



SECRET DIPLOMACY

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Paul Samuel Reinsch (1869-1923) pioneered the field of international relations. Given the current demise in the West of the art of diplomacy, it is good to go back to the basics. These excerpts are from *Secret Diplomacy. How Far Can it be Trusted?* which was published in 1922.



Introduction

Is secret diplomacy the evil spirit of modern politics? Is it the force that keeps nations in a state of potential hostility and does not allow a feeling of confidence and of wholehearted coöperation to grow up? Or is it only a trade device, a clever method of surrounding with an aura of importance the doings of the diplomats, a race of men of average wisdom and intelligence who traditionally have valued the prestige of dealing with "secret affairs of state"? Or is it something less romantic than either of these—merely the survival from a more barbarous age of instincts of secretiveness and chicane acquired at a time when self-defense was the necessity of every hour?

It is quite patent that the practice of secret diplomacy is incompatible with the democratic theory of state. Even in the Liberal theory of state it finds little favor, although that is disposed to grant a great deal of discretion to the representatives who are given the trusteeship of public affairs. Yet the essential idea of Liberalism, government by discussion, includes foreign affairs within its scope fully as much as those of purely domestic concern. In applying to public affairs the experience of private business it is often argued that as the directorate of a corporation could not be expected to transact its business in public, even so diplomatic conversations are not to be heralded from the house tops. How far this particular analogy between private business and public affairs will hold, is a point we shall have to examine later. At first sight the planning of private enterprises and the consideration of benefits and losses, can hardly furnish completely satisfactory rules for the conduct of public affairs, particularly those involving the life and death of the persons concerned. Stockholders would be reluctant to allow such matters to be determined by a board of trustees in secret conclave.

Divesting ourselves of all prejudices, even of righteous indignation against plainly unconscionable practices, we shall try to examine and analyze the action of great diplomats and to see to what extent really important results achieved by them have depended upon the use of secret methods. In the 18th

Century, diplomacy was still looked upon as a sharp game in which wits were matched, with a complete license as to the means pursued; provided, however, that embarrassing discovery must be avoided, in other words, that the exact method of deception must be so closely guarded that only the results will show. The great diplomats of the beginning of the 19th century—Metternich, Talleyrand, Pozzo di Borgo—while they talked much about humanitarian principles, continued to play a barren game of intrigue. Napoleon III, that master of devious statecraft, will always be cited by excoriators of secret diplomacy as an abhorrent example—a man undone by the results of his own plotting. Bismarck indeed prided himself on looking down upon petty secret manœuvering and cast a certain amount of contempt on the whole diplomatic business; he often disconcerted his opponents by an unaccustomed frankness. Yet the orientation of his statesmanship was based upon the idea of helping history to find a short-cut to her aims through masterful plotting. He took the reins out of the hands of Providence.

But let us return to our first question: "Is secret diplomacy the evil spirit of modern politics?" It is indeed worth inquiring how far our secretive methods in foreign affairs are to blame for the pitiful condition in which the world finds itself to-day. No doubt there is a general belief that secret diplomacy and ever-increasing armaments led Europe into the terrible destruction of the Great War and that the continuance of such methods is chiefly to blame for the deplorable condition since the Armistice. There may be deeper causes, but these evidences are so obtrusive that they naturally attract most attention and are given most blame for the evils we endure. It is plain that secret diplomacy is a potent cause for continued distrust, fear and hate. There are few statesmen that would not shrink from deliberately planning and staging a war. Yet they nearly all participate in methods of handling public business from which it is hardly possible that anything but suspicion, fear and hatred should arise. Distrust is planted everywhere. There is no assurance of what is the truth; true reports are questioned; false reports, believed. All motives are under suspicion. The public conscience and will are beclouded; nothing stands out as reliable but stark military force.

It would seem that we have learned very little from the war. The same dangerous and unhealthy methods continue to be used with inveterate zeal. The result is that suspicion has now grown up among those who fought side by side and who shed their blood together. Realizing the fundamental importance of basing international life on sound opinion and fair dealing, the framers of the League of Nations tried to secure the publicity of all international agreements. Yet this moderate provision of the covenant has not been obeyed by some of the strongest contracting powers. Some outsiders, indeed, such as Russia, have quite willingly published their treaties and furnished them to the bureau of the league.

That the first act of peace-making was to shut the door of the council chamber in the face of the multitudes who had offered their lives and shed their blood for the rights of humanity was a tragic mistake. In the defense of secret procedure, published on January 17, 1919, it was said "To discuss differences in the press would inflame public opinion and render impossible a compromise." So all connection between the great public that was paying the price of the game and the benevolent elder statesmen who thought they would shoulder the burden of responsibility alone, was cut off. The men in the council chamber were not strengthened in this great crisis by a feeling of intimate touch with a strong and enlightened public opinion. The public itself was disillusioned; suspicion and contempt were the natural result. The bald statements given to the press concerning the negotiations did not satisfy any one. Most of what was going on became known to outsiders. But its authenticity was so uncertain and it was so commingled with mere rumor that the public soon gave up in despair. It will be important to inquire as to what is the proper perspective between confidential deliberation and publicity of results, in conferences, which are becoming the usual agency for discussing and settling international affairs.

When secrecy is confined merely to the methods of carrying on negotiations, its importance for good and evil is certainly not so great as when the secrecy of methods includes concealment of aims and of the agreements arrived at. We could imagine that even a statesman who seeks the closest relationship with public opinion, even a Lincoln, could not at all times eliminate all use of confidential communications. But the temper of the whole system of foreign affairs is a different matter; and any broad effort to conceal the tendency of action or its results is certainly productive of evil, no matter how salutary or beneficial it may seem to the men employing it at the time.

But, it is said, we must trust to experts. International relations are so intricate and have so many delicate shadings that they elude the grasp of the ordinary man, and can be held together and seen in their proper relations only by the comprehensive and experienced mind of the seasoned statesman. There is, however, a distinction which ought to be noted. The public relies in most cases unreservedly upon expertship in matters of engineering, science, accounting, business management, and even in medicine, though in the latter with a feeling of less complete security. In all these cases we know that the processes applied and the methods pursued are demonstrable, and mathematically certain to produce the results anticipated. But in the affairs of international politics into which the human equation and other inexactly calculable factors enter, there is no such mathematical certainty which can be tested and ascertained by any group of experts. It is all a matter of wisdom in choosing alternatives, and we may well doubt whether any man or small group of men, under modern conditions of life and public state action, can be wiser in such matters by themselves than they would be if they constantly kept in

direct touch with public opinion. Society, when properly organized, will have at its disposal on every question of importance, groups of men who have expert knowledge. Expertship in foreign affairs is not confined to the foreign offices or the chanceries; many thoughtful men observing and thinking intensely, traveling widely, seeing foreign affairs from an independent angle, have opinions and judgments to contribute that the officials cannot safely ignore. In an inquiry of this kind we shall have to consider the broader setting of diplomacy as a part of public life within the nation and throughout the world. The element of secrecy is appropriate only when we consider diplomacy as a clever game played by a small inner privileged circle; it appears out of place in a society organized on a broader basis. As a matter of fact the defense of secrecy, from the point of view of the inner politics of the state, resolves itself almost entirely into an opinion that the ignorance and inexperience of the people does not fit them to judge of foreign relations. That, it must be confessed, does not seem to be a very sound or convincing basis for the choice of methods of public action in a modern state.

But the real strength of the argument for secrecy comes when the external aspects of state action are considered. Then there is, on the surface at least, an apparent justification for secretiveness, in the interest of a closely knit society engaged in competitive struggle with similar societies and obliged to defend itself and to safeguard its interest by all available means.

Regarded in its broader aspects there are two conceptions of diplomacy which are quite antagonistic and which have divided thinkers since the time of Machiavelli and Grotius. These two great minds may indeed be considered as typifying the two tendencies and expressing them in themselves and through the sentiments which their thought and writings have engendered in their successors.

We have the conception of diplomacy as working out a complex system of state action, balancing and counterbalancing forces and material resources and giving direction to the innermost purposes of the state. It is probable that all professional diplomats are more or less enchanted by this ideal. Up to the great war, Bismarck was generally considered the ablest master of diplomacy, and his action seemed to supply short-cuts for historical forces to work out their natural aims. Nationalism was the word of the day and the creation of the German national state, foreordained as it seemed by the laws of history, was accelerated by the masterful action of the great diplomat. But we are now able to see wherein lay the limitations of this method as applied by Bismarck. Notwithstanding his grasp of historic principles of development, he did not, after all, work in unison with broad natural forces, but relied on his power to dominate other men through forceful mastery, with dynastic associations. He was a superman rather than a great representative of a people's aspirations. So while he proclaimed the truthfulness of his

diplomacy, it was nevertheless kept essentially as his own and his master's affair and business, rather than the people's. The base of his policy was narrow. He understood nationalism from a Prussian point of view. He severed Austria from Germany, and then antagonized France by taking Lorraine; far more important still, he failed to strengthen German relations with Central Europe and thus made it later seem necessary for Germany to go on to the sea and thus to arouse the apprehensions and enmity of England. Thus while he himself would probably have in the end avoided confronting the entire world as enemies, the foundations he had laid did not provide a safe footing for the more ordinary men who followed him. His diplomacy, once considered so great, had contained no adequate and sound foundation for permanent national life. Such have been the results of the most distinguished and successful work of manipulative diplomacy during the Nineteenth Century.

What then shall we say of the justification of wars brought about as a part of such a system; under which statesmen consider it quite natural to contemplate "preventive war" and to assume responsibility for wholesale slaughter because their plan of action seems to reveal a necessity for it. The idea of conscious planning, or striving to subject national and economic facts and all historic development to the conscious political will,—that conception of diplomacy is synonymous with the essence of politics and will stand and fall with the continuance of the purely political state. Manipulative, and hence secret, diplomacy is in fact the most complete expression of the purely political factor in human affairs. To many, it will seem only a survival of a hyper-political era, as human society now tends to outgrow and transcend politics for more comprehensive, pervasive and essential principles of action. We need not here rehearse the fundamental character of politics as a struggle for recognized authority to determine the action of individuals, with the use of external compulsion. Politics is a part of the idea of the national state seen from the point of view of a struggle for existence among different political organizations, in which one class originally superimposed its authority upon a subject population and in which, after authority is firmly established within, political power is then used to gain advantages from, or over, outside societies. It is Machiavelli as opposed to Grotius who gives us the philosophy of this struggle. The narrowness of this basis for human action and the direful effect of conscious and forceful interference with social and economic laws, is now beginning to be recognized.

But there is also a broader conception of diplomacy which is influencing the minds of men although it is not yet fully embodied in our daily practice. This conception looks upon humanity, not as a mosaic of little mutually exclusive areas, but as a complex body of interlocking interests and cultural groups. As this conception gains in strength, the center of effort in diplomacy will not be to conceal separatist aims and special plots, but to bring out into the clear light of day the common interests of men. The common work for them to do in making the world habitable, in dignifying the life of men and protecting them

against mutual terror and massacre,—that ideal of coöperation and forbearance, is as yet only partially embodied in our international practices, although it arouses the fervid hopes of men throughout the world. Whether a system of local autonomy combined with full coöperation and free interchange of influences can be brought about without the exercise of an overpowering influence on the part of a group of allied nations, is still doubtful. But if it should be achieved, then plainly the old special functions of diplomacy will fall away and administrative conferences will take the place of diplomatic conversations. When Portugal became a republic, the proposal was made to abolish all diplomatic posts and have the international business of Portugal administered by consuls. That would eliminate politics from foreign relations.

Diplomacy in the spirit of Grotius has always had its votaries even in periods of the darkest intrigue, but there has only recently come into general use a method of transacting international business which favors open and full discussion of diplomatic affairs. Such business will be dealt with less and less in separate negotiation between two powers; there will generally be more nations involved, and conferences and standing committees or commissions will be at work, rather than isolated diplomats. Indeed, international conferences are still largely influenced by the old spirit of secretive diplomacy. Yet the practice of meeting together in larger groups is itself inimical to the strict maintenance of the older methods and we may expect a natural growth of more simple and direct dealings. It will be interesting to watch the use of the older methods of diplomacy under these new conditions and to see how far and how fast they will have to be modified in order to bear out the underlying principle in human development to which action by conference responds.

The Washington Conference of 1921 afforded the first notable occasion for bringing into use open methods in diplomatic discussion. Secretary Hughes in his introductory speech struck a keynote hitherto not heard in negotiations on international matters. A new era seemed to have dawned in which great issues and all-important interests could be discussed openly and decided on their merits. A great wave of enthusiasm passed over the public. But it cannot be said that the temper of this auspicious opening was sustained throughout. As the conference descended from general declarations to important questions of detail there was an unmistakable reversion to old methods, which obstructed the straightforward aims of Secretary Hughes. Even the generous initial proposal of the American government was made by one of the powers a trading subject. The result was that some of the attendant evils of secret diplomacy invaded even this conference, and that the public soon became somewhat confused as to its object and purposes, through an abundance of guesses which put a premium on the sensational imagination. It must be said that the temper of the press, encouraged by the manner in which the Conference had been inaugurated, was one of restraint and responsibility.

Viewing the questions which were before this Conference, there can be no doubt that the very problems about which there was hesitation and exaggerated secretiveness, were exactly those which could have been best judged of by the well-informed public opinion. One could not avoid the conclusion that the fear of publicity is in all cases inspired by motives which cannot stand the test of a world-wide public opinion.

At the present day, as yet, the fatal circle has not been broken: secret diplomacy, suspicion, armaments, war. We had thought that we should escape from it quite easily, after the terrible sacrifices laid on mankind and the light which had been flashed on us in that darkness. But the passions which had been stirred up and the fear and terror which had been aroused in that dire experience may for some time yet serve to strengthen the reactionary forces in human affairs, and retard those which tend to liberate humanity from terror and suffering. But it is lack of leadership toward better things, that is most to blame.

To America, to the government and the people, the elimination of secret dealings in international affairs is nothing short of a primary interest. The entire character of our foreign policy is inspired with, and based upon, the belief in open dealings and fair play. We have a broad continental position which makes secret plotting and devious transactions unnatural, inappropriate and unnecessary. Our national experience of one hundred and fifty years has expressed itself quite spontaneously in proposals for the peaceful settlement of international disputes by discussion, for the improvement of international relations through conferences, and in the great policies of the Open Door, which means commercial fair play, and the Monroe Doctrine, which means political fair play to the American sister republics. A policy such as this has nothing to seek with secret methods and concealed aims.

To tolerate secrecy in international affairs would mean to acquiesce in a great national danger. For good or ill we can no longer conceive ourselves as isolated. Our every-day happiness and permanent welfare are directly affected by what other nations do and plan. Continued secrecy would mean that we should feel ourselves surrounded by unknown dangers. We should have to live in an atmosphere of dread and suspicion. We could find peace of mind only in the security of vast armaments. In international affairs we would be walking by the edge of precipices and over volcanoes; our best intentioned proposals for the betterment of human affairs would be secretly burked, as in the case of Secretary Knox' plan of railway neutralization in Manchuria. Our rights would be secretly invaded and our security threatened, as at the time when England and France agreed with Japan that she should have the North Pacific islands, behind our backs, though our vital interests were involved. In all such

matters secrecy will work to the disadvantage of that power which has the most straightforward aims and policies. America cannot willingly submit to such a condition. It is unthinkable that with our traditions of public life and with our Constitutional arrangements, we should ourselves play the old game of secret intrigue; it is for us to see, and to the best of our power and ability to assure, that it will not be played in the future by others.

Nations will respond to the call for absolutely open dealings in international affairs, with a varying degree of readiness and enthusiasm. We are perhaps justified in saying that wherever the people can make their desires felt they will be unanimously for a policy of openness. The English tradition of public life would also be favorable to such a principle of action, were it not that such special imperial interests as the British raj in India frequently inspires British diplomacy with narrower motives and with a readiness to depart from open dealings from a conviction that imperial interests so require. The Russian Soviet government in giving to the public a full knowledge of international affairs, was at first inspired primarily by a desire to discredit the old régime. But it is also undoubtedly true that the hold which this government has on the party which supports it, is in a measure due to the fact that all foreign policies and relationships are freely reported to, and discussed in, the party meetings and the soviets. No matter what the aims of this government may be, it cannot be denied that it has strengthened itself by the openness of its foreign policy. The Chinese people have manifested a deep faith in public opinion and their chief desire in international affairs is that there shall be open, straightforward dealings so that all the world may know and judge. Through all their difficulties of the last decade they have been sustained by this faith in the strength of a good cause in the forum of world-wide public opinion.

The peoples of the Continent of Europe undoubtedly would welcome a reign of openness and truth, for they have suffered most from secret dealings in diplomacy. But those who govern them find it difficult to extricate themselves from the tangle of intrigue. As President Wilson expressed it:

“European diplomacy works always in the dense thicket of ancient feuds, rooted, entangled and entwined. It is difficult to see the path; it is not always possible to see the light of day. I did not realize it all until the peace conference; I did not realize how deep the roots are.”

Conclusion

In modern diplomacy there still persists the image of the chess players intent on their complicated game, planning each move with long foresight of all the combinations that could possibly be organized

by the opponent. In the popular image, too, the great diplomat is conceived as spinning a complicated web of actions and relationships in which every detail is subordinate and subservient to a general dominant purpose. Then comes the international publicist and with ingenuity still more refined than that of the imagined diplomat, he reasons out the innermost ambitions that dominate and inspire the makers of foreign affairs. So it has remained possible for the most extravagant imaginary constructions to be put forth in volumes of sober aspect, which purport to give the key to diplomacy or to expose the pernicious ambitions of this or that foreign office. It has become a game in which nothing is impossible to the constructive imagination.

To any one familiar with the usual methods of foreign offices and of diplomatic representatives,²¹² the idea that foreign affairs are really handled in this manner, like mental legerdemain, becomes quite grotesque. Complicated manipulations with respect to movements far in the future, looking to still more distant results,—that kind of diplomatic planning exists more in the imagination than in the actual conduct of foreign affairs. In the majority of cases foreign offices meet each situation as it arises, relying indeed on precedents and having certain underlying aims and purposes, but giving most attention to the facts immediately present and often satisfied with anything that will ease a troublesome or embarrassing situation. Foreign offices indeed differ greatly in the definiteness and constancy of their objectives and the completeness with which they subordinate details to central aims. The Russian foreign office always had the reputation of great continuity of policy; it gave the central place to fundamental objectives to which problems that arose from day to day could be referred; and thus it solved them with a cumulative effect upon the advancement of its political aims.

From the point of view of the older traditions of diplomacy, there would be a decided advantage in definiteness of plan and in the harmonious subordination of all details to the main idea. However,²¹³ the advantage of this method is frequently defeated through the narrowness of the objects aimed at, when diplomatic policy is conceived in this manner. Immediate purposes may indeed be achieved more readily, but the permanent results will usually be barren or lead ultimately to conflicts of forces. In such a system there is too much abstraction from the multiform forces of actual life; and while those who pursue it may flatter themselves that they are making history, they are not often building in accordance with natural and historic forces.

The concept of diplomacy which has been criticized in these pages does not exclude the possibility of immediate brilliant success; but its ineffectiveness appears when we view it over longer periods of history. It is built on too narrow a foundation. We have seen that even with the greatest statesmen, any

plan of action conceived in this manner has such positive limitations that the very success in executing such policies through a shrewd play of diplomatic forces, conjures up new dangers and difficulties. The wisdom of no man nor small self-contained group of men is at present sufficient to measure the needs of society and to transform its impulses into effective action. A broader basis for policy is needed. But²¹⁴ the greatest weakness of the old method lies in the fact that just at the very times when men are most in need of confidence and of a spirit of reason and sane judgment, this mode of action leaves the public mind in confusion, excitement and the darkest fears.

If democracy means anything, its significance for the welfare of humanity must lie in the value of allowing constantly more and more minds to participate in the great things of the world. Not only would such participation seem to be a natural right of the human mind but also the things most worth while can be achieved only when the ablest and best can freely lend their efforts. To all this a narrow system of secret management by a limited hierarchy is hostile. The old diplomacy rests entirely on skepticism as to the wisdom and self-control of the people. The people are merely material for statesmanship. This conception is blind to the fact that everything that is great in modern life has arisen through the freedom with which talent may manifest itself wherever found and that in all pursuits of humanity that are worth while, innumerable minds cooperate, in a degree as warranted by their capacity to bring about sound action and improvement. The older diplomacy assumed that the people²¹⁵ furnished only passive material for statesmanship to work upon, and it saw in the public only potentialities for vague and general influences which statesmanship in turn was to mold and utilize. The greatest distance it went, was to admit that national policy must rest on popular instinct; a principle which is quite compatible with the practice of secret diplomacy. When we come to talk of political instincts, however, we are dealing with one of the vaguest and most indefinite concepts known to thought. These instincts may be interpreted and given active expression as it suits any diplomatic policy. Unfortunately the "instincts" most to the fore are not usually helpful to calm and sound action. In international affairs, an instinctive dislike or hatred of anything different has again and again been made the basis of aggressive action, stirring up otherwise peaceful populations to warlike and murderous intent. Great national policies may often truly be said to rest on instinct in the sense that undivided popular support is given to a policy from a variety of motives which are not clearly reasoned out but which all express themselves in an overpowering impulse which may be called instinctive. Thus the Monroe policy in which the most fundamental motive is the desire for peace²¹⁶ and for the safety of the continental position of the American nation, may be said to rest on the instinct of self-preservation.

But it is quite plain that unless what is here called instinct can be transformed into an intelligent, wise and discriminating public opinion, such instinct is but a shifting sand, affording material which may be

molded into any desired form by an ambitious policy working through suggestion and propaganda. Instinct can be transformed into a true public policy only through publicity and through the training of large groups of men to see things with true eyes and to judge with reason and wisdom. Here is the crux of the matter. Secret diplomacy treats all except the inner official ring as outsiders and "persons without responsibility." Among these outsiders there may be numerous persons actually better qualified than the officials themselves, through experience and thought, to judge of international affairs. No one can here assume infallibility. Safe counsel can come only if the entire intelligence and moral sentiment of a nation can find expression and if its fittest individuals can concentrate their attention upon every great problem as it arises. A sound, just, wise public policy without publicity cannot be imagined. To consider publicity an²¹⁷ evil, to consider it as impeding the proper flow of international influences and obstructing the solution of international difficulties, appears as an unbelievable perversion when we consider the true implications of such a thought.

It is therefore inestimably important that the facts of international life, the materials out of which policies are formed, should be known freely and fully to the public of every nation. The manipulation of international communications for political purposes is the most sinister and dangerous part of the system with which secret diplomacy is entwined. According to this theory it is not only not good for the people to know everything but they must also be made to know things about the truth of which we need not bother our heads but which will stimulate the passions and arouse the instincts our policy desires to work upon. Thus the void left by secrecy, by a concealment of the true nature and character of internationally important matters, is frequently supplied by an intelligence service carrying distorted and colored versions of facts; all this confuses and discourages the public mind to such an extent that it becomes unable to sever fact from fiction and to form a consistent and firm judgment.

The abolition of secret diplomacy is not a matter²¹⁸ of agreeing to have no more secrets. It is a matter of arousing among the public so powerful a determination to know, so strong a sentiment of the value of truth, such a penetrating spirit of inquiry, that the secrets will fade away as they always do when the importance of a situation is really understood by a large number of people.

Meanwhile it need not appear futile to work for the positive elimination of secrecy. No one can doubt that the provision of the Covenant of the League of Nations, which requires that all treaties shall be made public, is salutary and that its enforcement would greatly increase public confidence. But it is necessary to go beyond this and to outlaw any agreement which is kept secret, by making it the public law of the world that no rights or obligations can be founded on such attempts against the peace and

common welfare of the nations.

The personal relationships of diplomacy also require attention. The spirit of the Diplomatic Service should be transformed in accordance with the modern organization of society. The most essential weakness of caste diplomacy lies in the fact that it does not provide means for a sufficient contact among the peoples of the world. Contact is maintained only within a narrow class.²¹⁹ The diplomatic fraternity lives in its own realm of precedences, rivalries and traditions. To confine the intercourse and interchange of influences so narrowly, is a great weakness of our present political system.

The diplomatic office should be conceived as having the function to represent not only the special national interest of the respective country, but also, on an equal plane, its participation in all the activities and interests which are common to the nations of the world. The legations and embassies should be provided with a personnel of attachés not only for political and military affairs, but for commerce, education, science and social legislation. All these matters are already dealt with to some extent by common action among the nations. The sending of ministers as delegates to international technical conferences has often been criticized as importing into such conferences the narrow, separatist point of view of diplomatic politics. It should be exactly the other way; participation in such conferences ought to impart to diplomats a broad spirit of coöperation instead of a desire to maintain intact a theoretical isolation. That is the essence of the matter. As long as it is supposed that by jealously scrutinizing every international relationship from the point of view of abstract political independence, and assuming that it is best to make the very least possible contribution of energy and coöperation, the national interest can be most promoted; so long will diplomatic action continue on a strained basis, always being painfully conscious of the potential enmity among nations. But when it is realized that in nearly every case the national interest, or the interest of the people of the nation which ought to be synonymous therewith, is best advanced by whole-souled coöperation in constructive work in commerce, industry, science and the arts, then the political factor of diplomatic rivalry will assume more just proportions as compared with the other interests of humanity.

This borders upon a very broad subject dealing rather with general international policy than with the specific problems we were considering; and yet we ought to be aware of this background. We need not give up our conviction that the autonomy of the national state must be preserved and that each political society shall dispose of its own affairs within its borders as its wisdom and judgment may dictate, free from intervention from without. But complete freedom of local self-determination can rest only upon a universal recognition of that right in all others, in a spirit of confidence and security

engendered by the absence of intrigue and secret ambitions. In a still greater measure does the happiness of the national state depend on free and full coöperation with all others in all pursuits, activities and interests common to humanity and in making the earth a place for dignified and happy human life. Unless diplomacy looks forward to this and helps to bring it about, it will remain ensnared in the old practices which ever lead only to barren results.

Lincoln's simple faith in the people has not yet been adequately applied in international affairs. International action has shown the impersonal character of calculated manipulations coldly disposing of the rights and lives of millions with cruel callousness. The last great war has made us consider the relation of war sacrifices to the daily welfare of the people. A great deal of the prevailing unrest in the world is undoubtedly due to a lack of confidence that great affairs are being handled with wisdom and with regard to the true, lasting welfare of the people themselves. It is difficult to reduce to personal terms relations so abstract and general as those obtaining in international affairs. We think of the armies in serried ranks and are impressed with the impact of their force and the great feats it may accomplish. But we are too apt to forget the individual destiny carried in every breast, the human feeling in every heart, among all the millions that make up this engine of power and destruction. Human welfare rather than human power has not yet been made the constant and overshadowing aim of diplomacy. That will be done only when the people themselves demand that international affairs shall be dealt with in a different spirit and with other methods. Then we shall have policies that can be avowed and understood by the people who bear the burden and who pay the bill.

The questions which we have been considering are not distinct and isolated but are bound up with all that goes toward a more adequate organization of modern society. Even in the industries, men are no longer satisfied with a narrowly centralized control. They call for information and accountability, they claim a share in management, at least of an advisory or consultative nature. All who contribute in bearing the risks of industry demand to be kept informed of the policies and actions of the management. In ever extending circles men share in the responsibility for action taken in their name. It is a truism that risk is diminished and tends to disappear as it is distributed over greater and greater numbers. Under our present political system nations are carrying a tremendous risk in international affairs—they are risking their wealth, the lives of their citizens, their own very existence. The responsibility for bearing these risks and for arranging the conditions of safety is now too narrowly centralized. It is an elementary demand of safety that it should be more widely distributed, that a larger number of competent and representative minds should take part in carrying this burden. And they should at all points be supported by a well-informed public opinion throughout the nation.

But there is a condition that lies still deeper. The popular psychology cultivated under the narrow aims of nationalism has exhausted itself in international matters in dislike and hatred of everything alien and of all that lies beyond the national pale. Such a state of mind is ever ready to act the bull to any red rag of newspaper sensationalism. So, the inside managers of diplomatic affairs may still say with some justification, "Open discussion would too much excite the public mind." This fundamental condition cannot be suddenly purged of all its potency for evil. Only by gradual degrees may an attitude be brought about within the national communities which will be more just to the outside world and to everything that is strange and unaccustomed. What the great imaginative writers of the first half of the nineteenth century accomplished in breaking down social prejudices and abuses will have to be done for humanity by a new host of inspired molders of human sentiment. We may not get rid of artificial hostilities now still nurtured by nationalism, until ideals of international goodwill and fellowship have been expressed in the form of human experience and portrayed as part of the struggles and triumphs of the individual human soul. Patient, sound, upbuilding influences shall have to work powerfully on the masses of men, and on their leaders, before we may finally overcome the evils that express themselves in practices inherent in a system such as that we call "secret diplomacy," before the world may be made an abode of mutual confidence and helpfulness instead of a house of imprisonment, suspicion and terror.

[Featured](#): *Statesmen of World War I*, by James Guthrie; painted ca. 1924-1930.

