

## The Alchemy of Adjustment

THE ART OF WAR is intricate and highly technical. The business of war demands the subordination of the individual will to the will of those in charge of it. These are two reasons why the ordinary citizen is an incompetent judge of the strategy or the politics of war during its progress. The necessary blackout of information essential to any understanding of its military or political direction makes speculation about it largely guesswork.

So, let us leave this business to the generals and statesmen and be done with it. We are in it, have nothing to say about it, can have no part in it except that which our leaders assign to us. While the best of us do the fighting, and all of us contribute to its cost, we can only hope and pray that these leaders know what they are about. That's all we can do, and, war being what it is, that's all we should try to do. The assumption that any of us is more than a cog in the wheel is silly, and furthermore tends toward irrational behavior.

There is, however, one thing we all need to remember: there will be an end to the war sometime. It is important to remember that, because if we do not we will find our ways of thinking so completely changed that we may not be able to recapture the ideas which before the war seemed good to us. It is not impossible that the civilization we knew may largely pass from our memory.

No people can emerge from an experience like war with unscarred souls. Our changed political situation is only an indication that we have been injured to new social concepts. The most lasting and devastating result of a harrowing experience is what it does to us mentally and spiritually.

The human being cannot remain sound in mind and body under the constant impact of shock. We soon learn to "roll with punches." Going without seems hard at first, but necessity contrives a comfortable arrangement with scarcity, just as one afflicted with a physical handicap manages to meet the situation. So, too, with battles; we soon learn that one is like another, and the intensity of headline-reading simmers off. Our sensibilities become blunted because they must.

The constant imminence of death tends toward a re-evaluation of life. Is existence really so important? And if existence loses its importance, how about the moral values which formerly gave life substance and meaning? Only the living strive for liberty; only the prospect of life gives rise to the search for justice.

The combatants in the presence of death are not alone in this compromise with futility. Every segment of society feels the crash of human values and seeks surcease from the violence of confusion in confusion itself. "Today is today, let tomorrow take care of itself" is the escapism that existence demands—and the alchemy of adjustment deteriorates the ideals of living into the dross of mere existence.

Perhaps it is inevitable that for the time being the ideals be suspended. The danger is in their be-



ing forgotten. Ideals do not live in a vacuum; they are born, developed and are retained in the human mind. They are recorded on the tablets of memory, and the peril is that in drifting into a reasonably comfortable existence in a world of violence we may wipe the tablets clean. For one sleeps better when one strives for less.

But there will be a tomorrow. There will always be a tomorrow. And it is the burden of those in whose memories the values of liberty and justice are deeply engraved to preserve the tablets for that tomorrow.

That it will be difficult to harbor these memories is all the more reason for so doing. The truth must have friends "who will toil for it; suffer for it; if need be, die for it. This is the power of Truth."

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