

Put yourself in our place and you will see what I mean. The pace of political events today is almost as fast as the progress that is being made in the science of total destruction. In 1914, the United States had three years to prepare for the decisions which had to be made on peace or war. In 1939, there were two years before Pearl Harbour made a decision unnecessary.

Next time, there will be no gradual and individual wading into the cold waters of total war. It is more likely to be, for allies, a dive in together from the spring board of collective action.

Indeed, that is the very purpose of NATO, to ensure that in defence we act together and act at once, in the hope, founded on the lamentable experience of the past, that we may thereby not have to act at all.

Mr. Dulles, in a speech on January 12, which may turn out to be one of the most important of our times, announced, as a basic principle for defence action, a Washington decision, and I quote from his speech, ". . . to depend principally upon a great capacity to retaliate, instantly, by means, and at places of our own choosing".

The key words in this sentence, as I see it, are "instantly", "means", and "our".

This statement has aroused intense interest in this country. I assure you that this interest is hardly less among your friends in other countries; especially, I suspect, among those whose territories are only a few hundred miles from those great communist armies who could also act as an instrument of retaliation.

From our point of view, it is important that the "our" in this statement should mean those who have agreed, particularly in NATO, to work together and by collective action, to prevent war or, if that should fail, to win it. Indeed, an earlier part of Mr. Dulles' statement gives that wise interpretation, when he said: "The way to deter aggression is for the free community to be willing and able to respond vigorously at places and with means of its own choosing".

But what effect will that have on the other words "instantly" and "means"?

Collective action means collective consultation but that must be reconciled with the necessity for swift and effective action. This reconciliation is not always easy, even within a single government. It is less easy between governments.

It seems clear in any event that this "new defence policy" makes diplomacy not less but even more important; especially when we contemplate the "means" - including atomic - that may have to be used, the occasions when this should be done, and the effect - explosive possibly in more respects than one - it may have.