

ICWA LETTERS

Since 1925 the Institute of Current World Affairs (the Crane-Rogers Foundation) has provided long-term fellowships to enable outstanding young professionals to live outside the United States and write about international areas and issues. An exempt operating foundation endowed by the late Charles R. Crane, the Institute is also supported by contributions from like-minded individuals and foundations.

TRUSTEES

Joseph Battat
Carole Beaulieu
Mary Beausoleil
Richard Dudman
Peter Geithner
Gary Hartshorn
Kitty Hempstone
Will Knowland
Mildred Marcy
Peter Bird Martin
Joel Millman
Samuel Levy
Edmund H. Sutton
Steven Maly
Warren Unna

HONORARY TRUSTEES

A. Doak Barnett
David Elliot
Lawrence M. Gould
David Hapgood
Pat M. Holt
Edwin S. Munger
Richard H. Nolte
Albert Ravenholt
Phillips Talbot

The Institute of Current World Affairs
4 West Wheelock Street
Hanover, New Hampshire 03755

BOB-17 1995
SOUTH ASIA

Delhi in May:

Sweltering Heat, Pollution and Chaotic Traffic

BY BACETE BWOGO

DELHI, India

May-June 1995

Mr. Peter Bird Martin
Executive Director
Institute of Current World Affairs
Hanover, New Hampshire

Dear Peter:

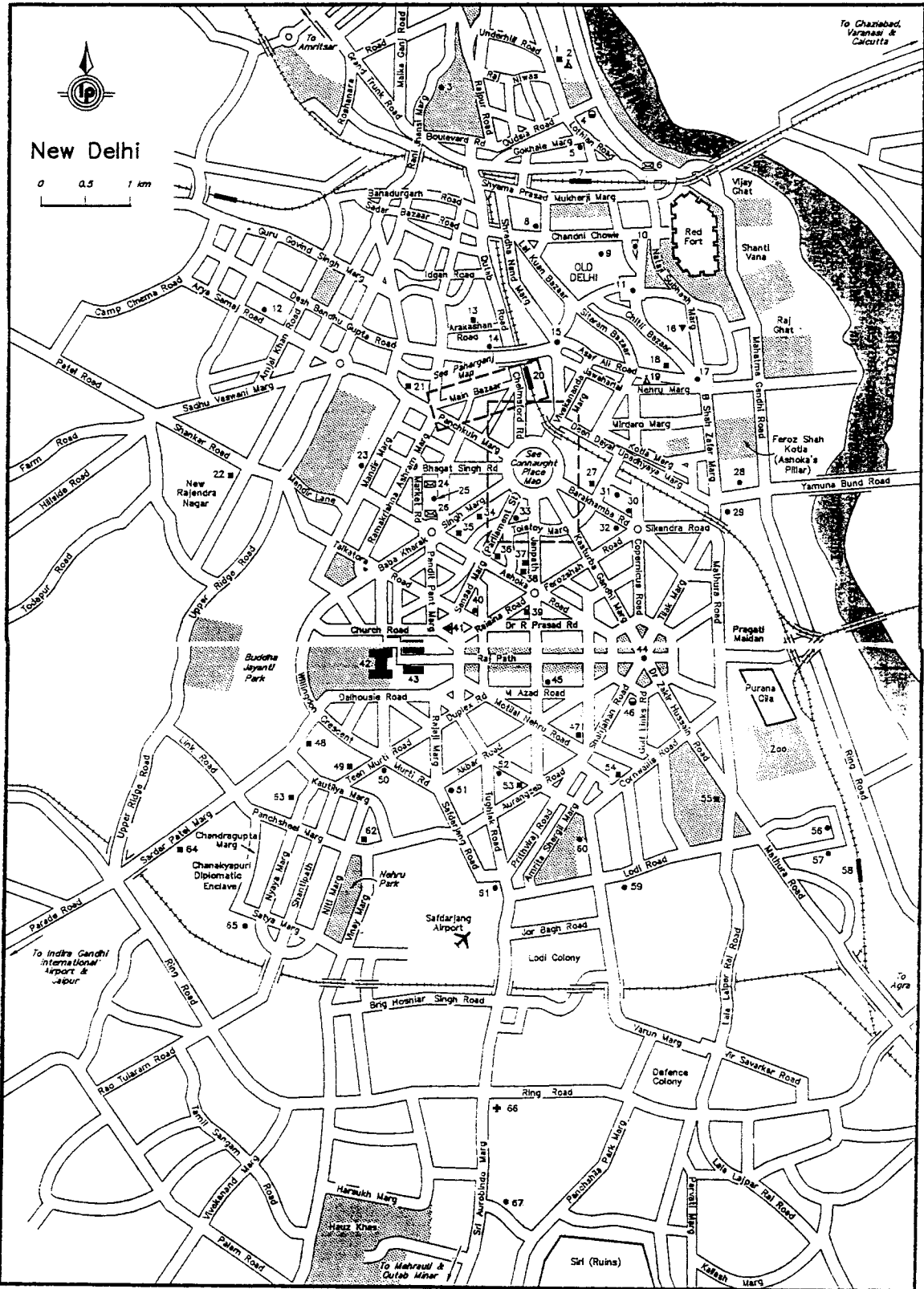
I could not figure out any other place in the world outside India where Hindi films are more popular than Sudan. And I had great fascination with India ever since. I even learnt how to sing some Hindi songs that I heard in the movies, and my favorite actor was Shami Kapoor. I still see in my mind's eye the beautiful valleys of Kashmir under the blue skies, the green gardens filled with flowers and trees, between which young people in their colorful outfits ran, danced and sang their romantic songs. I also remember how most films centered around social issues that bedeviled Indian society, and how attempts were made to resolve these social problems, by loving and caring people. This is the India I cared about seeing. But after I arrived in Delhi, I could not reconcile what I thought then, and the reality of life I was seeing here now. And a feeling of confusion lingers in my mind.

After only one week in Delhi I learnt how to pity objects. One day I was taking a morning walk along the Mathura road near my hotel, when I saw a frog-eyed, old 1950s lorry wrecked miserably across the middle of the road like a wounded buffalo with a broken back, blocking the road completely. Red bricks lay scattered all around over the street where the lorry had broken down. Water from the radiator gushed out and oil oozed from different parts of the machine on the street as if it were bleeding. I almost exclaimed, "poor creature!" It really seemed it had had a life of its own just a little while before the accident. The traffic was shifted to the other side of the street and vehicles heading in opposite directions used the one lane. Most cars and other motor vehicles left behind a tail of smoke as they moved along the road, some with a rattling sound.

The day is hot-as-can-be, 45 degrees Celsius. It is humid and sticky. The fine dust in the atmosphere and the blue/black smoke spewing from moving vehicles form a lethal cocktail that leaves everybody on the street gasping for a breath of air. A vehicle driven by

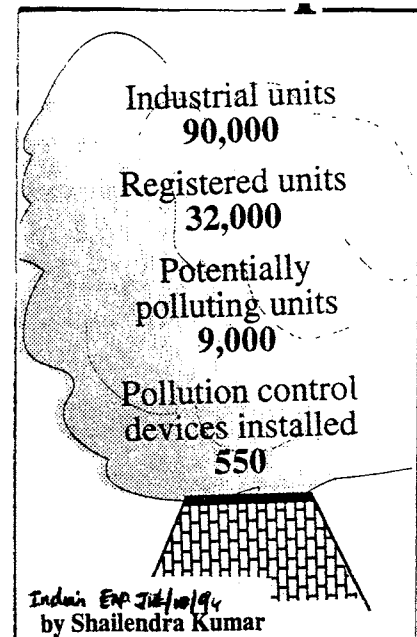
Continued on page 4

Bacete Bwogo, a Sudanese physician, is an ICWA Fellow studying primary health care delivery in Costa Rica, Cuba, Kerala State in India & the U.S.A.



No Escape for Delhiites from Industrial Pollution

Delhi City is ranked as the third in the world list of polluted cities. There are already 22 lakh (one lakh= 1,00,000) motor vehicles on the road. Some 700 new vehicles come on to the streets each day and 1,700 people die in road traffic accidents each year. Many car drivers are found to have faked driving licenses (The *Economist*, Dec. 4, 1993). Also there are 90,000 industrial units in Delhi which account for 25% of the 2,200 tons of pollutants discharged into Delhi skies daily. Only 550 industrial units have installed pollution control devices and more than 30,000 industrial units release toxic matter like ammonia, lead and sulfur dioxide. Polluting units are even increasing in residential areas. The rate of respiratory diseases in Delhi is 10 times higher than the national average. It was found that traffic policemen who are constantly exposed to fumes of automobile exhaust, suffered a high rate of respiratory, skin and eye problems (The *Environmentalist*, vol. 13, no., 1993).



Speeding Redline kills three sleeping kids

Overused brakes cause more mishaps in Capital



INDIAN EXP.
6/17/94
EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI

A shocked Ram Kali trying to recount what happened after the Redline bus rammed into her tent. She has also lost her two children in the accident. *Express photo*

*An auto-rickshaw in
Connaught Place*



an improvised water pump turned motor engine moves along desperately struggling on the road almost hopping like a grasshopper. Seeing what I was seeing, I felt a tickle and could not manage to restrain a smile. I smiled, and said to myself, "well, it's quite some kind of fun to be here".

Not very far from the broken lorry, I asked an auto-rickshaw driver to take me to Connaught place, the hub of New Delhi, where travel agents, airline offices and banks are located. After we started to move off, I asked him what he thought was the cause of the lorry accident. He just looked at the direction of the lorry

and smiled. Then whoops!, he nearly hit the vehicle ahead of us. "What is it?", I asked. He murmured something in Hindi which I did not understand. Something was wrong with the brakes. From time to time we had to pull to the side of the street to avoid hitting the vehicle ahead of us and we drifted towards the pedestrian pavement for a few meters before finally coming to a halt with the aid of his foot which he extended outside to touch the ground.

I was worried that we might not reach Connaught Place in one piece. "Please, stop?", I said, "I want to take another rickshaw. "Wait, wait", he insisted.



Connaught Circus



Janpath Lane Market

"Why?", I asked. He brought out some equipment and said, "brake, brake, no good". He fixed a new brake-cord and said, "OK, Connaught Place, acha (yes)?" And we were on our way again. But then the rickshaw ran out of gas. He switched something on under the seat I was sitting on and the engine came back to life again. He hit the gas and we were rolling on the street once again. I noticed that the driver never sat straight in his seat, but always at an angle. He put a cushion on his seat, because he was sitting right on the engine, which was hot.

I have never experienced reckless driving like this be-

fore. The rickshaw drivers seem to be fearless, as they plow their way through the heavy traffic. No one cares about making signals if one driver wants to go into another lane or to overtake another vehicle. The buses equally threaten the smaller vehicles on the road by their sheer larger sizes. Everybody appears to be in a hurry on the road. Finally, we arrived at the junction of Kasturba Ghandi Marg (Road) and Tolstoy Marg.

As the traffic lights turn red and the cars stop, someone with a broken limb or missing fingers or with an open wound (the raw parts left bare for you to see) will come and approach you while you are seated in the



*A slum in Lajpat Nagar,
New Delhi*

rickshaw. Such a person will always ask you, "rupia, rupia" (one rupee, one rupee), a request for you to donate some money. And if you pretend not to listen or you look the other way to avoid that person who is asking you, an attempt will be made to touch your feet with the hand or head, saying, "el salaam aleikum, el Hamdulelah." The asking is tenacious and persuasive.

At this point you feel hopelessly confused not knowing what to do. Speak to the rickshaw driver to bail you out of the situation? Perhaps a good idea, but in most cases the driver will pretend not to listen to you, nor will he answer you or help you or tell the beggar to leave. Your salvation will come only when the traffic lights turn green and the cars begin to move forward once again. Peter, believe me, you will never forget this experience and you shall develop a kind of weird sensitivity or fear for cross-road stoppages as long as you are in Delhi.

Of course, not all road junctions are like that. Beggars target areas where traffic hold-ups take a longer time to open up especially around the main market areas such as Connaught place. As you get off the rickshaw, you will meet such people again sitting at the entrances or exits of subways waiting to ask for something from whoever is passing by. I noticed that foreigners make easier targets for a long and often persuasive asking. I don't know what the assumption is here. Sometimes a woman carrying a small baby will approach and ask you to give something for the baby to eat. You feel confused and ashamed of yourself if you do not give anything. What do you do? Here is a supposedly hungry baby and what a shame it will be if you did not help in some way. However, you will get used to the situation and learn to deal with it better. Such stories seem to have no end as long as the sun rises and sets every day in Delhi.

On another day, one of those often-thin children may stop you at on the sidewalk and will intentionally protrude its abdomen and beat it like a drum to indicate it is hungry. Some children are trained by older persons to beg from passersby on the street while they watch the children from a distance. If a child receives a gift from someone, it must give it up to the older person

who is watching from afar.

Another place I visited is the Janpath market where you could buy things at good bargain prices. Shouts of Achahe! Belichai! Etzat! Folifive! Tewenifive! I don't understand what all these words mean, but they have a musical sound in them that makes the sale interesting. One must be careful in this place because there are many pick-pocketers. Some street-side sellers will attempt to sell you something through strong persuasion and they can easily fool you if you are not careful. The same person may approach you more than once. Perhaps the assumption is that some travelers may have short memories and therefore would not be able to recognize them as the same person they have seen before.

From Connaught Place, I visited the Yamuna river east of New Delhi. As I stood on the bridge I saw some people dive into the water on the shallow edge of the river and bring out from under the water some mud through which they search for some fortune. I was told that people come to stand on the bridge to throw gifts into the river so that God may give them some kind of blessings. They throw coins and other articles as offerings while fortune seekers dive to get them out from under the river bed. I don't know what their chances are of finding money or other valuable materials in the turbid water; the river is too wide and the water is not clear enough for them to see through.

On my way back from the Yamuna river, I saw a man riding on the back of an elephant in the middle of the Ring road which runs around Delhi.

As I continue my adventures around Delhi I see the need for more basic sanitary facilities. In some places the poverty really gets me down. In others I am surprised to find television sets in some homes in slum areas. The more I go around Delhi, the more I learn about new things that I did not know before.

However, I keep thinking about my frustration of not finding even a few of those good things that fascinated me in the Hindi-films I saw before in my home in Sudan. □

Auto-rickshaw: is a noisy three-wheel device powered by a stroke motorcycle engine with a driver up front and seats for two (or sometimes more) passengers behind. They don't have doors and have just a canvas top. They are also known as scooters or autos. They are faster than taxis for short trips and fare is half that for a taxi. (Lonely planet, India: travel Survival Kit)

Current Fellows & Their Activities

Bacete Bwogo. A Sudanese from the Shilluk tribe of southern Sudan, Bacete is a physician spending two and one-half years studying health-delivery systems in Costa Rica, Cuba, Kerala State (India) and the Bronx, U.S.A. Bacete did his undergraduate work at the University of Juba and received his M.D. from the University of Alexandria in Egypt. He served as a public-health officer in Port Sudan until 1990, when he moved to England to take advantage of scholarships at the London School of Economics and Oxford University. [THE AMERICAS]

Cheng Li. An Assistant Professor of Government at Hamilton College in Clinton, NY, Cheng Li is studying the growth of technocracy and its impact on the economy of the southeastern coast of China. He began his academic life by winning the equivalent of an M.D. at Jing An Medical School in Shanghai, but then did graduate work in Asian Studies and Political Science, with an M.A. from Berkeley in 1987 and a Ph.D. from Princeton in 1992. [EAST ASIA]

Adam Albion. A former research associate at the Institute for EastWest Studies at Prague in the Czech Republic, Adam is spending two years studying and writing about Turkey's regional role and growing importance as an actor in the Balkans, the Middle East and the former Soviet bloc. A Harvard graduate (1988; History), Adam has completed the first year of a two-year M. Litt. degree in Russian/East European history and languages at Oxford University. [EUROPE/RUSSIA]

Cynthia Caron. With a Masters degree in Forest Science from the Yale School of Forestry and Environment, Cynthia is spending two years in South Asia as ICWA's first John Miller Musser Memorial Forest & Society Fellow. She is studying and writing about the impact of forest-preservation projects on the lives (and land-tenure) of indigenous peoples and local farmers who live on their fringes. Her fellowship includes stays in Bhutan, India and Sri Lanka. [SOUTH ASIA/Forest & Society]

Hisham Ahmed. Born blind in the Palestinian Dheisheh Refugee Camp near Bethlehem, Hisham finished his A-levels with the fifth highest score out of 13,000 students throughout Israel. He received a B.A. in political science on a scholarship from Illinois State University and his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of California in Santa Barbara. Back in East Jerusalem and still blind, Hisham plans to gather oral histories from a broad selection of Palestinians to produce a "Portrait of Palestine" at this crucial point in Middle Eastern history. [MIDEAST/N. AFRICA]

Sharon Griffin. A feature writer and contributing columnist on African affairs at the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, Sharon is spending two years in southern Africa studying Zulu and the KwaZulu kingdom and writing about the role of nongovernmental organizations as fulfillment centers for national needs in developing countries where governments are still feeling their way toward effective administration. She plans to travel and live in Namibia and Zimbabwe as well as South Africa. [sub-SAHARA]

Pramila Jayapal. Born in India, Pramila left when she was four and went through primary and secondary education in Indonesia. She graduated from Georgetown University in 1986 and won an M.B.A. from the Kellogg School of Management in Evanston, Illinois in 1990. She has worked as a corporate analyst for PaineWebber and an accounts manager for the world's leading producer of cardiac defibrillators, but most recently managed a \$7 million developing-country revolving-loan fund for the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH) in Seattle. Pramila is spending two years in India tracing her roots and studying social issues involving religion, the status of women, population and AIDS. [SOUTH ASIA]

William F. Foote. Formerly a financial analyst with Lehman Brothers' Emerging Markets Group, Willy Foote is examining the economic substructure of Mexico and the impact of free-market reforms on Mexico's people, society and politics. Willy holds a Bachelor's degree from Yale University (history), a Master's from the London School of Economics (Development Economics; Latin America) and studied Basque history in San Sebastian, Spain. He carried out intensive Spanish-language studies in Guatemala in 1990 and then worked as a copy editor and Reporter for the Buenos Aires Herald from 1990 to 1992. [THE AMERICAS]

Teresa C. Yates. A former member of the American Civil Liberties Union's national task force on the workplace, Teresa is spending two years in South Africa observing and reporting on the efforts of the Mandela government to reform the national land-tenure system. A Vassar graduate with a *juris doctor* from the University of Cincinnati College of Law, Teresa had an internship at the Centre for Applied Legal Studies in Johannesburg in 1991 and 1992, studying the feasibility of including social and economic rights in the new South African constitution. While with the ACLU, she also conducted a Seminar on Women in the Law at Fordham Law School in New York. [sub-SAHARA]

Author: Institute of Current World Affairs

Title: ICWA Letters - South Asia

ISSN: 1083-4257

Imprint: Institute of Current World Affairs
Hanover, NH

Material Type: Serial

Language: English

Frequency: Monthly

Other Regions: East Asia; Mideast/North Africa;
Europe/Russia; SubSaharan Africa;
The Americas

Chosen on the basis of character, previous experience and promise, Institute Fellows are young professionals funded to spend a minimum of two years carrying out self-designed programs of study and writing outside the United States. The Fellows are required to report their findings and experiences from the field once a month. They can write on any subject, as formally or informally as they wish. The result is a unique form of reporting, analysis and periodical assessment of international events and issues.

ICWA LETTERS

ISSN 1083-4257

ICWA Letters are published by the Institute of Current World Affairs Inc., a 501(c)(3) exempt operating foundation incorporated in New York State with offices located at 4 West Wheelock Street, Hanover, NH 03755.

The letters are provided free of charge to members of ICWA and are available to libraries and professional researchers with indexes by subscription.

Executive Director

Peter Bird Martin

Program Administrator

Gary L. Hansen

Letters Coordinator

Ellen Kozak

Phone: (603) 643-5548

Fax: (603) 643-9599

E-Mail: ICWA@valley.net

© 1995 Institute of Current World Affairs, The Crane-Rogers Foundation.

The information contained in this publication may not be reproduced without the writer's permission.

The Institute of Current World Affairs

4 WEST WHEELOCK STREET
HANOVER, NEW HAMPSHIRE 03755

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage

PAID

Lebanon, NH 03766

Permit 130