

The word "peace" - which I have already used - is a good example. When you and I talk about peace, we do not mean merely an uneasy interim period between fighting, during which a rapacious state can gather its resources and strength for an attack on a neighbour, nor do we mean the peace of a cemetery or even the enforced order of a prison. For us, the notion of peace includes freedom to enjoy a long period of secure tranquility in which an honest and a hardworking man can make long-term plans for himself, for his family and for his community.

As another example, look what has happened to the word "freedom". We are asked, for instance, to believe that a people, with its own language, historical tradition, and religious and social ideas, has gained some sort of new freedom because it is entirely subservient to an alien power which happens to be communist. We are asked to believe in the validity of "free" elections where the entire population of voting age is compelled to vote for pre-selected candidates of a single party. We are presented with the solemn farce of a "free" press which does not venture, on pain of drastic punishment, to print anything which is not approved by the central authority. We are also expected to interpret "freedom of speech" as freedom to say only those things which give pleasure to the ruling authority. Freedom is slavery when it is only freedom to conform. It must be freedom to differ, to protest, to indict, and in politics, to "turn the rascals out" by due process of election.

If the deceivers of communism try to befuddle us by distorting and twisting the meaning of good words to cover bad actions, we can take comfort from the fact that, as George Orwell, the English writer, once said: "The solid world exists, its laws do not change. Stones are hard, water is wet, objects unsupported fall toward the earth's centre freedom . . . is freedom to say that two plus two makes four. If that is granted, all else follows."

On certain fundamental things, I take it, all of us who are here assembled are in deep agreement; that peaceful persuasion is a better course than violence; voluntary co-operation is to be preferred to control and compulsion; compassion to cynicism and convictions to indifference; that truth does exist and is a better thing than falsehood. These are simple things, but they make up the texture of our free life. Their loss we will not endure. To defend them we are prepared to make great sacrifices as we have already done twice in this century.

Exchange of ideas, then, can be confused and obstructed by the distortion of the meaning of words. It can also be hindered by the deliberate policy of totalitarian governments. It is easy to understand why they try. The most powerful forces on earth for freedom and goodwill among men are the ideas and ideals which are spread through spontaneous contacts - "Rotary" contacts, if I may call them that - between individuals.

That is why dictators go to such extreme lengths to deny possibilities for the development of any genuine sense of community both among their own peoples and between different peoples. They know that an idea, such as freedom, once it develops and finds expression in a word, a song, a slogan, or a prayer, may become something that no force on earth can kill. It is no wonder that rulers of totalitarian states are afraid of ideas that are not their own or are not tailored by them to their own ends.