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PLAN FOR A PROJECT

Drawn up subsequent to the publication of the
attached letter to the New York Times on February
6, 1955

It is proposed to set up a Board with initially three to five members and more members to be added later.

The functions of the Board would be to encourage or sponsor ~~one or more~~ ^{several} study groups that will attempt to determine what kind of arrangements set up between Russia, America and other nations would settle the major political issues involved in the Russian-American conflict, provide for the right kind of disarmament, and create a setting in which the great powers will have a strong incentive to keep such a set of arrangements in force.

The Board would keep in close touch with such study groups and would evaluate the validity of their conclusions from a point of view of enlightened American self interest. It would bring conclusions which it adopts to the attention of members of Congress and the Administration.

The Board would consist of American citizens of national standing and its members would serve on a part-time basis.

If such a Board were formed and were to encourage the formation of a full-time study group organized along the lines described below, I would attempt to set one up provided the necessary financial support can be obtained.

It is not likely that any group which attempts to think through the problem of resolving the Russian-American conflict on the basis of enlightened self-interest will succeed in coming up with the right answers. The right answers cannot be found by a straight application of logical reasoning and, in order to find them, one must have ideas. We do not know just how ideas come about, but somehow or other, enlightened self-interest does not seem to be very conducive to their generation. Somehow, enlightened self-interest lacks in appeal to the imagination of Man.

Bertrand Russell, in his book, Icarus, discusses how the "fixed price" came into existence in England. Up to that time, it took protracted negotiations to buy a pair of shoes in a shop. The shopkeeper started out by asking a price which was way too high, and the customer offered a price which was way too low. After long negotiations, the pair of shoes changed hands at a reasonable price - if one does not count the time invested by customer and shopkeeper in the negotiation of the price. The first shopkeepers to introduce the fixed price were - according to Russell - Quakers, who felt it was wrong to ask for a higher price than the merchandise was worth. The customers saved time by buying in these Quaker shops, and preferred to buy in them, with the result that the Quakers became prosperous. Russell stresses the fact that any merchant guided by enlightened self-interest could have arrived at the same conclusion which the Quakers reached on the basis of a moral

argument, but the fact remains that enlightened self-interest did not produce the "idea" which was required.

Ideas of greater depth are needed today if we are to find the right answers to the problem that confronts the world. To come up with these ideas is a task that requires qualities of the heart as well as qualities of the intellect.

The group which I would like to set up would be a full-time group to which I shall refer here as the "Commission". It would consist of perhaps five men. Its task would be to think through what kind of arrangements would create a setting in which the danger of war could be considered as remote and also which of such arrangements are most likely to be acceptable to the governments of the nations mainly involved.

The Commission would not be an American body, either from a point of view of its mandate or the composition of its membership. But since the task of the Commission is to conduct an inquiry the funds needed for its operation could be administered by an American university or some tax-exempt research institution.

It will be the function of the Board to determine whether the Commission's recommendations are clearly consistent with enlightened self interest from the American point of view. It will be the task of the Commission to generate ideas and to explore their feasibility.

The members of the Commission must possess imagination, critical ability and above all they must have faith in the possibility of finding a solution. Only if they possess this faith will they be able to think their way around the problems which appear to block the paths to a satisfactory solution. It is impossible to have the required knowledge and ability all assembled in the Commission and, therefore, the Commission will have to call on experts. It may have to spend much of the time in consultation with experts but the experts must not run the show.

The work of the Commission might extend over a period of six to seven months and it is proposed that they operate as follows:

(a) They shall devote perhaps 12 weeks to clarifying their own minds on what they themselves would consider to be a desirable and adequate international arrangement, from the point of view of the nations involved.

(b) Having accomplished this, the Commission shall discuss their thoughts with individual members of the Russian, British and American Governments and, if practicable, also the Chinese Government. Thus, the Commission shall learn how these individuals, who are entrusted with governmental responsibilities, feel about the Commission's plan in general. Furthermore, the Commission shall find out through such discussions how these individuals look -- from the point of view of the national interest

which they represent -- upon the specific proposals contained in the plan. Some of these proposals would adversely affect vested interests wielding political influence and the discussions should enable the Commission to assess the practical difficulties which these proposals are likely to encounter.

It is assumed that this phase of the work of the Commission would take about 8 weeks.

(c) Subsequent to these discussions, the Commission would then revise their proposals and also fill in at least the most important details which are needed in order to make the plan meaningful.

It is estimated that this phase of the work might take 6 weeks.

Since an essential part of the Commission's work would consist in informal conversations with members of governments, one would attempt to obtain in advance some indication that the cooperation of key government members both in Russia and America would be forthcoming.

In America the Commission would keep close contact with the Board who would continuously keep a check on the validity of their thinking. Perhaps it will be possible to get the Russian Government to appoint a Committee which would scrutinize the findings of the Commission in much the same way as would the Board.

And even though the funds for the Commission's work would be presumably administered by some American university under a grant,

it might be that the Russian Government would wish to contribute to that grant. If so, there should be no objection to accept half of the funds needed from the Russian Government, assuming that the other half comes from American sources.

The Commission's work is aimed at producing a working paper that might be used by the governments involved when they wish to abandon the procedure of negotiating peace-meal and are ready to discuss an overall settlement.