

Some Documents and Debates

Non-Violence—The Only Salvation

Following are excerpts from the statement made by Dr. Rammanohar Lohia on the occasion of his trial under the Defence of India Rules:

I was prosecuted a year ago under the law of sedition in the court of the chief presidency magistrate of Calcutta. The occasion was an anti-war speech. I have now been brought up before a Sultanpur court and my offence is again an anti-war speech. On neither of these two occasions have I cared for a legal defence which has necessarily to work within the framework of the law as exists. I do not accept the laws that govern our political life. I do not wish to disown the views and even the expressions as set out in the reported speech. There is some confusion due to wholesale omissions particularly into two places, but unless one wants to torture the report, one gets a fair idea of the general trend of my speech. I have at the outset emphasised the insecurity of the times in which we live. Nearly ten countries with governments of their own and some with formidable armies have inside of the first ten months come under the conqueror's jackboot. Economic and political systems are collapsing under the weight of war. Nothing is safe. It is little use clinging to old hopes and suffering from old fears. The hope of a life stable in well-worn ruts is old alike as the fear of the might of the Governments that oppress us is old. I have asked my countrymen to give up these hopes and fears. I have then tried to discuss the war as it affects—my people. We have been made participants in this war under foreign orders. We have no freedom of decisions. No proud people ever tolerates outside decision in the high matters of war and peace. The Congress asks the British Government to state its war-aims. The Viceroy of India replied that Britain sought no advantages from the war. This reply dodged the question of the Congress. It was impossible for the Congress to continue in ministerial officers in his state of enforced war. There arose a supreme test for the Indian constitution. Was this constitution capable of expressing the will of the people? It was clearly not. The element of freedom to whatever little extent it was present in the constitution broke down. In two-thirds of British administered India, the will of autocratic governors prevails and people's representatives have

been thrown out. In all our activities we have to be non-violent. Nonviolence is dictated not only by the circumstances in our country but by considerations that operate throughout the world. It is not only a practical necessity. It is an ethical desirability. Whatever confusion there might be on this point due to faulty reporting is set aside by the reporter himself. I am reported to have said when we have recourse to weapons, we become weak of hearts. Those who rely on weapons do not rely on their hearts. They turn into slaves of their own weapons. They have no strength left in themselves. I am an opponent of the old cult of the lathi and its modern equivalent the cult of the aeroplane. There is an inner contradiction between these cults and the enduring of human life, a contradiction which is daily becoming more fierce. The next twenty years will show which wins and the dualism cannot last longer. Should human life endure, there can be only one form of organisation. Adult democracy must obtain throughout the world and there will be no place in it for imperialism nor for capitalism. I have given an indication in my speech of this form of Government as it will affect the Indian people. It was with a view to bring into foreground this principle of adult democracy that I suggested immediate peace plan to Mahatma Gandhi. I claim no originality for this plan whose items are: All peoples will be free. Those newly acquiring freedom will determine their constitution through a Constituent Assembly. All races are equal and there will be no racial privileges in any part of the world. There will be no political bar to any one to sitting wherever he likes. All credits and investments owned by the Government and nationals of one country in another will be scrapped or submitted for impartial review to international tribunals. They will then be owned not by individuals but by the states. When these three principles will have been accepted by the peoples of the world a fourth will automatically come into operation. There will be total disarmament. I am happy in the knowledge that Mahatma Gandhi has endorsed this peace plan. Let me in conclusion state that I have no ill-will against any people. I have lived among the German people and liked their thoroughness of enquiry, the scientific bent of their mind and their efficiency in action. I am unhappy that

Some Documents and Debates

they have today to carry on their shoulders a system which exults in war and conquest. I have no intimate knowledge of the British people. I dare say that they have their virtues. I may be permitted to quote from my speech. "I do not want the destruction of Britain.

The British have done evil to us but I do not want to do evil to them." Again, I am unhappy that the British people have to carry on their shoulders today a system which has enslaved the peoples of the world.

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