

Meat

The Art of the Possible

Vested Interests - A

Politics has been defined as the "Art of the possible". It might be argued that the Governments of Russia, ^{and other nations} ~~and~~ the United States might very well reach a meeting of the minds on ^a ~~what would be~~ desirable arrangements that would secure military and political security and economic prosperity for the nations involved and yet these arrangements might be politically unacceptable. There are two different issues involved here.

For the past ten years following the Second World War, the public in the United States has been suffering from what might be called "induced megalomania". Because America had bombs before anyone else had them, there was a general feeling that we are an extremely powerful nation, who can threaten massive retaliation and by doing so, restrain Russia and her allies from intervening in conflicts which are close to their territory and far away from ours. Because of this power, imagined or real, we felt that we had the responsibility of defending the South Korean Government against armed intervention from North Korea; and having successfully done so, we felt that we ought to help the South Korean Government subjugate North Korea, and so we crossed the 30th Parallel, believing that China would not dare to intervene. It is probably correct to state that only because ~~of~~ our threat of massive retaliation was taken seriously, could we end the Korean War with an uneasy armistice.

Clearly, the threat of massive retaliation will cease to operate when Russia will be in a position to retaliate back and to devastate us as thoroughly as we are able to devastate her. The threat of massive retaliation will then be tantamount to the threat of murder and suicide, and it is likely to lose its effectiveness. If there is no over-all settlement, we shall then be in a position

First what needs to be done might ~~not~~ be politically unacceptable to the American people on general grounds and this is probably so today, for today the American people do not understand the situation in which they find themselves in the world. It will be very difficult to get them to think through the problems involved and to consent to the unprecedented solutions which need to be adopted in order to solve the problem that faces the world today. Having been lead by the Government to believe during the last 10 years that our threat of massive retaliation guarantees them a fair measure of security, it will be very difficult for them to face reality unless the Government takes the initiative in this respect. It is within the power of the Government to bring home to the people what they well know today to be the realities of the situation. If the Government did nothing else but arrange for test evacuation of the large cities, such as New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, etc., it would go a long way towards making people understand the position they are in.

to maintain an independent South Korea only by courtesy of the Russians if, indeed, they should wish to extend to us such a courtesy. The same thing will hold everywhere in Southeast Asia, and probably also with respect to Formosa. In the absence of an over-all settlement, the days during which we can base our policies on the present megalomania are numbered. It is conceivable that for a short while, we can prolong the present power relationship by building up a force composed of airborne troops - a sort of flying marines - armed with small atomic bombs and, therefore, extend by a few years our ability to intervene militarily in the back yards of China and Russia. But our conceivable military proficiency which has no political counterpart, or when inability to establish stable governments in under-developed countries which could rule with the consent of the people, would render such a military policy senseless even if the days of such a military policy were not numbered. But it can only be a question of years until Russia can equal us in airborne troops equipped with small atomic bombs and, if nothing else, that will put an end to the post-war megalomania.

In either case, the day will come when the American people will no longer believe that it is within their power to impose American policy, no matter how righteous it seems, in territories which are far away from our shores and lie, so to speak, in the back yards of China or Russia. The general idea of an over-all settlement that will give us military and political security, as well as economic prosperity, will then appear much more attractive to the people than it is today, and they will then be more willing to think through the problems involved and to consider unprecedented solutions than they are today. This day would come much sooner if the Government were willing to bring home to the people what they now know to be reality. All it would take on the part of the Government is to test evacuation of our big cities. New York, Chicago might be taken through an exercise

~~which would make the people living in those cities understand the situation~~
~~which they, in fact, face.~~ During a designated week, the people living in these cities might be moved out to pre-determined locations, each family to an assigned place where they will be provided with shelter and food for a week under conditions similar to that which would obtain in case we should be involved in a war with Russia. In such a war we could not rely on a threat of massive retaliation sufficiently to endanger the population of our large cities; nor could we rely on postponing evacuation of these cities until an enemy air force sets off our warning system. Whether or not our cities will be attacked by bombs, the population of our cities will have to be moved out, and will have to suffer inconveniences of which they have no conception at present. No greater incentive can be imagined for the people to begin to think about the price that may be worth paying for peace than to bring home to them these inconveniences. Few people are afraid of war in the sense that they are afraid to die in the case war comes. Many more are afraid of being inconvenienced than of dying. No greater incentives for peace can be created in this country than by bringing home to the people the life they will lead if we get embroiled in a war. *P* The Government of this country will not be able to make peace unless it has the support of the people, and there is no better way for the Government to enlist the support of the people to this end than to bring home to them what war would mean. It is easy to imagine what war would mean in terms of death and destruction. It is difficult to imagine what war would mean in the disruption of our social fabric, whether or not bombs are actually used against our cities.

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The Art of the Possible

Vested Interests - B

Among the arrangements upon which the governments involved might agree to be desirable, there probably will be a number of measures that would adversely affect vested interests which wield political influence, and what is then considered as desirable might prove to be politically unacceptable unless a way is found to win over the vested interests involved. Every man in his right senses in the Government of the United States knows, for instance, very well that if we want a market economy to prevail in international trade, we ought to abolish tariffs - not all at once, perhaps, but gradually according to a pre-determined schedule, so that tariffs will be completely eliminated within perhaps ten or 20 years. If that were done, some industries would disappear, and management, labor, and stockholders would suffer damage. Because of the political system under which the United States operates, the political influence of these vested interests is sufficient to prevent the abolishing of tariffs. The only way out of this difficulty would lie in the Government compensating labor, management, and capital for losses suffered or for "profits" not received as a result of the reduction of tariffs. This could be done at a comparatively small expense, and it would certainly be much cheaper than what we are doing today, for today we give aid to foreign nations in order to supply them with the dollars that they, or other nations with whom they trade, should be able to import goods from the United States. If we assume that profits that would be lost if tariffs would be abolished, amount to about 10% of the dollar volume of the goods produced, the compensation which we would have to pay as a result of reducing tariffs would amount to 10% of the drop in dollar volume that would result from the reduction of the tariffs and, accordingly, also to 10% of the dollar volume of imports that will replace these goods. Thus, we could reduce foreign aid by an amount which is about tenfold of that which the Government would pay out in compensation to the industries damaged by the tariff reduction. Why has this not been done long ago?

~~hypocrisy~~. The obstacles are two-fold. First, it is always difficult to do something unprecedented of this sort; and secondly, because of the hypocrisy which is traditional in politics. Instead of frankly clamoring ~~damage~~ for damages in case tariffs are reduced, the vested interests involved prefer to plead for the maintenance of the tariff on the ground of the national interest. In case of war, so they argue, the United States might be cut off from imports and should, therefore, maintain the productive capacity of its industry in all fields in which legitimate demand may persist in case of war. ~~just~~ just what kind of a war, they don't say.

Shortly after the Second World War, the issue of building battleships became a hot political issue in Germany. Germany could not build big battleships, but she was free, under the Treaty of Versailles, to build pocket battleships of ten thousand tons each. The Navy, of course, pushed hard for the construction of capital ships and emphasized the importance of these ships in case of war. In private conversations, however, it was frankly admitted that a few battleships ~~more or less~~ would make no difference to Germany and that the Navy's desire for capital ships was motivated by the need to maintain the promotional system of the which Navy, would have been decapitated in the absence of capital ships. For you cannot have a lot of Admirals unless you have capital ships, of which they can be put in charge. It would have been far less expensive, financially and politically, for Germany to revamp the promotional system of the Navy, and give them all the Admirals they want and put them in charge of God ~~knows~~ what; but this, of course was not done. P The kind of disarmament arrangement which might best solve the needs of Russia and America and the rest of the world might well involve considerable reduction of the manpower and the technical equipment of the Red Army, as well as of all other armies. Nobody knows today just what political ~~x~~ influence the Red Army wields - to what extent that our vested interests involved should want to

maintain a large military establishment, not for the sake of meeting real needs of national defense, but for the sake of meeting a real need of the political organism called the Red Army. If this should be the case, it might require a number of ingenious social inventions to satisfy the Red Army and to make it politically possible to put into force the arrangements which the Russian Government may recognize to be desirable from the over-all point of view.