



*My life is my message.*

*- M.K. Gandhi*

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## 59. Some Criticism Answered

I must say why I think that the warring nations do not know what they are fighting for. I had used the expression 'Warring nations', not 'peoples of Europe'. This is not a distinction without a difference. I have distinguished between the nations and their leaders. The leaders of course know what they are fighting for. I make no admission that they are right. But neither the English nor the Germans nor the Italians know what they are fighting for except that they trust their leaders and therefore follow them. I submit that this is not enough when the stake is so bloody and staggering as during the present war. It is perhaps common cause that Germans and Italians do not know why English children should be slaughtered in cold blood and beautiful English homes should be destroyed. When I asked the British soldiers in South Africa during the Boer War they could not tell me what they were fighting for. Theirs ' was surely 'not to reason why'. They did not even know where they were being marched to. The British people would not be able to give me a more satisfying answer, if I happened to be in London and asked them why their soldiers were working havoc in Berlin. If the press accounts are to be relied upon, British skill and valour have wrought more havoc in Berlin than have the Germans in London. What wrong have the German people done to the British people? Their leaders have. Hang them by all means, but why destroy German homes and German civilian life? What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or the holy name of liberty or democracy? I assert in all humility, but with all the strength at my command, that liberty and democracy become unholy when their hands are dyed red with innocent blood. I hear the living Christ saying: "These so-called children of mine know not what they are doing. They take my Father's name in vain, for they disobey the central command of my Father" If my ears do not deceive, I have erred in good company, if I have erred at all.

And why have I uttered the truth? Because I am confident that God has made me the instrument of showing the better way. If Britain seeks justice, she must appear before the imperial court of God with clean hands. She will not defend liberty and democracy by following totalitarian methods so far as war is concerned. She will not be able to retrace her steps after out-Hitlering Hitler in war. The last war is a resounding lesson. Her victory, if attained, will be a snare and a delusion. I know mine is a voice in the wilderness. But it will someday ring true. If liberty and democracy are to be truly saved, they will only be by non-violent resistance no less brave, no less glorious, than violent resistance. And it will be infinitely braver and more glorious because it will give life without taking any.

On the way to Simla, 25-9-'40

Harijan, 29-9-1940

Comprehensive Gandhi website by Gandhian Institutions : Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal  
(<https://www.mkgandhi.org>) & Gandhi Research Foundation (<http://www.gandhifoundation.net>)