

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

WDF - 5
The Visitor From China

Nedou's Hotel
The Mall
Lahore, Pakistan
December 30, 1956

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

Dear Mr. Rogers,

Chou En-lai has just paid us a 10-day visit here in Pakistan, but nobody hollered himself hoarse cheering. He was pleasant, he smiled, he said "thank you" and "please," he said nice things, but he didn't make any converts.

The Chinese Premier's visit came near the end of a six-week "good will" tour of South Asia, and it followed promptly the 12-day visit of Pakistan Prime Minister Suhrawardy to China last October. Ostensibly, Chou, accompanied by Vice-Premier Ho Lung and a party of 28 aides, came to Pakistan to seek "friendship, knowledge and peace."

There have been 10 days of hoop-la, of marching to-and-fro: Karachi, Hyderabad, Karachi, Peshawar, Lahore, Dacca. There have been visits to historical sites and scenic sights, irrigation and power projects, universities and military installations. There have been luncheons and dinners, ceremonial arches, banners and parades. Chou has been given Pakistani cloth, jugs, daggers, biscuits, razor blades, an honorary degree and an empty egg shell embroidered in gold thread to read "Welcome Prime Minister Chou En-lai."

Chou, his neck usually ringed by a garland of marigolds and tinsel, made halcyon speeches, signed the visitors' books, patted children on the cheek, waved at crowds.

All in all, Chou must have made a nice impression. There has been real excitement and curiosity about having the Prime Minister of China in the country. Not many distinguished foreign visitors come to Pakistan. Usually the Big Boys head right to India, passing Pakistan by. The crowds even included those creatures so seldom seen at public gatherings, women, peering out from behind their veils.

In a limited way, Chou certainly fulfilled his mission. If he came to see Pakistan, he had a fairly good look. If he came to meet Pakistanis, he met influential Pakistanis and he had their attention. If he came to foster trade, the trade delegation which accompanied him reportedly "conducted negotiations at an advanced stage." If he came to extend Chinese cultural influence, well, pretty remote, but the Pakistanis probably wouldn't object to seeing more Chinese or more of China. In short, if he came seeking good will, I think he won a little of it.

On the other hand, here are morning-after comments by Pakistanis on three aspects of Chou's overtures:

Politics: "Look here," a young government official told me privately, "We're with the West and they're with the Russians. They're

communists and we're trying to become democratic. Now what do we have in common? Of course they're fellow-Asians, but so is half the world!"

Trade: Said an engineer, "We now are trading with China. We will trade with any nation---we even trade with the Indians---but only if can make money doing it."

Cultural exchange: A bookshop-keeper cracked, "So what are we supposed to do now? Send dancing-girls to Peking?"

To comment on these comments, Pakistanis in general regard China first as an Asian country, secondly as a communistic one. As fellow-Asians the Chinese are sort of cousins, but second-cousins far-removed, for in West Pakistan, at least, people seem to be more oriented toward the Middle East or the West, rather than the Far East. All the same, there is some sympathy for China as a fellow-agrarian country busy working toward industrialization, as is Pakistan.

Politically, Pakistan recognized the Communist regime shortly after it came to power, but so far has sided with the United States in keeping Communist China out of the United Nations. Economically, China is Pakistan's fifth biggest overseas customer (raw cotton and jute, chiefly, and following Great Britain, India, Japan and the U.S.), and Pakistan ranks sixth in China's foreign trade (following Hong Kong, Japan, Germany, Great Britain and Ceylon, with the Iron Curtain countries as unknown factors). Ideologically, Pakistanis say that the Muslim religion stands as a mass bulwark against overt communist influence (although there is some question about communism's less perceptible allures), and there seems to be credence of the Chinese reports that China's 10 million Muslims never had it so good.

But when the Prime Minister of Pakistan sat down with the Premier of China to hold their "serious talks," on the crucial political questions that concern them most there is little that they had in common:

What Pakistan wants more than anything else in international affairs is support for her case against India in Kashmir. This China cannot give without cutting loose her best friend and supporter in Asia, India.

What China wants most is support for her bid for entry into the UN, a bid blocked by the U.S. This Pakistan cannot give without alienating her No. 1 benefactor in the world, the U.S.

Moreover, the two prime ministers had taken fundamentally opposite stands on the Egyptian and Hungarian questions.

So the Chou-Suhrawardy statement was a paragon of good, solid, rock-bottom, four-square evasion: "...The talks have been held in an atmosphere of cordiality and frankness...The (international) situation...requires constant vigilance and constructive action on the part of all peace-loving countries. It is absolutely essential that a climate of peace should be created. The Prime Ministers would like to reiterate their desire that every effort should be made to reduce international tension and to promote the cause of world peace and understanding."

Oh, there was a suggestion of less than full accord: "...The two Prime Ministers are of the view that the difference between the political systems of Pakistan and China and the divergence of views on many problems should not prevent the strengthening of friendship between their two countries. ...They are happy to place on record that there is no real conflict of interests between the two countries. They are confident that the present visit has further consolidated the bonds of friendship existing between China and Pakistan."

Having agreed that Pakistan and India had "no real conflict of interests," Chou cast about for an identity of interests (not counting "world peace and understanding"), and he found instances everywhere:

In Dacca, Chou was "grateful for the enthusiastic reception accorded me...It is indicative of the profound feelings of friendship existing between the two peoples."

In Karachi, Chou visited the Pakistan Navy establishment, there pointed out that "both Pakistan and China have long coastlines...It is the responsibility of our young navies to defend the coastlines and our peaceful co-existence. It is a heavy responsibility and in this respect both our countries are faced with the same problems."

Near Hyderabad, Chou visited the Ghulam Mohammed Barrage across the Indus and signed the visitors' book as follows: "Water conservancy is a common problem of our two countries. We are glad to visit (here). From this visit we can learn things which are beneficial to us."

In Peshawar, Chou let it be known that Chinese hearts beat in tune with Pakistani hearts: "Sympathy between the peoples who have suffered from colonialism is extremely natural. The Chinese people have great respect and esteem for the long struggle waged by the Pakistan people against colonialism...The people of this region had sacrificed a lot and suffered at the hands of colonialists and imperialists for over a century like the people of China."

Under the "don't-ruffle-the-hosts'-feathers" principle, Chou made no public statement soliciting support for his government's efforts to join the UN. On the other hand, the Chinese party was bombarded rather steadily by the hosts on the Kashmir question. The press, political groups (like the Azad Kashmir Muslim Conference and the Kashmir Liberation Front) and sign-bearing citizens posed the question.

At a press conference in Karachi, the first questioner asked the Chinese Premier "to comment on the right of self-determination of the Kashmir people."

Chou thought a moment, spoke slowly to his Chinese interpreter, who in turn said in English: "Through the talks I had with your Prime Minister, first in Peking, and then in Karachi, and also through my talks with Mr. Nehru, I came into contact with this question of Kashmir. I would like to make a full study of this question, and put forward my views after I have made myself clear on all the important details of the question. Before that, I hope that Pakistan and India will settle this question directly between themselves, because the people of India and Pakistan have lived together for such a long time throughout history."

Later, in Lahore, at a reception by a journalists' union for the six or seven publicists in the Chinese party, a half-dozen Pakistani reporters semi-circled around Mme. Kung Peng, press director of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, and tried to scratch a little deeper. One of them explained that "the Kashmir issue is now nine years old, and your government has been in control for seven years itself. Now, exactly what is the Chinese position?"

Mme. Kung looked startled. She looked at her audience one by one and began slowly. "Well, as our Prime Minister has said, we have come to Pakistan on a fact-finding tour. We have come to learn. We cannot of course decide on the matter until we have made a complete study..." Two of the reporters edged back to the tea table.

Lahore, I think, welcomed the Chinese' visit as a third holiday to go along with the double celebration on Dec. 25 of Mohammed Ali Jinnah's birthday and, to a lesser degree, Christmas. Colored lights were strung along the roof of the Provincial Assembly building, stores, offices and hotels. Along the Mall and other main streets great ceremonial arches of bamboo and bunting carried signs in vernacular and Chinese script shouting "Long Live Chinese-Pakistan Friendship!" "Long Live Chinese Premier Chou En-lai!" "Long Live Mao Tse-tung!" Some of the signs in Chinese were upside-down.

On the morning Chou was to arrive I rode out to the airport to see the festivities. Schoolboys, given a holiday, had been marched into their assigned positions along the streets, and their teachers were leading them in rehearsal: "Cheeni-Pakistan! Hurrah! Hurrah!" "Long Live Chow En-lay!"

At the airport the West Pakistan Governor was dressed in a long coat of creamy white wool, white lamb's-wool cap and white-and-brown oxfords, and he carried a cane in the crook of his arm. The ministers and secretaries of the provincial Cabinet were there, as were the foreign consuls---minus the American---and they all had a crease in their trousers. The guard of honor from Lahore Garrison was immaculate. The reporters even wore suits.

As Chou stepped down from the plane, a fanfare of trumpets blared. He stood on the runway in his dark blue uniform, prim, amiable, almost sedate. He had apparently cut himself on the right cheek while shaving.

Guided by the Governor, Chou walked with stiff legs to the dais and saluted while the band wavered through the Chinese national anthem, then, on more familiar ground, trudged through the mournful Pakistani hymn. Then, squired by the Foreign Minister, Malik Firoz Khan Noon, Chou began shaking hands with nearly everybody in sight, Cabinet, consuls, leading citizens, the press. With his lips parted in a slight smile, he made his way down the line, fixing his dark sober gaze on each one in turn, squeezing and pumping the hand once, nodding once, returning the shaking-hand to a half-cocked position near his hip before moving on to the next person.

When there was nobody left to shake hands with, Chou was ushered to a black Chrysler, where a couple dozen school children waited in line to wreath the visitor with garlands of marigolds. A protocol officer waved the children forward, one by one. Chou smiled and smiled and smiled. Nobody said anything. Three or four schoolboys released doves. The doves got out of there fast.

It was a seven-mile ride through crowd-lined, shady streets to the Governor's House, vestige of the British heyday in the Punjab, where Chou was to stay. There was applause and cheers. The Pakistan Times put it, the next day:

The citizens of Lahore who came out in thousands and lined along the roads by which the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China was to pass on his way to the historical places visited by him on Wednesday, wildly cheered Mr. Chou En-lai as he waived to the clapping crowds who had waited his arrival for many hours.

Among the historical places Chou visited were the Fort, the Royal Mosque and Shalimar Gardens, all monuments to Moghul splendor. I had been to Shalimar Gardens earlier. That day the former glory of the place was apparent---a walled park of 80 acres with marble pavilions set in greenery, with long canals and a vast rectangular pool---but then the canals and pool were dry and the place looked rather forlorn. Moreover.

a dumpy, congested suburb has grown up around the Gardens.

But today, the park was fixed up in festive style. The messy eye-sores on the route out from the city---junk yards, mud holes, squalid huts and buffalo yards---were shielded from view by stretches of canvas tenting. At the Gardens, potted plants surrounded the gateway. Inside, the canals brimmed with water, fountains sent up their bushy spray, and a red carpet (of cotton) ran alongside the main canal leading to the pool. On the terrace around the pool, two thousands of Lahore's choicest citizens sat at tables placed at night-club closeness, ate pastries, drank tea, inspected each other's finery, and listened to a succession of speakers located on a marble "island" connected to the "shore" of the pool by a narrow runway.

Competing against the squawking of a squadron of ducks sailing in V-formation in the pool, the high-pitched, sing-song voice of Chou En-lai came over the loud-speaker. His interpreter followed each paragraph with a translation in a British accent:

"...In this beautiful city of Lahore we have already visited some of the magnificent ancient constructions and shall be visiting on Thursday some of the industrial areas...China and Pakistan, like many other countries of the Asian-African region, have economic and cultural ties...There are bright prospects of friendship and cooperation between the two countries...and wide scope for trade and cultural relations..."

Several of us were standing on the terrace bank listening and watching, when a young Chinese protocol officer sitting in front of us moved his chair backwards to let someone pass in front. He was in danger of tipping his chair into a tiny drainage gutter, so I said in Chinese, "Be careful, be careful."

He wheeled around in his seat. "You speak Chinese?"

"A few sentences."

"You have come to China?"

"No. But I studied Chinese at a university in America."

"You are a newspaper reporter?"

"Half-newspaper reporter, half-student."

He passed this information down the row of chairs to his friends.

"I hope to go to China," I continued.

"Good, good. Please come." Then he switched to English: "But your State Department---" He smiled and swung back around in his chair.

I adjourned to a table where several reporters were sitting morosely, as Chou's voice came over the loud-speaker. "Oh, yes! Our long cultural heritage!" mimicked one of the boys from Karachi. "Not to mention 'Asian unity'!...Oh, how can we forget our 'common tasks'?...You know, what we should have done was stay in Karachi and change the date-line every day."

The man from Reuter's, an Australian, was griping. "You can't talk to these blasted blokes (the Chinese). I sat next to that morning-paper editor on the plane up to Peshawar. We got along like old school-chums until I asked him how the Chinese felt about Hungary. He gave me this rot about 'Western subversion.' He finally told me I talked like a bloody imperialist' and cut me off just like that!"

That evening, Chou and his entourage attended a banquet in the Governor's House, then went to a cultural show (a film, dances and songs) that lasted until quarter-to-one in the morning.

The next day the party was up early for another day of sight-seeing. First was the Batala Engineering Works, a machine-tool plant which the newspapers refer to as "Pakistan's Premier Iron and Steel Factory" (Pakistan as

yet has no steel mill). The signs were up: "Long Live Chou En-lai!" "Islamic Socialism is Panacea of All Our Economic Ills" and "Holy Koran Says 'Worker is a Friend of God!'" Chou rode in the control house of a giant crane, asked questions about the operation of lathes, inquired about workers' pay and food, and signed the visitors' book ("...We have visited a very good engineering workshops...Long live the friendship between the people of China and Pakistan."). As he left the plant, Chou was cheered by workers, but the crowd outside the gate watched quietly as the line of cars drove away.

Next came a visit to the sandstone and marble tomb of the Moghul Emperor Jahangir. There was no visitors' book, but Chou told those within earshot "Very good. Beautiful. Very good. Beautiful." He tipped the guides on duty Rs. 100, or about Rs. 99 more than they usually get. You began to wonder whether there was any more to Chou's visit than met the eye.

After lunch at the Foreign Minister's home, there was a visit to Aitchison College. Aitchison, with brick towers and grassy playing fields, is a rich man's college. Founded about 75 years ago, it was first known as Chiefs' College, after the top-notch landlords and tribal chiefs in the Punjab who patronized it. The chiefs would send their sons off to the college, where, with one, two or three wives, and 10, 11 or 12 servants, and the required number of cows, they would occupy a wing in a residential bungalow and learn how to become British-style gentlemen. Although the college was thrown open to lesser mortals and re-named nearly 30 years ago, and despite the fact that the sons of newly rich businessmen have sneaked in since Partition, the school is still rather genteel and it prides itself in being rather British.

As Chou's limousine glided up the driveway of the campus, the Principal, dressed in double-breasted Oxford suit, began clearing his throat for the welcoming message. Chou shook hands with him, the faculty, and a row of students dressed uniformly in blue blazers, old-school tie, grey trousers and---and adjustment for their homeland---blue turbans.

The party ambled across the lawn. On the cricket field, the chaps in white flannels (and a few cottons) were leisurely at play. On the grass courts, the chaps in white shorts were playing doubles. On the broad greensward, young horsemen were tent-pegging at full gallop. Under a tree, two students were doing watercolors of a campus scene.

Although the college was in the middle of the year-end vacation, the boys, a professor whispered to me, "had been brought back from as far away as Multan (about 200 miles). Some of them flew in."

The Foreign Minister, who was an "old boy" of the college, seemed particularly delighted to show Chou around. It occurred to me that he is a landlord of the kind they were shooting in China several years ago.

That evening Chou was given a dinner at the Lahore Gymkhana Club by a really choice group of local citizens---the two thousand had been culled down to two hundred. According to newspaper reports, Chou confessed at the banquet why he had come to Pakistan, and he added an appraisal of the results:

"We came here to seek your friendship; we have won it.

"We came here in search of knowledge; in this regard we are following in the footsteps of our forefathers who came here 1000 years ago in search of knowledge.

"We came here to seek peace; we are convinced now that the two peoples, with cooperation in their efforts, will maintain world peace."

The next day Chou left by plane for Dacca, where he would spend the final two days of his visit to Pakistan.

The newspapers have reported the remarks Chou made at a reception given him there:

"Chou said that Pakistan and China had a long historical tradition of friendship which had been stimulated since the dawn of independence of the two countries...

"The Chinese Premier observed that Pakistan and China, both freed only recently from colonial bondage, were face to face with common problems...

"There were many things which Pakistan and China could learn from each other. He hoped that his present trip---"

---that's where we all came in.

Received New York 1/21/57.