II

CONTEMPORARY CONFLICTS

THE PRIMARY CONDITION OF FREEDOM, to which all other conditions are related, lies in the character and the quality of human relations. This was the effective conclusion which we reached in considering the relativity of freedom. We have to start from the fact of our interdependence. We need one another, and none of us is sufficient unto himself. The extent to which we achieve freedom in this common life depends upon the extent to which the constraint of fear has been removed from it; the extent to which the co-operation it demands is positively or negatively motived.

When we look back upon the history of social development, we see that there are two ways in which freedom has been achieved and extended. These two ways are the social correlates, so to speak, of the two variables we noticed in the relativity of freedom—the moralization of desire which controls the ends of action, and the control of the means of action through the increase of power. Considered in relation to society these appear as the socialization of ends and the socialization of means respectively. The first defines the field of religion; the second the field of politics, using both these terms in the widest possible sense. The religious effort seeks to eliminate fear by deepening and extending the sense of brotherhood, fellowship and communion among the members of an interdependent group. This is the inner or spiritual way of achieving unity and so fulfilling the condition of freedom. So far as it succeeds it binds us together in sharing a common life so

that we belong together, and find ourselves with common values, common objectives and a common way of life. The religious conquest of fear seeks freedom through friendship.

The political way, on the other hand, aims at freedom through justice. The type of unity it seeks is external. It accepts men as they are, with their fears and their self-centredness, and concerns itself with guaranteeing a system of co-operation for common ends which will be fair to all, and which will prevent at least the grosser tyrannies to which the use of power so easily gives rise. It is this political road to freedom with which we shall concern ourselves in this chapter; and, in particular, with the direction it must take in the conflicts of our own time. But before we turn to the problem as it faces us today, there are two general remarks which I should like to make. The first is this. These two ways of securing freedom are not alternatives, either of which can reach its goal by its own success. They have a relative independence; but each needs the other. Of the two the religious effort is the more fundamental, because it seeks to deal directly with the desires and motives which govern the relationships of men. Politics, on the other hand, must deal with actual situations, and maintain a working co-operation whatever the motives of the co-operating members may be. This is a more negative task. It aims at mitigating the effects of fear rather than at its elimination. Clearly the task of politics becomes easier and its success becomes fuller in proportion to the inner unity of the society for which it prescribes. The degree to which the members of a society are conscious of their fellowship decides the shape of the task which is set for politics. If fear and enmity are rife, the justice which can be secured will be difficult to attain and meagre in its quality. If they increase beyond a certain point justice and even co-operation may become impossible.

The second remark concerns the relation of politics to power. We are apt to think that politics is the exercise of power, and that the State works through compulsion and constraint. The fact which gives colour to this opinion is that alone among institutions the State has the right to use force to secure obedience to its commands. This fact, however, is easily misunderstood. The purpose of the State is the elimination of the use of force in human intercourse. We arrange, therefore, that if force *must* be used, it shall be used *only* by the State. Nor do we stop there. We go on to secure that it shall be difficult for the State to use force; that it shall be used, even by the State, only after due process of law, and only as a last resort when all else fails. The intention of politics is not the use of force, but the elimination of force and the achievement of freedom through justice.

But this must be qualified by recognition of the difficulty of the task. The interdependence of men in society is a fact, and the system of co-operation which it entails is necessary. So the first task set for any government is to maintain effectively the system of co-operation. The penalty for failure is universal distress and social collapse. If co-operation can only be secured by compulsion, then compulsion must be used. We must co-operate, and if we will not freely, then under constraint. Abuses of power by governments are always possible, and have to be guarded against; but we are apt to blame the individuals who perpetrate them far beyond what is reasonable. The true sources of such misuse are always to be found in the social conditions, in the character of the social co-operation, which make the large-scale use of the power of government essential. Dictatorship is always undesirable, it is always a confession of failure and a threat to freedom. But history shows us that men can make it inevitable; and that sometimes it has been beneficial, and has been exercised in the

service of justice and of freedom. When we consider the threat to freedom in our own time, the widespread attack upon democracy, and the rise of dictatorships, let us remember this. Democracy as we know it is not, of itself, a guarantee of freedom; far less is it to be identified with freedom. Freedom has other and profounder roots. The English people prided themselves upon their freedom long before democracy, as we know it, had been thought of. In the conditions of our time, and, I believe, for as far ahead as we can see, democratic institutions are an essential condition of political freedom. But they are not the whole story.

Let me state at once the general thesis which I wish to develop, so that you may know in advance where I am leading you. The conflicts of the contemporary world are the symptoms of a change in the form of human society. We are living through the first world revolution. Probably we are yet in its early stages, and its completion may lie a long way ahead. What we have long called "the modern world" is coming to an end, and we are beginning a new chapter in the history of human development. The change is of such an extent that every country is involved in it. It is so profound that there is no level of human experience which is untouched by it. If we seek its causes too locally or too superficially we shall fail to understand it, and our efforts to cope with it will be unsuccessful, leaving us with a sense of helplessness and despair. But if we grasp our situation in its entirety and have a courage that can match it, we shall realize that it is full of hope and opportunity; and that it moves towards a great emancipation. For its goal is the unification of the world in a common life.

To explain this fully would be much too large a task. It would take us back to the origins of Western civilization at least. I should try to show how the driving force behind the process of our history is the impact of Christianity upon

Europe, and the slow penetration of the Christian spirit through its habits of life and thought. For in spite of temporary appearances, I am convinced that the influence of Christianity, properly understood, was never more widespread nor more effective than it is today. But we must limit our range at least to that phase of its development which began in the changes which dissolved the culture and the economy of the Middle Ages, and ushered in the Modern World.

The core of that great change lay in a transformation of moral attitude. In the Middle Ages, as in all customary societies, the idea of rightness was associated with the past and so with the authority which acted as the guardian of tradition. The right way to do anything was to do it as it had always been done. The wise men of old had discovered, or had had revealed to them, what was right to do and to believe. The Church was the custodian and interpreter of tradition. Men defied the tradition; of course, but they knew that they were doing wrong. In the Renaissance, however, and increasingly, thereafter, we find men associating the idea of rightness with the future, and believing that the right way to do things is to do them better than they have been done before. From this new moral outlook spring the distinguishing characteristics of the modern period—the special preoccupation with freedom as the right of the individual to live his own life in his own way. For this means freedom of individual thought and individual conscience, freedom to experiment, to try out new ways, to doubt and criticize tradition. In such an attitude there is imbedded the idea of a better way of life and a better form of society, to be sought for and established. Progress, as a conscious ideal, had begun.

The effort to live by such a faith, however, soon revealed the poverty of our resources. Society was shackled to customary routine by the necessities of life.

When all must labour from dawn till dusk to provide the bare means of existence, only a privileged few can strike out new ways for themselves; and they only at the expense of the multitude of their fellows. The vision of social freedom had to remain a vision. The resources for its realization must first be accumulated and the realization itself postponed. The modern world has cherished the idea of freedom as its goal; while in practice it concentrated its efforts upon the increase of power. So the modern period of our civilization became the age of accumulation; and its governing principle is the law of accumulation, that what is gained shall be used to gain more of the same. In the economic field this has made it the era of capitalism, when wealth is invested and not expended; used to gain more wealth. In the political field it has been the period of the increase of political power as a matter of public policy, so that power achieved is utilized for a further expansion of power. In the field of reflection it has been the era of the creation of science; of that type of knowledge upon which the techniques of power and control can be established: and here again the principle holds, that knowledge shall be pursued for its own sake, and used for its own increase.

In the accumulation of power there are two phases. The first is simple accumulation, a mathematical process of adding more and more. But this by itself has limits; for mere increase in weight either of numbers or of bulk soon becomes unwieldy and hinders rather than helps. The second phase is the increase of power by organization, so that the increasing mass of resources can be utilized. The two periods of our modern history follow this pattern. The dividing line between them is, in the economic field, the transition from merchant capitalism to industrial capitalism; in politics the democratic revolutions; in science, the creation of the sciences of the organic, after the mathematical

sciences had been set on secure foundations. The great change is even more revealing in the field of culture. In art and literature, the classical tradition yields to the romantic movement, with its concentration upon Life and Nature, and in philosophy the mathematical conceptions of the Cartesians are challenged by the new philosophies of the organic.

In the period of history which lies immediately behind us, the struggle for freedom has been directed to the organization of the institutions of political democracy. This has had the effect, natural but dangerous, of identifying freedom in society with the existence of representative legislation based on popular suffrage. I should be the last to deny the importance of the institutions of democracy as instruments of freedom. But I am concerned to insist that they do not of themselves confer freedom upon those who live under them. The constitution of Russia, and its political organization, are admirably democratic in form, but the substance of freedom, so far as I can see, is still to seek. And not a little of the danger to democracy in our time comes from the disappointment of large numbers of people who expected more from the extension of the franchise than it could possibly give. The nineteenth century was not the heyday of democracy, but of its preparation. It was the period in which, step by step, the political machinery of democracy was constructed, and this constructional task was completed, in Britain, only in the twenties of this century, with the grant of universal adult suffrage, after the first world war. The democratic period lies ahead of us, in the use that we make of the free institutions which have so recently been completed. In a word, it is not the institutions of democracy which confer freedom upon men but the essential justice which can, if we will, be secured by their means. What made them essentials was the great loss of freedom which accompanied the industrial

revolution. For industrialism produces swift and continuous change in the social system of human co-operation, and continuous shifts in the balance of power within it. If justice is to be maintained, this involves continuous adjustments in the law. The effect which universal suffrage secures, if it is rightly used, is not that the opinions of all shall count—never in my life have I had the good fortune to cast my vote for a candidate who was elected—but rather that the needs and difficulties of all classes shall be considered in the process of seeking justice through the modification of the law.

While at home the fight for freedom was building the institutions of democracy, two other movements were setting the problem of freedom which we have to solve today. Together they began, in different ways, to forge links between the peoples of the world. The first was the expansion of overseas and international trade, and the movements of colonization which went with it. The second was the missionary enterprise of the Christian churches. Of these two, the religious expansion is the slower and the least spectacular, but I have little doubt that future historians will reckon it the more significant of the two. But it is the economic expansion with which we are concerned at the moment. The effect of it was to extend the co-operative interdependence of men in society until it included the whole world. The power and wealth of the advanced nations increased rapidly, but at the expense of a rapidly increasing dependence, for food and raw materials, upon peoples beyond their borders. At the outbreak of war in 1914, mankind had already become one society of interdependent, co-operating individuals. War was the result of this; in a real sense the inevitable result. But because we were unaware or only vaguely aware of what was happening, war between civilized countries seemed incredible, and its outbreak was a profound shock, from

which we have not yet recovered. The first world war proved the *de facto* unity of mankind as a single co-operative group; and it drove this interdependence into the consciousness of every person in the world who had acquired the habit of reading a newspaper. It is only if we start from this achieved economic unity of the world that the history of our own time can be understood, and that our contemporary conflicts can reveal themselves as a new chapter, and a potentially glorious chapter, in the long struggle for human freedom.

This universal society, however, was, and still is, inherently unjust. This was nobody's fault, or at least it is undesirable to ask whose fault it was. To seek a scapegoat is only a way of seeking to dodge one's own responsibility to put things right. What we need, in the present plight of our civilization, is to understand one another, and the maxim on which all human understanding rests is, "Judge not, that ye be not judged." The rule which I try myself to follow, and which I commend to you, is a simple one. When things go wrong blame nobody, not even yourself; but if you must blame somebody, blame yourself. For you are always partly to blame, however little, and your part in the blame is the part that you are responsible for putting right. The world society of which we are all now interdependent members is unjust. The process of industrialization has now done for the undeveloped peoples of the world what it did for the independent craftsmen and crofters of Britain in its early days. Its impact has destroyed the ancient institutions of their primitive custom; undermined the social sanctions of their morality and their religion; and forced them, too often, to hew wood and draw water for alien masters. Yet their old customary ways were the instruments of their primitive freedom. We have destroyed it, in fact though not by intention, and created a world proletariat. In using the mastery that our power

has given us to make them serve our needs we have become dependent upon them, and our dependence makes us afraid. If they hate us, if they begin to use our dependence upon them against us, and to refuse us the service we have need of, we have no reason for surprise and no just ground for anger. It would be an almost incredible generosity if they did otherwise. And yet, the incredible generosity of common men and women everywhere has sometimes brought tears to my eyes, and revived my hopes and with them my trust in common humanity, which is the working centre of any democratic faith.

I am not blind to the efforts after justice in international relations which we have made: and I am not seeking to blame even ourselves. What is to the point is the fact that our interdependent world has no effective *instrument* of justice. Except in the direct relationships of life, there can be no justice without a law that can compel obedience if obedience is refused. When I buy a shirt I take the quality I desire at the cheapest price I can find. What else am I to do? Yet when I think of the numbers of my fellows who co-operated to produce it, how can I be sure that the saving of my money (which means the increase of my freedom) is not the effect of the exploitation and oppression of the Egyptian fellaheen who grew the cotton? Innocently I am involved in injustice to my fellows. If my relations with others are to be just, beyond the narrow circle of direct acquaintance, I must depend on a system of law which automatically adjusts the effects of my activities so that no injustice arises anywhere. Yet the one economic society of today is politically many, and there is no system of effective law which can secure justice for all its members in their dependence upon one another. It consists of a series of independent States, each with its own system of law to provide some sort of justice within its own borders. A system of independent sovereign States in a world which

is economically one society *cannot* achieve justice and must destroy freedom. For it is a system in which each government must attempt to control the economy of the whole world in the interest of its own citizens. So each industrial State tends to take on the character of a gigantic business combine in economic competition with all its rivals; and there is no common authority to hold the ring, and to formulate the rules of what is fair and what is foul play. Is it any wonder that such a situation leads to world wars, or that when they come there are no inhumanities to which the struggling adversaries will not stoop?

It is often said that war settles nothing. This is a mistake. What seems to be true is that war under modern conditions never achieves the intentions of those who resort to it. It is the unexpected and unintended consequences of war which are important, and they settle a great deal. The victors of the first world war fought to defend freedom. In Britain we called it "a war to end war" and "to make the world safe for democracy." In the distress and disillusionment which followed, we felt that it had been fought in vain; that democracy was less secure than it had been; that freedom was diminished and not increased. This was the case only in relation to the narrow range of our immediate hopes and purposes. That war, for the Western democracies, was an experience of disillusionment. But to be rid of illusions, if it does not break our courage, is a liberating experience; for it is a revelation of the truth. In a few years it transformed the consciousness of a great part of mankind by making us aware of our interdependence. The founding of the League of Nations was a momentous event in the history of freedom. It showed that men had discovered the true situation, and seen the conditions of freedom in our time—that liberty could only be defended by making it world-wide. It was the first attempt in history to create an instrument of justice for mankind as

one society. That it failed was of less account. The new phase in the struggle for freedom through justice had begun; and it continues.

But this was not the only liberating effect of the first world war. It created the new Russia and the new China. The Russian revolution, long overdue, was the climax of centuries of fruitless struggle by the Russian peasantry against an oppressive, antiquated and inefficient despotism. If we are shocked at some of the immediate repercussions upon our own part of the world, and by the crudity and explosiveness of some of its manifestations, if it complicates our problems and threatens our security, we should not let our fears blind us to the major fact, that the Russian revolution has meant a great victory in the struggle for freedom to the peoples of one-sixth of the earth. Even more significant, in the long event, was the Chinese revolution, which gave China the testament of Sun-Yat-Sen, and the first sketch of a democratic polity. These two revolutions between them freed six hundred millions of the world's people from the yoke of an ancient bondage and set their feet upon the devious and dangerous road of progress. The first world war settled a great deal. From that time the security of our own freedom has been bound up with the increase of theirs. In the confusion and uncertainty which must accompany any sudden enlargement of horizons we have to defend the freedom that we have ourselves achieved. It is a trust we owe to the society of the future. We may not yield it to any threat of violence or seek to buy an ambiguous peace at its expense. But in our resolve to defend our freedom we have to see to it that it is not our power, our mastery, our privilege that we are defending, but in very truth our liberty. We have to remember the lesson of our own devious and doubtful past, that the struggle for political freedom is a struggle against privilege and domination. In the contemporary conditions,

in the new struggle of an interdependent world for a universal freedom, we are the privileged nations, and the domination that must be yielded is our own.

In the uneasy interim between the two world wars, and in the second war itself, the problem of freedom was clarified and brought to a point. In the first place, the revolutionary character of the situation was exhibited. The Russian revolution was an ambiguous event. In one sense it was a belated national revolution for the overthrow of feudalism, to be classed with the French revolution in the West. But with the triumph of the Communist party it gained a new and international significance. For communism is a Western, not a Russian product; and it is international in its outlook and its objectives. Its triumph in Russia was widely felt to be a threat to the economic and the political structure of the Western democracies. As a national revolution it met and defeated, within its own borders, the counter-revolution of the adherents of the old regime. But this was followed by a new type of counter-revolution, in the Fascist movements. With the advent of Hitler to power in Germany there was created and organized, outside Russia, an anticommunist movement of great power; and the lines of conflict in the world revolution were consciously drawn.

A revolutionary situation is one in which a change in the form of society has become necessary. The existing institutions and habits of a society are incapable of solving the problems of the common life, and in consequence government loses control of the situation. History sets for such a society a problem of freedom which cannot be solved in terms of the existing forms of social organization, and which *must* be solved. The free choice between freedom and security is forced upon the interdependent group by the breakdown of the system of co-operation. The revolution may be achieved without bloodshed; but the

fear and distress, the opportunities for injustice which such a situation must produce, make it likely that it will involve a civil war. The society divides and each side struggles for the mastery; and to the victor falls the task of constructing the new form of society which can solve the problem that has been set. If it fails, the revolutionary situation must continue, the struggle must be resumed; the problem will be reset for a new effort to its solution.

In the world revolution of our time there is one major divergence from the pattern. There is no effective world government against which rebellion can be directed. But that is incidental. The main lines of the pattern are the same. We have a world society of interdependent individuals, and what institutions it has to achieve justice are quite inadequate to its problems. So history has become catastrophic. The efforts we make to control the situation through modes of thought and action with which we are familiar make the situation worse rather than better. Think of the long series of international conferences in the 1920's on disarmament, upon economic and other world problems. Never in history was so much thought and care and good will mobilized behind human effort. Yet the failure of each in succession only brought an increasing sense of futility and despair. At last Germany decided to give up trying, left the League of Nations, and set to work to solve her own problem by her own power. But the world was one society. It was a collapse in Wall Street that put Hitler in power; and each step in his career of private German nationalism brought the division of the world into two camps more close. In the war he initiated the logic of events showed clearly the unity of the world society; for it became evident that if he were to solve the problem of his own country by force of arms he could not stop short of the conquest of the world. These modern conflicts are civil wars in a world which is already one society, and in which

the prize of victory is the task of creating, for the first time, the institutions of a political unity for the world, of building the instruments of world-justice. If we fail in this, the revolutionary situation continues, the unsolved problem is reset, and until the solution is achieved the conflict remains.

The second of the world wars is still too close to be seen in perspective. It has defeated an attempt to solve the situation by an appeal to force and conquest. It has kept open the road to a free and peaceful solution. It has brought a democratic liberty to the last great centre of human population in India after a long period of alien rule. One other of its effects is already plain. It has opened a new era in the struggle for freedom. From the time of the Roman Empire the story of human advance was the story of West-European civilization. Until yesterday the tension that kept it in movement lay within Europe, as a tension between France and Germany. Today, Western Europe is only one factor in a wider process. The initiative has passed beyond Europe. The East has claimed successfully its right to give as well as to take. The tension which governs the advance lies now between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The field of its operation is the whole world. So, patently, the struggle for freedom has ceased to be the fight for the freedom of the individual in a local and separate national group and has become a fight for the freedom of the individual human being in the society of mankind.

These, it seems to me, are the conditions to which freedom is relative in our time. It may be that we of the West, who have advanced so far and grown so powerful, often at the expense of the rest of mankind, have now to learn that freedom is not our private possession, and to mark time while the others catch up with us. One thing we need, which is very difficult to achieve—the ability to see ourselves as only a part of a society which is universal;

and, in our freedom, as the trustees of a possession which belongs of right to all men. We can preserve our freedom now only by sharing it. When we achieve this large perspective we can see that the increase in human freedom in the last generation has been enormous, both in its extent and in its speed; and that the difficulties that face us and which at times seem ready to overwhelm us, are in fact the consequence of this. It is the speed of the advance that alarms us. The whole world is on the march, terrible as an army with banners, and the goal is freedom. The future is big with promise; there is no reason for fainting or for despondency.