

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

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Pakistan: 'Coincidence is the
hobgoblin of little
minds.'

25A Nizamuddin West
New Delhi

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Dear Dick,

Recently I had my first encounter as an Institute Fellow with the cops, namely, the intelligence organization and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of the Government of Pakistan. Dick Morse says I've arrived. Maybe so. The experience was interesting for me and provides some indication of conditions in Pakistan, so here is an account of it.

I arrived in Rawalpindi late on the evening of 24 March to continue the work I'd been doing for the previous nine days in Karachi and Lahore: to learn first hand the views of as many persons as possible about India, Kashmir, politics in general, and other issues important in Pakistan. On the 26th the Chinese delegation lead by Chairman Liu Shao-Chi arrived in 'Pindi' for a state visit. That evening in the Hotel Shakrazad (in the still-abuilding capital city of Islamabad—ten miles from Pindi, which is a temporary capital) foreign correspondents covering the visit began to gather. Many were staying in the hotel (as was I, because the only other hotel was full) and others had come because President Ayub was entertaining Chairman Liu at a state banquet and they expected the toasts might be newsworthy. Among them was a friend from Delhi, Warren Unna, former Fellow of the Institute and correspondent of the Washington Post. And so the fun began.

The next day was Sunday. Ayub and the Chinese guests were to visit the ruined cities of Taxila, twenty miles away, at one time centers of Bactrian and Buddhist culture that predated Alexander the Great, one of their more distinguished conquerors. Because it was Sunday and there was little else to do and because I wanted to see the ruins and the museum there, preferably in good company, I cadged a ride with Unna, who was riding out in his press car. After the official visit we hoped to have some leisure to prowl about on our own. We drove through the cool morning, stopping on the way to look at the monument and plaque erected in memory of Brigadier John Nicholson, eminent in the early British administration of the Punjab and killed, at age 34, leading an assault to retake Delhi during the 1857 mutiny. We arrived before the official party while the press was gathering, the crowds were still forming, and being formed, and the dancers were polishing their twirls

of welcome. The museum was closed to visitors so I asked directions to the ruins, attracting some attention, I noticed, as I did so.

The distance to the ruins proved greater than I'd expected, so I returned, arriving just after Ayub and Liu had left their cars and entered the museum. A burly man in common-man's dress (white pajama-like pants and flowing shirt) and obviously a security guard asked where I was going. I told him to join the newsmen. By this time a couple of uniformed policemen with burp-guns as well as several men in business suits--again quite evidently police--had taken an interest in me. One of them asked me if I was a newsman and I said no. He asked for identification, and I gave him my card. He told me I couldn't stand there, so I said OK that I'd go back to the parking lot and wait. I went, followed by a slender young man in a blue suit who watched me yawn, smoke, and look at the scenery for the next two hours. The visit over, Unna joined me and we drove quickly back to Pindi because he had arranged a lunch engagement. Sometime later, I returned to the Shahrazad.

That afternoon a tall, reasonably well-dressed man came to my room, accompanied by an anxious-looking clerk from the reception desk, and asked if he could talk with me. His credentials said he was Inspector Nasir Ali Sheikh of the police. He asked me a few routine questions, looked at my passport and foreigner's registration papers, said they were correct, smiled pleasantly, and went away.

Early in the evening I was at the reception desk inquiring about a shirt that hadn't come back from the laundry, when a man with a limp and a pistol bulging on his hip came over and introduced me to a second man. (These men later proved to be the Deputy and Senior Superintendents of the CID.) In response to questions I told the second man that I'd gone to Taxila to see the ruins, not to cover the Liu visit, and that I was not a pressman. I told him that I'd ridden out with a pressman to get a free ride, and that the man was a relative stranger to me and that I wasn't sure of his name. Although I expected that the man in the blue suit had got the number of the car and that it had been traced to Unna, I could by this time smell trouble and I didn't want to involve Unna in anything that might interfere with his work. The hotel lobby was at this time full of plain-clothes men and the honor guard of lancers was lined up because Liu was having a return dinner for Ayub. Leaving man number two and going to my room, I noticed at the end of the corridor two shabby men propping up the wall with apparently little to do. Later I went down to the bar and noticed that a tubby man with bushy mustaches and dressed in a brown suit with sagging trousers was watching me. I moved to another chair at the same table out of his sight and soon he peered through the door to make sure I was still there. To test him further, I went to my room several times during the evening and he toddled up the stairs, waited with the shabby men, and followed me back down again. The AP correspondent from Delhi, with whom I was sitting, got a particular kick out of this performance. Several times men with a slightly over-bearing manner seemed to be discussing me, and the charm of Pakistan grew less and less.

Later, the police officer in charge of foreigners registration in Pindi sat down and chatted at our table. (All foreigners, on arrival in Pakistan, must register with the police and thereafter report arrivals in and departures from cities to the local police and have their papers so endorsed.) I explained to this man, who was a pleasant fellow, that I had tried to report my intended departure for Peshawar that afternoon but had found his office closed and that my train left the next morning before his office opened. I told him that I had written a letter explaining all this, which was still in my room, and asked what I should do. He asked me to get the letter, read it when I brought it to him, and then asked me to give him my registration papers. He then most considerately told me that he would open his office a half hour early the next morning so that I could pick up my papers, endorsed, on the way to the train. By this time the hotel had found my shirt and I went to bed.

At his office the following morning, Monday, 28 March, he told me that a superior officer had taken my papers from him because there was some irregularity in them and that I might get them back later in the day or the following day. I replied that he was a nice guy but that this was all damned nonsense because he knew and I knew that my papers were in perfect order. I said that his superiors were being bloody-minded and were merely harassing me. He was very sympathetic and said he'd give me news in a few hours and that perhaps I might make a later train to Peshawar. I went to Flashmans Hotel and waited. It didn't take long before he came and informed me that I was officially requested not to leave Rawalpindi before the 31st. An irregularity in my papers was still the reason he gave, and he said he was under orders not to tell me who was handling the case. I booked a room at the hotel and then took a taxi to the American Embassy.

I reported developments to the head of USIS, who made a few suggestions and sent me on to a young Vice-Consul, who said that cases like mine were not unusual in Pakistan and told me to stay in touch with him. Several hours later I received a phone call from him at the hotel asking me to call at the Embassy. He then told me that the Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy was disturbed by the preemptory nature of the Pakistan Government's order to me and that the Embassy wanted to take up my case. Definitely relieved to have Uncle Sam behind me, I gave the Vice-Consul the particulars and became a 'Protective Case' with my name on a manila folder. I returned to the hotel to await developments, but none were forthcoming that day because all the senior police officials were busy getting Chairman Liu and the Chinese delegation safely aboard a plane to Lahore and could ^{not} be reached at their offices. From the time I returned to the hotel that morning until I finally left Pindi I was under surveillance. No one followed my taxis, but a variety of men, who tried unsuccessfully to look otherwise occupied, noted the numbers of the cabs I used and the times of my comings and goings. Others kept an eye on the doorway of my room—the hotel sprawls over several acres with rooms in different buildings—and followed me on walks. They were very obvious and ^{evidently} didn't care about being inconspicuous or know how to be. One man, who I'd got a headstart on when he wasn't looking, actually ran after me until he discovered that I'd stopped and was laughing at him. Then he stopped, looked at

something I couldn't see, and walked away. No one interfered with my movements, however, or was unpleasant in any way. Nevertheless, being watched becomes wearing.

At the Embassy the next morning, I found that the Vice-Consul had got in touch with the CID officer handling my case. This man, Senior Superintendent Farooki, Special Branch, CID, had explained to the V.-C. that although the whole affair was probably a series of unfortunate coincidences, the Government could if it chose detain me under the Defence of Pakistan Rules--which would permit the incommunicado detention of your grandmother for dropping a stitch. If the Embassy wished to make a formal protest in my behalf the Pakistan Government would make the matter formal, too, and detain me. But Farooki suggested keeping the matter informal. The Vice-Consul wisely agreed. It was settled that I would cooperate with the police and they would send a man to Flashmans to interrogate me that noon, checking the information I gave them as quickly as possible, and, hopefully, soon ending the matter.

Two men showed up at the hotel and we talked on the lawn outside my room. One of them was an inspector who acted as stenographer, and the other was the man from the Shahrazad with the limp and the pistol, Mohammed Abdullah, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Special Branch, CID. At the beginning of the questioning Abdullah pulled a typed sheet from his pocket and showed it quickly to me, saying that it was an order for my detention ("which I hope we won't have to serve!"), but otherwise the atmosphere was calm and pleasant. The questions were of a very routine nature concerning the dates and places where I had been educated, my time with USIS, my travels in India and elsewhere during the last three years, and so on. The inspector wrote all this down, but I was never asked to sign it. I had the strong feeling that they already had the information and were simply checking my story against what was in their files. It also became evident, I think, that their informants in Kashmir had reported on my trips there last year. We also talked politics. They seemed genuinely interested--as all Pakistanis I met were--in news from India, in my views on Kashmir, etc. Some of this may also have been to test me, and so I spoke frankly. When they asked what was my major criticism of Pakistan, I replied obsession with India and with Kashmir. They took it calmly and with no argument, and we chatted for a half hour about a variety of subjects. Finally, they indicated, without being explicit, that the affair was nearly at an end and Abdullah admitted that the talk of checking my papers had been a device to keep me in Pindi away from Chairman ^{Li} who had gone to Lahore the day before. They saw no objection to my going the next day to Peshawar. We parted amicably. I then telephoned to Superintendent Farooki and was given an appointment to see him the next morning.

I was to call Farooki at 9:00 a.m. to ask for transport if I needed it, but at 8:45 Abdullah reappeared while I was eating breakfast and said he'd come to take me to Farooki. He wouldn't have any coffee and waited patiently through my toast and jam. We drove in a newish Chevrolet sedan to the Special Branch office, which was in an unmarked private house. Farooki was very genial, asked a few

questions, and then agreed with me that the whole business was unfortunate but harmless. Their suspicion, he said, had been aroused by the number of coincidences: I had come from India, I showed up at Taxila among newsmen (The Pakistan Government is suspicious of the press, correspondents tell me.), I was riding with a press man who had false credentials, and I had later said I didn't know who he was. At this point I explained to Farooki that I'd been trying to keep Unna out of trouble. (And I must explain to you the business about Unna's credentials. Unna had arrived in Pindi unannounced and when he went to the Government's Press Information Department to arrange accreditation to cover the visit, officials there were in too much of a hurry to make out the necessary cards, lapel tag, and so on. To save time they instead gave him the credentials of James Keat of the Baltimore Sun who hadn't appeared.) I told Farooki that I knew the story, that it was the press department's fault and that he couldn't blame Unna. He agreed with this, but still seemed to think it a dangerous coincidence that I'd gone to Taxila with a man with false credentials. Unna's accreditation, by the way, was taken from him our last night at the Shahrzad and he never got it back. He had to cover Liu's visit to Lahore without special accreditation.

Despite the admission that the affair was harmless, Farooki—the most reasonable of the police officials I met—did not seem to think that the police had been overly suspicious or that they had over-stepped the mark in preemptorily ordering me to remain in Pindi for three days while an admittedly non-existent irregularity in my papers was being investigated. He saw no anomaly in applying a principle of guilt by coincidence when no crime had been committed—neither he nor anyone else, ever told me what was wrong in my being at Taxila on that day. And despite the admission that the affair was harmless, he "suggested" that I should not be in East Pakistan when Liu visited that part of the country or when General Ne Win came on a visit from Burma. I told him I had no intention of doing so. He also said that the deputy director of intelligence would like to ask me a few questions. At this point I said that I'd wanted to see him to explain that I could not stay on in Pakistan unless I received his absolute assurance, word of honor, that surveillance would stop and that no word would be sent to Peshawar or Dacca about me. I explained that I used mainly interviews in my work and that I could not visit a Pakistani if there was any danger that my visit would be noted and the person's name put in a file, with the chance of possible questioning or harassment of the person because I had called on him. I emphasised this point strongly. He seemed to understand this, and I think gave me his assurance that when I left Rawalpindi the issue was closed. We then talked about the Indo-Pak war, Kashmir and a variety of other subjects and drank tea. He sent a messenger to get my papers so he could hand them back to me.

Quite a while later a good-looking man, age between 45 and 50 with carefully combed gray hair, came in. He was Habibullah Malik, Deputy Director of Intelligence for, I presume, the central government. Malik asked a number of questions, but he was primarily interested in why I had come to Pakistan at that particular time. I

replied that it was coincidence, that I'd had a visa for Pakistan last autumn but the war had prevented my coming. And I added that my arrival in Pindi at the time was an unfortunate coincidence because state visits or upset conditions, like the food riots in Kerala, interfered with my work because officials would be too pressed by other duties to see me. Then he threw a curve ball, perhaps the only such question of the entire affair. Taking my passport and opening it to my current Pakistan visa, he asked me why I had come to Pakistan on a tourist visa when I had visited all other countries on residence or study visas. I answered that I couldn't accept the wording of the question, that I had applied to the Pakistan High Commission in Delhi for a visa, stating on the application form that the purpose of the visit was research, and that the kind of visa given was the High Commission's business not mine. (In fact, it was not apparent to me what kind of a visa I had; it bore no title and simply allowed me to enter and remain in Pakistan for one month. And I didn't bother to point out that only for India did I have any special visa; for other countries there were simple entry and exit visas.) The male stenographer called in to record this brief conversation was loathe to write down my answers and usually did so only when Malik repeated them to him. When he went away Malik and I talked politics for a bit. On many matters he seemed to have quite balanced views. I continued my policy of frankness. Again, I got the impression that the discussion provided them with news (they also gave me a lot of material) and with some sort of a check on whether or not I was a genuine 'scholar'.

It seemed time for me to get in a few licks so I told Malik that although I appreciated the need for security during a state visit and the courteous treatment I'd received, the whole affair had been absurd and that it showed an undue suspicion of foreigners that reflected ill on Pakistan. He said that in the intelligence business the tendency was to treat everyone as guilty until proved innocent and that I had been involved in too many coincidences. He listed them: coming to Pakistan from India, arriving in Pindi at the time of the Liu visit, staying at the Shahrazad where Liu and Ayub had twice gone, going to Taxila, riding there in a (to him) unauthorized fashion and with a man who had false press credentials (a reminder that this was the Government's fault and not Unna's or mine made no impression on him), going to Kashmir during the infiltration, intending to come to Pakistan during the war, and being in Kerala during the food agitation. He reminded me of Zero Mostel's famous isolationist speech in which Mostel would shout with vast suspicion, "And what's Hawaii doing out there in the middle of the Pacific?" I asked him what, in view of this damning evidence, I should do and then repeated my little speech about being unwilling to continue working in Pakistan if my activities would result in harassment of Pakistanis. I cannot now precisely recall his answer, but here are some parts of it. He said that there were ways of gaining information other than surveillance, but that no word would be sent to either Peshawar or Dacca. He understood my viewpoint "a little", but if I felt the way I did perhaps I'd best go back to India. A few minutes later the stenographer came in with typed copies of the brief interrogation,

which I read, corrected, and signed. I asked for a copy and they gave me one. Malik then shook hands and left. Farooki returned my registration papers and we had a pleasant, noisy argument about politics. We parted with much slapping of backs, uproarious laughter about 'coincidences', and protestations of mutual affection. His car drove me to the Embassy where I told the Vice-Consul about the morning and thanked him and Uncle Sam for their help. A taxi took me to Flashmans and a late lunch of good cold chicken and potato salad.

I was undecided what to do. Despite the assurances I'd been given I still feared that I might cause trouble to persons I'd meet, and for several of these contact with me might prove very embarrassing. Moreover, I'd been told by those knowledgeable that the East Pakistan Government jailed persons first and asked questions later. And, I confess, the affair had worn me a bit thin. Although I had believed all along that I was in no danger and that there would be no unpleasantness (my own correct position and then the Embassy's backing gave me confidence), I had been uneasy if not apprehensive. This feeling had not entirely disappeared. I thought that the peculiarities of the government's view of the outside world made it prone to capricious acts and I didn't want to be part of one. Finally I decided to drop my trip to East Pakistan and go back to Delhi. Somewhat to my surprise this did not prove difficult and I got my exit permit at Karachi with no trouble. I returned to India on April 1st, feeling relieved and not so foolish as the date allowed.

Yours sincerely,


Granville S. Austin

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