

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

WDF - 1

New York to Lahore:
Doing It the Hard Way

Nedous Hotel
The Mall
Lahore, Pakistan
October 20, 1956

Mr. Walter S. Rogers
Institute of Current World Affairs
522 Fifth Avenue
New York 36, New York

Dear Mr. Rogers:

There is a traffic sign on The Mall that tells travelers:

Gujranwala	Keep Right
Rawalpindi	
Multan	Keep Left
London	6372 Miles.

Adding another 3000 miles for the hop from London to New York puts home well over the horizon. Home was far away enough last week in Karachi, when the news was available only on October 9 that the Brooklyn Dodgers were ahead of the Yankees, two games to none, in the World Series. Now, in Lahore, 815 miles by road inland; home is indeed far away: I have yet to see a sign advertising Coca Cola.

But already Pakistan is beginning to provide some adequate substitutes. The news comes that Pakistan has walloped Australia in the first-ever Test match in cricket between the two countries, and I am getting little by little to like Mitchell's Orange Squash ("Dilute to Taste With Plain or Aerated Water" for a pause that refreshes.)

It was quite a time getting here, however. Flying, I spent 13 days en route from New York to Karachi. I stopped---barely stopped, and soon started---in Boston, Shannon, London, Amsterdam, Paris, Frankfurt, Rome and Beirut. Meeting Phil Talbot (Dr. Phillips Talbot, Executive Director of the American Universities Field Staff) in Karachi, we spent a couple of days getting ready and two and a half days to make the drive up from Karachi to Lahore.

I am sure that somewhere in the world there is a man who visited the United States for one day and happened to see a couple being married on top of a flagpole. He has of course since then delivered many a lecture to his fellow-countrymen on "The Wedding Ceremony in the United States," and he shows his slides to prove everything. For me, dashing through Western Europe and across the Middle East was chiefly a matter of one-day stands: of clearing Customs and Immigration at the airport, riding into town on the bus, checking in at the hotel, washing out a dacron shirt, taking a mad, "I've-only-got-one-day" fling at the town before checking out of the hotel, boarding the airport bus, clearing Currency and Emigration

...and so on. And while I saw only part of one wedding en route (a spick and spangled Pakistani bridegroom being carried to his bride's house in a horse-drawn carriage, to the accompaniment of a ragtime brass band), I did see people eat lunch, board buses, cross streets and go shopping, and there are some first impressions I'd like to get off my chest.

Boston---At the airport in late afternoon there was a lady's voice behind me saying, "Goodbye for now, darling, I'll be with you soon." With that, the airline steward picked up the box containing "Darling," a black French poodle, and carried him or her off to the plane. The lady followed and I followed the lady. Aboard, there turned out to be seven crew members and four customers, plus the poodle. "That's all right," said the stewardess, "we made money this summer."

Shannon---The speed of the plane flying eastward robbed the passengers and the sun of a good night's rest, and though the sky was still dark as we slid between the runway lights of the airport, the sky was turning a pale yellow as we took off again an hour later. Shannon is advertised far and wide as a duty-free port, and in the waiting room were showcases filled with linens and woollens, perfumes and cameras, whisky and just plain souvenirs, and we bargain-hunters scurried about laying up treasures, even at 6 AM: a sort of genteel, thick-carpeted bargain basement.

London---In the suburbs there were elegant brick-and-stucco cottages with flower boxes and clipped lawns...in town, elegantly dressed men with a flower in the buttonhole and clipped accents, and black bowlers, black briefcases, black umbrellas and black shoes that clicked on the sidewalk...ponderous grey public buildings stained dark by time...and over all, the grey, low, usually leaking ceiling of clouds...

Amsterdam---Circling Schiphol airport and looking out over flat, sober green and brown fields that in the hazy distance seem to slope up into the sky...in town, a war between taxicabs and bicycles, fought around canals and over cobblestone streets, and let the pedestrians fall where they may...a Sunday-afternoon train ride in the countryside, and the polo-field smoothness of the meadows...

Paris---What ? Two thousand years old now ? The city seems old and tired and a little pinched for money...on Montmartre, the plastered outer walls of houses and shops dirtied and crumbling: Utrillo was exactly right...blocks of formidable government buildings, wearing a hemline of trees by day and sparkling streetlights by night...in Saint Germain, the Class of '57 sitting silent and sorrowful in sidewalk cafes...young girls who really look at you, even in the daytime...

Frankfort---New airport terminal, new airport bus, new highway to town, new automobiles on the road, new office buildings and new stores...the sidewalk blocked by cement-mixing machines where still

other buildings are going up...housewives thronging the department stores and peeling off bills with no obvious pain...a stiff-faced policeman scolding a gentleman of commanding air for trying to jay-walk, and the gentleman taking it...

Rome---in the fields outside the city, occasional stretches of long-unused aquaduct, still standing solidly on arches of stone, and still looking capable (after a little patchwork) of carrying water to Romans...in the suburbs, new ten-story apartment houses of white concrete, with broad vertical panels of bright purple, blue or green...in the city, the sun warming up the rich creamy brown walls of older houses...stylish men in perfectly tailored silk suits...left-out looking women...

Beirut---the East begins with a bang...Bedouins in from the desert with burnouse and long loose robe...a noisy bazaar of stalls and strolling vendors...camels waggling along pulling carts, their padded feet stepping silently, their approach announced by the bracelets of jingle-bells strapped above their knees...photographs of Nasser posted in restaurants, newsstands, everywhere...the wearying din of automobile horns: no traffic lights, many camels...

Karachi---We flew into Karachi at sundown, after a day-long flight over the barren, burnt-yellow wastes of the Middle East and the hot blue waters of the Arabian Sea. The plane eased in over the drab mud flats, glided bumpily down the runway, and halted near the terminal building. A khaki-clad, turbaned man announced by the stewardess as a doctor walked up and down the aisle of the plane spraying an aerosol bomb. The children broke the silence by giggling; the adults coughed. We all debarked.

With 80 million people, Pakistan is the fifth most populous country in the world. Although only 35 million of them live in West Pakistan and only 1.2 million live in Karachi, you get the feeling that the whole 80 million are, as a matter of fact, in the city. Until the 18th century Karachi was a small fishing village; ten years ago it was a city of 350,000; in 1947, independence and partition made it the capital city. And now, as the center of government for the entire nation, as the home of scores of thousands of displaced and dispossessed refugees from India, and as the only port for a backward but increasingly busy economic hinterland stretching a thousand miles up to the Himalayas, Karachi is crowded, dirty, restless and seemingly at odds with itself.

The streets are crowded: with women in black-veiled or white-hooded burqa hiding their faces from view, with men in their billowing white cotton trousers, thigh-length outer shirts and turbans or "Jinnah caps," with ragamuffin children; with walking or squatting hawkers of fried wheat cakes, betel leaf, chunks of sugar cane, combs, live parrots, socks, coathangers, shoe-repair service, haircuts, almost everything imaginable except refrigerator parts and newspapers; and with bicycles and cars, horse-drawn tongas (carriages), bicycle-taxis, motorcycle-rickshaws, donkey carts, camel carts,

buses and street-cars.

I do not know how all these people make a living, or what they think of, or where they live (for some, home is a filthy one-room shed built of a few boards covered with jute matting or rusty flattened tin cans, with the whole precarious structure leaning against the wall of some compound or in some smoky, dusty, crowded alley). But in those faces is the look of poverty and anxiety, and resignation more pitiable than anxiety. Somehow, these people seemed very important.

The jungle in Pakistan is supposed to be located over in the East wing, but there is a jungle in downtown Karachi, not of clinging green vines, but of sticky red tape; the Customs. This tangled territory runs from West Wharf to East Wharf, which parallel each other like thin fingers across the mile-and-a-half long slip, and it includes the Customs House sitting between both wharves, on the land side, to be sure. It was in this territory that Phil Talbot spent part or all of six days in an eventually successful effort to reclaim the family automobile and baggage trunks.

Take the automobile: He went down to the wharf area on Wednesday, the day the ship was due, only to learn that the ship was a day late. He tried again on Thursday, only to be told that the ship would dock late in the day, too late for Customs action. He learned on Friday that the ship was discharging cargo, but the manifest had not yet been sent over to the Customs House. On Saturday he took a cab to dockside and found his 1951 Ford on East Wharf, Berth 15. All right.

Only there are no facilities for clearing Customs on East Wharf; that had to be done on West Wharf. Over on West Wharf, Mr. Talbot found that the Customs men there had no manifest, and since he saw that this business could settle into a lifetime career, he made a trip to American Express, where a Mr. Butt, a thin, nervous man with silver-rimmed eyeglasses, was provided as a guide. The missing manifest at last turned up at the Customs House, and once it was delivered to West Wharf, Mr. Talbot's automobile was duly registered in the proper account book---but this was accomplished only after one clerk presented the declaration form in triplicate, Messrs. Talbot and Butt had filled it out, another clerk checked it, an officer signed it, and the officer in charge had initialed the whole process.

Back again at the Customs House, an officer in the appraisal division inspected the declaration and wrote his approval for an inspection and appraisal of the car. Back to West Wharf went Messrs. T & B to pick up an appraiser, and over to East Wharf to have a look at the car. After returning the West Wharf to deposit the appraiser, they returned to the Customs House to submit the report to the chief of appraisals. (He calculated the value of the car at Rs. 7300, or approximately \$1600, six times its sale value in New York.) Once this step was initialed by the officer in charge, the next step was to visit the assistant collector in

charge of appraisals, who read the entire file and approved it with his initial. This fact was initialed by his immediate superior, the chief collector in charge of appraisals. The papers were waved on to the chief of appraisals again for further action, but he returned them to the assistant collector in charge of appraisals to affix the necessary file number, which had somehow been left off. With this done, the chief of appraisals signed the Customs release, and once an application was filled out to pay the Rs. 35 per day wharfage charge, and once a clerk inspected the application and made a record of it in a book, and once Mr. Talbot paid the Rs. 35 and the Customs release was stamped and a registrar registered payment in another book and stamped the form with his own stamp, progress had been made, and the day was over. This is all sworn testimony of Phil Talbot, and I think you would have sworn too.

The following day I joined the team, and, to put it briefly, we spent five hours on East and West Wharves, chasing down senior smuggling preventive officers, traffic inspectors, berth supervisors, or their assistants. Like a yo-yo on a string, we passed the Talbot car fully ten times, in search of some new signature, initial or stamp.

With the end in sight, we were informed that although the car had been drained of gas and oil for the ocean voyage, we were not permitted to bring gas or oil onto the wharf area. Just outside the wharf gate Mr. Butt hired a towing service: a 1937 model, one-hump, low-speed camel. With the camel hitched to a cart, and the car tied to the cart, and the camel driver driving the camel and me steering the car, we all made the 1.1 miles to the wharf gate in a half-hour. A 20-minute conference at the control booth and we were free, with a gas station just up the street. The sheaf of papers finally surrendered bore a total of 26 signatures and initials and nearly as many stamps and was about as bulky as Life magazine, and not nearly as neat.

How Mr. Talbot gained possession of the family trunks is another story, involving the slipping of hurry-up money three times and the hiring of a donkey cart once.

But tales of being tied up in the Customs at Karachi can be heard from Pakistani businessmen and travelers too. We heard a lot of talk, in Karachi and elsewhere, of red tape, inefficiency and petty corruption in government bureaus.

A partial answer, at least for Karachi Customs, would have to include these factors: the unwillingness and perhaps the inability, given educational levels of subordinates, to delegate authority very far; the sense of job-security on the part of literate, bilingual clerks; devotion, not to mention adherence, to highly compartmentalized division of labor; the scarcity of time-saving equipment (typewriters and carbon paper, and the telephone), and the general non-idealization of efficiency.

Karachi to Lahore---In anticipation as well as retrospect, it would have been much easier to get from Karachi to Lahore via the three-hour Pakistan International Airlines flight, but doing it by car would let us have a look at a long stretch of the Indus Valley that is the heart of West Pakistan, as well as some of the desert country east of the river. With no assurance of healthful water or food or sleeping accommodations for the two nights we would be on the road, plus the positive assurance of poor, one-lane roads, no road maps, few road markers ("It is advisable for tourists proceeding up-country...to rail their cars," says one guide-book) and maximum temperatures around 100 degrees, there was a bit of adventure involved.

We started in the darkness of 4 AM and drove through the suburbs east of Karachi. Toward us came occasional bullock carts and camel trains bringing food and firewood, chiefly, into the city's markets. Shortly, the rising sun revealed the flat, sandy, desolate wastes of the Lower Sind Desert. Pakistan had suddenly run out of people, except for occasional road-repairmen, goat-tenders and shepherds, whose flocks rummaged for bits of grass and scrubby bush. These were the western fringes of the Great Indian Desert where the annual rainfall averages 3 to 20 inches. As the day wore on, the sun glistened over miles on end of sandy hillocks. We made dozens of "diversions" (detours) forced for repairs to the "metal" pavement (tar or brick), and we passed through no more than a dozen towns. By sundown we had been on the road for 14 hours and had covered 280 miles. We were in Khairpur. We found rooms at a government rest-house, had supper on the verandah, and called it a day.

The following morning we set off again, stopped at 20 miles, however, to see the Lloyd Barrage on the Indus at Sukkar. Like the threshold of a doorway, the barrage sits over the river and shunts the broad flow of water into seven major canals on either side. These canals in turn lead the water off into a series of smaller canals with a total length of 6500 miles, and all together irrigating an area of 5.25 million acres. The barrage, a mile-and-a-quarter long and completed in 1931, is the largest irrigation work of its kind in the world.

In Indus complex it is the most intensively irrigated area in the world, and as we drove on we passed increasingly frequent irrigation works: canals, bunds (embankments), channels, sluices, weirs, ditches. Occasionally there was a Persian wheel, by which blindfolded bullocks tread a tiny circle, cranking a wheel that dips earthen pots into a channel of water, then dumps them into a trough on a higher level, which in turn pours the water onto the field.

In the fields grew cotton, now in white bursts of ripeness, and slick green sugar cane and corn and some rice. Along the roads, providing transport for these products and a host of other goods, were bullock carts, camels and squads of donkeys. When you add the flocks of sheep and goats and water buffalo and horse-back riders and now and then a truck or a bus spurting out a stream

of black smoke, and when you take into consideration the honking of horns and shouting of herdsman and bullock drivers trying to get their property out of the way, and bear in mind the powdery dust of the roadside continually rising and falling---it's quite a hullabaloo.

As the traffic increased, the towns became more frequent: flat-lying villages of mud walls and brick houses and dirt streets, wandering cattle and staring townsfolk. All together, there was a brown dullness, except for a whitewashed Muslim mosque on the skyline, or a tree.

By midday we stopped in the midst of a palm grove and dined: we had bought a can of peaches in Karachi (for \$1.25) and now we opened them and pitched in with stubby plastic spoons. Peaches Bahawalpur: heat can in moderately hot automobile (100 degrees) and serve.

By midafternoon we crossed into the Punjab ("Land of Five Streams") and sped at 40 miles an hour under an arch of kikar trees. I had to put up with a lot of bragging by Phil Talbot on behalf of the Punjab, his old stomping grounds. "See how much more prosperous things are...Look, the people even walk faster..." Well, it seemed to be true: it was cleaner and crisper. Certainly the Punjab, as the bread-basket of pre-Partition India, was a source of pride and joy to British and Indians alike, not to mention a prize for migrants and conquerors for centuries.

After a night spent in another rest-house in Khanewal, we began the last leg of our trip. Riding with us was a Mr. Nisar Ahmed, a personable man of 50, a tax official for the West Pakistan government. He mentioned incidentally that up the road we would pass only four miles from the ruins of Harappa, and would we like to stop? I have learned that that ancient city, along with Mohenjo-daro 400 miles south on the Lower Indus, dominated the Indus Civilization in the third and second millennia B.C. It was a civilization rivalled in known antiquity only by that of the Nile.

We paid the two annas apiece (3 cents) admission fee in the museum building and walked out to the vast sandy hill, 60 feet high and two miles in circumference, where stand the ruins of the city, the home, once, of perhaps 15- or 20,000 people. What appeared in the distance to be a yard stacked with red sun-burnt brick turned out to be at closer range the remains of close-set houses, two and three stories high, with tiled roofs, finely set brick floors and baths. The streets were straight as a die; brick-covered drains carried refuse off into pits.

Nearby was the "Great Granary" area, 150 feet square, where parallel lines of narrow, 50-foot long brick storehouses faced each other across a broad street. Adjoining this section of town were the mud-brick barracks of workers; a dozen work platforms 10 feet in diameter and made of brick; and a furnace for baking brick and pottery. On the outskirts of town was a cemetery area, now cleared of graves by archaeologists.

Back in the museum were implements and art that gave more detailed information about the life of the Harappans, who flourished for half a millenium before being overrun by the Vedic Aryans some time around 1500 B.C. There were household jars decorated with painted birds, bulls, fish, arrows, stars and geometric designs; household weights, knives, cores of bone and ivory; copper axes and knives; finely carved seals bearing pictures of bulls, rhinoceros, crocodile, and stylized characters which scholars have been unable to decipher; beads and bracelets of clay and limestone and marble; human statuettes of grey stone, and terracotta human figures; terracotta playthings: miniature animals, chickens, carts and marbles.

Weapons and tools for the men, kitchen utensils and jewelry for the women, toys for the children: things haven't changed so much in the past 5000 years. (In fact, "the village carts of Sind are identical, even to the wheel span, with those that rolled along the broad streets of Harappa..." according to V. Gordon Childe of London University (in Crescent and Green, London: Cassell & Co., 1955, page 11).) Our hour's visit to Harappa gave us little more than a minute for every century that was represented there.

Lahore---We were glad to see Lahore, not only because it was the end of the journey, but because it is a good city to see. The ancient capital of Punjab, now capital of the province of West Pakistan, Lahore is also "the cultural capital of Pakistan," you are frequently told. With a million inhabitants, it's crowded too, to my mind, but there's a more placid and complacent atmosphere here, by far, than in Karachi.

"Lahore should have been the capital of Pakistan," the story goes, but at the troubled time of Partition, Lahore immediately became militarily vulnerable: the Indian border is a scant 15 miles to the east. Now, driving through the city, we passed the green-tiled Chauburji garden gate, the brand-new government housing quarters, the pink brick cupolas of Punjab University. We drove down the bustling Mall to the end of our line: the shady verandahs of Faletti's Hotel.

Mind you, I liked Faletti's, but a few days after arriving I noticed an "Extract of the conditions as constituting the agreement under what rooms are allotted," posted on the wall of my room, and I came to "No. 3---Visitors Belongings." It read:

The Management does not hold itself responsible for the loss of or Damage to Residents', Visitors' and Guests' Goods or any Property, due to any Cause whatsoever including Loss or Damage due to Acts of God, Enemies, War, Insurrection, Civil Commotion, Fire, Earthquake, theft, etc.

If the management could not provide greater peace of mind than that, Faletti's was plainly no place to stay. Here among the white-washed colonnades of Nedous government officers' billet they keep silence about evil times---it's cheaper too---and I have moved in.