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Memoirs of Meredith Worth

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About this record

Memoirs of Meredith Worth (1905-93), beginning with a brief account of his education and his time in the Indian Civil Service in Bengal (1927-33), before going on to focus mainly on his career in the Indian Political Service (1933-47). The memoirs are typewritten with corrections and annotations in ink.

Worth recounts posts held in Gyantse [Gyangze], Bahrain, Baluchistan [Balochistān], Gujerat [Gujarat], Kathiawar, Rajputana, Orissa [Odisha], and Quetta. He states his preference for the Indian Civil Service over the Indian Political Service, and also gives his views on the partition of India.

Worth concludes his memoirs with an account of his career after 1947 in Australia, most notably in the Department of External Affairs, where he was involved in assisting Indian and Pakistani students in Victoria and Tasmania.

Memoirs of Meredith Worth [1r] (1/12)

MSS EUR F 226/34
MR. M. WORTH.

I

I was educated at Repton and Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and passed into the I.C.S. in 1927. After an enjoyable 4th year at Corpus I was posted to Chittagong, Bengal. After 6 months as Sub-Divisional Officer in Kalimpong I went to Barrackpore in 1931. After a few months I was put on the terrorists' Black List. I was given two very efficient Punjabi armed police guards and a Gurkha guard on my house at night. I was also ordered to carry a revolver wherever I went, even to Belvedere for a Viceregal Ball. Future life in the Province did not therefore look promising and as the hot, humid climate seriously affected my health, the Chief Secretary suggested that I should apply for a transfer to the Government of India, Foreign and Political Department. I did so, and eventually in 1933 was posted to Gyantse, Tibet, as British Trade Agent.

My duties were to maintain friendly relations with Chinese and Tibetan officials, Lamas and landowners and to ensure the safe passage of the wool caravans from Lhasa to Kalimpong over the Jelep La. For ceremonial duties I had an escort of infantry and mounted troops of the Mahratta Light Infantry commanded by a future Major General, Dennis Read, and half a dozen chappassis in gorgeously caparisoned scarlet and gold uniforms. My memories are of many cheerful parties in the Fort and in the homes of wealthy families, the dominance and brutality of the Lamas and officials towards the serf population and the prevalence of venereal diseases. The only hospital in Tibet giving Western medical treatment was in Gyantse, attached to the Mission and looked after by Captain David Tennant I.M.S. and Assistant Surgeon Bo, a capable Tibetan who had been trained in India. The only education available for Tibetan children was purely religious in nature and given by the Lamas. Perhaps conditions in Europe in the early Middle Ages must have been similar. It was, therefore, for me a relief recently to read in Han Suyen's book 'Lhasa, the open City' that those conditions no longer exist.

After a curtailed leave in the U.K. my next move was to a new post of Assistant Political Agent, Bahrain. The Sheikh of Bahrain, Sheikh Hamid bin Isa Al Khalifa, was a charming, very friendly old man who left the business of governing his small State to his Prime Minister, Charles Belgrave. A small oilfield, worked by the Standard Oil Co of California, registered in Canada, provided most of the State income. Other industries were boat building and pearling. After a short time the Political Agent, Lt-Col Gordon Loch, relieved Lt-Col Fowle in Bushire as Resident and I had to act as Political Agent.

Touring to the Trucial Coast States was mainly done in Sloops of the Royal Navy or occasionally in Flying Boats of 203 squadron R.A.F. Once we had to take the No 2 of the Anglo-Persian Oil Co in Abadan to visit the Sheikh of Qatar to try to persuade him to allow the Company to prospect for oil in his State. I was told that we would have to be on our best behaviour and that, if we were invited to lunch, our Mission would most likely succeed. Our arrival was not very impressive as there was then no quay at Doha and we had to be carried ashore. But the presence of the Senior Naval Officer and his Flag Lieut in our party, and the salute fired from 'Shoreham' whilst we were being transported on the backs of his subjects must have impressed the Sheikh as we were at once invited to lunch. Afterwards he agreed to a visit by a party from the Oil Co.

A splendid launch had been built in Bahrain for the Agency and when it was delivered at the Agency quay I invited the Sheikh to come to inspect it.

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The gangway was a broad plank and the Sheikh negotiated it successfully. However unnoticed by me, the launch had tilted on the Sheikh's arrival on board and the plank had then moved forward. I stepped on it to follow the Sheikh and the plank and I then dived into the Persian Gulf.

One other event sticks in my memory. Sir Philip Sassoon, then a junior Minister in the U.K. Government, was inspecting airfields and establishments in the Middle East. I was asked by the Foreign Office to meet him when he came to Bahrain and, if possible, to show him some pearls. The leading pearl merchant in the Gulf at that time was Mohd al Mana from Qatar. He kindly agreed to bring some pearls to the airfield at Bahrain. When the day came he arrived with 12 or 13 of the largest and most beautiful pearls. Sir Philip was entranced and agreed to buy them for what seemed a ridiculously small price. He put them in his pocket promising to send the money as soon as he returned to London. Weeks went by without any payment. Mohd al Mana told me that had he known that Sir Philip came from a family of Baghdadi Jews he would have charged him four times as much. After several reminders to the Foreign Office I was told that Sir Philip would not pay as he thought that the pearls were cultured. I pointed out that it was a criminal offence to bring cultured pearls for sale in Bahrain and asked the Foreign Office to arrange for the pearls to be drilled by Cartiers. This was done eventually and the money was at last paid to Mohd al Mana.

After a year in Bahrain the climate again affected my health and I had to take long leave in the U.K. I was then transferred in 1935 to Baluchistan as A.P.A. Sibi and later as P.A. Sibi. Sibi was the winter rendez-vous of the nomadic tribes, the Ghilzai, from Afghanistan who brought their flocks of camels, sheep and goats through the Bolan Pass onto the plains of Sind, reminding me vividly of pictures in my childhood Bible of the Israelites crossing the wilderness on the way to Jericho. They returned in the early spring and I had to make satisfactory arrangements with the tribes through whose lands they were to pass for their camps and grazing.

Sibi was deserted after March as the heat became intense. The temperature had been known to reach 136 degrees in the shade and the locals asked why Allah had made Hell when he had Sibi. The summer headquarters of the Agency were situated in Zarat at 8000 feet in the juniper forest. Touring was in the mountain valleys which in the early summer were ablaze with peach, apricot and almond blossom. The most pleasant time on tour was in the evenings. A large carpet was spread in front of the tent and round it the P.A., the local Extra Assistant Commissioner and the village elders sat and gossiped about village and tribal affairs. It was in the friendly intimacy of these gatherings that one learned what was really happening in the Agency and where one was able to give a few hints about how local living conditions could be improved. But one had to tread very carefully. I remember a demonstration intending to show that erosion of valuable top soil could be prevented by contour ploughing. Buckets or rather goatskins of water poured into the contour drills did not percolate downwards whilst water poured into the vertical drills produced a muddy mess at the bottom. Before the moral could be drawn one old villager said ' Oh we know all about that. It is how we get our sailaba crops '.

An important duty of the P.A. was to arrange Jirgas to settle local and inter-tribal disputes.

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inter-tribal disputes. Tribal law made no provision for punishment. It was only concerned with compensation for the injured party. The Jirga, composed of tribesmen who knew the parties, were expected to assess the damage done in terms of money or livestock and to fix the time by which the family of the guilty party had to make a settlement. If a murder had taken place it was necessary to appoint a leading Sirdar to preside over the Jirga and to make sure that the terms of compensation were accepted by the injured family who would not then start a vendetta. I remember one case in which a Lambardar, or official, of the Marri Baluch tribe was murdered. As he was an important tribal official the findings of the Jirga, after endorsement by the P.A., had to be approved by the Agent to the Governor General, Lt-Col Sir Arthur Parsons, who had recently arrived from Waziristan in the N.W.F.P. In murder cases it was customary for the guilty man to be told to leave the tribal area until compensation had been paid. This 'exile' was always added to the Jirga decision for the safety of the guilty man as well as of his family. The A.G.G. refused to accept this addition on the grounds that a man could not be punished twice for the same offence. He could not be made to understand that there was no question of punishment and that the 'exile' was a safeguard for the life of the murderer, he was duly killed after a short interval. What perhaps finally convinced the A.G.G. that the peaceful civil administration in Baluchistan had some advantages over that in the N.W.F.P. was a surprise visit which he paid to a large gathering at a place called Kach. It was a collection of Jirgas deciding tribal disputes under the chairmanship of the P.A. without an armed guard in sight. When Sandeman came to Quetta from Sind he pacified the Baluch and Pathan tribes by allowing them to appoint guards or Levies as they were called from their members to maintain the peace. The cost was met by Government. Some people outside the Province referred to this arrangement as 'blackmail'. In fact it was sound sense. By holding the purse strings Government was able to ensure that the peace was kept and that all could move in safety throughout the Province.

In the winter of 1936 I was transferred to Abbottabad in the N.W.F.P. as Civil Sub-Judge, a most curious appointment as I knew nothing about Civil Law and cared less. It was not surprising, therefore, that nearly all my judgments were reversed on appeal and that after a few months I was sent to Kabul to act as Counsellor in the British Legation whilst the Minister was on leave. My memories of the 6 months of my stay are pictures of Aminullah's tram and 20 yards of track, the 2 huge Buddhas at Bamyan, the trout fishing at Bukula and duck shooting on the Logar River, the hissing Japanese trying to excuse the murders at Nanking, charming French archaeologists, an Italian Minister who could not hold his beer and messages from the Foreign Office which even encoded the 'thes' in a sentence and most of which could have been sent safely en clair if the Foreign Office had not wanted to keep their Cypher clerks employed.

The Afghan Government was building a new road to the Indian frontier partly following the Kabul River. As I had to visit Peshawar on duty the acting Minister, Arthur Macann, asked me to find out whether the new road was passable for traffic. In order to evade the Afghan authorities I left after dark and reached the turn off of the new road about midnight. After the potholes of the old road the surface was excellent until we reached the top of the pass at about 2.0 a.m. In bright moonlight many hundreds of feet

below was the Kabul River and between the top of the pass and the next stretch of road were 100 yards of rocky, steep hillside. It was impossible to turn the car so we had to try to cross or wait to be rescued. My two servants got out of the car and actually held it up whilst I drove it very slowly over the 100 yards. We were all very frightened and it was some time before we recovered and were able to continue our journey along another excellent stretch of road.

One day the austere and venerable looking clerk in Chancery who was responsible for all Persian translations asked to be allowed to take ten days' leave on full pay to go to Lahore where his wife was expecting a baby. When I checked to see whether any leave was due to him I found that he had not been away from Kabul for 18 months. When I gently brought this fact to his notice he told me, without a glimmer of a smile, that of course he had a younger brother. His leave was duly sanctioned.

After a short spell doing a Settlement survey in the Hazara District from which it appeared that the Government had been defrauded of about $\frac{1}{2}$ of its revenue for 30 years, I was posted to Baroda as Secretary to the Resident, Lt-Col Colvin, and as P.A. Gujerat States. The Dewan of Baroda was Sir V.T. Krishnamachari, a very able administrator and a charming friend. Under him Baroda was well administered. It was noticeable how clean the town was and how well kept were the parks and gardens. There was a small cantonment with a battalion of the Rajputana Rifles, in memory, I suppose, of the Mahratta wars. Europeans in the station were avidly reading 'The Rains Came' by Louis Bromfield, who had been staying in Baroda, and who was supposed to have included the characters of several of the residents in the book.

The Gujerat States were all small with insignificant revenues mostly appropriated by their Rulers. I remember counting the money in the Treasury - a Chubb safe - in one small State in the presence of the Ruler and his Chief Clerk. The safe was found to have 8 annas in excess of the balance in the account book. This was too much for the clerk who fell off his chair in a faint. An enquiry subsequently showed that the money in the safe had been supplied by the local moneylender and that his clerk had miscalculated the amount.

Another small State, Sachin, had a Muslim Ruler with three very beautiful wives, who were not in purdah. Unfortunately the first wife had no children so she was sent back to Lahore to produce a second wife. This girl, equally pretty was also unable to have a child so the first wife was again sent to Lahore. The third, even prettier wife, was also unable to have a child. Later I mentioned the sad state of these girls to the Jam Saheb of Nawanagar. He told me to watch the Columns of births and deaths in The Statesman. Sure enough a notice of the birth of a son and heir to the Nawab of Sachin duly appeared to be followed a month later by a notice of his premature death. The Nawab's virility was thereby vindicated.

Whilst I was in Baroda the Gaekwar died. Before the funeral I had to accompany the Resident to commiserate with the Maharani and her daughter, who was, I think, the Maharani of Cooch Behar. As we knew that neither lady was really distressed by the death of the Gaekwar we were not deceived by their lamentations especially when the younger Maharani gave me a wink when thanking us.

The funeral procession in white

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The funeral procession with everyone in white and with elephants in their gold trappings was a most impressive sight. We were expected to join it but were excused as the Resident had difficulty in walking. Sir V.T. Krishnamachari had placed chairs for us by the funeral pyre so that we could make sure that the Maharani would not commit suttee. However, as there was no likelihood that she would do any such thing we were able to leave once the pyre was lit.

We were able to escape from the heat to Mt. Abu for 2 months. As I had been suffering from pleurisy and jaundice escape to a cooler climate was a great relief. On our way we had to change from the metre gauge to the broad gauge at Ahmedabad which was in Bombay Province where prohibition was in force. I had a bottle or two in my suitcases and the local police were anxious to open them before we boarded the train to Abu. I refused to let them do so and the argument became heated until Sirdar Vallabhai Patel, a leading Congressman and the Home Member in the Bombay Government, rescued me and accompanied us and our luggage to the train. He joined us for breakfast in the restaurant car. When the train pulled out of the station he took a large flask from his pocket and poured out a glassful of neat whisky explaining that now that he was out of his Province he could drink what he liked.

In October 1939 I was posted to Rajkot in Kathiawar as Secretary to Sir Edmund Gibson, the Resident for the Western India States. Gandhi and Jinnah were born in adjoining States in Kathiawar. Shortly before my arrival Gandhi had decided to teach the Thakor Saheb of Rajkot a lesson by having one of his so-called fasts. He was allowed to use the Police Hospital and was, I was told, provided with a bucket of goats' milk and another of glucose and lime juice every night. Despite the bulletins issued by Dr Roy in Calcutta that he was approaching death he actually put on weight and admitted to the Resident, when he gave up the fast, that the rest had done him good.

One of the Rulers was a Muslim, the Nawab of Junagadh. His main interest in life was breeding dogs of all sorts and sizes, His State was best known for being the last home of the Indian lion, 200 of them living in the Gir Forest. Their place as predators had been taken by young Rajas and Thakors hunting Gazelles in motor cars. Most of the Rulers had their own metre gauge railways with palatial saloons for themselves, a waste of State revenues as there was little goods traffic and passengers could have been transported by bus. Occasionally we were able to accept invitations from the Jam Saheb of Nawanagar to spend week-ends at Bedi Bandar, the State port. There we had some excellent bathing and tennis with the Jam Saheb and his cousins who were very good players and two Davis Cup players, Kukuljevik from Yugo-Slavia and Max Elmer from Switzerland. In the hot weather we were again able to recess for two months at Mount Abu.

One day I received a message from Himmat Singh, the elder brother of Duleepsingh and the elder step brother of the Jam Saheb asking me to meet him at Rajkot Railway Station. He told me that he had resigned as Revenue Commissioner of the State as his loyalty to the British Crown made it impossible for him to continue in the State service. He was on his way to Delhi and hoped that he could be usefully employed in some war service, perhaps in Japan as he was fluent in Japanese. He did not give me any further information. Shortly afterwards Mr McClenaghan, the Bombay Salt Commissioner

told us that cargoes of contraband goods were being shipped from Porbander and Bedi Bander ports to Cutch which was outside the Indian Customs Line, and that from there they found their way up the Persian Gulf eventually reaching Germany. It was hard to believe that the Jam Saheb, who was then Chancellor of the Chamber of Princes, could have been a party to this trade. But representations were made to the Rulers concerned and the trade stopped forthwith.

As a sequel it was thought that I would be a suitable person to be Dewan of Cutch, provided that the Maharaja agreed to invite me. I had no wish to go to Cutch and I learned that the Maharaja had been advised by the Jam Saheb, who told me this later on, not to offer the post to me. So the Maharaja and I had a most enjoyable half hour in the Taj Mahal Hotel in Bombay discussing shikar in East Africa and India without any mention of the Dewanship of Cutch.

One interesting small State which we visited was Vijayanagar, populated mostly by aboriginal Bhils. The State was mostly jungle and attractive hill country full of wild animals. The Bhils put on an interesting show for our benefit. The boy archers were surprisingly accurate in their shooting and the girls- dubbed the Bhil Beauty Chorus - were only too ready to show their charms as they danced and sang to the obvious embarrassment of the Resident. Finally the fathers performed a most agile dance with their sons standing on their shoulders.

At the end of my stay in Rajkot the Viceroy and Lady Linlithgow and their staff descended on Kathiawar for a short tour. Planning for the visits to the various States took some weeks as it meant consultation with the Rulers on one hand and Viceregal Staff on the other. Everything went well. The Rulers provided excellent hospitality and entertainment and Lord and Lady Linlithgow were kindness itself and made everything easy for us all. In fact the last State visited was Bhavnagar which was 'dry'. We had all come prepared with bottles hidden in our suitcases. Shortly after our arrival, however, we were all summoned to the Palace allotted to the Viceroy to find that Lord and Lady Linlithgow had set up a bar in the hall and were behind it serving drinks.

Early in 1941 I was transferred to Mount Abu as Secretary to Sir Arthur Lothian, Resident for Rajputana. Here my health rapidly recovered. It was a pleasure as well as excellent training to work for Sir Arthur who was always kind and considerate and careful to see that his Secretary was kept in the picture.

Ajmer-Merwara, though part of British India, was placed in our jurisdiction as it was surrounded by Rajputana States. In August 1942 we had to deal with the attempted rebellion by Congress and its sympathisers in Ajmer. Many Congress leaders had arrived there from Bombay thinking perhaps being closer to Delhi and in an isolated pocket of British India they could make more of a stir. They also thought that their identities would be unknown to us. In this they were mistaken as the local C.I.D. had obtained all the information needed for the preparation of Warrants. The police were, in fact, able to arrest and hold in custody all the ringleaders before they could cause any trouble.

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One of our duties was to attend the annual Prizegiving at the Mayo College in Ajmer. This College was founded to give education to the sons of Rulers and was run on the lines of an English Public School. At the time of our visit the Maharaja of Dholpur was President of the Board of Governors and had to make the closing speech. His hobby was to tame wild animals and his extraordinary success in doing so seemed to give him exalted ideas of his own importance. I was seated between the Maharajas of Jodhpur and Jaipur and we had a bet on the number of times H.H. Dholpur would refer to God in his speech. The Maharaja of Jaipur won with 23.

The Rajputana States stretched from the semi-desert of Jaisalmer and Jodhpur in the West to Bikaner and Awar in the North and to the forests of Udaipur, Kotah and Dungarpur in the South and East. Jaisalmer town was built on a rocky ridge and was surrounded by battlements of huge blocks of stone fitted tightly together without any mortar. Water was obtained from a deep well half way up the ridge. It probably tapped the river which in the days of Mohenjadaró flowed parallel to the Indus reaching the sea at the old port of Lohair. Inside the battlements many of the houses had beautiful stone lattice work in their windows. Jaipur was famous for its polo but when we were there the only game which we were made to play was bicycle polo, possibly a more dangerous version. Near the modern town was the old capital, Amber, with its Keep at the top of a hill where the State treasures were kept, and a huge water tank covered by a concrete roof in the main Palace. Round one of the temples at a height of about 20 feet from the ground were carvings of dancing girls. I first saw them from a nearby building at the same height and noticed that the heads and shoulders of the girls were much too large and out of proportion to the rest of their figures. When I went down to ground level and looked at the figures above my head the skill of the sculptors was at once evident as all parts of the dancers were in perfect proportion.

The Maharaja of Dungarpur refused to allow tigers to be shot in his State. At several places in the jungle he had had constructed small concrete pools fed by stand pipes. Close to them goats would be tethered. At one site there was a covered way to a hide 30 yards from a pool. One evening we were able to watch 2 nearly full grown cubs at the kill and the return of their mother from hunting. We watched her circle the pool and then slide into the water with obvious enjoyment as it had been a very hot day. The Maharaja of Udaipur was paralysed from the waist due it was said to a sore on his back being treated with cowdung. His disability did not stop him from attending all State functions and from being a charming host. One of his Rajas proudly showed us a ceremonial sword which had been given to his grandfather by Queen Victoria for rescuing and keeping safe on one of the islands a group of Europeans during the Mutiny.

Mount Abu was chosen as the headquarters of the Rajputana Agency by Sir Henry Lawrence and ~~he~~ ^{his wife} was buried there. ~~The~~ tomb was still a place of pilgrimage. From the Secretary's house, which overlooked the Nakki Lake, probably an ancient crater, we could see stretching westward 4500 feet below the plains of Jodhpur State and the Sind desert. The hillsides round the small town were well wooded and full of game, particularly the grey jungle cack. Many of the Rajputana and Kathiawar Rulers had houses tucked in folds of the hill

the hills. During the season there was plenty of social life, tennis parties at the Club or at Rulers' houses and golf on a sporty and rocky nine hole course.

The Rajputana States had seldom been known to cooperate with each other on any matter so when I was asked to try to obtain details of their requirements of essential civil supplies and of the yields of the various crops under cultivation I did not expect to have much success. The Government of India was anxious to find out whether there were any surpluses of food grains which could be sent to Bengal or to other areas where supplies were short. At first the States were unwilling to release figures of production or of supply requirements perhaps because they were unsure of their accuracy and perhaps because they did not want to reveal the state of their economy to their neighbours. However, I was very surprised to find, after a few months, that they were all willing to cooperate to the full. Unfortunately, as we began collecting the information, particularly of surplus food grains which could be sent to relieve the Bengal famine, I was told to return to Bengal to help with famine relief.

After a short time in Calcutta my health deteriorated and I had to take 2 months' leave to recover. I was then posted to Sambalpur as P.A. Orissa States. There were 26 small States, some under my direct control, others ruled by Rajas of varying degrees of incompetence and a few by Rajas who at least made an effort to improve the lot of their subjects. The whole Agency was heavily forested and full of game of all sorts. On the northern border in Bonai State and close to the iron and steel town of ~~Angul~~ were large deposits of iron ore and manganese. In the hills of the same State were two aboriginal tribes, the Juangs on the summits and the Bhuyians lower down. They were very shy of strangers and at first vanished from their villages when we reached them on tour. Soon, however, with the help of copious supplies of their local hooch friendship was established and I was able to listen to some of the most amazing rhythms of their drums as the young men and women shuffled in perfect time in their dances. They had their own tribal customs and laws and we were careful not to bring them within the ordinary State regime.

The Oriya men were a scraggy lot, many suffering from yaws, often drunk and often beaten by their wives who, surprisingly, were good looking with excellent figures and obvious good health. Suicide by the men was fairly common because they were physically unable to meet the demands of their wives. The difference in the physique of the sexes was so noticeable that I wondered whether there was a dietary reason. Enquiries, in fact, showed that when the rice had been harvested the husks were removed by parboiling. The men insisted on eating only the grains leaving the jelly, which contained the vitamins, to the women. I was planning a hilarious poster campaign when my health again broke down in the intense heat and I had to leave hurriedly for Baluchistan.

Every Province in India had started to prepare the first 5 year Development Plan. Preliminary work in Baluchistan had been done by Hugh Weightman, the Revenue Commissioner. I was appointed to the new post of Development Officer in charge of several Government Departments, and was very fortunate to have the help and guidance of such an able officer. After a short time I was asked to act temporarily as P.A. Quetta in addition to my other duties. Almost my first task was to organise the celebrations in Quetta for the victory over Japan.

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I called leading business men, Sirdars and wealthy landowners to a meeting in the Town Hall in Quetta, to decide on a programme of events and to provide funds for that programme and for various charities connected with the armed forces. Nearly 50,000 Rs were promised and it was agreed that at least half should go to these charities. I was careful to arrange for the control over the money to be in the hands of three leading business men, elected at the meeting. It was left to me and this committee to sort out the suggestions for events.

Sir Rupert Hay, the Agent to the Governor General, agreed that there should be an open air dinner under the Chinar trees in the Residency garden for leading Sirdars, business men, military officers and officials and, the next evening, a Reception at the Residency. It was left to me to provide the entertainment. The Mir Munshi in the P.A.'s office had relations and friends in

Lahore and he suggested that he should go there to try to arrange for a young film star in the Pancholi Studios to come to Quetta. This suggestion was put to the finance committee under an oath of secrecy, and was enthusiastically welcomed by them. So, in due course, one of the leading actresses, with her mother and 2 musicians arrived. They were housed in the Dak Bunhalow under Police guard. She was a leading star in the studio and told me that she could get 10,000 Rs for a performance at a private party in Lahore but, as this visit was a special and happy occasion, she would only accept 1,000 Rs and would be happy to give as many performances as we wanted. She was a pretty girl and very talented. After the first gasps of astonishment from the guests at the dinner her performance was greeted with prolonged applause and was a great success. She gave another performance at the Residency reception the next day and a third performance in the Town Hall the following day. In the meantime there was a Race meeting, A Civil vs Military football match and a fireworks display. Every evening little lamps were placed and lit round the houses in the town.

When the celebrations were over the A.G.G. rang me up and told me to earmark some of the money we had collected for some Roman Catholic charities, shoes for schoolchildren being mentioned. I was able to tell him that all moneys had already been spent or allocated and were in the hands of an elected finance committee and so not at my disposal.

Among all the plans proposed for the development of the Province the most important, to me, was the provision of mechanical cultivation. Though rainfall was small the winter snowfall on the mountains gave a few perennial streams, some of which disappeared under the stony valleys. John MacIntyre, the Chief Civil Engineer, had managed to make some of this underground water available by constructing sub-surface dams or weirs and it was decided that there would be sufficient water available for mechanical cultivation in some of the larger valleys together with enough rainfall for 'sailaba' cultivation by the construction of bunds to retain flood water. Owing to the altitude wheeled tractors would not have had sufficient power and caterpillar tractors would be needed. Fortunately at the end of the war large numbers of these tractors and ancillary equipment had been collected at Kanchrapara in Bengal. With the help of Hugh Weightman, who had become Foreign Secretary in Delhi, I was given permission by Pundit Nehru to arrange for the firm of Owen Roberts

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which supplied food grains to the army to provide the engineers and drivers to run the scheme and to select all the tractors, dozers and workshops which would be required. Within a month all the machines had reached Quetta and were under the control of Mr Parsons, the engineer from Messrs Owen Roberts. Demonstrations were promptly arranged and they aroused such enthusiasm that work programmes were filled up for the next 12 months. Unfortunately we were only able to see the start of this work before independence.

Looking back on my years in India I think that I had more work and greater responsibilities when I was S.D.O. Barrackpore in Bengal than I ever had in any post under the Government of India. I never saw the need for the birth of a separate Political Service. I remember arguments for and against a Crown Department and a Crown Service until finally officers in the Foreign and Political Department were told that they were members of an Indian Political Service. Personally I always considered myself to be a member of the Indian Civil Service serving under the Government of India. We were over-staffed, and made to wear expensive and uncomfortable uniforms which were really an anachronism and were regarded as a nuisance, and sometimes as figures of fun, by some of the Rulers. It was clear that they would never combine to form a Federal State or States and that we would have to repudiate our solemn treaties with them. Therefore all that we could reasonably do was to advise the Rulers not to take all the State revenues for themselves and to get rid of any obvious abuses in their Governments.

I had many Hindus and Sikhs on my staff in Baluchistan. They moved round the Province on tour in perfect safety, staying with Baluchi and Pathan landowners without any racial or religious antagonism. But after Independence Day I was told that refugees from East Punjab came to Quetta and set about murdering all Hindus and Sikhs who had been unable to get away. I am sure that those of us who worked in North India are ashamed and bitter at the atrocities which took place, and at our inability to arrange a peaceful transfer of populations between the two new nations. The cold-blooded decision to accelerate the transfer of power, which was certain to lead to bloodshed and hatred, and the deceit in using the excuse of Paramountcy to reward the loyalty of the Rulers by scrapping their Treaties with the Crown and so destroying the States for ever have overshadowed any feelings of satisfaction I may have had in helping in a very small way in creating new self-governing countries.

After spending the leave due to me in Australia I took temporary employment, thanks to the kindness of Mr Casey, with the Commonwealth Department of Works & Housing as Chief Clerk dealing with all correspondence concerning construction work on the Long Range Weapons site at Woomera. I was soon made Secretary of the Main Works Committee and then the Department's representative on the Commonwealth Defence & Research and Long Range Weapons Committees. I was also asked to be Secretary of the Commonwealth Immigration Works Committee and the Commonwealth Fire Committee.

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II

Mr Casey warned me that eventually efforts would be made to squeeze me out of the Department 'as a pip squeezed out of an orange'. After three years when I thought that the squeeze was starting I moved, again thanks to Mr Casey to the Department of External Affairs, looking after Colombo Plan students in Victoria and Tasmania. Some of these students were officers of the Indian and Pakistan Administrations. They all told me how pleased they were to have a member of the I.C.S. looking after them. One evening several of them attended a lecture by the Professor of Modern History in Melbourne University in which he started to refer to the exploitation of India by the British. He was cut short by a Forest Officer from Madras who gave him a real dressing down and a history lesson into the bargain. Fortunately none of the students was reading History at this University.

During the course of my work I found that there were several thousand Asian students in Australia who were being educated at their own expense. . . They had very little contact with Australians outside their school and technical courses and knew almost nothing of the country or its customs as they never travelled. With the help of the 'Age' newspaper and members of the Rotary and other Clubs I was able to arrange for parties of these students to spend days in the countryside with hospitable Australians. Mr & Mrs Casey were very interested in this work and at the beginning he saw that funds were put at my disposal to meet travel costs. With the help of Mrs Casey and the small External Affairs Office in Melbourne a small booklet was printed, paid for by the proprietor of the Herald newspaper, and issued to every new arrival. Eventually the External Affairs Department agreed that they had a liability to help these private students as well as the Colombo Plan students. I was given a well furnished office and two assistants, and was allowed to make use of the Department's Office in Melbourne. After three years this work was on a sound basis and I felt able to retire and bring my family back to England.

Meredith Worth
10.11.51

Memoirs of Meredith Worth [6v] (12/12)

