

Mohammad Ali Jinnah's speech at a Public Meeting at Dhaka

Speech as Governor General of Pakistan (March 21, 1948)

I am grateful to the people of this province and, through you, Mr. Chairman of the Reception Committee, to the people of Dhaka, for the great welcome that they have accorded to me. I need hardly say that it gives me the greatest pleasure to visit East Bengal. East Bengal is the most important component of Pakistan, inhabited as it is by the largest single bloc of Muslims in the world. I have been anxious to pay this province an early visit, but unfortunately other matters of greater importance had so far prevented me from doing so.

About some of these important matters you doubtless know. You know, for instance, of the cataclysm that shook the Punjab immediately after partition, and of the millions of Muslims who in consequence were uprooted from their homes in East Punjab, Delhi, and neighboring districts, and had to be protected, sheltered, and fed pending rehabilitation in Western Pakistan. Never throughout history was a new state called upon to face such tremendous problems. Never throughout history has a new state handled them with such competence and courage. Our enemies had hoped to kill Pakistan at its inception. Pakistan has, on the contrary, arisen triumphant and stronger than ever. It has come to stay, and to play the great role for which it is destined.

In your address of welcome you have stressed the importance of developing the great agricultural and industrial resources of this province, of providing facilities for the training of the young men and women of this province for entering the armed forces of Pakistan, of the development of the port of Chittagong and of communications between this province and other parts of Pakistan, of development of educational facilities, and, finally, you have stressed the importance of ensuring that the citizens of Eastern Pakistan get their due and legitimate share in all spheres of government activity. Let me at once assure you that my government attaches the greatest importance to these matters and is anxiously and constantly engaged in ensuring that Eastern Pakistan attains its full stature with the maximum speed. Of the martial prowess of the people of this province, history provides ample evidence, and, as you are aware, government has already taken energetic steps to provide facilities for the training of the youth of this province both in the regular armed forces and as volunteers in the Pakistan national guards. You may rest assured that the fullest provision shall be made for enabling the youth of this province to play its part in the defense of this state.

Let me now turn to some general matters concerning this province. In doing so, let me first congratulate you, the people of this province and your government, for the manner in which you have conducted yourselves during these seven months of trials and tribulations. Your government and loyal, hardworking officials deserve to be congratulated on the speed and efficiency with which they succeeded building up an ordered administration out of the chaos and confusion that prevailed immediately after partition. On August 15, the provincial government in Dhaka was a fugitive in its own home. It was faced with the immediate problem of finding accommodation for thousands of government personnel in what was, after all, before partition only a small mofussil town. Hardly had government come to grips with administrative problems thus created when some seventy thousand railways and other personnel and their families suddenly arrived in this province, driven out of India partly by panic owing to the disturbances immediately following the partition. There were, further, owing to the wholesale departure of Hindu personnel, great gaps left in the administrative machinery, and the entire

transport and communication system had become disorganized. The immediate task that faced the government, therefore, was hurriedly to regroup its forces and reorganize its administrative machine in order to avert an imminent administrative collapse.

This the government did with extraordinary speed and efficiency. The administration continued to function unhampered, and the life of the community continued undisturbed. Not only was the administration speedily reorganized, but the great administrative shortages were quickly made good, so that an impending famine was averted and, what is equally important, peace was maintained throughout the province. In this latter respect, much credit is due also to the people of this province, in particular to the members of the majority community, who showed exemplary calm and determination to maintain peace despite the great provocation afforded by the massacre and oppression of the Muslims in the Indian dominion in the months immediately after partition. Despite those horrible happenings, some forty thousand processions were taken out by the Hindu community during the last *Puja* in this province without a single instance of the breach of peace, and without any molestation from the Muslims of this province.

Any impartial observer will agree with me that throughout these troubles the minorities were looked after and protected in Pakistan better than anywhere else in India. You will agree that Pakistan was able to keep peace and maintain law and order; and let me tell you that the minorities not only here in Dhaka but throughout Pakistan are more secure, more safe than anywhere else. We have made it clear that the Pakistan government will not allow peace to be disturbed; Pakistan will maintain law and order at any cost; and it will not allow any kind of mob rule. It is necessary to draw attention to these facts—namely, the building up of an orderly administration, the averting of an imminent famine, and the maintenance of the supply of food to some forty million people in this province at a time of overall food shortage and serious administrative difficulties, and the maintenance of peace—because there is a tendency to ignore these achievements of the government and to take these things for granted.

It is always easy to criticize; it is always easy to go on finding fault, but people forget the things that are being done and are going to be done for them, and generally they take those things for granted without even realizing what trials, tribulations, difficulties, and dangers we had to face at the birth of Pakistan. I do not think that your administration is perfect—far from it. I do not say that there is no room for improvement; I do not say that honest criticism from true Pakistanis is unwelcome. It is always welcome. But when I find in some quarters nothing but complaint, faultfinding, and not a word of recognition as to the work that has been done either by your government or by those loyal officials and officers who have been working for you day and night, it naturally pains me. Therefore, at least say some good word for the good that is done, and then complain and criticize. In a large administration, it is obvious that mistakes must be made; you cannot expect that it should be faultless; no country in the world can be so. But our ambition and our desire is that it should be as little defective as possible. Our desire is to make it more efficient, more beneficial, more smooth working. For what? What does the government have for its aim? The government can only have for its aim one objective—to serve the people, to devise ways and means to their welfare, for their betterment. What other object can the government have? And remember; now it is in your hands to put the government in power or remove the government from power; but you must not do it by mob methods. You have the power; you must learn the art of using it; you must try and understand the machinery. Constitutionally, it is in your hands to upset one government and put another government in power if you are dissatisfied to such an extent.

Therefore, the whole thing is in your hands, but I advise you strongly to have patience and to support the men who are at the helm of your government; sympathize with them; try and understand their troubles and their difficulties just as they should try and understand your grievances and complaints and sufferings. It is by that cooperation and that good spirit and goodwill that you will be able not only to preserve Pakistan, which we have achieved, but also make it a great state in the world. Are you now, after having achieved Pakistan, going to destroy it by your own folly? Do you want to build it up? Well, then, for that purpose there is one essential condition, and it is this—complete unity and solidarity amongst ourselves.

But I want to tell you that in our midst there are people financed by foreign agencies who are intent on creating disruption. Their object is to disrupt and sabotage Pakistan. I want you to be on your guard; I want you to be vigilant and not to be taken in by attractive slogans and catchwords. They say that the Pakistan government and the East Bengal government are out to destroy your language. A bigger falsehood was never uttered by a man. Quite frankly and openly I must tell you that you have got amongst you a few communists and other agents financed by foreign help, and if you are not careful you will be disrupted. The idea that East Bengal should be brought back into the Indian union is not given up, and it is their aim yet, and I am confident—I am not afraid, but it is better to be vigilant—that those people who still dream of getting back East Bengal into the Indian union are living in a dreamland.

I am told that there has been some exodus of the Hindu community from this province. I have seen the magnitude of this exodus put in the Indian press at the fantastic figure of ten lakhs. Official estimates would not put the figure beyond two lakhs at the utmost. In any case, I am satisfied that such exodus as has taken place has been the result not of any ill-treatment of the minority communities. On the other hand, the minority communities have enjoyed, and rightly so, greater freedom, and have been shown greater solicitude for their welfare than the minorities in any part of the Indian dominion.

The causes of this exodus are to be found rather in the loose talk, by some warmongering leaders in the Indian dominion, of the inevitability of war between Pakistan and India; in the ill-treatment of the minorities in some of the Indian provinces and the fear among the minorities of the likely repercussions of that ill-treatment here, and in the open encouragement to Hindus to leave this province being sedulously given by a section of the Indian press, producing imaginary accounts of what it calls the plight of the minorities in Pakistan, and by the Hindu Mahasabha. All this propaganda and these accusations about the ill-treatment of the minorities are belied by the fact that more than twelve million non-Muslims continue to live in this province in peace and have refused to migrate from here.

Let me take this opportunity of repeating what I have already said: We shall treat the minorities in Pakistan fairly and justly. Their lives and property in Pakistan are far more secure and protected than in India, and we shall maintain peace, law, and order and protect and safeguard fully every citizen of Pakistan without distinction of caste, creed, or community.

So far so good. Let me now turn to some of the less satisfactory features of the conditions in this province. There is a certain feeling; I am told, in some parts of this province, against non-Bengali Muslims. There has also lately been a certain amount of excitement over the question whether Bengali or Urdu shall be the state language of this province and of Pakistan. In this latter connection, I hear that some discreditable attempts have been made by political opportunists to make a tool of the student community in Dhaka to embarrass the administration.

My young friends, students who are present here, let me tell you, as one who has always had love and affection for you, who has served you for ten years faithfully and loyally, let me give you this word of warning: You will be making the greatest mistake if you allow yourself to be exploited by one political party or another. Remember, there has been a revolutionary change. It is our own government. We are a free, independent, and sovereign state. Let us behave and regulate our affairs as free men; we are not suppressed and oppressed under the regime of a foreign domination; we have broken those chains, we have thrown off those shackles. My young friends, I look forward to you as the real makers of Pakistan. Do not be exploited and do not be misled. Create amongst yourselves complete unity and solidarity. Set an example of what youth can do. Your main occupation should be—in fairness to yourself, in fairness to your parents, in fairness to the state—to devote your attention to your studies. If you fritter away your energies now, you will always regret it. After you leave the portals of your universities and colleges, then you can play your part freely and help yourself and the state. Let me warn you in the clearest terms of the dangers that still face Pakistan and your province in particular, as I have done already. Having failed to prevent the establishment of Pakistan, thwarted and frustrated by their failure, the enemies of Pakistan have now turned their attention to disrupt the state by creating a split amongst the Muslims of Pakistan. These attempts have taken the shape principally of encouraging provincialism.

As long as you do not throw off this poison in our body politic, you will never be able to weld yourselves, mould yourselves, and galvanize yourselves into a real true nation. What we want is not to talk about Bengali, Punjabi, Sindhi, Baluchi, Pathan, and so on. They are, of course, units. But I ask you: Have you forgotten the lesson that was taught to us thirteen hundred years ago? If I may point out, you are all outsiders here. Who were the original inhabitants of Bengal? Not those who are now living. So what is the use of saying, "We are Bengalis, or Sindhis, or Pathans, or Punjabis"? No, we are Muslims.

Islam has taught us this, and I think you will agree with me that, whatever else you may be and whatever you are, you are a Muslim. You belong to a nation now; you have now carved out a territory, a vast territory. It is all yours; it does not belong to a Punjabi or a Sindhi, or a Pathan, or a Bengali; it is yours. You have got your central government where several units are represented. Therefore, if you want to build up yourselves into a nation, for God's sake, give up this provincialism. Provincialism has been one of the curses; and so is sectionalism—Shia, Sunni, etc.

It was no concern of our predecessor government; it was no concern of theirs to worry about it; they were here to carry on the administration, to maintain law and order and carry on their trade and exploit India as much as they could. But now we are in a different position altogether. Now I give you an example. Take America. When it threw off British rule and declared itself independent, how many nations were there? It had many races: Spaniards, French, Germans, Italians, English, Dutch, and many more. Well, there they were. They had many difficulties. But mind you, their nations were actually in existence and they were great nations, whereas you had nothing. You have got Pakistan only now. But there a Frenchman could say, "I am a Frenchman and belong to a great nation," and so on. But what happened? They understood, and they realized their difficulties because they had sense, and within a very short time they solved their problems and destroyed all this sectionalism and they were able to speak not as a German or a Frenchman or an Englishman or a Spaniard, but as Americans. They spoke in this spirit: "I am an American" and "We are Americans." And so you should think, live, and act in terms that your country is Pakistan and you are a Pakistani.

Now I ask you to get rid of this provincialism, because as long as you allow this poison to remain in the body politic of Pakistan, believe me, you will never be a strong nation, and you will never be able to achieve what I wish we could achieve. Please do not think that I do not appreciate the position. Very often it becomes a vicious circle. When you speak to a Bengali, he says, "Yes, you are right, but the Punjabi is so arrogant"; when you speak to the Punjabi or non-Bengali, he says "Yes, but these people do not want us here; they want to get us out." Now this is a vicious circle, and I do not think anybody can solve this Chinese puzzle. The question is, who is going to be more sensible, more practical, more statesmanlike and will be rendering the greatest service to Pakistan? So make up your mind and from today put an end to this sectionalism.

About language: As I have already said, this is in order to create disruption amongst the Musalmans. Your prime minister has rightly pointed this out in a recent statement, and I am glad this government has decided to put down firmly any attempt to disturb the peace of this province by political saboteurs or their agents. Whether Bengali shall be the official language of this province is a matter for the elected representatives of the people of this province to decide. I have no doubt that this question shall be decided solely in accordance with the wishes of the inhabitants of this province at the appropriate time.

Let me tell you in the clearest language that there is no truth that your normal life is going to be touched or disturbed so far as your Bengali language is concerned. But ultimately it is for you, the people of this province, to decide what shall be the language of your province. But let me make it very clear to you that the state language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language. Anyone who tries to mislead you is really the enemy of Pakistan. Without one state language, no nation can remain tied up solidly together and function. Look at the history of other countries. Therefore, so far as the state language is concerned, Pakistan's language shall be Urdu. But, as I have said, it will come in time.

I tell you once again, do not fall into the trap of those who are the enemies of Pakistan. Unfortunately, you have fifth-columnists—and I am sorry to say they are Muslims—who are financed by outsiders. But they are making a great mistake. We are not going to tolerate sabotage anymore; we are not going to tolerate the enemies of Pakistan; we are not going to tolerate quislings and fifth-columnists in our state. And if this is not stopped, I am confident that your government and the Pakistan government will take the strongest measures and deal with them ruthlessly, because they are a poison. I can quite understand differences of views. Very often it is said, "Why cannot we have this party or that party?" Now let me tell you, and I hope you will agree with me, that we have, as a result of unceasing effort and struggle, ultimately achieved Pakistan, after ten years. It is the Muslim League that has done it. There were of course many Musalmans who were indifferent; some were afraid, because they had vested interests and they thought they might lose; some sold themselves to the enemy and worked against us, but we struggled and we fought and, by the grace of God and with His help, we have established Pakistan—which has stunned the world.

Now this is a sacred trust in your hands—i.e., the Muslim League. Is this sacred trust to be guarded by us as the real custodians of the welfare of our country and our people, or not? Are mushroom parties led by men of doubtful past to be started up for the purpose of destroying what we have achieved or of capturing what we have secured? I ask you one question. Do you believe in Pakistan? [Cries of "Yes! Yes!"] Do you want East Bengal or any part of Pakistan to go into the Indian union? ["No! No!"] Well, if you are going to reconstruct Pakistan, then I say that the honest course open to every Musalman is to join the Muslim League Party and serve Pakistan to the best of his ability. Any other mushroom parties

that are started up at present will be looked upon with suspicion because of their past—not that we have any feeling of malice, ill-will, or revenge. Honest change is welcome, but the present emergency requires that every Musalman should come under the banner of the Muslim League, which is the true custodian of Pakistan, and build it up and make it a great state before we think of parties amongst ourselves which may be formed later on sound and healthy lines.

Just one thing more. Do not feel isolated. Many people have said to me that East Bengal feels isolated from the rest of Pakistan. No doubt there is a great distance separating the East from the West Pakistan; no doubt there are difficulties, but I tell you that we fully know and realize the importance of Dhaka and East Bengal. I have come here only for a week or ten days this time, but in order to discharge my duty as the head of the state I may have to come here and stay for days, for weeks, and similarly the Pakistan ministers must establish closer contact. They should come here, and your leaders and members of your government should go to Karachi, which is the capital of Pakistan. But you must have patience. With your help and with your support we will make Pakistan a mighty state.

Finally, let me appeal to you—Keep together, put up with inconveniences, sufferings and sacrifices, for the collective good of our people. No amount of trouble, no amount of hard work or sacrifice is too much or to be shirked if you individually and collectively make a contribution to the collective good of your nation and your state. It is in that way that you will build up Pakistan as the fifth largest state in the world—not only in population, as it is, but also in strength—so that it will command the respect of all the other nations of the world. With these words I wish you Godspeed.

Adapted from "National Consolidation," *Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad ali Jinnah: Speeches and Statements as Governor General of Pakistan, 1947–48* (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Directorate of Films and Publications, 1989), pp. 175–85.