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SECTION THREE

Process of Change

Individual Action and Collective Transformation

OVERVIEW

I. Survival as the Superordinate Goal

In the Long View of History Cooperation Is Spreading

For most of human history, we have thought of war as a given. For centuries, war within, say, Western Europe has been a constant. Today, it is unthinkable. In certain areas of the globe, there has been an evolution from stable war toward stable peace. Worldwide, most human activity is peaceful and cooperative: eating, working, loving, building, studying, planning, communicating. Internationally, when boundaries have stabilized stable peace has evolved. Habits can and should build into taboos, and taboos into unwritten agreements which reject war. This is one way stable peace will grow. (“Moving from Unstable to Stable Peace,” Kenneth Boulding)

Moving from Unilateral to Multilateral Decision Making

Despite the fact that “peace” and “security” are usually discussed together, their real correlation is not so clear. They do not necessarily go together.

For many years we have concentrated on security, strategic parity, and preserving a high level of mutual danger. Today, the whole understanding of what is security must be revised. Universal security is not a ready-made package, but it has been studied and “common security” is becoming a viable concept. For this, nation-states would have to abandon deterrence through terror, or psychological stalemate, as the basis of security. There are also real limitations on national sovereignty in a nuclear and interdependent world. Any attempts to use military means for the solution of disputes of a political and ideological nature must be ruled out by both the American and Soviet sides. (“The Concept of Universal Security: A Revolution of Thinking and Policy in the Nuclear Age,” Alexander I. Nikitin)

Reorientation!

In the nuclear age many traditional beliefs, perceptions, and views must change. The problem is global and involves the whole civilization, which is now at risk. The challenge here is to the linear development of society. Nuclear apocalypse would be the end of history, the end of everything. The crucial fact is that both sides are totally vulnerable. That changes the nature and character of war. It forces a reevaluation of the correlation between force and politics. Old notions of security are turned upside down. We are challenged to make a radical reorientation in our consciousness. It is an unprecedented, difficult task which entails a resolute break with historical, political, psychological, and ideological traditions. We have to move past the psychological defense mechanisms of denial, of overstating absolute ideals, or of underrating nuclear weapons as if they were only conventional weapons. (“Nuclear Revolution and the New Way of Thinking,” Andrei Y. Melville)

If Survival Is the Goal Cooperation Is Inevitable

Antagonists don't have to like each other to cooperate. They don't even have to be rational. They don't have to have a backlog of trust. It is only necessary that they expect to share the future. Given that overwhelmingly important expectation, cooperation naturally evolves, with or without ideological agreement. That has been the experience from soldiers in the trenches of World War I to international commercial enterprises today. Those are also the results of a surprising computerized tournament that demonstrates how cooperation not only evolves, but spreads. Cooperators seek each other out. Groups of cooperators grow. They bolster each other, while noncooperators tend toward isolation or mutual retaliation which inhibits growth. Cooperators survive. They have in history, and computerized simulations show why. (“The Evolution of Cooperation,” Robert Axelrod)

II. Resistance to Change

Brain Functioning and Reorientation

Change is a universal phenomenon. But it is not comfortable. It is resisted. Studies of electrical currents in the brain show that the brain seeks stability. It functions less well in times of high stress, thrives on stimulation but not overstimulation; it may overreact, and shut down in an unhealthy, passive stability. When it does, it resists change mightily. It slips into psychic numbing. What is then required is not just a soft push, but rather a massive jolt. Without this stimulus on the one hand, and active involvement by the individual on the other, the brain will resist and stay in the unhealthy state. It is the action, however, which literally transforms the mind. Involvement is healing. Anyone can cure psychic numbing by acting personally. Such healing action can begin with as little as verbalizing the problem, and is more pronounced when one actively seeks a solution. (“Dangers and Opportunities for Change from a Physiologist’s Point of View,” Natalia P. Bekhtereva)

Projection of Blame onto an Enemy

It is natural for humans to form into groups and to value their groups above all others. It is the historic way to survive. Groups provide protection. Other groups can be dangerous. The net effect can be to idolize one’s own group and demonize the other. Sometimes, images of the enemy mirror each other. The images become excuses for staying in an old reality, resisting change, blaming all our problems on the other group, now characterized as an “enemy.” Then, often, it is said that it is only the “leaders” of the opposing group who are the problem - the people are good. These exaggerated images gradually blur and distort the vision of both sides and reality is lost. The escalation of enemy images disrupts communication. The result is the idea that one can deal with the enemy only by force. Thus, the image of the enemy itself breeds the arms race and carries adversaries toward war. (“The Image of the Enemy and the Process of Change,” Jerome D. Frank and Andrei Y. Melville)

Hiding Behind Idealism

We sometimes use ideals, not as a guide for action, but as a shield against action. The greater the gap between words and deeds, the louder and more insistent the words become to protect the psyche from seeing one’s own behavior. Any ideology, not excluding Christianity and Marxism, can be used for this purpose. On the other hand, when an individual or a society faces the fact that the current course can lead to death, there is a chance for

transformation. That is the situation with the nuclear threat today. The ideal is that nuclear weapons be eliminated. The reality is that to survive, the ideal must be achieved. Thus leaders who seek this goal can be both practical and idealistic at the same time, and the real and the ideal can become one. (“Nuclear Disarmament: Ideal and Reality,” Yuri A. Zamoshkin)

Fabricating Resistance to New Realities

National policy is often based upon perceptions of military power rather than upon realities. There is a perception, for example, that more nuclear weapons make one more secure, but military strategists know that the reality is that more weapons have no more impact on security. To deal with this difference between fact and perception the human has a high capacity to tolerate ambiguity. There have been two key responses of the defense planners. One, to suppress the awareness of the reality that numbers of weapons do not increase security; the other to suppress the idea that nuclear weapons are more dangerous than conventional weapons. Interviews with some Soviet and American experts and observers reveal that both indulge in these twin efforts to deny the nuclear reality. Both have, in the past, discussed the idea of “winning” a nuclear war. There is encouragement in the fact that in the late 1980s, both are trying to adapt to new realities created by the nuclear revolution. (“Nuclear Reality: Resistance and Adaptation,” Steven Kull)

III. Bringing New Thinking to Life: Building Public Support

Important Governmental Changes Depend upon Public Support

The most important achievements in arms control are those which have been backed by a public constituency. When that is there, as in the case of the ABM Treaty, there has been progress in arms control and moderation of the commitment to the MX missile. When the public support has not been active, as in the case of SALT II, or is ambivalent, as in the case of nuclear weapons testing, then there has been little or no progress in international negotiations. An enduring, energetic, informed, and politically aware arms control constituency is not just a good idea, it is essential. The arms control record is the evidence. (“The Impact of a US Public Constituency on Arms Control,” Sidney Drell)

Restructuring of Soviet Society

The democratization that is going on in the Soviet Union today is both economic and political. The two are tied together, and there cannot be one

without the other. There are multiple candidate elections taking place in all the republics of the country, including elections for factory managers and new direct-election, secret ballot procedures for local level party leaders. The attempt is being made to increase the influence of citizens, employees, and ordinary party members, so that power comes from the bottom up, rather than from the top down. Newspapers, radio, and television are changing. They are beginning to publish accounts of misdeeds of public officials, Western articles or interviews, and statements of foreign leaders. In economics, there is decentralization of management, and, very recently, new forms of adaptation to supply and demand. Here again, the principle is to lessen the influence on enterprises from above, giving more independence, and more rewards to those at the factory, plant, or local level. These changes are revolutionary. ("Restructuring of Soviet Society," Alexander I. Belchuk)

New Thinking Spreads One Individual at a Time

We are more likely to buy a new car or a computer because of a friend or peer than because of any other influence. In some degree, the same is true in adopting the idea of a world in which war is obsolete. The actual process of adopting a new idea is built upon individuals who learn from one another. An idea spreads from innovators to opinion leaders to the population at large. When it has been adopted by at least 20 percent, it cannot be stopped. It will grow and expand throughout the society. The role of the media is important - but not as much as one would think. The media builds awareness. Adoption, that is, the actual personal identification with the idea, "That is what I believe," is a result of activity, discussion, and example among friends. The role of each individual is, therefore, more important than that of any other influence. ("Diffusion of the Idea of Beyond War," Everett M. Rogers)

The Value of Diversity

Diversity and unity are two sides of a picture. Our world is infinitely diverse, geographically, culturally, and economically. There is extraordinary variety. Prejudice against those who are different, who are strange, is extremely widespread. The foreigner is the enemy. To overcome this powerful psychological barrier will require a revolution in consciousness. Is it possible? In the Soviet Union there have been major changes in attitude concerning, for example, ecology and alcohol. Can the same sort of change occur, not only here but everywhere, with regard to the distrust of whatever is foreign? One is accustomed, in answer to this question, to look for what is similar between two peoples. An alternative is to look, not for what is similar, but to acknowledge and respect the differences. Studies at the

University of Moscow show that we can look into the culture of another, become more conscious and understanding of them, and, at the same time more conscious and understanding of our own culture and values. ("Similarity or Diversity?" Vladimir S. Ageev)

We Must Adapt to the Reality of Conflict

There have been two distinct tendencies in Soviet history since the 1920s. The struggle between these two tendencies, two ways of understanding socialism, has continued from that time forward until the present day. One model was developed in the conditions of a cruel civil war under which all market mechanisms and transactions were abolished. The other model, beginning with the New Economic Policy, was one in which various types of enterprises - state, cooperative, and private - competed, and the peasant freely sold his production on the market. It is the latter tendency which is again emerging in the dramatic changes which are now going on in the Soviet Union. Contradictions in socialism have often been thought of as something to be eliminated. In fact, contradictions, or internal conflicts, are the most important engine of development, the source of dynamics and competitiveness in a society. Values are created by the people through pluralism, competitiveness, and democratization. ("New Thinking about Socialism," Fyodor M. Burlatsky)