

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

WWU - 14
INDIA: MEMORIES UPDATED

Claridge's Hotel.
Aurangzeb Road, New Delhi.
March 31, 1959.

Mr. Walter S. Rogers.
Institute of Current World Affairs.
366 Madison Ave., New York 17, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Rogers:

I hadn't mentioned it before, but I have been looking forward to these two months in India for quite some time. I was a soldier in New Delhi and in various Bengal towns outside Calcutta in 1945-1946 and long have been anxious to meet India after her Independence. Now I have.



CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY: "Unfortunate" student demonstrators and Vice-Chancellor

My first stop in India, in the beginning of February, was Calcutta. I made quick tracks for Calcutta University because that was the place during the War where not a single student indicated he understood English as this soldier boy went wandering through the campus. I thought they were being nationalistically proud. Maybe they were, but that would mean they still are -- for I had the same trouble getting answers. But at least this time there were smiles when they didn't understand.

I arrived on the campus (the main one, actually Calcutta University has no less than 145) just as a student demonstration was forming. Later it was to march and yell its way through the entire downtown area. Prof. N.K. Siddhanta, the bow-tied, fast-talking, fast-moving Vice Chancellor, told me that the demonstration was actually abortive. It was a protest over a few of the university colleges raising their tuition fees by 15 per cent, "without any deference to me." Siddhanta said he was out of town when it happened, but returned from Delhi that morning ("running off to Delhi nowadays is like running off to Howrah (Calcutta's main railway station across the river)") and already had been to see Bengal's Chief Minister, Dr. B.C. Roy, a former Vice Chancellor himself. Apparently Siddhanta secured Dr. Roy's promise that if there was to be any tuition increase, the state would make up the difference, not the students. Explained Siddhanta: "In 1954, we found 33 to 40 per cent of the students really had no home. Now it is about 25 per cent. How can I speak of them as 'undisciplined'?"

I can speak of them as unfortunate. And so far as I have found, my students are far better disciplined than the adults. But they are sentimental and can be led astray by these adults very quickly. All student organizations have direct access to me as I want to understand fully what they are suffering from." The Vice Chancellor said that his university's enrollment increased from 87,000 in 1956 to 125,000 today. Of this city-sized studentbody, 20,000 are women and 85,000 study in Calcutta itself.

He went on: "Originally, we set 1965 as the date when all children of school age would be given compulsory education. We've had to revise that because 75 per cent of our population are in the villages and at the age of 11 a father finds his child is far more useful helping him in the field than in 'wasting' his time in school. Right now, only 20 per cent of our population of 370 to 380 million are literate, and only 10 per cent of our adults are literate. But if we are going to give them a vote and call them the rulers; they have to have an education."

Physically, I didn't find much change in Calcutta during my 13-year absence. Of course the Royal emblem on the gate leading to Government House has been replaced with Asoka's four lions, the national emblem of India. But it is still "Government House," an enormous white palace which once housed the Viceroy when Calcutta was the capital, then the Royal Governor and now, in Free India, it houses a Governor still. She is Miss Padma Naidu, a lady Governor if you please. And for that square footage of downtown real estate, her job is solely ceremonial, a useless vestige which the Indians, mimicking their departed conquerors, decided to retain.

I wanted to stay at Calcutta's Grand Hotel because it had always been off-limits to me as a GI. I'm not sure whether I was discriminated against for being an enlisted man or for being an American. It is possible the Grand was British officers' country only. Anyway, I should have known when I was well off. The Grand is built around an enormous courtyard and promptly at 11 o'clock on every night except Wednesday a would-be jazz orchestra, amplified many decibels by loudspeakers, puts sleep out of the question until it folds up its stand at 2:30 a.m. Ordinarily, you would either reach for a fire hose or summon the police. But since this show was sponsored by management, I decided any protest was futile.

I found Her Majesty still looking majestic with orb and sceptre in hand as she sat enthroned in front of Calcutta's Victoria Memorial. But the two huge swimming pools which the British and Americans had built on the Maidan lawns in back of the Memorial are now ploughed under. Perhaps it is just as well. Built toward the end of World War II, both were fenced in, to keep out blowing trash. On the British gate the sign read: "Open to all troops all days." On the American gate the sign read: "Open to American troops only. Negroes on Tuesdays, Thursdays and alternate Saturdays." In one blow, we had managed to antagonize our Indian hosts, our British comrades and our own personnel. But racial discrimination in swimming pools is still around.



HER MAJESTY: Unmoved by Independence

Eight Calcutta clubs are still closed to Indians (or "non-Europeans," as they call them). The Communist newspaper "Blitz" is also pointing out that Bombay exercises similar discrimination in its Breach Candy Swimming Club where the British claim helplessness because of an "irrevocable trust." And Mihir Sen, Indian's champion Channel swimmer, is being used as a test case to knock for admittance everywhere under the tack that it's ok if the members want to limit the coterie to "All English" or "All German" -- but nothing doing on "All White."

Calcutta still has its share of beggars, and now it has more than its share of Hindu refugees from the Muslim land of Pakistan's East Bengal. Partition has created a staggering burden on the Bengal (and Indian Union) economy. Bengal always has been overcrowded. But Partition gave the best rice and jute land to Pakistan and the hungry stomachs and unemployed to India. Calcutta itself now has seven million people, making it the largest city in South Asia. India's State of West Bengal as a whole has been inundated with some 3½ million refugees. And while the exodus from Karachi and West Pakistan into India's Punjab has now stopped, it is still going on in Bengal. I guess these figures explain why the Indian Embassy in Washington advised me before I began my trip: "Don't go to Bengal. Every problem that exists anywhere in India exists a thousand-fold in Calcutta."

Well, I also was a soldier in New Delhi so I decided to do a little reminiscing here too. I found my old barracks on Queensway off Connaught Circus. Except Queensway is now called Janpath, the building has now been taken over by the Government of India Cooperative Union and my old dining hall is now a cottage industry "emporium." The handicraft products are well displayed too. They look much better than the Army chow we used to be served there. Besides Janpath, there have been other road name changes. Just during my stay here in New Delhi, the city Chief Commissioner announced King Edward soon would become Maulana Azad and Queen Victoria, Dr. Rajendra Prasad. But the Government of India is going slower on statues. During the Lok Sabha Question Hour the other day, B.N. Datar, the Minister of State in the Ministry of Home Affairs, let it be known that the Government was prepared to remove all those statues of foreigners "which offended the national sentiment or respect." But first, the Government would offer to dispose of these stone thorns as gifts. And then, if any showed "artistic skill," they would be incarcerated in the National Museum now under construction. As for architecture in general, Prime Minister Nehru has lifted this from the nationalistic to the aesthetic. Addressing an architectural meeting here in Delhi 10 days ago, Pandiji rebuked Prof. Humayun Kabir, his Minister for Scientific Research and Cultural Affairs (WWU-11), for trying to insist on a "synthesis" of Buddhist, Pathan and Moghul influences. Instead of being afraid of imitating "Western trends," as his Minister had warned, Mr. Nehru said it is high time for India to innovate with air, light and temperature along functional lines. The Times of India issued an editorial amen by describing Minister Kabir's recipe as "an exercise in pastiche."

I've noticed a few other curiosities in the press. The Lok Sabha questioned Mr. Nehru on how come one Maj. Gen. Henderson-Brookes came to be commanding Army troops in West Bengal. The Prime Minister replied that old H-B "has all along been treated as an Indian national and, like all other Indian service officers, he took the oath of allegiance to the Constitution of India soon after it was framed in 1950." Answer the question, Mr. Prime Minister, was old H-B born in Blighty, or wasn't he?

But Mr. Nehru has other troubles. In Bombay they are complaining over the way all traffic was stopped when he came to visit there earlier

this month. A letter-to-the-editor of The Times of India notes that local trains were halted for a full hour to keep the crossings free for Mr. Nehru's limousine. The letter writer notes that the homage was against Mr. Nehru's explicit instructions and laments: "Such a feudal practice did not obtain even in the days of British Viceroys and Governors, who needed far greater protection from the people than do our popular Ministers."

Also on this pomp-and-circumstance theme, I noticed that such commercial institutions as the Rangoon Photo Studios still carry a framed "By Appointment" on their wall. Only now it is not "By Appointment to His Gracious Majesty George VI," or "His Excellency, the Viceroy." But "to His Excellency, the Præsident, Dr. Rajendra Prasad." And Dr. P, incidentally, has moved into the Viceroy's Palace here in New Delhi. Only now it's called the "Raj Bhavan." And the beautiful gardens which I, as a GI, could walk through almost anytime I wanted, are now open to the public only in the month of February, during specified days and specified hours. And I am afraid the multi-colored blooms are clearly outnumbered by the assemblage of frowning signs and guards. I will concede, though, that the Maharajah town houses here in the capital are being put to better use: They are now annexes for the various Government ministries.

But I needn't set myself up as a watchdog for Indian austerity. The Parliamentary Question Hour seems to have things well in hand. The M.P.'s have had a field day with the personal assets of Mr. M.O. Mathai, Mr. Nehru's Sherman Adams who apparently was equally unpopular among the politicians and now has followed Mr. Adams into forced retirement

And the Punjabi Congress Government has been asked to do some explaining over the way Master Tara Singh, leader of the Sikh Akali Party, was hauled out of bed and into a police van the other night after his phone had first been disconnected and a cordon thrown about his house. Singh, a separatist leader in the Punjab, was about to lead a protest demonstration in Delhi March 15. The Punjab Chief Minister, Pratap Singh Kairon, explained: "We cannot be silent spectators to the frequent threats of agitation in the border state." Incidentally, the Punjab Government crackdown also hit A.K. Gopalan, the State Communist leader and an M.P., who has been "externed" for a year because his "agitation" against a Punjab "betterment levy" on lands to be irrigated with water from the Bhakra-Nangal dam project "threatened the maintenance of public order." You'd think the Kremlin would have acted first. What business has a Communist opposing higher taxes on landholders whose tracts are being improved with State irrigation projects?

During my stay in India, I made a sidetrip to Jaipur, once a princely state and now, since Independence, the capital of a far larger Rajasthan State. I also had been there as a soldier and at that time Jaipur City, a pink-stucco delight with castles and bazaars right out of the Arabian Nights, was considered a model -- for cleanliness, beauty and, more importantly, for comparatively progressive government.

Well, I took the hour's flight from New Delhi and getting out of the plane noticed a waiting Cadillac convertible with a large "JAIPUR" on the license plate. I looked a little further and out of the same plane came His Highness, the Maharajah, with a big grin. I decided to interpret the grin as aimed at me (timidity never got anyone anywhere, some patron saint of reporters must have once said) and walked up to H.H. I reminded him that we were fellow guests at Claridge's Hotel here in New Delhi (H.H. stays here because it's near

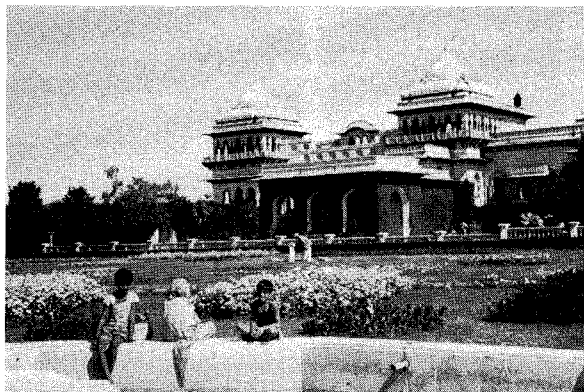
his polo field and he sweetens things up by having his own string ensemble lilt him into wakefulness each morning, and then soothe him through his breakfast). And I also reminded him that I had once dropped a note into his hotel box saying I wanted to see him.

"Well, I'm only here for a day or two," H.H. said, looking desperately around for an aide to step in between. "So am I," I replied, "I'll give you my card." Then while the Maharajah held my wallet steady (I was loaded with cameras and typewriter), I pulled out a calling card and presented it to him. "Where are you staying?" he asked. Knowing by then that gamesmanship was in the ascendency, I smiled with just a little bit of indulgence and said: "Your old home, I suppose." You see, H.H. has converted his Rambagh Palace into a hotel and bundled himself and the last of his three Maharanis (this one, considered to be the most beautiful woman in India, is the only one still alive) into the old palace of his former Prime Minister. Well, that night as I was soaking in a royal bathtub, a bearer came dashing in to announce that "Her Highness" would see me in 10 minutes. In my present state, I thought that would be carrying journalistic aggressiveness a bit too far. I quickly got dressed and followed the bearer into the bar, where I found it was His Highness who had come a'calling. We retreated to the "Chinese Room," one of the chambers H.H. has reserved for himself in a private wing of the hotel, and while he ordered champagne I stuck to proletarian gin.

H.H. has four sons, one of which looks as old as the surviving Maharani, and I would say that Himself is a very well-preserved 47 or 48. The Maharajah has enormous charm, characteristic of the breed I suppose. And I quickly learned that despite what I thought about Princes being passé, this Maharajah is far from out of business. "Under our agreement with the Government," he said, "the line goes on and our eldest sons succeed us." I was most solicitous, wondering what trade the rest of his sons were being trained in so that they could make their way in the world. "Oh, they all have their lands, I've arranged for that," H.H. explained. (I later learned that, in addition to his lands, No. 1 son will get an annual Government stipend equal to half his father's Rs. two million (\$425,000); and that when it comes time for HIS son to be Maharajah the stipend will once again be halved. It still should be quite enough to meet the fuel bill.)

For himself, H.H. said he already had served the new Rajasthan State as Governor, a sort of noblese oblige agreement the Maharajahs made in giving up their private powers. Now he would like some "Foreign Service" post, presumably as an Ambassador. What about standing for Parliament, as some Maharajahs have? H.H. decided that wouldn't do because "You're either in the Congress Party or you're out. The opposition is just a squeak, there's no place for it."

I told H.H. that I had visited Jaipur as a soldier in 1946, had a morning tomato juice with Sir Mirza Ismail, the Dewan (Prime Minister) who died just a few months ago and that Sir Mirza had told me of the reforms in government and education that had been introduced in Jaipur.



JAIPUR'S RAMBAGH PALACE: Home for a night

"Ah," H.H. replied, "if you saw Jaipur under Sir Mirza you saw Jaipur at its best. Now we are part of a larger area, Rajasthan, and our colleges and schools must get no better treatment than those in the rest of the State. We have to stand still while they catch up." With that, H.H. looked at his watch and decided the audience was over (I later discovered his concern was less for time than for an American brunette with a low neck front who was waiting for him in the bar).

As the Maharajah walked out into the evening air, I noticed that one of his old castles was now floodlit on the mountain across the way and that in front of us Rambagh Palace's fountains had suddenly begun to splash, with colored lights playing on them. As I recall my history, keeping fountains going was sort of expensive even in Louis XIV's day. But whenever Louis decided to walk through the gardens of Versailles a high sign was given and the fountains would splash forth for his pleasure. Now let's see, at \$425,000 a year, plus the 93 cents I paid to get a guided tour of his City Palace, plus my overnight rent at his Rambagh Palace, plus whatever share he still has of Jaipur's famed emerald mines, do you suppose H.H. The Maharajah of Jaipur has those fountains and lights going even when he isn't walking through his gardens?

Also during my stay here, I made a sidetrip to Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh State, to visit one Mohammed A. Rauf Abbasi, editor and owner of The Daily Haque, an Urdu-language paper. Abbasi's son (I later learned nephew), a copy boy on The Washington Post, had told him of my impending visit and Abbasi kindly wrote me in Washington inviting me for dinner. Well, the moment my plane set down in Lucknow I was greeted by Abbasi, a patriarchal figure with muslim cap, beard and flowing robe who smiled welcome in one expression and sorrow in the next: His son (nephew) had been fired. Nevertheless, the dinner invitation was still on. The dinner was all-male (except for the local U.S.I.S. man's wife, who Abbasi had asked along for morale), served with fingers and standing up. Except for the U.S.I.S. couple and myself, the guest list was all Mohammedan.

The next day, I managed to get Abbasi alone for a talk and asked him what it is like to be a member of the Muslim minority (40 million) in Hindu India. He was immediately outspoken: "We Muslims used to be in control here in Lucknow; we had everything. We were the leaders. Now Muslims are being retired from government posts. We are very much discriminated against. Even if we want to leave, the Government of India puts up obstacles. They want us only to be servants. Any Muslim who has a beard is ridiculed. On my paper, I no longer get government ads. Only once was I taken off the blacklist, when I supported Pandit Pant (now the Central Government's Home Minister) for Parliament. My mail is opened. I know that just after I had a letter from "Mo" in Washington, the mail man came around with a smile and asked if I had heard from my son recently."

I asked him how it could be that if discrimination were this intense, one of his Muslim friends, a dinner guest the night before, was introduced to me as the Deputy Minister for Planning in Uttar Pradesh State?

"He pleasures them and dances according to their desires," Abbasi said curtly.

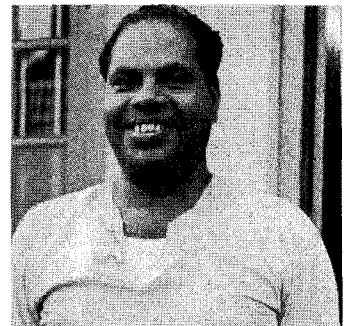
I asked Abbasi if it were true that Muslims in India really preferred Pakistan. He thought for a moment and then decided to be

frank: "Yes, it is true. If any trouble arises in Pakistan, every Muslim feels it in his heart. In the cricket match between Pakistan and India in 1954 every Muslim was for Pakistan. We feel this way because of Jinnah. We think Pakistan at least is a place which we can call our own. (I couldn't help interjecting that the Jews look upon Israel the same way.) The difference with the Hindus is inevitable. Everything is different -- language, culture, civilization, clothing, food. People who use cow dung in their kitchen. People who worship killers. You make your own idols with your own hands and then say it is God. You must then be SuperGod."

Abbasi was an old colleague of Jinnah's and was secretary of the Muslim League conference in Lucknow in the mid-'thirties -- "when Lucknow was the heart of the whole thing." Now he is thinking seriously of closing his paper, packing up his family (apparently there were a good many sisters, sisters-in-law and nieces behind the unseen screens at his dinner) and joining one of his sons in Pakistan. He says it will mean leaving all his property behind.

I also made a sidetrip to Kerala, the one State among India's 14 where the Congress Party does not have a majority in the State Assembly and no representation at all in the State Ministry. The Communist Party has both. The Communists got there by Constitutional means -- an election in 1957 which brought five "independents" over to their side, enough to secure a three-man majority in the Assembly. Kerala, in the southwest tip of India, ironically has the highest literacy rate (over 50 per cent) and the highest percentage of Catholics (by tradition St. Thomas arrived in 52 A.D.; now Catholics account for 24 per cent of the population) in all of India. It also is India's most densely populated state (more than 1000 people per square mile), the smallest state, the state with greatest unemployment (1.6 million out of a total population of 13 million) and one of the areas with the greatest food deficit (50 per cent of Kerala's food has to be imported). I have been told that the 1957 vote was not so much an endorsement of the Communists as it was a repudiation of the Congress leadership which long had been accused of corruption, do-nothingness and Brahmin aloofness from the common village needs. Well, as usual I was unable to find any Communists to interview (this time they were all out of town for a long Easter weekend -- Good Friday is a national holiday, if you please). But I am beginning to think somebody belled me so that wherever I go the Communists have a chance to move on. However in Ernakulum, the Indian business center for the predominantly European-run port of Cochin, I talked with four members of the Opposition.

PANAMPILLY GOVINDA MENON, the last Congress Party Chief Minister, made such a poor impression on the electorate in 1957 that they even chose another Congress candidate over him for his Legislative Assembly seat. When I sought my appointment by phone, Menon refused to give me the address of his law office-home: "Everybody knows me." When I did find him, I discovered equal self-confidence: "In March, 1957, they voted light-heartedly. They exaggerated the faults of the Congress Party. They thought that, 'just for fun, let us vote for the Communist Party.' But nobody expected them to come into office. And nobody expected the mischief they have been doing. In the past 24 months they have done no good whatsoever. But there has been lots of corruption. I hope this experience is good for the people here. In the next general election (in 1962), they will be ousted. In a municipal election we had three days ago we got 47 per cent and



captured seven out of 16 seats in the local body. Two years ago, we got only 25 per cent."

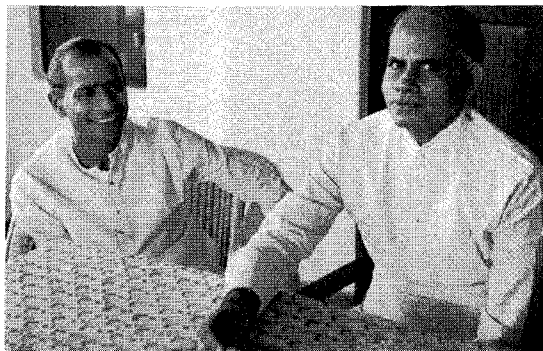
What about the charges of graft and corruption in your own party? "Malicious reports, generalized charges, absolutely unfounded. There never was a demand in the Assembly for an inquiry. That is the test." (I later learned that Menon personally has been accused of pocketing the equivalent of \$117,000).

Is there a chance of shaking up the Communist majority in the legislature before 1962? "I don't think so. There is only one Communist who has spoken out as if he might cross the floor. And that would not be enough (Menon, however, was a bit vague on whether the Communist majority is "two, three or four"). Anyway, a person who crosses the floor is looked down upon. It would be taken that he was purchased and not that he did it on principle."

I am afraid that I found the ex-Congress leader far from impressive and far from convincing. I guess I came to this conclusion when he said: "The Congress Party found disfavor with the electorate because we had been in office five or six years and the electorate gets tired." Funny that the Congress has been in just as long or longer in other parts of India and no similar ennui has been evidenced.

DAMODORAN MENON, Kerala Congress Party President, and JOSEPH MATHAN, the party Secretary, were a bit less righteous and a bit less optimistic. They explained that the Congress defeat "was in large measure due to problems of integration. Cochin, in the North here, has always been resentful that Trivandrum, in the South, part of the old princely state of Travancore, was more important. Then in 1957 we were given the Malabar section from Bombay State, and they were already Communist. Now we are hopeful that we will be able to defeat the Communists in 1962.

During the last 1½ years of Communist rule, unemployment in Kerala has increased while unemployment in the rest of India at least has not worsened. The youths are thoroughly dissatisfied. And private capital has shied away from coming here because they have not felt the Communist police and labor policies, and general tension, conducive. (Not quite, the Communists were so anxious to get the Birla interests to come in and put up a plant they promised to be good boys on the dotted line). And there is now huge corruption. Loans which the Centre says should be given at low terms to everybody now are given only when a percentage goes to the Communist Party. Liquor distribution licenses used to be auctioned with the profit going to the State. Now the Communists give the licenses to their Cooperative Society of Tappers (palm trees are tapped for "toddy," the local liquor). We are a democratic party. We cannot just go and bribe people. We are up against a party who has no scruples about keeping itself in power. They inflate the election rolls. The village unit elections this year are crucial. If they win, there will be a commune in each village. If we win, then we may upset them in 1962."



MATHAN & MENON: "If we win....."

Menon, an ex-editor who was an M.P. in the Lok Sabha, and Mathan, a lawyer and former member of the Kerala Assembly, face party elections themselves April 3. Actually, the Kerala Congress Party has been so disorganized

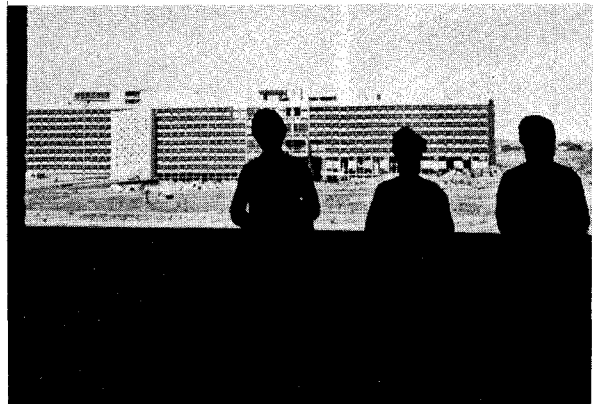
and so lacking in funds that the party election and possible regrouping comes a year later than it normally should. They said they are banking not only on revitalizing their own ranks, but hope to continue a new "understanding" with the Socialists and Muslim League to stick together in the hope of reaching a coalition majority.

His Grace, ARCHBISHOP JOSEPH ATTIPETTY, the "Latin Catholic" head of Kerala, was even less optimistic over ousting the Communists. Yet the Church is considered to be the only real opposition to Kerala's Communists. The 64-year-old, Indian-born prelate, one of four Kerala Archbishops (but the sole representative of Rome), watches over the 14 per cent of Kerala's population which is Latin Catholic. In schooling, however, Attipetty has much more of a say. All but 2000 of Kerala's 8000 schools are private. And His Grace speaks for more than 1500 of these schools. At the moment, schooling is his prime concern with the Communists for the Kerala Government is about to implement a highly controversial Education Bill. This will compel private schools to appoint their teachers from a State Public Service Commission-approved list. The bill will also permit the State to regulate instruction and supervise textbooks. The Archdiocese has been able to force a few minor modifications in the bill through appeals to the Supreme Court in New Delhi. But now the bill has cleared both the Court and India's President and Kerala's Communists are ready to put it into operation.



"If they are going to appoint their own teachers and their own texts, then we are lost," His Grace declared. "But we are hoping that this bill will undo them. Already the Nairs, the high-caste Hindus who have a large number of their own schools, are turning against them. Yet if the three necessary members don't cross the floor and the Communists are still in power by 1962, I am afraid they will continue. Other governments are amenable to reason. But here the Opposition are afraid of their own lives. At the last by-election I understand they put a Communist in every polling station." And His Grace only smiled benignly when I asked if the Congress Party had done anything to regain the public's confidence.

Well, this winds up my two months in India. You will notice that I have been a thorough coward and stayed clear of conclusions. Two months in a country as vast and as complicated as India certainly are insufficient for any nicely tied up thoughts. But I think two months in India are sufficient to indicate how important a Nation India is, how far it has moved on its own since my pre-Independence visit as a soldier, and how much further it has to go if it is to feed its people and make democracy succeed. Two months are also quite sufficient to indicate that the West, particularly the U.S., will have to make some readjustments in its aid



CHANDIGARH: Watching India's new horizon

philosophy if it means to be as helpful to India as it is capable of being.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Warren W. Unna". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

Warren W. Unna

Received New York April 17, 1959