

Agra, India  
January 22, 1948

Mr. Walter S. Rogers  
Institute of Current World Affairs  
522 Fifth Avenue  
New York 18, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Rogers:

This letter reports, in brief, my activities during the past two months. It also partly explains my failure to write earlier. If it is more personal in tone than might ordinarily be expected, that fact reflects the nature of my experiences, and I hope you will once again excuse the personal element.

It was on November 19th, in Poona, that I wrote a rough first draft of my letter 21. On the following day I left by train for the historic fort town of Gulbarga, now a district seat in southwestern Hyderabad State. I stopped overnight there with Asif and Qudsia Ahmad, a young Muslim couple whom I had met at Karachi through a Muslim University friend. Asif is on the staff of the Hyderabad State Bank, and was just completing six months of training as assistant manager of its Gulbarga branch. Both he and Qudsia are residents of the capital, Hyderabad itself, and although they were able to show me some aspects of life in Gulbarga, both considered it very definitely a 'mofussil' (country) town, and were eager to return to the more social and cosmopolitan capital.

In a large old mosque within the ancient fort walls, Asif showed me Gulbarga's major immediate problem: some 3000 Muslims who had fled from the Central India States and Central Provinces to the Muslim-ruled state of Hyderabad, because they had felt insecure in a predominantly Hindu area. Qudsia has helped in carrying out benefit projects for provision of blankets and clothes to these refugee families, whose needs are homes, employment, and friendship in their strange new surroundings.

To see the Hyderabad countryside, I went on from Gulbarga by bus, stopping for a couple of hours in one village where a capable Muslim official reviewed conditions for me. In the past year, he said, cultivators in his district - cultivators and village artisans form the bulk of Hyderabad's population, as of India's, and in Hyderabad are nearly all Hindus - have refused to pay willingly the government's grain levy. He regarded Congress incitement of peasants and the Dominion of India's attitude toward Hyderabad as 'imperialism', and repeated more than once, "But God will save us."

Then to the capital. As my purpose was chiefly to learn the attitudes of different elements of the population, I stayed at a hotel in the city, rather than accepting the hospitality of a friend with whom I might be over-influenced by one point of view. In one sense this was a mistake, for while it permitted me freedom of movement it also kept me somewhat apart from the family life and natural outlook of any one group. I did, at least, meet a variety of people, in a week when Hyderabad was tensely awaiting results of high-level negotiations in New Delhi, failure of which, had it occurred, might quickly have brought armed force into the picture.

Among Asif Ahmad's relatives and friends were members of the official and administrative groups in Hyderabad: a former chief justice,

secretaries in the departments of Education and Supply, the Vice-Principal of the Agriculture College, and the Superintendent of Railways. Their homes reflected the revival of Muslim and Urdu language culture of which Hyderabad has been the south India center in the past three decades. Those whom I met were political moderates, believers in constitutional government but resenting the pressure and pace at which Hindus and Congressmen are demanding constitutional reforms which will transfer power from the Muslim dynasty to the votes of the peoples of Hyderabad, predominantly Hindu. I met also a number of Hindu officials, and a group of business and newspaper people, as well, who similarly stood for more gradual transition to popular government.

But power politics and threats of force seemed dominant in those days, and I did not miss the extremists. I made particular contact with leaders and followers of the strongest Muslim political party, who feel their power especially in the capital and other urban centers, where Muslims are nearly in a majority. Their outlook was an enlightening lesson in how men can grow to believe firmly that they have an inherited right to rule. "The Muslims are the ruling race (sic) in Hyderabad, and intend to remain so", I was told several times. "The Nizam is the sole reminder of Mughal rule in India. We are prepared to fight to hold our place."

Many Hindus in the capital city were nervous for the immediate future. Among them, I could not meet many active opponents of the Muslim regime, for Congressmen have been conducting a 'non-violent' movement against the government and several thousand of them are therefore in jail, while Socialists and Communists are working underground or from beyond the borders of Hyderabad to organize peasants. Nor did I have the opportunity, which is needed to understand the state as a whole, to visit rural areas where economic discontent and incitement are combining to foster peasant opposition. I was glad, however, to meet a very able group of middle class men and women, mostly Muslim, organized in a left-wing Progressive Writers' Association, who were both helpful and friendly, inviting me to their homes and discussing political conflicts most frankly and sincerely.

I came away from Hyderabad with a picture sufficient to my original purpose, which was to have background knowledge upon which I could interpret newspaper and friends' reports from Hyderabad during the coming year in northern India. I did not have an understanding complete enough to write a sound paper on the Hyderabad issue, but in the following weeks made the mistake of trying to write such a paper, rather than a simple letter. After working a number of hours trying to outline such a paper, and after mulling over the subject during parts of several days, I finally realized that I did not have sufficient information and experience of the state to present a balanced and honest report. Much time was wasted in coming to that conclusion, and in the meantime the freshness of the trip had gone so that a narrative account of it seemed of little life or interest. Hence my failure to send you a letter after my Hyderabad trip.

Returning to Poona by train on December 2nd, I met at Reverend Boulton's home Dr. W.A. Anderson, professor of rural sociology at Cornell University. Dr. Anderson is on a tour of the middle and far eastern countries as Technical Adviser to Agricultural Missions, Inc., an organization with New York headquarters in which several missions are cooperating to work out integrated and comprehensive rural development programs. Dr. Anderson, who has had previous experience in Asia, is making a rather rapid comparative survey of rural life and problems in various regions

from Greece to China, and an examination of rural development programs, particularly those of missionary groups. At the suggestion of Dr. Mosher of the Allahabad Agricultural Institute -whose name has been mentioned in earlier letters from Phil Talbot and me - Dr. Anderson came through Poona to visit the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics. I sat in on his interesting discussion with the director and staff members of the Gokhale Institute, and then went with him to Vadala, a village some 60 miles away where an American missionary group is building up a village program which aims to integrate agricultural instruction and aid, health and sanitation, family and home development, education, and church work.

Mr. V. R. Gadgil, who has supervised some of the major rural research projects of the Gokhale Institute, was able to go with us to Vadala. The four-day trip through agricultural country in the company of specialists in rural economy, sociology, and missionary work was a useful introduction, for me, to the village study that I will be doing for the next few months. All of us Americans were glad of Mr. Gadgil's direct knowledge of the region; to the latter the trip brought to focus a program which he had long had on his mind. Having spent ten years in carrying out intensive research into the agricultural economy of a homogeneous tract near Poona, Mr. Gadgil has been anxious to utilize the resultant information for direct development work in that area. The visit to the American missionary center, and discussion of its varied program, came at a timely point for crystallizing his ideas and purpose. On the day following our return to Poona he came to me with the news that he had decided to bring to an end his fulltime work with the Gokhale Institute, and to devote his complete attention to building up a rural service mission in his home tract. He views its eventual possibilities as threefold: firstly, as an aid to villagers in agricultural techniques, marketing, finance, etc., in education, sanitation, village industries, social reforms; secondly, as an organization through which further direct field research can be carried on; thirdly, as a training ground for rural social workers, which he would like to see become a school for rural social work. A man of fifty, Mr. Gadgil's initiative is shown by this break in his whole life's work, research, to take up its more dynamic and arduous application to constructive work.

Our trip, and Mr. Gadgil's plans and hopes, would have made up an interesting letter to you. Or, apropos of Mr. O'Flaherty's letter which reached me just at that time, a very human story could have been made of one Indian's initiative, sparked, as Mr. Gadgil said it partly was, by the demands of independence. But I was off to Bombay before I could summon time or concentration sufficient to write either story or letter.

I spent a week in Bombay, during the days when Phil and Mildred Talbot were making final preparations for their trip home. Phil has probably mentioned to you that we had a couple of days together, including several hours one evening when we reviewed my work of the past year and discussed my program for the coming months. Out of that discussion, which I sensed at the time was more optimistic than my record warranted, came at least the decision that I would spend some time, during the Christmas holidays, in writing a report to the Trustees of the Institute, to set forth in some detail the work I have done in the past sixteen months. Phil as usual was a great help to me in stimulating thought and in helping me to organize ideas and plans in orderly fashion. I failed to carry through with anything like his energy; that report is only now nearing completion.

After Phil's departure and several visits with American and European friends in Bombay, and with westernized Indians - also very lively in

mind - I came north by train to New Delhi, which I had left four months earlier, before north India's upheaval. In Delhi I stopped for four days at the Quaker Center operated by an Indian Christian and a young British couple, the Chetsinghs and Bakers, whose field is education. Seeking to supplement newspaper information about Delhi's condition, I wandered through the bazaars of Chandni Chauk, where Hindu and Sikh evacuees from the West Punjab have opened small retail stalls on the street in front of old Delhi shops. Literally with no 'overhead', selling small quantities of everything from flashlights to second-hand army clothing to sweetmeats, they compete at much lower prices than the old shopkeepers, and thus constitute one source of friction today in the city. I wandered also through the railway station, where platforms were still covered with chairs, beds, bicycles and clothing being moved by people with no homes, where hundreds were still sleeping, where each main train departed with one carriage guarded by armed police and labelled, "For the minority community only." I lunched with an Indian Christian girl, daughter of an army brigadier, who gave me a graphic account of the September trouble; with a Hindu steel merchant who had lost several hundred thousands of dollars' worth of property in leaving Lahore, and who had still not found a house for his family in Delhi. I talked with newspapermen, and with American and Indian businessmen who frankly discussed the shortcomings of the Delhi administration, overburdened with refugees and troubled by the prospect that the thousands of Muslims still in Delhi might yet be attacked again. More than one person emphasized the bitterness of refugees who had lost everything, and said that a cold campaign of threats was slowly and quietly seeking to drive away Muslims so that houses would be vacated for refugee occupation. The presence in Delhi of Mahatma Gandhi, I was told, prevented or postponed another open conflict.

For Christmas, and for a quiet place where letter and report writing would be possible, I went by train north from Delhi, five hours' slow ride through wheat and mustard fields to the northwestern United Provinces city of Saharanpur, which borders the East Punjab. There my hosts were Charles and Janice Forman (and son David, ten months old), American missionaries with whom I had stayed at Landour last summer. Of a family which has worked in India for generations, Chuck Forman was born here, but returned to America at the age of seven. After graduating from Ohio State University, he obtained his doctorate in history at Wisconsin, writing his thesis on the role of science in the development of British Empire resources. His theological course was then taken at Union Seminary in New York. The Formans left the United States in early 1945 on a slow sea trip, with long stops in Portugal and along the African coast, to India. Their first year here was spent in travel throughout the country, under the sponsorship of Union Seminary, making a study of the role and influence of Christian institutions in the Indian community. Language study occupied much of their next year, and at present Chuck is delivering his lectures in Urdu at the United Theological Seminary, Saharanpur.

Save for one excursion to Delhi to attend the two-day wedding of a Sikh friend, I stayed with the Formans for three weeks, longer than I had originally intended. Christmas activities occupied much of a week, and such quiet diversions as learning the ways and whims of a ten-month old baby, or listening to symphonic records in the evening, encouraged me to stay longer. Though I did some writing, my mind did not really concentrate properly on concrete work. The environment was more suitable for reflecting and reading, which I sometimes feel necessary, on moral issues or general social problems. At mealtimes, Chuck would bring me back to my work with keen questions about my political and economic

study and observations of the past months; or I would ask him about his experiences in refugee relief work in the East Punjab during October and November, and his observations on the forces now at work there. But at other times my thoughts wandered to ethics, child psychology, even to theology. When I tried to get some specific writing done, I failed; but I believe the whole stay in the Formans' home was of real help in giving me new perspective and in other intangible personal aspects.

I finished only letter 21 at Saharanpur; I had postponed it hoping that a few weeks' time would make my treatment of the subject more balanced, but do not now feel that it had sufficient effect in that direction. One evening I mentioned to the Formans my failure to write you more regularly, or to cover topics completely enough to consider my acquaintance with them worth treatment in a letter to you. Jan pointed out that the nature of my program did not demand, or even make possible, that my regular letters to you should be definitive on the subject covered. Frequent letters, many of a narrative form, are what are required, she suggested, to describe the development of my work as I change to new environments, move in different circles, and take up new problems. When I work on a given topic or inquiry sufficiently to treat it with some coherent completeness, as I should do occasionally, a separate, longer paper would be suitable.

This suggestion really parallels advice which you wrote me last February. I had long since partly accepted that advice, but apparently not so wholeheartedly as to put it into regular practice. My repeated difficulty, in letter writing, has been too high an ambition: I have wanted to report on situations somewhat more complex or delicate than I'm yet prepared to understand or treat in balanced fashion. As instances, after my August visit to Karachi and my recent trip to Hyderabad I wanted to write papers more comprehensive in scope than my knowledge of the facts really warranted. In each case, a narrative and descriptive letter would have put across my experience and illuminated some aspects of the local situation. I tried to include other aspects, and only gave up the attempt after I had shown myself that honest knowledge was lacking. Other less complex examples could also be given.

My failure to write you in the past weeks, plus the Formans' comment, have taught me the lesson more sharply. Henceforth I will make a real effort to write you more spontaneously and simply, as the weeks pass. In my first report to the Trustees of the Institute, I will touch briefly on these letters once more. Here I can only apologize sincerely for the personal discourtesy to you involved in this long delay.

I arrived back in Delhi in the week when Mahatma Gandhi undertook his fast, and stopped three days there with the Bakers before coming on to Mathura, three hours' train ride southeast of Delhi. I had tentatively chosen the Agra-Mathura region as suitable for my first village stay, chiefly as the result of a short conversation with Pandit H.N.Kunzru in New Delhi during my pre-Christmas visit. My report to the Trustees will introduce some of the reasons for this choice; here I only need say that Pandit Kunzru had sent ahead a letter of introduction to an old friend, Mr. Dwarka Nath Bhargava, a retired advocate of the liberal political school. I had also written Mr. Bhargava, describing the nature of my purpose. When I reached Mathura I found he had consulted a number of people about my project, and was ready to help with advice and arrangements for my stay in a village in Mathura District. I spent three days in the company of Mr

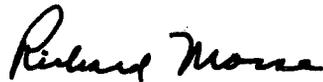
Bhargava, his brothers - a doctor and a cloth merchant - and friends, and decided to go ahead with the village they had selected. I then came away from Mathura, planning to return in ten days or less.

Firstly, I went beyond Agra to the capital city of Gwalior, a Central India state. There I met Chuck Forman, who had been still further south to attend a three-day conference of Indian and western pacifists, forerunner to a world pacifist conference which Gandhi hopes to hold next year. Chuck grew up in the huge rock fort of Gwalior, and now that he is back in India he likes to stop there occasionally, drawn especially by its medieval architecture. He persuaded me to meet him to spend a day viewing the 19th century Hindu and Jain temples and statues, the 15th century fort and palace. I took little persuasion, for besides wanting to see the architecture I anticipated, rightly, that his conversation would touch soundly on four or five topics: architecture and its development in India; pacifism in several aspects; comparative religion; and current Indian affairs, including the ideas and program towards a decentralized economy of Gandhi's colleague, Dr. J.C.Kumarappa, whom Chuck had met at the conference. It was a good day, lengthened by the six hour tardiness of the train which brought me back as far as Agra and took Chuck to Delhi on his return home.

At Agra, I have two things to do. Firstly, completion of my report. To avoid interruption or distraction, I have come to the Imperial Hotel, almost vacant since 'burra sahibs' and soldiers have departed from India. After the report is in hand, I shall visit St. John's College to seek guidance from an economist and others familiar with the Agra-Mathura rural area. Then back to Mathura.

Of course before leaving Agra I shall also see the Taj Mahal for the first time, and the Agra Fort, which, Chuck tells me, incorporates with the Mughal style a number of the Hindu architectural ideas seen earlier at Gwalior.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Morse

% American Embassy  
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