

The tunes of statesmanlike conduct

In times of war and intense political unrest, people of all nations worry about conflict showing its face at their doorstep. Many have endured unending violence for several generations.

When heads of state attend summits and other gatherings, the hosts, state departments and diplomats carefully plan and control their activities. Embarrassing mishaps and possible unforeseen personal conflict at high levels could result in dangerous diplomatic breakdowns, which could influence the fates of nations.

One challenging public remark between two men of high political office could define the well being of entire cultures. It takes a few seconds to declare war and sometimes years to end it.

Nonetheless, I have noticed that when high-level meetings and conventions last for several days, there is always one social gathering that is very private. Information about the gathering can only come from the guests in attendance. However, their correspondence with the outside world is closely monitored. The planners strictly prohibit the media, and swear everyone working the event to secrecy, even the musicians and waiters.

Well...secrecy often comes in degrees. One of those summits happened on American soil. The event was hosted at a castle-like private estate. The security, as anyone can imagine, was impenetrable. Even the air space was off limits for miles.

I happened to know a waiter who worked the event. He worked that private evening when the heads of state, with their wives, gathered for an evening of socializing without the scrutiny of the dreaded media, or anyone else for that matter. They could let their virtual hair down and enjoy themselves with impunity.

At the risk of compromising



You can't beat a system you can't understand

By Sam Bari

our friendship, I asked my waiter friend if he could tell me anything. He knew that I wrote an unbiased, non-political column, so it wasn't as if I were trying to scoop other publications for a front-page headline.

Still, he was cagey about what he would say. He was an intelligent guy, a graduate student in political science who wanted to ultimately be involved in the global arena. He thought he could get an inside edge by working where he could watch the system actually function, and see how things really happened.

Backgrounds of event employees are carefully checked, and the chances of a reporter faking his or her way into a job even at the lowest level of one of these political extravaganzas are close to impossible.

My friend said, "I'm not going to tell you anything today that could be construed as news. I don't trust publications that might get the information and misuse it. Call me in a month when this event is old news, and I'll give you something you can write about."

I was mildly disappointed, but we did get together and he did tell me about what happens at these events.

He asked if I had ever watched lawyers at work in court. I told him I had. "Have you ever noticed that when court is finished, they go to lunch together, play golf or attend some other function?" I said, "Yes. Of course."

He went on to say, "In court

you'd think they were bitter enemies. But they treat it as business; it's nothing personal. They are representing their clients in the courtroom. After that, they go back to just being people.

"Well...most of the time, that's what it's like at these gatherings when the media is not present. Many of the heads of state know each other personally, but they understand their jobs. They must represent the best interests of their countries, even when they are at odds."

He said that two presidents of countries that had bitter differences happened to be amateur musicians. One played piano, and the other the trumpet. They sat in with the band and played a little jazz. They made beautiful music together. Everyone applauded. But not one picture was taken of their camaraderie. If their friendship were made public, they would probably lose their jobs.

This is second-hand information, but I do not doubt my friend. He had no reason to deceive me. I like to think that what he told me is true. If it is, I feel much more secure knowing that level heads usually prevail.

Chalk this up to another reason why I can make a career out of writing about living in a system we can't understand.

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