

The Lenin Prize oration

Faiz delivered the following oration, in Urdu, when he was awarded the Lenin Peace Prize in 1962



Creating words and shaping them in an orderly form is the vocation of poets and men of letters. But there are occasions in life when one is left speechless. This is one such occasion for me; I don't have the words with which to adequately thank the Lenin Peace Prize Committee, as well as other Soviet institutions and friends, for the honour they have conferred upon me. The Peace Prize is invaluable because it carries Lenin's honored and sacred name with it. Lenin is the most revered standard-bearer of liberty and peace in our time, peace which is a prerequisite for human life and its beauty and excellence. I do not find anything in my life and work which should have made me worthy of this single honour. However, I can think of one reason: the fervent yearning for peace and independence which has motivated me and my colleagues. There is such glory in the desire itself that even the humblest votaries of peace and independence are considered worthy of respect and recognition.

All except those who are affected by dementia or are given to crime are agreed that peace and independence are beautiful ideals. All can visualise that peace is reflected in the wheat fields, in poplar trees, in the bride's veil, in the laughing hands of children, in the poet's pen, artists brush. All of us can visualise that independence guarantees all these and servitude kills all qualities which distinguish man from beast-- qualities of intellect and intelligence, truth and justice, dignity and valour, piety and forbearance. Therefore, there should logically be no difference of opinion among reasonable people regarding the achievement and consolidation of peace and independence. Unfortunately, however, that common understanding is lacking because, from the beginning of time, contending

forces have been at work. These forces are the forces of creation and destruction, of light and darkness, of justice and injustice. The interplay of these contrary forces continues to this day. At the same time, the problems with which we are faced today are different in character than the one that used to tax us in the past. War today does not mean bloody tribal strife. Nor do we mean by peace today merely that bloodshed should come to an end. Today, war means the annihilation of the human race itself. Today, peace is the precondition for the survival of humanity as such. On these two words-- annihilation or survival-- depends the continuation or culmination of human history. On these two words depends the destruction or survival of the human habitat. Again, man did not have, until our own time, sufficient control over natural resources and the forces of production to take care of the needs of all groups and clans. Thus, there was some justification in the past for the grab-and-run loot which has been so much a part of human history. That is not the situation today.

Human inventiveness has taken science and technology to such high levels of efficiency that all mouths can be fed, all physical needs can be met, provided that the limitless bounties of nature, the infinite means of production at the disposal of mankind, are geared not to satisfy the avarice or monopolists or special interest groups but to ensure the welfare of all, and provided also that the scientific and industrial abilities of the human race are put to constructive rather than destructive purposes.

All this is possible only under a social structure raised upon the foundations of justice, equality, independence and the collective good, and not on avarice, exploitation and monopoly interests. This is something to work for and not merely to talk about. This requires practical effort and in this effort, the struggle for peace and the struggle for independence converge and become indivisible. This is so because the forces which work for peace are also the forces which work for independence, and the forces working against independence are also the forces working for the destruction of peace. On the one hand there are the imperialist forces, whose interests and whose monopolies can survive only through force and thrive only through jealous competitions. Pitted against them are those who value human life more than banks and factories, those who love to work together rather than to order others about. In short, in politics and morality, in literature and art, in day-to-day life, this struggle between constructive and destructive forces is being waged on several fronts, in myriad shapes. For those who cherish independence and love peace, it is necessary to be vigilant on every front. For instance, even apart from this inevitable conflict between imperialist and non-imperialist forces, there are violent differences among countries which attained independence recently. Such differences exist between Pakistan and neighboring India, between one Arab state and another, and between one African state and another. It is obvious that only those Powers can benefit from these differences which are opposed to world

peace and universal brotherhood. It is essential, therefore, that peace-loving peoples should think about these differences and help find just solutions.

A few days ago, when the whole world was excited by the latest Soviet achievements in space, the thought came to my mind that now that we could have a glimpse of our own planet from other stars, how foolish are these small mean nesses, this desire to cut up the world into small parcels of land, this desire to dominate small groups of people. Isn't there even a small group of aware, honest and just human beings among us who can convince the others that now that the passageways to the entire universe are being opened up in front of our very eyes, and the riches of all creation are there for humanity to use, we should dismantle all the military bases and throw these bombs and rockets and guns into the sea, so that we may go forth together to conquer this wide universe where there is room enough for all mankind, where no one need fight anyone else, where there is limitless space and worlds without number? I am convinced that despite numerous difficulties on the way, we can succeed in convincing humankind of these simple truths.

I am convinced that the humankind which has never surrendered to its enemies, will emerge victorious yet, and that, at long last, hatred, repression and war will give way to peace and universal brotherhood. I am convinced that we shall all live together in harmony as Hafiz, the Persian poet, had wanted us to live long ago:

Khalal pazir bawad har bina ki mi bini

Bajuz bina-i-mohabbat ki khali as khalal ast.

(Every foundation that we have seen has been flawed,
but for the foundation of love, for love alone is flawless)

<http://www.viewpointonline.net/the-lenin-prize-oration.html>

