

## THE CHALLENGE OF THE FOUR FREEDOMS

A UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO  
ROUND TABLE BROADCAST\*

*Concluding its series on the post-war world, the University of Chicago ROUND TABLE brought three observers to its microphone to answer some of these questions in a discussion of The Challenge of the Four Freedoms:*

Mortimer J. Adler  
Law School, University of Chicago

Carl J. Friedrich  
Department of Government, Harvard University

W. W. Waymack  
*Des Moines Register-Tribune*

The ROUND TABLE, the oldest educational program continuously on the air, is broadcast entirely without a script, although participants meet in advance, prepare a topical outline, and exchange data and views. Subjects are chosen because of their social, political, or economic significance. The program has no "ax to grind." In the selection of speakers, the effort is to provide a balanced discussion by participants who have special competence and knowledge. The opinion of each speaker is his own and in no way involves the responsibility of either the University of Chicago or the National Broadcasting Company.

(Part 1 of 2)

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*What are we fighting for? Today the most likely answer would be "for the four freedoms, freedom of expression and of religion and freedom from want and from fear."*

*How many of us understand what these freedoms entail or comprehend the task which they impose upon each citizen?*

*What major problems must be solved unequivocally before these freedoms can be achieved—at home and abroad?*

*How do the peoples of the other United Nations react to the promise of these freedoms?*

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**MR. ADLER:** In the minds of most Americans the four freedoms are symbols; they're a part of a slogan under which we are fighting. In the past there have been other slogans for which free men have fought. In the eighteenth century there were the rights of man.

**MR. WAYMACK:** Yes, and Lincoln's government of, by, and for the people.

**ADLER:** And liberty, equality, and fraternity.

**MR. FRIEDRICH:** And Wilson's "make the world safe for democracy."

**ADLER:** And we mustn't forget, I suppose, that Hitler himself has a slogan in speaking of the new order. Now, to begin with, in what respects are the four freedoms the same things that have been said by these other slogans, and in what respects are they different?

**WAYMACK:** In general, I think the four freedoms are a good expression, necessarily loose, of the aspirations of the majority of the American people. All of them, of course, are the complete negation of the new-order theory and principle of Hitler and of the Nazis and Fascists in general.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> President Roosevelt first stated the four freedoms in his annual message to Congress, on January 6, 1941:

"The first is freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world. The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world.

"The third is freedom from want—which, translated into world-terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants—everywhere in the world.

"The fourth is freedom from fear—which, translated into world-terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor—anywhere in the world."

Now, of the four freedoms, it seems to me that freedom of expression and freedom of religion, at least as far as Americans are concerned, are very close, if not identical, with our traditional ideals. They don't represent a very significant expansion of our traditional ideals and expressions of the past. Possibly freedom of expression is a little broader than freedom of speech. We have our new communications—the movies and the radio and all—but fundamentally they are the same.

However, I think there is a very significant expansion of our traditional ideals and slogans in the inclusion of freedom from fear and freedom from want, and I'd like very much to hear Friedrich say something about freedom from fear.

**FRIEDRICH:** Freedom from fear is very important. I don't think I quite agree with you when you say that all Americans find themselves represented in the four freedoms. I believe in them ardently; I think we all do. But there are quite a few Americans who do not entirely agree with them.

**WAYMACK:** Oh, of course.

**FRIEDRICH:** Remember that freedom from fear in the eighteenth century meant freedom from the fear of dynastic oppression; freedom from fear of what George, the king of England, might do. Today, to the American, the threat, the terror, of the fascist reaction that is rampant in the world has come in the form of attack from without. But let us not forget that to a great many people in the world today the older meaning of the freedom from fear is just as significant. What the people under fascist oppression most suffer from is the terror.

**ADLER:** But wouldn't you say that the two meanings of freedom from fear are closely connected—that freedom from fear aroused by oppression and tyranny and despotism within is very close to freedom from fear from despotic and totalitarian aggression from without?

**FRIEDRICH:** Certainly. They are both the result of the same

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The twenty-eight members of the United Nations have adhered to the Atlantic Charter, which has as its sixth principle “. . . to see established a peace which will afford . . . assurance that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want.” (See pages 16-17.)

world-forces.

**WAYMACK:** We who haven't been invaded naturally put the emphasis on the one thing, the fear of external aggression. Those people who have been invaded know what the Gestapo is.

**FRIEDRICH:** Right!

**ADLER:** I agree with you, Waymack, that freedom from fear and freedom from want are novel, but, of the four freedoms that arouse our interest, it seems to me that freedom from want is the most difficult of all.

**FRIEDRICH:** Before we get to freedom from want, I'd like to add that, while it is true that a good many Americans have freedom from fear, there are some Americans, notably some of our colored people in the South, who have never been really entirely free from fear. I think we ought to recognize that.

**ADLER:** I think we should, and I think we ought to come back to it when we ask whether in our obligation to carry the four freedoms to the rest of the world we aren't first obligated to establish it here.

**WAYMACK:** You certainly can't skip it.

**ADLER:** Let me come back to freedom from want generally, apart from the United States or the rest of the world. The thing that strikes me about freedom from want is, first, that it's the only one of the four freedoms on which you would get universal agreement, because it hits below the belt, as a matter of fact, and is something that no one can ignore.

**WAYMACK:** Or exactly at the belt.

**ADLER:** But the other aspect of freedom from want, it seems to me, is the most ambiguous. People who, like former President Hoover, talk about the free-enterprise system think that they are providing freedom from want. On the other hand, you have both the Communists and the Fascists—I think you have to admit that both the Germans and the Russians have made all their work predicated on the end of freedom from want.

**WAYMACK:** I don't think they get it. But you're right; that's what they profess.

**FRIEDRICH:** I've always wondered to what extent that was really

an aim of the Nazis rather than a slogan.

**ADLER:** In any case, wouldn't you gentlemen admit that the aim at freedom from want, the desire for freedom from want, tends to get in the way of the other three freedoms? That in the name of freedom from want you suppress freedom of speech; you may actually interfere with freedom of worship; you may, in fact, increase freedom from fear?

**FRIEDRICH:** Except that in the case of the Nazis there is that slogan about guns rather than butter. That doesn't sound like freedom from want to me.

**WAYMACK:** And Friedrich's comment a moment ago suggests the importance to us of making sure that our slogans are more than slogans—that they aim at accomplishing things.

**FRIEDRICH:** I agree very heartily with that.

**ADLER:** But in the United States, to leave the world at large for a moment, do we not yet have a long way to go to establish the kind of economic order not only in which we have plenty but in which, through cooperative bargaining, through collective and unionized conditions of labor, through a cooperative organization of industry, we prevent any man from being economically dependent upon other men? Because wouldn't you agree, Waymack, that unless men are economically free they can't actually enjoy and exercise their political freedom?

**WAYMACK:** I think that's true, and I think we're coming to a realization of it. We have to face it when we face this question of the meaning of the four freedoms for us. We do have to face it. We must make progress. We must make faster progress in the years just ahead than we have made in the past—there is no question about that.

**ADLER:** Doesn't that suggest that perhaps the four freedoms are a very radical document?

**FRIEDRICH:** I think they are. I think it's very important to realize that the four freedoms are the expression of the fact that our world is going completely upside down. The other day, riding in the train, I saw a headline which read: "Willkie Goes with Message from F.D.R. to Stalin."

**ADLER:** Think of that in 1940 or in 1939!

**FRIEDRICH:** Exactly! People would have thought somebody had gone completely crazy.

**WAYMACK:** Still stranger things may happen within the next three years.

**FRIEDRICH:** That's right. But we must recognize that what it all adds up to is that imperialism and nationalism and capitalism and collectivism, as we have known them, are gone.

**WAYMACK:** You say "as we've known them." That's quite right; but it doesn't necessarily mean that nationalism is gone completely. I think it's an unspent force in the world.

**ADLER:** May I say that I completely agree with you, Friedrich, that nationalism, as we have known it, and similarly capitalism and imperialism, are gone. We agree.

We must recognize, perhaps, that a large part or some of the ROUND TABLE's audience may not agree with us.

**FRIEDRICH:** Oh, certainly! But we must recognize that the struggle of capitalism and of communism for the control of national states is gone. Just as the people in Federal Union have said, you've got to have some kind of an organization that will provide for rule of law everywhere.<sup>2</sup>

**ADLER:** Let us turn now to another question which will be reported for us.

**ANNOUNCER:** *President Roosevelt has called this war the "war of survival." Many Americans ask how we can survive, even after a military victory, unless the four freedoms are extended throughout the world. Other Americans ask how we can expect to survive if we try to impose our ideals on the rest of the world.*

**ADLER:** That question seems to pose two problems. One is a problem about the four freedoms in the United States in the future. The other is a problem about the relation of the United States to the rest of the world with respect to the four freedoms.

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<sup>2</sup>For further details of this plan see Clarence Streit, *Union Now* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1939), and *Union Now with Britain* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941).

As I see the challenge of the four freedoms within the borders of our country, it is a challenge to us to perfect democracy in two ways—one, to remove the economic and social obstacles to its working. I refer to the problem of the Negro in the South and to the problems of labor in this country. We have a lot to do in economic and social progress within our own borders to make democracy work. But is there a relation between that in your mind and the problem of making democracy work in the rest of the world?

**WAYMACK:** There is, very definitely. A moment ago Friedrich put the emphasis upon the importance of freedom from fear, and he indicated two aspects of that: freedom from foreign aggression—fear of that; and freedom from domestic terror—fear of that. We agreed, I think, that they are really two facets of the same thing.

Well, now, if we're going to establish freedom from fear in the world, we've got to approach it from the standpoint of the world-community and as a problem of the world-community which only the world-community can hopefully approach or hope to solve. And that means, as I see it, that in one way or another (but, at any rate, effectively) there has simply got to be set up some form of collective security, something that's beyond the scope of national boundaries.

**ADLER:** Then you really are, I think, agreeing with Friedrich, who says that nationalism as we have known it must be forgotten or said goodbye to. When you talk about collective security, are you admitting more than a League of Nations without sanctions or more than a peace treaty with a temporary police power? Aren't you contemplating a world-order established by a world-government somehow?

**WAYMACK:** Yes, unquestionably! I think it's an imperative, a "must" in the situation. I've said that nationalism isn't entirely spent. It's still a force in the world, but we've got to go beyond it.

**FRIEDRICH:** You don't mean necessarily a government comprising all the world?

**WAYMACK:** Not at all!

**FRIEDRICH:** An intermediary step, as something in the way of progress.

**WAYMACK:** It must be effective. We can't do too little, because the whole world would be in a pot if we did that! I think what

we've got to aim for now, in the immediate future after this war, is some way of implementing the phrase of Norman Angell, of some years ago, "of getting force behind the law instead of behind the litigant."

**ADLER:** There's another aspect to this problem of the world-order which, it seems to me, has a great bearing on our own democracy. I would say it is imperative for us to work for a world-government because I don't think that democracy can exist in the United States—endure and flourish and develop—without a better order among the communities of the world. Friedrich, in a recent book, makes the point even more sharply by saying that a democracy cannot really develop a foreign policy.

**FRIEDRICH:** What I tried to show in *The New Belief in the Common Man* is that democracy cannot carry on the kind of foreign policy that was characteristic of the old monarchies. The old monarchies played the balance-of-power game, with secret treaties and secret diplomacy and all the rest, but democracy can't do it because the public is supposed to participate in the formulation of public policies, and they do not understand this intricate game of intrigue and so forth. Therefore, there were two solutions. The older solution was isolation. That was possible in the days when America was far removed and could separate herself and say: "Let these people fight their brawls, and we won't have any part in it." Today (and Pearl Harbor certainly proved it) that solution is out. Therefore, American democracy can only seize the other side of the dilemma and establish a world-democracy.

**ADLER:** There's still another aspect. Agreeing with you that we can no longer pursue our isolated national existence, must we not go further and agree with Hitler on one point, namely, that the totalitarian regimes that are actually opposed to our constitutional governments and democracy cannot exist together in the same world? If that's true (and I think it is true), then we can no longer hold, as we used to hold, that the internal governments of other countries were no part of our concern. Wouldn't you agree, Waymack, that, just as the Constitution of the United States had to guarantee republican government to each of the several states belonging to the federation, so if we do have anything like world-government, the aim must be to establish and develop democracy in all the communities of the world?

**FRIEDRICH:** One reason is precisely this problem of foreign policy. The democracies cannot handle the type of game that Hitler imposes upon them. They've got to get rid of him.



**WAYMACK:** I agree with that, and also I agree with Adler's point, although it does represent a change in my attitude. In common with practically all Americans I've held heretofore to the traditional notion that the form of government that anybody else had was none of our business. But, when you see what developed in Germany, I think that we've got to recognize that for our own security, and for the safety of our institutions and ideals in the future, it just isn't safe to permit to develop anywhere, as developed in Germany in the Hitlerite period, a great national community, cut off from the rest of the world, with no access to information, with no free expression—a regimented people constituted into an engine of menace and aggression and destruction. Now that probably isn't tolerable in a world of the future.

**ADLER:** That summarizes our first main point. Let us turn now to the second of our main questions and have it stated for us.

*ANNOUNCER: Are the four freedoms really practicable ideas? Some of our allies, as well as our enemies, may not want to adopt them. And we say we believe in self-determination for each nation. What are the practical problems we shall face, and what are the actual chances for success in making the four freedoms world-wide?*

**FRIEDRICH:** These are very real questions. We've said we want to live in a world where law and order reign. That's right. But how are we going to do it? Let's put the question about the four freedoms in another form. How many of the four freedoms would even the peoples of the United Nations agree to? Would, for example, the Soviet Union accept all four of the freedoms or only some? We've got that problem of the common ground facing us, and we must explore it. Don't you think so?

**ADLER:** I've thought considerably about that problem, Friedrich, and I must confess to being something of a pessimist. The minimum common ground which I can find for all the peoples of the United Nations is some belief in justice, in a reign of law and right; in some belief that might is not the only controlling factor in human affairs. But if you go beyond that, if you ask for acceptance of all the four freedoms, meaning constitutional government, universal suffrage, all the democratic privileges and rights, then I must say you can't find them in all the United Nations. And what bothers me, Waymack, is that I doubt if you can get all Americans to agree about the four freedoms, if by the four freedoms you mean freedom from want and freedom from fear, implying the end of

nationalism as we've known it and the end of capitalism as we've known it.

**WAYMACK:** Of course, you won't find unanimous agreement in America on these things any more than you'd find unanimous agreement in any democratically organized country about anything that involves a degree of change. But I think you're needlessly pessimistic. I recognize that there are great difficulties; that there isn't yet a completely common understanding even between us and our allies. But I think that you're needlessly pessimistic about certain common-denominator qualities of these four freedoms—for our allies, for the United Nations, and for the rest of the world.

After all, unless our whole democratic faith is just bunk, for the long run we must believe, and I do believe, that it's the natural and inevitable urge of humans to seek out these liberties, including even the freedom of expression, and so on. I think the similarities between the peoples of the world are more significant for the long run—and even for the relatively short run—than the differences.

**ADLER:** As many previous ROUND TABLES on similar topics have shown, the similarities may be great, but there are also within communities the same kind of divisions. In England, in the United States, in Holland, there are the people who are for nationalism and imperialism and capitalism and who are against the people who are not.

**WAYMACK:** Of course; but again that is just the democratic process. And don't forget that war itself is a very great educator and that it's a very great fanner of the aspirations and ambitions of people.

**FRIEDRICH:** What would you think of this? Here we have a disagreement between Adler and you about a common ground. Now we know, for example, that all the millions of China are Confucionists and Buddhists; and we know that our own people are Christians; and we know that the peoples of the Soviet Union have different beliefs—

**ADLER:** When you say "Christian," I'm reminded of the fact that President Roosevelt has said again and again that the belief in the four freedoms is based upon the belief that man is a human being, made in God's image, which is definitely Christian and not shared by the oriental religions.

**WAYMACK:** Well, fine as it may be, you don't have to Christian-

ize the world before you can make progress toward establishing the foundations of a tolerable peace.

**FRIEDRICH:** Maybe you don't have to, but I shouldn't be surprised if the world were Christianized in the process of spreading the four freedoms.

**WAYMACK:** Fine!

**FRIEDRICH:** But we have these great masses of people. Wouldn't it be a more democratic thing, rather than for us to try to settle it here at this table, to bring together representatives of the great beliefs that mankind shares and let them thrash it out; to have a meeting of the men of thought rather than of the men of action, who could lay the foundation for a pan-humanistic conception of mankind?

**ADLER:** Would it be your view of the future and of the steps that we must take to achieve its promise that our job is one of education—a job of education by discussion, education by carrying these problems to the peoples of the world in their own forums?

**FRIEDRICH:** Well, it's an education for ourselves, too. I believe that our own conceptions would broaden. We have already been learning from India and China. Non-cooperation is right now a very aggravating thing; and yet we all somehow respect Gandhi for his uncompromising stand on behalf of his principles, don't you think?

**ADLER:** I think we do, though I do think I tend to regard the task of bringing the four freedoms to the world as a much more difficult one than either you or Waymack seem to think.

**WAYMACK:** Education is necessary, of course; but we can't wait for the educational process to complete itself before we do something. And I still think, not wanting to minimize the difficulties at all, that even in the case of the Russians they have an aspiration toward a constitutional government, although they haven't achieved it yet, despite a written constitution. The Chinese are moving toward national independence; they want it, for unification, for industrialization, and for education. I think that points toward such things as free expression.

Mexico and the South American countries, ditto. I happened to be thrown, within the past month, into a conference with representatives of all the Latin-American countries. It seemed very clear to

me, as far as the great majority of those millions of people south of the Rio Grande are concerned, that they are not very far removed from the aspirations of the four freedoms.

**ADLER:** That summarizes I think very nicely our second large problem. Let us turn now to the third major question which will be stated for us.

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***We welcome your comments, questions or suggestions.***

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