

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Hotel Imperial
New Delhi, India
September 20, 1947

Mr. Walter S. Rogers
Institute of Current World Affairs
522 Fifth Avenue
New York 18, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Rogers:

During the past two weeks I have accompanied Phil Talbot on a whirlwind tour of India which has touched several different regions and has extended from Cape Comorin in the South to Delhi in the North. We have travelled exclusively by air. Without the airplane a trip covering so much territory in such a short period of time would have been impossible. Fortunately, however, commercial airlines provide excellent service connecting the major cities in India. On September 9th we flew from Bangalore to Trivandrum, capital city of Travancore State. Our stay there which lasted until the 11th included a quick motor trip to Cape Comorin. From Trivandrum we flew to Madras where we remained until the 13th. After an overnight stop at Bangalore, I flew here to Delhi while Phil came via Bombay where he picked up Dick Robinson who has been with us here in Delhi for several days.

In many respects our moves have been so rapid that it has been impossible for me to gain any real understanding or insight into the current developments and problems in the various regions of India which we have visited, but I have received some definite impressions of places and people and of the significant issues which have been foremost in the minds of the limited but select group of people with whom we have had conversations and in the local press in the various places we have visited. It has been invaluable to accompany an experienced and competent observer, and I have been able to compare, balance, and in many cases correct my judgements on the basis of Phil's interpretations of events and conditions. Of course all the people I personally have been able to talk with have been literate and English-speaking, and therefore represent only a very small percentage of the population, and whatever impressions I have received of the attitudes and thinking of India's masses have been necessarily derived from second-hand sources. Nonetheless, I shall report some of my impressions for what they are worth.

I have been greatly interested in the apparent differences in the atmosphere and the problems currently facing each of the places which we have visited. The contrast between Delhi where violent communalism dominates and Trivandrum, Bangalore, and Madras where political issues seem to be relatively more important is a striking one. It is impossible to generalize about the latter three places, however, because there are important differences in the situations and problems confronting the people in each place.

Phil and I spent almost our entire period in Bangalore investigating and trying to evaluate the motives and issues involved in the State Congress-led campaign of non-violent resistance to the established government of the State. As I mentioned in my last letter, the Prime Minister told us that the constitutional issue of responsible government was nothing more than a camouflage for a communal struggle between Brahmans and non-Brahmans. We tried to gather further evidence either to support or contradict this assertion. We talked with many people of various sorts including social workers having close contacts with the people, police officers involved in carrying out repressive measures, ex-government officials with wide knowledge of the State, government employees in minor positions, local newspapermen, members of both the economic and intellectual upper strata of the community, and others. With the exception of one prominent American businessman who asserted without qualification that the troubles in Mysore and the rest of India were all Communist inspired (\$), the people with whom we discussed the question almost without variation asserted that it was a sincere popular movement for responsible government supported by the mass of the population. The general feeling of these people was that the government has not acted in good faith and has tried to forestall democratic developments made inevitable by what has already taken place in former British-India and in certain nearby States. Even one of the police officers said to us: "Speaking as a citizen rather than as a police officer I must say that almost everyone is in sympathy with the aims of the Congress Party." An ex-Prime Minister of Mysore said to us on the day that the government issued a somewhat vague statement of its intentions: "Ten years ago I would have fought this movement with determination, but now the establishment of responsible government in the States is inevitable and must be accepted. The government here is equivocating. The statement made this morning evades the major issues and will satisfy no one." Two other ex-Prime Ministers of Mysore present at the same time expressed similar opinions.

Although the situation in Bangalore has been tense at times, and although the city has been under a curfew and several slashes between the police and demonstrators resulting in deaths have taken place, the struggle there is primarily a political one without the mass hysteria, hatred, and fear which have been evident in Delhi (and which according to all reports are even worse in the Punjab). Evidences of communal feeling directed against the Muslim minority are present in Bangalore, but there are few evidences that communalism will lead to mass, fratricidal blood-letting there.

The atmosphere in Trivandrum is quite different from that in Bangalore. The political scene is calm. A short while before we reached there the Maharaja had agreed to the establishment of complete responsible government, and the much-maligned Prime Minister, Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyer, had left the State. Everyone with whom we talked expressed satisfaction with the fact that the struggle for democratic government had been completely victorious. Thanu Pillai., President of the State Congress and leader of the organization since its inception; told us, "We are completely satisfied with the government's promises and concessions.

We have achieved everything we fought for." He and others are now absorbed by the forthcoming job of constitution-making, and he admitted that his party's future program has yet to be formulated. There were some evidences, however, that the state of almost suspended animation in politics is merely an interim period and that new political groupings and rivalries will appear once the new form of government is established and starts functioning.

One of the most interesting aspects of Travancore to both Phil and myself is the complex social organization based upon communal division along religious lines. The State differs from most of India in that it has a large Christian community which comprises roughly a third of the population. The Muslims are only a small minority, and we were told that there is very little communal feeling on the Hindu-Muslim pattern found in many other parts of India. Instead, there is a highly complex system of social (or rather religious) groups including Hindu castes and Christian sects, and the Muslims play only a relatively minor role in communal rivalries. I personally don't know of any other place in the world where Christianity is sub-divided into such a plethora of sects. The major Christian communities are the Syrian Christians claiming unbroken continuity since the arrival of Saint Thomas in Travancore, traditionally dated 52 A.D., and the Catholics who date from the later period of active Roman Catholic proselytising. Two major schisms in the Syrian church produced the Mar Thoma and the Catholicus of the East sects, and the Catholic church is divided into two major groups, the Syro-Roman Catholics composed of converts from the Syrian church, and the Latin Roman Catholics composed of converts from Hinduism. In addition there are numerous Protestant sects and a branch of the Chaldean church. The Hindus, likewise, are split into a large number of castes (58 are listed in census publications), and the major ones, the Nairs and the Ezhavas, are said to be uniquely characteristic of this part of India. One of the most interesting aspects of this intricate social system is the way in which the Christian sects have apparently taken on many of the characteristics of castes. We were told of the many ways in which these groups functioned as social, political, and economic units, and many persons told us that future politics in the State would be much more strongly influenced by communal rivalries between these groups than in the past, and that the Congress Party, hitherto fairly close-knit, would probably undergo some division along communal lines. One Indian journalist in Trivandrum said to us: "I have seen more communalism here than in any other part of India." Whether or not that was an exaggeration I do not know, but communalism undoubtedly has deep roots in Travancore. But, and this is important, the communalism in Travancore has not led to chronic inter-group violence, and no one with whom we talked expressed any fear that it would.

The situation in Madras seemed to have a different aspect from that in either Bangalore or Trivandrum. In Madras a Congress-dominated provincial administration has already assumed the responsibilities of government and is grappling with innumerable problems of administration. Phil and I talked with many people there including a prominent Minister in the administration, a Communist Party leader, a local Servants of India social worker, a member of the new national legislature of India,

the editor of the outstanding daily newspaper in Madras, members of the American community, and others. The general impression we received was that the administration to date has not been particularly successful in formulating and carrying out sound policies. The remarks of the newspaper editor will illustrate the type of criticism we heard. "The administration has no long range program", he said. "Without administrative experience they are just getting through each day's work. There are intelligent people here who could help a great deal, but they are not consulted. The Prime Minister is an ignorant man. He has no knowledge of government....The Congress is already divided into groups and is bound to break apart because it represents both the highest and the lowest classes in the community....People have been chosen for government posts because of their loyalty to the party, and not for administrative skill." Many people criticized the administration for carrying out costly and unrealistic pet reforms. The Minister of Agriculture and Jails himself admitted to us that the government's prohibition schemes would reduce the government's income by roughly one-half, and he did not have any clear idea as to how this reduction in revenues would be compensated for or what the effect of the reduction would have on other government social services. Although he was an extremely friendly and likeable person he did not impress us as being well-informed even concerning the policies which his own department is responsible for. As an example, I can cite the fact that he stumbled and corrected himself several times in describing the details of their program of agricultural land tenure reform. By contrast, the young Communist leader whom we saw impressed us both as being extremely alert, well-informed, and energetic. We encountered differences of opinion concerning the strength of the Communists in the Madras area. One person claimed that they were powerful enough to threaten taking over the government. Very few people rated their strength so highly, however, and even the Communist leader himself did not claim any such strength. There is some apprehension, however, that their strength may grow considerably because of the city's swollen population of poorly-paid, ill-fed, and ill-housed workers.

Many people in Madras expressed fear that, even though the Muslims are a small percentage of their population, Hindu-Muslim communal rioting might break out at any time as refugees from the Punjab arrived and spread their stories and rumors. It was from this atmosphere of apprehension and expectancy that I flew to Delhi.

My reception at Delhi was provided by an unsmiling group of soldiers at the airport who frisked me and inspected my luggage for hidden arms before allowing me to enter the city. The confusion, tension, and fear gripping the city was immediately obvious even to a first-time visitor. Few people walked the streets even in the daytime. At night the curfew kept almost everyone indoors. Telephone communications were virtually impossible, although from what I am told they were never very good. Transportation was extremely difficult to obtain because most of the drivers of taxis and horse-drawn tongas in the city were Muslims who have either been killed or frightened away. If one could locate a taxi it would only take you to certain places in the city, and the prices

were ridiculously high. Very few Muslims remained in the part of New Delhi where I obtained a room. Conversations which I heard concerned themselves almost exclusively with atrocity stories, and most of the people I met during the first few days claimed to have been eye-witnesses to brutal massacres involving bodily mutilation and in many cases torture. This was the atmosphere when I arrived, "after the worst of the trouble was already over". Since then the tension has visibly eased. More shops have reopened, and the non-Muslims in the areas I have seen have started to recommence normal activity. When I first arrived the local press reported many instances of killing and violence (although I personally did not see any and saw few evidences of it except for some damaged shop-fronts ~~fronts~~ and one mutilated body), but during the past two days there have been only a few such cases reported. It is still not considered safe for a Muslim to travel through non-Muslim areas, however, and very few do so. Three days ago I visited one of the Muslim refugee camps on the edge of New Delhi. It was jam-packed with an estimated fifty to sixty thousand refugees living under crowded, dirty conditions with only improvised shelter and almost no latrine facilities. It took me almost an hour just to get in and out the narrow gate to the camp. Yesterday I toured one section of Old Delhi. The Muslims were crowded into an area surrounding the largest mosque in the city, and a sort of no-man's-land separating them from the surrounding non-Muslim areas was being patrolled by a column of six tanks mounted by Gurkhas with rifles ready for action. A long column of refugees, taking what belongings they could carry, wound its way out of Old Delhi towards outlying refugee camps.

There is no reason for me to repeat the innumerable atrocity stories which I have heard. Suffice it to say that evidently the massacres have been incredible, even though some rumor is undoubtedly mixed with the truth in the reports. Brutality of the sort which has taken place here is difficult to explain, but most of the explanations made to me have included the phrase "temporary insanity" in describing the rioters. The consensus of opinion among those I have talked with is that the Delhi riots were largely a result of the reports and hysteria imported by non-Muslim refugees from the Punjab and that the violence here has been in the nature of violent retaliation in which the Sikhs have played a conspicuous role as ring-leaders and the Muslim minority has been the group primarily victimized.

I have had an unusual opportunity to meet some of India's political leaders during the past few days. Before Phil arrived I established contact with my father who happened to be in Delhi for a few days and accompanied him on interesting interview with Gandhi, Prime Minister Nehru, U. S. Ambassador Grady, and others, and with him had two meals at the Government House with Viscount and Lady Mountbatten. Since then I have seen a number of other people with Phil, have attended one of Gandhi's prayer meetings, and last night sat in at an unusual off-the-record press conference at which Liaquat Ali Khan, Prime Minister of Pakistan, was present along with Nehru and Mountbatten.

I have been much impressed by the calibre of the top government leaders whom I have met, but both India and Pakistan have been staggered

by the communal violence which has overwhelmed them almost since the first day of their independence. Nonetheless, they claim that from a military point of view at least the situation is rapidly being brought under control, but they feel that the Hindu-Muslim bitterness which has been so greatly magnified and intensified during past weeks may last for years and complicate relations between India and Pakistan. Both Nehru and Liaquat Ali Khan disclaim any desire for an exchange of minorities, but the spontaneous migration of minorities has forced them to assist in the process. Some people I have talked with believe that mass exchanges on a permanent basis are inevitable now, but there are others who feel that there is at least a chance that passions will subside in time making it possible for mixed Hindu-Sikh-Muslim communities to live in peace once again. There seems to be little doubt, however, that the pitch to which communal feeling has been raised will leave lasting bitterness of serious consequences to both India and Pakistan.

I could write a great deal more about what I have seen and heard in the past two weeks, but I will stop before your patience and interest are exhausted. The complexities and problems confronting the two new states in this sub-continent are overwhelming. Nonetheless, the rapid tour I have made has introduced me to places and people as well as to problems and issues about which I had only the barest understanding previously.

Your cable arrived a few days ago, and I am delighted that you are willing for me to accompany Phil to Indonesia. We are encountering serious transportation difficulties at the moment, but we hope to get off in a few days.

Sincerely yours,

Doak Barnett

Doak Barnett