

Mutual Security Comes First

RECENT discussions of the situation in North Africa have brought into the foreground a question which is not always faced with the frankness its importance deserves, namely, which is the major cause for which the Allies are fighting—freedom or security? It would, of course, be true to say that they are fighting for both—freedom to realize their own ideals in their own way, and protection against threats from without which would make this realization impossible. Unfortunately the matter is not so simple, for different social groups, like the individuals of which they are composed, will interpret the freedom for which they are fighting differently. To some it will mean the freedom of the New Deal with its emphasis upon deliverance from want; to others the continuance of the system of free competition, which in their thinking alone makes social progress possible. When the attempt is made to define more exactly which of these two conceptions of freedom should control the political strategy of the Allies, difference appears and tension arises. Unless it is realized that something even more fundamental is at stake than the achievement of freedom in either of these senses there is danger of divided counsels which will make a united approach to post-war problems difficult if not impossible.

No one has put this more clearly than Sir Norman Angell in his various books and in none more clearly than in the last. He has been reminding us that the primary object for which the war is being fought is security. It is the primary object because without security—that is some form of international order which has promise of permanence—freedom in either of the two senses above contrasted is unobtainable. If security is achieved, it will then be possible for

those who differ in social theory to settle their differences by the method of free discussion and legal enactment which recognized government makes possible.

It is not easy for liberals, either in Church or State, to put security first. They see so clearly the dangers to which the type of society in which big business feels most at home commits them; they know so well how easily, under the guise of free competition, the monopolistic practices with which fascism has familiarized them may reappear.

Yet there is danger that too close identification of the freedoms of the Atlantic Charter with the particular conception of freedom which is most dear to liberals may blind them to the fact that in order to lay a foundation for a society as complex as our modern society has become, one must be able to find a basis so broad in its appeal that it can serve to unify social groups which differ as widely as the Soviets of Russia, the appeasers of Vichy, the stand-patters of big business and the liberals of the New Deal. Democracy as a political system guarantees to those who live under it only the right to make their views prevail by legal means, never the power to exclude from equal participation those who from the liberal point of view seem misguided or dangerous.

It is no doubt true that such a statement of the

issue is an over simplification. Under the abnormal conditions produced by the war it is possible to hide under the cloak of impartiality policies and procedures which are really partisan. How far this danger has already been yielded to by those in control of the policy of the Allied nations or any of their representatives, it is not easy to determine. In default of definite evidence the imputation of improper motives is dangerous. It must never be forgotten that motives which seem to many liberals improper may be held by some of their associates in the Allied cause in perfect good faith. To impugn the motives of those from whom one differs tends to divert attention from the real issue, which is to determine what procedure will most speedily re-establish the ordered society on which freedom in any intelligible sense of the word alone depends.

If the point thus made is well taken, it would appear that there is laid upon liberals a double duty: first to cooperate whole heartedly with men of every nation or social creed who, whatever their political philosophy, believe in an ordered government enough to be willing to cooperate in bringing it into existence; then in the more limited political sphere to work with every means in their power to make the particular type of freedom in which they believe more appealing and so ultimately more controlling.

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