Bhagat Singh dead, will be more dangerous to the British enslavers than Bhagat Singh alive. After I am hanged, the fragrance of my revolutionary ideas will permeate the atmosphere of this beautiful land of ours. It will intoxicate the youth and make him mad for freedom and revolution, and that, will bring the doom of the British imperialists nearer. This is my firm conviction.

Bhagat Singh, quoted by Shiv Verma

Introduction to *The Selected Writings of Bhagat Singh*

The threat of imperialism, led by the United States in the company of the United Kingdom and Israel, looms large over the entire world. In Afghanistan, Iraq and Lebanon, this threat has taken a direct military form over the past few years. Countries like Iran and North Korea are being bullied daily, while others like Cuba and Venezuela have faced conspiracies of various kinds over the last several years. Several other nations, India included, face pressure to frame domestic and international policies in line with what the imperialist master dictates. In these difficult and challenging times, one’s thoughts turn to Bhagat Singh and Che Guevara, who both fought against colonialism and imperialism uncompromisingly. Both were fearless and unflinching in their dedication to the cause of the oppressed. Separated by nearly half a century and several thousand miles, the two are yet united in their heroic martyrdom, which continues to inspire millions worldwide. While Che is deservedly a global icon for revolutionaries and other progressive forces, for various reasons Bhagat Singh remains relatively obscure outside India. His struggle against British colonialism, his life and his thoughts deserve to be better known, for they hold out lessons to the oppressed all over the planet.

On April 8, 1929, Bhagat Singh and Batu Keshwar Dutta threw harmless bombs in what is today the Parliament of India, then the Central Assembly. The slogans they shouted, ‘Inqilab Zindabad’ (‘Long Live Revolution’) and ‘Down with Imperialism’, caught the imagination of the Indian people. The slogans themselves arose out of a qualitative change in the nature of the anti-colonial movement, with the entry, on a mass scale, of the working people and the poor. The new slogans replaced ‘Bande Mataram’ (‘Mother, I Bow to
Dear brother,

The judgement has been delivered. I am condemned to death. In these cells, besides myself, there are many others prisoners who are waiting to be hanged. The only prayer of these people is that somehow or other they may escape the noose. Perhaps I am the only man amongst them who is anxiously waiting for the day when I will be fortunate enough to embrace the gallows for my ideal.

I will climb the gallows gladly and show to the world as to how bravely the revolutionaries can sacrifice themselves for the cause.

I am condemned to death, but you are sentenced to transportation for life. You will live and, while living, you will have to show to the world that the revolutionaries not only die for their ideals but can face every calamity. Death should not be a means to escape the worldly difficulties. Those revolutionaries who have by chance escaped the gallows, should live and show to the world that they cannot only embrace gallows for the ideal but also bear the worst type of tortures in the dark dingy prison cells.

Yours

Bhagat Singh

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1 The original English version appeared in *New Era*, an English weekly from Calcutta (now defunct). The original has not been traced. This version has been re-translated from Hindi.
Letter to Jaidev Gupta

Lahore Central Jail
24.7.30

My dear Jaidev,¹
Please take following books in my name from Dwarkadas Library and send them through Kulvir on Sunday:

- Militarism (Karl Liebknecht)
- Why Men Fight (B. Russel)
- Soviets at Work
- Collapse of the Second International
- Left-Wing Communism
- Mutual Aid (Prince Kropotkin)
- Fields, Factories and Workshops
- Civil War in France (Marx)
- Land Revolution in Russia
- Spy (Upton Sinclair)

Please send one more book from Punjab Public Library: Historical Materialism (Bukharin). Also, please find out from the librarian if some books have been sent to Borstal Jail. They are facing a terrible famine of books. They had sent a list of books through Sukhdev’s brother Jaidev. They have not received any book till now. In case they have no list, then please ask Lala Firoz Chand to send some interesting books of his choice. The books must reach them before I go there on this Sunday. This work is a must. Please keep this in mind.

Also send Punjab Peasants in Prosperity and Debt by Darling and 2 or 3 books of this type for Dr. Alam. Hope you will excuse me for this trouble. I promise I will not trouble you in future. Please remember me to all my friends and convey my respect to Lajjawati. I am sure if Dutt’s sister came she will not forget to see me.

With regards
Bhagat Singh

¹ Jaidev Gupta was Bhagat Singh’s close friend from his school days.
Introduction to *Dreamland*

My noble friend, L. Ram Saran Das, has asked me to write an introduction to his poetical work, ‘The Dreamland’. I am neither a poet nor a litterateur, neither am I a journalist nor a critic. Hence, by no stretch of imagination can I find the justification of the demand. But the circumstances in which I am placed do not afford any opportunity of discussing the question with the author arguing back and forth, and thereby do not leave me any alternative but to comply with the desire of my friend.

As I am not a poet I am not going to discuss it from that point of view. I have absolutely no knowledge of metre, and do not even know whether judged from metrical standard it would prove correct. Not being a litterateur I am not going to discuss it with a view of assigning to it its right place in the national literature.

I, being a political worker, can at the utmost discuss it only from that point of view. But here also one factor is making my work practically impossible or at least very difficult. As a rule the introduction is always written by a man who is at one with the author on the contents of the work. But, here the case is quite different. I do not see eye to eye with my friend on all the matters. He was aware of the fact that I differed from him on many vital points. Therefore, my writing is not going to be an introduction at all. It can at the utmost amount to a criticism, and its place will be at the end and not in the beginning of the book.

In the political field ‘The Dreamland’ occupies a very important place. In the prevailing circumstances it is filling up a very important gap in the movement. As a matter of fact all the political movements of our country that

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1 Shiv Verma’s annotation: “Lala Ram Saran Das was convicted for life in 1915 in the first Lahore Conspiracy Case. While in Salem Central Prison, Madras Presidency, he wrote a book in verse entitled *The Dreamland*. After his release in the mid-twenties he contacted Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev and became active in the HSRA. He was arrested again in connection with the second LCC. This time he wavered and accepted king’s pardon. Soon he realised the mistake and retracted his statement. He was charged of perjury and convicted for two years which was subsequently reduced to six months in appeal.

“It was during this conviction that he passed on his manuscript to Bhagat Singh for an introduction. In this article Bhagat Singh, while appreciating the spirit behind Ram Saran Das’s work, has criticised his Utopian approach to the problems of revolution. He has also expressed himself on such subjects as God, religion, violence and non-violence, spiritualism, literature, poetry, etc.”
To Young Political Workers

To
The Young Political Workers

Dear comrades,

Our movement is passing through a very important phase at present. After a year’s fierce struggle some definite proposals regarding the constitutional reforms have been formulated by the Round Table Conference and the Congress leaders have been invited to give this . . . ² think it desirable in the present circumstances to call off their movement. Whether they decide in favour or against is a matter of little importance to us. The present movement is bound to end in some sort of compromise. The compromise may be effected sooner or later. And compromise is not such ignoble and deplorable a thing as we generally think. It is rather an indispensable factor in the political strategy. Any nation that rises against the oppressors is bound to fail in the beginning, and to gain partial reforms during the medieval period of its struggle through compromises. And it is only at the last stage—having fully organised all the forces and resources of the nation—that it can possibly strike the final blow in which it might succeed to shatter the ruler’s government. But even then it might fail, which makes some sort of compromise inevitable. This can be best illustrated by the Russian example.

In 1905 a revolutionary movement broke out in Russia. All the leaders were very hopeful. Lenin had returned from the foreign countries where he had taken refuge. He was conducting the struggle. People came to tell him that a dozen landlords were killed and a score of their mansions were burnt. Lenin responded by telling them to return and to kill twelve hundred landlords and burn as many of their palaces. In his opinion that would have meant something if revolution failed. Duma was introduced. The same Lenin advocated the view of participating in the Duma. This is what happened in 1907. In 1906 he was opposed to the participation in this first Duma which had granted more scope of work than this second one whose rights had been

¹ After Bhagat Singh’s execution this document was published in a mutilated form. All references to Soviet Union, Marx, Lenin and the Communist Party were carefully deleted. Subsequently, the Government of India published it in one of its secret reports in 1936. A photostat copy of the full report is preserved in the library of the Martyrs’ Memorial and Freedom Struggle Research Centre at Lucknow.

² Missing text.
Why I am an Atheist

A new question has cropped up.¹ Is it due to vanity that I do not believe in the existence of an omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient God? I had never imagined that I would ever have to confront such a question. But conversation with some friends has given me a hint that certain of my friends—if I am not claiming too much in thinking them to be so—are inclined to conclude from the brief contact they have had with me, that it was too much on my part to deny the existence of God and that there was a certain amount of vanity that actuated my disbelief. Well, the problem is a serious one. I do not boast to be quite above these human traits. I am a man and nothing more. None can claim to be more. I also have this weakness in me. Vanity does form a part of my nature. Amongst my comrades I was called an autocrat. Even my friend Mr. B.K. Dutta sometimes called me so. On certain occasions I was decried as a despot. Some friends do complain, and very seriously too, that I involuntarily thrust my opinions upon others and get my proposals accepted. That this is true up to a certain extent, I do not deny. This may amount to egotism. There is vanity in me inasmuch as our cult as opposed to other popular creeds is concerned. But that is not personal. It may be, it is only legitimate pride in our cult and does not amount to vanity. Vanity, or to be more precise “Ahankar”, is the excess of undue pride in one’s self. Whether it is such an undue pride that has led me to atheism or whether it is after very careful study of the subject and after much consideration that I have come to disbelieve in God, is a question that I intend to discuss here. Let me first make it clear that egotism and vanity are two different things.

In the first place, I have altogether failed to comprehend as to how undue pride or vaingloriousness could ever stand in the way of a man in believing in God. I can refuse to recognise the greatness of a really great man, provided I have also achieved a certain amount of popularity without deserving it or without having possessed the qualities really essential or indispensable for the

¹ Bhai Randhir Singh was a Ghadarite in Lahore Central Jail in 1930–31. Shiv Verma’s annotation: “Baba Randhir Singh . . . was a God-fearing religious man. It pained him to learn that Bhagat Singh was a non-believer. He somehow managed to see Bhagat Singh in the condemned cell and tried to convince him about the existence of God, but failed. Baba lost his temper and said tauntingly: ‘You are giddy with fame and have developed an ego which is standing like a black curtain between you and the God.’

“It was in reply to that remark that Bhagat Singh wrote this article.”
No Hanging, Please Shoot Us

To
The Punjab Governor

Sir
With due respect we beg to bring to your kind notice the following.

That we were sentenced to death on 7th October 1930 by a British court, L.C.C. Tribunal, constituted under the Special L.C.C. Ordinance, promulgated by H.E. The Viceroy, the head of the British Government in India, and the main charge against us was that of having waged war against H.M. King George, the King of England.

The above mentioned findings of the court presupposed two things:
First, that there exists a state of war between the British nation and the Indian nation and, secondly, that we had actually participated in that war and were, therefore, war prisoners.

The second presupposition seems to be a little bit flattering, but nevertheless it is too tempting to resist the design acquiescing in it.

As regards the first, we are constrained to go into some details. Apparently there seems to be no such war as the phrase indicated. Nevertheless, please, allow us to accept the validity of the presupposition, taking it at its face value. But in order to be correctly understood we must explain it further. Let us declare that the state of war does exist ad shall exist so long as the Indian toiling masses and their natural resources are being exploited by a handful of parasites. They may be purely British capitalists or mixed British and Indian, or even purely Indian. They may be carrying on their insidious exploitation through mixed or even purely Indian bureaucratic apparatus. All these things make no difference. No matter if your government tries and succeeds in winning over the leaders of the upper strata of the Indian society through petty concessions and compromises and thereby cause a temporary demoralisation in the main body of the forces. No matter if once again the vanguard of the Indian movement, the revolutionary party finds itself deserted into the thick of the war. No matter if the leaders to whom personally we are much indebted for the sympathy and feelings they expressed for us, but nevertheless we cannot overlook the fact that they did become so callous as to ignore and not to make a mention in the peace negotiations of even the homeless, friendless and penniless female workers who are alleged to be
Letter to the Second Lahore Conspiracy Case Convicts

March 22, 1931
Comrades,

The desire to live is natural. It is in me also. I do not want to conceal it. But it is conditional. I don’t want to live as a prisoner or under restrictions. My name has become a symbol of Indian revolution. The ideal and sacrifices of the revolutionary party have elevated me to a height beyond which I will never be able to rise if I live.

Today people do not know my weaknesses. If I escape gallows those weaknesses will come before them and the symbol of revolution will get tarnished or perhaps it may vanish altogether. On the other hand, if I mount the gallows boldly and with a smile, that will inspire Indian mothers and they will aspire that their children should also become Bhagat Singh. Thus the number of persons ready to sacrifice their lives for the freedom of our country will increase enormously. It will then become impossible for imperialism to face the tide of the revolution, and all their might and their satanic efforts will not be able to stop its onward march.

Yes, one thing pricks me even today. My heart nurtured some ambitions for doing something for humanity and for my country. I have not been able to fulfill even one thousandth part of those ambitions. If I live I might perhaps get a chance to fulfill them. If ever it came to my mind that I should not die, it came from this end only.

I am proud of myself these days and I am anxiously waiting for the final test. I wish the day may come nearer soon.

Your comrade

Bhagat Singh

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1 This is Bhagat Singh’s last letter, written a day before his execution. Shiv Verma’s annotation: “On March 22, the Second Lahore Conspiracy Case convicts, who were locked up in Ward Number 14 (near condemned cells), sent a slip to Bhagat Singh asking if would like to live. This letter was in reply to that slip.” Bhagat Singh wrote this in Urdu.
APPENDIX 1

Labour Gov’t Executes 3 India Rebels
Frame-up Revolutionists For British Imperialism

(Cable By Inprecorr.)
LONDON, March 24.—The three Lahore prisoners, Bhagat Singh, Raj Guru and Sukh Dev, fighters for the Independence of India, have been executed by the British labour government in the interest of British imperialism. This is one of the bloodiest deeds ever undertaken by the British labour government, under the leadership of MacDonald.

The Indian National Congress opens at Karachi on Thursday. Indignation against the executions is causing mass opposition to the Gandhi–Irwin agreement. The Punjab members of the legislature propose an adjournment and censure of the government for the execution. The London press declares the Karachi congress is the supreme test of Gandhi’s authority and doubts Gandhi’s success.

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The execution of the three Indian revolutionists, on a deliberate political frame-up, at the orders of the labor government, shows the lengths to which the MacDonald regime will go to save British imperialism in India. The MacDonald government, which weeps bitter tears over the trial of the counter-revolutionary Mensheviks in the Soviet Union who received splendid treatment although they plotted for war against the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union, deliberately fosters the most brutal tortures against Indian revolutionaries.

The three executed Indian revolutionists were arrested on the charge of setting off a bomb last April, as well as for the murder of Lieutenant Saunders, a police official, who had beaten thousands and killed many Indian workers.

Against the suspects arrested, the labor government vented its wrath and hate. All of the prisoners were beaten and tortured through special methods invented by the British imperialists and the ‘labor’ administrators, Jatin Das, one of the accused, who died before he could be executed, was tortured for 63 days. He was paralyzed and blinded by the torture. His blood circulation had stopped except around his heart. His body was reduced to 19 pounds at his
APPENDIX 2

75 Killed; 500 Hurt by Labor Gov’t Soldiers

Fighting Spreading in India;

Gandhi for Real Betrayal

(Cable by Inprecorr)

BERLIN, March 26.—A rigid censorship has been clamped down in Cawnpore, India, by the British labor government to prevent the truth of the widespread fighting from being known.

Seventy-five are already dead and at least 500 have been wounded. An exodus of 30,000 people took place from the city last night, due to the fighting. Large British military forces, are enforcing martial law. All railroad bookings to Cawnpore have been stopped, unless a special permit is issued.

New fighting has started in the Tharawaddy forest where two British platoons were reported to have killed 22 rebels. The outbreak is spreading. Reinforcements, including armored trains are being rushed by the British to the affected district.

* * *

The fighting in Cawnpore followed the lynching by the British imperialist labor government of three Indian revolutionists, after they had been frightfully tortured.

Latest reports from Karachi, India, by the Associated Press and the United Press tell of the growing opposition to Gandhi. Gandhi is trying to put over his sell-out with Lord Irwin, British viceroy of India, by all means, threatening to retire for life if the betrayal is not accepted.

The United Press staff correspondent in Karachi where the Indian National Congress is meeting writes:

“The independence leader, who was the object of hostile demonstrations by ‘red shirts’ throughout last night, told newspapermen that the execution of Nationalist extremists at Lahore had not affected his position toward the peace settlement.” That is to say, Gandhi’s object is to do the dirty work for