

SPEECHES

By

THE EARL MOUNTBATTEN OF BURMA

— 25 —
1947-48.

SPEECHES

By

His Excellency Rear-Admiral

The Earl Mountbatten of Burma,

**K.G., P.C., G.M.S.I., G.M.I.E., G.C.V.O., K.C.B., D.S.O.,
D.C.L., LL.D. D.Sc.**

(Including related addresses).



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INTRODUCTION.

This volume has been prepared in accordance with the custom of printing the speeches made by all Viceroys and Governors-General of India on demitting office. It contains all the speeches made by Lord Mountbatten during his time in India; they have been inserted in chronological order for the purpose of historical reference.

In the interests of continuity opportunity has been taken to interpolate the principal addresses to which Lord Mountbatten's speeches are related.

On the formal occasions when it was necessary to provide a copy of what His Excellency was going to say to the press, his speeches were prepared in writing. Whenever possible however, His Excellency preferred to talk extempore, usually without any form of notes, and in this case unless a shorthand writer was available, the speech was not recorded. Where it was necessary to provide the press with a record, one of His Excellency's own shorthand writers used to take down his speech, and this is the version that has been printed, whenever available.

This book has been divided into two parts. Part I contains the speeches made by Lord Mountbatten in his capacity as Viceroy from the 24th March 1947 until the transfer of power on the 15th August 1947. Part II contains those made in his capacity as the first Constitutional Governor-General of the Dominion of India until his departure on the 21st June 1948.

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX "A".

Statement by His Majesty's Government.*3rd June 1947.*

INTRODUCTION.

1. On February 20th, 1947, His Majesty's Government announced their intention of transferring power in British India to Indian hands by June 1948. His Majesty's Government had hoped that it would be possible for the major parties to co-operate in the working out of the Cabinet Mission's Plan of May 16th, 1946, and evolve for India a Constitution acceptable to all concerned. This hope has not been fulfilled.

2. The majority of the representatives of the Provinces of Madras, Bombay, the United Provinces, Bihar, Central Provinces and Berar, Assam, Orissa, and the North-West Frontier Province, and the representatives of Delhi, Ajmer-Merwara and Coorg have already made progress in the task of evolving a new Constitution. On the other hand, the Muslim League Party, including in it a majority of the representatives of Bengal, the Punjab and Sind as also the representative of British Baluchistan, has decided not to participate in the Constituent Assembly.

3. It has always been the desire of His Majesty's Government that power should be transferred in accordance with the wishes of the Indian people themselves. This task would have been greatly facilitated if there had been agreement among the Indian political parties. In the absence of such agreement, the task of devising a method by which the wishes of the Indian people can be ascertained has devolved upon His Majesty's Government. After full consultation with political leaders in India, His Majesty's Government have decided to adopt for this purpose the plan set out below. His Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that they have no intention of attempting to frame any ultimate Constitution for India; this is a matter for the Indians themselves. Nor is there anything in this plan to preclude negotiations between communities for a united India.

THE ISSUES TO BE DECIDED.

4. It is not the intention of His Majesty's Government to interrupt the work of the existing Constituent Assembly. Now that provision is made for certain Provinces specified below, His Majesty's Government trust that, as a consequence of this announcement, the Muslim League representatives of those Provinces, a majority of whose representatives are already participating in it, will now take their due share in its labours. At the same time, it is clear that any Constitution framed by this Assembly cannot apply to those

parts of the country which are unwilling to accept it. His Majesty's Government are satisfied that the procedure outlined below embodies the best practical method of ascertaining the wishes of the people of such areas on the issue whether their Constitution is to be framed:—

- (a) in the existing Constituent Assembly; or
- (b) in a new and separate Constituent Assembly consisting of the representatives of those areas which decide not to participate in the existing Constituent Assembly.

When this has been done, it will be possible to determine the authority or authorities to whom power should be transferred.

BENGAL AND THE PUNJAB.

5. The Provincial Legislative Assemblies of Bengal and the Punjab (excluding the European members) will, therefore, each be asked to meet in two parts, one representing the Muslim majority districts and the other the rest of the Province. For the purpose of determining the population of districts, the 1941 census figures will be taken as authoritative. The Muslim majority districts in these two Provinces are set out in the Appendix to this Announcement.

6. The members of the two parts of each Legislative Assembly sitting separately will be empowered to vote whether or not the Province should be partitioned. If a simple majority of either part decides in favour of partition, division will take place and arrangements will be made accordingly.

7. Before the question as to the partition is decided, it is desirable that the representatives of each part should know in advance which Constituent Assembly the Province as a whole would join in the event of the two parts subsequently deciding to remain united. Therefore, if any member of either Legislative Assembly so demands, there shall be held a meeting of all members of the Legislative Assembly (other than Europeans) at which a decision will be taken on the issue as to which Constituent Assembly the Province as a whole would join if it were decided by the two parts to remain united.

8. In the event of partition being decided upon, each part of the Legislative Assembly will, on behalf of the areas they represent, decide which of the alternatives in paragraph 4 above to adopt.

9. For the immediate purpose of deciding on the issue of partition, the members of the Legislative Assemblies of Bengal and the Punjab will sit in two parts according to Muslim majority districts (as laid down in the Appendix) and non-Muslim majority districts. This is only a preliminary step of a purely temporary nature as it is evident that for the purposes of a final partition of these Provinces a detailed investigation of boundary questions will be needed; and, as soon as a decision involving partition has

been taken for either Province, a Boundary Commission will be set up by the Governor-General, the membership and terms of reference of which will be settled in consultation with those concerned. It will be instructed to demarcate the boundaries of the two parts of the Punjab on the basis of ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims. It will also be instructed to take into account other factors. Similar instructions will be given to the Bengal Boundary Commission. Until the report of a Boundary Commission has been put into effect, the provisional boundaries indicated in the Appendix will be used.

SIND.

10. The Legislative Assembly of Sind (excluding the European members) will at a special meeting also take its own decision on the alternatives in paragraph 4 above.

NORTH-WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE.

11. The position of the North-West Frontier Province is exceptional. Two of the three representatives of this Province are already participating in the existing Constituent Assembly. But it is clear, in view of its geographical situation, and other considerations, that if the whole or any part of the Punjab decides not to join the existing Constituent Assembly, it will be necessary to give the North-West Frontier Province an opportunity to reconsider its position. Accordingly, in such an event, a referendum will be made to the electors of the present Legislative Assembly in the North-West Frontier Province to choose which of the alternatives mentioned in paragraph 4 above they wish to adopt. The referendum will be held under the ægis of the Governor-General and in consultation with the Provincial Government.

BRITISH BALUCHISTAN.

12. British Baluchistan has elected a member, but he has not taken his seat in the existing Constituent Assembly. In view of its geographical situation, this Province will also be given an opportunity to reconsider its position and to choose which of the alternatives in paragraph 4 above to adopt. His Excellency the Governor-General is examining how this can most appropriately be done.

ASSAM.

13. Though Assam is predominantly a non-Muslim Province, the district of Sylhet which is contiguous to Bengal is predominantly Muslim. There has been a demand that, in the event of the partition of Bengal, Sylhet should be amalgamated with the Muslim part of Bengal. Accordingly, if it is decided that Bengal should be partitioned, a referendum will be held in Sylhet district

under the aegis of the Governor-General and in consultation with the Assam Provincial Government to decide whether the district of Sylhet should continue to form part of the Assam Province or should be amalgamated with the new Province of Eastern Bengal, if that Province agrees. If the referendum results in favour of amalgamation with Eastern Bengal, a Boundary Commission with terms of reference similar to those for the Punjab and Bengal will be set up to demarcate the Muslim majority areas of Sylhet district and contiguous Muslim majority areas of adjoining districts, which will then be transferred to Eastern Bengal. The rest of the Assam Province will in any case continue to participate in the proceedings of the existing Constituent Assembly.

REPRESENTATION IN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLIES.

14. If it is decided that Bengal and the Punjab should be partitioned, it will be necessary to hold fresh elections to choose their representatives on the scale of one for every million of population according to the principle contained in the Cabinet Mission's Plan of May 16th, 1946. Similar elections will also have to be held for Sylhet in the event of it being decided that this district should form part of East Bengal. The number of representatives to which each area would be entitled is as follows:—

Province.	General.	Muslims.	Sikhs.	TOTAL.
Sylhet District	1	2	Nil	3
West Bengal	15	4	Nil	19
East Bengal	12	29	Nil	41
West Punjab	3	12	2	17
East Punjab	6	4	2	12

15. In accordance with the mandates given to them, the representatives of the various areas will either join the existing Constituent Assembly or form the new Constituent Assembly.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS.

16. Negotiations will have to be initiated as soon as possible on the administrative consequences of any partition that may have been decided upon:—

- (a) Between the representatives of the respective successor authorities about all subjects now dealt with by the Central Government, including Defence, Finance and Communications.
- (b) Between different successor authorities and His Majesty's Government for treaties in regard to matters arising out of the transfer of power.

- (c) In the case of Provinces that may be partitioned, as to the administration of all provincial subjects such as the division of assets and liabilities, the police and other services, the High Courts, provincial institutions, etc.

THE TRIBES OF THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER.

17. Agreements with tribes of the North-West Frontier of India will have to be negotiated by the appropriate successor authority.

THE STATES.

18. His Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that the decisions announced above relate only to British India and that their policy towards Indian States contained in the Cabinet Mission Memorandum of 12th May 1946 remains unchanged.

NECESSITY FOR SPEED.

19. In order that the successor authorities may have time to prepare themselves to take over power, it is important that all the above processes should be completed as quickly as possible. To avoid delay, the different Provinces or parts of Provinces will proceed independently as far as practicable within the conditions of this Plan. The existing Constituent Assembly and the new Constituent Assembly (if formed) will proceed to frame Constitutions for their respective territories: they will of course be free to frame their own rules.

IMMEDIATE TRANSFER OF POWER.

20. The major political parties have repeatedly emphasized their desire that there should be the earliest possible transfer of power in India. With this desire His Majesty's Government are in full sympathy, and they are willing to anticipate the date of June, 1948, for the handing over of power by the setting up of an independent Indian Government or Governments at an even earlier date. Accordingly, as the most expeditious, and indeed the only practicable way of meeting this desire, His Majesty's Government propose to introduce legislation during the current session for the transfer of power this year on a Dominion Status basis to one or two successor authorities according to the decisions taken as a result of this announcement. This will be without prejudice to the right of the Indian Constituent Assemblies to decide in due course whether or not the part of India in respect of which they have authority will remain within the British Commonwealth.

FURTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS BY GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

21. His Excellency the Governor-General will from time to time make such further announcements as may be necessary in regard to procedure or any other matters for carrying out the above arrangements.

(Appendix to Statement by His Majesty's Government.)

The Muslim majority districts of Punjab and Bengal according to 1941 census.

1. THE PUNJAB.

Lahore Division.—Gujranwala, Gurdaspur, Lahore, Sheikhpura, Sialkot.

Rawalpindi Division.—Attock, Gujrat, Jhelum, Mianwali, Rawalpindi, Shahpur.

Multan Division.—Dera Ghazi Khan, Jhang, Lyallpur, Montgomery, Multan, Muzaffargarh.

2. BENGAL.

Chittagong Division.—Chittagong, Noakhali, Tippera.

Dacca Division.—Bakerganj, Dacca, Faridpur, Mymensingh.

Presidency Division.—Jessore, Murshidabad, Nadia.

Rajshahi Division.—Bogra, Dinajpur, Malda, Pabna, Rajshahi, Rangpur.

THE VICEROY'S HOUSE,
NEW DELHI.

3rd June 1947.

APPENDIX "B".

THE GANDHI-JINNAH APPEAL.

We deeply deplore the recent acts of lawlessness and violence that have brought the utmost disgrace on the fair name of India and the greatest misery to innocent people, irrespective of who were the aggressors and who were the victims.

We denounce for all time the use of force to achieve political ends, and we call upon all the communities of India, to whatever persuasion they may belong, not only to refrain from all acts of violence and disorder; but also to avoid both in speech and writing any incitement to such acts.

M. A. JINNAH,—15-4-47.

M. K. GANDHI.

APPENDIX "C".

THE VICEROY'S ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE IN NEW DELHI ON 4TH JUNE 1947, IN RESPECT TO THE STATEMENT BY HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT, DATED 3RD JUNE, 1947*.

(Marginal references refer to paragraphs of this Statement in the Questions and Answers.)

The Hon'ble Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel (Member for Information and Broadcasting): Anybody can now put questions.

1. Q. Is Your Excellency in a position to say whether Mr. Jinnah has accepted the plan*?

A. The position about Mr. Jinnah and the Muslim League is this. By the Constitution and precedents of the Muslim League no final decision is taken until the Muslim League Council has an opportunity of taking that decision. I am not going to say anything today to prejudice the free discussion of that Council. I will put it this way. I took full personal responsibility for mentioning about it in my broadcast after my conversation with Mr. Jinnah. I do not want you to twist that in such a manner as to make it difficult for the Muslim League.

2. Q. Profiting by our past experience, we would like to know, in the event of the Muslim League Council rejecting the plan, what would be the fate of it?

A. That is a hypothetical question. If it ever arises come and see me and I will tell you what I will do.

3. Q. We have had past experience of this.

A. You may have, but not of me. Honestly, come along to me if it happens.

4. Q. In view of the recent speeches made in Bengal by Muslim League leaders, including Suhrawardy, the Prime Minister of Bengal, that in the event of the partition of Bengal, if Calcutta goes to the Hindu zone, the city of Calcutta will be reduced to ashes, does Your Excellency consider the necessity of immediately taking over the administration of the Province under Section 93 or setting up a regional ministry?

5-9

A. The answer is, No. That is up to the Governor to decide. As a matter of fact I have spoken to Mr. Suhrawardy and Mr. Kiron Shankar Roy. The last thing either wants is to see Calcutta destroyed.

5. Q. Reference the Indian States, in view of the fact that there are two Constituent Assemblies likely to come into existence, is it open to any of the Indian States to choose to come into either or into neither if they wish to remain units of the British Commonwealth?

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A. The answer is that the policy about the Indian States is contained in paragraph 18. That is to say, that the policy of His Majesty's Government remains unchanged and that policy has been made clear in the declaration of May 12th, 1946, and if you read that memorandum you will see that by the time the date comes to transfer power, it will be my duty to hand back paramountcy to each of the States. After that the States are free agents to enter either Constituent Assembly or make such other arrangements as they deem necessary.

I think you also asked me whether they could enter the Commonwealth separately as Dominions. The answer is that they cannot, as Dominions. If you ask me whether they can have any relations with the Commonwealth apart from that, that is a hypothetical question, which has not yet arisen. If it does I will have to refer it to His Majesty's Government.

6. Q. May I be permitted to ask another question? If any of the Indian States claims to have taken back paramountcy from the quitting British power and wants to enter into separate treaty with His Majesty's Government; would His Majesty's Government be prepared to enter into treaty with that Indian State either from an economic or military point of view?

A. As far as I know this question has not arisen. If an Indian State were to come to me with such a request, I should refer it to His Majesty's Government. I have already answered the question whether they would be given Dominion Status: but this is a hypothetical question. If you ask me further details I really cannot answer. I have not had enough time to think about everything.

The Hon'ble Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel: Let us have questions paragraph by paragraph: it would simplify matters and avoid confusion.

7. Q. In the introductory third paragraph there is a sentence which reads "Nor is there anything in this plan to preclude negotiations between communities for a united India". Does that mean that the decision of the British Government can even at this stage be put into the melting pot, if the Indian leaders produce an agreed alternative plan?

A. It means that in a different way: it is not that it will be in the melting pot. It is the desire of His Majesty's Government to promote agreement among the parties. They can always get together and let us know what they want us to do. That is why that sentence has been put in there. It is a part of the plan.

8. Q. Since the attitude of the parties is also described in the first three paragraphs, may I ask whether His Excellency is satisfied that the measure of support that he has received from Mr. Jinnah and his colleagues is almost the same as he has received from the other parties and that whatever the legal or constitutional procedure may be in regard to ratification the element of

uncertainty in the case of the other two leaders and in the case of Mr. Jinnah is the same: or is it different?

A. I must really stick to my original answer. You are trying to draw me out.

9. Q. I do not want to embarrass Your Excellency. Even the Congress Working Committee has also to consult the All-India Congress Committee and we find that Master Tara Singh, the Akali leader, has stated that the statement is not very satisfactory. My point is whether His Excellency has received from each of the three leaders the Congress, the Muslim League and the Sikhs, that measure of support which gives him the satisfaction that when these matters are referred to their bigger bodies they will receive satisfactory ratification or whether His Excellency is feeling more satisfied in the case of one and less in the case of the other?

A. Let us put it this way. I am the person who is carrying the responsibility of going ahead with this business. If I had gone ahead, it is because I feel that that was the right thing to do. If you are trying to find out what was given to me in confidence I am not going to be taken in, for the simple reason that I do not want to prejudice the deliberations that may be carried out by the various parties. The main point is, and I repeat it, that I have gone ahead and I have taken, if you like, the risk in doing so, but I have spent the last five years in taking what you might call calculated risks.

10. Q. Will it be open to any Province which may be participating in either Constituent Assembly to feel free, after the constitution is framed, to vote itself out of one union and join the other or join neither?

A. The answer is that after discussing this particular point with the leaders of both the parties I find that the leaders do not wish the Provinces to have any other option than to join one or the other of the Constituent Assemblies for the good and sufficient reason that they do not wish this plan to encourage what I might call "Balkanisation".

11. Q. The second part of my question is whether any Province participating in either Constituent Assembly will be free after the constitution is framed to vote itself out of one union and join another or join neither?

A. That again is one of those hypothetical questions which I am trying to avoid answering at the moment, because I am not here to give decisions. I am here to try and help the Indian people to do what they want to do. Let me put it to you this way: supposing a Province having agreed to join a Constituent Assembly or having gone ahead after joining, suddenly turns round and says that it wants to join another Constituent Assembly. It is up to the particular Constituent Assembly to see whether they are going to try to keep the Province against its wish. I cannot believe that Provinces will do such a thing. In fact I am not here to answer hypothetical questions. I am only here to try and help people to make up their mind as to what they want to do.

12. Q. With the Constituent Assembly still functioning under the limitations of the Cabinet Mission's plan, will it be free to choose its own course? For example, will the restrictions relating to voting on communal issues or providing for a strong Centre still operate?

A. See paragraph 19, where it is said "The existing Constituent Assembly and the new Constituent Assembly (if formed) will proceed to frame Constitutions for those respective territories: they will of course be free to frame their own rules."

19

13. Q. May I know why it was not considered necessary to ask the Bengal Assembly or the Punjab Assembly to sit together collectively and vote first on the issue of United India, and later on vote whether they want a partition of the Province or partition of India?

5-9

A. It is precisely what they are allowed to do. Paragraph 7 says "Before the question as to the partition is decided, it is desirable that the representatives of each part should know in advance which Constituent Assembly the Province as a whole would join in the event of the two parts subsequently deciding to remain united. Therefore, if any member of either Legislative Assembly so demands, there shall be held a meeting of all members of the Legislative Assembly (other than Europeans) at which a decision will be taken on the issue as to which Constituent Assembly the Province as a whole would join if it were decided by the two parts to remain united."

7

As regards the other part of the question, namely, whether they can vote for United India, that question does not merely depend on a vote by Bengal or Punjab. What I do myself feel is that there should be a United India.

14. Q. The process is reversed here. You are asking them to sit separately and vote.

A. No. If you read the paragraph you will find "*Before* the question of partition is decided, etc."

15. Q. Will the vote under paragraph 7 be by simple majority vote?

A. Yes.

16. Q. Is not the issue already decided, practically?

A. I am not here to say that it has been already decided. You and I may have a jolly good idea. We have still got to go by the voting.

17. Q. The statement says in one place that the Boundary Commission will determine the boundaries on the basis of ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims and on "other factors". Will you please give us any idea as to what those "other factors" may be?

9

A. The term "other factors" was put in for the purpose of allowing the Commission the maximum latitude in dealing with this problem. The British are not going to draw up those boundaries. I am quite sincere when I say this and am not bluffing.

18. Q. With respect to the Boundary Commission there was a statement in your Lordship's broadcast last evening in which it was categorically stated that the ultimate boundaries will be settled by a Boundary Commission and will almost certainly not be identical with those which have been provisionally adopted. Why was this categorically stated as "almost certainly"? Did your Lordship have in mind certain factors that could lead to a different boundary other than the question of majority population according to community?

A. I put that in for the simple reason that in the district of Gurdaspur in the Punjab the population is 50·4 per cent. Muslims, I think, and 49·6 per cent. non-Muslims. With a difference of 0·8 per cent. you will see at once that it is unlikely that the Boundary Commission will throw the whole of the district into the Muslim majority areas. In Bengal, the district of Khulna is the reverse case, by a very small fraction of percentage: it falls into a non-Muslim majority area. So you can't say that the whole of that district will go completely into the non-Muslim area. The point is this: we have adopted these districts for one purpose and one purpose only. It is the only simple way by which you can divide the Members of the Legislative Assembly. I won't labour this point. And I will be grateful for publicity by the press that it should not be assumed that it is a foregone conclusion that they will be going into the area within which their community is not in a majority.

19. Q. Arising out of this question, do you foresee any mass transfer of population from a Province or District?

A. Personally I do not—I am speaking as a prophet—because of the physical difficulties involved which you can visualize. There are many physical practical difficulties. But I equally think that a measure of transfer of population will come about in a natural way, that is to say people will just cross the boundary or the Government may take steps to transfer populations. Once more, this is a matter, not so much for the main parties, as for the local authorities living in the boundary areas to decide.

20. Q. Supplemental to the question as to the basis on which the boundary may be drawn, may I take it that the question of communal majority in the population would be the basic determining factor and that the various other issues raised by other parties, such as property, economic liability and various other such considerations, would not be allowed to be included in the terms of reference—because that will be a source of conflict?

A. I entirely agree. That is a point I raised with His Majesty's Government. His Majesty's Government could hardly be expected to subscribe to a partition on the basis of landed property—least of all the present Government. I think, therefore, that the question should be left to Indians. I do not want to prophesy what this Commission will decide, but I promise you that it will be free to decide that certain considerations should be taken into account; I think it is absolutely up to them to do so.

21. *Q.* Is there any time-table fixed for the operation of paragraph 9?

A. To begin with, the plan cannot operate until I am absolutely certain that everybody wants to operate it. In the meantime the Governors have already been issued a warning to put this into effect at the earliest possible moment after they are quite certain about it. No time will be lost, I can assure you, to act as quickly as possible.

22. *Q.* What will be the Administrations of Bengal and the Punjab in the interim period?

A. That is a matter really for the Legislative Assemblies of those two Provinces to decide in consultation with their Governments.

23. *Q.* So far as Assam is concerned, there is only one district mentioned. In this Boundary Commission only this one district will be considered and nothing else? 13

A. I gave examples of two districts in Bengal and the Punjab to show why I have made the prophesy that the boundary will not be certainly identical with the division of the districts. If you look at the map, you will see. Obviously the boundary must be drawn in the most commonsense, intelligent, human way you can draw it; and the districts you will find are not necessarily drawn like that.

24. *Q.* I was speaking of Assam. In Assam there is only one district involved.

A. In Sylhet there are some adjacent areas—I am not very clear of the extent—but there are areas in which there are Muslim majority populations. It is only Sylhet itself which will be asked to vote. There will be two Boundary Commissions for the East and the West, and the Boundary Commission for the East will be asked to look into this question because it is a question of mutual adjustment and commonsense. I put it to you that no area which is not wholeheartedly with it will be included by a State within its area. Conversely, the other State to which an area should owe allegiance, will welcome that area. It is a matter of mutual adjustment for the Boundary Commission to look into all these matters.

25. *Q.* I should like Your Excellency to clear up a point of procedure. The object of the Boundary Commissions is to carry out the wishes of the individual areas concerned. I should have thought that the proper authority for doing this would be the Constituent Assemblies of the two States. It is for them to assume this responsibility.

A. The question is a good one but the answer is "Speed". To begin with, it is not certain how long it would take to set up Constituent Assemblies for the two parts of India. The function of the Committee which will be set up in this connection is to give instructions. It will not prejudge the issue at all. I should take the Chair at the first meeting of the Committee and I

shall probably express no views at all about it. All the way through, what I am trying to do with my staff is to be of service in working the mechanism. I do not like to take the driver's seat myself. I will give you an example. The first thing I did yesterday before broadcasting was to hand round a paper to the leaders which simply showed them the necessary decisions which will have to be taken on points of detail in regard to partition and the subjects which I suggested they should take up. This is in relation to what I may call the administrative consequences of partition, although partition is not yet decided upon. If there is no partition the problem is comparatively simple. I am really trying to get ahead and be of the best possible service to you. I am only thinking out the problems. It is for you to say how you would like them to be solved and we can help you in the process. I want to assure you that there are two reasons why I sincerely want the Indians themselves to settle this problem. The first is that it is your own problem and secondly there is absolutely no desire on my part to interfere in any way with the most suitable method that Indians themselves may adopt for this purpose.

26. Q. Is it not likely that the composition of the committee will be more or less communal in its nature and one community might try to dominate the other?

A. I do not expect complete agreement but on the other hand, how do you expect me to work the plan? The main service that a Chairman can give is to sum up the various points, suggesting accommodations and compromises, to shuffle them about, smooth down ruffled feelings and eventually evolve an answer, but the answer that comes out must be the answer that you desire. After all, in this country, if it is not possible for you to settle your own problems without my having to give a judgment every time, it is a terrible reflection on your own country, which I do not share.

27. Q. May I ask if the services of some experts will be available for such purposes. Will you get them from His Majesty's Government on loan or otherwise?

A. I have been promised the services of two constitutional experts who will be on loan from England. Over and above that, we have a number of experts in this country. I have a number of high class constitutional experts on my own staff who have given me very reliable help all through.

28. Q. May I know whether any administrative arrangements are being set in motion to give effect to the provisional boundaries indicated in the Appendix?

A. I hope that this boundary will be solely for the purposes of the vote. We have left ourselves the option to use it for any other purpose. We should not mislead people in any particular part of the Province into believing that they are going to come on one side or the other of the partition line. It is all

a question of speed. If we had years and years at our disposal, we could go on in a leisurely way but now speed is of such importance that we should like to go ahead as fast as we can.

29. *Q.* Earlier you said that in the matter of division of the Punjab, it will be done on the population basis but you also say that other factors will be taken into consideration?

A. What I said was that we could not expect the present Government in England to make a statement now that they are going to partition any Province on the basis of private property! All I said was that that was a matter for the Indians themselves to decide. Every time you ask me whether I am going to decide a question for you I say "No". If you put the same question in a second and third way, I still say my answer is "No". I am quite sincere when I say that you have got to make up your own mind.

30. *Q.* The question is how to keep the integrity of the Sikh community intact. What is the provision that you have made in this plan to keep the integrity of the Sikh people intact?

A. I must point out that the people who asked for the partition were the Sikhs. The Congress took up their request and framed the Resolution in the form they wanted. They wanted the Punjab to be divided into predominantly Muslim and non-Muslim areas. I have done exactly what the Sikhs requested me to do through the Congress. The request came to me as a tremendous shock, as I like the Sikhs, I am fond of them and I wish them well. I started thinking out a formula to help them, but I am not a magician. I am an ordinary human being. I believe that it is the Indians who have got to find out a solution. You cannot expect the British to solve all your problems. I can only help you to arrive at the correct solution. A lot can be done by a Chairman but he cannot impose a decision on any one. It is up to the Sikhs who are represented on the Committee to take up the case. It is not I who am responsible for asking for partition.

31. *Q.* If the matter of partition is to be settled merely on the basis of population and not on the basis of property, and the Sikhs are uprooted from the place where they have got property, will they not become paupers?

A. Look, I want to make it absolutely clear. If that was what you wanted †, why did you not put your resolution in that form? Why did you not make the request that you wanted it to be divided into Muslim and non-Muslim property areas. You have got all that you asked for, but I want to help you.

32. *Q.* Is it the Congress plan?

A. Yes, it is the Congress plan. Surely, you have already read the Congress resolution.

33. *Q.* The Congress did not want the partition of India?

† A Sikh had asked this question.

A. The Congress resolution on the Punjab suggested that it should be divided according to the predominantly Muslim and non-Muslim areas.

34. Q. Paragraph 10. Do I take it that authorities are semi-conscious of the fact that a great deal of our trouble is due to the separate electorates which were imposed on this country? 10

A. I do not think that has anything to do with the plan that we are now discussing. I will leave it for somebody else to reply to.

35. Q. How is it that in the case of Bengal and the Punjab the legislatures have been asked to decide which Constituent Assembly they should join, but a different procedure has been proposed in the case of the North-West Frontier Province where the electors will have to decide the issue? 11

A. The reason for that is contained in paragraph 11 which has been appropriately worded and in addition to that, please remember that in the case of the North-West Frontier Province there is the heaviest weightage for the minority community which is not to be found in any other Province of India. So much so, that out of 50 seats, 12 have been given to the minorities, although they represent only something like 5 per cent. In fact, you have got a weightage four times greater than the number of minorities. That is one reason. The other reason is that it is a perfectly straightforward referendum on this particular question.

36. Q. The Congress has already said that they would not like to coerce any area that might like to decide otherwise than to join the Constituent Assembly. Your Excellency knows that in the case of the North-West Frontier Province the party had on the last occasion at the time of the elections tried to clarify the position that they would like to form an independent Pathan State. I do not say that it is official, but it is very much in the picture. If the idea of self-determination was there, why was it thought necessary that a third alternative for a referendum should be adopted. Why do you want to know the point of view of the people and not of the Legislature?

A. The question of whether a Province could decide her independence was not raised specifically in the case of the North-West Frontier Province when the plan was drawn up. It was raised as a matter of general principle and it was turned down as a matter of general principle by the leaders of both the parties. What you are suggesting is that they, a Province of 3 million people, want to stand on their own. I do not know how you expect them to stand on their own. I repeat I do not want to make these rules; I am only trying to interpret the feelings and wishes of the leaders.

37. Q. You did consult the views of both the parties and they unanimously turned it down?

A. What I said was that we discussed the principle whether any Province should be allowed to vote for independence or whether they should

be obliged to vote for one or other of the two Constituent Assemblies. That is what I said.

38. Q. The Frontier Province probably did not know all that. As soon as they came to know that there was going to be a Sovereign Bengal, they thought that a Sovereign Pathan State will also come into being afterwards.

A. I do not think I am divulging any secret when I say that the parties in Bengal were considering that they should join together to form an independent Bengal. In reply to a telegram from the Governor I said that I would agree to anything which the High Command or the Leaders or Parties in Delhi would agree to. But I must work through a particular system. It will be quite wrong for me to go over the heads of the people in India. I am not trying to settle the future of India, and the Congress leaders have decided not to permit "independence".

39. Q. The Congress Party are supporting the demand of the Frontier people for a Sovereign State. You want both the parties to agree. Is it not enough that the demand of the Frontier people should be put by one party and it should be considered by the rest of the Government?

A. How is it possible for me to agree to each request of one party? In that case, where is the basis of agreement?

40. Q. To avoid the organisation which you are setting up of semi-autonomous units in the two States of Hindustan and Pakistan, may I point out the example of Russia where they used to have a sort of republic?

A. That question is a question which can only be settled by the Constituent Assemblies of the two States concerned. They have got every freedom to do what they like.

41. Q. May I ask whether the Frontier people are now free to select the issue on which they will vote in the referendum?

A. Yes; it is very simple.

42. Q. Can they decide whether they wish to remain independent or whether they wish to join some Constituent Assembly?

A. If the Frontier were to vote for independence and if they can get the two High Commands to agree, I will, of course, agree. If, on the other hand, they want to join one of the two Constituent Assemblies, then we stick to what was originally agreed to.

43. Q. Is not this inconsistent with the principle of provincial autonomy?

A. Let us get it absolutely clearly. It is for them to say whether they want United India, but other people may want to break it into small parts.

44. Q. The referendum will be held under the ægis of the Governor-General and in consultation with the Provincial Governor. Does the Provincial Governor mean the Governor in consultation with the Ministry or the Governor alone?

A. It means that I am going to send up officers whom I am going to select myself. I am proposing to select British officers in the Indian Army who speak the language and who never had anything to do with politics; so far as I know, they have no interest in politics. I am trying to get such impartial men to go out to these places to assure a completely impartial referendum.

45. Q. If the result of the referendum in the North-West Frontier Province goes against the Muslim League and the League consequently tries to withdraw its acceptance, then may I know whether Your Excellency would advise the British Government to force this Plan, or alter the same to suit the sweet-will of the Muslim League?

A. The question as far as I can make out is this: If the referendum in the North-West Frontier Province goes in favour of the Congress instead of the Muslim League, will I agree to the Muslim League then going back on this Plan. The answer is that the referendum in the Frontier Province is a matter of six to eight weeks hence. Long before the referendum in the North-West Frontier Province is finished, the Muslim League will have taken its decision.

46. Q. In paragraph 12 of the Statement it is stated:—

“British Baluchistan has elected a member, but he has not taken his seat in the existing Constituent Assembly. In view of its geographical situation, this Province will also be given an opportunity to reconsider its position and to choose which of the alternatives in paragraph 4 above to adopt.”

12

Does British Baluchistan mean British-administered Baluchistan? British Baluchistan proper means Sibi District and Pishin District.

*Mr. V. P. Menon**: So far as those two areas are concerned, they are not included in the British Baluchistan District. They are tribal areas.

47. Q. You say British Baluchistan has elected one member for the Constituent Assembly, but that member was elected by reference to the votes of about 7 to 8 people.

A. We will devise a method to ascertain exactly the opinion of the people in the same area as we have done under the Cabinet Mission Plan.

48. Q. My point is this: You want to refer to the people of British Baluchistan now. Will it be to the people of the British Baluchistan proper or the people who elected this one representative?

A. I am afraid I cannot follow your question at all.

*Secretary of the States Ministry and late Reforms Commissioner to the Viceroy.

49. Q. Three members out of the present members of the existing Constituent Assembly are to be taken out if Sylhet votes for partition. 14

A. The ones from Sylhet will be taken out.

50. Q. The representatives from Sylhet will be taken out?

A. Yes, they will go to the other Assembly.

51. Q. Are you going to dissolve the whole contingent from Assam and have new elections for both the Assemblies? How is it to be determined?

Mr. Menon: We have still to determine the procedure yet: we have not thought about it so far.

52. Q. Paragraph 16 reads:—

“Negotiations will have to be initiated as soon as possible on the administrative consequences of any partition that may have been decided upon (a) between the representatives of the respective successor authorities.....” 16

If they are to be effective, they must be in charge of Defence, Finance and Communications, and so it is putting the cart before the horse.

A. No, it is not so. I cannot give any pronouncement on this because I shall have to consult the leaders of the Interim Government but obviously we have got to set up very soon committees of the Cabinet responsible for future arrangements. Something on those lines has to be worked out, but we have yet to discuss the details. They will begin to negotiate, but they will not reach final agreement until power has been transferred to them and they are completely responsible. Once more it is a question of speed: it is a question of going ahead.

53. Q. Paragraph 16 (c) reads:—

“In the case of Provinces that may be partitioned, as to the administration of all provincial subjects such as the division of assets and liabilities, the police and other services, the High Courts, provincial institutions, etc.”

What does “etc.”, signify?

Mr. Menon: We have not exhaustively categorized the matters which have to be considered so we have left “etc.” to be understood in that sense.

54. Q. Will “negotiations on the administrative consequences” also include immediate negotiations with reference to Indian States?

A. The Indian States will be given every facility to negotiate as quickly as they desire. In my opinion, for what it is worth, it will have to be done on the interim basis of a standstill agreement. Let me give you very simple example in history.

The last partition of this sort occurred in Ireland. After the division between Northern and Southern Ireland was complete, you will be surprised

to hear that the Irish had not finished making all their agreements. Among others, there was no agreement over the railways. But do you think one train stopped on that account? They ran on. The General Managers rang each other up and said they would go on the basis of a standstill agreement. Gradually agreements were built up. The world is really a sensible place once you get anger out of it and unless I have a complete wrong estimate of the Indian character, India will be sensible too.

55. Q. If communal strifes in Provinces do not subside in spite of His Majesty's Government's announcement of their plan and Your Excellency's appeal to the people of India, will Your Excellency allow the Centre to intervene for quelling the disturbances?

A. I have already discussed this. With the authority of the Home Member I am in a position to tell you that there has been a unanimous decision in the Cabinet that we shall not allow any more violence or strife. Sardar Baldev Singh broadcast as Defence Member on that point yesterday. Now we know the bad spots, and there the troops are being sent. The Centre has therefore already intervened in the most effective way possible by passing a unanimous decision in the Interim Government not to tolerate any more violence.

56. Q. Do you mean to say that you have been allowing the disturbances?

A. I did not start the disturbances and I do not want them to go on. But till now the distribution of the armed forces has been on a narrow margin throughout India. At this moment we know the places where disturbances are likely to occur and so we are taking the risk of denuding other parts of India of their armed forces to concentrate them in various particular areas. That is really the answer. We are not voluntarily allowing this to go on.

57. Q. Arising out of paragraph 18 of the White Paper which represents the decisions of His Majesty's Government, are the decisions or any one of them subject to revision on the fundamental issue regarding the division of India? If so, on what conditions?

18

A. The whole of this paper is designed as to the way in which the people of India decide—whether there is to be partition or a union. If there is to be a union, very little of this procedure, except paragraph 20 applies: But we have allowed for a union to take place at any time. Therefore your answer is that this White Paper legally provides for a union at any stage that the Indians are likely to come together. Paragraph 20 legally provides for that contingency also. That is the one *re.* transfer of power.

58. Q. The political unity of India was ensured by paramountcy. So far as economic integrity was concerned, there are hundreds of agreements between British India and Indian States. And I take it when paramountcy

goes, the Indian States will be free and independent to join any one Constituent Assembly. There are hundreds of agreements between British India and Indian States regarding the railways, postal services, coinage, etc., and they ensure the economic integrity of India. Are those agreements to remain intact in respect of Paramountcy's dissolution or are they to be dissolved when paramountcy dissolves itself?

A. So far as I know those agreements will in any case be subject to a standstill basis while this is being discussed. I am not a lawyer and I am afraid I do not know the legal terms in which those contracts were drawn up. But if legal authority declares that those contracts are drawn up in terms which make them valid after the handing back of paramountcy, of course they will be in force. If someone says they are invalid then they can continue on a standstill basis until fresh agreements are negotiated.

59. Q. Your Excellency in reply to my question said in regard to the Frontier you could not conceive of a few million people trying to separate into an independent State. In paragraph 18 the Indian States, at least some of them, have perhaps an area of 50 square miles and they will become independent overnight. Has Your Excellency also foreseen this, where we could prevent Balkanisation of a very bad form in those areas which become independent overnight, when in fact these areas are much less than the areas on the Frontier where you will not allow a referendum on the independence issue?

A. That was an expression of opinion. So far as I am concerned, the Frontier can be independent as soon as the leaders of the two parties say so.

60. Q. Has Your Excellency seen to it that there is no Balkanisation, which will be of the worst form if the Indian States as such become independent without any machinery whereby they can co-ordinate their allegiance to one section or the other?

A. The answer is two-fold. In the first place the decision about the States was taken a year before I came out. There is a vast difference between the legal status of British India and the Indian States. British India is territory over which His Majesty's Government has the complete right to negotiate on behalf of all, and the principle there is to do exactly what the leaders of the communities in those territories want. The Indian States have never been British territory. They have been independent States in Treaty relations with the British. Are you suggesting that we, as our last act, should tear up those Treaties and say we are going to compel them to join this or that new Constituent Assembly? And how are we going to enforce it? I may say in all sincerity we can only do what it is legally possible to do. The Indian States must be perfectly aware where their interests lie. I, as Crown Representative, during the few months when I am exercising paramountcy on behalf of the King will do everything in my power to facilitate agreement and bring them together or negotiate standstill agreements.

I am going to do what I can. I cannot go back on a pledge given and based on treaties entered into many years ago.

61. *Q.* If Your Excellency would refer to the 1935 Act, you will appreciate my question whether under that Act a place could not be found for the Indian States legally to come in. I agree that later on they might become independent or certain other arrangements can be arrived at. But during the period in which British India will be under the Act of 1935 cannot a place be found for the States under the Act?

Mr. Menon: Under the 1935 Act, the Government of India negotiated with the States whether they would come in under a particular group of States. Under the revised Act what is the procedure to be adopted is a matter for decision between His Excellency and the British Indian leaders but the point which you are mentioning will certainly be borne in mind.

62. *Q.* The principle of non-interference in the affairs of States will mean that it is the intention of His Majesty's Government to leave many types of governments in India when they quit. For example there may be Osmania raj in one place, Dogra raj in another, democracy in a third and autocracy in a fourth and so on and so forth.

A. So far as I am aware the Government of the Indian States has been progressing and has progressed more rapidly during the last year than at any other time in their history. I am not quite clear whether you suggest that in the last two or three months of my stay here I should use my paramountcy to impose what must be the will of the British very heavily on the States. I do not think it would be right. Even if in one or two instances it might be right, I do not think myself that it is desirable. I really think that we must stand by the Cabinet Mission's statement of May the 12th which I think if you read carefully you will find has not given me the right to do what you suggest.

63. *Q.* It keeps us absolutely in the dark. We do not know on what basis the negotiations between the Princes and His Majesty's Government are to be carried on. The people are not to be consulted nor any publication is to be made of what transpires at all.

A. There is going to be no negotiation between His Majesty's Government and the States. When we go, we hand back paramountcy, and in the process we offer our services in helping the princes to make the necessary contacts with the Government of India and with the constituent assemblies to come to an agreement. But we are not actually going to enter into any fresh agreements. We are getting out of all our commitments. In this process of quitting power in India we must try and quit in as legal and correct a manner as possible and that is the position. I would put it to you and it is my belief

that I have great faith in the future of the whole of India. I believe that ultimately commonsense will prevail. That is what I feel. This is my sincere belief, for I do not think that there is "no hope".

64. Q. When you withdraw paramountcy, would you regard sovereignty as thereafter being vested with the princes or the people of the States, because there is the British Labour Party in power?

A. It is no question of parties in power. It is a question with whom the treaties were made. This is a matter for lawyers. I must know exactly what the legal position is. Please remember that treaties if they are going to be honoured must be honoured in the letter.

65. Q. May I draw your attention to the Raja of Sarawak's example where he claimed to have the popular support and yet he was dethroned? Are you following two different principles in this instance?

A. Exactly the opposite is the case. He was not dethroned. He claimed that he had popular support to dethrone himself. In other words he meant "I have got the support of the people to take such action as I believe to be in their interests". Not only did he consult the legislative machinery, which was pretty primitive, but members of parliament were sent out to decide whether the wishes of the people of Sarawak were that the Raja should abdicate in favour of a Governor and they decided that that was the wish of the people, and so he abdicated: he was not dethroned.

66. Q. Is it not a fact that His Majesty's Government brought out the Raja of Sarawak and refused to countenance his re-installation?

A. Most emphatically not. I personally took him back and put him on his throne.

67. Q. (In Hindustani) regarding Berar.

A. (*The Hon'ble Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*) Berar is at present a part of British India.

68. Q. Is it the Congress view or the view of His Majesty's Government?

A. (*The Hon'ble Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel*) It is a fact.

69. Q. In view of the fact that speed is the very essence of the plan how are the princes assisted to come to a favourable decision in favour of joining one or the other Constituent Assembly?

A. I had arranged to see the representatives of the Princes five hours after the decision had been arrived at with the leaders, at which I told them what the plan was and I offered my services and the services of the Political Department to speed up all the negotiations that can be taken in hand. Then I put it into their heads that they should work on a basis of standstill agreements. I do not think much more is possible in a few hours.

70. Q. You are aware that some of the States have joined the Constituent Assembly. What will be their position after this statement of His Majesty's Government, will they be free to join either Constituent Assembly, will they be allowed to do so?

A. The States are at liberty to send their duly qualified representatives to the existing Constituent Assembly or if they so desire to the other Constituent Assembly if formed. If they are already in the existing Constituent Assembly they have come into it to take part in the work of framing the constitution. In passing I would refer to the *Hindustan Times* report today on the question whether the Legislative Assembly or the Constituent Assembly would be the body to deal with this matter. In my opinion it can only be the Constituent Assembly. The Legislative Assembly contains European Members whereas the position will not be so in the Constituent Assemblies. The weightage will be in exact proportion to the populations of the territories which form the two States. It automatically provides the same amount of representation for such States as join the Constituent Assemblies. So, I assume that the two Constituent Assemblies will deal with this—I say I assume because these things have still got to be considered.

71. Q. Will the representatives of the States participate in legislation?

A. If they so wish. When the Constituent Assembly functions as a legislative body the States' representatives will certainly legislate because they will by that time have made their decision about coming in.

72. Q. Do you think that your advice can be so freely taken? Is there no stronger factor as for instance geographical proximity? If Kashmir wants to join the Hindustan Constituent Assembly, it cannot do so; similarly, if Hyderabad wants to join Pakistan Constituent Assembly it cannot do it.

A. I did not say it cannot do it. I said they are absolutely free to choose. But once more I must say it is a matter for the whole of the Indian authorities to tackle. If they feel that a particular State is better with a certain Constituent Assembly in spite of geographical disadvantages it is for them to decide. I said that normally geographical situation and communal interests and so forth will be the factors to be considered. I am not trying to prejudge.

73. Q. What about paths for such long distances—corridors—from one place to another?

A. Which paragraph are you referring to?

The Hon'ble Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel: We come to paragraph 19.

74. Q. What will be your attitude till June 1948 if the people in certain States like Hyderabad do not like the autocratic rule of the Princes?

A. The date of the transfer of power is going to be much earlier, this year, somewhere round about by August. The date you mean is in this year, 1947 and not June 1948. The British including this chap here (*H.E. point-*

ed to himself) may have left by the end of 1947. We may have booked our berths and be gone.

75. Q. Will paramountcy cease with the complete withdrawal of the British?

A. Paramountcy will recede not later than the day on which Dominion Status is given to the two States. Every Resident and Political Agent will be removed.

76. Q. Will you kindly let us know what is proposed to be done about the Political Department's records?

A. I think the records are of considerable significance and interest. I will have to consult the States and the leaders; I cannot take a unilateral decision. I think it is up to the Department concerned.

77. Q. May I ask whether when you mentioned "this chap here" you meant that British troops also will be withdrawn?

A. So far as I am concerned, the answer to that is "yes".

78. Q. How long will "His Excellency" stay as His Excellency and thereafter as Governor-General?

A. That is a most embarrassing question; I think the transfer could be about the 15th of August.

The Hon'ble Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel: Let us come to paragraph 20.

20

79. Q. In view of the decision to leave and to partition India I feel that it is absolutely essential that on the question of Dominion Status there should be a declaration which is more specific than is contained in paragraph 20. In fact paragraph 20 is perhaps the only disappointing paragraph in the plan. It is possible that it is a matter of drafting. It is absolutely essential that it should be made quite clear that in regard to Dominion Status you make no overtures to or accept no overtures from fragments of India.

A. If you people meet together and ask for one single Dominion Status that can be done. But if you insist on two States what are we going to do? I do not quite follow. If there is one India then we can transfer power to one India. If there are two parts, then we must transfer power to two parts. What else can we do?

80. Q. I am sorry I did not make myself clear. There is a great potential for mischief in regard to Dominion Status once you are prepared to deal with different parts of India in regard to the final choice about membership of the Commonwealth.

A. What you mean is that as a result of paragraph 20, one part comes in and the other does not.

81. Q. You should reject any offer on the part of any single individual State to become a Dominion. You should not also make any efforts to induce any separate State of India to come into the Commonwealth. You should insist on India as a whole coming to a decision on the question of membership of the Commonwealth or not.

A. That is exactly the point. We won't allow any separate part of India to come into the Commonwealth. But if the whole of India decides to break into two independent States, they could both come in. Before this paragraph was framed I had most careful talks with the Leaders of Parties. It was only then that I discovered that this particular solution was one that commended itself as a fair and just one—the only solution for speedy transfer of power which both parties desired. I must say that I do honestly think that we have done everything in our power to meet the very point you have mentioned.

82. Q. It is said here that the respective Constituent Assemblies have the right to ultimately elect to remain within the British Commonwealth or not. I want to point out that there is mischief in that provision?

A. I absolutely disagree. The British Commonwealth of Nations is a completely free association of peoples. Each State is completely independent. As far as I know, they decide their own future. There is absolutely no sort of power that I know of to force them to stay in if they want to go out. The whole essence of independence is that you must have complete freedom to do what you like. I would again repeat that the British Commonwealth of Nations is a free association of different nations and the British Government have no control over them. The only connecting link is the King. I honestly think that we have done all we can to transfer power and to give each of the Indian States the greatest possible measure of freedom.

83. Q. May I know whether the Congress leaders and the League leaders have agreed, as was pointed out by Mr. Devadas Gandhi in the particular sentence which he quoted*, that the two States can remain members of the British Commonwealth, because Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru very recently made it emphatically clear that they would not like any foreign power to have bases in any part of India? I would like to know whether that particular paragraph in this statement has the approval of the party leaders?

A. It is good that you have put that question. It is known all over the world that so far as the British Commonwealth of Nations is concerned, you cannot compel any part to remain inside it, if it wants to go out.

84. Q. Has this position been accepted by the party leaders?

A. I took the responsibility of writing this out and we have been trying to get it into a form which will be most acceptable to all concerned. The whole essence of the proposal is to transfer power completely.

*Question 82.

85. *Q.* Nobody objects to interim Dominion Status. Suppose there are two Constituent Assemblies. It is open to one of them to declare itself absolutely independent and the other to declare itself a Dominion? That is the point that Mr. Devadas Gandhi made.

A. If you grant independence and at the same time try to impose restrictions, the independence becomes a mockery.

86. *Q.* It is quite possible that so far as the interim period is concerned, you have the support of the three groups of leaders. The point I want to put to Your Excellency is this. You know the history of the last few years. The two major parties have been asking for complete independence knowing full well all the implications of the Statute of Westminster. Since you are proceeding with the consent of the parties throughout, what will happen if one party is not a consenting party to what the other party is doing.

A. I am simply amazed at these questions. If you are sincere in your demand for independence, it means that you have got perfect freedom to do what you like. There is no question of imposing any decision on you. There is no question of one party imposing its will on the other.

87. *Q.* I am afraid we are still at cross purposes on this particular point. If by raising this question we have caused embarrassment to Your Excellency, I sincerely apologise for it because I have had reason to deduce that His Majesty's Government's opinion on this question and perhaps your opinion also has been exactly in accordance with what I myself suggested a few minutes ago. We cannot envisage the independence which we have not yet got. We are looking forward to having it in June 1948. I have at heart the fair name of Great Britain and that of the Labour Party and yourself. If you allow the Dominion Status to become a bone of contention to the rival parties, you are going to be charged with some kind of conspiracy behind it. Therefore, so far as the Dominion Status is concerned, we shall think of it when all sections of India want it. If tomorrow, we come and say that we must be admitted into the Commonwealth of Nations, nobody shall say "no" to it. If you demand that India should have one voice and not two voices regarding the membership of the Commonwealth of Nations, you will surely be furthering your own aim.

A. I do not think you have yourself understood what the Commonwealth of Nations is. It is not run by His Majesty's Government. His Majesty's Government represents only one Government and not the Commonwealth of Nations. Before this paragraph could go through, the Dominion Governments had to be consulted. I can assure you there is no sinister motive about it. Living as neighbours alongside each other, the two Dominions will have a hundred and one problems that will arise in the course of the partition. If they will feel then that the time has come when one or both should leave the Commonwealth of Nations, they will presumably consult

each other. I think it is a sort of a hang over over-stressing what the British Government in London have done. I myself was surprised how little Mr. Attlee had to do with this. Besides, you are attempting to give to the British Government a power which does not exist there at all. I honestly think that complete freedom remains with you and I am quite certain that the present Government is not trying to do something which is sinister and I hope you will agree with this.

88. Q. Will the Governor-General be appointed on the advice of the Dominion Governments? If so, is there any bar against there being separate Governors-General for the two States?

A. The moment any State acquires Dominion Status, it chooses its own Governor-General. That Governor-General is chosen by the Prime Minister of the Government or the Dominion concerned. He submits his name to the King, who being a constitutional monarch may discuss it but finally acts on the advice of the Government concerned. We have many examples on that. It is complete and absolute freedom to do exactly what you like.

There is one more point which I was asked and which I have not yet answered. I was asked whether His Majesty's Government had made no provision for the protection of the minorities, because they are not referred to in this plan. The position about minorities is that since the desire of the British to quit power is now going to be effected quickly, there is no chance for the British to afford protection to the minorities. But I should like to add that on the question of the minorities I have talked to the principal leaders and I am absolutely certain that so long as power rests with them to look after the interests of the minorities they will use it as a matter of conscience, honour and fair play. I have also told them I shall be only too happy if I can help them in any way. I have told the leaders of the minorities that they can see me while I am here and I will do my best to help them. I have got great faith in the future of India and that faith remains. I do believe that the minorities are going to have fair play and a decent chance in the country.

89. Q. May I ask whether each Dominion will have full responsibility for its own defences?

A. Basically, each State, when it gets its independence, is wholly and solely responsible for its own defence. I must tell you that the process of partition of forces, if it is to be done in a way that will not cause the collapse of the morale and the disintegration of the army, must be done in an orderly and well-disciplined manner. When the partition has taken place, the States are absolutely at liberty to get together and have a combined plan for the defence of India or to make their own separate plans. From all the questions that have been asked, there is one thing which I sincerely believe is

not yet clear to the people. Somehow people seem to have some doubts about this word "Dominion Status". It is absolute independence in every possible way, with the sole exception that the Member States of Commonwealth are linked together voluntarily. In effect they look for support from each other and they are pulled together by mutual trust and in due course affection.

Sir Usha Nath Sen: Your Excellency, I am not going to ask any question. My task is a little more pleasant, and that is to thank you for the courtesy and consideration which you have shown to the representatives of the Press by coming here this morning and giving us elaborate interpretations on some of the points in regard to which there was doubt in the minds of some of the correspondents. This is the second time in our memory that the Viceroy and Governor-General has held a Press Conference to inaugurate reforms so far as India is concerned. It was your distinguished predecessor, Lord Linlithgow, who held a Press Conference in Simla and explained to us the provisions and implications of the Government of India Act of 1935. Some of us were there and we asked many questions and some of our questions were as inconvenient as they were today. Your Excellency has taken us a stage further by telling us what the new policy of His Majesty's Government is going to be. Judging from the expressions of opinion given by some of our eminent leaders last night on the All-India Radio, and judging from the expressions used in the debate in Parliament yesterday, particularly by the great Leader of the Opposition, who is not too friendly to India, it leads us to the conclusion that the event which concludes today is one of personal triumph for you. We believe that ever since you came to this country you did nothing else than to give a new reorientation to His Majesty's Government's policy in this country with regard to constitutional reforms. Some of us have felt, at least I have felt, that the way you have handled this question and the skill which you have exhibited, is reminiscent of the strategy of South-East Asia. There were many difficulties, there were many hurdles, but you have handled them like a brilliant Commander. Whatever may be the ultimate result, it is a great achievement not only for yourself but may I add also for your colleagues in the Cabinet who have helped you right through without any mental reservations.

Sir, we thank you very heartily for showing this courtesy to the Press which we deeply value and deeply appreciate.

H.E.: Thank you very much for the kind words which you have used about me. I hope you will not think from the way in which I have been answering your questions that they were not very valuable. I have valued every single question that has been put. So far as I am concerned, I have absolutely nothing to hide. I do not think that any of you really thinks that any single paragraph in this plan has any ulterior significance whatsoever. It has been a sincere attempt to find a solution which will be as acceptable as

possible among the peoples who would use this plan. The way this Press Conference has proceeded has encouraged me very much, because after clearing misunderstandings on some points, I think there is not really a single question which has not been helpful.

I would like to conclude with one more word. I am really sincere in my desire to help the Sikhs; I really believe that the leaders of both the major parties are equally sincere and intend to do what they can to help them. In fact I think there will be a revolution in feelings; whereas before there was mistrust and strife, I think we are going to see the leaders come together in a friendly spirit of co-operation.

One word more. In putting out your news and your leading articles you will all aim at one thing—peaceful, quick and speedy settlement, which all of us so sincerely desire.