with the foreign minister. Routine and inconsequential matters between them are handled on an informal basis as are informal matters everywhere; but when serious issues arise they are dealt with formally and in writing. The highest type of such correspondence is called a Note. It is written personally by the ambassador to the foreign minister. On the most formal occasions it may be in the third person. It is always signed by the ambassador. The next category, used for less serious matters is the Note Verbal, addressed to the foreign office. ~~It begins "The Embassy of the United States of America presents its compliments and has the honor to...."~~ It is never signed. The lowest type of written instrument is

the Aide-Memoir, used to record oral agreements and submitted for the record.

The ambassadors of several nations may sign a single note addressed to a single recipient called a Collective Note. A Collective Note is offensive and is seldom used except when dictating terms or when the situation is irreparable, anyway.

Slightly less offensive are Identic Notes; separate notes in identical language. The use of Identic Notes smacks of bullying and coercion.

The polite way governments indicate their joint or common feelings is by the use of Parallel Notes, which are notes expressing the same meaning but written individually by the several ambassadors. Even Parallel Notes can be offensive. Stalin it is said, used to object to the communications sent him by the Allies during the War as being too parallel.

The most effective diplomacy is carried on, however, by face to face discussion and conversations and it is at this that the skilled diplomat excels. It was for such confrontations that the formalities, immunities, and procedures of diplomatic practice were developed. It is here that the good diplomat's knowledge of the other's national characteristics and aspirations is important. At such times the leisurely, careful preparation, the detached air, the privacy and the attitude of calmness and formality permit the discussion of the most incendiary matters without shock to any national pride. This is not

to imply that logic and sweet reasonableness always carry the day. In our world, force, apparent or implicit plays a part. But the diplomat who relies on force alone is not always successful.

There is a school of thought which attributes to diplomats of different nations certain national techniques or traits, and although this idea is of doubtful validity it is interesting to consider..

The Italians, for example, are presumed to be crafty and devious; always attempting to put the other side in the wrong in order to extract some concession from them. It is said they are inclined to switch sides and often choose the wrong one.

The English are optimistic and loath to face unpleasant facts. Being an island people they have always pursued a policy of overseas expansion. It has been to their interest to keep the Continent pacified which they have attempted to do by compromising differences, effecting treaties. They attempt to prevent aggression not by guaranteeing small powers but by cajoling large ones. The Englishman is always convinced that diplomats must not stop talking. As it was recently expressed, "Jaw-jaw is better than war-war."

The German is considered to be an unstable element, given to "sudden diplomacy" designed to cause fear; to extract concession by anxiety.

The Russian is said to be inheritor of the Byzantine tradition of trickery, distrust, and fear of foreign

contacts. The Russian is tenacious, long-winded and wants everything his way; yet is afraid when a point is conceded him.

The American, so our nationalistic theory goes, is a moralist. He is inclined to assume that his position is morally superior and should be so acknowledged. This attitude has made the American diplomat singularly inflexible in his approach to problems.. The late Mr. Dulles was probably the archtype; he was especially repugnant to Prime Minister Nehru, the chief proponent of flexibility. The American is also characterized by his impatience with prolonged discussion.

It is an axiom of traditional diplomacy that a diplomat does not deal officially with those outside the government to which he is accredited. This practice is easily misunderstood. Our State Department has been taken to task quite severely in recent months in this connection with regard to Latin American countries. It has been said that our diplomats have dealt with dictators and have ignored the legitimate aspirations of the common people. In Cuba, for example, the fact that we dealt with the Batista regime is deplored by many well intentioned people as though it were a crime.

History shows, however, that more ills have come from diplomats who have not confined their representations to the established government. In the Renaissance, the name diplomat was practically synonymous with spy or assassin. Some diplomats thought nothing of poisoning their hosts and

were well aware that they ran the same risk themselves. Diplomats who encouraged sedition and fomented revolution were not uncommon. One example of such is the Spanish ambassador at the court of Queen Elizabeth of England who financed and supported the dissident elements attempting to dethrone her.

The United States has had its own taste of foreign diplomatic interference in internal affairs - the case of Citizen Genet during Washington's administration. This worthy's speeches, intrigues, general disregard of the government in his attempts to stir up popular support for the French Revolution caused even Jefferson to disavow him. When we consider that our stage of development at that time is comparable to that of the Latin American nations today, it should give us pause in censuring our diplomats for aloofness from Latin popular ferment.

Even in politically sophisticated countries it is considered a good rule to limit contacts with the opposition party to the minimum. In unsophisticated countries where the opposition is not above the forcible overthrow of the government it is even more important that the diplomat avoid any contacts that will prejudice his relations with the government. The diplomat cannot represent the affairs of his own country if he is expelled as persona-non-grata or if he causes diplomatic relations to be broken off. The work of diplomacy is not to establish some preferred type of government in the host country; but rather to achieve the most possible from the government in office.

We said at the beginning that another kind of diplomacy has assumed great importance in recent years and which may be called personal or "summit" diplomacy. Personal diplomacy may be defined as the participation in active negotiation of heads of state, heads of government, or foreign ministers to the total or partial exclusion of the usual diplomat. The name "Summit Conference" for the meeting of such persons must be attributed, I believe, to Sir Winston Churchill, who, upon the death of Marshall Stalin, called for a "parley at the summit" with his successor. It would seem strange that Sir Winston, a product of British methods, would have advocated personal diplomacy were it not for his supreme confidence in his own ability to manipulate such a meeting to his own ends. Indeed, the summit conference is the most primitive method of diplomatic negotiation. It is ironic that the efforts of centuries to improve the diplomatic relations between nations should result in a return to the very practice which the traditional method was developed to forestall.

The arguments in favor of summit diplomacy take two principle forms. First, it is said that modern methods of travel and communications have so shrunk the globe that no difficulty is involved in journeying to Bangkok or Berlin or any other place. Why should we depend on an ambassador when the President or Secretary of State can jet over in a jiffy to represent us in person?

The other reason advanced for summit meetings is the argument that only the heads of government of a few



countries matter today; that the rest of the world must perforce fall in line when these titans have agreed. Perhaps a subdivision of this argument is the idea that the heads of these great nations are essentially men of good will who distrust each other because they do not know each other. A summit meeting, if it is held, would dispel fear and distrust by allowing acts of goodfellowship.

First off, it must be acknowledged that there are some elements of truth in all these. A foreign minister or head of state can fly rapidly to a trouble spot, and, using his power and prestige settle differences which would take an ambassador using normal diplomatic channels considerable time to resolve. It is true that a head of state can get to know his counterparts and by cultivating their friendship create an atmosphere of ease and good will for the discussion of problems. The friendship of President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill certainly seems to bear this out.

But, Sir Harold Nicolson, a British diplomat of long experience had this to say about meetings of heads of government..."Nothing could be more fatal than the habit of personal contact between the statesmen of the world...Personal contact breeds, inevitably, personal acquaintance and that, in its turn, leads in many cases to friendliness: there is nothing more damaging to precision in international relations than friendliness between contracting parties. Locarno should have convinced us of the desirability of keeping our statesmen mutually detached. This is no mere paradox. Diplomacy is the art of negotiating documents in a ratifiable

and therefore dependable form. It is by no means the art of conversation".

Personal acquaintance does not necessarily lead to friendship. It can lead to dislike, enmity, even hatred. All fatal to the accomplishment of good results. The Versailles Conference of 1919 became a disaster for the world and a personal tragedy for Mr. Wilson largely because of the incompatibility and dislike of Wilson, Lloyd George, and Clemanceau for each other.

Summit conferences are dangerous because of the hopes and expectations they arouse. Their purpose may be easily misunderstood or distorted by propaganda. One has only to consider the abortive summit conference of this past spring which ended so disastrously.

One factor of great importance in such meetings which does not seem to get the attention it deserves is the time involved. As Nicolson says "The time at the disposal of these visitors (the heads of government) is not always sufficient to allow for patient and calm deliberations. The honors which are paid to a minister in a foreign capital may tire his physique, excite his vanity, or bewilder his judgment". It is expected of a head of state that he review honor guards, lay wreaths, attend state dinners; but when does he negotiate? Other problems, domestic, political, personal, do not vanish because the head of state must attend a summit conference. How long can these problems be let go?

As long as he is away from his capital the decision making process is inevitably impaired. Subordinates must handle these matters without direction and counsel; but he

and his government must bear the blame for any failures.

It might also be said that summit meetings are doomed to failure because of the glare of publicity in which they are held. They are attended by scores of reporters and photographers armed with tape recorders and cameras. Movie and television films are made of every possible event. Every session is covered, every public statement recorded, every frown or smile photographed, every shade of expression analyzed. To such an extent have we carried the principle of open covenants openly arrived at that there is little flexibility allowed the negotiators.

This actually is the crux of the matter; for in such circumstances it is impossible to negotiate. Negotiation implies discussion, disagreement, the resolving of differences, concession and compromise. It involves in most cases the working out of solutions that are less than desired but all that can be realized. The ambassador in the privacy of chancellery or foreign office can do all of these things but a head of government cannot. The head of government is the embodiment of official position, of foreign policy, whether it is good or bad policy, right or wrong, practical or impractical. His administration has developed it, persecuted it and the personal prestige of the head of government is involved in it. When a head of government attends a summit conference he lays his personal prestige on the line, both at home and abroad. To compromise, to accept less than what has been announced as our due is difficult if not impossible to explain to the electorate.

The representative of a democracy runs the risk of repudiation of his agreement by the people as was the case with Mr. Wilson. The League of Nations plan, had it been promoted through normal channels most likely would have been accepted by the Congress. Presented as it was, involved with Presidential prestige, it is not surprising that it was defeated.

What are the effect though when heads of state cannot come to terms at all; when they are publicly forced to acknowledge their disagreement how can situations help but be worsened?

In an earlier age the failure of a summit conference would have resulted in war. A hundred, fifty, even thirty years ago, the treatment accorded President Eisenhower at the hands of Mr. Kruschchev in Paris would have meant the declaration of war ~~within forty-eight hours~~. Only the fears of the atomic age preserved us.

Perhaps they will continue to do so even longer and thus permit us to engage in summitry to our hearts' content; but we should be aware of one final consideration. Dependence upon personal diplomacy will dry up the normal channels of contact between nations. When these are replaced for any extended period by personal contacts between heads of government the machinery of foreign relations rapidly rusts away. When the personal contact ends a vacuum remains.

The world does not need any more vacuums than are created by normal failure in communication and understanding. The successful conduct of foreign relations depends upon the efforts of trained professionals. It is a continuous task

day in and day out. An experienced diplomat of the Fifteenth Century once said, "Two great princes who wish to establish good relations should never meet each other face to face but ought to communicate through good and wise ambassadors". This advice has never been bettered.

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