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FOOD RESEARCH INSTITUTE
STANFORD UNIVERSITY

One of a group of studies on
FOOD, AGRICULTURE, AND WORLD WAR II

FOOD ADMINISTRATION IN INDIA 1939-47

By
SIR HENRY KNIGHT, K.C.S.I., C.I.E.
formerly of the
Indian Civil Service

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DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

This book is the fourth to appear in the Food Research Institute's projected series of some 20 volumes designed to illuminate the complex aspects of food, agriculture, and World War II. As is indicated by its title, *Food Administration in India, 1939–47*, it falls into a group of studies dealing with wartime management of food and agriculture in various important countries or regions of the world.

The author, Sir Henry Knight, has chosen to focus attention upon problems of food administration in India. His account covers a period characterized by exacerbated sporadic food shortages, among them the tragic Bengal famine of 1943, in a setting of war with the enemy penetrating the borders and of occasional bitter political dissension internally. No reader can fail to be impressed by the immensity and unwieldiness of the tasks of food administration in the vast Indian subcontinent, or by the degree of administrative success achieved in softening the impact of food shortages when, in 1946, a second sharp crisis arose as the result of widespread crop failure. Sir Henry writes of these difficult times with the authority of the eyewitness in a position to take a bird's-eye view. From 1939 to 1945 he served as Adviser to the Governor of Bombay in charge of finance, food, agriculture, and rural development; in 1945 as Acting Governor of Bombay; in 1946 as Acting Governor of Madras, of Burma, and of Assam. Returning to Great Britain in 1947, he served as Adviser to the Secretary of State for India, in the India Office. And behind these positions of high responsibility lay nearly three decades of varied experience in the Indian Civil Service.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the Rockefeller Foundation for a grant of funds that made possible the preparation and publication of this work. The Foundation is in no way responsible for the treatment of the subject. The final responsibility, in general and in detail, rests with the author himself.

M. K. BENNETT
Director

STANFORD, CALIFORNIA
January 1954

To
the Farmers
of
India and Pakistan

PREFACE

This study of the Food Administration in India during World War II and immediately thereafter was undertaken at the request of the Food Research Institute of Stanford University, California. It was to have been written by Sir Robert Hutchings, K.C.I.E., C.M.G., who was Secretary of the Food Department of the Government of India from 1943 to 1947. When circumstances prevented his carrying out the task, it was suggested that I should do it instead.

Progress with the work has been delayed by my appointment to an Advisory Commission concerned with Arab Refugees in the Near East and this has involved residence in Beirut in the Lebanon and numerous visits elsewhere. I have therefore been unable to consult as many people and to refer to as many records and publications as I should have wished.

Most of the information has been obtained from published official documents and reports. I am grateful to the Commonwealth Relations Office of Her Majesty's Government for permission to use certain unpublished records and to the Ministry of Food and Agriculture of the Government of India for having specially compiled for me certain important statistics not available elsewhere.

I most gratefully acknowledge the help of those whose names are mentioned below this Preface and of many others who have given me information on many matters; I am particularly indebted to the kindness of those friends, especially Sir Robert Hutchings, who have read, criticized, and corrected much of what I had written. The responsibility, however, for all matters stated and for all opinions expressed rests upon myself. I am grateful also to the many publishers and others who have given me permission to quote significant passages.

In writing this account, I have as far as possible avoided mentioning by name those who were concerned with Food Administration in India, lest, where so much good work was done by so many, injustice be caused by omission. I believe that my former colleagues in the Indian Services will concur in this view.

References to source materials are given in the text by numbers in parentheses, at once referring to the lists of authorities that follow each chapter and giving the relevant page number. In some cases,

however, where the information is from unpublished records or from periodicals, the page number is not given.

Since the study is being published by Stanford University, the American usage in spelling and in capitalization has in the main been followed, instead of that customary in publications of the Indian Government.

Finally, I thank Mr. Bennett and the Food Research Institute for the opportunity to record some of the wartime food problems, and the efforts made to meet them, in India, where I had the good fortune to serve for thirty-six happy years.

H. F. K.

BEIRUT, LEBANON
December 29, 1952

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FOOD ADMINISTRATION IN INDIA 1939-47

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The object of this study is to put on record some of the difficulties which faced India in the years 1939–47, during and immediately after World War II, in feeding its 400 million people, and of the administrative measures taken to meet these difficulties.

Fully to recount the wartime administration of food and agriculture in a country "roughly equal to Europe without Russia" in size and population, and which "in most of the elements which distinguish one country from another—in race, in language, in religion, in ways of life—is more variegated than Europe" (*1*, p. 1) would be impossible. It is therefore not intended to write a military, political, commercial, economic, or social history of India during the war, and such subjects are referred to only so far as they affected food. The military operations of the Allies and their opponents, the international problems to which these gave rise, the difficulties of India's transport system under an almost impossible strain, the economic and social consequences of the war, such as inflation, shortage of consumers' goods, excess purchasing power in unaccustomed hands, and the like, are excluded from consideration except where they directly impinged on food supply. Similarly the political and constitutional developments, which culminated in the establishment of the two new Dominions of India and Pakistan, are not dealt with except where explanation is needed to account for administrative action.

Attention is confined to events which happened between the beginning of World War II on September 3, 1939 and the division of India into the Dominions of India and Pakistan on August 15, 1947 under the Independence of India Act, 1947. The word "India" is therefore used here in its old connotation covering the countries now known as India and Pakistan. Also, except where the context may show otherwise, India is used to cover both British India and the Indian States. The French and Portuguese territories in India, which had a combined population of less than a million, are excluded from consideration throughout.

"India's immensity and diversity are known only to those who have travelled over it. One man's India is not another man's India.

It is no uncommon thing to hear someone say of a particular area: 'This is not India,' meaning simply that it differs markedly from that part in which he has hitherto passed his life. Hence the folly of generalization. At the same time there is a family resemblance between these cultivator types, a resemblance that grows as one reads the life story of daily routine of one son of the soil after another. There is the same plainness of life, the same wrestling with uncertainties of climate (except in favoured areas), the same love of simple games, sport and songs, the same religious background, the same neighbourly helpfulness and the same financial indebtedness" (*2*, p. vii).

It is this unity of the Indian farmer beneath great diversity which makes possible the writing of this account.

India's vital problem during the years 1939–47 was to ensure that all its people received enough of the staple foods. These staple foods were the various cereals, and if the supply of these could be assured, it was probable that the additional foods needed would be somehow produced. The present account therefore has to be concerned mainly with the four chief cereals—rice, wheat, bajra and jowar—on one or the other of which almost all the population depended, and so the problems of the lesser cereals, of pulses, of vegetables and other protective foods have had to be dealt with more briefly.

Attention has had to be concentrated mainly on the administrative measures of the Government of India as, except for a few important matters, the space available has precluded detailed accounts of the difficulties and measures of the various Provincial Governments and the Indian States.

Similarly no attempt has been made to assess the future problems facing India after 1947 of how the food production and food imports can be adequate for the increasing population of the country.

Much of interest and importance has thus had to be omitted by design. And, equally, doubtless much has been omitted by accident or by ignorance. For this apology is made.

It has not been possible to avoid the use of some Indian words and a glossary is therefore given on page 309.

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1 Sir Reginald Coupland, *Britain and India: 1600–1941* (Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., London, 1941), by permission of the Central Office of Information.

2 William Burns, ed., *Sons of the Soil* (Govt. of India, Delhi, 1941).

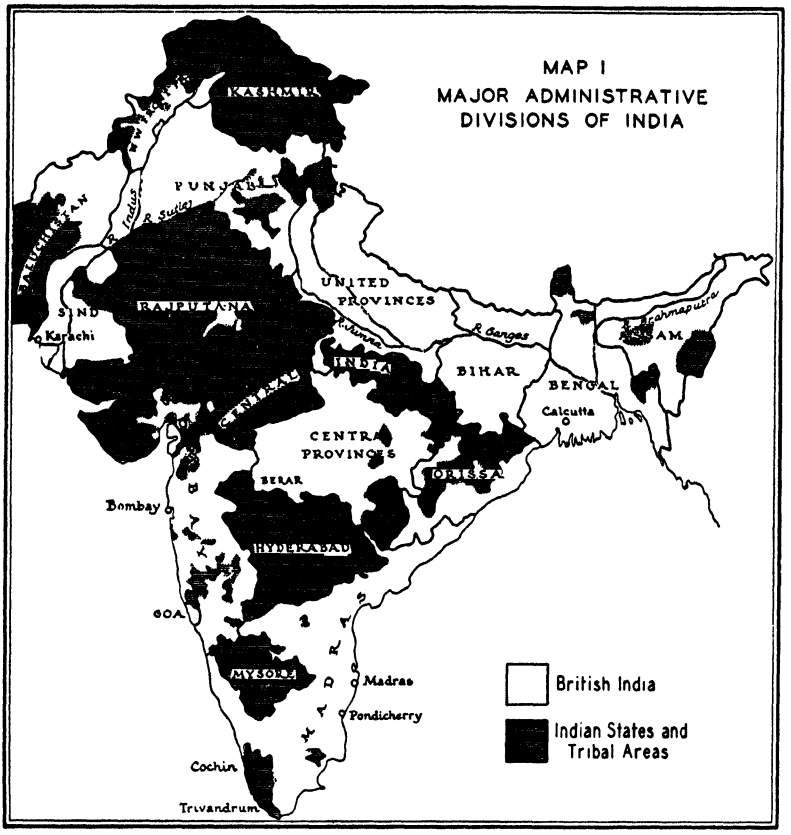
CHAPTER 2

POLITICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND

The problem of dealing with India's food supply during the war was complicated by the fact that the subcontinent was divided between British India and the Indian States. A general view of this division is provided by Map 1. Of India's area of 1,581,410 square miles with a population of about 390 million, British India covered only 865,446 square miles with 295 million people, and the Indian States occupied 715,964 square miles with 93 million (*1*, p. 117).

The Princes ruled rather more than two fifths of the area and rather less than a quarter of the inhabitants of India. Their origin was very diverse and their frontiers confused and illogical. In order to facilitate the settlement of the country in 1818, the British recognised as princes all those in *de facto* possession of the soil who were prepared to acknowledge their supremacy. There was a political moratorium; State boundaries were frozen as they existed at the moment, and remained substantially the same until 1947. This accounts for the extraordinary confusion of the State frontiers in some parts of India, and for the great varieties and status of the various States. Thus Hyderabad, the largest of all, was really a fragment of the Moghul Empire ruled by the descendants of a masterful Moghul Governor; the States of Rajputana were clan chiefships whose history went back more than a thousand years; the Maratha States of Indore, Gwalior, and Baroda were remnants of the eighteenth century Maratha military principalities; while Bhopal and other Central Indian States represented the enterprise of military adventurers in time of troubles. (*2*, p. 137).

The individual relationships of the several hundred States to the Crown need be described only briefly. While British India was governed under a constitution sanctioned by an Act of the British Parliament, each State was ruled by an Indian Prince and had its own laws, its own administration, and its own judiciary; and British laws and British officials had no authority in the State. The only sanction over a State was the somewhat nebulous "paramountcy" under which the Crown had the right to interfere. In practice, though advice, suggestion, or even threat might be given to an Indian Prince, it was only in cases of gross mismanagement, or to cover a Ruler's minority, that the Viceroy in his capacity of Crown Representative would directly interfere in an Indian State. Thus, if the Government of India desired uniform action throughout all India on, for instance, a Basic



All-India Food Plan, not only had the agreement of the eleven provinces of British India to be secured, but, by persuasion of the Political Agents accredited to the States, the agreement of each of some five hundred Indian States. Though of course the major States were comparatively few and co-operative, negotiations throughout India inevitably took valuable time in an emergency.

Furthermore, when a state had agreed to follow the general policy, it depended on the administration of the state whether the policy would in practice be enforced. The administration of states such as Mysore and Travancore was well up to the standard of British India, but in some states it was still frankly medieval—possibly not unsuited in some cases to the condition of the subjects—and incapable of applying the complexities of wartime controls. (And of course in any area where controls were not enforced there arose a black market.)

In dealing with Indian States the only constitutional link between the Government of British India and the Indian States was the dual capacity of the Viceroy as Governor General of British India and as Crown Representative vis-à-vis the Indian States. This at times involved delays.

It would be very wrong, however, not to acknowledge the great help given by almost all the Indian States in India's food problems, of which indeed their own was a part, and of the efficiency of some of the states in food administration. But equally it would be wrong not to recognize the difficulty caused by the multiplicity of territorial and political entities and by the very varying abilities of their administrations.

THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA ACT

The administration of food and agriculture in British India was affected by the provisions of the Government of India Act, 1937. In 1939 British India was not—as sometimes seemed to be thought—ruled by a unified administration directed from London by the Secretary of State for India. Since the Morley-Minto "Reforms" (*3*, p. 59) in 1909—and in fact from much earlier times—the aim of the British Government had been the progressive devolution of the responsibility for India's administration to the people of India. In 1819 Mountstuart Elphinstone, Governor of Bombay, wrote, "The most desirable death for us to die of should be, the improvement of the natives reaching such a pitch as would render it impossible for a foreign nation to retain the Government."

This aim was continued by the Government of India Acts of 1919 and 1935. The latter, which consisted of 321 sections and 10 schedules—"the largest and most complex legislative enactment ever negotiated on to a statute book" (*4*, p. 41)—was passed by Parliament in 1935, and "provided for the establishment of a Federal Government and Parliament in which both British India and the States would be represented. Indian Ministers would be responsible for all Federal Subjects except three—defence, foreign policy, and (a very minor matter) the control of the British Chaplains" [for British officials and soldiers]. Only these three subjects "would be 'reserved' to the control of the Governor General responsible only to the Secretary of State" (*3*, p. 79).

Owing to certain hesitations on the part of the Indian Princes and of the Congress Party (by far the largest political party in India), the federal portion of the Act had not been brought into operation

when the war started in 1939, and therefore during the war period the central government in India was still based on the ultimate authority of the British Parliament, with the chain of control from Parliament through the Secretary of State to the Viceroy (*1*, p. 184).

The provincial part of the Act, however, had come into force on April 1, 1937, the beginning of the official year 1937/38, and this "entrusted the whole field of administration to undivided Indian Ministries. In other words, all the internal affairs of a Province, including justice and police, . . . were dealt with by an Indian Prime Minister and Cabinet, responsible, like their originals in Britain, to their own legislature, and through it to the electorate" (*3*, pp. 77–78). There were in the Act certain special responsibilities with which the Governor of a province was charged, but in practice these did not derogate from the ministerial authority.

There was delay in the formation of ministries in some provinces, but from July 1937 until after the war had begun, the eleven provinces of India were governed by ministries responsible to popularly elected legislatures. "The position at the beginning of the war was thus that the Provinces were practically self-governing, while the Central Government continued to be in essence an official Government, subordinate to the British Parliament" (*1*, p. 184).

Toward the end of 1939, for reasons which need not be considered here, the Congress Party ministries in seven of the eleven provinces resigned office. With no alternative party able to form governments, administration in Madras, Bombay, the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Bihar, Orissa, and the North West Frontier Province was taken over by their Governors under Section 93 of the Government of India Act which provided for such emergencies. In Bengal, the Punjab, Sind, and Assam ministries, based on majorities in popularly elected legislatures, continued to function.

Constitutionally, these ministerial governments were fully responsible in their provinces for the administration of all subjects not "reserved" to the Central Government, and neither food nor agriculture was so "reserved." The Governor General had, under the Act, no right to interfere with a provincial ministry's use of its powers, except in so far as such use might impinge on his special responsibility for, e.g., "the prevention of any grave menace to the peace and tranquility of India." Democratic government in the provinces, which was provided under the Government of India Act, was being tried out.

Both on constitutional grounds and on those of expediency, only

the gravest emergency could have justified the Governor General, or a Governor, in overruling a popular ministry, with the almost inevitable result of its resignation and the failure of democratic government in yet another province. Whether in any particular instance this noninterference policy was justified in the crisis of global war may of course be questioned. Of its constitutional correctness there is no doubt. Nor can there be any doubt of the value to India's war effort of retaining the support of those provinces where democracy was operative. (In only two cases were directions given by the Governor General to provincial governments in matters of food: to Bengal regarding rationing and to Sind regarding price of wheat. Both were accepted.)

The position in the "Section 93" Provinces was not so simple as it might appear. The Governor General or the Governor could give administrative directions to the Executive at his discretion, but it would be useless to give orders that could not, or would not, be carried out on account of public apathy or opposition. Particularly in matters so closely affecting the basic life of the people as food or agriculture, the Governor had to carry public opinion with him; and the introduction of novel measures such as food rationing or compulsory purchase of crops needed careful preparation and propaganda, if they were not to be resisted or evaded. A bureaucracy lacks many means of testing and influencing public opinion which are open to a popularly based ministry. In fact one or two of the Section 93 governments sometimes perhaps erred on the side of caution, for they were irreverently described as "widows' governments," implying that, however circumstances might change, they, like a dutiful widow, would never do anything of which the "dear departed" former government might remotely disapprove.

These two difficulties—the lack of direct control over more than one-third of India comprised in the Indian States, and the need to keep popular support for the administration in provinces where the constitution had not been suspended—were responsible for much of what may have seemed incompetent bureaucratic bungling, for instance to the zealous official with famine threatening his district, to the hungry inhabitant of a "deficit" province, or to the public unfamiliar with the complexities of the Indian constitution.

The constitutional position changed soon after the end of the war when, after the provincial elections in the spring of 1946, the administration of the Section 93 Provinces was taken over once more by popularly elected ministries.

As regards the Central Government, there were negotiations with the leaders of the principal political parties in India by a British Cabinet Mission and later by the Viceroy, and in September 1946 an Interim Central Government was formed with, in effect, ministerial responsibility for the administration of India.

The tension between the British Government and the Indian political parties, and between the Congress Party and the Moslem League, continued to increase. In February 1947 Mr. Attlee, the British Prime Minister, announced the decision of the British Government to hand over India to Indian control, and in March Lord Mountbatten arrived in India to put this decision into force. It was soon apparent that to achieve this object the division of the country into Hindu and Moslem spheres was inevitable; on July 18 the British Parliament passed the Indian Independence Act; and on August 15 the two independent Dominions of India and Pakistan came into existence. Beyond this date this account of India's food administration does not go.

DEFENCE OF INDIA ACT

During the war a system of government control over various commodities, particularly foodgrains, grew up in India and was continued after hostilities had ended. The legal basis on which this system operated should be briefly stated.

At the outbreak of the war the Governor General issued a Defence of India Ordinance under Section 42 of the Government of India Act. This was soon replaced by the Defence of India Act 1939, which was passed by the Indian Legislature and received the assent of the Governor General on September 29, 1939. This Act provided for the Central Government to "make such rules as appear to it to be necessary or expedient for securing the Defence of British India, the public safety, the maintenance of public order, or the efficient prosecution of the war, or for maintaining supplies and services essential to the life of the community."

Among the matters on which such rules might provide for the making of orders was

> the control of any trade or industry for the purpose of regulating or increasing the supply of, and the obtaining of information with regard to, articles or things of any description whatsoever which can be used in connexion with the conduct of the war or for maintaining supplies and services essential to the life of the community.

Section 4 of the Act enabled the Government of India to delegate

powers under the Act and Section 5 authorized provincial governments further to delegate powers conferred on them.

Of the rules made under the Act, Rule 81 for the "general control of Industry etc" provided for (*a*) regulating production, treatment, keeping, storage, movement, transport, distribution, disposal, acquisition, use, or consumption of articles or things of any description whatsoever; (*b*) controlling the prices or rates at which articles or things of any description whatsoever may be sold; (*c*) requiring the keeping of books, records, etc.

It was under this very comprehensive rule that most of the regulations were made and controls were enforced regarding food supplies. The rules were amended from time to time, and in particular, by Department of Commerce notification No. 899-SM/41 of November 28, 1941, powers were delegated to provincial governments to make rules.

The Defence of India Act and the rules thereunder ceased to have validity on October 1, 1946 and the controls on essential commodities in short supply such as foodstuffs would have lapsed with the Act. But, since it was necessary to keep in force a number of these, Ordinance XVIII was promulgated on September 25, 1946 to provide for their continuance, and this Ordinance was still in force on August 15, 1947.

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2 T. G. P. Spear, *India, Pakistan, and the West* (Oxford Univ. Press, London, 1949).

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4 The Indian Year Book and Who's Who, 1947 (Bennett, Coleman and Co. Ltd., Bombay).

CHAPTER 3

AGRICULTURE

The importance of agriculture in India cannot be exaggerated, for it is on the Indian farmer that India's prosperity—indeed India's existence—depends.

In 1941, of the 390 million people living in India, 339 million lived in rural areas and only 49 million in urban, 87 as against 13 percent, whereas in the United States the proportion of urban population was 56 percent and in England and Wales 80 percent (*1*, p. 29). Probably 80 percent of the people of India were dependent on agriculture for their living (*2*, p. 99).

The total area of India was about 1,000 million acres, of which approximately 515 million were in British India and 490 million in Indian States, and of this, 362 million acres were cultivated (*3*, p. 15). Except for such areas as were irrigated (in British India 55 million acres out of 214 million under cultivation were irrigated), farming was dependent on rain, on the southwest and the northeast monsoons.

The Indo-Gangetic Plain and the northern parts of the Peninsula receive the southwest monsoon rains, which normally fall from June to October, with an average rainfall ranging from 15 inches or less to 50 inches in the main cultivated tracts. In this area the cold-weather rainfall between December and March is usually not more than 2–4 inches. The greater part of southeast India, however, receives the bulk of its rain during the northeast monsoon, which covers October to February (*1*, p. 306).

There are in most parts of India two main harvests. Throughout northern India, the Central Provinces, and the greater part of the Bombay Presidency, there are two well-defined crop seasons, the rainy and the cold, yielding two distinct harvests, the autumn or "kharif" and the spring or "rabi." In the south of the Peninsula, the greater part of which gets the benefit of the northeast monsoon from October to January, and in which extremes of temperature are absent, the distinction between the seasons tends to disappear and there are merely early and late sowings of the same crops. As a general statement, both in the north and in the south, the principal kharif crops

are rice, the two millets, jowar (*Sorghum vulgare*), and bajra (*Pennisetum typhoidsum*), and the oilseed sesamum (*Sesamum indicum*), to which should be added cotton for northern, jute for northeastern, and groundnut and ragi (*Eleusine coracana*) for southern India. The principal rabi crops in northern India are wheat, gram (*Cicer arietinum*), linseed, rape, mustard, and barley; and in southern India, jowar, rice, sesamum, and gram (*3*, p. 69).

The times of the principal harvests are: for rice October to February, for wheat February to April, for jowar November and February, for bajra October and November, for maize October and November, and for gram April. The kharif crop year is taken as covering the twelve months from November 1, and the rabi crop year as the twelve months from May 1. For the purpose of reports and statistics, the Indian agricultural year is from July 1 to June 30. In giving the yield of crops, the ton used is the "long ton" of 2,240 pounds.

Agricultural India is a land of small villages—600,000 of them have less than a thousand inhabitants (*4*, map 10), and the main characteristics of village life are still those of centuries and millenniums ago. Superficial changes there are: the railway and the motor bus and motor truck have widened the villager's range of travel, save him time, and assure a better market for his crops; industrial mass production has destroyed some traditional village crafts; more people can read and write and put their sons into other occupations; some agricultural methods and implements have been improved. But in essence the village is still the same, a cluster of mud houses, set in the middle of the village lands. Here are the dwellings of the farmers and of a few tradesmen and artisans, with the village well, the village temple or mosque or both, the village meeting place, often a schoolhouse, and on the outskirts the huts and well of the "untouchables." The village still has its own intense public opinion, its village squabbles, its festivals, its marriages and mournings, its sowings and its harvests. The village is the most unchanging factor of the Indian civilization on which all else depends. The holdings are small, varying in size with the nature of the soil, and in more fertile and irrigated areas smaller than in dry tracts. The individual cultivator does not live in a farmhouse in the middle of his holding, for this is normally composed of a number of small pieces scattered throughout the village lands, some of good land, others of bad, as may have been acquired through division of land or inheritance, or by purchase, or as relics of the older village common cultivation. Except in some areas

favored by the climate or by irrigation, the harvest is dependent on the rain, in most of India an uncertain factor.

No one picture covers all India's villages; these, M. S. Randhava says, "are in different developmental stages; while the hand flail and the solid wheeled bullock cart of Mohenjo Daro dating back to 3000 B.C. still survive in some parts of India, there are some villages, particularly in Northern India, which have gone far ahead and have adopted modern scientific methods of crop production" (*2*, p. 7).

MOVEMENT OF CROP SURPLUS

India is, however, basically a land of millions of subsistence farmers, either small owners or tenants, who cultivate their five acres or less of scattered patches of land with the help of their families, live on the crops which they grow, and if and when this is not enough, work part of the time as laborers, cartmen, and the like. When they have a surplus, they sell it for cash or for credit with the local shopkeeper.

The Indian farmer needs cash to pay the revenue on his land or his rent, to pay some of his debts, to buy the clothes for his family, the bullocks for his plough and his cart, some jewelry for his wife—a form of savings bank account against a rainy day, or perhaps in India more appropriately against a rainless day—and to provide all the various necessaries and petty luxuries of village life. If the farmer is a tenant, he may pay his rent in cash or he may have to pay in kind, usually in the form of a share of the crop.

While there were of course big landlords and substantial farmers with produce far beyond their own needs for food or current cash, taking India as a whole these were comparatively few, and it was from the "marginal accretions" of the surpluses of millions of small farmers that the towns and the nonproducers of the country were fed.

When a small farmer had a surplus of grain which he did not need to turn into cash, he might store it either against next year's needs or in the hope of better prices later on, or he and his family might eat better than they normally had been doing. The increase in the money value of crops during the war allowed the farmer to pay his land revenue and his debts with the sale of a smaller quantity of grain than before, with the result that he and his family could eat more food, and thus send a smaller quantity to market.

How many individual holdings there were in India has never been accurately computed. It was estimated that in 1931 there were in British India 4,151,000 noncultivating owners of land, 28,397,000

cultivating owners, and 36,239,000 tenants—a total of about 65.5 million individual farmers (*6*). The Royal Commission on Agriculture in 1928 stated that the figures for the Punjab, which were the only ones available for a province, indicated that 22.5 percent of the cultivators cultivated one acre or less; a further 15.4 percent between one and two and a half acres; 17.9 percent between two and a half and five acres, and 20.5 percent between five and ten acres. It added that all other provinces except Bombay had much smaller average areas per cultivator. And it is likely that in the succeeding ten years these areas had still further decreased.

The basic problem in feeding India was not of course that of feeding the whole population of 400 million people, but of feeding that part of the people who did not grow their own food, or did not grow enough of it—the inhabitants of the big cities, the shopkeeper, the artisan, the clerk, the pensioner, the laborers who worked in the towns, and those who lived in the country but had no land, or not enough land to live on. It has been estimated that out of some 70 million tons of foodgrains produced in India only 21 million tons, i.e., about 30 percent, came to market, and on this the urban population—with the help of a million or so tons of imports—depended for its staple foods (*5*, p. 37).

In normal times the problem was met in two ways. On the one hand grain was imported from overseas, particularly rice to the amount of a million tons annually from Burma, mostly to supply the great cities of Calcutta and Bombay with their hundreds of thousands of working people. On the other hand, and of far greater importance, was the internal movement of foodgrains from the growers to the towns and villages. Not only the surplus crops of the big landlords and the well-to-do farmers came on the market, but also the still greater aggregate of the small surpluses of the millions of individual small holders. These surpluses traveled from the fields to the hundreds of thousands of village shopkeepers and grain dealers, thence to wholesale dealers at local markets, and so by process of wholesale and retail trade to the consumer in the towns.

The village shopkeeper might get the grain as a payment in kind toward the credit side of his customer's account for groceries, cloth, cash advances, etc., or as rent for land on which he had foreclosed a mortgage, or as a cash purchase from a farmer, or as a return with 100 percent interest in kind on seedgrain lent at sowing time.

The timing of the sales of produce might be varied. Some must be sold early to pay the land revenue which was due soon after har-

vest; thereafter the grower might keep back some of his crop in the hope of better prices or the middleman might hold off buying in the hope of lower prices to come.

If for any reason the millions of small producers should eat more than usual, or should hold back their produce, then the townsfolk and the nonproducer must go short, or must import more food; and it was in this connection that the supply of rice from Burma was such an important factor in the mechanism of feeding India before the war. But when the supply from Burma failed, and supplies from elsewhere were very difficult to import, it became almost imperative for the authorities throughout India to secure from the individual grower all his produce over and above what he needed for his and his family's food and for next year's seed; at least it was imperative for the governments of the deficit areas to do this. But until 1946 the need for such action was not accepted by most of the surplus areas.

The stream of supply might be tapped at any point, but clearly larger amounts would be secured if the offtake was before the grain left the grower and got into trade circulation. This would mean calculating for each farmer how much grain his land produced, how much ought to be left for his own needs, and then making arrangements for the government or its agents to buy the difference. This vast task could be done in some parts of India with reasonable success, but in other parts it was impossible and there the grain had to be bought at various higher levels during its course through the trade to the consumer.

LAND TENURE

The reason why the government could not everywhere deal directly with the producer lay primarily in the historic causes underlying the development of the land revenue system of India. This system had been inherited by the British from the previous rulers of the country, with little change from that of the Moghul Empire, and in many parts of India based on far earlier origins.

Briefly, the Ruler in theory was the ultimate proprietor of all land in India; and the actual tiller of the soil, the "rayat," might hold either direct from the Ruler, or as tenant of a landlord, the "zemindar," who held a larger grant from the Ruler. In areas under the former system, known as the "rayatwari," where every field was held from the government, and where the land revenue was revised every thirty years or so, the government had necessarily to keep detailed records of the position, area, assessment, tenure, holder, crop-

ping, etc., of each field each year. These were recorded for each village, the immemorial foundation of all life in India, by the village officers, a village headman and a village accountant, varying in designation in various areas and languages, but men of ability and local influence, entrusted with duties of ever increasing scope and importance far beyond what their emoluments would indicate. Where the administration had this village Land Revenue organization, it was possible to introduce and to carry out measures of control of crops and of government purchases, which could not be done elsewhere.

In areas under the "zemindari" system, the responsibility for paying the land revenue to the government did not rest on the individual farmer, but on the landlord to whom the farmer paid his rent, and the government did not need to keep the detailed records and accounts for every holding which were necessary under the "rayatwari" system.

A more important factor was that the lands held under the "zemindari" system fell into two classes, those "permanently settled" and those "temporarily settled." In permanently settled areas the amount which the landlord paid to the government had been fixed once and for all and the landlord was a freehold proprietor, and the government had no further interest in the land or how it was used. In temporarily settled areas the amount paid to government was revised at intervals in accord with changing economic conditions, and therefore records, especially in connection with the various tenancy laws which gave rights to the tenants, were maintained under government supervision. In most of the permanently settled "zemindari" areas the government retained normally no more village staff than a village watchman, whose duties were primarily police and who could provide no reliable information about crops, still less act as an official agency for buying produce.

The above is of course an oversimplification of the position; there were zemindari villages in the rayatwari provinces; there were many various forms of agreement between landlords and the government; there were different tenures based on grants by previous rulers, on religious privileges, on duties to be performed, on war services, etc. But administratively the main difference was between the temporarily settled areas where the authorities had a competent local staff of village revenue officials, and the permanently settled areas where the government had no concern with the actual cultivator of the soil and had no local agency to discover anything about his land or his crops.

In British India some 391 million acres were temporarily settled,

and 125 million permanently settled (7, pp. 3–4), which meant that for about one-quarter of the country neither reliable information about crops nor official agency for their procurement was available.

The respective area of permanently and temporarily settled land in the various provinces of British India is shown below, in thousand acres:

	Permanently settled	Temporarily settled
Ajmer-Merwara	974	797
Assam	3,919	31,566
Bengal	39,158	10,100
Bihar	39,694	4,630
Bombay	...	48,653
Central Provinces and Berar	...	63,091
Madras	25,589[a]	62,176
North West Frontier Province	...	8,577
Orissa	9,861	10,745
Punjab	...	60,155
Sind	...	30,180
United Provinces	7,306[a]	60,660
	124,501	391,330

[a] Madras and the United Provinces maintained a village revenue organization in permanently settled areas.

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CHAPTER 4

THE FOOD POSITION

The problem of India's food in relation to India's people can be considered from two aspects, quantity and quality: whether the people were getting enough to eat and whether they were getting the right kind of food to eat. These two aspects are of course interrelated, but perforce the former was of major importance during the war.

It had been known for many years that in many parts of India the ordinary diet was defective in the consumption of some of the "protective foods" required to give a properly balanced nutrition. But it seems often to have been assumed that, being an agricultural country, India would always be able to feed itself and that no actual shortage of food could occur except temporarily. For instance, even in January 1943 the Chairman of the Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay, described India as an agricultural country "which is, in normal times, able to feed itself." Until the loss of Burma in 1942 it was often forgotten that for a number of years past India's own food production was supplemented by imports of Burma rice. The fact that in years of good harvests India had a net export of wheat and wheat flour, which in 1937/38 amounted to 304,000 tons, seems to have led to the idea that India was a net exporter of foodgrains, whereas in the same year she imported a net 1,165,000 tons of rice and paddy. In fact, over the decade 1931–41 India had a net annual import of foodgrains and pulses varying from 600,000 to 2,200,000 tons (*1*, p. 83). During the war the question of how far India could feed her own inhabitants became of vital importance and it was not easy to give an answer.

AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

Before considering the statistics, however, on which an answer might be based, it may be wise to refer to a dictum of Sir Josiah Stamp particularly relevant to India (*2*, p. 259):

> The individual source of statistics may easily be the weakest link. Harold Cox tells a story of his life as a young man in India. He quoted some statistics to a judge, an Englishman, and a very good fellow. His friend said, "Cox, when

you are a bit older, you will not quote Indian Statistics with that assurance. The Government are very keen on amassing statistics—they collect them, add them, raise them to the nth power, take the cube root and prepare wonderful diagrams. But what you must never forget is that every one of these figures comes in the first instance from the *Chowkydar* (village watchman), who just puts down what he damn pleases."

Though the judge's verdict was no longer true for a great part of Indian statistics, it was still applicable to most of those from the permanently settled provinces, and inculcates caution in accepting figures in official reports.

For any consideration of the food and agricultural problems of India one ought to know the food and other crop yields of the country, the net imports or exports, and the population. The last two factors have been known with some accuracy for many years; the overseas import and export trade figures were regularly issued and the decennial census reports were available up to 1941. But in 1939 agricultural and food statistics were faulty. Ultimately all figures of the area of land under crops depended on reports from over half a million villages throughout the subcontinent. In those parts of British India where the land revenue assessment was revised at intervals, comprising rather more than three-quarters of the whole (*1*, p. 4), the village records needed for the periodical revision were maintained by generally competent officials.

The village revenue officers in the ordinary course of their work were required to make a detailed inspection of the village or villages in their charge and to record in the records the crops grown in each field. Provided that supervision by the higher revenue staff was adequate, the system ensured estimates of acreage which are believed to be reasonably accurate. But where the land revenue has been permanently settled, as in the provinces of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa, no such village revenue establishment existed and estimates of crop acreage were admittedly very defective (*6*, p. 44). The returns of areas under cultivation were made by *chowkidars* or village watchmen, checked to some extent by reports made by Circle Officers, District Agricultural Officers, and others. Such figures could not be accurate, and the random sample surveys of the area under rice, conducted in permanently settled Bengal by Professor Mahalanobis, showed that the official figure of 22.39 million acres was probably an underestimate by 3.5 million acres (*1*, p. 4).

Further, the figures of areas under food crops in the Indian States were available for only 56 percent of the state territories, which con-

stituted 47 percent of the whole of India. In effect, data on acreage were collected for only two-thirds of India and for the remaining third had to be composed on a basis of such intelligent guesswork as might be possible.

The All-India figures of crop acreage have therefore to be regarded with considerable caution. The various measures taken to improve them during the war had not been sufficiently tested by 1947.

The yield of crops in India was in most provinces calculated on a formula (*1*, p. 5) of "area under the crop × normal yield × condition factor, stated as a fraction of the normal yield." The normal yield was based upon crop-cutting experiments over a number of years on plots selected "by eye" as being of average quality, and apart from this unscientific selection the figures of normal yield were in many cases considerably out of date. The "condition factor," i.e., the proportion which the produce of the crop in the field bore to the normal yield, was usually an eye estimate based on the appearance of the growing crop and the knowledge and experience of the inspecting officer. In the temporarily settled areas this estimate was primarily made by the village officers. This was checked by the official in charge of a Circle or similar division of a Tehsil; a proportion of these Circle Officers' work was further checked by the Tehsildar, and that of the Tehsildar by the Subdivisional Officer, and finally there was a check by the Collector or the Deputy Commissioner.

These estimates of crop yield were of particular importance in areas where the amount of the land revenue to be collected, suspended, or remitted depended on the yield of the crops for that year. It is probable that when the harvest was good and no question of giving relief from taxation arose, less care would perhaps be given to deciding how much the crop exceeded the normal; when the harvest was bad, anxiety to avoid hardship to the farmer might bring the estimate to the low side.

Though the estimate of the yield of crops was only subjective and not scientific, it is not impossible that over periods of time and large areas the underestimates and the overestimates canceled out.

However, though the acreage and yield statistics of food crops in India may not have been quantitatively accurate, they did provide a basis by which trends of development of cultivation and production could be judged.

On this it appears that from 1931/32 to 1941/42 there was no significant change in acreage or yield of food crops indicated in the figures given below (*1*, pp. 28–29), showing the All-India acreage

and yield of foodgrains and pulses. The variations seem no more than those attributable to the normal variations of the seasons.

	Million acres	Million tons		Million acres	Million tons
1931/32....	239	68.3	1937/38....	234	66.3
1932/33....	234	66.1	1938/39....	235	61.6
1933/34....	239	65.2	1939/40....	233	64.8
1934/35....	233	64.8	1940/41....	235	62.1
1935/36....	233	62.1	1941/42....	236	63.6
1936/37....	237	66.7			

POPULATION AND FOOD SUPPLY

The figures of population stand on a different footing from those of acreage and yield and may be taken as having a high degree of accuracy in the later censuses. The population of India according to the census figures increased as follows between 1872 and 1941 (*6*, p. 74):

Census year	Population (*millions*)	Census year	Population (*millions*)
1872	203	1921	306
1881	250	1931	338
1891	279	1941	389
1901	284	1946	410[a]
1911	308		

[a] Estimated (*7*, p. 7).

The real increase of population over part of this period was not as great as shown, because up to 1891 considerable new areas were being brought under census and methods of enumeration were being improved. The real percentage of increase may be taken as below (*6*, p. 74):

Period	Percentage increase	Period	Percentage increase
1872–81	1.5	1911–21	1.2
1881–91	9.6	1921–31	10.6
1891–1901	1.4	1931–41	15.1
1901–11	6.4		

The small increase for 1891–1901 was largely due to famines and that for 1911–21 to the influenza epidemic of 1918/19, which is said to have caused 13 million deaths (*6*, p. 74). The larger increase in the last two decades was due to the prevention of famine and to improved public health administration against epidemics.

Dr. Burns calculated in 1944 that the total production of major

foodgrains in British India might be taken as 54.3 million tons in 1921 for a population of 233.6 million, as 50.1 million tons in 1931 for 256.8 million, and as 45.7 million tons in 1941 for 295.8 million (*5*, p. 848).

These figures may be compared with those for both reporting and nonreporting areas given in Appendix Table VI. These, after allowance for production, for seed and wastage, and for imports, purport to give the available supplies per adult of the major cereals for each year from 1931/32 to 1944/45. They show that there was a general trend of decrease in the number of pounds of cereals available for each adult's food during the year from somewhere about 437 pounds in 1931/32 to perhaps 382 pounds in 1939/40.

As the acreage statistics of food in India are more reliable than the production figures, it may be well also to consider the area of cultivable or of cultivated land available per head to produce food. The total area of India was about 1,000 million acres and of this 512 million acres were in British India. For the year 1940/41 these 512 million acres were classified as follows (*6*, p. 77):

	Million acres
Cultivated area	
Net area sown	214
Net area under food crops	170
Current fallows	45
Uncultivated area	
Not available for cultivation (desert, etc.)	87
Forest	68
Other uncultivated land	98

To ascertain how far India could feed its population, the Famine Inquiry Commission considered that, of the various ways of making this calculation, the most practicable was to divide the net area sown by the census figure of population, and this gave the following results for British India (*6*, p. 78):

	Population (*millions*)	Average net area sown (*million acres*)	Per capita area sown (*acres*)
1911	231.6	208	0.90
1921	233.6	205	0.88
1931	256.8	211	0.82
1941	295.8	215	0.72

These figures of course omit the possible increase in the outturn by better cultivation and better seed, and above all by better irriga-

tion. In India irrigation beyond any other factor produces larger crops.

The area in British India irrigated from government irrigation works increased from an average of 25,631,000 acres in the five years ending 1921/22 to 33,438,000 acres in the five years ending 1941/42 (*6*, p. 130). But even allowing for increased productivity per acre, the decrease in the per capita area of food crops gave cause for anxiety about India's food, especially if import from overseas should ever be interrupted.

It is not possible to say what is the minimum acreage per capita in India which would provide an adequate diet; conditions of cultivation vary greatly, from, for instance, the heavy crops annually assured under irrigation in the northern provinces, to the sparse yield of the dry-farming parts of the Deccan, where perhaps three years out of five the crop may be short. In the Punjab it was estimated in 1945 that the area per capita needed to produce a balanced diet was 1.5 acres. This may perhaps be compared with the 1.8 acres per capita estimated by Dr. O. E. Baker as needed in the United States of America to produce "an adequate diet at minimum cost," though, as the Famine Inquiry Commission points out, conditions in the United States and India are very different and a direct comparison is scarcely justified (*6*, p. 80).

Before the war, then, there was in India a steadily rising curve of population, but no corresponding rise in food production, nor was it generally realized how dependent India was on imports of food, especially for the supply of the rice-eating areas.

The present account aims at telling how this position developed and was met between 1939 and 1947. The further development thereafter in India of a rapidly growing population and a less rapidly increasing production of food crops and the possible consequences for the future is outside the period, but has been examined by a number of competent authorities.

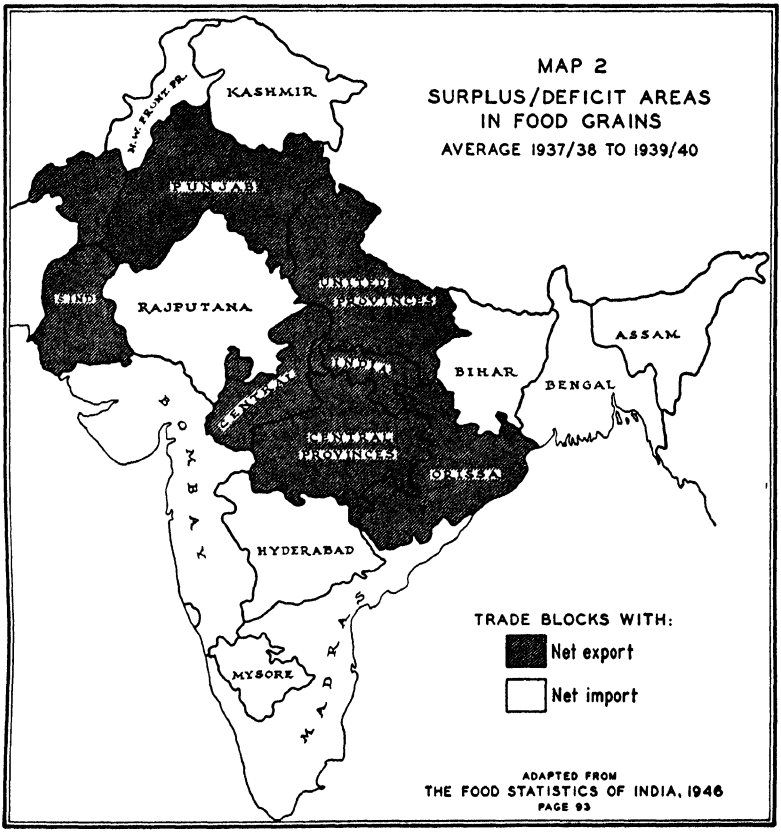
"SURPLUS" AND "DEFICIT" PROVINCES

In any examination of food matters in India reference is inevitable to "surplus" and "deficit" provinces and states. The terms are to some degree conventional, as within almost every province and state there were places where local foodgrain production did not suffice to feed the local population and food had to be brought in from elsewhere, and equally there were areas which produced more than

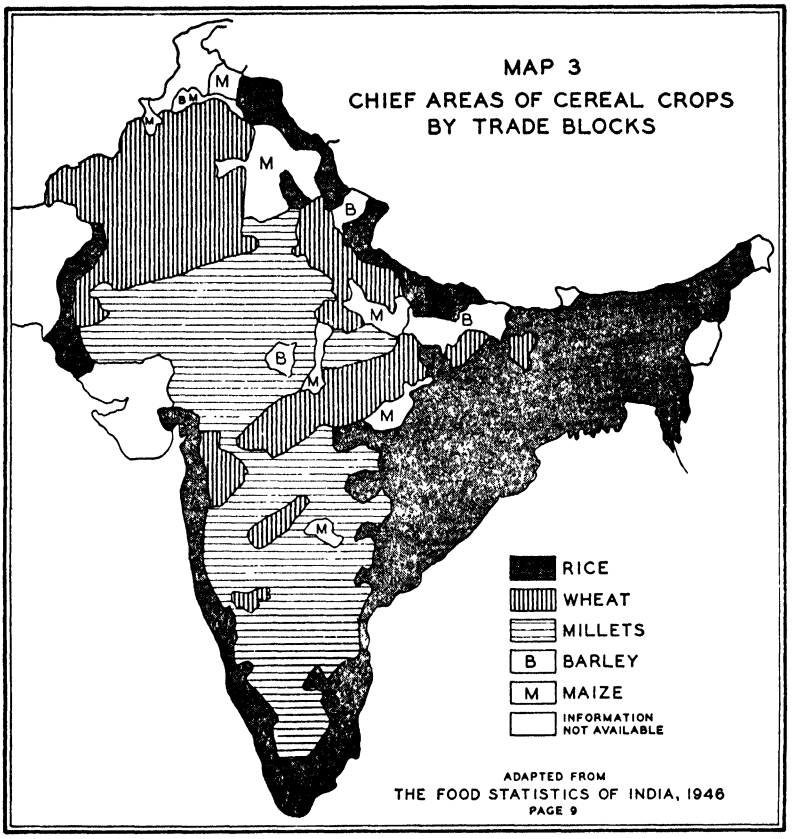
their own needs. A general view of surplus and deficit areas is given in Map 2, and Map 3 supplements it by showing the main types of foodgrains grown in different areas.[1]

The "deficit" or "surplus" position of the various provinces of India before 1943 was summarized by the Foodgrains Policy Committee on the basis of the average production and the average imports and exports, including those by sea, by rail and road, and by coastal movement, for the period 1938/39 to 1940/41.

Taking first the provinces which were normally in deficit, Assam had a total net import of 14,000 tons of foodgrains a year; most of this was wheat needed to feed its large population of immigrant plantation labor. By 1943, however. Assam was no longer in deficit in cereals,



[1] Acknowledgment is made to the Government of India for permission to use material included in these maps.



but the great military forces assembled on the northeast frontier of India put a severe strain on the supply of the protective foods, such as milk, vegetables, and eggs, needed to supplement the rice diet of the inhabitants.

Bengal was a net importer of about 500,000 tons annually, half of wheat and half of rice. This amount was not a very large proportion of Bengal's total foodgrain consumption of 7,500,000 tons a year, but it was of great importance, for 1938/39, 1939/40, and 1940/41 were lean years and the stocks carried over from good years, which normally supported the Bengali during bad seasons, were probably by 1942 nearly exhausted.

Bihar was also a deficit province with average annual net imports of some 275,000 tons, three-quarters of it rice, and in addition usually some 55,000 tons came in from Nepal without being recorded in the

Indian statistics. A considerable industrial and coal-mining population had to be fed—for instance the Tata Steel Works at Jamshedpur are in Bihar—and also much of the rural population was engaged in cultivating commercial crops such as sugar cane and tobacco.

The densely populated South Indian States of Travancore and Cochin, which subsisted almost entirely on rice supplemented by tapioca, imported an average of 446,000 tons of rice, almost all from Burma, and this deficit had to be made up during the war. The states could not possibly grow enough to feed themselves.

Bombay Presidency, with its large industrial cities and its Deccan uplands always liable to crop failure, normally imported some 760,000 tons of foodgrains, more than half of it rice from Burma.

Madras Presidency had a net import of 848,000 tons a year, nearly three-quarters of it rice. For an agricultural province this was a considerable deficit against a production of 6,700,000 tons of foodgrains.

The North West Frontier Province had an annual import of 38,000 tons, of which 25,000 tons were wheat.

On the other hand, the Punjab normally exported 754,000 tons, of which 684,000 tons were wheat. The United Provinces averaged exports of 69,000 tons, sending out wheat, jowar, bajra, and gram against a lesser import of rice. Sind, including British Baluchistan and Khairpur State, averaged an export of 328,000 tons, half of it rice, and, though the exports of this last trade block were not great in absolute volume compared with the total Indian consumption of foodgrains, they amounted in the case of wheat and rice to some 30 to 35 percent of the province's crops.

The Central Provinces and Berar, including the adjacent Indian States, exported an average of 234,000 tons, over three-quarters of it rice, the foodgrain which was then in shortest supply. Orissa had an exportable surplus of 182,000 tons, nearly all rice.

Putting it still more briefly, one may say that with the help of a varying amount of overseas imports, the Punjab, the United Provinces, Sind, the Central Provinces, Orissa, and their adjacent States had to make up the deficit on the home production of foodgrains in Assam, Bengal, Bihar, Bombay, Cochin and Travancore, Madras, the North West Frontier Province, and the States of their regions (*8*, pp. 13 ff.).

Before the war the imports into the deficit areas were normally both from overseas and from within India, but with the loss of Burma the surplus provinces had as far as possible to supply the needs of

those in deficit. Chapter 13 on the Basic Plan will give some account of how this was done.

The question was not merely one of arithmetic. The grain most urgently needed after the loss of Burma was rice, but the surplus provinces mainly exported wheat and millets. The Indian food problem was not only that of securing an adequate supply of food for everybody, but of adjusting the habits of millions of people to eating unaccustomed foods, for the preparation of which they had no facilities.

INDIAN DIETS

The main constituent of every Indian diet is one of the major cereals, generally wheat in the north and the northwest, rice in the south and east, and elsewhere one of the millets (see Map 3).

Of these, rice is the most important, and the total area under rice in India, with a normal production of around 28 million tons a year, exceeded one-third of the total area sown to all cereals. In addition, between one and two million tons were annually imported, mainly from Burma.

The production of wheat was about 10 million tons and of millets of various kinds, grown in almost every part of India, about 17.5 million tons.

Other foodgrains of more localized importance were barley and maize, and, though not a cereal but a root, tapioca (manioc) in the southwest corner of India.

In addition to cereals all Indian diets include pulses (resembling beans and peas), which give, dietetically, some of the constituents which are missing in cereals, and, agriculturally, a leguminous crop rotation needed to keep up the fertility of the soil.

In the diet of the majority, fats were chiefly provided by the use of vegetable oils, made from groundnut, coconut, "til," mustard, rapeseed, etc. The supply of dairy produce, which should furnish much of the fat content, was gravely in defect in India. Milk and "ghee" (clarified butter used in cooking) were comparatively scarce and costly, and vegetable oils and their product, "artificial ghee" or "vanaspati," were commonly used instead.

The consumption of meat, fish, and eggs, though of importance in some areas and among some classes, was limited both by the cost and by social and religious custom, and formed a small part of the general diet.

Fruit and vegetables, though cultivated almost everywhere, were

not produced in nearly large enough quantity to meet the nutritional needs of consumers (*9*, pp. 7 ff.).

The Famine Inquiry Commission gives the following summary (*6*, p. 107) of Indian diets:

> The diet of the poor rice eater is very much the same all over India. In addition to his staple cereal he consumes only small quantities of pulses and vegetables. Intake of pulses is from 0.5 to 1.5 ounces daily; of non-leafy vegetables, 2 to 6 ounces; of vegetable oil, less than 1 ounce. Consumption of meat, fish and eggs taken together does not often exceed 1.5 ounces daily and as a rule less than this amount is taken. Leafy vegetables are eaten in small quantities, while the consumption of milk is negligible. Fruit is a rare ingredient in the diet. Millet diets are in general similar to rice diets except that millet replaces rice as the main ingredient. The wheat eater's diet usually contains more milk than that of the rice or millet eater, since milk production is higher in the wheat-eating parts of India than elsewhere, and his intake of pulses tends to be greater. An adequate intake of milk is, however, by no means universal in wheat-eating areas. In their content of other protective foods, wheat diets resemble rice and millet diets.

An adequate and well-balanced diet must be sufficient both in quantity and in quality, providing enough calories and enough of the constituents of food in their proper proportions, and an "optimum" diet in the terms of actual food means (*9*, p. 6) "a high intake of milk and milk products, meat, fish, vegetables and fruit and a relatively small intake of cereals." The Nutrition Advisory Committee of the Indian Research Fund Association had drawn up a balanced diet schedule in terms of Indian dietary habits, which it considered would provide the various nutrients in quantities sufficient for the daily needs of an adult man (*6*, p. 106):

	Ounces		Ounces
Cereals	14	Milk	10
Pulses	3	Sugar and jaggery	2
Green leafy vegetables	4	Vegetable oil, ghee, etc.	2
Root vegetables	3	Fish and meat	3
Other vegetables	3	One egg	...
Fruits	3		

This diet was designed to contain a due proportion of the protective foods and to make up the deficiencies in proteins, fats, vitamins, and mineral salts which exist in a mainly cereal diet.

The Famine Commission said: "If the typical Indian diets, as described above, are contrasted with the balanced diet shown . . . it will at once be seen that the former contain insufficient protective foods. It will of course be understood that we are concerned here

with broad generalizations and are ignoring the very considerable variations in the intake of certain noncereal foods, e.g., fish and vegetables, which exist in different parts of the country."

It is perhaps permissible to doubt whether any ideal diet could be drawn up that would apply universally throughout India. Climate, social custom, occupation, physique, habits of working, etc., vary greatly. The Tamil or Telegu farmer of south India can live well on food very different from what the Pathan eats in the bitter winter of the North West Frontier Province, while the Bhil or Gond of the forests of central India, who perforce or of choice spends the hot weather in idleness or hunting, exists and enjoys life on a diet which the Bombay businessman would not find satisfactory.

It was estimated in 1944 that to provide the ingredients of a balanced diet on the scale proposed for India's then population, the following minimum increase on existing production would be required (*3*, p. 36):

	Percent		Percent
Cereals	10	Fats and oils	250
Pulses	20	Milk	300
Fruits	50	Fish and eggs	300
Vegetables	100		

But even if the production of foodstuffs in India had been increased, the poorer classes would not necessarily have been well fed. The cost of producing the "protective foods" is inevitably higher than the cost of growing cereals; the poor man to satisfy hunger must depend on the cheaper foods; and only as his income increases can he afford the needed protective intake. Before the war the cost of a balanced diet was rather more than twice that of the normal cereal diet, and, when the urban laborer was spending 50 to 60 percent of his income on food, a balanced diet at twice the cost was out of the question. An improvement in Indian diets would have required not only higher food production, but also higher incomes among most consumers.

The Famine Inquiry Commission was not prepared to make any attempt to assess what proportion of the population did not get enough to eat (*6*, p. 106), nor could it find fully satisfactory evidence (*6*, p. 90) "that standards of nutrition have fallen during recent decades. Increasing under-nutrition would tend to raise the death rate, but the death rate has fallen." It pointed out that the Famine Commission of 1880 had been gravely concerned over the then growth of popula-

tion in relation to food supply and "would probably have found it difficult to envisage the possibility that the country would be capable in 1945 of supporting a population of 400 millions, 150 millions more than in 1880." Yet this had actually happened. On food produced in the country, supplemented to a comparatively small extent by imports, nearly 400 million people were being fed in 1945 without an increase in the death rate.

That in 1939 there was undernutrition and malnutrition among various classes and in various parts of India is true, but such has always been the condition not only in India but in all countries. The United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture held in 1943 stated, "There never has been enough food for the health of all people."

Shortage of food in India was not a uniform condition. There were areas which enjoyed an abundant rainfall or efficient irrigation and where the pressure of population on the land was not excessive. "The Punjab peasant on the whole feeds well—who could doubt it looking at his fine physique?" (*4*, p. 145). There were areas with poor rainfall and no irrigation where the people lived always on the edge of famine. Some areas depended on cash crops, the price of which fluctuated with world demand. Major industries had their periods of "boom" and of "slump." When and where times were good, people ate enough; when and where times were bad, many of them had to eat less.

Nevertheless, for very many in India in normal times the margin between their normal food supply and shortage, or even starvation, was so narrow that any disturbance in the production or movement of supplies necessarily resulted in difficulty or disaster. Thus when the needs of war transport affected the normal movement of grain crops from province to province, prices rose in the importing province and the poor began to go short of food, and when the supply of rice from Burma came to an end in 1942, areas such as Cochin, Travancore, and parts of Bombay Presidency, which normally consumed Burma rice, had either to get supplies elsewhere or to starve. With the disturbance of traffic and trade and with the cessation of imports, the margin of millions of consumers vanished and government had to provide food for those needing it, and if government failed, hardship, and at the worst the Bengal famine, were the result.

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CHAPTER 5

DEVELOPMENTS UP TO THE JAPANESE ONSLAUGHT

During the later stages of World War II the Indian governments were often compared unfavorably with the British Government, in that they had failed to make plans before the war to meet the food emergency which arose later. What steps should have been taken, however, were not usually defined.

For the United Kingdom Sir William Beveridge in a memorandum of October 1936 on the "Wider Aspects of Food Control" had summarized the "substantial requirements for dealing with food in a future war" as four (*1*, p. 10).

1. A decision to appoint a Food Controller with full powers as from the outbreak of war.
2. A feeding policy, thought out in advance, for adequate total supply in the country at all stages of a possibly protracted war.
3. A control plan, prepared in advance, in regard to each essential food. for taking over supply, regulating prices, and directing distribution.
4. "Outbreak Plans" for the probable initial emergency resulting from air attack.

The United Kingdom in framing its food policy for World War II had behind it the experience gained in food organization in the previous war, when India had had no great problems of feeding its people. Even so the preparation of food plans in the United Kingdom between 1936 and 1939 suffered from various delays and hesitances on the part of the government and the authorities concerned (*1*, p. 19).

The feeding of the people of India depended on the internal supply being supplemented by the import of a certain amount of rice from Burma and to a less degree from the Far East, and it was presumably not foreseen before the war that the Japanese would destroy the American fleet at Pearl Harbor and thus obtain control of the Far Eastern seas, with the consequent capture of Singapore and the stoppage of the supplies of Burma rice to India. On the assumption that the Burma rice would be available during wartime, the Government of India had no need to take elaborate food precautions, for, except for the possible chance of very extensive crop failure in India,

India with Burma's help could feed itself. And in any case the difficulty of putting into practice the policy and plans suggested by Sir William Beveridge, in a subcontinent of 350 million people under separate administrations of a dozen British Provinces and several hundred Indian States, must inevitably have seemed so great as not to be worth while, or have looked like theoretical exploration against an apparently improbable emergency.

It is perhaps less easy to indicate why, once Japan had entered the war, the Government of India did not more rapidly frame food plans on something like the comprehensive scale indicated six years before by Sir William Beveridge for the United Kingdom, but relied on what seemed to be piecemeal action varied by unsuccessful experiments, until it was compelled by circumstances to decide on a policy and to improvise machinery to enforce it. This study will try to give an explanation. But lest India's failure to plan ahead logically be judged too harshly, one may note that in the United Kingdom Food Administration the British civil servants' thinking over the whole field of war economics has been described (*1*, p. 120) as "empirical and opportunist in spirit."

When India entered the war in September 1939, it seems to have been thought by everyone that, as an agricultural country, India need not worry over its food supplies during wartime, and, in fact, that the war might benefit the Indian agriculturalist.

The public, and apparently the authorities, had not realized how far India was from being self-sufficient in food production, and seem to have assumed that Burma was still in effect part of India and would be available to provide the deficit in India's food supply. Unless, before September 1939, the defense authorities had seriously contemplated the likelihood of Japan overrunning Burma, the Government of India was justified in assuming that India and Burma would continue to grow enough food for their populations, that its procurement and its distribution could be left to the normal trade channels, and that no extensive preparations for a food emergency, such as for rationing all or part of the population, need be made.

On this assumption the Government of India could consider with an open mind the question of the probable price of food under war conditions, and its effect on the economy of India. The view was widely held that for the ten years or so before 1939 the Indian agriculturalist had had a "raw deal" owing to the drop in prices of agricultural produce since the slump of 1929, that he had been selling his crops below the real cost of production, and that he had greatly

deteriorated in his finances and his scale of living. This had been to some degree recognized by the Government of India in imposing an import duty on wheat in 1930, and in giving protection to the sugar industry in 1932.

During the early part of the war the Government of India had to consider how the rising cost of imported goods and of consumers' goods needed by the farmer who grew India's food—agricultural implements, fertilizers, kerosene, cotton cloth, etc.—would affect the price of food for the public generally, and in particular for the industrial population which was engaged in work for India's war effort. And it had to seek a balance between the enhanced prices of the farmers' crops and the resulting higher cost of living in the cities.

The Government of India's food policy therefore began by having reference almost entirely to prices. This is reflected in the proceedings of the various price control conferences called at New Delhi. These give a conspectus of the situation from time to time.

In considering the course of food prices during the war in India, attention will be mainly concentrated on the prices of the staple food grains—rice, wheat, and millets—for these formed the bulk of the food consumed by the poorer classes, and on their prices depended the amount which the ordinary man could afford to spend on supplementary foods and the other necessities of living.

For the period from 1931/32 to 1938/39 the All-India annual average weighted harvest prices were approximately as follows (*2*, pp. 137–38): rice from Rs. 3 to Rs. 3 as. 8 per maund, wheat between Rs. 2 as. 8 and Rs. 3, though above Rs. 3 in 1937/38, and jowar and bajra between Rs. 2 and Rs. 3. Appendix Table XIII gives the average annual harvest prices in the various provinces for rice and wheat between 1931/32 and 1943/44. These figures, however, are wholesale prices and do not represent what the consumer had to pay for his food, though they probably are not far from what a countryman, who did not grow enough for his own needs, paid in his village. The important question during the early part of the war was what the town dweller had to pay for his daily grain or his daily bread. Accurate retail figures were probably unobtainable, for these varied throughout the year with the supplies in the local market, the prospects of the next crop, the credit of the customer, the locality of the grocer's shop, etc., and the official collecting of retail prices tended to become an office routine and not to reflect changes rapidly. However, taking the figure given in *Food Statistics of India* (*2*, p. 146), in 1938/39 the price of rice ranged from Rs. 5 as. 12 a maund in

Delhi to Rs. 2 as. 9 in Cuttack; wheat from Rs. 4 as. 4 in Bombay to Rs. 2 as. 6 in Peshawar; and jowar from Rs. 3 as. 7 in Bombay to Rs. 2 as. 7 in Nandyal.

It is against a background of grain prices on this scale that the difficulties of the governments in India, of the Indian consumer, and of the Indian farmer during the war must be viewed.

FIRST PRICE CONTROL CONFERENCE

The First Price Control Conference was held by the Government of India at New Delhi in October 1939. It set forth as a view generally agreed upon (*3*, p. 40):

> that as agricultural produce had not yet recovered fully from the recent depression, the agriculturalist was entitled to an increased price. It was pointed out that in the course of time the problem might become serious and that there might have to be imposed two limitations on the tendency for agricultural commodity prices to rise; the first with regard to the necessaries of life when prices rise so sharply as to bring about serious social discontent, the second with reference to Government supplies for war purposes when a steep rise would militate against an adequate war effort.

The comfortable theory seems to have been held that, until the war should restore prosperity to the agriculturalist, without of course causing any serious hardship to anyone else who had been profiting by the cheap food of the past ten years, no government action ought to be, or need be, taken to control food prices to the consumer.

It is difficult now to see how the disadvantage of this theory was overlooked. Perhaps various factors were responsible. For 80 years, speaking generally, India had been governed on the basis of Victorian "laissez faire," under which a minimum interference with the individual was aimed at and private rather than government enterprise was the ideal. (In practice, as a matter of fact, the Government of India as the almost universal landlord of British India, the owner and manager of vast forests and of irrigation works, etc., was really an exponent of state as opposed to private enterprise.) The provincial officers, burdened with new problems arising from the war, and greatly in sympathy with the agriculturalists' plight, may have had no time to think matters out, while the landlords and the trading classes were not likely to discourage a plan which would provide obvious opportunities for profit.

The ordinary agriculturalist did not of course gain immediate benefit from any rise in foodgrain prices in September 1939. His crop, except for what he needed for seed and his family, had been

sold at slump prices, and possibly his next year's crop pledged at similar rates; his reserves had been largely consumed during the hard times; it would not be at least till the 1940 harvests that the peasant would benefit.

Meanwhile the village trader, the landlord, and the grain merchant, who held stocks which they had obtained at low rates, could immediately sell at higher prices. Even had market conditions remained normal, with the declaration of war retail prices must have risen.

But market conditions, especially in the larger towns, did not remain normal. Some goods imported from Europe could obviously not be replaced, others were likely to be in short supply, or were imagined as likely to be in short supply in future, and a justified rise in the price of any imported commodity immediately produced unjustified increases in a number of other commodities; and once such increases started among imported goods, they spread with little or no justification to many Indian products.

The natural result was that retail prices of most commodities began to rise in the larger towns and then in the smaller retail markets. For instance, in the first few days of September 1939 there was a panic in commodity markets in Bombay and within six weeks of the declaration of war the cost of living there was estimated to have risen by 25 percent (*3*, p. 35).

The Central Government had armed the provinces with powers under the Defence of India Rules to control the prices of necessities, the "ceiling" to be 20 percent over prices on September 1, 1939. This percentage was shortly reduced to 10 with permission to add replacement costs. But as replacement costs of various imported articles inevitably varied and those of others were difficult to ascertain, enforceable price levels could not always be fixed.

The Provincial Governments took action generally by the fixing of prices, by the publication of information on prices in wholesale markets, by issuing "fair price" lists for the information of the public when making purchases, and by the formation of advisory committees of leading merchants and public men. The various measures taken had a steadying effect on public opinion and on the course of prices of staple foodstuffs, but the tendency was noticed for supplies to disappear when prices were fixed, or to move to an area where prices were higher.

"In Bombay, the provincial government—a Congress ministry—ordered that no one should charge more than 20 per cent above the

prices prevailing on September 1 for Indian grains, flour, vegetable oils, spices, meat, fish, charcoal, kerosene, matches and drugs. Such an order was peculiarly ineffective because by September 1, prices had already risen considerably." Then: "By permitting another 20 per cent on top of that rise the authorities legalised profiteering of anything up to 50 per cent over the rates obtaining three weeks previously. Some days later the permissible margin was revised downwards to 10 per cent, but the damage had been done—profiteering had got away to a flying start, with Government's blessing. At least, that was how the shopkeepers saw it and since there was little or no active enforcement of orders, it looked as though they were right" (*3*, p. 35).

SECOND PRICE CONTROL CONFERENCE

The Second Price Control Conference was held on January 24, 1940. To quote the chairman, the Commerce Member of the Governor General's Executive Council (*4*), "The Discussion made it fairly clear that for the time being at any rate, with respect to most of these agricultural commodities, there might not be any necessity for the control of prices." But the discussion had indicated some misgivings. In theory, where industrial wages had been adjusted to 1929 prices, there should have been no hardship, for prices of cereals were below, and sugar the same as the 1929 levels. But it was recognized that organized labor, faced with a fall in real wages since August 1939, would not be content with the explanation that the workers were as well off as they had been in 1929. About 50 percent of industrial wages represented the cost of food, and to avoid a threatened strike, the textile mill owners in Bombay were prepared to raise the wages of operatives.

At this conference there were signs of cleavage between the agricultural and the industrial outlook in food matters, which was later to become prominent in India's food difficulties. The Wheat Conference held earlier in January 1940 at Lahore, where the wheat-producing provinces, but not the wheat-consuming provinces, were represented, had reached the following conclusions:

1. Having regard to the interests of the agricultural classes, no control of wheat prices in the various wholesale markets was at present called for.

2. *a*) If at any time such control should become necessary, the appropriate agency for exercising such control was the Central Government upon whom it would fall to decide, in consultation with other

governments concerned, what forms the control should take. *b*) The majority opinion was that even when a steep rise in prices took place in the wholesale market, which was regarded as likely to be temporary, it might be left to adjust itself.

3. Retail price control, if undertaken at all, must be an issue for Provincial and State governments and must only be administered on the basis of the prevailing wholesale prices.

The representative of the Punjab, the largest wheat-producing province of India, stated that his government was definitely of opinion that no price control for wheat should be considered until the price at Lyallpur rose above Rs. 5 per maund. He added (*4*) that, "for a number of years the wheat cultivators had been selling their produce at less than the cost of production, and referring to the complaints in the Press about the price of wheat, contrasted this with the little interest shown when wheat was for some years at a very low level. The cultivator was not as vocal as some of the wage earning classes and the equities of the problem could not be judged from the extent of public agitation in the Press."

The conclusion reached by the Second Price Control Conference, that no control of agricultural commodity prices was at present needed, seemed to be confirmed by the course of wholesale prices after January 1940. Speculation and lack of confidence were thought to have been responsible for the rise in prices; the 1939/40 harvest was better than that of 1938/39; the total cereal yield reckoned in millions of tons for the former was 57.2 against 54.4 for the latter year (*2*, p. 29), and the available cereal supply, including production and net imports, per adult unit of the population was estimated for 1939/40 to be 382 pounds against 360 pounds in the year before (*2*, p. 111). The wheat prices throughout India were based on the average wholesale prices for wheat in Lyallpur, the chief wheat market in the Punjab, and in Hapur in the United Provinces, and this average wholesale price was only Rs. 2 as. 10 in 1939/40 compared with Rs. 2 as. 2 in 1938/39. Wholesale coarse rice prices in Madras averaged Rs. 3 as. 5 in 1939/40 against Rs. 3 as. 4 the year before. (These were prices averaged over the year on the weekly quotations and do not show the fluctuations.)

The Economic Adviser's index numbers of wholesale prices, taking the last week of August 1939 as 100, showed a gradual rise in rice from 116 in January 1940 to 122 in April, and 123 in June, but wheat dropped from 146 in December 1939 to 132 in January 1940, 119 in May, and 110 in June (*2*, pp. 150–51).

The working-class cost-of-living index, with August 1939 taken as 100, in Bombay was 109 in January 1940, declined to 105 in April, and was 108 in July. Similar figures for Cawnpore were 114 in January 1940, 110 in April and 109 in July (*5*).

On figures such as these it was possible to conclude that during the first half of 1940 the agricultural producer was not getting an unduly high price for his crops and that the urban consumer was not paying unduly high prices.

It is possible, however, that in deciding that no further action to control foodgrain prices was needed, the authorities placed too much reliance on wholesale price returns, for in unusual times there may be a wide divergence between such prices and those that the small and indigent consumer actually has to pay.

The trend of prices for a time after January 1940 thus was such that the Government of India decided not to call the Third Price Control Conference in April 1940 as had originally been intended. But it was now realized that the existing measure of control, by which the provinces could fix maximum retail prices at only 10 percent over those of 1939 plus cost of replacement, was ineffective. In many cases replacement costs were impossible to calculate with accuracy, as these might vary from day to day. In Bombay City, price control practically ceased to function early in 1940 owing to the difficulty of fixing prices and to the ease of evasion, so long as the government did not have power to control the movement and supply of commodities.

The Government of India therefore amended their price control policy, and by a fresh notification under the Defence of India Rules, removed the provision that prices must not exceed those of September 1, 1939 by more than 10 percent. Provincial governments were allowed henceforward to relate controlled prices to costs and to fix the price of necessaries except in the primary markets. Provincial governments, however, could control the price of imported goods (except salt, kerosene, and medicines) only with prior sanction of the Government of India.

It is perhaps remarkable that the fall of France and the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk in May 1940 seems to have had little effect on prices of food commodities in India. But whether this was due to confidence in Great Britain, or to popular impercipience of the gravity of the situation, it is difficult now to say.

In the latter half of 1940, however, the index numbers of foodgrain prices and urban cost of living gradually rose; the wholesale

figure for rice was 129 in July and by December had reached 143; wheat, which was 122 in July, dropped to 118 the next month, but by December was 153. The working-class cost-of-living index rose more slowly, but by the end of the year in Bombay was 108 and in Cawnpore 112.

The harvest of 1940/41 was not so good as that of 1939/40; the total yield of cereal crops was 54.8 million tons aaginst 57.2 in 1939/40 (*2*, p. 29) and the available cereal supplies per adult unit of the population 352 pounds against 382 pounds (*2*, p. 111). The average wholesale wheat price for 1940/41 at Lyallpur in the Punjab went up to Rs. 3 as. 1 from Rs. 2 as. 10 in 1939/40; the average wholesale price of coarse rice in Madras, however, remained at Rs. 3.5 (*2*, p. 143).

But wheat, after starting the year 1941 at a wholesale index number of 153.5, dropped to 127 in February, and after various fluctuations stood at 144 in June. Rice rose from 145 in January 1941 to 165 in June; jowar and gram dropped very slightly from 88 to 86 and from 97 to 96 respectively. Thus during the first half of the year, prices were not perhaps high considering the harvest and the general rise in costs.

But in July 1941 the wheat index figure rose to 170.5, rice to 159, jowar to 102, and gram to 105 (*2*, p. 150), while the working-class cost-of-living index in Bombay rose from 111 in January 1941 to 120 in July and in Cawnpore from 110 to 126 (*5*).

Public opinion therefore began to demand action to keep prices reasonable and to prevent the middleman from profiteering at the expense of the consumer. Wheat prices continued to rise and the wheat index number was 180 in September, nearly 50 percent higher than it had been in February.

THIRD PRICE CONTROL CONFERENCE; SPECULATION IN WHEAT

In view of public anxiety at the rising prices, the Government of India called the Third Price Control Conference in New Delhi on October 16 and 17, 1941. In discussion it was pointed out that wheat prices normally went up in January or February before the new crop harvested in March–April, but never in July and August, and the reasonable inference was drawn that the rise in July 1941 had been caused by speculation.

At the conference it was stated (*7*) that in the United Provinces "what actually happened was that the speculators purchased

all the wheat available and, when no more wheat was coming, they raised prices." It was alleged, for example, that one firm bought 30,000 tons of wheat and made forward purchases for more, in the hope of recovering by profits on United Provinces wheat its heavy losses on speculative cotton transactions in Bombay.

The representative of the United Provinces said (*7*): "In July–August wheat experienced a spectacular rise in price. Prices went up only in January and February and never in July or August. Within two weeks in July wheat price in the Hapur market rose by about 11 annas in the maund. Evidently the activities of speculators were forcing up the prices since producers had disposed of 80 to 90 per cent of their produce and during July no exports from the Province were observed. There was a general outcry against this unwarranted rise and instances of food riots were reported from the districts of Lucknow and Cawnpore."

The Punjab representative, while still opposed to the continued control of wheat prices, admitted that if wholesale prices went above Rs. 5, some control would have to be imposed, but he suggested that in that case a minimum price of Rs. 3 as. 12 should also be fixed, and that there should be no maximum control during the harvest period of April 15 to July 15.

The general view was that the consumer was by October 1941 suffering hardship from the rise of foodgrain prices, while the farmer himself was not getting the proper benefit from the increase, but the middleman and speculator were profiting; and that, if prices rose further, government would have to intervene.

Toward the end of November 1941, however, the price of wheat rose to more than twice its prewar level and the Government of India therefore passed an order fixing the maximum wholesale price of wheat in the two great wholesale markets of Lyallpur (Punjab) and Hapur (United Provinces) at Rs. 4 as. 6 per maund, and authorized Provincial Governments to fix parity prices for other markets. The Punjab Legislative Assembly on December 11, 1941 passed a resolution protesting against what it considered the low price thus fixed by the Government of India (*6*, p. 4).

Regarding rice, the chairman of the conference concluded that in the rice-growing provinces and rice-consuming provinces the level of price was not such as to cause serious concern to the local governments, and that the problem was one of "pockets of shortage" where price was high for special reasons. These were mainly areas normally dependent on imported Burma rice. Import of Burma rice

for Bengal and Assam was normally from the Arakan District and owing to a local shortage the Burma Government for some time had had to prohibit export from Arakan, and did not lift this prohibition till, owing to monsoon weather, the local coasting craft could not make the voyage to Bengal.

The other areas mainly dependent on Burma rice were Travancore, Malabar, and Bombay. The shipping difficulties earlier in the year considerably eased after July 1941, and it was hoped (7) that within the next few months the shipping position would be even better "so that on the whole the import of rice under normal circumstances would be adequate to make up that deficit which has arisen in this country owing to our not producing all the rice we consume."

The negotiations with the Burma Government had been chiefly concerned with the channel through which a controlled rice trade should operate, for the rice trade of Burma was largely in the hands of Indian merchants, whose business capacity and success the Burmans wished to emulate, and thus to secure for Burma the profits of a most valuable export business. The possibility therefore was considered that the rice control to be imposed by the Government of Burma might not be such as the Government of India could agree to, and India might have to forego importing rice from Burma. If this should happen, as 95 percent of the rice needed in India was grown in the country, the president of the conference hoped that by a proper transport arrangement the price could be kept within reasonable limits in the areas which normally used Burma rice. "But," he added (7), "as an extreme measure . . . in those areas where prices go up owing to want of imported rice, Provincial and State Governments may have to make certain arrangements for subsidising the producer." What these measures were to be was not stated, but the view that an over-all shortage of 5 percent in India's rice supply could be thus summarily disposed of appears optimistic. The rice grower within India would eat no less himself, the nonproducer in the rice surplus districts might have to pay a little more, but the people who normally ate Burma rice would have to cut their rice consumption by far more than 5 percent, or compete for more of India's own crop at much higher prices. The relation of supply to demand and thus to price seems not to have been realized.

The conference agreed, however, that the Government of India was taking all necessary steps regarding rice and that no further action was needed on rice prices.

When the Third Price Control Conference was held on October 16 and 17, 1941, it was not foreseen that Japan would make war within two months.

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CHAPTER 6

APPROACH OF THE CRISIS: 1942

To quote the Famine Inquiry Commission (*1*, p. 23), "By the beginning of 1942 the war in the East had taken a dangerous turn for India. War with Japan had broken out on December 8, 1941. The first air raids on Rangoon took place on January 23, 1942. On the 15th February Singapore fell. On the 7th March Rangoon was evacuated, and on the 23rd of that month the Japanese occupied the Andamans, and on April 5th and 6th the first enemy bombs fell in Ceylon and on the east coast of India. The military situation was transformed overnight with profound repercussions on civil life." It was during 1942 that the Government of India began to recognize the gravity of the Indian food situation. This led to the establishment in December of a separate Food Department.

The harvest of 1941/42 was better than that of 1940/41; the total acreage of major cereals was slightly more, 202.73 million acres against 200.75 the year before, and the yield was better, 56.5 million tons against 54.8, showing an amount per head of total cereals of 355 pounds against 352 pounds.

Of the two most important food crops, the yield of rice was much better than in 1940/41. Though Bihar, the United Provinces, and the Central Provinces were not so good, Bengal had an outstandingly good crop, and the estimated yield for all India was 27 million tons against 23.8 in the year before.

The wheat crop of 1940/41, however, was little more than the average for the quinquennium ending 1937/38 and meanwhile of course the population had increased (*2*, pp. 20, 28, 111).

In December 1941 a statutory maximum of wholesale wheat prices in Lyallpur (Punjab) and Hapur (United Provinces) had been notified at Rs. 4 as. 6 a maund.

The notified price did not meet the views of the trade, however, and from about the middle of January 1942 acute local scarcity was suddenly and simultaneously experienced in many important wheat-consuming areas. The places specially affected were urban and particularly industrial centers of major importance such as Bombay, Calcutta, Cawnpore, and Delhi, and even Lahore and Amritsar in the

Punjab itself. There can be no doubt that this was an artificial shortage, the direct result of refusal of the trade to operate within the limits of the maximum price prescribed. An indication of the causal connection between the imposition of control and the disappearance of supplies from the market is afforded by the observations made by the representative of the Punjab Government at the Fourth Price Control Conference, held early in February 1942. He said (*1*, p. 21), "If there had been no control there would not have arisen any difficulties. The only result of control has been to drive all stocks of wheat underground. You lift control and to-morrow you will have any amount of wheat from so many corners of the Punjab and from other parts of India also. I do not think there is really such a shortage of wheat as is indicated at present, but this control has brought many difficulties in its train." The disappearance of supplies from the principal towns of the Punjab immediately affected the poorer classes of the population, and the Punjab consequently "found it desirable" to place an embargo on the export of wheat, both "owing to the unfortunate commercial deadlock," under which a certain section of the population had gone on strike, and to the smuggling of wheat into certain adjoining Indian States which had no price control. Such a prohibition of export, however beneficial to Punjab urban poor, inevitably made more difficult the position of consuming centers outside the Punjab.

FOURTH PRICE CONTROL CONFERENCE

On February 6 and 7, 1942 the Fourth Price Control Conference was called at New Delhi by the Commerce Department of the Government of India. It was attended by 19 representatives of the Government of India and by 31 from the Provincial Governments and Indian States, and during its two days it considered a somewhat varied agenda: monetary policy in relation to prices, wheat, rice, sugar, coal, matches, raw cotton, cotton yarn and piece goods, paper, and power alcohol. Most of the time, however, was devoted to food, not only its price, but the growing difficulties which some provinces were finding in getting supplies.

The conference concluded (*1*, p. 22) that "some authority had to determine the quantity of wheat which could be taken off the Punjab wheat market from time to time and how it should be distributed between the Army and the various consuming areas." But there was the further problem of how to secure this wheat once the quantity had

been determined. In December 1941 the Government of India had removed the import duty of two annas on wheat and appointed a Wheat Commissioner, to advise the Provincial Authorities, to regulate the distribution of wheat, and to acquire wheat, if necessary, for sale through provincial agencies. But before the Wheat Commissioner could really get to work, he was overtaken by the acute local shortages referred to above and it was not till April 30, 1942 that the Wheat Control Order was issued regulating the movement by rail of wheat from producing provinces to consuming areas. In March stocks of wheat pledged with banks in northern India were requisitioned and in the same month the maximum wholesale price of wheat was raised to Rs. 5 a maund. This steadied prices for some months, but by August the black market was flourishing at a higher price, and by the end of 1942 shortages in the large industrial centers were again acute (*1*, p. 22).

Events in Burma and the Far East had disarranged normal shipping arrangements and thrown an extra load on the Indian railways, already burdened with the carriage of troops and war materials. The Burma rice trade was more disorganized than ever, for the first air raid on Rangoon on January 23 dislocated the life of that city. Many of the Indian merchants in Rangoon, who normally carried on the export trade in rice to India, had fled; the Burma Government's arrangements for a Controller of Rice, who would export in their place, were not fully effective; and even if shipping had been available to bring rice from Rangoon, it was not possible to say to what ports it would be able to bring it.

The conference recognized at last that Burma rice might soon be no longer available and there would be a shortage of some 5 to 6 percent of the total rice supply for India. But it was still thought that the problem might be solved by a rearrangement of transport and that at the moment there was no need to fix a maximum price for rice. It did not seem to be realized how great a disorganization of food supplies would be involved by such a rice shortage, that without control the poorer rice eaters would go short, and that wheat or other grain imported into a rice-eating area would not solve the problem.

The rice markets on the whole had remained healthier than the wheat, but with the fall of Burma, troubles similar to those in the Punjab with wheat faced the governments of the rice-growing provinces, "namely, a scramble for supplies, rising prices, competitive buying, reluctance to sell, and speculation."

Despite the good crop of rice, conditions could not be expected

to remain normal; perhaps prices might have been expected to rise more rapidly than they did, but supply difficulties increased. The imports of rice during 1941/42 (April–March) were only 0.75 million tons against a yearly average of 1.72 million tons during 1933 to 1939 (*1*, p. 17), and latterly had practically ceased. Transport was in difficulties; the railways with the loss of Burma had to reorient their traffic, which had hitherto centered on India's western outlets, and had now to meet a completely different direction of army operations, and additionally to carry a mass of essential heavy materials, such as coal, which had formerly gone by ship. And this had to be done with engines, rolling stock, and staff seriously depleted by the demands of operational theaters in the Middle East (*1*, p. 23).

Under such conditions the Central Provinces, which had had a succession of poor harvests, by March had to prohibit the export of foodgrains to places outside the province except under permit, in order to conserve local food resources.

In Madras the competitive buying of merchants from Travancore and Ceylon, which were hard hit by the lack of imports from Burma, caused a steep rise in prices and their operations in deficit districts were producing local shortages. By June 1, 1942 all exports of rice and paddy to places outside the province were prohibited except under permit.

Bihar during two years had developed a system of market control and finally had adjusted its rice prices to those of Bengal. But a sudden rise of prices in the United Provinces caused large exports to that province and, as Bihar is normally a deficit area in rice, the government imposed a ban on all exports of rice from July 1.

In the same month Orissa had to do the same on account of a shortage due to increased export to Bengal. About the same time Bengal took similar action (*1*, p. 23).

Thus it occurred that provinces faced with possible shortages had imposed various bans on the movement of foodgrains from various areas, and these of course further complicated the transport problem and the movement of food supplies. The Government of India proposed the establishment of a Central Transport Authority which would effect all movements of food and other essentials under the direction of the Commerce Department, so as to ensure that all places were adequately, though possibly not fully, supplied. The provinces, while welcoming the idea, could not, in the absence of any details of the scheme, afford to give up their protective bans.

The Fourth Price Control Conference in February 1942, however,

marked a definite stage in India's realization that food had become a major problem which could not be solved by normal methods. But the Government of India's unwillingness to apply compulsion, on constitutional and political considerations, still remained; as did the unwillingness of some of the provinces to abandon a somewhat selfish attitude. This was bluntly stated by the Punjab representative: "We have been placing an embargo on the export of wheat off and on and each time that we have tried to impose a ban on the export of wheat we have been asked to lift it and we had to lift it. But after all, there is a limit beyond which we could not go. After all, the first care of a Provincial Government is the supply of food to those who live within its jurisdiction. What we are prepared to do, is that anything that is needed for consumption in the Province itself may be left with us and the rest we are prepared to place at the disposal of the Government of India. The Government of India may take what steps they like to distribute the surplus produce of the Punjab."

Though the action of the Government of India in fixing a maximum price for wheat was generally approved by most representatives, there was criticism that the price fixed was inadequate, mainly on the ground that the price of agricultural produce must take into account the rise in the cost of consumer and other commodities which the agriculturalist required. Reference was made at the conference to a resolution passed in the Punjab Legislative Assembly on December 11, protesting that the wheat price was too low. This problem of how to supply the cultivator with his needs, especially cloth and iron and steel, at reasonable prices and in adequate quantities persisted throughout the war and for some time thereafter, and it was never satisfactorily solved while defense and reconstruction absorbed so great a part of the manufacturing capacity of the country.

Perhaps it is not unjust to say that at the Fourth Price Control Conference in February 1942 the Government of India and most of the Provincial Governments for the first time really faced the need for central co-ordination of movement of foodgrains and of their prices under war conditions. But the conception of India as one country, within which some must make sacrifices for others less fortunate, was not even then universally accepted, though the president of the conference, referring to the probable rice shortage, did say, "The process of tightening up the belt must be a universal process and not a process which must apply only to those unfortunate provinces which were in short supply with reference to any particular commodity."

The measures suggested for a Central Transport Authority and for Regional Committees to co-ordinate distribution and prices of commodities proved inadequate to meet the threatening wartime developments. Rangoon was evacuated exactly a month after the conference.

FIFTH PRICE CONTROL CONFERENCE

Only two months after the fourth conference, the Fifth Price Control Conference was called in Delhi in April 1942. In the background were disasters in the war, the loss of Burma, the fear of invasion in eastern India, the failure of wheat to come forward under the Government of India's maximum price, shortages of supplies in industrial areas, a scramble to buy rice in the rice-growing areas to make up for the loss of the Burma imports, a holding back of supplies from the markets in hope of better prices still to come, increasing anxiety among Provincial Governments lest they should be left without enough to feed their own people, and a growing public awareness of the food problem.

The Punjab had won the first round against the Government of India and had forced the raising of the maximum wheat price from Rs. 4 as. 6 to Rs. 5. The Fifth Price Control Conference, when it reviewed the general course of past prices, recognized that, if the prices of foodgrains were to be controlled—and controlled they must be if the poorer classes were to live—then some measure of restraint must also be enforced over stocks of foodstuffs, and that Provincial and State Governments must ensure an effective check on quantities, location, and movement of stocks. This was to be obtained by a system of licensing of the wholesale dealers in grain, while maintaining as far as possible the existing channels of trade.

For this purpose the "Foodgrains Control Order" was issued by the Government of India on May 21, 1942. The order (see Appendix Note IV for its text) had two main objects, first to segregate the legitimate trader from the speculator and second to secure information of wholesale stocks and their movements. It provided that "licenses were to be issued free of charge to all established dealers, millers and other *bona fide* manufacturers of food products so as to leave the normal channels of trade undisturbed." But all license holders had under penalty to keep prescribed accounts of their dealings and each month to submit to the authorities returns of purchases, sales, and stocks.

The operation of the order was entrusted to the Provincial Governments, which were asked to enforce it as soon as possible, and the Indian States were advised to introduce similar orders in their territories. The various governments brought it into force at varying dates, but by the end of the year, seven months after its issue, the order "was nominally in force over almost the entire country," though it was not applied in Bengal till a much later date (*3*, p. 114).

The order, or something of the kind, was clearly necessary if any effective control was to be exercised over foodgrains and supplies were to be obtained, but Provincial Governments in many cases seem to have failed to realize the value of, or the need for, the order and to have hesitated to apply it efficiently. The order was, however, the basis of food control in India, and by the end of 1946 it was fairly effectively applied nearly everywhere.

The action taken as a result of the Fifth Price Control Conference did not prove adequate. As the Famine Inquiry Commission stated (*1*, p. 17), "Conditions had arisen by the summer of 1942 which imperatively dictated the adoption by almost all Provincial and State Governments and their officers of a whole series of measures in restraint of the normal operation of the machinery of trade. These were adopted independently and largely without reference to one another, as a result of local initiative in dealing with local emergencies which had arisen more or less simultaneously in widely separated areas. There was a scramble for supplies which occurred simultaneously in many parts of the country. Unusual quantities were being purchased at unusual prices and being moved out of areas which needed them." And as Brown indicated (*4*, p. 50), "Mysterious shortages [of wheat] developed. In the larger towns food queues became a regular feature of life, with people returning day after day in the hope of being able to buy their quota before the shops' limited supply ran out."

It was getting more and more difficult for the deficit areas to buy food to feed the people, and these difficulties were accentuated by the progress of the war and by the disturbances which took place in parts of the country in the latter part of the year. The All-India Congress Committee met in Bombay on August 7, 1942 and passed a resolution calling for "a mass struggle on non-violent lines" against Great Britain, and the leaders of the Congress party were arrested a day or two later. The disturbances which shortly ensued were, however, not nonviolent: up to the middle of November, 49 police officers had been killed and 1,363 wounded by mob violence, while

hundreds of police stations, government buildings, railway stations, and post offices were destroyed or badly damaged. Communications were disorganized over large parts of the country, especially in the eastern areas through which supplies for the troops on the northeast frontier had to pass (*7*, p. 875).

The details of the disturbances and their organization belong, however, to political and not to food history (*5*). But throughout much of India for some months the movement and provision of food supplies for the civil population was greatly handicapped, and everywhere the authorities had to devote their attention to preserving law and order instead of to feeding the people.

To meet the emergency, in August 1942 the Government of India promulgated Rule 81D under the Defence of India Act controlling shops trading in certain scheduled articles and others which might be deemed essential to the life of the community. The scheduled articles were grains, pulses, and flour, and any foodstuffs made from any of these; milk and milk products including ghee; eggs, vegetable oils, vegetables and fruits, meat, fish, poultry, spices, salt, kerosene oil, charcoal, steamcoal, firewood, matches, medicines, household soap, fodder, bran, pollard, and oilcakes. It was also provided that any business dealing in these might be taken over by government if desired (*8*).

One demonstration had been an organized strike of food merchants in many places, and in Bombay dissatisfaction at this behavior by traders, who had made considerable profit from the common people's needs, gave popular support to the Bombay Government's eventually taking over all supply of foodgrains in the city and introducing food rationing in 1943.

In June a Central Food Advisory Council of officials and nonofficials and Regional Price and Supply Boards had been set up by the Government of India; in July a Civil Supplies Commissioner for rice and other commodities had been appointed. And in this month the Government of India had made its first request to His Majesty's Government for imports of wheat (*6*, p. 114).

Apart from the dislocation of transport, at this stage the food difficulties of India were primarily those of supplying the deficit areas with something to eat, in the face of the inevitable bans on export imposed by provinces anxious to protect their own food stocks against the competitive buying of traders and contractors, and the resulting tendency for growers to keep stocks off the market in hope of higher prices.

SIXTH PRICE CONTROL CONFERENCE

The Sixth Price Control Conference, which met in September 1942, was chiefly occupied in consideration of the first scheme for centralized purchase of foodgrains (*1*, p. 44). As this scheme was the origin of the later "Basic Plan" adopted by the Government of India and by the Provincial Governments, it may be well to give a summary of it, and of some of the difficulties which must have occurred if the plan had ever been tried in its original form.

The conference approved a plan on the following lines:

(i) That in order to eliminate competitive buying, exports of wheat from the surplus provinces and states should be prohibited except by a Central Government organization which should purchase the requirements of the military, labour, and the deficit provinces and states up to a predetermined figure for each surplus province or state in consultation with the Provincial or the State Government concerned and arrange for transport.

(ii) That the Central Organization should make its purchases in the surplus provinces or states through agencies selected in consultation with the Provincial or State Governments concerned.

(iii) That the Central Organization should conduct its purchase operations in close collaboration with the price control authorities in the surplus provinces and states and that the latter authorities should give the Central Organization all possible assistance in obtaining supplies at controlled rates.

(iv) That in allocating supplies available for civil distribution the Central Organization, in consultation with the Provincial Governments and States should give priority to the requirements of fair price shops, consumers cooperative societies, industrial areas, big cities, public utilities, and places where large military works are under construction.

(v) That supplies allocated to a deficit province or state should be dispatched only to consignees approved by the Director of Civil Supplies or the Director himself in that province or state.

(vi) That in calculating the export quotas from the producing areas, and the import quotas for the consuming areas, the principle of "equality of sacrifice" should be borne in mind; in other words, the consumption as revealed by the available data regarding normal production, receipts and dispatches, should generally be subjected to the same percentage reduction (subject to variations in the case of particular areas in view of changes in population and other special circumstances) as that which the consumption in the country as a whole is likely to suffer owing to inadequacy of supplies . . .

The scheme in theory was undoubtedly a good one; all purchase for export from the surplus provinces was to be made by one agency run by the Central Government with the full co-operation of the governments of the producing provinces up to quantities mutually agreed upon, and these supplies were to be distributed to the deficit provinces and areas, defense forces, military works, industry, etc.

But experience of the previous price control conferences might have led the Government of India to anticipate that the surplus-producing provincial governments were unlikely to agree to the export of grain unless adequate, or more than adequate, supplies were retained for their own populations, nor were these governments likely to accept the estimate of an outside body as to what the available surplus might be; and with some justification, for statistics were inaccurate and in any case there was no real knowledge of what the annual consumption and the carry-over were. The opportunities for delay and argument were clearly infinite, as indeed was shown in the discussions in 1943 about supplies under the Basic Plan. The scheme assumed a degree of co-operation from the surplus provinces and states which was probably more than a Ministerially governed province could be expected to give, or which some of the Section 93 provinces might think it safe to enforce. Even if the Government of India were to insist on its central purchasing organization operating to buy what it might consider the properly available surplus, its efforts could easily have been nullified by lack of co-operation from the provinces or states and their officers. That the Sixth Price Control Conference recommended the scheme was, however, a step in advance and an indication that the probable plight of India in regard to food was beginning to be taken seriously.

How near at this stage the Government of India was to considering not only "equality of sacrifice," but also "equality of consumption," i.e., food rationing, it is not now possible to say. From item (v) of the summary of the plan, the Government of India seemed willing to leave the distribution of supplies secured under the plan to the provincial and state authorities; and the reluctance of surplus provinces to reduce the normal food supply of their own people, unless they could be assured that their sacrifices were not being used to increase the profits of the traders and "blackmarketeers" of deficit provinces, was understandable. Really effective procurement from surplus provinces and states required also the introduction of effective control of distribution in deficit areas, and as yet such effective control existed in very few places.

The scheme described above was to apply only to wheat. But a similar scheme was recommended for the "staple competitive foodgrains, namely rice, jowar, bajra, ragi, barley, gram and maize." For this scheme the whole of India was to be divided into "regions," and the "primary responsibility for distribution within each region" was to be vested in the Regional Price and Supply Board, operating

"either through its own machinery or through the machinery of the Provincial Governments subject to the general directions of the Central Government." Purchases for export from one region to another were to be made by the Central Government or by Provincial Governments acting on its behalf.

But the Regional Price and Supply Boards, which had only recently been constituted, were never called upon to undertake this "primary responsibility," which indeed, as bodies hastily established and with no executive functions or staff, they were unfitted to perform. The proposal had, however, the merit of recognizing that control over all cereals must inevitably be the goal of India's food administration.

In consequence of the recommendations of the Sixth Price Control Conference, the Government of India on October 7, 1942 wrote to the Provincial Governments outlining a scheme on the lines suggested by the conference, and on November 21 the Government of India took a further step and informed the provinces that it intended to start buying wheat by a central organization operating through selected agents, and to send the wheat so procured to importing centers, consigned to the Provincial Director of Civil Supplies or to his nominee. This was necessary, for experience had shown that grain consigned under permits from the Wheat Commissioner to private consignees in areas where it was badly needed was sometimes diverted elsewhere. Provincial Governments were told to inform the Government of India Wheat Commissioner of their requirements, and that he would do his best to satisfy them.

Until December 1942, however, the price of foodgrains had not been such as to cause real alarm. The Foodgrains Policy Committee said, "Making all allowance for the fact that recorded prices were lower than 'black-market' prices, the recorded figures for all-India showed a monthly average for December 1942 (week ending August 19, 1939 = 100) of 218 for rice and of 232 for wheat. Without any question the Bengal situation was deteriorating badly, but the all-India situation could not be judged in the light of Bengal alone" (*3*, p. 2).

Under the proposed scheme, however, and indeed on all other considerations, it was clear that the Government of India would in future be far more directly concerned with India's food supply than hitherto, for the problem was now not one of fixing prices of foodgrains, but of finding and procuring the grain from the grower and the middleman. The Government of India therefore, with effect from

December 2, 1942, established a separate Food Department at New Delhi, under the Commerce Member of the Governor General's Council (*1*, p. 45).

As the Foodgrains Policy Committee later stated, "December 1942 formed a natural dividing line because it was in that month that the Food Department was created and the Food Policy of the Central Government, its implication and its failure or its successes became of great importance." Food was becoming, or had become, "news."

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CHAPTER 7

THE CRISIS YEAR: 1943

FIRST AND SECOND FOOD CONFERENCES

On December 14, 1942 the First Food Conference was called at New Delhi by the newly constituted Food Department of the Government of India under the chairmanship of the Honourable Member, Commerce and Food Departments. It was attended by 17 representatives of the Government of India, by 16 from the Provincial Governments, and by 14 from the Indian States.

The most important item on the agenda was the first, "To frame agreed estimates of the foodgrain requirements and resources of the main administrative areas of the country and to draw up a programme for the utilization of such stocks as may be found available on the lines best calculated to meet the most essential needs of the country; in other words to frame a quota programme for supplying the deficit areas."

The conference was of course faced with obvious difficulties in drawing up any program that might be realistic; in December in some provinces the winter rice crop was in process of being harvested, while in others it was still in the fields; the wheat crop had only recently been sown and no estimate of its eventual outturn was possible. Added to this was the known inaccuracy of crop statistics, and a natural, indeed an inevitable, inclination for the representatives of provinces and states to play for safety in asking for or offering supplies. Eventually, however, the conference made a rough calculation of the demands of the deficit areas and the surpluses offered by the surplus areas, and "the result caused some dismay," being that "the shortage in rice alone is 1,900,000 tons, assuming that Bengal gets no rice from outside. If Bengal has to get rice, the deficit is increased by the quantity that Bengal requires. The shortage in wheat is 400,000 tons. But that only covers the next five months. This is the position based on the statements that have been made this morning" (*1*, p. 46). The uncertainty regarding Bengal's requirements was probably due to the already obvious needs of other areas, and to the fact that the Bengal final rice forecast had not been received and therefore

the danger overhanging that province not fully realized. The areas which were in great need were those normally dependent on the import of rice from Burma, which was now no longer possible. "Bombay produced on the average of five years ending 1941, 760,000 tons of rice and consumed 1,050,000 tons. If it received no imports it would have to manage with less than three fourths of its normal supply. The dependence of Travancore and Cochin on imports was even greater." Besides, "Madras was no less deficit than Bengal and had had a poor rice crop at the end of 1942" (*1*, p. 46). (The Foodgrains Policy Committee which met later in the year took the period 1938/39–1940/41 for calculation and this gave a normal rice deficit of 438,000 tons for Bombay. This was probably more realistic.)

The conference also discussed various other questions, including the Government of India's proposal that purchases for export and for the Defence Services should be made in the provinces by an organization set up by the Central Government and working under its control; there was opposition to this and no agreement was reached. Other matters considered were the figures which should be fixed for maximum prices of foodgrains, possible methods of securing a freer flow of foodgrains to the markets, and the possible lines for a rationing scheme for foodgrains in urban areas, if such should ever become necessary.

The main result of the conference was that the Food Department undertook to fix target figures for export from surplus provinces and for receipts by deficit areas. But it was by now becoming clear to all that the food problem must no longer be allowed to drift and that the Government of India would have to take an active part in its solution. Especially, looking to the inflation and price increases which followed in 1943, the view of a representative of the Hyderabad State at the conference is of interest:

> The main causes which have given rise to the present unsatisfactory position seem to be lack of full coordination between the different administrative units, lack of an all-India policy, the uncontrolled profit motive, and lastly stocks going underground and being held for greater gain or on account of fear of future shortage, or—a thing which has not been touched upon till now—a desire to invest profits in commodities which will maintain their value whatever may happen to the currency; for, I must emphasise, there is now a general distrust of the new coinage and the paper currency.

The infant Food Department thus faced the year 1943 with a heavy task before it. The surpluses and deficits of foodgrains dis-

cussed at the First Food Conference in December had to be worked out and the agreement of the various provinces and states secured on these and on the operations needed to effect the movement of these amounts; the deficit areas of Bombay, Madras, Travancore, and Cochin had somehow to be provisioned even before supplies under the new plan could be arranged for; the inheritance from the Commerce Department of a statutory maximum price for wheat had to be liquidated; Bengal was beginning the famine of 1943, although this was not realized till somewhat later; in the first few months of 1943 "inflation was getting away to a flying start"; there were changes in the Honourable Members in charge of the Food Department, and in its superior personnel, some due to death, some to the exigencies of wartime. That the Food Department accomplished what it did to save India's food supply under these circumstances is remarkable.

On January 2, 1943 the Food Department issued instructions to the Provincial Governments to prohibit except under permit the export of all major foodgrains from their provinces and to confine the permits to purchases made by, or on behalf of, importing governments. On January 27 the provinces were informed that the Government of India had decided that the purchasing agency for export should be the Provincial Government and not an organization set up by the Center, and the provinces were requested to set up procurement machinery at once so that buying could start in advance of the decision on the quantities to be bought. Meanwhile the Food Department was working out the necessary figures for discussion with the provinces at the Second Food Conference fixed for the last week of February 1943 (*1*, p. 46).

It had been realized that the statutory maximum price of wheat, which had been first imposed in December 1941, even though supported during 1942 by control over movement of wheat and over futures and option trading, had failed, and would fail so long as supplies could be withheld from the market. Therefore the maximum price was removed by a notification of January 25, 1943, and, though the prices immediately rose, they soon steadied down in the producing areas around Rs. 9 as. 10 a maund. The wholesale price index for wheat was 220 for December 1942; it rose to 344 for January 1943 when control was removed but dropped to 307 for February, 290 for March, and 298 for April (*2*, p. 150). How far this decrease in prices was due to decontrol is uncertain, for some of the drop was due to the prospects of a large wheat crop. Though decontrol was probably inevitable until an adequate procurement machinery and control of

stocks could be enforced, its introduction just at this time, when stricter control was obviously going to be necessary, weakened the Food Department's position in proposing such control (*3*, p. 4).

The Second Food Conference was held on February 24, 25, and 26, 1943 and was mainly occupied in discussion of the operational details involved in the Government of India's "Basic Plan" for procurement. The agenda included such items as how the "target" surplus and deficiency figures should be fixed, contracts with purchasing agents, "pool" prices, methods of payments by importing provinces, the reception and distribution of supplies received under the scheme, inspection, storage, statistics, assistance by district officials, finance, etc.

The Government of India proposed that purchases on behalf of the Central Government should not be confined to what the producing province held to be its "exportable surplus," but should go beyond that and include as much as possible of the provincial "marketable surplus," i.e., "the surplus beyond the cultivator's requirements that he brings forward for sale in the market." This would enable the Central Government to produce an equilibrium of supply prices throughout India, and ensure that the probable shortage of production of some 4 or 5 percent should be distributed with some equity over all consumers.

Though this principle was accepted by most provinces, the comment by the representative of Sind, that "it would appear that certain Provinces were not prepared to share any sacrifices in the supply of food that may be necessary for the conduct of the war [and] were not prepared to give up anything beyond the balance after providing for their own normal consumption however serious the position," was not unjustified. A proposal made by one of the provinces that it should be for the Central Government to determine, after such consultation as was necessary, what quantities should be surrendered by surplus provinces and states, and what quantities should be apportioned to deficit provinces and states, was accepted by the representatives of Madras, Bengal, Bombay, the United Provinces, Sind, Assam, and the North West Frontier Province, but opposed by the Punjab, Bihar, and the Central Provinces (Orissa neutral). The idea of an "equality of sacrifice" throughout India had made progress, but the reluctance of some to accept it continued to hamper the Food Department's endeavors for a long time to come.

The conference did not discuss the amounts of the "surpluses" and the "deficits" of the various provinces, for the suggestions con-

cerning these made by the Food Department had not yet been considered by the Provincial Governments.

The Government of India on March 12 again pressed on the provinces the urgency of starting procurement of foodgrains and of taking the necessary action for setting up provincial machinery, and about a month later they communicated to the provinces the preliminary "target" figures of purchases at which surplus provinces must aim. The Provincial Governments were reminded that "over three months had been spent in reaching the greatest common measure of agreement in respect of the Plan and the methods to be adopted" (*1*, p. 47).

Early in May a movement plan was sent showing quantities to be dispatched month by month, with sources and destinations. The total quantity of foodgrains which it was planned to distribute was over 4 million tons, including 1.5 million tons of wheat, 1.1 million tons of rice, the same quantity of millets, and nearly 400,000 tons of gram. The figures for rice and millets represented the quantities to be moved between December 1, 1942 and November 30, 1943, while the corresponding period for wheat and gram was April 1, 1943 to March 31, 1944.

SIGNS OF FURTHER TROUBLE

Meanwhile other trouble was developing over prices. The decontrol of wheat in January had occasioned an immediate rise in price followed by a drop in February and March; the wholesale price index of rice, however, remained at 217 from November 1942 until February 1943. That of jowar was 103 in December and only 112 in January and February, and that of bajra at 139 from November to January and in February only 152. March figures, however, showed an increase of rice to 365, of jowar to 184, and of bajra to 170. By July the figures were 572, 228, and 230 respectively (*2*, p. 150). The effect of these increases in price was serious for the poorer classes.

To quote the report of the Foodgrains Policy Committee (*3*, p. 3):

> In the early months of 1943 an inflationist wave swept over India, and particularly Western India. In the first quarter of this year, the issue which was agitating the public was not food but "Inflation." The mounting note issues and the rise in the price of bullion were used as a justification for the rise in the price of cotton piecegoods, and when these had risen, their rise was used as a justification for a rise in other commodities not "in line", and the rise in the latter was then utilised in justifying a still further rise in the former. Such developments could not leave the food situation unaffected—the mere suggestion that the currency was becoming seriously depreciated *must* have affected

food prices, *via* withholding from sale, which could be justified on the grounds that the holder was "investing" in foodgrains as an anti-inflationary hedge.

The general inflationary psychology was countered by the measures taken by the Finance and Industries and Civil Supply Departments of the Government of India. Nevertheless the food situation was deteriorating, not only in Bengal, but elsewhere, especially in Bombay and Travancore and Cochin, heavily deficit areas which in the past had greatly depended on imports. Vigorous and energetic action was called for. Travancore State, which had taken a preliminary series of measures in the autumn of 1942, took powers to acquire the entire stocks of rice and paddy in January 1943. The Bombay Government adopted formal rationing in the City of Bombay on May 2, 1943.

The immediate difficulty confronting the newly started Food Department had been the supply of food to Bombay, Travancore, and Cochin, but before long it was clear that Bengal would be faced with a serious rice shortage. The Bengal Famine is discussed in chapters 8 and 9. It had an important effect on the general food policy of the Government of India.

The abnormal rise in prices of rice in the latter half of November and December 1942 in Calcutta had led the Government of Bengal to try various methods of procurement in the province in order to "break the Calcutta market." But these were unsuccessful, and on March 11, 1943 the Government of Bengal announced the end of price control in the rice and paddy markets, in order to increase the flow of supplies within Bengal (*1*, p. 39).

The position, however, was still serious. The Government of India decided on an emergency mobilization of supplies from areas adjoining Bengal in the Eastern Region, with the object of supplying 60,000 tons of rice within three weeks or a month. The plan failed because, except from Orissa, the supplies proposed were not forthcoming and those secured were insufficient to "break" the Calcutta market. Meanwhile after March 1943, prices both in Calcutta and the districts continued to rise and reports from the latter clearly indicated the approach of famine. Early in April the Government of Bengal reached the conclusion that the Basic Plan could not help them and informed the Government of India that "the attempt to treat the Provinces of Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa as separate units for procurement of and movement of trade in rice and paddy was fast leading to disaster. If not quickly abandoned it will result not only in frustration of the Government of India's purchase plan, starvation in deficit areas, and disorder, but also in grave shortage of the future crop owing to interruption in the flow of seed supplies" (*1*, p. 48).

Toward the end of April 1943 the Government of India were also

beginning to doubt whether the Basic Plan would solve the Bengal problem. The "target" figures had caused dismay, and in the majority of provinces the procurement machinery had not been established. The arrangements agreed on in March to help Bengal had failed. The Famine Inquiry Commission observed (*1*, p. 49):

> After careful consideration the Government of India came to the conclusion that the arrangements for procurement were so far behind in the Provinces of the Eastern Region that supplies to Bengal under the Basic Plan would not be forthcoming in time, and [in view of the needs of Bombay, Travancore and Cochin] to divert supplies to Bengal from outside the Eastern Region was likely to destroy the All India Basic Plan.

Two proposals were put forward: one that of "unrestricted free trade" between the provinces of the Eastern Region, and the other that of "modified free trade," which would give powers of control over movement of foodgrains to the Regional Food Commissioner, by a system of licenses issued to private traders on the recommendations of provincial governments. On May 6, 1943 the Government of India informed the Provincial Governments of the Eastern Region that "modified free trade" would be introduced and called a conference for May 10. At this meeting Assam preferred modified free trade, Orissa complete free trade, Bihar objected to both, and Bengal was insistent on unrestricted free trade. The representatives of provinces other than Bengal had no opportunity to consult their governments on the merits of the two schemes; nevertheless the Government of India introduced, not "modified free trade," but "unrestricted free trade" on May 18, 1943 in the Eastern Region.

The conditions which free trade produced in the Eastern Region are described later. Briefly, these were the invasion of Bihar, Orissa, and Assam by hordes of Bengal buyers, making fantastic offers, disorganizing local markets, raising prices of rice to outrageous heights, and causing wild speculation. In the interests of their own people, the local governments had to counter these developments as best they could by drastic enforcement of the Foodgrains Control Order, by purchase through government officers, by requisitioning stocks, and by opening fair price grain shops.

The Famine Inquiry Commission unequivocally states (*1*, p. 93), "the decision to introduce Free Trade into the Eastern Region was a mistake. It could only result, not in the solution of the Food problem in Bengal, but in the creation of similar conditions in other areas of the Eastern Region."

Despite the disastrous effect of free trade in the Eastern Region

on the economy of Bihar, Orissa, and Assam, the policy did secure some supplies for Bengal. "This apparent success and the continued slowness of deliveries under the Basic Plan to other deficit areas . . . led the Government of India to a further change of policy. They decided to introduce with effect from July 15, 1943 free trading conditions throughout India with the exception of the region comprising the Punjab and Sind, and certain other areas in North-West India. This decision, which was taken also without consultation with the Provinces and States, aroused immediately a storm of protest from the deficit as well as from the surplus areas" (*1*, p. 51).

Those provinces and states which had so far managed to protect their people from starvation by procurement of supplies within their own territories or from other provincial governments, by the control of movement of foodgrains, by establishing fair price shops, by rationing towns and cities, and by other measures knew that the Government of India's "free trade" decision would wreck everything that they had achieved, would put food prices beyond the pocket of the poorer classes, would open the door to profiteering and the black market on an incredible scale, and would cause a serious threat to war production and to law and order; and some of them told the Government so in unmistakable terms. In view of the strength and unanimity of this opposition, the Government of India postponed the introduction of free trade in other parts of India and called the Third All-India Food Conference (*1*, p. 51).

That the Government of India had its difficulties is true; for instance, the lack of reliable information on which to frame the Basic Plan, the reluctance of the surplus provinces to make more than normal supplies available, the urgent need of Madras, Bombay, Travancore, and Cochin for food early in 1943, the changes in the Members of Council and of officers serving in the Food Department, the political changes and disputes in Bengal, and the inadequacy of the administrative machine in that province. But the Famine Inquiry Commission decided that the "proposal to introduce free trade throughout the greater part of India was quite unjustified and should not have been put forward. Its application, successfully resisted by many of the Provinces and States, particularly by the Governments of Bombay and Madras, might have led to serious catastrophe in various parts of India" (*1*, p. 106).

On the Government of India the free trade episode had perhaps two effects. First, the method by which free trade had been imposed on the Eastern Region without adequate consultation with the local

governments and the decision, announced after no consultation at all with the provinces, to extend it to almost all India, caused both Provincial Governments and the public seriously to question the competence of the Government of India and of its Food Department to deal with the most important problem in the country, the feeding of the people. Secondly, an uneasy suspicion was aroused that perhaps the influence of the trading class on food policy was greater than it should have been, to the detriment of the common man.

It is, however, a tribute to the Food Department of the Government of India, as reorganized on the recommendations of the Foodgrains Policy Committee, that it was able to acquire and preserve a well-deserved reputation for efficiency and impartiality.

THIRD FOOD CONFERENCE

The Third All-India Food Conference was held at New Delhi on July 5–8, 1943, under the chairmanship of the Honourable Member, Commerce Department. The conference was opened by His Excellency the Viceroy and was attended by 80 representatives of the Central Government, of the Provinces, and of the Indian States. This conference marks a definite stage in the evolution of a unified food policy for India. Meeting under the shadow of the Bengal famine and of the narrow escape from the fatal disaster of a free trade policy throughout nearly all India, there was a general response to the chairman's appeal to consider the future rather than the past. "I beg you all, I appeal to you all and I do so in utmost humility and with all the sincerity of my feelings not to overweigh our discussions with criticisms of the past. . . . I know the history of the past two years. I am fully aware of the story of the last six months, and I am familiar with the events of the last six weeks. . . . Let the future write its judgment. Let statistical controversies, economic criticisms, the passing of judgment and the award of convictions and sentences be deferred till at least this situation is under better control."

Except for Bengal and the Punjab in a modified degree, the conference was unanimous that control of foodgrain supplies was necessary and inevitable, and that free trade was impossible. The chairman himself stated, "I need make no secret of the fact that so long as war conditions last, free trade is a thing which we have to keep in our pocket."

The chairman announced the intention of the Government of India to appoint a long-range planning committee and to ensure that the committee's report should be available for consideration at an-

other food conference early in September (and remarkably enough this committee did sign its report on September 11).

The main conclusions reached by the conference may be summarized as follows:

1. The Basic Plan should be continued with such arithmetical adjustments as may be necessary.

2. In execution of the Basic Plan, procurement should be carried out by government or by agencies under full control of government—state or provincial.

3. There should be no statutory fixation of maximum prices at the present stage.

4. Energetic steps must be taken to facilitate transport for the distribution plan.

5. The Foodgrains Control Order must be vigorously applied everywhere.

6. The rationing of urban areas must be progressively increased, both to secure equitable distribution and to control prices.

7. Financial settlement between surplus and deficit governments should be direct.

8. Metal coinage and consumers' goods should be made more freely available as a means of securing greater surpluses from the cultivator.

The appointment by the Government of India of the Foodgrains Policy Committee, which held its first sitting on the last day of the conference, was the most important happening in connection with the Third All-India Food Conference. On the report of that Committee was built the whole future food policy of the Government of India until 1947.

CITATIONS

1 India, Famine Inquiry Commis., *Report on Bengal* (1945).
2 India, Dept. Food, *The Food Statistics of India* (1946).
3 India, Dept. Food, *Report of the Foodgrains Policy Committee, 1943.*

CHAPTER 8

THE BENGAL FAMINE OF 1943: BACKGROUND

The Bengal famine of 1943 was a tragedy which caused the deaths of probably one and a half million people and which shocked the conscience of the world.

The events leading up to the famine and the happenings during it were inquired into by the Famine Inquiry Commission, appointed by the Government of India under Ordinance No. XXVIII of 1944 with the following terms of reference:

> To investigate and report to the Central Government upon the causes of the food shortage and subsequent epidemics in India, and especially in Bengal, in the year 1943, and to make recommendations as to the prevention of their recurrence with special reference to: (*a*) the possibility of improving the diet of the people and the quality and yield of food crops, and (*b*) the possibility of improving the system of administration in respect of the supply and distribution of food, the provision of emergent medical relief and the emergent arrangements for the control of epidemics in famine conditions in these areas and in those aspects in which the present system may have been found to have been unsatisfactory.
>
> Section 4(1) of the Ordinance, in pursuance of which this report is submitted, provides that "the Commission shall in the first instance direct its attention to the Province of Bengal, and . . . shall make a report and formulate recommendations in relation to that Province in advance of the final report. . . ."

The Commission, under the chairmanship of Sir John Woodhead, met first in July 1944 and issued the report on Bengal in April 1945. This report gives a comprehensive and detailed account of events in Bengal and of relevant happenings elsewhere. Its conclusions have nowhere been effectively challenged; inevitably the present chapter and that following are almost entirely derived from the report.

In this chapter it is intended rather to relate and discuss the causes and development of the Bengal famine, than to describe the condition and the sufferings of those affected except in so far as this is needed to give a due perspective. Nor is it intended to comment in detail on the political disputes, the charges of corruption, the allegations of lack of co-operation and the like, which were a lamentable accompaniment to the calamity.

The famine in Bengal came as a shock to public and to official opinion. Failure of crops in some areas is a familiar, and indeed an inevitable, feature of Indian agriculture. But for forty years the administration had been able to prevent famine, in the sense of high mortality due to lack of food to eat, by the import and distribution in the affected areas of supplies from overseas or from parts of India where the crops had been good. It was thought that famine in this sense had been finally banished from India.

Though in 1769/70 famine throughout Bengal was estimated to have caused the death of 10 million out of 30 million inhabitants, the province had during the last two centuries been almost entirely free from famine. The Famine Commission of 1880 stated that the eastern districts of Bengal (which suffered so badly in 1943) "enjoy so ample and regular rainfall and such an abundant river inundation as to insure the safety of the crops in the driest years (*1*, p. 1).

The 1943 famine in Bengal was caused by a combination of factors, which was outside the normal experience of the country and of the administration, and an attempt must be made to assess these.

Bengal, with an area of 77,442 square miles and a population of over 60 million, is "preeminent among the Provinces of India in two respects: it has the largest number of mouths to feed and produces the largest amount of cereals" (*1*, p. 4).

The cultivated area was nearly 29 million acres and of this some was cropped more than once, so that the normal cropped area was 35 million acres. Of this, rice accounted for a little less than 26 million acres. Areas under other food crops were some 4 million acres, and jute, the most important nonfood crop, occupied 2 to 2.5 million acres. The chief factor in the life of Bengal's countryside can be said to be rice. It is the staple crop and the staple food of the population.

The Bengal countryside, which includes some of the most densely populated areas in the world, is a land of small producers. The Famine Inquiry Commission estimated that 7.5 million families depended on the cultivation of the land, that of these less than 2 million held more than 5 acres each—"the minimum that can keep the average family in reasonable comfort"; that about 2 million families held between 2 and 5 acres each; and that all the others, consisting of about one half of all the families depending on the cultivation of land, either held less than 2 acres each or were landless (*1*, p. 6).

"There is not enough land in Bengal to go round" was an official characterization of the situation (*2*).

In normal times a section of the poorer classes in rural Bengal

did not get enough to eat (*1*, p. 7) and had no margin of safety, whether financial, physical, or of food, to meet any great unforeseen calamity.

Food production was not increasing in proportion to the increase of the population, for each year there were more than a million new mouths to be fed; and "in terms of cereal rations at a pound a head this needs nearly an extra 170,000 tons of food grain every twelvemonth" (*3*, p. 111).

Normally the Bengal population was fed, in the main, from the rice crop grown in the province, except for local crop movements from adjoining provinces and a comparatively small quantity of rice and wheat imported for the industrial centers. The local movements were not statistically known; in parts of East Bengal they represented a net gain, while elsewhere they were, in net total, largely offset by local movements out of other parts of the province; but a cessation of them could cause serious dislocation, only to be met by reversing the natural lines of transport. The net imports 1937–41, for the industrial centers or for relief in times of serious local distress, averaged some 140,000 tons (*1*, p. 42) against a normal provincial crop of over 8 million tons (*4*, p. 32). It was the provincial rice crop which was of importance, and the method of its marketing and distribution which affected the bulk of the population.

Bengal has three rice crops. The "aman" crop, sown in May and June and harvested in November and December, is by far the most important, normally being some 78 percent of the total production; the "aus" crop, sown in April and harvested in August and September, is next in importance; the third is the "boro," sown in November and harvested in February or March. Normally the aman crop does not come into consumption until after the new year, as the consumer has a carry-over of earlier rice.

The Famine Inquiry Commission visualized the annual rice "budget" of Bengal as follows:

Credit	Debit
1. Balance of old rice from the previous year	1. Seed
2. Yield of the aman crop	2. Exports
3. Yield of the boro and aus crops	3. Consumption
4. Imports	4. Balance of old rice carried forward to the succeeding year

This "budget" of rice is important in that, while in any year the

failure of one factor on the credit side might not be serious, yet the failure of two or more must cause great difficulty. In 1943, three of them failed.

Briefly, the consumers of rice could be divided into three classes: (1) those producers who have holdings of rice land big enough to supply their needs for food, seed, rent, cash, etc., (2) those whose land can only support them for part of the year and who have to buy rice in the market for the rest, and (3) those who buy their needs all the year round, i.e., the nonagricultural population, including all urban labor and much of the agricultural labor, which in Bengal is generally hired on a cash basis.

For the last two classes the commercial rice supply was provided, not only by the growers who have a surplus, but also by those in the second class who sell rice at harvest time to get cash for paying their rent, for personal expenses, etc., thus increasing their eventual dependence on the market.

The season for marketing rice depends on the time of harvest. The important aman crop is mostly harvested by the end of December, and 50 percent of the total arrivals of paddy and rice into the Calcutta market were in the four months January to April. After March, arrivals diminished gradually, being least in July and August for paddy, and in September to November for rice.

It was estimated that normally 54 percent of the Bengal rice crop was kept by the producer, and that the balance of 46 percent came on to local or Calcutta markets.

The movement of this crop from the growers, scattered throughout the hundred thousand villages of the Bengal countryside, up to the retailer in Calcutta, was a gradual process. First the cultivator sold his paddy or his hand-husked rice to small traders in one of the seven thousand or so rural markets of the province. Part of this of course went into local retail distribution, but possibly the greater part went to larger markets where it was sold to larger merchants (aratdars), or to local rice mills. Here again part was drawn off for local consumption, but much was dispatched from these assembling centers to other centers in the province, and part to the wholesale market in and around Calcutta.

It was an extremely complicated process by which food in Bengal was collected in small lots from millions of growers, transported, stored, dehusked, transported and stored again, and finally distributed through tens of thousands of retail shops to millions of households (*1*, p. 12). The great mobility of the rice crop through these compli-

cated channels was the key to the success of this process in normal times; this mobility was ensured by the constant threat of low-priced imports, so long as Burma rice was available. Once the spur to mobility ceased, local shortages caused local high prices, which at once hardened the markets in the supplying areas, and resulted in a vicious circle that could only be broken by positive movement of supplies or by the certainty of such. So long as the crop was kept mobile and imports were available, there was ground for the assumptions that, provided the consumer had money to buy food, food would be available for purchase at his local retail shop, and that the competitive supply of food would suffice to keep the prices at the retail shop at a reasonable figure. In Bengal in 1943, however, in many parts the system not only did not supply food at local shops at a reasonable figure, but failed to provide any food at all at any price. It is the reasons for and the effects of this failure that have to be investigated.

To deal with any emergency such as that of 1943, the Province of Bengal suffered from two serious handicaps in comparison with most other parts of India.

The first, and probably the greater, was the administrative organization in the districts. Bengal was a "permanently settled" province in which the government has no "Revenue" organization in the villages, nor any effective administrative machinery, except the police, between the village and the head of the District or the Subdivision. "The only functionary in the Bengal village is the village chowkidar (watchman) who carries out police duties. He is poorly paid, usually illiterate, and in no way comparable with the village officers of the ryotwari areas, who are persons of established standing with considerable local influence."

The Circle Officers whose duty it was to supervise the Union Boards had each an area of some 400 square miles and had no assistants such as Circle inspectors or village headmen.

This lack of an effective administrative machine in the lower grades not only hampered the authorities in keeping touch with conditions existing in the villages, but also meant that there was no foundation on which to build the staff and the organization needed to cope with an emergency such as the famine of 1943.

This system, originating with the "Permanent Settlement" of Bengal made by Lord Cornwallis in 1793, was one which the provincial government could not have entirely changed by improvisation during the war, and it was a definite handicap to the execution of any

effective measures which might have to be undertaken to meet the famine.

The second pre-existing and practically irremediable difficulty was the transport and communication system resulting from the physical and geographical conditions of the province (*1*, p. 8):

> The outstanding features . . . are the important country boat traffic on its waterways and the meagreness of road communications . . . Throughout the greater part of the Province roads have to be raised above flood level, frequently to the height of several feet, and have to be provided with a large number of bridges over the smaller rivers and *khals*. Moreover, the larger rivers present an insurmountable obstacle to any system of through communication by road; the largest of them are too wide to be bridged and others are unbridgeable except at prohibitive cost. In many districts, therefore, the chief means of communications are by country boats supplemented by a limited number of river steamer services . . . Bengal, while it lacks roads, is rich in waterways.

In most of the province, therefore, transport off the railway was at best slow and unsuited to emergency. That this difficulty, however, was not insurmountable was shown by the distribution of food by the Army in the last part of 1943.

Bengal's 26 districts averaged over two million each in population and nearly 3,000 square miles each in area, and the districts most affected by the famine were larger than the average.

The main pivot of the government administration in the districts was the District Officer. Primarily, as District Magistrate he was responsible for public order, and as Collector for revenue administration, but in fact he was the representative of government for all but purely technical departments and was also responsible for facilitating the work of these latter or for getting them out of difficulties in time of trouble. In normal times the District Officer had a hard day's work of great variety, and could only cope with it by a combination of effective delegation and strict control.

It was on the District Officers of the southeastern districts of Bengal that fell the full local impact of military defeat in Burma in 1942: Civil Defence (A.R.P.) on a front-line scale; the requisitioning of supplies, land, and buildings for the Army and for airfields; the influx of panic-stricken and enfeebled refugees; the "denial" of boats and transport; heavy local inflation of currency; and all the turmoil of an army re-forming its meager defenses after a retreat. By June 1942 the headquarters town of Chittagong was in front of the first

line of defense, ready to be abandoned if attacked, as soon as its port and installations could be destroyed, and in the 60-mile strip south of the town, civil administration carried on far in front of the troops down to the Japanese-held border. The Collector of a neighboring coastal district said that he "never knew whether he was going to wake up the next morning to find a Jap bringing in his morning tea."

As the famine developed in 1943, burdened with these other pressing administrative problems, the District Officer had no personal or recorded experience to help him, except that of the Famine Code. The procedure there laid down assumed that, given work and money in distressed areas, supplies would be automatically attracted to where they were needed. In Bengal in 1943 that assumption was proved false.

There was a further special difficulty in 1942 and 1943 which must be mentioned. To deal with the food situation in Bengal as it was in 1943, the full co-operation of the public was needed. Unfortunately this was lacking. Though, except for a few days in March, ministers responsible to the legislature were in office, yet at no time could the government command the support of the principal parties in the legislature. Attempts seem to have been made to form an all-party government—an obvious necessity in a time of such crisis—before and after the change of ministry in March. These failed, and whatever ministry was in office had to face bitter criticism from the Opposition, which seemed not prepared to relinquish the misery of thousands as a political party weapon.

Differences at the seat of Government toward the end of 1942 and in the early months of 1943 cannot have helped the handling of the crisis. The Famine Inquiry Commission says (*1*, p. 85): "We have been told by certain of those who held the office of Minister at the time that decisions on food policy were taken by the Governor on the advice of permanent officials, and that Ministers were not 'allowed a free hand to deal with the situation in the light of the experience and knowledge they undoubtedly possessed of the situation in the country'. We are unable to endorse this contention. We are satisfied from the material which has been placed before us that important issues of food policy and administration were referred to the Cabinet and decisions taken in the normal way." Had this been otherwise, one may presume that the Chief Minister would have resigned office in protest.

The failure to form an all-party government in the latter part of

1942 or early in 1943 is commented on by the Famine Inquiry Commission as one of the contributing causes of the famine failures of the Government of Bengal.

BENGAL AND THE WAR

The famine in Bengal was due not only to happenings and conditions within the province, but also to the growing food problem of India as a whole.

India's two main cereal crops are rice and wheat. Of rice the average production during the five years ending 1938 was 25.84 million tons and of wheat 9.81 million tons; but for the five years ending 1942/43 the figures were 24.42 million tons and 10.37 million tons respectively (*1*, p. 17). This meant an over-all decrease of 0.86 million tons of foodstuffs and of 1.42 million tons in the case of rice. Meanwhile the population had continued to increase.

At the beginning of the war, as we have seen, foodgrain prices began to rise, and at first this was regarded as a reasonable opportunity for the farmer to recover some of the loss incurred since the slump in prices of 1929, and to share in the increasing wages of industrial labor; and until 1941 this view seemed perhaps justified. During 1941, however, the war situation became more serious; by September foodgrain prices had risen considerably; by November the price of wheat was more than twice that before the war; in December the Government of India fixed a maximum price for wheat in the main markets and a wheat scarcity followed in consuming centers.

Then in the beginning of 1942 the war in the East began to take on a more dangerous aspect than ever; and by March all hope of rice from Burma was at an end. The Indian rice-growing provinces of Madras, the Central Provinces, Bihar, and Orissa then faced a scramble for supplies, rising prices, competitive buying, reluctance of growers and merchants to sell, and eager speculation, and inevitably their governments were, in the interests of their own people, compelled to control the export of rice from their territories.

This control of exports was, however, on a provincial basis, and the Government of India did not introduce any effective machinery to ensure the flow of supplies of rice from the surplus areas to the deficit provinces and states. It was not at that time recognized that India was inevitably in the process of moving from a system of privately organized grain trade to one of full state control, and that, if disaster was to be avoided, machinery for the change-over had to be prepared beforehand.

In Bengal the year 1942 opened with fair prospects. Though the aman crop reaped at the end of 1940 was the smallest for 15 years, though there had been shortages and relief distribution in 1941, and though the carry-over from 1941 to 1942 was low, the aman crop of 1941, harvested in November–December, was excellent and promised adequate supplies for the year 1942. But the conditions resulting from the war gave cause for disquiet. To quote the Famine Inquiry Commission (*1*, p. 25):

> The outstanding feature of the situation in Bengal was the rapid approach of the enemy to the borders of the Province and the universal expectation of an invasion of the Province itself. One of the witnesses who appeared before us gave the following vivid account of the prevailing atmosphere: "There was a feeling of tenseness and expectancy in Calcutta. Calcutta was largely empty. Houses were vacant. Shopkeepers had very largely moved off and a great deal of the population had gone out. The families of Government servants were ordered out of the coastal and exposed districts . . . Valuable records were removed from the southern districts to safer districts in the north. In general, nobody knew whether by next cold weather Calcutta would be in the possession of the Japanese . . . There was little panic in the districts but there was a great deal of confusion. Transport was unpunctual and very crowded and the districts of Chittagong, Noakhali, and Tipperah were just like an active theatre of war behind the front . . . A continuous stream of refugees was arriving from Burma. They were finding their way through Assam, after an initial influx into Chittagong, and were moving into the country. They were arriving diseased, bringing in a virulent type of malaria, and hair-raising stories of atrocities and sufferings . . . The natural effect of all that on the people of Bengal was to make them feel that the times were extremely uncertain and that terrible things might happen."

In view of the danger of invasion two military measures had to be put into force early in 1942. One was the "rice denial" policy under which stocks of rice in excess of local needs were to be purchased and removed from the three coastal districts of Midnapore, Bakargunge, and Khulna. The official price, however, was low and in the end only some 40,000 tons were secured. This quantity incidentally was to prove most useful in the later crisis of Calcutta's food supply.

The other war measure was the "boat denial" policy, under which, according to orders of May 1, 1942, boats capable of carrying 10 or more persons were removed from a number of coastal districts, where communications were almost entirely by water. The policy was first applied to an area south of a line running from Chandpur on the east, through Barisal, Khulna, Basir Hat, and Diamond Harbour to Kharagpur on the west. By the end of November only about one-third of such boats were left for service in the area. This order was a military

necessity and wide relaxations were made from November onward to allow boats to return. It seems, however, that the arrangements made by the Bengal Government for the care of boats when removed to "reception stations" were defective, and that if such boats had been kept in order, more transport would have been available for the movement of foodgrains in the "denial" areas during the difficult times in 1943 (*1*, p. 27).

Inevitably the price of rice in Bengal rose during 1942, as the stoppage of rice from Burma increased the demand in the provinces deficient in rice, and these began to buy Bengal rice. In the first seven months of 1941 the net *imports* of rice into Bengal had been 296,000 tons, whereas from January 1 to July 16, 1942, when the Government of Bengal prohibited the export of rice, the net *exports* were 185,000 tons (*1*, p. 28).

The effect of rising rice prices in Bengal has to be regarded in the light of those before the war. The price of rice throughout Bengal is normally ruled by the prices in the wholesale rice markets in Calcutta where in normal times cheap sea-borne imports kept prices from undue increase. From April 1931 to January 1943 the price was lowest between October 1932 and April 1933 and in January 1934, when the price of coarse rice in Calcutta was Rs. 3 per maund. In 1936, when Bengal had a poor harvest, it was as high as Rs. 4 as. 8; in April 1938 it was down again to Rs. 3 as. 4; for the next two years the price moved slowly upward. The 1940 aman rice crop was a failure and consequently the price rose sharply after April 1941 and by July was above Rs. 7. The 1941 aman crop was excellent, but Rangoon was evacuated on March 7, 1942 and by April 1942 the price was as high as that of April 1941, nearly Rs. 6; by July it was Rs. 8, and by October Rs. 8 as. 8. In November there was another violent rise and by January 1943 the price was Rs. 12 as. 8, over three times the usual prewar price. From 1931 to 1939 Bengal's economy had been based on the price of rice being three to four rupees a maund and a threefold increase meant hardship, if not disaster, to the poorer classes, especially those with money incomes, who did not grow their own food (*1*, p. 27). These prices in January 1943 were of course far lower than those which prevailed later on, but they were a warning of dangers ahead.

CALCUTTA

The system by which the Bengal nonproducer bought his rice has been briefly indicated above. But though the famine was a disaster

in many of the country districts, it was the necessity of keeping Calcutta's industrial workers fed which caused many of the difficulties of the Bengal Government. Calcutta's industries, especially the engineering industries, the railways, and the port, were of such vital importance to the prosecution of the war that the feeding of the city worker must have seemed vital, and certainly more instant than the needs of the remoter districts. Indeed a breakdown in Calcutta would have largely paralyzed the administration in dealing with Bengal as a whole. Some account, therefore, is needed of the developments in Calcutta in 1942.

Early in 1942 there was a war scare which caused many local grain shopkeepers to leave the city. To make sure there would be no stoppage of industry, the government advised large employers of labor to supply foodstuffs to their workers, and in consequence a number of employers' grain shops were opened. But by August, owing to competitive and speculative buying, these were finding difficulty in getting supplies and therefore "The Bengal Chamber of Commerce Food Stuffs Scheme" was approved by government. Under this the Chamber purchased and distributed essential supplies for the industrial labor of its members. The Indian Chamber of Commerce and the Bengal National Chamber of Commerce were informed that the authorities would give them similar facilities also. The Government of Bengal, however, while willing to do all in its power to facilitate supplies, did not normally contemplate provision from government stocks. Considering the reluctance of the Bengal Government to undertake procurement operations at that time, this was a wise proviso.

In August 1942 the scheme covered about 500,000 employees and by December about 620,000, and the total number of persons served including dependents was approximately one million.

Toward the end of 1942 the steadily increasing prices of foodstuffs faced organized industry with the dilemma of either increasing wages or of subsidizing supplies to their workers. The Bengal Chamber of Commerce, again in consultation with the Bengal Government, decided that, in the interests of their employees and in accord with the government price control and anti-inflationary policy, the Chamber would supply part of the essential foodstuffs at the controlled prices of August 1942 and that the employers would meet the difference between this and the actual cost.

Similar arrangements were made jointly by the Bengal National Chamber, the Marwari Chamber, the Indian Chamber, and the Muslim Chamber of Commerce, which covered some 170,000 laborers.

Similarly the Central and Provincial Governments, the Railway Board, the Port Trust, and other employers arranged for supplies at subsidized prices to their employees, numbering about 300,000.

These various classes, who received part of their food largely at the expense of the taxpayer or of the general consumer, were known as "priority consumers" and so long as food was procurable they did not so greatly feel the effects of the rise in prices. Therefore, in dealing with the Bengal famine it must be remembered that not far short of two million of Calcutta's more than 4 million inhabitants were reasonably well assured of supplies of food at the prices of August 1942.

In addition to the scheme for priority consumers, the government had a system of about 100 "controlled shops," which was started in August, and at which grain was sold to the public at controlled prices.

Calcutta, with a labor force drawn from many parts of India, was not like the rest of Bengal a consumer of rice alone. Wheat was the staple food of many, and normally some 18,000 tons were imported monthly for Calcutta and its suburbs. But during the latter months of 1942 these imports steadily decreased from 13,259 tons in April to 9,397 in December. The causes were various: the difficulties in northern India wholesale markets, the failure of the Government of India's price control of wheat, the civil disturbances in August which affected transport, etc. But the effect was to increase the demand on Calcutta's rice supplies at a time when these were seriously short.

In view of the steadily rising prices from January 1940 and of the increased exports in 1942, the Government of Bengal had fixed, with effect from July 1, 1942, the maximum wholesale price of rice in Calcutta at Rs. 5 as. 12 a maund. This price had been decided on in consequence of discussions held some weeks earlier. By July the market price was about Rs. 7 and the immediate effect of the order, therefore, was that rice disappeared from the Calcutta market. A similar result followed in the districts, and the Commissioners protested and asked for the stoppage of export of rice. The Howrah District Magistrate anticipated food riots and was compelled to seize stocks that were being withheld from sale. In the Burdwan Division price control completely broke down (*1*, p. 29).

On July 21 the maximum price was raised to Rs. 6 as. 12, which merely put the black-market price up another rupee.

The Government of Bengal then put on the market in Calcutta, through the controlled shops and the employers of labor, a portion of the "denial" rice stocks. This eased the situation, but the result was

not enough to make the statutory price effective. The statutory price was apparently considered to be a major obstacle to the movement of supplies into the markets and, while the Bengal Government were not prepared formally to abrogate it, instructions were issued, early in October, not to enforce it except in flagrant cases. This can hardly have increased public confidence.

During October supplies from "denial" stocks were made available with good results to urban areas in four districts of East Bengal. A firm offer of a much larger supply to rural areas of one such district sufficed to bring local stocks onto the market without any actual dispatch.

Thus by October 1942, despite anxieties for the future, the Bengal Government appeared to have regained the initiative. The aman crop prospects, though not good, had been revived by rain in September, and an average crop seemed assured; it was even apprehended that there might be a loss on the remaining "denial" stocks owing to a fall in prices on the new crop. It must be noted, however, that in the opinion of the Famine Inquiry Commission, September was probably the critical month in the development of the Bengal famine and measures to avert disaster ought to have been started then.

CITATIONS

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2 Bengal, *Report of the Land Revenue Commission* (1939).

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CHAPTER 9

THE BENGAL FAMINE OF 1943: AFTER THE MIDNAPORE CYCLONE

DISASTER AND CROP FAILURE

In October 1942 "West Bengal was visited by a great natural calamity, a calamity which took a heavy toll of life and brought acute distress to thousands of homes. On the morning of October 16, 1942, a cyclone of great intensity accompanied by torrential rains, and followed later in the day by three tidal waves, struck the western districts of the Province. The tidal waves laid waste a strip of land about seven miles wide along the coast in the districts of Midnapore and the 24-Parganas, and caused similar damage to an area about three miles wide along the banks of the Hooghly, the Rupnarayan, the Haldi and the Rasulpur rivers. Another effect of the tidal waves, reinforced by heavy rain, was to push up the water level in the northern reaches of the rivers, thereby causing extensive floods. The effects of the cyclone itself and the torrential rains which accompanied it were felt over a very wide area though in different degrees of intensity. The severest loss of life and damage to property occurred in the southern parts of the two districts already mentioned, that is in the areas nearest to the sea. In areas more distant from the coast, there was little or no loss of life, but crops and property were damaged and communications interrupted. It is estimated that the total area affected was 3,200 square miles, of which 450 square miles were swept by the tidal waves, and 400 square miles affected by floods. Throughout this large area the standing aman crop, which was then flowering, was in large measure damaged. In the worst affected areas it was not only the standing crops which were destroyed; reserve stocks of the previous crop in the hands of cultivators, consumers, and dealers were also lost" (*1*, p. 32). "Some 14,500 people and 190,000 cattle were killed and dwellings, food stores, and crops destroyed over a wide area. Corpses and ruins littered the countryside" (*1*, p. 66; also *2*, p. 73).

It is not possible here to give a detailed account of the cyclone or of the damage caused by it, nor of the measures taken for relief

of need. Military units in the area, who themselves suffered some loss of life, took the initiative in the clearance of debris and the removal of the dead. Relief parties bringing food, water, and medical supplies were sent from Calcutta and a special medical staff appointed; government and voluntary societies distributed rice, and relief works were started and loans given to cultivators. These efforts were, however, inevitably handicapped by the great damage which the cyclone had caused to communications and by political "unrest," and soon even more by the rise in the price of food. The cyclone was followed by crop disease, fungus and "root-rot," which were estimated to have done more damage to the outturn than the cyclone itself. An additional burden of work and responsibility was thrown on the district administration, already under a great strain, and from October the cyclone-damaged areas were in no condition to meet the onslaught of the coming famine.

The hoped-for improvement in the aman crop after September did not appear. Crop disease was prevalent, and the cyclone had hit the most important rice-producing area in the west of the province.

The Famine Inquiry Commission Report, in its Appendix 11, made an exhaustive examination of the Bengal rice supply over a period of years and reached the conclusion that the calendar year 1942 started with a carry-over from the year 1941 of five weeks' supply, that during 1942 current supply exceeded requirements by one week's supply, and that the year 1943 thus opened with a carry-over of six weeks from 1942. But owing to the failure of the aman crop and the absence of imports, the current supply of 1943 would suffice for only 43 weeks' consumption of the province; so that including the carry-over, Bengal had enough rice for only 49 out of 52 weeks in 1943. One of the four members of the Commission put the deficit considerably higher. As admittedly all calculations as to Bengal's rice supplies must be based on unreliable statistics and estimates, the view of the majority of the Commission has been taken here.

This of course did not mean that everyone in Bengal would have to cut his eating of rice by 6 or 7 percent. The rice grower with a surplus would continue his usual consumption, but would sell less and perhaps store more. The total available for the nonproducer—the pensioner, the farm laborer, the village artisan, the clerk, the professional man—would be short by far more than 6 or 7 percent.

Under the circumstances of 1942 and 1943 in Bengal—rumors of war, failure of crops, steadily rising prices, speculative buying, lack of imports—the producer probably kept a reserve against future troubles

or for sale later at higher prices, and even less was available for the nonproducer.

The First All-India Food Conference met at Delhi on December 14, 1942 and made a rough calculation of the requirements of deficit areas and of the surpluses of surplus areas, reaching the conclusion that "the shortage in rice alone is 1,900,000 tons assuming that Bengal gets no rice from outside. If Bengal is to get rice, the deficit is increased by the quantity that Bengal requires. The shortage in wheat is 400,000 tons. But that only covers the next five months" (*1*, p. 46).

In view of the conditions already existing in Bengal, the doubt whether Bengal would need rice from outside seems surprising. It appears to have been caused by several factors. Among them were Bengal's urgent emphasis on wheat supplies, uncertainty as to the probable yield of the aman crop, the actual extent of the "carry-over," and the reluctance of the Bengal Prime Minister to compromise the impending "Rajshahi procurement scheme" by disclosing its details or by formally proclaiming a serious shortage at a time when the markets for the new crop were most sensitive. The Director of Civil Supplies, Bengal, stated at the conference, "We do not require rice in the next few months, but statistically we are heavily in deficit for the coming year." When a doubt was expressed about the correctness of the crop forecast, he added, "I should say at once that this is the first forecast and the indications are that the final forecast is likely to be worse."

Subsequent accounts of this conference caused considerable public misapprehension. In the light of later events it was unfortunate that the Bengal Government failed to emphasize—or possibly perhaps to realize—the full extent of the danger ahead.

Danger signs were apparent before December. Once the knowledge of, or rumors about, the cyclone and the unfavorable prospects of the aman crop reached the public, rice prices began to rise abruptly in many parts of the province owing to heavy and speculative buying. In the Burdwan District the course of prices in one market was:

November 18, 1942	Rs. 7 as. 8
November 25, 1942	Rs. 10 as. 8
December 2, 1942	Rs. 11 as. 8
December 7, 1942	Rs. 14

Those of the people who had not rice stocks of their own were clearly hard hit by the trebling of the price of the staple food since the war began, without a corresponding rise in income.

FAILURE OF GOVERNMENT BUYING

Faced with the great rise in prices in November and early December, the Government of Bengal, which had failed to take measures at an earlier stage to control rice stocks throughout the province, and had "held off" the markets to avoid a further rise of price, rightly concluded that the key position was the Calcutta market, and that if prices could be brought down there by "breaking the market," then prices would fall everywhere else. To secure supplies for Calcutta, the Rajshahi Division, normally a surplus area and one little disturbed by the war, was "cordoned off" to prevent competitive buying, and District Officers therein were instructed to buy some 7,400 tons of rice at limited prices, and to support their action by requisition. The operation began on December 22 and some 2,800 tons were secured by January 9, 1943. But by that date events had overtaken the plan. The supplies, which had been intended to give freedom for maneuver, were needed for immediate consumption. A portion was diverted at once to feed the District of Darjeeling, whose normal source of supply was suddenly closed down by an interprovincial barrier; the remainder was swallowed up by urgent demands for food in Calcutta following Japanese air raids between December 20 and 28. These raids brought the rice trade into Calcutta to a standstill, and the government reluctantly had to requisition existing stocks in the city for distribution through controlled shops and approved markets. "From that moment the ordinary trade machinery could not be relied upon to feed Calcutta. The crisis had begun" (*1*, p. 34).

This was the first of a series of experiments which ended in failure. It is difficult to criticize now or to suggest what measures were possible or impossible in 1943 in Bengal, a province in the front line of the war, handicapped by an insufficient and inefficient administrative machine, and hampered by the communal and personal disputes of politicians. But it seems clear that measures, admirable in themselves, were often put in hand too late and then not pushed through with determination.

Clearly, to obtain stocks for safeguarding the immediate situation in Calcutta, more extensive supplies than 7,400 tons would be needed when the monthly requirements were assessed at 11,021 tons of rice and 16,552 tons of paddy. Purchases on this scale could not be made by the District Officers, who had not the staff, storage, or knowledge for the task, and the Rajshahi scheme was closed down on January 9, 1943.

Thereafter seven agents were selected from the trade and were allotted areas in which to make their purchases. Maximum rates for purchase price were fixed in the hope of avoiding competition and speculative buying, and soon export, except under license, was prohibited from both buying and nonbuying areas. But under the then conditions the merchants could not buy at the prices fixed, and between January 9 when the scheme started, and February 17 when it was dropped, only some 2,200 tons were secured.

A third method of procurement was then tried. Rice was to be bought by a Foodgrains Purchasing Officer who took offers direct from the trade, but though the embargoes on movement were retained, this officer could only buy 3,000 tons by March 11.

Thus in two months early in 1943 only 5,200 tons had been secured against an estimated target of 27,000 tons, and by March 3 the price of coarse rice in Calcutta had risen to Rs. 15 per maund.

The Famine Inquiry Commission has examined at length the figures of movement of supplies into Bengal and in and out of Calcutta in 1943 (*1*, p. 219), and shows that net receipts of rice into Calcutta during January and February were only 14,000 tons against a normal requirement of perhaps 300,000 tons a year. Wheat also was in short supply. By the beginning of March supplies were so low that it looked as if the city must starve within a fortnight (*1*, p. 38).

The Government of Bengal recognized that its efforts to control prices *and* at the same time to purchase stocks had failed, and was faced with a choice of two courses. The first was to intensify controlled procurement backed by requisitioning of stocks, if necessary by coercion, and the second to allow rice prices to rise and then to secure stocks by purchase and by imports from outside.

The former course needed an administrative machine which Bengal had not, and in any case was by then impracticable owing to Bengal's failure to enforce the Foodgrains Control Order of May 1942. With one exception Commissioners and District Officers considered that any measures that might probably involve the use of force were not feasible and would not provide the required supplies. The Famine Inquiry Commission, however, thought that, subject to certain conditions, such procurement would have been possible. The second course, if local and outside supplies should not quickly come forward, involved a risk of prices rising beyond the purchasing power of a great many of the people.

With the approval of the Government of India, which had re-

moved the control of wheat prices at the end of January, the Bengal Government chose the second risk. On March 11, 1943 it announced the abolition of any maximum price for rice and paddy throughout Bengal, in the following terms (*1*, p. 39):

> To clear up misapprehensions which are still impeding the flow of paddy and rice into the markets, the Bengal Government declare categorically that there is and will be no statutory maximum price for wholesale transactions in paddy and rice. Both cultivators and traders are free to bring their grain to the market without fear of having it taken from them at a price to which they do not agree. No trader who has declared his stock under the Food Grains Control Order will be compelled to part with it below the prevailing market price.
>
> (ii) The Bengal Government, in full accord with the Government of India, adhere to the policy of buying as much rice and paddy as possible by free market operations in order to secure the best use of the resources of the Province and their most equitable distribution.
>
> (iii) The clear abrogation of any vestige of price control in the primary wholesale market does not imply unrestricted profiteering. Government's own operations as buyer and seller coupled with the removal of the Black Market are in their opinion most likely to be successful in moderating prices at a reasonable level; but to prevent buying at reckless prices by wealthy areas, the embargoes prohibiting the movement of paddy and rice from one area to another in the Province will remain in force. The Government itself takes the responsibility for the movement of paddy and rice to deficit areas.

It may be noted that the Government of India had arranged for the import of overseas wheat when it abolished price control of that grain. The Government of Bengal appears to have trusted to local purchases of rice, backed by an assurance of supplies from other provinces of some 60,000 tons within the first month, to be followed quickly by the controlled movements into Bengal of 200,000–300,000 tons. But of the 60,000 tons only about half was obtained in the first two months; other controlled movements were scanty till after August (*1*, p. 89).

However, the plan at first seemed successful. Between March 12 and 31, government purchases exceeded 17,000 tons—much more than the total obtained by the previous three methods of purchase. Part of the promised 60,000 tons began to arrive from Orissa, which saved the immediate situation in Calcutta and allowed some stocks to be diverted to hard-pressed districts.

But purchases from April 1 to the end of August came only to 18,000 tons.

"Prices, as had been expected, rose sharply. The following table

shows how the price of coarse rice rose in Calcutta in 1943 from Rs. 15 on March 3 to Rs. 30 as. 10 on May 17:

Date	Price per maund *Rs. as. p.*
March 3	15 0 0
17	19 6 0
22	21 4 0
29	22 0 0
April 5	21 3 0
12	20 7 0
19	19 5 0
26	21 0 0
May 3	21 1 0
10	25 0 0
17	30 10 0

Prices in all the markets in Bengal were rising similarly. The following table gives the minimum ruling price per maund of rice in the last week of each month in five districts:

Month	Khulna	Burdwan	Rajshahi	Faridpur	Tipperah Brahmanbaria
January 1943	10 6	11 12	13 4	12 4	9 8
February	12 8	13 8	13 8	13 2	12 9
March	18 12	20 6	18 0	25 0	20 0
April	22 8	23 8	20 0	24 0	31 0
May	30 0	29 12	26 5	31 0	25 0

"The prices mentioned in the foregoing table are the minimum ruling prices. Actual prices were often higher and supplies were not always available for purchase even at these high prices. The effects of the high prices were felt throughout Bengal. On May 13 the Commissioner of Burdwan Division reported: 'Economic conditions approaching a crisis. Rice out of reach of the poor. Rice should be imported if the people are not to starve.' A picture of the conditions developing in the Chittagong Division is given by the reports from local officers, some of which we extract below:

11th May 1943—Price of rice rose to 43 rupees per maund in Noakhali but has come down again. Famine conditions prevailing among certain percentage of the population in Chittagong District. High prices keeping people on one meal.

29th May 1943—Many people starving in Chittagong District owing to high prices. First gruel kitchen started in Chittagong.

11th June 1943—No fall of prices in Chittagong or Noakhali. Definite cases of deaths from starvation throughout Chittagong, and number of living skeletons increasing. Soup kitchens have already been started in acute starva-

tion areas. 15 kitchens are feeding 1,500 persons daily. Scarcity should be declared. Gruel kitchens start working in Noakhali.

28th June 1943—Number of destitutes in town increased. Eleven deaths in streets.

"Thus, towards the end of the second quarter of 1943, famine had begun in parts of Bengal" (*1*, pp. 40, 41).

The hope that governmental operations and the end of the black market would succeed "in moderating prices at a reasonable level" was found to be illusory.

FREE-TRADE EXPERIMENT

The course of events in Bengal having been traced to the crisis of March 1943, it is necessary briefly to review the course of relations with the Central Government.

In September 1942 the Bengal Government, at a price-control conference in Delhi, had favored a central control of rice, operating over the four eastern provinces as one region, through a Rice Commission acting under the instructions of the Central Government, but functioning on business principles. The Government of India at this time also favored control of rice on a regional basis (*1*, p. 82). Meanwhile Bengal did not set up any procurement organization of its own. This was unfortunate, for in January 1943 the Government of India decided that procurement should be entrusted to each province separately, with a view to the planned movement of supplies from "surplus" to "deficit" provinces.

At the First All-India Food Conference of December 1942 attempts were made to assess these "surpluses" and "deficits," and the reticence of Bengal on the subject has been referred to. The Second Food Conference was held in February 1943, at which the Basic Plan for movements of surpluses was agreed to in principle, but the amounts to be moved were left undefined.

In March the "target figures" under the Basic Plan were issued and showed a target import into Bengal of 350,000 tons of rice for the year 1943, which was to be supplied mainly from the adjoining provinces (*1*, p. 47).

Meanwhile conditions in Bengal were getting worse, and in consequence the Government of Bengal in March had decided to decontrol rice to increase the movement of supplies within the province.

To assist this move the Government of India on March 10, 1943 held a discussion with representatives of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Assam, and the Eastern States, and proposed that 60,000 tons of rice for Ben-

gal should be obtained immediately from these other provinces and states in order to break the Calcutta market and bring down prices.

The target was not reached, only some 35,000 tons being eventually secured, of which Orissa supplied 25,000 tons. While this and the arrival of wheat supplies somewhat eased the situation, it was not enough to keep prices down. By the end of April less than 23,000 tons had arrived in all, Calcutta rice stocks were running low, and reports from the districts clearly indicated the approach of famine (*1*, p. 48). The price of rice was higher than the poorer sections of the population could afford to pay, and they were beginning to starve (*1*, p. 55).

Early in April 1943 the Government of Bengal came to the conclusion that the Basic Plan, operated by each province as a self-contained unit, would not solve the problem of Bengal's food supply, and suggested to the Government of India that Bengal, Bihar, Assam, and Orissa should be treated as one region for the procurement of, and movement of trade in, rice and paddy, so that grain could move within the whole area unrestricted by provincial boundaries.

The Government of India also doubted whether the Basic Plan would rescue Bengal. The target figures under the Plan were not being attained and in most provinces no effective procurement machinery was as yet working.

Therefore in the last few days of April, after discussion with the Government of Bengal, the Government of India concluded that the arrangements for procuring rice in the eastern provinces were so insufficient that the Basic Plan quotas would not be secured there, and that, in view of the urgent needs of Bombay, Travancore, and Cochin, rice supplies could not be diverted to Bengal from other areas.

In consequence the Government of India considered two proposals: "unrestricted free trade" as demanded by Bengal, and "modified free trade," under which interprovincial movements of rice would be controlled by the Regional Food Commissioner, who would thus control distribution, though not quantities or prices. The latter proposal was preferred by the Government of India, and the Famine Inquiry Commission considered that it ought to have been adopted.

However, after a meeting with the representatives of the governments of Bengal, Assam, Bihar, and Orissa on May 10, the Government of India, on the plea of urgent need for a decision, decided to introduce free trade within the Eastern Region from May 18, 1943.

On this the Famine Inquiry Commission's comment is (*1*, p. 50):

> The introduction of free trade led immediately to the invasion of the

provinces of Bihar, Orissa, and Assam by a large army of purchasers from Bengal; in fact it began a week before. The Bihar Government have described the position as follows:—

"The new policy resulted in large scale incursion of speculators, agents of big business, hoarders and small buyers from Bengal into all the markets. Prices flared up almost immediately. Merchants who had previously sold their stocks to Government tried to evade delivery by any means in their power because they received higher offers from Bengal buyers. The Bengal buyers or their agents went into the interior villages and offered fantastic prices, as a result of which the arrival of supplies in local markets were extremely poor. Prices fluctuated almost from hour to hour due to wild speculation and ownership of goods passed through various hands before they actually moved."

But it was not only private dealers who were buying. The provincial governments were also in the market. The Bengal Government through their agents were making extensive purchases. Directly free trade was established, the Government of Bihar ordered their Trade Adviser and District Officers to buy all available foodgrains; stocks in the mills were also bought or requisitioned. Purchases, however, had ceased by the end of June, as by that time prices in Bihar were above the maximum limits laid down by the provincial government. The Government of Orissa improvised purchasing agencies in every district. In addition, they obtained stocks by the rigorous enforcement of the Foodgrains Control Order. Merchants from outside Orissa, who, without obtaining licenses from the Orissa Government, had made purchases, were prosecuted, and their stocks requisitioned. By these means and by active purchases in the local market the Orissa Government were able within a fortnight to acquire several thousand tons of rice at a reasonable price.

In Bihar the food situation deteriorated rapidly on the introduction of free trade, and in order to prevent widespread distress and panic, the government opened departmental shops for the supply of foodgrains at concession rates to low-paid government servants and the essential services, and "poor" shops for relief to the poor sections of the community. The Government of Orissa have described the effects of free trade as follows: "It was undoubtedly the greatest factor in causing high prices, hoarding, and the unavailability of foodgrains to consumers in the latter part of 1943 . . . It caused the disappearance of rice from the local markets and led to serious maldistribution and economic maladjustments" (*1*, pp. 50–51).

A lamentable result was the unpleasant disputes between the Bengal Government, their agents, and other Bengal traders on the one hand, and the governments of Bihar and Orissa on the other.

Charges of bad faith, of obstruction, of corruption, of interested motives, and the like were very freely made, and need not now be "post-mortemed." But in fairness the popular idea should be mentioned that "one of the main reasons why Bengal's neighbouring provinces refused to co-operate in the Eastern Zone free trade scheme was that they knew that the grain, which both their own people and the Bengalis needed, was being bought for Bengal speculators' hoards" (*3*, p. 137). It is difficult to contest this in view of the Government of Bengal's record of inefficient control.

One result of the outcry about the Government of Bengal and their agents was that both in the Eastern Region and in other parts of India public opinion turned against leaving the food of the people in times of crisis to private trade and the maneuvers of interested private enterprise.

The free-trade experiment succeeded in getting some supplies for Bengal at the cost of high prices and hardship in other provinces. But the Basic Plan elsewhere in India was making slow progress, and so the Government of India decided to introduce free trade throughout practically the whole of India, except the Punjab and Sind, with effect from June 15, 1943 (*1*, p. 51).

This remarkable decision and its reversal have been described earlier. In the Eastern Region also, despite the protests of Bengal and the issue of various inconclusive orders, in practice free trade came to an end from the middle of July 1943.

The Famine Inquiry Commission has described the effect of free trade in the Eastern Region (*1*, p. 52), and this may be summed up as follows:

1. Probably 91,000 tons of foodgrains moved into Bengal from other parts of the Eastern Region, of which 38,000 had been purchased by the Bengal Government agent.

2. The effect on rice prices in Bengal was negligible. On May 17, the day before free trade was introduced, the Calcutta price was Rs. 30 as. 10. There was a considerable drop on May 18 and for a short time prices were slightly lower. But by June 7 the price was up to Rs. 31 as. 8, and in some places outside Calcutta prices rose to Rs. 40.

3. Prices in the other provinces of the Eastern Region rose steeply; e.g., in Bihar in the week ending May 12 prices were between Rs. 8 as. 12 and Rs. 9 as. 4, while during the week ending July 12 they were between Rs. 23 and Rs. 25. In Orissa the price in the Balasore District rose soon to Rs. 24.

It is perhaps not unjust to say that, while the experiment of free trade brought substantial supplies into Bengal for a short period, its main result was to extend famine prices and distress to provinces hitherto unaffected, and where the prewar price of rice had been about Rs. 3 or Rs. 4.

BENGAL'S FAILURES

The Bengal Government early in June 1943 undertook another experiment to solve its food problem in the shape of a provincewide Food Drive, designed

> to ascertain the actual statistical position, to locate hoards, to stimulate the flow of grain from agriculturalists to the markets and to organise distribution of local supplies as loans or by sales to those who were in need of foodgrains.

Very briefly, the whole of Bengal, excluding Greater Calcutta, was divided into units and subunits—in municipal areas a subunit was about 100 houses—and in each subunit a committee of 12 local residents was elected. This committee had to make a house-to-house inquiry into stocks of rice and paddy, to estimate the needs of each family and to persuade persons with surplus stocks to lend or sell them to those in need. Stocks of unlicensed traders were to be requisitioned, those who withheld from sale were to be warned, 25 percent of stocks over 300 maunds (about eleven tons) was to be requisitioned, and under certain conditions District Officers could requisition stocks from growers. In the result 23,000 tons of rice and 18,000 tons of paddy were obtained by requisition from the whole rural area of the province. While praiseworthy as an attempt to associate local public opinion with government food policy, the procedure had obvious openings for error or misuse and can hardly absolve the Bengal Government from its responsibility for feeding the people.

The inquiry covered nearly 10 million families of 56 million persons. The stocks of rice held by these were reported at one million tons, which was acknowledged by all concerned to be an underestimate—according to the Bengal Government by 25 percent. While not apparently accepting the figures, the Famine Inquiry Commission agreed that the Food Drive generally confirmed its view of a shortfall of rice in 1943.

In July a somewhat similar food drive was undertaken in Greater Calcutta, but by official agency and not by committees of private individuals. The reported stocks were some 33,000 tons of rice and paddy and 8,600 tons of wheat. This, if requisitioned, would have

provided Calcutta with nearly 6 weeks' supply of rice and less than 3 weeks' supply of wheat under actual rationing. But these stocks were not requisitioned and rationing was not in force.

The Food Drive in June, providing as it did for certain requisitioning of stocks, was a step away from the system of decontrol begun in March, and a further step was taken in August when it was announced that the Bengal Government would fix statutory maximum prices for rice and paddy on a descending scale:

	Rice	Paddy
From August 28 to September 9	Rs. 30	Rs. 15
From September 10 to 20	Rs. 24	Rs. 12/8
From September 21 onward	Rs. 20	Rs. 10

Apart from procurement for local needs in 20 districts, it was hoped to purchase an exportable surplus in 6 districts of 174,000 tons which would be available for relief in deficit areas.

This scheme was intended to enable government to buy as much as possible of the aus crop, due to be harvested in August and September, as soon as possible, and to secure control of this local crop was essential for any real system of supply for Bengal.

The scheme failed. In fact, in the light of past experience it is difficult to see how it could have been expected to succeed. Prices did not come down; the cultivator did not bring his crop to market; the trade disliked operating under controlled prices; the arrangements for financing the purchasing agents were effective a week too late; and when the scheme actually started, the bulk of the aus crop had already been sold. Eventually the total amount bought was 23,900 tons of rice and 38,600 tons of paddy.

FAILURE IN DISTRIBUTION

For the distribution of those supplies which eventually arrived in Calcutta the organization was defective. In August 1943 food stocks began to arrive in Calcutta and were soon piling up, and this continued until the Army took charge in November. In July the Bengal Government had said that they could deal with the arrival of "even 500 wagons of foodgrains daily" in Calcutta and would appoint "a Transport Officer and a Transport Department who would do the work of receiving goods, handling them here, distributing them to the various districts and also doing inter-district transport" (*1*, p. 99).

The Famine Commission, however, state that in practice the

Government of Bengal failed to carry out these undertakings. Stocks arriving in Calcutta were not properly identified on arrival, and arrangements for storage and distribution were unsatisfactory; the offer of help from the Government of India in September was refused, and when two officers from the Government of India were sent in October, their services were not fully utilized. The Government of Bengal's statement that "all attempts to secure suitable men from the business houses proved abortive" is surprising.

The Famine Inquiry Commission consider that the Bengal Government ought in July to have taken in hand the task of setting up the organization needed to deal with the arrival of foodgrains in Calcutta under the Basic Plan and their dispatch to the districts, and if local resources were inadequate, to have applied to the Government of India for help (*1*, p. 100).

Other comment was more outspoken. "For some reason, best known to themselves, the Bengal Government preferred to have all food from outside the Province delivered in Calcutta instead of directly to the famine areas. The only credible explanation for such amazing stupidity was that the Bengal Civil Supplies Department did not know where the stuff was most needed and could not arrange a supply programme. That statement may seem fantastic, but Mr. Suhrawardy admitted to me that he had not made even a provisional distribution plan, and when I went to the districts it became clear that calls for help had received little response in Calcutta" (*3*, p. 129).

While the dispatches of foodgrains from Calcutta to the districts, before the Army took charge, is stated to have been 900 tons a day or less, the Army soon raised this to 2,200 tons a day (*3*, p. 129).

The Famine Inquiry Commission considered that if the Army had been called in two months earlier, famine mortality would have been considerably reduced, and that the Government of Bengal failed to realize the magnitude of these problems and the scale of the organization required for their successful solution and were reluctant to ask for outside help even when the organization and personnel available within the province were obviously inadequate. The comment of the Commission, "we feel that this attitude was particularly unfortunate in the circumstances," appears an understatement.

For helping the famine-stricken areas the value of any supplies that were received in Calcutta was greatly reduced by the fact that Calcutta as a city was not rationed in foodgrains; the ordinary retail shops were entirely uncontrolled, and attempts to supervise the "controlled" shops failed, while the "priority consumers" were supplied

under the Bengal Chamber of Commerce, and other similar schemes.

Early in 1943 the Bengal Chamber of Commerce decided to provide on a scale of 5 seers of rice per head per week for the average labor force, and for employees in engineering works, dockyards, etc., at 7 seers. This was on the assumption, which had been agreed to by the employers, that every workman had one adult and two child dependents—a questionable assumption. However, there were many occasions when, owing to shortage of supplies, a reduced ration was issued.

The rations under the other schemes varied, and in some cases were too high, and eventually the Bengal Directorate of Civil Supplies aimed at 3½ seers of grain a week for each employee under the priority scheme, and an equal amount per head of the population supplied by controlled shops and approved markets.

The Government of India in October 1942 and again early in 1943 had pressed on provincial governments the need for introducing rationing of all important foodgrains, and early in 1943 the Government of Bengal put an officer on special duty to prepare a scheme for Calcutta and its industrial areas. This was ready by the middle of March and provided for full rationing of foodgrains, pulses, sugar, kerosene oil, salt, and mustard oil. The necessary orders, viz., "The Bengal Food and Fuel Distribution Enquiries Order," "The Bengal Food and Retail Trade Returns Order," and "The Bengal Residential and Catering Establishments Food and Fuel Enquiry Order," were passed, the Controller and Food Executive Officers were appointed, and the enumeration of messing units was completed by the end of May.

At this stage the scheme was scrapped by the Bengal Government. They issued orders to prepare, instead of allover rationing, a low-income preferential scheme by which one seer of rice per head was to be sold at a subsidized price to all persons with an income of Rs. 20 or less per month.

The Government of Bengal also decided that all articles of which the supply was controlled by government should be distributed through government centers, and not through private retail shops, and yet by September 3 only 25 such centers had been started.

In the middle of August, on the recommendation of the Rationing Adviser to the Government of India, another change of policy was made, and it was decided to introduce an over-all scheme based on ration cards for every individual. But the Government of Bengal insisted that the ordinary retail trader should be excluded from the

scheme. On December 21, 1943 the Government of India took their courage in their hands and, under Section 126A of the Government of India Act, directed the Bengal Government that the number of government shops should not exceed 450 and that the remainder should be licensed retail shops owned and managed by private traders and that a total of at least 1,000 shops should be established by January 31, 1944.

Thus rationing was started in Calcutta on January 31, 1944 and in Greater Calcutta by May 1, 1944, a year and a quarter after the preparation of a scheme had begun.

The Famine Inquiry Commission state, "The failure to introduce rationing at any time during 1943 added greatly to the difficulties encountered by the Government in coping with the emergency throughout that year" (*1*, p. 64). The reasons for this failure were apparently mainly political and reflect little credit on the Government of Bengal.

SOME FEATURES OF THE FAMINE

As mentioned above, relief measures were taken for the distress caused by the Midnapore cyclone of October 1942. Though recovery in the affected areas was far from complete by the middle of 1943, this was overshadowed by the need for relief for the greater calamity of the famine.

The rise in prices early in 1943 did not affect all the inhabitants of rural Bengal in an equal degree. As prices rose, the agricultural laborer, the village artisan, the recipients of charity, and the like were the first to suffer. Those dependent on charity soon faced starvation. The laborer and artisan sold their pots and pans, their family ornaments, their tools, their animals, the doors and windows of their houses, in the hope of warding off starvation for a little longer. Soon also many small holders, who had finished their stocks of rice or had sold these at what had then seemed fantastic prices, had to sell their lands and houses.

Some stayed on in their villages and starved there. Many went elsewhere to look for work. As things worsened, many thousands of people wandered across the countryside to towns or cities, where they hoped to get food. The greatest migration was toward Calcutta, mainly from the 24-Parganas, Midnapore, and other near-by districts. Similar though smaller migrations took place to other centers. The effect of these migrations was disastrous. Where the poor could be kept in their villages, even on a starvation diet of rice gruel but free

from exhausting effort and in their own homes, their condition, though weak, was astonishingly different from that of the migrants getting the same, or even a greater, amount of rice gruel in the streets and bazaars of the towns.

The famine-stricken population made little attempt to loot and there was no organized violence. They belonged to the poorer classes, accustomed to accept misfortune passively, and had been weakened by gradual lack of nourishment, so that when food finally failed they were too weak for energetic action.

But the famine-stricken were not all the population. Large landowners had rice enough to feed their families and to sell the balance at an enormous profit; rice dealers and merchants prospered; the industrial population of Greater Calcutta was assured of its food throughout; and, though experiencing some difficulties, the Calcutta lower middle classes did not face starvation.

How many of the rural population of Bengal suffered from famine it is impossible now to say. The Famine Inquiry Commission estimated that possibly one tenth were affected and stated that "it should be clearly understood that the greater part of the population of Bengal did not suffer from lack of food in 1943" (*1*, p. 68). It is important to bear this in mind.

Though the famine was not universal, the Famine Inquiry Commission rightly emphasized the magnitude of the task of providing relief. The mere numbers of the population to be dealt with were alarming; of the five administrative divisions of the province some had a population exceeding that of a minor province elsewhere; leaving out of account the Presidency and Burdwan divisions swollen by the vast urban numbers of Greater Calcutta, Dacca had more people in it than the provinces of Assam and Orissa together, and Rajshahi more than the Central Provinces. With such numbers and with such difficult conditions as are those in Bengal, famine relief could have taxed to the utmost the resources of an administrative system far better than that with which history had endowed Bengal.

The question is sometimes asked why wheat was not imported from America to feed the people in the famine districts of Bengal.

One difficulty of course lay in the fact that "the famine of 1943 was a famine in rice" (*1*, p. 169) as well as a famine in purchasing power. To quote the Famine Inquiry Commission (*1*, pp. 176–77):

> During the famine large supplies of wheat and millets were sent to Bengal and helped to relieve food shortage. They were supplied to rice eaters through the free kitchens but efforts to persuade people to eat them in their homes in

place of rice met with little success. Reference has already been made to the unpopularity of *bajra* and other millets. Wheat is somewhat more acceptable, but in general is consumed with reluctance by habitual rice eaters. When in Bengal, we were informed of the difficulties of increasing the offtake of wheat and we visited numerous grain stores in which quantities of wheat, mainly in the form of *atta*, were deteriorating for lack of demand.

The reason why little progress has been made in increasing the consumption of wheat by rice-eaters may be briefly analysed. Wheat as a staple food is eaten in two principal forms: as bread, or as unleavened cakes, known as *chappaties*. In this country bread is eaten only by well-to-do people and bakeries are confined to towns and cities. The domestic baking of bread is unknown, except possibly in limited areas in the North-West. To make *chappaties* an iron grid is needed, and it takes skill and experience to produce a light and palatable *chappati*. The poor rice-eater does not possess the necessary iron utensil and if he did would not know how to use it. Further, *chappaties* as a food differ in bulk and consistency from a bowl of rice. The rice-eater is accustomed to bulky meals of soft consistency which give him a feeling of repletion, and does not relish more concentrated food which needs chewing. . . .

In wheat-eating areas whole wheat is stored as such and ground into *atta* in mills or stone *chakkies* before being made into *chappaties*. It is not stored in the form of *atta*. In Bengal there are a few wheat mills outside Calcutta and the people do not possess stone *chakkies*. Hence wheat sent to Bengal has to be ground before distribution, mainly in Calcutta, and the resulting ground flour or *atta* readily goes bad on storage. There would be no point in distributing unground whole wheat, since it is difficult to use wheat in this form, and as has been said the people have no facilities for grinding it.

Wheat and millets can of course be eaten unground, boiled, or made into gruel, and were so used in the free kitchens started in the Bengal famine. But too often the poor continued to eat rice so long as they could get any and when that was finished had neither the energy nor knowledge to look for other foods, even if these had been available locally. That an extensive change from a rice to another cereal diet cannot be made easily was shown by the experience of Ceylon, where during the war the people had to switch from rice to Australian wheat. It needed vigorous propaganda by schools, local bodies, health officers, and government officials, by lectures, demonstrations, or posters, and the establishment of flour mills and of bakeries before the eating of bread in place of rice could be increased considerably. Such could not have been improvised at short notice in the myriad villages of rural Bengal (*1*, p. 177).

During 1943, 196,518 tons of rice and paddy were received in Calcutta by the Bengal Government and only 64,952 were sent from there to the districts (*1*, p. 220). Probably, with due organization of mills and bakeries, wheat could have replaced rice to some extent

in the diet of the industrial labor of the city, and the rice thus saved sent upcountry. But the importance of not interrupting the running of the industries, which were vital to the war effort against the Japanese, must have weighed heavily on the authorities. To substitute wheat for rice would have involved the prior introduction of food rationing in Calcutta and its suburbs, which the Government of Bengal was not willing, and possibly not able, to undertake in time.

But the great and probably insuperable difficulty of importing wheat for the famine-stricken was the war situation in 1943. To have brought any adequate quantity of wheat from America would have meant the release of a large number of ships already employed on vital work for the Allies in the various theaters of war in Europe and Asia and in moving essential supplies for the civil populations and the manufacture of munitions in America and the United Kingdom. Even if the ships had been available, they would have run great risk on the voyage of 13,000 miles round the Cape of Good Hope to India, for in the first six months of 1943 enemy action caused the loss of 2,125,743 tons of Allied and neutral shipping (5, p. 641).

In these conditions it seems doubtful whether the Allies would have been willing to provide the wheat and the shipping before the full extent of the famine was apparent, or indeed whether they would have then been justified in providing them, having regard to their other commitments. If they had delayed till the real extent of the Bengal disaster was visible, then supply could hardly have come in time before the new rice crop was available.

ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION

It is unnecessary now to detail the various administrative orders issued by the Bengal Government about famine relief. Very early in 1943 reports of distress were coming in from the districts to headquarters, and from March there was no doubt of the seriousness of the situation as indicated in the reports from Commissioners of the Divisions. Not until June 11, however, did the government ask the Collectors of Districts for information and for applications for relief funds. By August it was clear that a great famine was in progress and Commissioners and Collectors were called to a conference on August 14–16 in Calcutta. On August 18 a memorandum was issued emphasizing the need for "speedy and resolute action for relief of distress," and on August 20 a circular of the Revenue Department was issued prescribing the measures to be taken, including (*a*) gratui-

tous relief in the form of gruel, uncooked foodgrains, and cash, (*b*) provision of work for wages, (*c*) agricultural loans, including maintenance, (*d*) sale of cheap food to the poor. Union Committees were to be set up, the duties of those employed on famine relief work were detailed, and the prices to be charged for food sent to the districts were laid down.

"In practice, however, the issue of the instructions was not accompanied by the adequate provision of food and funds, with the result that the relief measures taken failed to prevent distress and death on a large scale" (*1*, p. 70).

The District Officers, overburdened already with war work and seeing death by starvation taking place before their eyes, must be absolved from responsibility for the tragedy by the failure of the government to provide other than paper help.

On September 26 a Relief Commissioner was appointed, but he was not given the powers of a Famine Commissioner contemplated by the Famine Relief Code, and he had no control over food supplies, as that was vested in the Civil Supplies Department. Distribution of food on a large scale was not begun, except in isolated cases of local initiative, until September.

The Famine Inquiry Commission were of opinion that all these measures ought to have been taken at least three months earlier.

The measures of relief applied in the various districts inevitably differed according to the conditions of the district, the people, the supplies, and the personnel for relief. By early June the main methods later generally adopted were being tried out on local initiative in the Chittagong Division.

"In some districts the situation was got under control fairly rapidly; in others confusion, inefficiency, and lack of transport and supplies hindered the provision of relief" (*1*, pp. 72–73). At first relief was attempted by opening labor works, making agricultural loans, and giving small money doles. These were ineffective and thereafter the main effort was devoted to obtaining supplies of food either locally or through the government and to distributing these through free kitchens (*1*, p. 73).

Many of the needy and famine-stricken flocked to Calcutta and the larger towns, and in Calcutta from July 1943 these created a grave problem. By the middle of October it was estimated that the number of famine "destitutes" there had reached 100,000.

"Destitutes in Calcutta begged for food and sought scraps even in refuse bins. They flocked round military and hotel kitchens to get

what food they could. They lay on pavements even in the busiest parts of the city, and corpses became a familiar sight. Complaints of delay and inefficiency were made against the Authorities responsible for the removal and disposal of corpses. It was at this stage that most of the gruesome photographs of famine victims were taken, which when published in the 'Statesman' and subsequently in newspapers and journals in England and America, familiarised the world with the horrors of the Bengal famine. In publishing such photographs for the first time the 'Statesman,' we consider, rendered a valuable public service" (*1*, p. 71).

The above is an extract from the Famine Inquiry Commission Report. Other accounts confirm it.

"A couple of minutes after I had been told by a Bengal Minister of his Government's grandiloquent plans I counted twelve living skeletons while walking across Charnock Place, including a bundle of bones which had once been a baby. It was being given water from the gutter by a woman who was too emaciated to feed it. They were seated near a tram stop and were practically trampled under foot by the prosperous people of Calcutta" (*3*, p. 123).

"All down the main shopping centres there were restaurants and food shops. Outside them, propped against the wall, huddled in the gutters, sprawled over the steps, were the silent skeletons" (*4*, p. 204).

To try to meet the situation free kitchens and famine hospitals were opened and in September a small daily ration of cooked food was available for all destitutes (*1*, p. 71).

While it was recognized that destitutes should return to their villages as soon as possible, this was impossible until there were food supplies in the villages, and therefore reliance had to be placed on the system of poorhouses, destitute homes, and famine camps. Much selfless work was done by many agencies in organizing and working such institutions, and to many individuals and social and philanthropic societies credit is due; but taken together the arrangements did not work as smoothly as they should have. Primarily there seems to have been a failure to realize the physical and mental deterioration that inevitably affected the famine-stricken who had wandered from their villages to the city (*1*, p. 71, and *3*, p. 121).

By August 1943 it had become clear that the Government of Bengal, handicapped by the lack of supplies, the overstraining of an originally inadequate administration, and the pressure of the war, had failed to cope with the famine. The Government of India had been unwilling to override the Government of Bengal, which, under

a Chief Minister and a ministry of elected members of the legislature, was exercising the constitutional functions of a Provincial Government under the Government of India Act.

But it was also clear that deaths by starvation and mass migration on a large scale were taking place in Bengal.

In October 1943, immediately after his appointment as Viceroy, His Excellency Lord Wavell visited Bengal and on his orders military help was given to the civil authorities. This help was mainly in three directions: (1) military officers were lent to the headquarters of the Department of Civil Supplies to organize and control movements of foodstuffs, (2) troops assisted moving and distributing food in the districts, and (3) army medical officers organized medical and public health relief.

The intervention of the Army brought new hope, fresh manpower and determination, new and improved transport, and medical and public-health resources to end the famine and alleviate its aftermath. By the end of November several thousand troops had come to the assistance of the civil authorities and by the middle of December they had handled 24,000 tons of foodstuffs.

The duties undertaken by the troops, British and Indian, indicate some of the defects in the civil organization. They turned themselves into temporary coolies for the loading and unloading of thousands of maunds of rice; guards and escorts were put on trains and river steamers to discover bottlenecks in transport; traveling shops were placed on boats and taken to out-of-the-way villages; small parties went to villages to show the people how to prepare other grains than rice; unarmed patrols visited and reported on the conditions of distant areas; new bridges were made and old ones improved; ferries were reconstructed and river crossings reorganized; boats, immobilized under the denial scheme of 1942, were salvaged and repaired; warm clothing was distributed. Of the last, 100 tons were flown to East Bengal by the American Army Air Force.

By the time the troops were withdrawn in March–April 1944, they had handled over 70,000 tons of foodgrains and Army motor transport had covered 836,000 miles.

The mortality caused by the famine, its effect on the health of the people, the efforts made to provide medical and hospital relief, and the epidemics which accompanied the famine in 1943 and followed it in 1944, are outside the scope of this study. These have been examined in the Famine Inquiry Commission's Report on Bengal, Part II, Chapters I–IV, and, apart from the work done by the Army, they

make sad reading. The Commission's general appreciation is (*1*, p. 142):

> The Bengal famine resulted in high mortality, the basic cause of which was lack of food. The lethal epidemics of malaria, small-pox and cholera were associated in various ways with the famine and its disruptive influences on social life. The health situation which arose in 1943 was beyond the control of any health and medical service. The health and medical services in Bengal were, however, unfitted to meet the emergency because of defects in organization and inadequacy and inefficiency of staff, and some of the mortality which occurred could have been prevented by more vigorous and timely measures. During the famine period up to November 1943, there was almost a complete breakdown of the health services. In November the atmosphere of defeatism was partially dispelled and much effective work was subsequently done in the medical and public health spheres. Even at this later period, however, there were many unnecessary delays and failures. The story is, in fact, throughout, one of belated efforts to bring the situation under control. This is said with full understanding of the numerous and formidable difficulties and full appreciation of all that was eventually done to overcome them.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

On the causes and events of the Bengal famine the conclusions reached by the Famine Inquiry Commission may be accepted as authoritative (*1*, pp. 103 ff.) and the main points may be summarized very briefly.

Early in 1942 the loss of Burma had disorganized the rice market and caused the "deficit" provinces and states, which normally were supplied in part from Burma, to buy supplies from the rice-growing areas in India, including Bengal.

Bengal itself was more exposed than the other provinces of India to the preparations for, and the hazards of, the war which not only hampered civilian transport, but also produced a state of apprehension and a liability to panic, especially in Calcutta.

On top of this came the Midnapore cyclone and the partial failure of the Bengal aman crop harvested at the end of 1942. Under these circumstances, unless drastic measures were taken, a rise in the price of rice to a level at which the poor would not be able to buy their food was inevitable.

At this stage the Government of Bengal ought to have taken steps to control supplies effectively and to distribute them at reasonable prices. At this stage also the Government of India ought to have established a system of planned movement of foodgrains from surplus to deficit provinces. These measures were not taken and rice prices in Bengal rose to five and six times those prevailing early in 1942.

When prices had risen steeply in May and June 1942 the Government of Bengal prohibited exports and fixed statutory maximum prices. Though, as supplies were not controlled, statutory price control failed, yet in September 1942 supplies and prices seemed to have reached an equilibrium.

The Commission considered that September 1942 was the critical month and that the Government of Bengal should at that time have set up a procurement organization. This was not done; and with the partial failure of the aman crop at the end of the year, supplies were short and prices rose steeply. Measures taken to obtain control were inadequate and in some cases wrong in principle.

In January and February 1943 procurement operations were undertaken, were unsuccessful, and were dropped. In March "decontrol" was decided on. But in the then conditions, if disaster was to be avoided, control was essential. Still less appropriate to the emergency was the "unrestricted free trade" in the Eastern Region, which the Government of Bengal urged on the Government of India and which the latter government injudiciously accepted.

As a result of "decontrol" the supplies which reached Calcutta—and from August 1943 these were considerable—were not under the control of the government, and the rationing of Calcutta was thus impossible. This failure to control distribution in Calcutta was largely responsible for the failure to control prices throughout the whole of Bengal.

The arrangements for the receipt, storage, and distribution of the substantial amounts of foodgrains received in Calcutta in the autumn of 1943 were "thoroughly inadequate."

Though reports of distress were sent by Collectors and Commissioners from the early months of 1943, the Government of Bengal did not call for a report until June, and instructions regarding relief were not issued until August, and then famine was not finally declared.

There was a failure of co-operation between the government in office and the various political parties, between the administration and the public, and at one period between the Governor and his ministry.

The Famine Inquiry Commission state that, after giving due weight to the great difficulties with which the Government of Bengal were faced, "we cannot avoid the conclusion that it lay in the power of the Government of Bengal by bold, resolute and well considered measures at the right time to have largely prevented the tragedy of the famine as it actually took place" (*1*, p. 105). However, the Commis-

sion, after thus criticizing the Government of Bengal, add, "We have criticised the Government of Bengal for their failure to control the famine. It is the responsibility of the Government to lead the people and take effective steps to prevent avoidable catastrophe. But the public in Bengal, or at least certain sections of it, have also their share of blame. We have referred to the atmosphere of fear and greed which, in the absence of controls, was one of the causes of the rapid rise in the price level. Enormous profits were made out of the calamity, and in the circumstances, profits for some meant death for others. A large part of the community lived in plenty while others starved, and there was much indifference in the face of suffering. Corruption was widespread throughout the Province and in many classes of society" (*1*, p. 106).

The Government of India must share some of the responsibility, first in failing to realize early enough the need for planned movement of foodgrains, including both rice and wheat from surplus to deficit provinces, and second in not reaching in time agreement with the Punjab on the price and procurement of wheat. If this had been done earlier, the supplies of wheat which reached Calcutta late in 1943 might have got there several months sooner.

The Government of India must also bear some of the blame for the decision to "decontrol" in March 1943 when the situation was obviously such that outside help to Bengal was imperative, and for the introduction thereafter of "unrestricted free trade" in the Eastern Region, with its result of soaring prices in provinces other than Bengal.

Though after August 1943, when the Government of Bengal's failure was clear to all, the Government of India sent large supplies of wheat and rice to Bengal, it was not till His Excellency the Viceroy Lord Wavell went to Bengal at the end of October that adequate arrangements were made to ensure that these supplies were properly distributed.

Perhaps this chapter may be closed with the words of the Famine Inquiry Commission:

"It has been for us a sad task to inquire into the course and the causes of the Bengal famine. We have been haunted by a deep sense of tragedy. A million and a half of the poor of Bengal fell victim to circumstances for which they themselves were not responsible. Society, together with its organs, failed to protect its weaker members. Indeed there was a moral and social breakdown, as well as an administrative breakdown" (*1*, p. 107).

NOTE

For comparison, a contemporary description of famine in Calcutta in 1789 may be of interest (*6*, p. 343):

This year a dreadful scarcity of grain prevailed, the crops having failed throughout the Provinces of Bengal and Behar, from which circumstance the laborious poor became distressed for food to supply their families. In consequence of this the British inhabitants of Calcutta, with their accustomed benevolence, entered into a voluntary subscription for their relief, whereby so large a sum was raised as to allow them to feed upwards of twenty thousand men, women and children daily. Six different stations were fixed upon in opposite directions for delivering out rice, ghee, and other articles of provisions, two English gentlemen attending at each station to superintend the proper distribution; this continued about four months when such immense crowds of miserable creatures were drawn to the Presidency by hope of relief that Government became alarmed and were under the unpleasant necessity of issuing orders to stop the further delivery of rice, etc., after a certain day therein specified, of which public and written notices were proclaimed and stuck up all over the country and every possible precaution was taken to prevent a further influx of people to the Capital; but nothing could stop the unhappy, famished wretches from rushing in crowds to Calcutta, the neighbourhood of which became dreadful to behold. One could not stir out of doors without encountering the most shocking objects, the poor, starved people lying dead and dying in every street and road. It was computed that for many weeks no less than fifty died daily, yet this patient and mild race never committed the least act of violence, no houses or go-downs were broken into to procure rice, no exclamations or noisy cries made for assistance; all with that gentle resignation so peculiar to the natives of India, submitting to their fate and laying themselves down to die. Everything in the power of liberal individuals was done for their relief; indeed, one must have been less than a man, an absolute Buonaparte, to have witnessed such horrible scenes of misery without feeling the bitterest pangs and exerting every nerve to alleviate them.

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CHAPTER 10

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FOODGRAINS POLICY COMMITTEE, 1943

When the Foodgrains Policy Committee held its first meeting in Delhi on July 8, 1943, it faced a difficult situation, even though the full disaster of the Bengal famine was not yet apparent. The supply of Burma rice had been stopped; India was threatened with a Japanese invasion; the Government of India's food policy had been discredited by three failures and was distrusted by some Provincial Governments and many of the public (*1*); Bengal was in desperate need of rice; some surplus provinces were protesting that they could not provide so much food for others, or could not introduce necessary administrative measures which other provinces were already effectively working; the trade was demanding abolition of control; and the people were frightened, afraid of famine, and suspicious that undue exports of foodgrains were in progress and that excessive purchases were being made for the Army in India. The Committee had, therefore, to convince, not only the governments concerned, but also the public, that measures must and could be undertaken which would put India's food on an organized basis and ensure a fair share for everyone in a crisis. The Committee's report contains much argument and persuasion to combat the uninstructed and sometimes selfish views of various authorities and classes. These, which are nowadays self-evident propositions, need not be examined in detail; nearly all the recommendations of the Committee's report were accepted by the governments, and many of them were put into force at once.

The report was welcomed by public opinion of most parts of India, which in this matter seems to have moved in advance of the official view, presumably as being in closer touch with realities of its daily bread.

Since the report of the Foodgrains Policy Committee laid down the lines on which India's food policy from 1943 onward was formed, its recommendations are fairly fully described here. They fell under five main headings (*2*, p. iv):

1. An increase in available supplies
2. An improvement in the technique by which home-grown supplies

of food could be made available; i.e., improved procurement machinery

3. Measures to secure more equitable distribution of what was available; i.e., the extension of rationing
4. A check on rising food prices; i.e., a general extension of the principle of statutory price control
5. Last, a general overhaul of the machinery of administration and a readjustment of the relations between the Provincial Governments and the Central Government.

It was emphasized that all these remedies were intimately and indivisibly connected, that none could be effective unless the others were also applied, and that no partial measures could succeed, a fact which seemed not to have been recognized in the past by provinces and individuals, who demanded that some action be taken, only not by them, but by or against someone else.

INCREASE IN AVAILABLE SUPPLY

As stated earlier, prewar India was normally a net importer of foodgrains, and during the decade 1931–41 this import varied from some 800,000 tons to 2,200,000 tons a year. Import was particularly necessary for rice, of which the net import rose from 1,165,000 tons in 1937/38 to 2,138,000 tons in 1939/40 (see Appendix Table IV). In view of the food position, the Government of India had in March 1942 announced its policy not to allow the export of foodgrains, and a section of opinion held the view that this step ought to have been taken earlier. The Commission therefore considered the point and reached the conclusion that it need not have been, for the stoppage of food exports would have inflicted great hardship on countries dependent on supplies from India and from Burma. Of these, Ceylon contained a large Indian population, and some Arab states were linked closely with a large community in India. For war strategy, too, Ceylon was an Allied bastion against Japan, and unrest in areas close to the war supply lines was undesirable. Furthermore, in 1942 the submarine campaign was rapidly reducing available tonnage, and supply from India saved ships. But by 1943 the position had changed. India was in distress through loss of imports, and the public was alarmed by exaggerated or untrue tales of export of foodgrains. The Food Department in July 1942 had pressed on the British Government the need for imports, and later in the year a program of imports was drawn up, and the British Government had shipped to India an amount of wheat considerably exceeding 150,000 tons.

The Committee considered in July 1943 that for the future India must cease to be a net exporter of food, and in any case must stop all export of rice, and emphasized that it be made fully clear to all parties interested that this was the considered and irrevocable policy of the Government of India. "In no other way will it be possible, in our judgment, to dispose once and for all of the crop of rumours, which have done and are doing an immense amount of harm to the spirit of the country."

Imports were necessary, not merely to cover the "statistical gap" between production and consumption, but to supply certain deficit areas, and as a buttress to public opinion and a weapon against the profiteer and the hoarder. The Committee proposed first, therefore, the import of 500,000 tons as a central foodgrain reserve "to break defeatism and to curb the monopolist who is prepared, for his own profit-making motives, to hold Government to ransom." Such a reserve would be needed to prevent a breakdown of the proposed procurement, ration, and price control programs.

Second, the Committee urged the import for current consumption, based on the average of the past five years, of about 1,000,000 tons a year of foodgrains. This proposal for imports, at a time when the United Nations were undergoing great strain and when merchant shipping was suffering terribly from submarine activity, was justified by the Committee on two grounds. The first was that eastern India was apparently to be the supply and operational base against Japan, and this was the part of India suffering most severely from shortage of food, and the second was that, compared with other allied nations, the scale of living of the people of India was so low that it offered little or no room for further reduction. The population was increasing by some 5 million a year which, on a basis of 1 pound of grain per day per adult, involved a yearly addition to India's food bill of over 600,000 tons of cereals (*3*, p. 53).

IMPROVED PROCUREMENT

Within the country the problem of procurement was not merely one of purchasing grain and moving it to a deficit province. Under the prevailing conditions in India the object of procurement would have to be to ensure that no one in all India was holding grain except for his own reasonable family consumption, or for resale in the normal course of trade, and in quantities known to the authorities. The use of grain as an "investment," or for "speculation," or for "security," was an antisocial act; all grain beyond the cultivator's rea-

sonable needs ought to be available for sharing out among all others. This idea was new to many in India in 1943, and was not welcome to everyone.

The Committee clearly asserted that "free trade," i.e., leaving the established organizations of trade utterly unhampered in their operations, would not solve the food problem. "It appears to us simply fantastic to imagine that the restoration of the unlimited right to buy and sell, from anyone at any price to anyone at any price, in any part of India, will under existing conditions give satisfactory results. Free trade under conditions of scarcity on the one hand, and of fear on the other, would be an open invitation for holders to hold, and for every rich man and speculator to 'invest' or 'hoard' or do whatever strikes him as most likely to be in his own self-interest" (*2*, p. 38).

The aim of procurement was to secure from the cultivator in every part of India the maximum amount of his crop. In theory the ideal would be a Government of India Foodgrain Monopoly, under which no one would be allowed to buy, sell, or deal in grain, no wagon of foodgrains would be moved, no allocation of foodgrains made anywhere throughout India, except as part of the Central Government's procurement agency, which alone would be responsible for provisioning some 400 million people. Even if such an agency could have worked, to establish it would have taken a considerable time, and time was not available during the war.

"Free trade" and "central procurement" were thus equally ruled out. The Committee considered that every province and every state must have an efficient procurement agency of its own, which would buy grain for internal provincial needs, for the Central Government reserve, for other states and provinces, for Defence Services, and for Civil Essential Services. What form this agency should take in each province or state would depend on the local circumstances. Government monopoly buying would be difficult if a province had not already an efficient and adequate revenue staff, and by no means all had this; the quality and organization of the grain trade varied in different parts of the country; buying through the trade might be through one firm, or through several, or through firms combined into syndicates, or through many firms each with a separate area. Local conditions did not allow a uniform system throughout India. But one point was clear, that, where more than one agent was used by government, there must be no possibility of competitive buying for government needs, and conversely all government needs must be supplied by the same agency, lest, for instance, the Defence Services' agents bid against those for the Civil Essential Services.

In different provinces various schemes of procurement were already in force, but in some these principles, which now seem so obvious, were not observed. It was therefore necessary that, despite the provisions of the Government of India Act, the Central Government must have the right to insist on any provincial procurement agency being efficient.

While agreeing that "requisitioning" of foodgrains was justified against "black marketeers" and hoarders or to meet a temporary emergency, the Committee was against it as a regular part of procurement. While recognizing the success of such a policy in Travancore and Cochin, it thought that "these operations owed their success in part to the sense on everyone's part of the absolute urgency of the situation and to the existence of administrative facilities which are not everywhere present to the same extent in British India, particularly in those parts of the country in which the permanent Settlement obtains" (2, p. 45). However, in the event, time showed that compulsory purchase of crops from the cultivator became a successful part of the procurement system of more than one province. The development of the Committee's recommendation is described in Chapter 12.

Control of transport was a necessary weapon in procurement. The Committee quoted the example of Assam, where all railway wagons for moving grain were put at the disposal of the government agents, who, after government priority demands were met, reallotted wagons to bona fide traders. This steadied prices, brought more supplies on the local market, and "was welcomed by genuine traders, who were no longer dependent on the rapacity and venality of Railway staffs" (2, p. 42). The Committee advised that, in its arrangements for securing control of the forthcoming aus rice crop, the Government of Bengal should deny transport to all grain bought in competition with government agents. Unfortunately, however, the Bengal Government failed to take adequate action and the crop was not obtained.

Movement of grain is an integral part of any system of food planning, and by August 1943 the railway system of India had a very heavy additional strain thrown on it. Much traffic formerly sent by sea had to go by rail; the normal volume of traffic was greatly increased by military and supply services movements; after four years of war there were shortages of locomotives and of wagons; and the recent floods had impeded traffic to Calcutta, an industrial and operational center of great importance, as well as headquarters of a famine-stricken province.

The War Transport Department of the Government of India gave instructions to railways as to which goods should get priority of movement, but the operation of the railways and the compliance with such instructions rested with the Railway Board. The War Resources Committee of the Governor General's Council had laid down that higher priority be given to foodstuffs than to ordinary military supplies. But arrangements in detail could not be made from the Center and the grain movements needed to carry out the Basic Plan and to move grain from surplus to deficit areas had to be worked out between the Regional Controllers of Railways, the Regional Food Commissioners, and the Provincial Governments. This movement primarily concerned the great grain-exporting provinces of Sind and the Punjab, and while arrangements in Sind were usually good, there were some difficulties and delays in the Punjab. Purchase operations were sometimes delayed owing to lack of storage facilities and of wagons, and at times large quantities of grain were lying on station platforms awaiting wagons, while at other times grain was not ready to fill available wagons. The Committee stated that increased storage accommodation was imperative at Karachi and in the Punjab (*2*, pp. 63, 64).

As regards transport by sea, even at the beginning of the fifth year of the war, there was still a lack of co-ordination and control. Sea traffic on the east coast was of course hindered by the possibility of enemy action. On the west coast seagoing "country craft," the coastal sailing ships, had been allowed to ship whatever goods the owners wished to whatever ports they liked, and much tonnage had been wasted in sending to Bombay short-staple cotton for which neither markets nor storage space any longer existed. However, for some months efforts to co-ordinate the country craft and to utilize them for the movement of foodgrains to supply the deficit areas down the west coast had been in progress, and on the recommendation of the Committee, the country craft were brought under control and proved most valuable. The process was not easy, as the west-coast seamen are an independent race with a long maritime tradition behind them; and since sea traffic by country craft has to cease in the monsoon, shipment of grain needed careful timing.

The more important sea transport was of course by steamer, for one steamer could take 50 or 100 times what a country craft could. But steamers fell under three different forms of control: (*a*) those chartered by the Central Government under the control of the Indian Shipping Adviser; (*b*) those controlled by the British Ministry of

War Transport and working in Indian waters; (*c*) those under the Indian Registry and under no control at all.

When freight was required, three or more people or companies with shipping at their disposal had to be approached, and in their administration at least two departments of the Government of India were concerned. The Committee recommended that one department of the Central Government should deal not only with shipping, but with transport generally, and should have effective control over sea transport.

EXTENSION OF RATIONING

The most urgent subject of consideration by the Committee was distribution of supplies to the consumer, and on July 27, 1943, nineteen days after its first meeting, the Committee informed the Government of India that rationing of foodstuffs in all the large centers of India was necessary, and ought to be introduced forthwith in the larger cities of India, both in deficit and surplus areas, and should be progressively extended to lesser towns (*2*, p. xiv). This was accepted by the Government of India, and officers were deputed to Bombay for a course of instruction in rationing administration.

This action of the Committee indicated a willingness to face facts, and a degree of foresight more in consonance with public opinion in India than that shown either by some provincial governments or by some interested bodies and classes.

There were considerable difficulties to be overcome. For instance, it had been urged against rationing that:

1. The diets and dietary habits of the various classes and castes made any uniform supply of rations impossible.
2. Rationing would have to be applied to the staple diets of the people.
3. Procurement from the "marginal accretions" of the output of millions of individual cultivators must be difficult.
4. India had not made before the war any plans for rationing.
5. Though the urban population, which was to be rationed, was not absolutely very great, it was scattered over an immense territory.
6. A staff to work rationing would be impossible to recruit.

Against these arguments the Committee was definite that:

1. Rationing was the only way of ensuring that everyone got something like a fair share of commodities in short supply, and that the poor got their share, while the rich did not get more than theirs.
2. Rationing was the only way to "kill the queue," to hold "food

morale," to keep public opinion firm against panic buying, and against the antisocial food hoarder.

3. India, desperately in need of imports of food, could not expect at a time of world shortage to get food from overseas, unless she could show that any food so sent would be equitably and economically distributed.

Nowadays these arguments seem self-evident, but they did not seem so to all in India in 1943, with each province and state immersed in its own difficulties, with producers in many parts of India anxious about their own food future and everywhere envious of the soaring wages of urban labor, and with traders in grain who saw their brothers who dealt in other commodities making profits beyond the dreams of avarice.

But in August 1943 opponents of rationing could no longer say that it could not possibly work in India, for full rationing had already been introduced into thirteen cities and areas, and partial rationing into four, distributed among two provinces of British India and some nine Indian States. The Committee gave the following as fully rationed by August 1943: Bombay City and suburbs, Poona and Kirkee, Cochin State, Travancore, Bangalore City, Civil and Military Station Bangalore, Indore City, Dewas Senior, Morar and Lashkar in Gwalior State, Quetta Pishin, Jafarabad and Vithalgadh in Kathiawar Agency. It gave as partially rationed: Bhopal City, Junagadh, Thanadeoli and Manavadar in Kathiawar Agency. This list is possibly incomplete, for rationing had also been in force for some time in, for example, Amreli of Gwalior State (*4*, p. 99).

It was the acceptance of the principle of fair shares and the propriety of rationing in surplus as well as in deficit areas that the Committee had to emphasize, rather than the possibility of rationing at all.

The Committee laid down the principles which in its opinion should govern foodgrain rationing in India (*2*, p. 68). Since rationing throughout India was thereafter based on the Committee's report, these principles are summarized here:

1. Rationing when introduced should extend to all classes and sections of the people and should cover all major foodgrains.

2. The standard cereal ration should not be less than one pound per adult per day, and if supplies within India could not guarantee this, then imports of foodgrains must be made.

3. While as far as possible tastes and habits of the various communities and castes should be studied, no guarantee could be given to any section that its habitual foodgrains would be available.

4. For rationing to succeed, adequate procurement machinery was indispensable.

5. Any attempts by individuals to anticipate rationing by the accumulation of reserves would have to be prevented by antihoarding measures and control of movement.

6. While the public should not be harassed for minor and unintentional infractions of the regulations, willful breach of the rules by those trying to improve their own position at the expense of their fellow citizens must receive punishment sufficient to deter others.

7. Publicity to educate and to secure the support of public opinion was essential.

8. Advisory bureaus and nonofficial advisory committees should be set up.

9. Individual rationing was preferable to family rationing.

10. Each consumer would have to be attached to a particular retailer, and the number of retailers that would be needed was so great that the existing traders would have to be utilized.

11. Traders should be licensed and licenses immediately revoked for any malpractice or abuse. As a further control, a certain number of government retail grain shops should be opened.

12. Employers' shops and co-operative societies would have to be treated as traders and licensed, and their customers would have to come under the same ration rules as the rest of the public.

13. While of course conditions differed greatly in various places, uniformity of administrative forms and procedure would simplify and facilitate rationing.

For rural areas the Committee thought general rationing was neither practicable nor necessary. But where a rural area contained an organized industry, the workers would have to rely on the provincial procurement machinery for supplies, and where a rural area was a deficit one, those people who did not grow enough food for themselves would have to be assisted by the government to get supplies; in some places, for instance, fair price grain shops were opened, in others distribution was made by local authorities, and elsewhere a system of ration cards was introduced.

Government intervention was imperative in a deficit area in acute difficulty for food, as was shown by the Bombay Government in Bijapur in 1943. This entirely rural district was always liable to famine, and in 1942/43 the rains failed, local food resources were almost negligible, and grain to feed nearly a million people had to be im-

ported. After an attempt at distribution through local merchants' associations had failed, because the associations kept back part of the grain, numerous official retail sale centers were opened. Soon, however, owing to the inadequacy of supplies, the whole district was rationed on a basis of ¾ pound of grain per adult and ⅜ pound per child. These rations were sold in municipal areas at government grain shops and in rural areas by reliable local merchants or by the village officers with the help of village committees. The relief operations in Bijapur illustrated a point of food administration of possible interest. Owing to the people's lack of money in a famine year, the grain supplied by government was at first sold at rates below cost price. This caused an influx of purchasers from neighboring Indian States, where prices were much higher, and as a result supplies were rapidly depleted. Therefore the price of grain was raised to the economic level, but employment was provided for all able-bodied men on extensive soil conservation works and was paid at a rate to correspond with the grain prices, while the aged and infirm received free relief.

The Foodgrains Policy Committee was perhaps too diffident about the possibility of rural rationing.

STATUTORY PRICE CONTROL

The difficult question whether statutory price control of foodgrains should be extended to all provinces and states in India was faced by the Committee, and, though complete unanimity was not reached, the "overwhelming majority" of the members agreed that such control ought to be instituted (*2*, p. 85).

This recommendation was considered perhaps the most serious one in the Committee's report, and possibly rightly so in view of the opposition of some of the grain-growing provinces due to the importance of the agricultural vote.

In August 1943 the position regarding price control of foodgrains was (*2*, p. 95):

Statutory price control.....	Sind and Bombay (excepting four districts)
Statutory price control plus ceiling prices	Central Provinces
Ceiling prices without statutory price control.....	Madras, United Provinces, Punjab (for export)
Neither statutory price control nor ceiling prices....	Orissa, North West Frontier Province, Assam, Bengal (except for wheat, atta and flour), Bihar (since May 18, 1943 only)

The failure of statutory control of wheat prices from 1941 to January 1943 had been due to failure to provide the controls and sanctions necessary to enforce the order, such as limitation of movement, declaration of stocks, control of transport, etc., as well as to the reluctance of some provinces to deprive the grower of his profit. Experience made clear that so long as a rising market was expected by grower and trader, grain would be held off the market, and that it was only on a falling market that grain came freely forward. So long as the seller felt that he could "beat the government" by refraining from selling, and so long as government was not the sole purchaser, no system of ceiling prices, by which government hoped to bring down prices by keeping off the market when prices reached a certain level, could possibly succeed.

The Committee held that, provided adequate procurement machinery was established, the Foodgrains Control Order everywhere drastically enforced, and transport of foodgrains effectively controlled, then All-India statutory price control was practicable, and only by this could an All-India system of prices be restored and the disproportionately high level in some deficit areas, for instance, in the Eastern Region, be reduced.

The Committee emphasized that statutory grain prices when fixed must be fair to the cultivator, since the consumers' goods, which he needed both for the production of his crop and for his own subsistence, had risen so greatly in cost. But the Committee decisively rejected the view that "the right procedure in the middle of a great war and during a time of acute crisis, is to compensate the cultivator by allowing an unlimited rise of food prices. This measure would have grave anti-social consequences, and, in any case, in so far as rising prices involve a rise in cost of production of consumer goods, the process is self-defeating" (*2*, p. 91).

FOOD ADMINISTRATION

When the Food Department of the Government of India was founded in December 1942, it was included in the portfolio of the Commerce Member of the Governor General's Council, instead of being given to a Member solely charged with its administration.

"But the Commerce Department of the Government of India is surely the most crowded administrative pantechnicon the world has ever seen. It embraces everything from Lighthouses to the Sugar Controller, plus the Superintendent of Insurance, the Nautical Adviser, the Textile Commissioner, the Industries and Civil Supplies

Department, the Chief Controller of Imports, the Economic Adviser, Scientific and Industrial Research and the Controller of Patents. To expect one man to control this heterogeneous mass of activity plus an urgent subject like food is surely asking too much" (*4*, p. 51).

In May 1943 the organization of the Food Department had been modified, so that it was divided into two parts: the first, the Secretariat, to perform "the duties, functions, and responsibilities normal to a Department of the Central Government in accordance with the Rules of Business," and the other, a Directorate General, Food, which under the guidance of a Director General and three Deputy Director Generals, was to be in charge of the following functions (*2*, p. 104): "(*a*) procurement of the seven major foodgrains (wheat, rice, barley, gram, maize, jowar and bajra) and distribution for civil needs and supply against Defence Services requirement of grains or grain products; (*b*) procurement and supply of foodstuffs for the Defence Services against Quartermaster General's indents."

The Secretariat side was divided into a number of branches concerned with Administration, Sugar and Salt, Licensing and Processed Food, Co-ordination (including Rationing and Publicity and Propaganda, Operation of Control Order) Foodgrain Branch, and Statistical Branch. Attached to the Secretariat was an Adviser on Food Rationing, deputed from the Ministry of Food in England.

In theory the Secretariat was responsible for advising the Commerce Member on matters of policy and for obtaining the Government of India's decisions on policy, while the Executive side—the Director General and his staff—was responsible for carrying the decisions into effect. In practice, however, it was soon found that the two functions were so closely linked that the traditional Government of India separation between policy and its execution could not strictly apply—in fact for a time the Secretary of the Food Department had had to double the posts of Secretary and Director General. The Committee therefore advised that policy and executive functions be combined, for "policy is useless unless adequately carried out." The Committee recommended, however, that the duty of physical procurement of major foodgrains should be laid on the provinces, instead of as hitherto on the Director General.

These proposals implied no criticism of the officers of the Food Department, who had been working under very great strain. The Department, "started in the fourth year of the war, had special difficulties in recruiting any reasonably adequate staff, both in numbers and competence. By this stage, the recruitment field, both Indian

and British had already become substantially drained by the all-embracing character of the War demands . . . As regards the task of physical procurement, which is popularly, but erroneously, taken as the sole test of the efficiency of the working of the Department, we may point out that the total of foodgrains purchased by or for the Central Government from December 1942 to August 2, 1943, amounted to over 975,000 tons" (*2*, p. 104).

The Committee proposed that the functions of the Food Department should be in principle:

1. Food policy in its day-to-day aspects, i.e., relations with other departments, with the Governor General's Council, and with the legislature.
2. Intelligence and statistics.
3. The day-to-day study of the Basic Plan.
4. Enforcement, i.e., review and improvement of the entire foodgrains administration of the provinces and states, in particular physical procurement, rationing, antihoarding measures, and the Foodgrains Control Order.
5. Movement, i.e., physical transport, whether by sea or by land.
6. Executive, i.e., the administration of the Central Foodgrains Reserve, Sugar Control, and the procurement and management of foods other than foodgrains on behalf of the Q.M.G. and other Central Government departments.
7. Publicity.
8. Establishment and finance.

The wisdom of the Committee's recommendations is clear. Experience had shown that food was a subject which needed the close attention of the Government of India. It had shown that procurement of food could not safely be left to competing agencies, whether these were Provincial Governments buying for their own people, the Central Government buyers purchasing for the Army, or traders and speculators buying for private profit. It had shown that the Central Government was not in close enough touch with food and crop conditions all over India, that transport must be better organized, and that to prevent panic and rumor the public must be kept informed of the facts of the food situation. These considerations—now commonplaces—had not been adequately realized hitherto either by the Government of India or by the Provincial Governments.

On the administrative side the hierarchical system normal in the Government of India, the division between "Secretariat" and "Ex-

ecutive" functions, was ended by the absorption of the Director General into the Food Department, which henceforward combined both food policy and its carrying out. This change was largely responsible for the successful working of the Food Department of the Government of India. For successful it undoubtedly was; otherwise, disaster must have overtaken India's food supply.

Vis-à-vis the provinces, the Government of India Food Department was to be the "thinking machine" to lay down policy and principles, to indicate the best lines of administration, and to see that the standards of administration necessary to secure the food supply of all India were kept up.

For securing India's food supply the main instrument had to be the Foodgrains Control Order issued in May 1942 (*5*). Under this all persons, other than producers, dealing in grain in quantities over 20 maunds (1,650 pounds), had to take out licenses, to keep accounts, and to submit returns, so that it should be possible to distinguish between the legitimate trader and the speculator, and to secure information of all wholesale stocks and their movements. The Order was nominally in force over almost the whole country by the end of 1942. But unfortunately some provinces had been very slow in applying the Order and even more lax in enforcing it (*2*, p. 115), with the result that they had acquired neither the knowledge nor the control of available stocks and were at the mercy of the trader, the hoarder, the speculator, and the big landowner. On the other hand, where the Order had been energetically applied, despite delays, evasion, illiteracy, falsification of accounts, dispersal of stocks, etc., it had been proved an effective weapon in securing the provisioning of the people. The Committee urged the need for the strict enforcement of the Order by an adequate provincial staff and suggested the Order be modified so that, when occasion arose (as before the introduction of rationing) information should be available about stocks held by consumers and producers, as well as by traders.

CONCLUSION

In its final chapter the Foodgrains Policy Committee emphasized the importance of the food problem to India as a whole, and the fact that food affected every aspect of the administration, indeed the very existence of the State. "Hungry men do not discriminate and social unrest does not stop at Provincial frontiers. The Centre, all the Provinces and all the States have a common interest in seeing that the situation does not get out of hand" (*2*, p. 124).

This fact, judging from the proceedings of various price control and food conferences, and even from some of the minutes recorded by members of the Foodgrains Policy Committee, had not been accepted, or perhaps not appreciated, by some of the provinces. For instance, in the Punjab a popular government seemed at times to put the interest of its own grain-growing people before those of the less-favored areas, and in Bengal the intrigues and disputes of a government of politicians seem to have prevented the taking of that timely action which was necessary both for the salvation of Bengal's own countryside and for the needs of other deficit provinces. The Committee's insistence on the All-India problem was undoubtedly in consonance with the bulk of public opinion, and made it clear that in future the Government of India could never "wash its hands" of the food situation in any part of India. The Central Government, therefore, whatever might be its constitutional position vis-à-vis the provinces, could not accept a position of responsibility without power, and the Committee made clear that, in the event of dispute, the Government of India must enforce its will on the provinces. Wisely, however, the Committee assumed that the close consultation on food matters which it advised would prove effective, and that no province would bluntly refuse to implement a policy agreed on by the Central Government and other Provincial Governments. And in effect this was the case, for only on two occasions did the Government of India have to issue directions about food to a province under the Government of India Act.

It should be mentioned that the Committee suggested that if a difference of opinion that could not be resolved arose between the Center and a province about the final surplus or deficit calculated under the Basic Plan, it should be referred to an expert committee whose decision should be taken as final by both the Center and the province. This recommendation was not accepted by the Government of India, which properly decided that it could not thus limit its own final authority and responsibility.

The Foodgrains Policy Committee undoubtedly interpreted rightly the public opinion of India, which was profoundly stirred by the happenings in Bengal, by the shortages elsewhere in India, and by its own domestic food difficulties. It brought home to the Government of India the fact that the food problem was a part of the war effort and had to be tackled as resolutely as any other war measure. How this might be done was laid down in the Committee's Report which formed the basis for all future food administration in India. Without the

Committee's plans, the fate of millions in India in the famine days of 1946 must have been disastrous.

(The departure from the Committee's policy during the "decontrol" period in 1947–48 falls outside the scope of this study.)

CITATIONS

1 India, *Third All-India Food Conference, July 5–8–1943.*

2 India, Dept. Food, *Report of the Foodgrains Policy Committee, 1943.*

3 India, Famine Inquiry Commis., *Final Report* (1945).

4 Michael Brown, *India Need Not Starve!* (Orient Longmans Ltd., Bombay, 1944).

5 India, *Foodgrains Control Order* (1942), Appendix XII.

CHAPTER 11

THE GROW MORE FOOD CAMPAIGN

Recognizing the imperative need for India to produce more food, the Foodgrains Policy Committee emphasized that the Government of India and the various Provincial and State governments must press on with the Grow More Food Campaign started in the previous year 1942. Some account therefore is necessary of how the campaign was conducted and of the progress made. The long-term plans for the development of Indian agriculture and of the Indian countryside in general are beyond the scope of this study, interesting though they be. The present aim can be only to state briefly some of the short-term measures undertaken to increase the internal production of foodstuffs in India from 1942 to 1947.

Agriculture in India cannot, however, be considered apart from the general economic structure of the country, including industry (*1*, p. 1). Early in the war the agricultural problem which faced the Government of India and the governments of some provinces was not shortage of foodgrains production but difficulty over the growing and marketing of cotton. Normally before the war Indian short-staple cotton of, say, five-eighths inch staple had been extensively exported to Japan and the Far East, and a large part of the cotton-growing area was dependent on this trade. In 1936/37 Japan's purchases of Indian cotton had reached the record level of 2.4 million bales (*2*, p. 24) and in the 1939/40 season the highest rate for the Broach[1] Contract, the principal indicator of the short-staple prospects on the Bombay market, was Rs. 340 per khandy (784 pounds of cotton lint) for July-August. But with the war, difficulties of freight space, of credits, etc., arose in the dispatch of cotton to Japan, and by January 1941 the price was down to Rs. 180 for the July-August Broach Contract (*2*, p. 107). On July 26, 1941 the Government of India issued orders freezing the accounts of all persons or firms domiciled in the Empire of Japan and Manchuria (*2*, p. 25). The export of cotton to Japan

[1] Broach, an area in the Gujarat Division of the Bombay Presidency, grew a cotton which was used as the standard for such contracts. It was later replaced by Jarila, a creation of the plant-breeders of the Bombay Agricultural Department, since the Broach cotton could no longer be relied on for its purity.

came to an end and the short-staple stocks in India began to pile up. On October 27, 1941 the Central Legislative Assembly discussed the precarious situation of the cotton grower, especially the short-staple grower, and on January 29, 1942 the Government of India imposed an additional duty of one anna a pound on imported raw cotton, the proceeds of which were to form a fund to help growers of short-staple cotton.

Meanwhile on December 8, 1941 the war with Japan began, and, with the first air raids on Rangoon on January 23, 1942, it was clear that India could not much longer rely on Burma rice to supplement its food supply. Early in the year, therefore, both the Indian Central Cotton Committee and the Advisory Board of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research made recommendations that India should grow more food herself. The Government of India in consequence called on April 6 a Food Production Conference of representatives of provinces and states, under the chairmanship of the Honourable Member in charge of the Department of Education, Health and Lands, to concert measures for the increased production of foodgrains in India (*3*, p. 11). The Chairman suggested a modest target of a 4 percent increase — 7 million acres — in food acreage, and an additional 1,700,000 tons of extra food (*4*, p. 55).

"The Conference viewed with grave concern the shortage of food which is likely to face the country largely because of the loss of imports of rice from Burma, and recommended that a planned drive for the increase of food and fodder crops should be immediately initiated." It suggested

"i. an increase in the area under food and fodder crops by—
   a) bringing new land, including fallow land, under cultivation;
   b) double cropping;
   c) diverting land from non-food crops to food crops;
ii. an increase in the supply of water for irrigation by the improvement and extension of existing irrigation canals, the construction of additional wells, etc.;
iii. the extended use of manures and fertilisers;
iv. an increase in the supply of improved seeds" (*3*, p. 11).

PROGRESS OF THE CAMPAIGN, 1942–44

The suggestions of this Food Production Conference started the Grow More Food Campaign, which, despite criticisms and despite disappointments, did much to enable India to survive the difficulties

of the next five years. Under this the Government of India urged each province and state to become self-supporting in food as far as possible. Their production and their requirements were calculated and they were asked as far as practicable to make up the deficit. This exhortation was given more practical form when in 1943 the Government of India promised to assist with small irrigation schemes, supplies of manure, improved seed, and use of tractors and large implements for reclamation (*5*, p. 19).

When the conference was held in April 1942, the sowing of the kharif crop was only some eight or ten weeks away, and time to organize the campaign was desperately short. Vocal public opinion and the press were not always favorable, and sometimes defeatist. Some said that no authority and no propaganda would make the farmer sow food crops if he thought that cash crops were likely to pay better, or if he thought that the season would be more favorable for growing nonfood crops; that the area to be sown with a food or any other crop depended solely on the monsoon prospects; if the ryot did sow food crops, as he was urged to, there would be a glut and a catastrophic fall in grain prices at harvest; government officials were incompetent to run such a campaign, and in any case were out of touch with the farmers. And so on.

And indeed the Grow More Food Campaign had many obstacles to overcome. There was the prevalent idea that there was much unoccupied and uncultivated land throughout India awaiting the plow, if only the authorities would give leave to use it and would provide the farmer with capital. This idea was wrong. To quote the "Memorandum Outlining a Plan of Economic Development for India" (*6*, p. 55), though "18% of the area of British India is classified as cultivable waste, it is extremely doubtful whether much of it is really cultivable." To divert land already cultivated under nonfood crops to food crops normally depended on the prospects of profit and the prospects of rain, and while the former was not yet under governmental control, the latter could never be. The Indian farmer's crop plans were based on the traditions of thousands of years of skill and experience handed down from the generations of the past. He did not dare to experiment lest he lose his crop and with it his and his family's livelihood for the year, and even perhaps the land on which he depended for the future.

To meet the argument that a heavy increase in the production of foodgrains might bring a slump in prices, and penalize the farmer for having answered the appeal to grow more food, the Government

of India on May 20, 1942 gave an assurance that "should any developments take place which affect the saleability of the foodcrops, they will buy such quantities of food stuffs in the open market, whether in British India or in the Indian States, as are calculated to prevent a serious fall in the prices." And this assurance was later repeated by the Food Department in a press note of April 3, 1943.

Possibilities for the rapid increase of food crops rested mainly on three factors: first, an increased supply of water for irrigation by canals or wells, which would give a bigger and more certain outturn than rain-fed land and would often allow double cropping; second, the supply and use of adequate amounts of fertilizers; third, an increased supply of improved seeds. None of these could be provided at a moment's notice; wells take time to dig or bore, canals and their extensions usually take years to build, and seed multiplication is a slow process. Above all, the staff to carry out desirable reforms was lacking. The various agricultural departments and research stations in India had done much valuable work in research, especially in improving strains of seeds and plants, in discovering the optimum conditions of growth, and in many other directions. But owing to financial limitations the agricultural departments were all on a small scale, the available trained experts were few, and the problem of bringing the results of research and experiment to the farmer's field had seemed to lag, partly from lack of funds, partly from shortage of staff, partly from the conservatism of the Indian farmer. The ordinary district administration had its hands full, or overfull, with other matters concerned with the war, and the men to put across the Grow More Food Campaign could not be produced at short notice.

In 1945 the Famine Inquiry Commission summarized some of the difficulties before the authorities. Many reasons might prevent cultivation of the 170 million acres (*1*, p. 12) shown as cultivable waste in the statistics for British India: too little water for men or cattle, too much water needing drainage, unhealthy conditions such as the prevalence of malaria, deep-rooted weeds and grasses which could only be plowed out by tractors, soil of low fertility, alkaline or saline land, damage by wild animals, etc. Such lands could not usually be profitably brought under cultivation without special and expensive measures, and at a cost of time, men, and machinery very difficult, or impossible, to find in the middle of a war. Money might have been made available, but the skilled human and the mechanical agencies to expend it effectively could not be improvised. Therefore the Grow More Food Campaign had to limit its immediate objectives to what

was quickly possible, such as the grant of interest-free loans, rent-free leases for a term of years, rebates of land revenue, irrigation water at concession rates, cheap or free seed, and in some cases the amendment of tenancy laws and the like.

Little time had been left between the start of the campaign and the 1942/43 kharif sowings, but the efforts of the authorities to encourage the growth of food crops had effect. Propaganda was pressed on; in addition to official pronouncements and press publicity, films, posters, ballad singers, public meetings, radio speeches, and other methods were used in various provinces (*4*, p. 56). These efforts were helped by the fall in the price of short-staple cotton and by the nature of the season, and the results surpassed expectations. The target set by the Food Production Conference had been an increase of 7 million acres, and the Government of India stated in the Central Legislative Assembly in March 1946 that, compared with the previous three years, the estimated increase in 1942/43 was 11 million acres and 3 million tons of foodgrains (*7*).

The yield of course was of greater importance than the area and a "patchy" monsoon had caused partial crop failures in some areas of Bombay and Madras. The over-all crop production would have been good, however, if it had not been for the Midnapore cyclone in Bengal in October 1942, which was estimated to have destroyed 1,500,000 tons of rice, and the further failure of the Bengal rice crop on account of disease thereafter. While the Punjab and its States increased their wheat area by some half a million acres, other provinces—the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, and Bombay—reduced their wheat sowings by 800,000 acres on account of a monsoon unfavorable for that crop. However, the wheat production for All-India for 1942/43 was 11.2 million tons against 10.3 the year before.

The results of the campaign in the following year, 1943/44, were largely affected by two factors, first an increase in the acreage of rice in Bengal by 1.3 million acres due to favorable monsoon conditions and to the high price of rice prevailing in the province, which led to a reduction in the jute sowings, and second a rise in the price of short-staple cotton due to speculation on the Bombay market.

The Defence of India Act was amended to give power to make rules for controlling and regulating agriculture, and in January 1944 Rule 80B was issued empowering the Central and Provincial governments to regulate crop areas, to prohibit or restrict the growing of particular crops, to compel occupiers to cultivate wastelands, and in

the event of their failure to do so, to replace them by others. The extent, however, to which the provisions of this order were applied in practice depended on the Provincial Governments' estimates of the needs of, and the possibilities in, their provinces from time to time.

REVIEW OF PROGRESS, 1945

The Fifth All-India Food Conference met at New Delhi at the end of January and the beginning of February 1945 and discussed the progress of the Grow More Food Campaign. The representatives of the provinces and states generally reported that the results obtained were satisfactory, but they emphasized that the last two seasons had been favorable in most provinces and states, and that if the campaign was to continue effectively, All-India planning would be necessary to correlate demand with the crops to be grown. The Punjab representative, for instance, explained that in pursuance of the need for food crops a larger area than usual had been sown with gram, but after harvest the growers found that the demand had dropped and much remained unsold. If the farmer was to go on growing food crops in preference to others, he must be protected by an assured market for his produce and by transport arrangements to move it. Plans for increased food crops must be more elastic and must be changed as might be necessary in consultation between the Government of India and the Provincial Governments; it was impracticable for the former to dictate "targets" of production to the latter. Much of the discussion at the conference seems, however, to have been under a misapprehension of the Central Government's objects, on which in reality there was little difference of opinion, and surprisingly little attention was paid to the possibility of bad seasons ahead and the danger of shortages rather than of overproduction.

The Department of Education, Health and Lands of the Government of India issued in 1945 a note on the Grow More Food Campaign during the years 1943/44 and 1944/45, which indicated in some detail the progress made up till then and the plans for further development.

The note (*8*, p. 2) considered the program under the following heads:

1. Increasing the Acreage of Land Under Food Grains
2. Emergency Irrigation Projects
3. Land Improvement and Minor Irrigation Projects
4. Agricultural Machinery
5. Manures and Fertilisers

6. Seed Multiplication and Distribution
7. Vegetables and Vegetable Seeds
8. Agricultural Implements
9. Protection of Crop Grains
10. Fisheries
11. Fruit Development
12. Live Stock and Dairying
13. Agricultural Statistics

The note does not, however, give information on progress in training agricultural staff, which the Advisory Board of the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research in 1944 had considered "the first item in any programme of development" (*1*, p. 73). Various provinces, however, had schemes in being for such training, in many cases correlated with plans for training demobilized soldiers of the Indian Army as "village guides" to inculcate better farming and better living in their villages (*1*, pp. 7–9).

Not all the heads of development enumerated above were of equal importance, nor were all making equal progress. In many matters action had not gone beyond making plans for the future, or allotting funds for such plans. And in the event, with the continued scarcity of materials after the war, the inevitable delay in securing or training personnel, and the fateful political developments in India, by no means all the plans made were ever carried out. However the progress made by May 1945 is briefly shown below.

Increased food acreage.—The methods of increasing the area of land under foodgrains were three: putting more land under double crops, bringing uncultivated or fallow land into cultivation, and diverting land from nonfood crops. No exact information was available about the increase in double cropping, or about the cultivation of fallows; much of the latter was so low in fertility that it needed considerable rest between crops. What figures there were showed that the acreage under food crops in 1943/44 exceeded the normal area by 12.5 million acres, but of this, 4.5 million was primarily due to a revision of classification in Bengal, and elsewhere some 5 million acres had been diverted from short-staple cotton to food crops, and it was therefore concluded that some 3 million acres more land had been brought under cultivation. Of government-owned wasteland, the eleven provinces gave out 896,834 acres for cultivation (*9*, Mar. 6, 1946).

This acreage of course seems very little compared with the area

shown in the statistics for India as land available for cultivation, but the example of a survey of cultivable waste of the Kheri District undertaken by the Government of the United Provinces largely explains it. The area of the Kheri District was 1,602,634 acres, of which 903,391 were under cultivation and 522,031 had been shown in the Land Records as cultivable waste. The survey disclosed, however, that of the cultivable waste, 275,318 acres were not cultivated on account of weeds, wild animals, malaria, liability to flood, inaccessibility, uneven surface, poor soil, etc. Of the remaining 246,713 acres, mango groves covered 38,000 acres, khair, babool, and dak forests 137,726, zamindari timber forests, which yielded a higher rent than agricultural land, 37,805, grazing grounds 24,500, threshing floors 2,400, cattle pens, etc., 201. In effect only about half the supposedly cultivable waste could be even considered for cultivation, and it was unlikely that more than a small fraction of that could actually produce crops.

Owing to the efforts of the Grow More Food Campaign, aided by a considerable drop in the price of short-staple cotton, the cotton acreage in 1942/43 decreased by 5 million acres compared with the year before (*8*, p. 4). But by April 1944 it was found that the acreage had gone up by a million acres. The cause of this was that speculation on the Bombay market had pushed up the price once more. This compelled the Government of India to prohibit, from April 30, 1943, forward contracts in new-crop cotton, soon after to prohibit also forward contracts in the current crop, and to fix prices for the standard Jarila deliveries at Rs. 565 and Rs. 568 per khandy for May and July. But these orders came too late to remove the impression on the cultivator's mind, who had been told the year before to sow food crops and not cotton, and then after harvest had seen cotton prices soar. In consequence about 1,195,000 acres went back to cotton in 1943/44 (*10*, p. 11).

As the increase in cotton was mainly in the short-staple areas where millets were the alternative crop, the Government of India announced that it would purchase the 1944/45 crop of jowar and bajra at Rs. 5/8 and Rs. 6 per maund in the markets of the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, Madras, the Punjab, and Sind, and at the same time it made clear that it would neither fix a floor price nor give transport for short-staple cotton. The governments of the Central Provinces, the Punjab, the United Provinces, and Madras were offered grants for propaganda and bonuses to induce cotton growers to reduce the cotton area by 30 percent. Some governments took more

direct action; Bombay enacted the "Bombay Growth of Foodcrops Act, 1944," which limited the cultivation of nonfood crops such as tobacco, cotton, etc.; Madras issued orders that certain short-staple cottons might only be grown if interspaced with food crops; Hyderabad imposed a cash-crops tax on groundnuts and cotton.

The Indian Central Cotton Committee, gravely concerned at the heavy stocks of short-staple cotton accumulating in India, decided that the area under such cotton must be still further reduced and fixed acreage targets for the various provinces and states providing for a reduction of 1.9 million acres under short-staple and low-grade medium staple in 1945/46.

The measures taken resulted in a decrease by 1944/45 of 10,447,000 acres, roughly 42 percent of the prewar cotton acreage (*8*, p. 5):

Year	Area (*1,000 acres*)
Prewar (1936/37 to 1938/39)	24,665
1941/42	24,151
1942/43	19,203
1943/44	20,420
1944/45	14.218[a]
1945/46	14,668[b]

[a] See *8*, p. 5.
[b] See *13*, pp. 10, 13.

The other cash crop which competed with food crops, perhaps even more seriously than cotton, was jute, for the need of rice was greater than the need for millets, the yield of rice per acre was much higher, and where jute could be grown paddy could be. While persuasion, propaganda, warnings, and special enactments were needed to reduce the cotton acreage, Bengal, the main jute-producing province, had had a Jute Regulation Act in operation since 1940. Under this the jute area of 5.4 million acres in 1940/41 was taken as the standard, and each year a target of acreage, a proportion of the standard, was fixed and licenses to plant jute issued accordingly. Licensed and actually sown areas were as follows (*8*, p. 5, and *16*):

Season	Licensed area (*1,000 acres*)	Area sown (*1,000 acres*)
1941/42	1,634	1,533
1942/43	3,190	2,704
1943/44	2,559	2,146
1944/45	2,563	1,694
1945/46	2,547	2,040
1946/47	2,010	1,526

In 1944 it was decided that a further decrease in jute was unnecessary, and even unsafe, and the Government of India guaranteed minimum prices to the grower; but the high price of paddy in Bengal after the 1943 famine proved too attractive and the area sown was only two-thirds of that hoped for. But the rice crop of course correspondingly benefited.

Irrigation. — The importance of irrigation for the Grow More Food Campaign was that the application of water to land on the average increased the yield of crops by 50 to 100 percent, allowed much uncultivable land to be put under crops, and enabled superior crops to be grown in place of inferior types. But above all irrigation rendered the farmer independent of the vagaries of the Indian monsoon. The Government of India therefore appointed an Irrigation Adviser to advise and report on "Emergency Irrigation Projects" which could be put into very early effect, and by 1945 he had proposed projects calculated to provide an additional 2 million acres with water by 1947.

Numerous schemes were undertaken which could give short-term results without the use of mechanical power, such as conservation of rain water and moisture by embankments and "contour bunding" in Bombay, the Central Provinces, and Rajputana; drainage of over-wet lands in Bengal and Assam; minor flow irrigation schemes in Assam, Orissa, the North West Frontier Province, and Baluchistan. But a more significant development was the extension of the tube well system, where subsoil water was pumped by electricity. This was of course limited to alluvial tracts where subsoil reservoirs of water existed and where cheap electricity was available in the countryside; yet, since these conditions applied to much of the Ganges valley, one of the most fertile areas of India, the value of the method was very great. A testimony to this and a sidelight on the working of the scheme is given by a comment of Sir Malcolm Darling on his tour in the Punjab and the United Provinces (*11*, p. 162):

> January 21, 1947. One more village we stopped at, to see one of the 2150 tube wells which have been sunk in the tract under the inspiration of Sir William Stampe. The water came out of the well clear and sparkling and flowed away to the fields all sunlight. The superb crops around were the result. Yet there was no word of praise or thanks from the people for their benefactor, only complaints that they had not enough water in the hot weather and that one of the channels was leaking.

A tube well could water about 500 acres of crops, and a feature of irrigation by this system was that "a rectangular layout of the

channels and distributaries is essential, and this requires consolidation of cropping and of cultural operations — in short, cooperative farming which had been advocated but never adopted until it became a sine qua non if a tube well was wanted" (*5*, p. 22).

By 1945 schemes involving some 2,500 new tube wells were accepted or were under examination. Not all these schemes came rapidly to fruition; by October 1946 the number of tube wells constructed under the Grow More Food Campaign was 520, of which 516 were in the United Provinces (*9*, Oct. 3, 1946).

Where electric power and subsoil water were not available, the traditional Indian well with its bullock-operated "mhot," a leather bag, or its Persian wheel or other form of water lift, was already irrigating some 30 million acres. Such wells watered some 5 to 15 acres each and could be dug without recourse to machinery, and to increase their number loans and grants were extensively given.

In 1945 schemes were in hand for pumping water from deep rivers by electric or diesel-driven pumps, in Bihar, Bengal, Bombay, the North West Frontier Province, Kolhapur, Bundi, etc. Such schemes were of course greatly handicapped by the difficulty of getting pumps and other machinery from overseas in wartime, but by intensive effort more was obtained than at first seemed likely.

The Government of India stated in 1945 that by the tube wells and other pumping schemes "irrigation of more than a million acres has been assured." These schemes and various projects then under consideration were estimated eventually to irrigate an additional 1,700,000 acres and to provide an additional 460,000 tons of food grains. By 1945 some 170,000 acres had been brought under cultivation, resulting in an estimated additional production of 33,805 tons (*8*, p. 8). The accuracy of this estimate it is not now possible to check, nor to say how far future expectations were realized.

Land improvement.—The question of soil conservation in India, though of vital importance, can be referred to only briefly here. During the war the danger to Indian agriculture from erosion of fertile land was at last more widely recognized. The soil conservation work, begun some years before in the Punjab, was pushed on, and similar work begun in Bombay and Bihar. In these latter provinces extensive schemes of "contour bunding" and "ridging" to conserve both soil and moisture were undertaken—50,000 acres in Bihar and 500,000 acres in Bombay—estimated to provide an additional 44,000 tons of foodgrains. Land reclamation schemes, as distinguished from soil conservation schemes, were started in various places, for instance

40,000 acres in Madras, 100,000 acres in the Punjab, and 33,000 acres in Orissa.

Agricultural machinery.—During the war the Government of India was often criticized for not importing power-operated agricultural machinery, and with it reclaiming and cultivating large areas of wasteland, in order to relieve the food shortage. The examples of Australia, New Zealand, and Britain were pointed out where, despite the war, agricultural production had been maintained by such methods. This criticism was unfair. The Government of India and every Provincial Government would have been only too glad to employ such methods, for in almost every province areas existed which could only be developed by such mechanical means, as for instance where kans (*Imperata arundinacea*) or hariali grass (*Cynodon dactylon*) had to be plowed out, or where land had to be cleared before malaria would allow settlement of cultivators. But tractors and their implements were not manufactured in India and during the war were practically unobtainable from overseas. "In the first four years of the war, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1943, hardly any tractors were imported into India. In 1943–44 a modest request was made for the supply of 151 tractors . . . to be delivered during 1944 . . . out of this demand only 32 have so far (May 1945) been received in this country. The requirements of India for 1945 and the first half of 1946 were carefully considered by an expert committee in September 1944 . . . the estimated requirements of India were for 1,747 tractors with appropriate implements." An indent for 458 crawler tractors and 32 wheel tractors was sent to the United States in January 1945, and of these it was expected that all the latter would be obtained but only some 20 of the former, whereas it was the "crawlers" which were needed for land reclamation work (*8*, p. 10). Despite the lack of supply, efforts in various provinces were made to do something. For instance, by February 1, 1947 the Government of Bombay had a Mechanical Cultivation Section of 67 tractors, including 10 tractor units of 4 tractors each, a Training Center with 6 tractors, Mobile Service Units, and a Headquarter Workshop, and between March 1945 and February 1947 the plowing of 36,000 acres was carried out, both deep plowing to eradicate hariali grass, and other plowing to help the Grow More Food Campaign. The chief difficulty was to secure from overseas suitable plows and other implements, so as to permit full use of the tractors available (*14*).

Manures.—The use of artificial fertilizers had made slow progress in India. Shortly after World War I sulphate of ammonia began to

be applied in "appreciable quantities" to certain plantation crops, such as tea, coffee, and rubber; but its use spread very slowly to the cultivator, and that mainly by the efforts of commercial firms. The imposition of a duty on imported sugar encouraged its use in sugar-cane growing after 1932, and in some economically favorable areas it was used also for paddy crops. But generally the low price of agricultural produce hindered the use of artificial fertilizers, and at the beginning of World War II India's market for sulphate of ammonia was only 100,000 tons a year, of which 15,000–20,000 tons were produced as a by-product of the Indian steel industry.

The war caused difficulty in supplies from overseas, and from 1940 till the middle of 1944 none was imported and then only 30,000 tons were secured. For the year 1944/45 70,000 tons of sulphate of ammonia were allotted from the United Kingdom and Canada, so that with the production of the steel works 90,000 tons were available; and in 1945 efforts were in progress to obtain 171,000 tons for 1945/46.

It was estimated that the use of 82,000 tons of sulphate of ammonia in the year 1944/45 would produce the following increase of food: paddy, 127,500 tons; potatoes, vegetables, and grain crops, 120,000 tons; sugar cane and other crops, 900,000 tons cane, 90,000 tons white sugar; tea, 27,000 pounds. The balance of the 90,000 tons available was to be used for defense and industrial purposes (*8*, p. 13).

How far this hoped-for increase was attained it is impossible to say. The effect of the fertilizers cannot be isolated from that of the season and of other factors, and the seasons of 1945/46 and 1946/47 were climatically unfavorable.

It should be added that plans were made to build a much-needed chemical-fertilizer factory in Bihar, but this was not in production by August 1947.

Of organic manures used in India the most important is cow dung, but its use as manure has to compete with its use in the villages as domestic fuel. Firewood in the plains of India is in extremely short supply. Cow-dung cakes provide the slow-burning fuel needed for the traditional methods of rural cookery, and in effect only what can be spared from the farmer's hearth goes onto his land.

An alternative manure is oil cake made from groundnuts, cotton seed, sesamum, and castor. The peacetime production of oil cake was estimated at 1.85 million tons. Owing to the difficulties of export during the war, the use of oil cake as manure was greatly extended in

response to propaganda of the agricultural authorities, and by 1945 only Hyderabad, Kathiawar, and the United Provinces seemed likely to have surpluses to dispatch to other parts of India. Almost all provinces subsidized the use of oil cake for manure and, owing to the great need for rice, the Government of India contributed to the subsidy on oil cake used on paddy.

In India a neglected source of manure was compost made from any form of vegetable refuse or from town refuse, night soil, etc. Experiment in various places had proved the value and harmlessness of night soil, but partly owing to the Indian prejudice against utilization of human excrement, and partly on account of cost and difficulties of distribution, litle progress had anywhere been made. But under war conditions—and indeed in India under any conditions—such a source of increased food could not be neglected. The Imperial Council of Agricultural Research therefore in 1944 started a scheme for producing compost, and this was adopted by 15 provinces and states in some 200 centers of production. In 1943/44 some 6,000 tons of compost were produced; in 1945/46 the output had increased to 763,000 tons; and for 1946/47 some 1,150,000 tons were expected (*7*, Mar. 15, 1947). Disposal still presented difficulty and did not keep pace with production, and the Government of India sponsored a plan to subsidize sales, staff, and transport.

Another source of fertilizer, primarily phosphatic, was bone meal. Little could be done during the war to encourage its use in India, because the bone mills were not designed to crush more than a small part of their output to the requisite fineness. However, subsidies were given for bone-meal supply as fertilizer (*8*, p. 16).

Seeds.—"The use of suitable improved varieties of seed is an important method of increasing production. A 10–15 percent increase in India for different crops has been recorded through the use of such seeds." But the widespread production and distribution of improved seed was not a short-term means of securing more food. The research to produce improved strains by selection or hybridization takes a long time, and even when success has been reached the multiplication of the seed to a scale of commercial distribution cannot be hurried. Crops can only be grown at the proper seasons of the year; one new seed may give only ten others the first year, a hundred the second year, a thousand the third, and so on. Each multiplication has to be carefully rogued in the field; and in most cases it takes from 5 to 10 years before a sufficient quantity of improved seed becomes available for distribution on a commercial scale (*8*, p. 18). Of course India

did not start from scratch in 1942 in the production of improved seed, for many improved strains, particularly of cotton, rice, and wheat, had been worked out by the agricultural departments and were in use in large areas. But it was not possible at short notice largely to step up the supply, and so to produce a significant immediate increase in food. Attention therefore had to be devoted to helping the provinces to improve and organize their existing methods both of research and multiplication of seed and their systems of distribution of improved seed, and also to ensuring that at any rate sufficient seed of some kind, even if not the best, was available everywhere.

The total acreage involved in seed distribution schemes was 4,113,670 acres in 1943/44 and 3,949,670 acres in 1944/45 in the various provinces. In Madras at the beginning of 1945, for instance, seed multiplication schemes were in operation in 13 of the 24 districts. Four million acres compared with the some 200 million acres of major cereals grown in India look unimpressive, but they were a useful step toward future progress. However, "it is practically impossible to estimate the real increase in production due to the use of improved seed alone. So many different elements go to increase production in agriculture that it is not feasible to demarcate separately how much increase is due to any single factor . . . all that can be said is that the estimated yield under normal circumstances from the use of improved seed as judged from the schemes planned should have been of the order of 350,000 tons in each of the years 1943/44 and 1944/45" (*8*, p. 19).

Vegetables.—The demand for fresh vegetables increased very greatly during the war, particularly for supplying the Defence Forces and the industrial cities, where many times the normal labor force were earning high wages on war work. The demand was difficult to meet, because in peacetime the seed for the so-called "European" vegetables was imported into India from overseas, largely from the United States and Great Britain, and on the outbreak of war these countries prohibited export and any other sources of supply were hard to find. Hitherto it had been considered that the seed of European vegetables necessarily deteriorated in India, partly due to planting in unsuitable climatic conditions and partly to failure to maintain the quality of seed by selection, roguing, and segregation. The Government of India therefore undertook experiments, which proved successful, to acclimatize vegetable seeds on seed farms in Kashmir and Baluchistan, and to maintain the quality of the seed grown by control in the neighborhood of the seed farms of unregistered growers and

of registered growers not complying with official instructions. In 1943/44 some 1,200 acres were put under vegetable seed cultivation and yielded approximately 600,000 pounds of seed, five-sixths of which went for civilian consumption and one-sixth for the Defence Forces.

Steel for implements.—In the middle of 1943 the increasing shortage of steel in India was hampering the production of agricultural implements. In particular the village smiths, on whom the farmers depended for their plowshares, harrows, cart tires and axles, hoes, mattocks, sickles, and other necessary tools for cultivation, were very short of materials. Unless the worn-out implements could be repaired or replaced, the production of food would inevitably suffer. The Government of India in consultation with the provinces attempted to organize a system by which a definite share of the steel available in India might be allocated so as to reach not only the manufacturers of more elaborate agricultural machinery such as iron plows and sugar-cane mills, but also the village blacksmiths in as many as possible of the 700,000 villages in the country. The Government of India stated in 1945 that "on the whole agricultural operations are not suffering due to a shortage of implements." But probably the small farmer in out-of-the-way places, faced with the difficulties, delays, and demands incidental to getting his bullock cart mended or a new share fitted to his plow, would not have agreed with the Government of India.

Locusts.—One of the dangers to which crops are exposed is destruction by locusts, and the Government of India before the war had financed a long and accurate study of the habits and distribution of locusts in India, based on the original work of Uvarov. It then set up in skeleton form an antilocust organization, which during the war was greatly expanded in co-operation with neighboring countries. From this largely grew the Anti-locust Organisation which now holds such an important place in countries of the Middle East affected by the locust menace and which affords an excellent example of international effort.

The Government of India during the war assisted in dealing with locusts in Persia and in Arabia, while conducting operations at home as well. A new "locust cycle" started in 1940. By 1945/46 the Government of India reported that "hardly any damage has been caused to crops in any part of India including the fertile plains of the Punjab, the U.P., or Sind, which constitute the first targets of the locust swarms, if the pest cannot be controlled in its desert homes. This is

the first occasion in the history of locust control in India or other countries when the locust has been brought under control to such an extent by human agency" (*8*, p. 23).

The details of locust control are not described here, but the saving of the vitally important food crops of northwest India was a great factor in the Grow More Food Campaign.

Fisheries.—Fish is an important part of the Indian diet among certain classes and in certain areas. It was estimated that annually 625,000 tons of fish were normally marketed, two-thirds sea fish and one-third inland fish, with a total value of 10½ crores of rupees, rather over 8 million pounds or 35 million dollars (*7*, Feb. 1, 1947).

Indian fisheries were still conducted on traditional lines for, though some provinces maintained fishery departments, efforts to improve the supply of fish and to introduce modern methods had generally in the past been sporadic and not particularly successful. The fishermen were very conservative, fishing is at best an uncertain occupation with alternating gluts and scarcities, fish is an extremely perishable commodity, the middleman almost everywhere controlled the market, and modern methods seemed to cost too much.

During the war the fishermen had to contend with additional difficulties. Timber for boats and fishing stakes, cotton yarn for nets and lines, coir ropes for rigging, canvas for sails, fishing hooks, tar, etc., were very scarce and cost several times their former price. Ice supplies for keeping fish fresh were very limited and transport to consuming centers under war conditions was greatly restricted. For sea fishermen the security restrictions in waters near ports were an additional trouble.

The immediate task before the authorities was twofold, on the one hand to get information about the possible improvement of the fish supply, especially of inland fish, to train staff, as technical staff was very short, and to organize such short-term schemes of fish breeding, restocking, etc., as might be possible; and on the other hand to provide the fishermen with the apparatus needed for catching fish, and then for transporting the catch to the consumer.

The Government of India appointed a Fisheries Development Adviser in May 1944, and a Deputy Adviser for Marine Fisheries in November. Arrangements were made for fishery training courses at Madras and Calcutta to help produce personnel for provinces which were reorganizing their fishery departments, and schemes were worked out for stocking suitable areas and for starting fish farms with fry and fingerlings. In marine fisheries the most important

problem was probably not that of catching fish, but of conveying it quickly to port and keeping it in cold storage pending consumption. By 1945 twelve diesel engines had been obtained from America for the Bombay sea fisheries, where transport of the catch in ice from the fishing grounds to the city had for some years been made by motor launches, which owing to wartime conditions by then needed replacement and an increase in number. Investigations were also in hand for provision of more cold storage and ice-making plants in various parts of India. Arrangements were made for the import of fishhooks, which were unobtainable in India, and as far as possible supplies were released of twine, yarn, cordage, timber, steel, tar, paint, and the like, for distribution to fishermen. But lack of staff and shortage of goods made this difficult.

Several schemes were undertaken by the provinces and states to improve their fisheries—for instance, by appointing additional staff, by establishing fish farms, by catching and rearing fry for stocking, by protection of spawning grounds, by stocking tanks with fingerlings, and by improved methods of curing fish. What actual increase in the food supply the various schemes effected it is difficult to say. The Punjab expected, as a result of stocking some 30 tanks, to get an additional 100 tons of fish in 1945; the United Provinces by stocking 500 tanks in the Allahabad, Mirzapur, Benares, Jaunpur, Banda, and Jhansi districts expected by the end of the year an extra 1,000 tons, a 20 percent increase over the normal fish supply of the province; Hyderabad State by stocking 600 tanks hoped for 1,500 tons. How far these expectations were realized one cannot say, but in February 1947 the Fisheries Development Adviser to the Government of India estimated that, as a result of the Grow More Food Campaign, an additional 17,000 tons of fish would become available for the country's food supply.

Some specialized fishery developments on the peninsular coast of India during the war may be mentioned, such as the kippering of fish for supply to the Defence Forces, and the extraction of shark's liver oil to provide a vitamin reinforcement to diets during scarcity and for children under rationing conditions.

Fruit.—The chief fruits produced in India are mangoes, bananas, and citrus, and also—in a limited area in the North West Frontier Province, Baluchistan, and the northern Punjab—apples, pears, quinces, and peaches. Total fruit production had been estimated in the course of market surveys at about 10 million tons a year, which, after making allowance for stones, skins, and the like, was equivalent

to 6 million tons of edible fruit. This would have given 2 ounces of fruit a day for each adult of the population, which was the minimum considered dietetically needed for health. But experience indicated that the people did not consume anything like this quantity and that the estimates of production were excessive, and it was clear that the production and the consumption of fruit in India needed to be greatly increased (*1*, p. 40).

Fruit farming, however, is essentially a long-term business and involves complicated problems of propagation, testing and selection of varieties, disease and pest control, marketing and distribution. Little could be attained by such short-term measures as the Grow More Food Campaign could contemplate, but several schemes were sanctioned by the Government of India designed to "(*a*) make arrangements for the training of 'malis' (gardeners) as the shortage of trained staff all over the country is a serious handicap in the way of progress, (*b*) establish nurseries for the supply of plants of reliable varieties at reasonable prices, (*c*) appointment of staff for advisory and supervisory work, for the improvement of old gardens, and planting fresh gardens on up to date lines" (*8*, p. 27). The immediate aim of such schemes was to increase the area under quick-yielding fruit such as papaya, banana, pineapple, Cape gooseberry, etc., and to improve the yield of existing gardens by better cultural, irrigational, and manurial methods and by control of insect pests and of diseases. An example of pest control was a scheme to deal with the codling moth which was damaging apples and pears in Baluchistan to the extent of a crore of rupees a year.

The Indian Fruit Growers Association was strengthened and was of value in representing to the authorities the difficulties of the Indian fruit preserving industry, such as insufficient and poor quality sugar, shortages of bottles and containers, and difficulty in obtaining chemicals. A Central Research Station was started in April 1945 to investigate the conditions of the industry and to advise the trade on its problems.

Livestock.—India's food supply depended on its cattle in two ways. Not only were cattle needed for the supply of milk and ghee, but the bullock was the main means of traction for all agricultural operations, and cattle therefore had to be considered in the Grow More Food Campaign. It was stated in 1944 that there were 200 million bovines in India, one-third male, one-third female, and one-third young stock (*1*, p. 42). Figures of the cattle population of India were normally available in the quinquennial cattle census, but these,

like all other agricultural statistics in India, were not necessarily correct. (It was said that in Bihar one census reported that there were in the province several million she-goats, but only two male goats!) During the war more accurate information was needed on account of the danger that the slaughter of cattle for food might bring their numbers below those needed for cultivating the land or for providing milk and other dairy products as protective foods. Orders were therefore issued for a special census of cattle to be taken in 1945.

The first task, however, under the Grow More Food Campaign was to increase as rapidly as possible the yield of the main cereals, which were the food of the bulk of the people, and until steps had been taken to do this, consideration of the problems of the country's livestock had to be put off. To this, however, there was one exception—the urgent need to reduce or to avoid the slaughter for food of animals useful for breeding or for agricultural work. As stated elsewhere, from the summer of 1944 the slaughter was prohibited of: (1) cattle below three years of age, (2) male cattle between two and ten years of age, which were being used or likely to be used as working cattle, (3) all cows between three and ten years of age other than cows which were unsuitable for bearing offspring, and (4) all cows which were pregnant or in milk. In 1945 this prohibition applied universally to animals for the consumption of the Defence Forces, and to animals for civilian consumption except in the Punjab and the North West Frontier Province (*8*, p. 29). How far in practice outside the Defence Forces these excellent regulations were actually enforced in a country where veterinary surgeons were even rarer than doctors, it is impossible to say. American experience in control of small slaughterers during the war suggests that perhaps the regulations may not have been strictly enforced in the country districts of India (*12*, p. 362).

India had the largest cattle population in the world and the largest number supported per acre of land (*8*, p. 29). But the Hindu religion attached great reverence to the cow, and in consequence there existed a large number of cattle whose utility to the community did not justify economically the fodder which they consumed. The grazing grounds were overcrowded and in the hot weather did not provide enough to do more than barely keep the animals alive, and in times of drought not even this much. Thus over most of India the cattle were of poor quality and undernourished; the tractive power for plowing, cartage, and the like was insufficient; and the milk produced was totally inadequate for the needs of the people.

The shortage of draft and of milch cattle increased during the first three years of the war and its effect was aggravated by bans on the export of cattle from one province to another. The Government of India recognized that the deficiency could not be met merely by increasing the number of cattle kept under existing conditions, but that the quality of the cattle must be improved by better feeding, better breeding, and better management. There were of course great difficulties in the way, but India had many fine breeds of draft and milch cattle, and good management and good feeding were traditional in some parts of the country. The feeding difficulty, especially for milch cattle, was urgent. Various provinces had banned the export of fodder and concentrates to protect their own cattle, and where movement was allowed, transport by rail was very delayed. The efforts to grow more food for human consumption reduced the feed for cattle; for instance, the application of oil cake as a fertilizer to food crops cut down the available concentrates for cattle, and the reduction in the area sown to short-staple cotton led to a serious shortage of the cotton seed which normally formed a large part of the diet of the milch buffaloes which gave most of India's milk supply. In Bombay City a system of controlled import of cattle feed and of its rationed distribution had to be introduced to keep the milk supply going. Despite the shortage of staff trained in dairying, a number of schemes for improved production and distribution of milk were under consideration in 1945, but inevitably most of these were of a long-term nature and aimed at general postwar development.

The Imperial Veterinary Institute at Mukteswar in the hills and at Izatnagar near Bareilly in the plains was in process of development into an Animal Husbandry Institute and was doing valuable research work.

Statistics.—The incompleteness and the inaccuracy of the agricultural statistics in India have been referred to earlier. As part of the Grow More Food Campaign, the Government of India tried to help the provinces and states to improve them. Schemes for complete enumeration of the acreage under various crops were in hand, or in prospect, in Orissa, Bihar, Bengal, and Assam, and experiments were made in "random sampling" as a quicker and cheaper, though not so accurate, method of discovering acreage. In estimating the outturn of crops, however, the Imperial Council of Agricultural Research showed that random sampling was more successful and that by it more reliable data of normal yield could be obtained.

SUMMING UP: 1945

The Famine Inquiry Commission in its comments on the Grow More Food Campaign sums up the results for the years 1942/43 and 1943/44. In food crops there was an absolute increase of about a million acres in paddy, to which the high price of rice considerably contributed. The acreage under wheat did not materially increase, and that under barley remained about the same. The increase of 2 million acres in jowar was not accompanied by an increase in yield, but an increase of 4 million acres under bajra gave an additional million tons of grain. Maize increased by 600,000 acres and 350,000 tons, and ragi showed no substantial change. The increase in rice yield was mainly due to the 1943/44 monsoon being unusually favorable to that crop; the monsoon of 1942/43 gave a bumper wheat crop, but no large increase in the wheat area was likely except with an increase of irrigation. Apart from rice in 1943/44, the major part of the increased cereal yield was in bajra, which was grown in place of short-staple cotton and which was "the poorest yielder among Indian cereals and the least popular among millets."

The report of the Commission continued,

> We have no specific recommendation to make as regards the Grow More Food Campaign except that it should be continued with undiminished vigour and without any slackening of effort. The results achieved by the campaign have not been spectacular. This is not surprising. As we have said, the area of cultivable but uncultivated land which can be brought under cultivation without the application of special, and in the majority of cases, expensive, measures, is small. . . . The lesson to be learned from the experience of the Grow More Food Campaign stands out quite clearly. It is this. A large increase in agricultural production in India by an extension of the area of cultivated land and the improvement in the yield of crops through irrigation and other measures will not be achieved without intensive and sustained effort on the part of both Government and the people. There is, therefore, need for laying down a clear agricultural policy and providing administrative machinery for its execution.

URGENCY OF THE PROBLEM AND POLICY: 1946

A policy was announced by the Government of India on January 21, 1946 (*15*, Jan. 21, 1946).

> The All-India policy is to promote the welfare of the people and to secure a progressive improvement in their standard of living. This includes the responsibility for providing enough food for all, sufficient in quantity and of the requisite quality. For the achievement of this objective high priority will be

given to measures for increasing the food resources of the country to the fullest extent, and in particular to measures designed to increase the output per acre and to diminish dependence on the vagaries of nature. Their aim will be not only to remove the threat of famine, but also to increase the prosperity of the cultivator, raise the levels of consumption and create a healthy and vigorous population.

Ten "cardinal objectives" of this comprehensive policy were announced, including the growth of more food, the production of more raw materials for industry, assured markets for agricultural produce at prices remunerative to the producer and fair to the consumer, fair wages for agricultural labor and a higher standard of rural living, development of cottage industries and scientific methods, and ensuring a fair distribution of the food produced. To these ends ten major immediate measures and twenty-six minor measures were suggested. But it was also made clear that it was on the provinces that the responsibility lay to plan and carry out these measures. The Central Government would, however, initiate and co-ordinate plans, and give to the provinces some financial aid and conduct some research and training.

This announcement of policy by the Government of India must be regarded, however, mainly as the statement of an ideal and as an encouragement to the provinces and states to take a large and a long view of their duties and their responsibilities, rather than as a program of immediate action.

The urgency of the food position in 1946 was recognized by the Indian Central Cotton Committee, which at its meeting on February 1 and 2 passed a resolution which stated that the Committee was of opinion that from the purely cotton standpoint an extension of the cotton acreage was highly desirable. "In view, however, of the gravity of the Food position in the country, the Committee strongly recommends to the Government of India that all Provincial Governments and States be required to take whatever steps are necessary to restrict the cotton acreage for the season 1946/47 so that it may not exceed the acreage sown in 1945/46. In making this resolution, the Committee is aware that the maximum acreage suggested is below India's domestic requirements of raw cotton and cotton seed for cattle food." The Committee also very rightly stressed to the Government of India the urgent need to increase the yield per acre of food crops, to import fertilizers, to improve transport, and to step up the crushing of oil seeds in India. It must be recorded that throughout the period the Indian Central Cotton Committee took a most balanced

view of the problem of food *versus* other crops, which was a great help to the authorities.

In October 1946 the Government of India appointed an Advisory Planning Board which issued a preliminary report early in 1947. This report suggested that as regards cereals a reasonable target to be obtained by 1951/52 was an additional annual production of 4 million tons and that each province and state should make plans for its share of such target. It recognized that hitherto there had been insufficient co-ordination between agricultural and industrial planning, for a balance must be kept between cash and food crops, and that the willing co-operation of the cultivators must be secured as much as possible, although "sometimes persuasion must be reinforced by legislative compulsion," as in the matter of consolidation of holdings. The frank comment that "the general criticism of planning in India is that there is a plethora of paper plans, but that nothing effective is being done," was refreshing, and perhaps expressed a doubt that not all the provincial programs of development mentioned in the report would succeed. These programs were numerous and extensive, but few, if any, were completed by August 1947, and they are not examined here. Though they erred on the side of optimism, mankind then was hopeful of a new and better postwar world, and criticism is not deserved.

At the Food Production and Agricultural Prices Conferences at Delhi in January 1947 and later to newsmen in Bombay, the Food Member of the Central Government emphasized once more the urgency of the position. "Though in this period, our people have somehow managed so far to escape death by starvation, there has been a great deal of undernourishment, the effect of which cannot have failed to leave its mark on their health and capacity to resist disease." "The difficulty of the Food Department is that they can distribute only what they can get and that too only to the extent they can procure this either within the country or from outside. The people must realise that unless production is stepped up considerably within the country itself and Provinces become more self-supporting, or at least able to meet their requirements from the surplus of neighbouring Provinces, the difficulties will increase." The Minister explained the duties of the Central Government and of the Provincial Governments in this matter. "Agriculture is a Provincial subject and we in the Government of India can be of service and help only in an indirect way, by offering advice or suggestions, by placing at the disposal of the Provincial Governments the results of research being

carried out under our auspices, by placing at their disposal such technical advice and mechanical devices as we possess, and though not least, by offering to share with Provincial Governments and the people at large the financial burden which the plan that may be evolved will entail."

EFFECT OF THE CAMPAIGN BY 1947

How far the short-term objectives of the Grow More Food Campaign were realized by 1947 can be judged to some extent from information given in the Indian Constituent Assembly in August 1948. In the years 1943 to 1947 minor irrigation projects comprised 64,217 surface wells, including 18,668 old ones repaired, 471 tube wells sunk, 2,339 tanks constructed and 813 old ones repaired, and 22,043 other projects taken up; 4.8 million tons of oil cake, 2 million tons of compost, and 420,000 tons of sulphate of ammonia were distributed as fertilizer, and in addition nearly 9,000 tons of seed were issued for green manuring. Of rice, wheat, jowar, bajra, and gram, 305,000 tons of seed were distributed. The amounts given by the Central Government for Grow More Food purposes from 1943/44 to 1947/48 to Provincial Governments, local administrations, and institutions are shown below in thousand rupees (*9*, Aug. 16, 1948):

	Loan	Grant
Irrigation facilities	12,983	44,064
Land clearance and development	6,878	6,969
Manure distribution	18,618	19,195
Seed multiplication and distribution	33,880	21,275
Fish production		2,297
Fruit schemes		1,090
Dairy schemes	100	5,635
Poultry schemes		502
Livestock schemes	373	981
Miscellaneous schemes	9,633	13,220
Total	82,468	115,237

The real effect of the Grow More Food Campaign on India's food supply is not easy to assess. Production statistics cannot show what extra amount of food resulted from it, for it is impossible to isolate the factors which controlled the yield of crops in the critical years 1942 to 1947. The rainfall, its timeliness or otherwise, agricultural prices, the efficiency or inefficiency of food and price controls, supplies of consumers' goods, the political situation, and civil disturbances, all played a part in deciding how much food would be produced in any

year, and in helping or hindering the Grow More Food Campaign.

Perhaps the most valuable work of the campaign was that it brought home to the Indian public that India must grow more food crops if its people were to be fed without reliance on uncertain and expensive imports of foodgrains from overseas. Furthermore the large increase in the area under foodcrops in 1942/43 proved that, by suitable measures of persuasion and under certain circumstances, the conservative Indian farmer could be induced to grow the crops which the country needed. But the return to a large area of short-stapled cotton in 1943/44 showed that speculation and lack of government control over trade could provide an incentive of high prices for nonfood crops which the grower would not withstand. But the Indian farmer was not alone in placing his own immediate profit before the needs of other people. Even in the United States "throughout the war many farmers used imported fertilisers, labor deferred from military service, and fertile land to grow short-staple cotton, of which there was a surplus, watermelons and other low priority crops" (*12*, p. 338).

The Indian situation improved in 1944/45, but the disastrous seasons of the next two years greatly hampered the campaign. Its difficulties were increased by the uncertainty of the political situation, the administrative inexperience of the provincial ministries, the communal outbreaks in Calcutta, East Bengal, and Bihar, and the stresses within the Cabinet of the Interim Government at the Center. In February 1947 came the decision that Britain would hand over control in India; in March, Lord Mountbatten arrived in India as Viceroy to arrange the transfer of power; and in June was announced the forthcoming partition of India and the establishment of the two Dominions of India and of Pakistan from August 15. During all this time the statesmen and the politicians were inevitably more concerned with impending constitutional changes and their effect on the country than with the pressing economic problems of food and other supplies.

Probably the greatest handicap to the Grow More Food Campaign was the failure of the Central and Provincial Governments to arrange the supply, and to control the prices, of the consumers' goods needed by the farmer and to prevent the flood of speculation which disorganized business in 1946. The Food and Foodgrains Control administration was losing efficiency, and the farmer, dissatisfied with the prices offered for his crops and tempted by the black market, inevitably heeded his own immediate profit rather than official exhortations to grow more food crops.

Whatever effect these factors had, one must conclude that without the Grow More Food Campaign less food would have been grown in India and that the difficulties of the famine year 1946 and of the little better season of 1947 would have been far greater.

But, though the campaign was essentially a short-term expedient to meet a wartime emergency over some five years, it was also planning for a long-term increase in India's food production. Although these plans are not considered here because they were not implemented by August 1947, they were, and still are, of immense importance to the future of India and Pakistan. Works such as the Sindri Fertilizer Factory and the projects proposed for the Indus River in Sind, the Mahanadi in Orissa, the Damodar Valley in Bihar, the Kosi Dam in Bihar and Nepal, the Thungabhadra and Ramapadasagar in Madras, are vital for the countries' food (*15*, Apr. 23, 1947).

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CHAPTER 12

FOODGRAINS PROCUREMENT

In peacetime the Government of India bought the foodgrains needed for the Defence Forces through agents operating in the surplus provinces and states. This quantity was a very small part of India's total crop. But during the war, foodgrains had to be procured by government, not only for the Defence Forces, but for much of the civil population as well.

By the end of 1942 securing supplies for deficit areas was getting more and more difficult, and after considerable discussion at food conferences at Delhi held in December 1942 and February and July 1943, the principle was accepted that foodgrains, both for Army and civilian needs, should be bought by the same agency, and that that agency should be provincial, and not a department of the Central Government. Such arrangement was clearly necessary for operation of the Basic Plan, under which the Government of India was to agree with the surplus provinces on the amount of their exportable surpluses, and with the deficit provinces on their deficits in foodgrains, and was then to allot the available supplies from the former among the latter. To buy the needed, or rather the declared, quantities, an efficient purchase organization was imperative. Only the Provincial Governments would have the necessary local knowledge, the authority over the district staff, and the confidence of the public.

The failure of the aman crop of 1942, the Bengal famine of 1943, and the neglect of the Bengal Government to put its own house in order, diverted the efforts of the Food Department to the rescue of Bengal before most of the provinces had got their procurement machinery working. There was consequently an outcry that the Basic Plan had failed. The Third Food Conference made it clear, however, that the Basic Plan had not failed, but that, if it was to operate successfully, every province, surplus or deficit, must have a procurement agency which would secure from each cultivator the maximum possible amount of his crop for the government.

Earlier, a brief description was given of Indian agricultural conditions, under which food crops are produced by millions of small farmers in about 700,000 villages, spread over 1.5 million square

miles, and of how the innumerable "marginal accretions" of these producers are drawn into a great network of retail and wholesale trade throughout the country. It was not surprising that most provincial and state governments, considering the number, the magnitude, and the complexity of the transactions intervening between the grower and the consumer, between the Punjab farmer's heap of wheat on the threshing floor and the Bombay dock laborer's wheaten chupati, or between the Central Provinces' paddy field and the rice-eating overpopulated villages of Travancore, hesitated before interfering with, controlling, or substituting any official agency for the immemorial methods of the indigenous grain trade. More especially was this so for the governments of the permanently settled provinces, where the authorities would have had to recruit and train an entirely new staff throughout all the villages, at a time when manpower was extremely short. Even if recruited, such staff would have had little or none of the official experience, the personal influence, and the local knowledge which the village revenue staff in other provinces had acquired by generations of service. Direct procurement from the cultivator through such improvised staff could be neither effective nor efficient, and would have afforded unlimited opportunity for corruption. And everywhere, both in provinces with a village staff and in those without it, government procurement threw an additional burden on the District Officer and his subordinates, already overburdened with a mass of extra work arising from the war and wartime conditions.

Therefore provincial and state governments inevitably endeavored as long as possible to purchase foodgrains through existing trade agencies, at varying stages of the movement toward the consumer; and it was only the pressure of necessity, when the task was beyond the powers—and the ethics—of private enterprise, which eventually produced the comprehensive government systems in force toward the end of the period.

It was probably fortunate that the provinces of Bombay and Madras and the states of Travancore and Cochin, which earliest had to face the task of undertaking procurement, had highly developed village revenue systems.

There were many controversies about procurement. The objections to monopoly government procurement, the allegations of the disastrous effect of any compulsory levy of grain from the cultivator, the impossibility of requisitioning without provoking violent revolt, the necessity of keeping the purchases in the hands of the trade, etc.,

all enlivened the proceedings of some of the earlier All-India Food Conferences. It is therefore perhaps surprising to discover that in the Kashmir State a compulsory levy of paddy from all growers and a rationed supply to the town population had been enforced successfully since 1921.

The Kashmir scheme and the difficulties and failures which led to its adoption are described in a report of August 1923 by Raja Sir Hari Singh, later Maharaja of Kashmir, Major General Janak Singh, and Sir Bertrand Glancy (*1*, p. 18). If this report had been taken out of its pigeonhole and early in the war studied by the Government of India and the governments of the provinces, perhaps some of the hesitancies and mistakes which at times marked Indian wartime food administration might have been avoided. The report showed, for instance, the futility of control of price without control of supply, the rapid rise of prices under "free trade" once the normal markets were upset, the dangers of profiteering and hoarding, and the necessity of organization to feed an urban population.

Admittedly, however, a system which worked satisfactorily in a remote Indian State with an uneducated and submissive rural countryside, and an administration not far removed from autocracy, could hardly have been applied to the independent and educated landowners and peasants of the Punjab, for example, by an administration dependent on the votes of the farmers. But the facts set out in the report, if appreciated, should have prevented much spoken and written controversy over the principles of food control, and should have saved time before their eventual application to some areas. Unfortunately the Kashmir system was only briefly referred to at the First Food Conference, and at the Second and Third no representative of Kashmir was present. A short note on the Kashmir system is given in Appendix Note III.

Procurement of foodgrains was of course conditioned by the times of harvest and of the crops coming on the market. Rice was generally harvested from October to February, and was on the market and available for purchase by government from November to May, but from July to September it was difficult to get. Wheat, harvested from February to April, was in plentiful supply from March to June, and for the rest of the year not easy to procure. The millets (jowar and bajra) and maize came to market from November till February, and from July to October they were difficult to purchase. Gram was harvested in April and available from May to August.

If procurement arrangements were inefficient or delayed, the

authorities might miss the purchasing season, and so fall far short of their target and their needs, as happened with the 1943 aus harvest in Bengal, and the Madras rice procurement through co-operative societies in early 1947.

The Foodgrains Policy Committee in its discussion of procurement stated that, from the standpoint of principle, the only completely satisfactory solution would be a Central Foodgrains Monopoly, but added the qualification that this would be "wholly impracticable" under the conditions of 1943. It advised that the provinces and states should run their own procurement on such systems as best suited the economic and administrative conditions of each.

But the need for governments to secure the maximum share of the produce, especially in deficit districts, if the towns and the landless countrymen were to be fed, led the Government of India in 1944 to place an officer on special duty to report on such government monopoly schemes as were then in force. His report (*1*) dealt with the Central Provinces, the provinces of Orissa, Madras, Bombay, the states of Kashmir, Travancore, Cochin, Mysore, Kolhapur, and the Deccan States and Holkar State. It is of interest as showing how far by the autumn of 1944, less than two years after the scarcity and famine of 1942/43, some parts of India had advanced toward control of the farmer's grain crop and how the methods of control varied from place to place.

The report stated (*1*, p. ii) that

> . . . in all those areas which have gone forward towards a Government Monopoly there is not one single instance where any doubt is felt that the basic principle is right. In no case is there any thought of withdrawing even to a minor degree. On the contrary, the tendency is quite the reverse and in virtually every case the determined policy is to go forward to make the monopoly more complete and to ensure the whole surplus of every individual cultivator coming within the physical control of Government. . . . To say that all the schemes have been successful, that there have not been mistakes or that hardships have not been caused would be ridiculous but that the policy is right there are no two opinions amongst those who have tried it out. And the same thing can be said for the views of non-officials. Nowhere did I hear criticism of the policy of Monopoly Procurement. In fact, quite the reverse.

Under monopoly procurement, grain was bought at a price fixed for the whole crop year by government, which enabled price control to be enforced, for "there was not one deficit area in which no monopoly operates that has not, by bitter experience, learnt the impossibility of maintaining prices within any statutory maximum that may be laid

down if forces are against them. And this goes for some highly surplus areas also" (*1*, p. ii).

The report found that monopoly procurement did not discourage the farmer from producing the maximum crops, but rather afforded an inducement, as he had assured to him a cash market for his produce at a fixed price.

The extent of the monopolies in force in 1944 in the various areas varied considerably, "from complete monopolies where the entire surplus from each individual holding is compulsorily acquired to a semi-monopoly such as in force in Orissa where there is no levy or any attempt made at assessing surpluses and private trade is permitted to continue to the extent of transactions up to quantities of ten maunds each" (*1*, p. v).

The methods ran from an arbitrary levy, as was for a short time introduced as an emergency measure for millets procurement in parts of Madras, to a complete accounting of the crop of each several holder and of his family needs, followed by the compulsory purchase by the authorities of everything beyond that. In all such schemes, however, the grower kept the food for his family, and the seed for his next sowing; sometimes he also kept grain for other needs, as for rent fixed in kind, for his farm hands' wages, for customary payments to village artisans and village servants, or for repayment of loans taken in kind. But generally the tendency was to reduce these miscellaneous allowances as affording too easy a scope for the growth of a black market. As a matter of policy, however, the farmer was allowed to keep for his own and his family's food more than the ration which the townsman received.

It is impracticable to give a detailed description of every method of procurement developed in India, interesting though it might be to examine how each system was inevitably conditioned or prescribed by the history, the economy, or the administration of each province or state, extending back into generations past. No single pattern was attempted for the machinery for the maintenance of food supplies in the various areas, because conditions varied so greatly throughout India that uniformity would have been impossible.

A description may therefore be given in some detail of the procurement systems in force in two of the major provinces of India, which differed widely from each other in economic conditions, political circumstances, and administrative methods; the Punjab, a wheat-producing and wheat-eating province of North India, where an elected government based mainly on the rural vote was in office all through

the war; and Madras, a rice-eating province of the South, where in 1939 the Congress Ministry resigned, and the Governor had to carry on the administration until 1946.

For the rest of the provinces, we may describe very briefly their methods at three important stages of India's food history. The first is in 1943 when the Bengal famine was in progress, much of southern India was suffering from crop failure, and the Foodgrains Policy Committee made its report. The second is in 1945 when the Famine Inquiry Commission made its survey of India's food supply and prospects. And the third is in October 1946, when the crop failures of that year had created a serious food crisis, the popular governments were once more in office in the provinces, and the "Interim Government" was in charge at the Center.

PUNJAB PROCUREMENT

The development of procurement in the Punjab illustrates the difficulties both of the Government of India in dealing with a province governed by a ministry constituted under the Government of India Act, and of a popularly based government in taking a broad view of an All-India problem, in this case the danger of a food shortage in India.

When in 1939 the Congress Party called on its provincial ministries to resign, the Punjab Government remained in office and continued to support fully the effective prosecution of the war. The Punjab Government was a ministry mainly dependent on the rural vote, and therefore its platform had inevitably to support the interests of the farmer. This farmer, whether landlord, small holder, or tenant, had had a very lean time during the agricultural depression of the thirties, and with the advent of the war he felt that he was entitled to benefit from the high prices which his produce was sure to fetch during hostilities. The Punjab Government therefore was bound to take a stand in favor of a high price for grain and against any coercion on the farmer to sell his crops at a fixed price. This attitude was reinforced by the influence of the very important grain trade, which had great influence on the Sikh and Hindu urban vote, and which of course was opposed to any foodgrain control. The popular feeling in the Punjab was that the other parts of India, especially the industrial areas, had unjustly profited during the depression by living on cheap Punjab grain, and that so long as the wartime prices of the products of industry were allowed to rise, the Punjabi ought to be allowed to make whatever profit he could from his wheat and his other crops.

The deficit provinces on the other hand, harried by the difficulty of feeding their people, inevitably regarded the Punjab as a province which was feeding luxuriously itself and selling to the rest of India at extortionate prices the crumbs which fell from its table, and they demanded that the Punjab should not evade its responsibility as a part of India.

But, as explained earlier, only under extraordinary circumstances would the Central Government be justified in interfering with a provincial subject administered by a popular ministry, and food was, in constitutional theory at least, a provincial subject. In addition, the rural Punjab was normally the principal recruiting area for the combatant forces of the Indian Army, and the military authorities were most anxious that the Government of India should take no action which might disturb the Punjab farmer and hinder recruiting, or cause anxiety to the Punjabi soldiers already in service. Probably nowhere in India could compulsory purchase or requisitioning of foodgrains have been successfully enforced against general public opinion, and certainly not in the Punjab against the will of a self-reliant and independent electorate.

This is not the place to assess the contributions of the various provinces and states toward India's war effort; the chief part of some was the provision of combatant personnel, of others that of technicians, of others that of equipment and munitions, and all these were equally needed for modern warfare. Without food none of these activities could function. But the idea of the unity of India and of the interdependence of its various parts took time to develop, and at times it seemed as though the Punjab hardly considered that it had any responsibility toward the rest of the country. Indeed it might be argued that the eventual partition of India in 1947 showed that the conception of India's unity was a mirage.

These conflicting considerations help to explain the dilatory and checkered progress of the procurement of foodgrains in the Punjab during the war.

The troubles of the Government of India over the price control of wheat and its failure have been mentioned earlier; but by the end of 1942 the Punjab Government offered "the heartiest cooperation" in securing supplies and agreed to the proposal of a central buying agency for wheat, provided that the Provincial Government conducted the operations, decided the quantities for export, fixed the prices, and was not required to requisition grain for the Central Government (*2*).

In February 1943 the Punjab clarified this offer by explaining

CARRYING RICE STRAW, BENGAL

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WOMEN GRINDING MILLET, SOUTH INDIA

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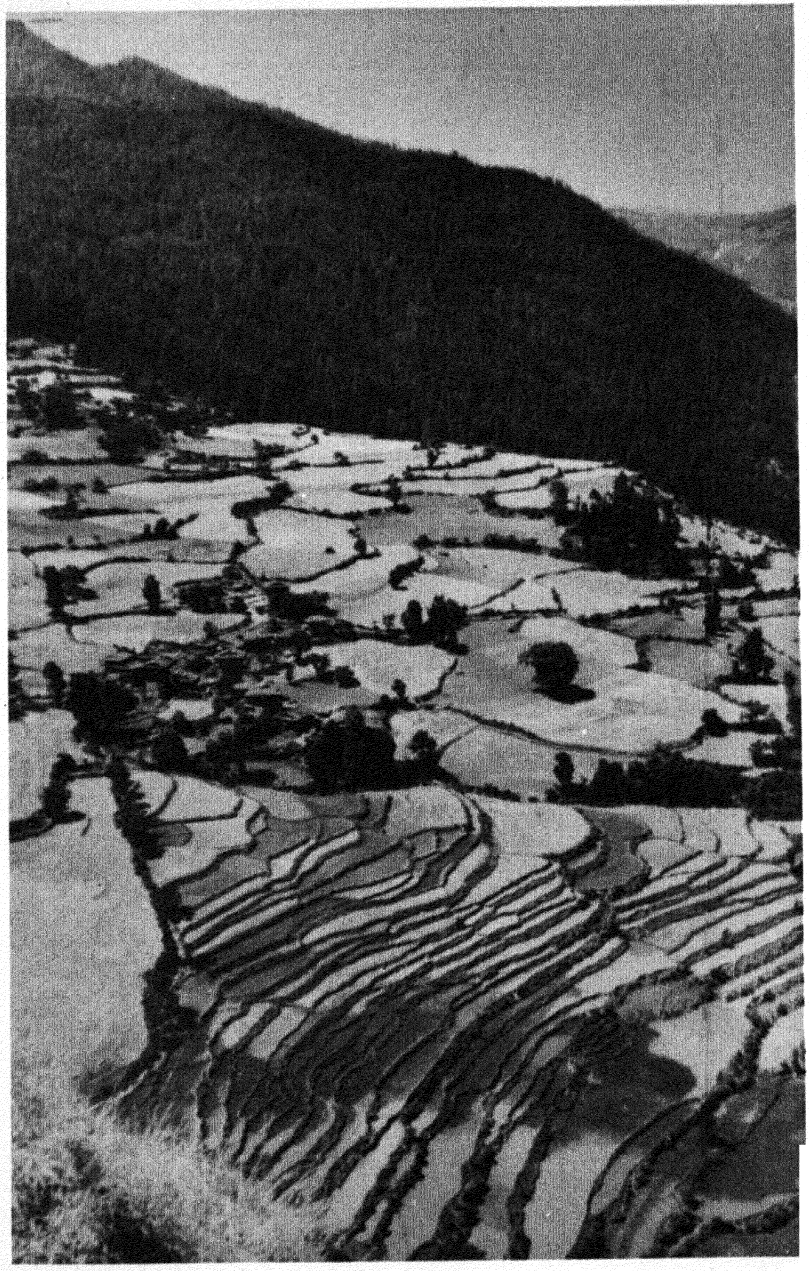
HILLSIDE TERRACED FOR CULTIVATION



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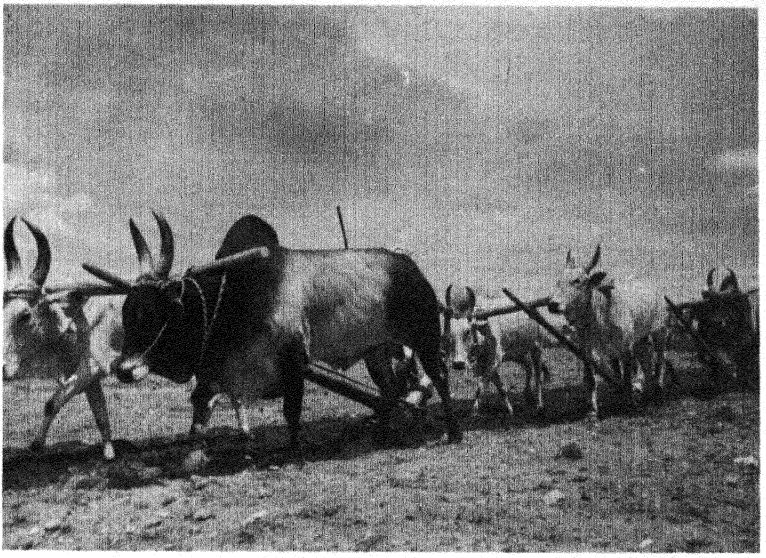
Plowing in South India



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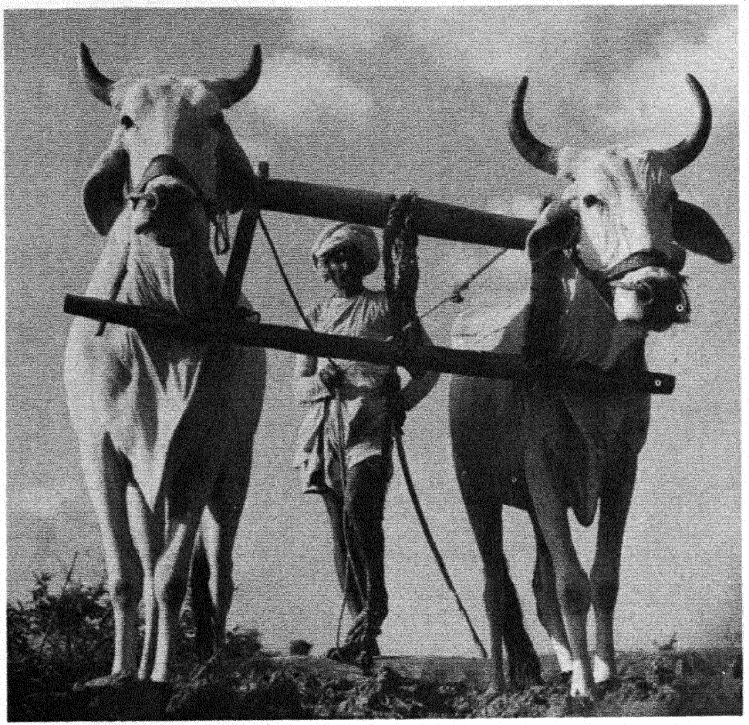
A Paddy Field

By permission of the Public Relations Department of the High Commission of India, London

PUNJAB FARMER WITH YOKE OF OXEN



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CARRYING COTTON IN BOMBAY COTTON COUNTRY

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that the price should be such as to induce the cultivator to bring his goods to market, that the target for purchases should be the "exportable surplus," not the "marketable surplus," and that ordinary trade agencies should be used to purchase the grain. The Punjab representative at the Second All-India Food Conference explained that about 40–45 percent of the Punjab growers' crop came on the market, and that that was the "marketable surplus," but, as this had to feed the Punjab towns and Punjab deficit areas, the "exportable surplus" was only what remained after these wants were satisfied. If more than this should be exported, unrest and black markets would result. How the needs of the urban and deficit areas were to be calculated, when admittedly much of their consumption was grain which never came on the market but which was brought in direct from the fields, was not made clear; apparently a "target figure" was to be fixed, and the Provincial Government was to decide whether it might be exceeded. To deficit provinces the proposal seemed rather a case of Punjab first, and the rest nowhere.

By July 1943, when the Bengal famine was in full force and the disastrous effects of the "free trade" experiment in the Eastern Region were apparent, the Punjab representative at the Third All-India Food Conference, after objecting to other suggestions for procurement, made the curious proposal that there should be "qualified Free Trade, a voluntary or compulsory setting aside of one seer per maund of produce for the countryside, and . . . a charity fund to which well-to-do people should be asked to contribute voluntarily in the first instance." He added, "Enforce it by law and compel them to make this contribution if they fail to do so voluntarily."

It is difficult to take seriously this proposal of the greatest surplus province in India to meet an All-India food shortage, which was involving the deaths of thousands daily in Bengal, even if one grant the pressure on the Punjab Government of a rural electorate, with a real grievance that agricultural prices had not kept pace with the supply of consumers' goods.

The suggestion was not adopted, and the Punjab continued its existing procurement system through old established trade organizations dealing in the marketing and export of foodgrains. Under this, six firms had been chosen from the grain dealers in the province as purchasing agents. One firm did all the buying for the Defence Department, and the other five bought for the civil needs of other provinces and states, on the basis of allotment of Government of India supply orders made by the Director of Food Supplies. Ordinary trade

channels operated for supplying the domestic needs of the province; and the Registrar of Cooperative Societies bought through Commission agents for the provincial grain reserve. All these agencies conducted their operations throughout the whole of the Punjab, and thus there was maximum competition from each to get supplies. The only check appears to have been comparison with prices paid by the Government Agency, and the fact that direct offers might be made to the Director of Food Supplies (*3*, p. 53). Inevitably the system tended to profit the Punjab grower and trader at the expense of the rest of India.

It did, however, produce a large quantity of wheat for export to other provinces, for the 1942/43 Punjab wheat crop was 4,175,000 tons against a usual crop of about 3.25 to 3.5 million tons (*4*, p. 38). At the Fourth All-India Food Conference the Punjab representative stated that for the wheat year 1942/43, against a target figure of 900,000 tons exclusive of what was bought for the Defence Department, 970,000 tons were calculated to have been dispatched, and that up to September 25 in the wheat year 1943/44, of a demand for 1,000,000 tons, 200,000 tons of wheat had already been bought.

The Punjab also claimed that its system had not only secured very large amounts of foodgrains for the deficit provinces, but that, after the abolition of the statutory controlled price in January 1943 had sent the price of wheat up to Rs. 13 a maund, it had gradually brought the price down to Rs. 10 a maund by the end of May.

The Government of India was criticized for failing to help procurement by not making available for the farmer those consumer goods such as steel and iron for implements and cart tires, cotton cloth for clothes, fertilizers for crops, oil for irrigation pumps, etc., which were necessary, if the food supply was to be kept up and foodgrains produced at a reasonable price. This criticism was not unjustified, for the diversion of production employed on war work, in order to provide for the needs of the cultivator, did not receive adequate consideration early in the war, but was much delayed, and indeed in some cases was then probably impossible.

Great though the help was which the Punjab gave to India from its bumper crop of 1942/43 in the critical time of the Bengal famine, it seems that at that stage its representatives had not perhaps fully appreciated the danger threatening India's food supply. Rationing was said to be not only impracticable but unnecessary in a surplus province; price control of foodgrains ought not to be applied unless at the same time control should be extended to stocks and prices of all

other commodities; the procurement policy recommended by the Foodgrains Policy Committee was not accepted and was considered in practice to amount to the requisitioning of foodstuffs.

The Punjab representative at the Fourth Food Conference emphasized that some 50 percent of the combatant ranks of the Indian Army at that time were drawn from the farming classes of the Punjab, and that "grave administrative and political repercussions" would follow if rationing, statutory price control, and requisitioning of foodgrains were put into force; and he disclaimed any responsibility for what might happen if the Government of India disregarded the advice of the Punjab Government.

"We are prepared to go to the extent of even tightening our belts, within reasonable limits of course, in order to be able to help all deficit areas, but what we do not propose to stand is any arbitrary exercise of authority on the part of the centre or anybody else" (*5*).

Without pronouncing on the validity of the Punjab claim to special treatment, or of the political and economic reasons which led its government to adopt the position which it did, it is obvious that the attitude of the Punjab added to the difficulties faced at this time by the Government of India in attempting to organize the needed procurement and distribution of food for the whole of India.

In 1944, however, the Punjab Government re-examined its procurement policy. When the Famine Inquiry Commission report was issued in 1945, the system was that all purchases for the Defence Services were made by a single commercial firm and all those for civil needs by the Director of Food Purchases, an officer of the Provincial Government. This officer bought by means of tenders which had to be guaranteed and accepted for execution by certain grain-dealing firms appointed as clearing agents (*6*, p. 30). This system, as pointed out by the Punjab representative at the Fifth Food Conference in January 1945, eliminated competitive buying and was in accordance with his government's view that the actual handling of such large quantities of grain as were involved in the purchase of an "exportable surplus" of, in a good season, a million tons, would be too much for any such system of direct government procurement as could then be devised.

But, as the Famine Commission pointed out, it did not allow for a time of rising prices. The Punjab had normally a large surplus, and, as long as crops were good and prices steady or "bearish," grain would come freely into the hands of the only purchaser for export, which was the Provincial Government. But if prices had a "bullish" tendency,

the grower might withhold his grain from the market, hoping for a better price, and the trader might increase his stocks instead of selling. The government purchaser might then hold off the market until prices came down, but only successfully so if the Provincial or Central Government had sufficient stocks of foodgrains, and in 1945 they had not. The Commission's view was that "action by the large producer and the trader, with the object of pushing up prices, should be countered as far as possible by direct as well as indirect action," and that "if it is established that the producer is holding back his grain from the market, or that the trader is refraining from placing his stocks on the market, with the object of pushing up prices, requisitioning should be resorted to without hesitation" (*6*, p. 35). At the Fifth Food Conference in January 1945, the Punjab did not agree with this view, and, though in October 1943 it had seen "no reason for accepting the Foodgrains Policy Committee's recommendations in respect of procurement policy," it now preferred that Committee's proposals to the conclusion of the "Government Grain Monopoly Schemes" Report of 1944, that "monopoly procurement had justified itself and should continue to be the goal towards which the development of all procurement systems should proceed" (*7*). The Punjab Government considered that monopoly procurement would involve the requisitioning of grain from the producer, which it was not willing to undertake, nor was it prepared to fix a procurement price.

The wheat crop of 1944/45 for All-India (omitting nonreporting areas) amounted to 10,551,000 tons, but that for 1945/46 was only 9,038,000 tons (*4*, p. 29), and this compelled the Punjab to modify its outlook on government procurement. In April 1946 it introduced a system of monopoly procurement of wheat. The purchase of wheat in nearly 500 markets of the province was completely controlled by government, operating through associations of the larger local grain dealers (*pucca artiyas*), who were the sole buyers of wheat at the market; and all the wheat bought by these dealers could only be disposed of under the orders of government. Wheat was purchased at prices fixed for each market by government, and sale of wheat by the grower, except for the needs of his village or in quantities up to 20 seers to a neighboring village, was forbidden. All movement of wheat by rail or road was prohibited, except between village and market, or under government permit.

Similarly, in the rice-growing areas of the Punjab, a scheme was introduced under which all rice produced at any rice mill could only be disposed of under orders of government, and at controlled prices.

Movement of rice and paddy into and out of these controlled rice areas was allowed only on permit.

It is difficult, or probably impossible, now to say how far the Punjab Government might have adopted a foodgrains policy more consonant with the food needs of India as a whole during the period 1939–46. A breakdown in the ministerial administration or serious discontent among the farmers of the Punjab must have had serious repercussions on India's war effort. Admittedly a Punjab ministry, dependent upon a rural vote and with internal weaknesses, would not be in a position to take such strong action as might, in theory at least, the Governor of a Section 93 Province. In practice, of course, neither could act far in advance of public opinion, and it does not seem that the Punjab Ministry made much effort to educate public opinion in that province in the realities of the danger to India's food supply, of the possible consequences in deficit areas, and of the need for all provinces and states fully sharing in the hardships needed to meet the emergency. That the danger could only be met by the extension of government procurement, price control, and rationing of foodgrains seems only to have been effectively acknowledged when the year 1946 brought food shortages to the Punjab itself.

MADRAS PROCUREMENT

In the Madras Presidency there were some half dozen districts in the Kistna, Godavari, and Cauvery deltas which produced a large surplus of rice; many other districts such as Nellore, North and South Arcot, Trichinopoly, Salem, and Madura were self-supporting in a normal year, but, if the northeast monsoon should fail and the irrigation "tanks" of these Carnatic districts did not fill, food had to be imported. Other districts, especially Malabar, Coimbatore, Vizagapatam, and Madras, were always heavily deficit in rice and other grain.

When in 1942 Burma rice was no longer available to feed the deficit areas of those provinces and states which normally relied upon it, there was a rush of purchasing agents to the Madras surplus districts, and the Government of Madras had to take action to prevent a disastrous scramble for supplies and a consequent rapid rise of prices. The first step was to prohibit the export of rice except under permit. But the various buying agents for Ceylon, Travancore, Bombay, and other places were competing with each other and prices rose rapidly. The Madras Government was urged to fix statutory maximum prices for rice, but at that stage rightly refused to do so. Instead, in September 1942 all rice buying was put into the hands of

a government purchasing agency. At first the government purchasing officers were told to buy up to a ceiling price, but it was soon found that rice was not coming forward as it should have; the rice was undoubtedly there, however, and so the Madras authorities requisitioned some 5,000 tons held by a group of merchants and offered it for sale at the ceiling price. As the Madras representative at the Third Food Conference said, "That settled the matter for the time being." In February 1943 purchases once more were slowing up, and requisitioning was again adopted, and was thereafter to a limited extent an integral part of the system, as a sanction against the withholding of stocks from the market.

Rice was bought with a ceiling price, normally from rice mills, though if there were signs of cultivators holding back grain, requisitioning of paddy was threatened or employed. The purchases were made by grain purchase officers, who were picked Deputy Collectors of the Madras Civil Service, each with the necessary clerical and accounts staff and a Marketing Assistant and a Recorder from the Agricultural Department to help in checking the quality and sampling of the rice. The grain purchase officers bought all rice for export from the province, for the Defence Department, for industries, and for the deficit districts within the province. Approved merchants from the deficit districts bought the grain and sold it at approved prices to the local retailers (*3*, p. 50).

Requisitioning was applied for three purposes: in surplus districts in order to export rice to deficit areas at ceiling prices; in surplus or moderately deficit districts to keep the local price at about the same level as that of imported rice; and in severely deficit districts to even out supplies. The ceiling prices were fixed, after a conference with landowners, at a fair price, considering the increase in the cost of cultivation and cost of living. A small premium over ceiling price was given for voluntary sale, and it was claimed that the Madras market for rice was neither a buyer's nor a seller's market, but one fair to both (*5*).

This Madras rice-purchase scheme was not a full government monopoly. The grower in the surplus districts had to sell to a licensed miller, and permits were needed to move rice or paddy, not only from district to district, but from taluk to taluk. If the grower or the trader withheld it from the market, he ran the risk of having his stock requisitioned at the government price. At the Fifth Food Conference in February 1945, the Government of Madras was definitely against monopoly purchase except in heavily deficit districts. Its system se-

cured for government about 20 percent of all the rice produced in the province, and over 33 percent of that grown in the eight surplus districts. During the previous two and a half years the system had obtained not only practically all the individual surpluses but a very great deal of the normal carry-over. And it had the advantage that the local internal trade was left undisturbed, and government had only to undertake the responsibility for distribution of rice in rationed towns and certain deficit pockets (*8*).

Unlike government monopoly procurement, the Madras procurement system in the surplus districts did not aim at getting from the cultivator all his produce beyond what he needed for himself and his family, but rather at getting on the market the bulk of the surplus rice and preventing the accumulation of undue stocks by growers or traders.

The system worked extremely well so long as the rice-surplus districts continued to be surplus districts. But then the 1945/46 crop failed in two of the three great rice-growing areas of the province, due to a cyclone in the Godavari Delta and a failure of the monsoon in the Tanjore Delta, and in consequence the Madras rice crop was only 4,241,000 tons (*13*, p. 9) against an average of 4,862,000 tons for the period 1939/40 to 1944/45. As a result, the Madras Government had to alter the system and introduce complete monopoly procurement of the grower's surplus and organize province-wide rationing of supplies.

Malabar.—Conditions were entirely different in the Malabar District, which was densely populated and heavily deficit in the production of rice. In normal times the district relied, as did the Indian States of Cochin and Travancore, on imports of rice from Burma, and with the stoppage of those supplies conditions became very difficult. In 1944 the Government of Madras therefore introduced a comprehensive government monopoly purchase of paddy and rice, ragi, and samai throughout the whole Malabar District, excluding British Cochin, the Laccadive Islands, and the Attapadi Ansam in the Walluvanad Taluk.

Under this scheme the whole produce of the grower was at the disposal of the government, which allowed him to retain only the portion necessary for the domestic needs of himself and his family, for seed, and for payment of any rent due in kind. According to the regulations, the farmer had to put in a return to the village accountant a week before his crop was to be harvested, giving what he thought would be the yield of grain; the village accountant then visited the

field and made a rough estimate of the likely crop, and later after harvest he made a more accurate estimate of the grain actually produced and informed the farmer of this estimate. If the grower disagreed with this, he could appeal to the Taluk Grain Purchase Officer, and from the latter to the District Grain Purchase Officer. In practice the village accountant had not the time to make more than one estimate, but a proportion of the estimates was checked by the Grain Purchase Inspectors, then by the Taluk Grain Purchase Officers, and finally by the District Supply Officer.

Much of the grain produced in Malabar was paid as rent in kind, and, after providing for the landlord's family ration, was subsequently procured from him. It is worth recording that, generally speaking, the landlords co-operated fully with the authorities; one officer stated, "I found a remarkably high standard of integrity among the landlords, particularly in South Malabar. Their grain stores were always open for inspection; normally more was found than had been estimated in the field by the accountant, indicating that they did not 'black market' the excess, but kept it intact for inspection and sale to the Government purchasers. Moreover they were always ready to store the grain without charge until it was needed for sale" (*9*).

The farmer kept food for himself and his family till the next crop should be ready on a basis of 1.16 pounds of paddy (12⅓ ounces of rice) a day per adult and half this for children between 2 and 12. In addition he retained the seed requirements for the next year's sowing at about 101.2 pounds per acre.

All the rest of the produce was held available to the grain purchase officer or anyone authorized by him to buy.

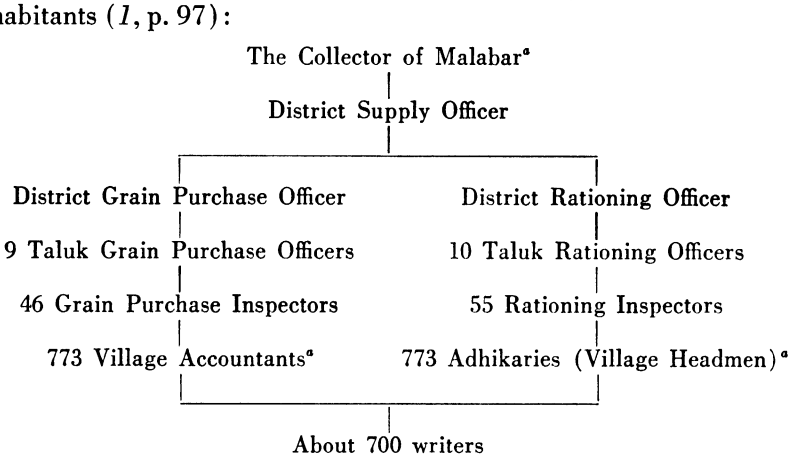
Actual procurement was by traders approved as purchasing agents by government, each operating in a separate area. In one taluk, the Malabar Wholesale Cooperative Stores, a well-established institution, was appointed government purchasing agent and worked well. But a later experiment in 1946, of replacing the trade throughout the whole district by Producer-Consumers Cooperative Societies, did not lead to efficiency.

The purchasing agents were also licensed importers of rice from the surplus rice-producing districts, which was a more profitable business than buying for government. The authorities could discourage any malpractice by a purchasing agent by reducing or canceling his monthly rice import quota, without inconveniencing the public, as that quota would be allotted to some other importer.

The village accountant informed the local purchasing agent of the

amount of grain which each landholder had been assessed, and it was the duty of the agent to purchase this at the price fixed by government (in 1944 this was Rs. 6 as. 6 per maund) and meanwhile the grower might not move his crop from storage at the threshing floor or from the village of production without a permit from the grain purchase officer. As a corollary of such intensive procurement necessitated by the great shortage of rice, the whole district was rationed. Family ration cards were issued to all heads of families, and those who legitimately held stocks of grain had their cards canceled for such part of the year as might correspond to the food they had. The average holding in Malabar did not provide food for the cultivator and his family throughout the year; and one result of rationing was that "the rural poor had more to eat in the scarce season of this year (July) than they had ever had before, and could obtain it at a reasonable price. This benefit was much appreciated" (*9*).

It may be of interest to give the staff which carried out such a complete control of food in a district of something over 4 million inhabitants (*1*, p. 97):



[a] These officers formed part of the existing revenue establishment.

This organization was simplified and improved in 1946 by replacing the District and Taluk Grain Purchase and Rationing Officers by Deputy District Supply Officers, Taluk Supply Officers, and Deputy Supply Officers who dealt both with grain purchase and with rationing.

Millets.—The original Madras procurement schemes were concerned with rice, which was the staple food of most of the population and was also in greatest demand for export to other parts of India.

But a number of districts produced and consumed millets—bajra, jowar, ragi, and korra—and, when statutory price control of millets was introduced in 1944, the Government of Madras found that millet stocks became "exceedingly shy" (*8*). Therefore in April 1944 a rough and ready levy was introduced of one maund from each acre from each holding of over 10 acres cultivated with millets, and this was applied to all districts except Madras, Malabar, and the Nilgiris. But the scheme was soon modified and by October replaced by a graded levy applied only to the districts of Bellary, Anantapur, Kurnool, Cuddapah, Salem, Madura, Chingleput, North Arcot, and Chittoor, and covering bajra, jowar, korra, ragi, samai, and varigalu or varagu. The levy ranged from 1 maund to 6 maunds per acre on irrigated land and from nothing to 2 maunds per acre on dry crop land, according to the area of the holding sown with millets.

To secure information to facilitate procurement, orders were issued that a comprehensive stock register should be maintained in every village throughout the Presidency except in the districts of Madras and Malabar. This register was kept both for paddy and for millets. It could of course be used either for a graded levy or for the acquisition of the whole of the grower's surplus. "In effect it shows:

1. Total yield.
2. Carry over from the last crop year.
3. Available stocks.
4. Cultivator's family consumption per annum.
5. Payment of rent where rent is in kind.
6. Payment for labour where wages are in kind.
7. Seed.
8. Cultivator's other needs and the total of 4 to 8.
9. Surplus in local measures. Item 3 minus item 8.
10. Surplus in maunds.
11. Levy in maunds" (*1*, p. 88).

The value of such a local detailed record is obvious. It proved its worth in 1946.

The above system for procurement of millets was, however, dropped early in 1945. In the deficit districts it was replaced by the procurement of each grower's surplus millet crop (as well as his paddy crop). In districts which were surplus or slightly deficit, purchases were made by trade purchasing agents, who came into the market whenever millet prices tended toward the floor price fixed for millets

by the Government of India, and bought millets up to a target figure laid down by the local government.

PROCUREMENT IN OTHER PROVINCES

Assam.—Assam, the province on the northeast frontier of India, was largely composed of inaccessible forest-covered mountains, inhabited by such tribes as Nagas, Mishmis, and Abors, of a culture alien to India. But it also included two most fertile valleys, the Assam and the Surma, the former the valley of the Brahmaputra River which, coming from Tibet, joins the Ganges before it flows into the Indian Ocean. In Assam the earliest experiments in cultivating tea were made; these had developed into a great industry, employing thousands of laborers from other parts of India. Until 1940 the local produce was not enough to feed the population (*8*), but through the development of food growing in the two great valleys, by 1943 Assam had become a surplus province.

In September 1942 the Government of Assam appointed a commercial firm with great experience in the rice trade, which, owing to the evacuation of Burma, had a large staff available, as the sole government agents for buying rice and paddy in the Assam Valley. The retreat of the Army and the escape of civilians from Burma into Assam, the subsequent invasion of India by the Japanese forces, which occupied two districts of the province, and the military movements to meet the emergency, had disorganized transport and the local machinery for food distribution in many areas.

At first the company bought only for the civil needs in deficit areas of the province and for the requirements of the tea estates (*3*, p. 53). But from January 1943 purchases were made for the Defence Department, for labor on military works (largely air fields for the U.S.A.A.F. operations to supply China), and to build up a reserve of paddy for price stabilization. The government agents had no monopoly of purchase, nor was there any control of prices, and the local traders continued to function within the surplus areas of the province. But all rail and steamer transport of foodgrains from surplus to deficit areas and to outside the province was confined to the government and its agents. Road communications were so limited that road transport was not controlled, and, though movement by country boat in the network of rivers and streams on the Bengal border was almost uncontrollable, it was only seasonal.

In the Surma Valley two commercial firms were similarly employed to buy for government, but here the results were not so satis-

factory, and from the beginning of 1945 these firms were replaced by an official agency buying under a tender system (*6*, p. 29).

In 1946 the single firm which had hitherto operated in the Assam Valley was also replaced by official procurement machinery.

Bengal.—Some account of the procurement efforts of the Bengal Government has been given earlier and need not be repeated here. In October 1946 it was stated by the Government of India that in Bengal purchases were made direct by government officers in certain districts, and in others through trade agents called "chief purchasing agents." All rice mills producing more than 50 maunds of rice daily were required to sell their produce to government. Rice or paddy could only move on government account by rail or river. The Provincial Government had also recently resorted to requisitionings of stocks lying with the larger holders.

It is improbable that the system here stated was working efficiently, for "to the end of June [1946] the Government had purchased in 1946 only 370,000 tons out of an anticipated marketable crop of 4,500,000 tons. Despite Government cordons round 16 districts, the remainder of the crop was getting into the open market at rates 10 to 15 rupees above Government controlled prices. The Government proposes to raid large hoards and to requisition private stocks. But it is doubtful whether under the present system the Government can gain control of sufficient stocks to hold the market price in the deficit area of Bengal in line with rice prices elsewhere" (*11*, p. 15).

In January 1947 the direct purchase system was introduced in the chief purchasing areas, but figures of the result are not available.

Bihar.—In Bihar, almost entirely a permanently settled province, the government began preparations for procurement in December 1942. But in view of the state of the rice market in eastern India at that time, when the unprecedented Bengal speculative boom was spreading to Bihar, the entry of the government as a purchaser would have caused further inflation and even wilder speculation and hoarding (*3*, p. 51). The Bihar authorities therefore attacked the problem from another angle and prohibited all movement of grain from one district to another except under permit, through a very limited number of traders, and at controlled prices. In March 1943 a Rice Control Order and, soon after, a Flour Mills Control Order were issued, under which the dispatch of stocks and their destinations were brought under control.

In April 1943 an attempt was made to form syndicates of rice

and flour mills to buy stocks for the government. But the ill-starred introduction by the Government of India of "free trade" in the Eastern Region prevented the syndicates from working.

The Bihar Government, however, by its "canalization" of the interdistrict trade in foodgrains, could direct stocks through the exporting and importing merchants to the places where they were needed and where they came under the control of the District Magistrate, and the system was particularly successful in securing supplies for the Bihar coal fields and mica-mining areas.

In February 1943, however, the Government of India had urged on the Government of Bihar definite physical control over the foodgrain resources of the province, and in March the Government of Bihar with some reluctance appointed a Trade Adviser. But he and his agents could not cover the whole field, and in April and May District Officers were ordered to buy direct from zamindars (large landholders) and the bigger farmers (*3*, p. 52).

By October 1946 Bihar's procurement arrangements were that supplies were bought by government officers through accredited trade agents, and in addition a compulsory levy on paddy had been introduced. Under the latter a producer growing 100 acres or more of rice was not allowed to dispose of more than a fourth of his total crop himself, the balance being partly left for his own use and partly at the disposal of the government. But government could not demand more than half the total produce if it were less than 1,000 maunds of paddy, or in any case more than three-fourths of the total produce. This system was applied also to wheat in the autumn of 1946 (*7*).

In 1947 a monopoly purchase system for paddy was superimposed on the levy in certain districts. It had the unusual feature that any paddy producer who sold to government more than his quota before April 1, 1947 was entitled to receive 10 yards of cloth for every 50 maunds so sold (*10*). This, while indicative of the shortage of consumers' goods during and after the war, seems more likely to have clothed the rich than the poor and naked.

Bombay.—In the rice-surplus districts of Thana and Kolaba, the Bombay Government initially bought through agents or trade associations. This soon led to friction and to disappointingly poor purchases. When the food shortage of 1943 developed, the authorities were compelled to "freeze" and requisition all stocks of rice and paddy pledged with the banks in the Thana District, and soon after to extend requisitioning to supplies lying with moneylenders, middlemen, and large growers. In other areas, as the need to increase pro-

curement grew with the emergency, local buying was mainly by the revenue and price control staff, and to a smaller extent by the trade and co-operative societies (*3*, p. 54).

By 1945 the Government of Bombay had prohibited export of rice from the rice-growing districts and was buying both from the rice millers, who contracted to supply specified quantities, and direct from the grower. Elsewhere for other grain a monopoly system was in force, the main features of which were a compulsory and graded levy of part of the grower's surplus crop, a government monopoly of purchase for whatever further grain the farmer might want to sell, a strict control over the movement of foodgrains, and a government monopoly of distribution in both urban and rural areas (*6*, p. 27). This system was still in force in 1947.

Its success was due primarily to two factors. First was the realization by the people of the province of the hard facts of the food situation of a deficit province and the mobilization of public opinion, led by prominent nonofficials, in support of a policy of fair shares for all. Second was the ryotwari land tenure, which ensured that there were in each village competent minor officials traditionally associated with the local people, who could put a detailed scheme into effect. Not all provinces had these advantages.

Central Provinces. — Procurement in the Central Provinces evolved from the control of export of rice and of the movement of grain from one district to another, which was imposed with the object of securing effective control of available supplies and of prices. The arrangement was introduced in the spring of 1942 for railway transport and by August was extended to export by road.

When, early in 1943, Bombay, Travancore, and Cochin were extremely short of food owing to bad crops and the failure of the normal supplies from Burma, the Central Provinces Government in January agreed to send some 30,000 tons of rice to Bombay, and thereafter large supplies to the two States. To do this a rice procurement system, based on the experience of movement control of grain, was set up. The Commissioner of the Chattisgarh Division, which produced 90 percent of the rice grown in the province, was appointed the government's chief buying agent, and he appointed the chief rice trader in each principal market to buy, within a ceiling price, all the rice which came to that market. All purchases of rice for export to other provinces, for the Defence Services, and soon for the deficit areas in the province, were made thus (*3*, p. 53).

The system was developed into one of complete government mo-

nopoly of purchase of rice, under which a government agency supervised the milling, grading, and pricing of the product and also arranged and managed the storage and consignment of the rice procured. The scheme applied to rice and not to paddy; within his own district the farmer was at liberty to do what he liked with his paddy, subject to the general provisions regulating the disposal of foodgrains. The government used the rice mills, which formed a bottleneck through which all rice for the larger markets must pass, as the point of control or of procurement, buying either direct from the mills or from the adjacent markets where millers and producers brought their supplies for sale. The price of paddy was not controlled, but the prices of the various grades of rice were fixed by government which had a monopoly of rice purchase; no one could buy or sell rice except in retail quantities or under a permit from the authorities.

Direct procurement from the grower of all his estimated surplus of paddy would have been very difficult, if not impossible, under the malguzari land-revenue system prevailing in the part of the province concerned, and it was the finished product, rice, and not paddy, that was required for supply to the consuming areas. The scheme of control and purchase of rice through the mills and markets proved most successful. Eventually the Provincial Government's Food Department took over the whole business of the trade for export beyond the province, as well as for consigning supplies to consuming areas within the province.

Incidentally the government could, and did, thus regulate the degree of polish given to the grain in the milling, so as to retain the maximum of nutrition value in the rice and minimize waste.

Of course this system of procurement of rice at the mills and markets might have failed if the paddy had not come forward in sufficient quantity. But power was available for the requisitioning of paddy, at the paddy equivalent of the ceiling price of rice, to be put into force if it were found that paddy was being held up by the cultivators or by speculators (*1*, p. 60).

The Central Provinces rice procurement scheme was well received by the people of the province. The consumer accepted the rice prices fixed by government as fair and reasonable, and the farmer found that these prices allowed a margin at which he could sell his paddy to the mills and merchants at a fair return. The rice millers had to compete for the supplies of paddy needed to keep their mills going, but had an assured market and price for their product. The Central Provinces in normal seasons produced a substantial surplus of rice, which was

exported in large quantities by the local traders to other parts of India. It was therefore the natural policy for the government to utilize and incorporate the trade in its procurement system, as the government of a deficit province might not be able to do.

Jowar was the food crop grown, and the chief staple grain consumed, in the cotton-growing areas of the Central Provinces. Originally the government bought such jowar as was voluntarily brought to market. But, when in 1943 Bombay and other scarcity areas wanted to draw supplies from the Central Provinces, it was found that the amounts coming forward were insignificant compared with the surplus said to be available (*1*, p. 62). In the emergency, therefore, requisitioning had to be undertaken, on a gradually increasing scale and at irregular intervals. The uncertainty of this procedure inevitably led to discontent among the growers. Therefore in 1944, and after consultation with the producers, the government laid down the basis on which a voluntary levy was made. The principle was broadly that no holder with less than 10 acres of jowar should be asked to contribute, those with 10 to 50 acres were approached for a contribution of about 15 percent of their crop, and those with 50 acres or over, one of 15 percent to 30 percent. The system proved successful, and in the event growers generally contributed considerably more than was laid down in the scale.

In 1944 the wheat crop in the Central Provinces was poor and a compulsory levy was introduced on wheat in three districts. The levy was based on the production of the cultivator's holding as estimated from its area and outturn, and on his estimated requirements of grain for consumption and seed and other agricultural needs. It was intentionally fixed at a low figure, beginning with 5 seers (10½ pounds) per acre for cultivators with small wheat acreage and rising gradually to 2 maunds (164½ pounds) for those with 50 acres or more. It was not very satisfactory and was dropped in 1945, but in the emergency of 1946 the levy was reintroduced in all districts of the Jubbulpore Division.

North West Frontier Province. — The government of the North West Frontier Province at first appointed a single commercial firm to purchase for export the surplus of barley and maize (*3*, p. 54). Later, under an order issued in July 1944, every person possessing more than 150 maunds of these grains had to submit a declaration stating the quantity in his possession, and the Deputy Commissioner was empowered to direct that any surplus over 150 maunds should be sold to a government servant or a government agent (*6*, p. 31).

In 1944 an experiment in compulsory levy was tried, but it was not entirely a success and was dropped.

Until 1945 the system of private trade under government supervision for export and for supply from surplus to deficit districts within the province through normal trade channels was continued, but in that year a Wheat Procurement Order was issued, which prohibited the sale or transfer of wheat from one person to another without government permission. Exception was made, however, of transactions of less than 20 maunds direct with the grower.

For the 1946/47 rabi crop the government imposed a compulsory levy on holdings of 50 acres or more. The assessment for the levy on unirrigated land was to be at the rate of 2 maunds an acre and at a higher rate on irrigated land (*7*).

Orissa.—In 1943, under the "free trade" imposed by the Government of India, the Orissa Government bought mainly for its own domestic consumption through government purchasing agents in each district, except where, owing to combinations of free trade merchants against government, purchases had to be made by the District Officers (*3*, p. 54).

After the "free trade" episode, however, the system was altered. From the harvest of the 1943 rice crop the Orissa Government aimed at directing the flow of all rice and paddy in the wholesale market into the hands of government (*6*, p. 28). The scheme had three essential features. First, the price of rice and paddy, which the grower was entitled to demand and to receive, was fixed by government for the whole crop year. This contrasted with the system in the Central Provinces, where the price of rice, but not of paddy, was controlled. Second, no one—merchant, cultivator, landlord, trader, or anyone else—might sell more than 10 maunds of rice in any one day, unless the seller was a government agent, or was selling to a government buyer. This limit of 10 maunds a day was intended to allow purchases and sales to go on unhindered in village markets and the like, so as to keep the normal distribution system of the province functioning. Third, no one except as an agent of government could hold a stock of more than 100 maunds (about 3½ tons) of rice and paddy at any time, even though licensed under the Foodgrains Control Order, and this quantity was reduced to 50 maunds in 1945.

Government's purchases were made through government purchasing agents—in 1944 there were 33 of these—each of whom appointed a number of subagents, limited in effect only by the number of licensees under the Foodgrains Control Order who were willing to

undertake this work. Not all were prepared to do it, for the commission allowed by the agents seems to have compared unfavorably with the profits which might be made under war conditions by using capital in other ways. No private wholesale trade in rice or paddy was allowed, and no prices were fixed for private retail sales. With the price to growers fixed by government, the cultivator could not be victimized by the trader, and government's willingness itself to sell to the public, if retail prices were excessive, prevented profiteering by retailers. This system avoided the almost impossible task of fixing innumerable differentials between producer and retail prices. Wholesalers could only dispose of their stocks in accordance with the orders of government authorities (*1*, p. 42).

The Orissa plan was not of course a complete government monopoly scheme, aiming at securing the surplus of the individual grower; the government had decided that such was impracticable in a province of which a third of the area had not been surveyed, where even in the surveyed area the records were not up to date, and where there was no village staff. Despite this, however, the government introduced in certain border areas a "levy," or rather a rough and ready system of requisitioning, to reduce the surplus stocks of rice in growers' hands, which might otherwise be smuggled over the Bengal and Madras frontiers to areas where the price of rice was higher than in Orissa.

Sind.—Sind was a province of irrigated crops dependent on the Indus River and its system of irrigation canals, and with a large surplus production of foodgrains.

For the procurement of wheat for government, which was the sole exporter from the province, a syndicate was formed of the four Karachi flour mills, which already had a purchasing organization; and this syndicate employed some 25 main brokers and under these about 150 subbrokers, who bought direct from landlords and cultivators. This purchase through a single syndicate eliminated competition in buying for export, but was not monopoly purchase (*3*, p. 51).

For grains other than wheat, various methods of buying had been tried, but for the kharif harvest of 1943/44 a syndicate of 50 merchants was formed on the lines of the wheat syndicate. This syndicate, until the end of 1944, was a body representative of the Buyers and Shippers Chamber, Karachi, and was composed of recognized dealers in rice, millets, and gram. Its procurement operations were, however, subject to considerable public criticism and complaints of corruption and dishonesty. The syndicate therefore was replaced in December 1944 by a purchasing board of 18 members—9 Muslims and 9 Hindus

—and a chairman, the managing directors being experienced grain merchants (*6*, p. 30). There was also another syndicate in the form of a co-operative society to supply the rationed city of Hyderabad, Sind.

Up to the wheat season of 1945/46, wheat was bought at going market rates. But in April 1945 statutory wheat and rice prices were fixed for the whole crop year. The Sind wheat crop in 1942/43 had been 513,000 tons and in 1943/44 it was 508,000 tons, both well above average, but that for 1944/45 of 342,000 tons was by no means so good and prices would have been expected to rise (*4*, p. 38). The year 1946 was one of scarcity throughout most of India, and in May the Government of Sind promulgated the Sind Wheat and Gram Procurement Order, under which a government purchasing officer could order a wholesale dealer not to sell wheat or gram to anyone but a government agent, and retailers in rationed areas were not allowed to sell more than 20 seers (42 pounds) in one transaction. The system of rice procurement was also changed, and under the Sind Rice Procurement Order (1946) rice mills could dispose of the rice they milled only in accordance with the orders of a government authority. All movement of grain by rail or river was controlled (*7*).

The Province of Sind grew much more food than it needed to feed itself. The government was the only exporter of foodgrains. Therefore, so long as crops were good, the authorities could buy for export at prices considerably below those ruling in other large exporting areas, where procurement and control were less efficient. When in 1945 statutory wheat and rice prices were fixed in Sind, these were still below the prices in other centers. For example, in October 1943 the price of wheat in the Punjab was Rs. 10, and in the United Provinces Rs. 14, while the Sind Government was buying at Rs. 7 (*5*). But the deficit areas were of course paying the Punjab and the United Provinces for supplies at the prices based on those in the exporting areas of these provinces, and the Government of Sind decided that there was no reason to deprive the people of Sind of what was considered a due profit on the sale of Sind grain; it therefore charged the receiving provinces at the Punjab or United Provinces rates. This "profiteering" by Sind was much criticized, both by deficit areas which argued that the urgent need of their people for food was being exploited for the benefit of a province which was enjoying plenty, and by some of the surplus provinces, which were unable or unwilling to enforce price control or procurement measures as efficient as those in Sind.

As a matter of fact, however, the total Sind surpluses were so small in relation to the totals of other exporting provinces that sale at Sind rates would have made little difference to the average prices which deficit provinces would have had to pay. Nor could the Sind Government obtain from some importing provinces an assurance that, if grain were allowed to go to them at a cheap rate, it would be sold there at equally cheap rates, and that the dealers there would not have been allowed to make large profits at the expense of the Sind farmer.

It is difficult to see how under the circumstances the Sind Government could have denied to its people the benefit of market prices. What was remarkable, however, was that the Government of Sind, though entirely dependent on the votes of the landowners, was able to resist the clamor for raising the Sind buying prices and to secure agreement that the profits realized by the purchase and sale of grain should be devoted to the improvement of the country generally, especially to the irrigation system on which its prosperity depended, rather than add to the income of the big landlords or the profits of the traders in grain.

United Provinces.—The United Provinces was the second largest wheat-producing province, providing as a rule rather over a quarter of India's total wheat crop, and of great importance to the provisioning of the Defence Forces and the deficit areas.

In 1943 the United Provinces Government's procurement agency consisted of five Regional Controllers, each in charge of an area which was largely self-sufficient in all foodgrains taken together. Each Regional Controller had a staff of Deputy Controllers, Transport Officers, etc., and bought through trade purchasing agents in the main assembling markets, within ceiling prices fixed by government. This machinery bought for the Defence Services, for export under the Basic Plan, and for internal requirements such as supplies for the railways and industrial firms.

Strict control over movement from one food region to another and to and from the principal cities prevented competition from large consuming centers, but competition between the various purchasing agents in each region was not eliminated (*3*, p. 52).

The system depended for its success on the grain coming forward in the markets, and therefore when shortages developed in the year 1946, "the new Congress Ministry took up a politically unappealing compulsory procurement scheme and made it work far beyond expectation" (*11*, p. 14).

SUMMARY

In 1946 the American Famine Mission to India reported, "This procurement of food grains from cultivators by direct measures has been more highly developed in India than in any other major country except perhaps the Soviet Union" (*11*, p. 11).

However, this position was reached only by slow stages and not without difficulties. Starting with the deficit areas having to buy or control foodgrains to feed their own people, as in Travancore and Cochin, the stoppage of the supplies of rice from Burma and the failure of crops in two major provinces in 1942/43 made it clear that the food of India would have to be controlled unless many were to go short. The Bengal famine of 1943 showed that effective control was not introduced in time, and many died in consequence.

The Government of India, on account of the constitutional difficulties, was not in a position to impose its will on the Provincial Governments.

It was generally held that the Government of India had a major responsibility for feeding the people of India and yet it did not have administrative authority to do this. Clearly the deficit Provinces and States looked to the Central Government for aid. They wanted the necessary foodstuffs. On the other hand the surplus Provinces and States viewed any Central program as "undesirable interference." Nevertheless, in October 1943, agreement was reached on a Basic Food Plan under which all provincial food surpluses were made available without reservation to the Central Government for distribution anywhere in India. The deficit areas were willing, in fact anxious to cooperate. The surplus areas were slow to join and gave less than full support. As in all surplus areas, neither producers nor consumers are disposed to accept readily low rations of food and direct procurement measures. In fact the procurement provisions of India's Basic Food Plan were put into effect quickly and effectively in most of the deficit areas, but slowly and less effectively in surplus regions. In the latter areas the Government of India found it necessary to rely upon requests, upon appeals of patriotism and the national unity of India, and various indirect pressures (*11*, pp. 12–13).

Though among the surplus areas there were honorable exceptions, which fully co-operated both in procurement and control, this summing up by the American Famine Mission can be taken as a fair appreciation made by competent observers.

It is to be remembered, however, that after the experience of the shortages of 1946, when the 1945/46 total cereals crop was only 52 million tons (the lowest for at least fifteen years) and the surplus provinces felt the pinch of shortage themselves, their attitude generally changed and improvements in food procurement and distribution were introduced.

The scale on which from 1945 onward the provinces and states were procuring foodgrains can be judged from the figures below, in thousand tons.

	1945	1946	1947 (to June 30)
Deficit areas			
Madras	770	1,370	1,080
Bengal	640	670	380
Bombay	610	400	360
United Provinces	180	360	250
Mysore	170	90	80
Travancore and Cochin	70	70	60
Bihar	60	80	130
Surplus areas			
Punjab	770	550	250
Central Provinces	440	390	250
Sind	290	390	330
Assam	210	150	100
Orissa	140	120	110
Eastern States	60	50	50

These figures are the combined totals for rice, wheat, and millets for the "procurement year," which for rice and millets means the twelve months beginning on November 1 of the previous calendar year, and for wheat the twelve months ending on April 30 of the succeeding calendar year (*12*).

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CHAPTER 13

THE BASIC PLAN

Much was said in India after 1942 about the Basic Food Plan of the Government of India and about its success or its failure. But its object and its working were often misunderstood.

The Basic Plan was in essence an agreed estimate of the marketable foodgrain surplus of the surplus areas and a plan for moving this to supply the needs of deficit areas. Its effectiveness depended on the efficiency of the procurement arrangements in surplus provinces and states and of the food distribution systems in those that were deficit.

The Plan never purported to be able to supply all the needs of deficit areas, especially in years of shortage, but it did aim at allotting available supplies to the best use.

The Sixth Price Control Conference held by the Government of India in September 1942 recommended a scheme for the centralized purchase of foodgrains, and the First Food Conference in December 1942 had agreed that estimates of foodgrains requirements and resources should be framed and a program drawn up for their best utilization. The origin of the Basic Plan was in these recommendations.

The rough calculation made at the latter conference showed a great "gap" between surpluses and deficits as estimated by the governments concerned; however, the Food Department undertook to make its suggestions for "target figures," and a formula for the fixation of target figures was sent to the Provincial Governments on February 16, 1943, with a request that they would submit their proposals as regards surpluses and deficits by March 6.

By the middle of April the Government of India had to remind the provinces that over three months had by then been spent in attempting to find the greatest common measure of agreement in respect to the Plan and the methods to be adopted in putting it into force. The Government of India's "target figures" were therefore communicated to the provinces, and in early May a monthly movement plan was forwarded showing the quantities to be dispatched by each surplus province, with sources and destinations.

The total quantity which it was planned to distribute was over 4 million tons, including 1.5 million tons of wheat, 1.1 million tons of rice, the same quantity of millets, and nearly 400,000 tons of gram (*1*, p. 47).

Unfortunately the newly formed Food Department of the Government of India found itself faced almost at once with a serious shortage of foodgrains in Bombay, Madras, and other parts of southern India, and soon thereafter with realization of the seriousness of the Bengal famine of 1943. Thus the original Basic Plan never had a chance of being properly put into effect. First, food had to be rushed to the areas of shortage, and then the "Bengal Rescue Plan" had to be tried in order to save Bengal. This failed, and the Government of India embarked on the disastrous "free trade" policy, which had to be hurriedly abandoned in July 1943.

The Foodgrains Policy Committee examined the alleged failure of the Basic Plan and in its report explained its working and the difficulties it had had to face. The conclusion reached was that there was no reason to abandon the Basic Plan, but that certain modifications should be made in its working.

The Committee pointed out that no plan for allocating India's food throughout the country could be accurate; statistics of crop outturn were most defective; no information existed of the carry-over at the end of each year; consumption could only be guessed at; and all the time the real figures were continually changing owing to the advance or the delay of the monsoon, the course of the war, the movements of prices, etc. But, if any attempt was to be made to deal with India's food shortage, some factual or statistical basis must be assumed by the Food Department for planning.

The Secretary of the Department explained how the Basic Plan was constructed (*2*, p. 99):

> We took the [production] figures of the three pre-war years. We applied to them the known factors of exports and imports in so far as the statistics were available. We so arrived at the aggregate of all foodgrains available to each Province and State in each of these three years. We took the lowest aggregate figure of these three years and accepted that as the minimum necessary. None had experienced shortage at that time. We invited the Provinces and States to accept such formula and to calculate for themselves such figures, and to set against them their production figures and so by this means determining whether they had a surplus or were in deficit. Practically all those from whom surpluses were expected did not agree, although the deficit areas mostly accepted the formula. The former preferred to follow other calculations that reflected their cases more favourably.

Obviously this formula, in which the past production figure was little more accurate than the estimate of current crops, even when not modified by "calculations which reflected their cases more favourably," could not give an accurate balance sheet of India's food. But the Committee pointed out that any negotiations as to quantities available must have some basis, and that such a formula uniformly applied would "afford an indication of the relative order of magnitude of surpluses and deficits." It suggested an amended formula (2, p. 101):

Normal consumption requirements should be taken as the average of the estimated harvests of all the foodgrains over a five year period ending 31st March 1942, plus/minus the average imports/exports of the same period. Surpluses and deficits should be calculated on the basis of normal consumption thus determined with the estimates of the forthcoming year's/half year's production of all food grains.

A proviso to this or any other formula was that the figures should be kept continuously under review.

The object of the Basic Plan was to "secure the maximum social welfare in the distribution of what is available . . . which involves mutual give and take and a willingness to incur sacrifices for the good of India as a whole" (2, p. 102). The Plan did not imply the reduction of per capita consumption throughout India to one level; such would have been impossible to enforce in rural areas. But it did aim at allotting available resources so as "to bring the most seriously deficient areas somewhat nearer to the general over all average of deficiency." Misunderstanding of the Basic Plan had been widespread and had to be removed, but it is perhaps remarkable that after four years of war the Foodgrains Policy Committee had to emphasize so strongly the need for the food problem to be regarded as an All-India matter involving mutual sacrifice.

The Government of India accepted the recommendations of the Committee and a revised Basic Plan was produced.

It is somewhat difficult to describe the working of the Basic Plan during the years 1943 to 1947. As pointed out by the Committee, to be of any use a plan had to be based on the kharif and rabi seasons, and that meant that in effect India's food position had to be reviewed twice a year, in April and in November. The kharif crop year, which covered chiefly rice, maize, and millets, ran for the twelve months beginning November 1, when the early crops began to be available. The rabi crop year, for wheat, barley, and gram, ran from May 1, when the wheat crop was coming to market. By November and May

the prospects of the two crops for the year would be known; but the main movements of the crops from the field to market would take place from January to May for kharif and from May to December for rabi each year. Thus, while for planning purposes the combined food year ran from November in one year to April in the next year but one, for the practical putting into effect in delivering the goods the intervening calendar year covered both kharif and rabi.

The Food Department had each year to work out both kharif and rabi plans and to continue to revise these as the seasons progressed. To begin with, there was the difficulty of discovering what exportable surplus might be expected in any area, or what the needs of deficit provinces might be. These expectations inevitably varied throughout the year, e.g., if winter rains were short, the grower would keep back more of his kharif crop in expectation of a poor rabi crop and the kharif plan would have to be revised accordingly; or a failure of expected supplies from overseas would mean the diversion of internal movement from one deficit province to another, which it had been intended to feed with imported grain.

These continued and inevitable alterations in, and the constant reactions between, the kharif and rabi plans are what make it difficult to give a consecutive and comprehensible account of the operation of the Basic Plan in India.

A further difficulty arises from the fact that while published statistics for the Basic Plan for India are available for the agricultural years 1942/43, 1943/44, and 1944/45 (*3*, pp. 152–63), those for the years thereafter are available only for the Indian Union, i.e., India less Pakistan (*4*, pp. 44–58). The Ministry of Food of the Government of India have, however, been kind enough to compile especially for this study the figures for undivided India for the years 1945/46 and 1946/47. These are given in Appendix Tables VIII–XI.

The figures giving the progress of the Basic Plan embodied in the various memoranda laid before the Indian Legislature do not always refer to the same periods as the annual statistics; the former relate to the position at the time of issuing the memoranda, or to the Basic Plan rabi or kharif year covering some eighteen months, whereas the latter refer to the agricultural year of twelve months from July to June. In consequence the figures in the Appendix and in the table below do not correspond with those given in the brief accounts of individual Basic Plans.

The general effect of the Basic Plan, as distinct from its day-to-day working, can be best seen from Appendix Tables VIII–XI, which

give the declared surpluses or declared deficits of various provinces and states, the allotments from these surpluses to various deficit areas, and the amounts actually dispatched from the former to the latter. Included in these figures are foodgrains imported into India, supplies to the Defence Forces, and those exported to certain places which had to be provisioned from India, including ships' stores. They give therefore a comprehensive picture in outline of the major movements of India's food. The intraprovincial or intrastate movements of foodgrains from internal surplus districts to internal deficit districts were, however, the concern of the local governments and did not come into the Basic Plan.

A brief summary of the working of the Basic Plan as far as rice, wheat, millets, and maize were concerned is shown below, in thousand tons (rice and millet only 1942/43):

	1912/43	1943/44	1944/45	1945/46	1946/47
1. Deficit declared by provinces and states to the Government of India	1,946	4,995	5,867	5,081	4,044
2. Surplus so declared	872	2,236	1,993	1,784	721
3. "Gap" between 1 and 2	1,074	2,759	3,874	3,297	3,323
4. Allotment made by the Government of India from surpluses plus imports	1,117	2,757	3,284	3,221	3,363
5. Quantities of foodgrains actually moved in accordance with allotments	1,106	2,584	3,055	2,972	3,248

The "gap" between what the deficit areas thought that they would need and what the surplus areas thought that they could spare, sometimes seemed most alarming and likely to require food imports from overseas rising in 1944/45 to nearly 4 million tons of grain. These estimates, however, afforded room for discussion and reconsideration, and the "allotments" made to deficit areas, after consideration of the crop prospects and the probable imports, show that often the offered surpluses could be raised. That provincial or state procurement would everywhere in India secure all the cultivator's surplus over his and his family's food requirements was never anticipated, nor under the varying systems of administration and the varying economic, social, and political conditions would this ever have been possible in practice, even though by 1947 in some areas an approach to this ideal was being made.

Under the early Basic Plans, kharif for 1942/43 and 1943/44

and rabi for 1943/44, some 2,600,000 tons of foodgrains were moved from surplus areas between December 1, 1942 and January 31, 1944 (*5*).

However, in the light of the continually changing conditions of harvest prospects and the time taken to secure agreement on exportable surpluses and food needs, early in 1944 the Food Department modified the procedure for making the Basic Plan. First, at the beginning of the crop year concerned a plan of distribution was drawn up on the best information then available, and allotments were made to deficit provinces from the then likely surpluses of surplus areas. Movements of grain began in accordance with this budget estimate, which was meanwhile discussed between the Center and the provinces and states on the basis of the formula proposed by the Foodgrains Policy Committee. In these discussions regard was to be had to all relevant factors such as actual crops, harvesting periods, abnormal local increases in population, or the statistics, if such existed, of past imports and exports (*5*). The preliminary kharif plan which had been issued in November 1943 was under discussion and open to modification until the final kharif plan was issued in April 1944.

In view of the inaccuracy of agricultural statistics and the difficulty of calculating the requirements of the increase of the population in some areas, the Government of India found it impossible to ask every area to accept the statistical surplus or deficit calculated according to the formula proposed by the Committee. In this connection the Foodgrains Policy Committee had recommended that any difference of opinion between the Central and a Provincial or State Government over target figures should be settled by reference to an arbitration committee. But the Fourth All-India Food Conference by a majority had dissented from this proposal and the Government of India accepted the majority view. It is difficult to see how it could have done otherwise, having its ultimate responsibility for the welfare of the country in mind.

PROGRESS OF THE BASIC PLANS

Under the new procedure the figures of surplus grain to be moved were under discussion for some six months after the initial issue of the Basic Plan for a crop year. Hence, it is difficult to assess the closeness of performance to expectation at any particular time; but some examples may be given. The rabi plan, May 1944 to April 1945, and the kharif plan, November 1944 to October 1945, had proposed the movement of 3.2 million tons. By January 1, 1945, when the

Food Department presented its memorandum to the Central Legislature, 1.4 million tons, or 44 percent, had been moved, chiefly to Bengal, Bombay, Madras, Travancore, and Cochin. The rabi plan expected 750,000 tons of wheat from overseas between April and December 1944, and 544,000 tons were received by January 1945, and the expected internal wheat surplus of about a million tons was raised by the addition of 94,000 tons offered by surplus provinces. The other main rabi crop, gram, soon began to show a greater surplus and a lesser offtake than had been expected, and, as it is a foodstuff that cannot be kept in store so long as cereals, gram was taken off the plan from November 1, 1944 and was allowed to move in private trade channels (*6*).

The kharif plan of 1944/45 started with the offer of 684,000 tons of rice and 215,000 tons of millets from the surplus areas, against declared deficits of 3,109,000 tons of rice and 1,050,000 tons of millets, a gap of over 3 million tons in kharif foodgrains. This was an alarming prospect. But it proved that the estimates of surpluses had been on the cautious side, owing to fears aroused by the late break of the monsoon, and the estimates did not include rabi jowar, which is extensively grown in the Deccan. By January 25, 1945 the surpluses had been revised upward to 744,000 tons of rice and 305,000 tons of millets. This, while it showed the difficulty of devising any accurate forecast of the yield of crops, still left the situation regarding rice and millet supplies to the deficit areas unsatisfactory; and therefore additional wheat allotments were made to them.

One favorable kharif item, however, was that in Bengal on account of the bumper rice harvest of 1943/44 and the improved methods of procurement and distribution introduced, the emergency conditions resulting from the famine of 1943 were for the time being brought under control (*6*).

The kharif and rabi plans, 1945/46, had originally proposed the movement of 3.2 million tons of foodgrains. But the initial wheat allocation made in May 1945 under the rabi plan of 1945/46 had to be revised and the plan was reissued in July 1945. The declared internal surplus, including 35,000 tons of the Central Government's stock in the depots, was 911,000 tons, and the British Government promised 760,000 tons of wheat from overseas; the total quantity thus planned to be available for distribution was 1,671,600 tons as against declared deficits of 2,024,000 tons. The declared surpluses, however, deteriorated by some 25,000 tons; in addition, the wheat procurement in the Punjab, the principal wheat-supplying province,

was extremely slow; the wheat position in the United Provinces turned out to be worse than anticipated, and an allotment much above the original declared deficit of 100,000 tons had to be made to that province.

The kharif plan of 1945/46 assumed surpluses of 840,000 tons of rice, 230,000 tons of millets, and 90,000 tons of maize, against declared deficits of 2,742,000 tons of rice and 480,000 tons of millets. The war in the Far East had ended on August 15, 1945, and hence there were hopes of resumed rice imports from overseas. Burma, in fact, promised to supply 161,000 tons, but by the end of December 1945 only half of this amount had been received.

As the season progressed, surpluses decreased and deficits rose owing to floods and drought, and the movement target for rice, maize, and millets had to be reduced from 1,120,000 tons to 990,000 tons against an original estimated deficit of over 3 million tons.

But, as the Food Department stated in its memorandum of January 1946, even this unpropitious picture was completely changed by failure of the monsoons and by cyclones. Bombay, Madras,, Mysore, the Deccan States, and the Western India States had to raise their demands to a point which the Food Department could not meet, unless largely increased supplies of wheat and rice could be obtained from abroad in the first four months of the year. The Government of India therefore approached the Combined Food Board in Washington for help.

MONTHLY FOOD BUDGETS

The rabi plan for 1946/47, from May to April, promised even worse than that of the year before, for the only surpluses offered were 40,000 tons by Sind and 30,000 tons by Bahawalpur. The situation was so grave and so uncertain that the Food Department in May had to change the system of annual Basic Plans for one of Monthly Food Budgets, on which allocations of foodgrains were made. These budgets indicated for each deficit area the stock positions at the beginning of the month, local procurement within the area, stocks to be moved into the area from surplus areas in India, allocation of imports from abroad, the total resources available for the month, and the consumption for the month. "Stocks" referred to stocks held by government and "consumption" to the offtake by persons dependent or partly dependent on government for supplies.

At the review of the situation in October 1946, it was stated that the principal deficit areas would start the month of November with

only one month's stock of foodgrains for the population dependent on government for food—that is, rationed areas and specially provided-for classes—and that they would face December with even less. Such exiguous stocks were inadequate to ensure the working of the rationing systems.

To keep these in operation, 515,000 tons of grain would have to arrive from overseas before the end of 1946, and appeals for help had been already made to the British Government and to the International Emergency Food Council. The latter body recommended import of 2.3 million tons between July 1, 1946 and July 30, 1947, and of this 1.3 million tons were shipped by December 31, 1946.

Two developments in 1946 deserve mention. Some of the surplus provinces and states gave loans of foodgrains to the Government of India to tide over critical periods on a guaranty of replacement later, and, when the seamen's strike in the United States of America in September and October 1946 and the delay in reaching agreement with the Argentine seriously affected imports, Orissa, Punjab, the Central Provinces, Indore, and Khairpur offered further surpluses amounting to some 45,000 tons (7). These actions showed an appreciation of India's unity which was not always shown hitherto and may be attributed to the unusual experience of shortage at home by some of the surplus areas and to the return of popular governments to the administration in 1946.

When the kharif plan, 1946/47, was drawn up in November 1946, the prospects for the standing crops of rice and millets were good. The Bengal and Madras rice harvest turned out normal, and 564,000 tons of rice were moved from surplus to deficit areas. But heavy and prolonged rain in November and December caused considerable damage to the crops, especially millets, particularly in Central India, the Central Provinces, and Hyderabad. The millet surplus offered for distribution was small, only 42,000 tons against a normal effective surplus of 200,000 to 250,000 tons. When it became clear that the 1947 wheat crop was also a poor one, almost all the surpluses of millet, which had been offered, were withdrawn, and only 15,000 tons were moved. The requirements of deficit areas for millets had to be met almost entirely from overseas imports.

The 1947 wheat crop was severely affected by rust, the final crop figures being 7.9 million tons against a normal 10.5 million. Following on the poor wheat crop of 1946, the wheat surpluses offered for the 1947/48 rabi plan were small and the deficits unusually large. What surpluses were offered had to be used to supply the seed re-

quirements of the areas where the wheat seed had been lost, and the food needs for wheat had therefore to be met by imports from overseas. Internal wheat surpluses, including requirements for seed, amounted to only 124,000 tons, and the foodgrains imports from foreign countries between November 1, 1946 and October 31, 1947 were 2,430,000 tons (*8*, pp. 1–3).

The rains in July and August in the Punjab and Sind were below normal, and there were disastrous floods in Chittagong in the latter month. Grave anxiety over food supplies thus faced the two new Dominions of India and Pakistan when they were inaugurated on August 15, 1947.

CONCLUSION

The Basic Food Plan, owing to the selfishness of human nature and the constitutional handicap of the Government of India in dealing with self-governing provinces and states, met with many difficulties but undoubtedly saved India. The shocks of the Bengal famine of 1943 and of the India-wide crop failures of 1946 did much to move public opinion, but it was the persistence of the Food Department of the Government of India in pressing the needs of the deficit areas on the surplus provinces and states, on the British Government, on the Combined Food Board, and on other organizations and governments, which secured food for the deficit governments to distribute to their hungry peoples. Without such an over-all allocation of food supplies as was provided by the Basic Plan, the most efficient local distribution would have been useless.

The working of the Plan brought out very strongly the need for more accurate statistics of food supplies and of food needs, as the deficit areas tended to overestimate their requirements and the surplus areas to underestimate their possible exports. But the principal difficulty lay in the variations of the season and of the crop prospects from month to month, or from week to week. The Indian food supply, like the Indian budget, was inevitably a "gamble in rain." This was clear by 1944, when the original plan was changed to a preliminary plan on which action was started and which was discussed during the next few months with the surplus provinces, until a final Basic Plan was agreed upon. The Plan worked satisfactorily until the disastrous year 1946, when the prospects of supplies both within India and from overseas became so uncertain that the Food Department had to resort to the hand-to-mouth system of monthly food budgets, neither it nor the provinces knowing from one month to another from where they

would get the people's food. It was this crisis that faced most of the elected governments when they returned to power in 1946, and it was the available machinery of the Food Department and the Basic Plan that enabled them to overcome the crisis.

CITATIONS

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CHAPTER 14

RATIONING

THE GENERAL PROBLEM

When the Foodgrains Policy Committee told the Government of India in July 1943 that rationing of foodstuffs was necessary in all the large centers of India and ought to be put in force forthwith, full rationing had only been introduced into 13 cities and areas in the whole of India. Although these included Bombay City with 2 million inhabitants and the States of Travancore and Cochin with mainly rural populations, rationing was still regarded by some as impracticable, by some as unnecessary, and by others as undesirable. But the famine in Bengal in 1943 caused a great change in public opinion. Bengal was popularly considered a surplus province in rice (*1*), yet when its crop failed and rice imports were not immediately available, the lack of arrangements for all to share alike caused directly or indirectly the death of a million and a half persons. Clearly no province or state could any longer consider itself safe.

The Government of India regarded "the introduction of individual food rationing in all large cities and towns as fundamental to a coordinated food plan. . . . Practically every Government accepted the need for food rationing of towns" (*2*).

By February 1944, 103 cities and towns were rationed in British India and the Indian States—though Calcutta was rationed only from the last day of January, and that at the peremptory orders of the Government of India (*2*). But preparations for rationing took time, and the full effect of the warning of Bengal appeared later in the year, when by November 1944, 460 towns and municipal areas were, or were about to be, fully rationed, covering approximately 42 million people (*3*); by February 1945 the number had increased to 516 with a population of 50 million (*4*).

That even by February 1945 all the provinces had fully appreciated the real food situation in India, and the urgency of rationing, may be doubted. For on the first of that month, at the Fifth All-India Food Conference, the representative of the United Provinces said, "We feel that we are dealing with a temporary emergency which we hope will be gone, say, three years hence. If that is so we are going

to get through it by improvisations. . . . If it is a matter of improvisation, I do not think it is necessary to go to total rationing for the sake of the theory of total rationing, if you see that under all other circumstances you had better hold off for a few months more or a year more."

The representative of the Punjab said, "The Punjab Government were not convinced, nor are they convinced after experience of rationing that rationing is at all necessary in urban areas of a surplus province like the Punjab. You know, sir, that the Punjab ultimately agreed to fall in line because they were told that this was necessary in the interest of all India Policy and in order to satisfy outside public opinion. Their view still remains unchanged."

The failure of the crops in the south of India at the end of 1945 and in the early part of 1946 again emphasized the urgency of rationing. By October 1946, 771 towns and rural areas with a population of over 150 million were under rationing (*5*) and by January 1947 the numbers had risen to 878 and 159.5 million (*6*).

The very great development of rationing in these years required a system in the rural areas which did not involve the detailed and elaborate machinery needed in a city like Madras or Calcutta, but something simpler which would ensure that the poor did not have to go without.

There were two main types of rationing in India, the "statutory" and the "nonstatutory." Under the former, statutory orders were issued to deal with the enumeration of the population and with the possession, acquisition, and movement of the rationed foodstuffs, and any breach of these orders was punishable by law; every ration card holder was entitled to receive specified quantities of specified rationed articles at specified prices, and without a ration card no one could obtain rationed food (except, say, at an authorized hotel or restaurant), and the import of food by a consumer into a rationed area was prohibited. The quantities procurable under a ration card were fixed from time to time by statutory order and government held itself responsible for providing these amounts.

Nonstatutory rationing, which was in force in most rural areas, was not so complicated; there was no prohibition of private imports, but ration cards were issued to nonproducers and to producers whose production was judged to be below their needs, and these entitled the possessors to purchase rations on a fixed scale from a licensed retail dealer. But there was no legal obligation on the authorities to supply this ration and in theory the government might vary or stop

the distribution; in practice, however, the provincial governments managed to honor the commitments as fully as under statutory rationing (*7*, p. ix).

A third method of government distribution was "controlled distribution," which applied in some country districts. Under it family ration cards were issued to needy consumers for priority supply by private traders in amounts varying with the supplies that might be available at the time. The numbers under controlled distribution are included in the figures for October 1946 and January 1947 given above.

By 1947 Madras, Bombay, Travancore, Cochin, and Mysore had practically their entire area, rural and urban alike, under some form of rationing. The Punjab, which had at first opposed rationing, introduced it into the cities of Rawalpindi, Amritsar, and Lahore early in 1944, and into Simla in 1945, but not until the middle of 1946 was the decision taken to ration 20 more towns. By 1947, 24 cities and towns with a population of 3 million were rationed (*3* and *6*). In 1947 Bengal had rationed 19 towns with a population of 6.4 million and also had a "controlled distribution" scheme for rural and semi-urban areas covering 19.6 million people, though only 6.5 million were actually participating in it.

In other surplus provinces, at the beginning of 1947 the number of towns and areas rationed either statutorily or nonstatutorily was Assam 14, Orissa 18, Central Provinces 30, Sind 5, Bihar 30, United Provinces 52 (*6*).

By the end of 1944 the Government of India was in a position to explain to the Legislature some of the problems encountered in applying rationing of foodgrains to the subcontinent. So much opposition had been expressed at times to the idea of rationing that the Government of India wisely did not attempt to insist on uniformity, and indeed conditions varied so enormously in different parts that uniformity would have been impossible either then or later.

The Foodgrains Policy Committee had recommended that, where rationing was introduced, all the major foodgrains in use in that area should be included in the rationing. Thus in 1944 in Bombay, Sind, Hyderabad (Deccan), and the Central Provinces, wheat, rice, and millets were rationed; in the Punjab only wheat and ata (flour); in Madras (outside Madras City) only rice; and in Mysore, rice, wheat, and ragi.

As rice in particular was in short supply, often only a small proportion of the ration could be taken in rice. For instance, in Bombay

and in Cochin only rather over a third of the ration could be so drawn. In rice-eating areas, therefore, when rationing was introduced, efforts had to be made by the authorities to induce the people to buy and to learn how to prepare substitute foodgrains, by no means an easy task.

The Foodgrains Policy Committee had suggested a minimum basic standard of one pound of foodgrains per adult per day. But there was a tendency in the surplus provinces to give a larger amount —"the Northern and North West Provinces claim that their people are physically so constructed as to require a relatively greater proportion of foodgrains than people in the southern parts" (*3*).

The Central Food Advisory Council did not accept this, and at its meeting in July 1944 recommended as follows:

> The Council is of the view that the present burden of an overall deficiency of foodgrains should be shared evenly by all parts of the country and deprecates the existing disparity of ration scales. It, therefore, recommends that full rationing should be introduced in every province in all urban areas and that the basic ration per head should be uniformly 1 lb. per adult per day. It presses the Government of India to bring about uniformity in both these matters throughout India without delay.

The Government of India referred the recommendations to the Provincial Governments with the comment that "so long as there is any part of the country where the ration is lower than three and a half seers [7 pounds] a week, there appears to be little justification for having a bigger ration anywhere else" (*3*). The scale of rations remained a matter of dispute until the crisis of 1946 caused the Government of India to order that no cereal ration should exceed 12 ounces a day.

While the normal adult ration was 1 pound a day, general provision was made, on the one hand, for children from 2 to 12 years to receive half the normal adult ration and, on the other, for specified classes of heavy manual workers to get an additional 50 percent. Considerable ingenuity and special pleading were at times exercised to prove that heavy manual labor was involved in some normal occupations, such as that of night watchman.

It may perhaps be noted here, as a matter of historical interest, that inequality of rations had been accepted in ancient India, for *Kautilya's Arthasastra*, a Sanskrit treatise on government attributed to the third century B.C., states (*8*, p. 112):

> one prastha of rice, pure and unsplit, one fourth prastha of supa, (curry) and clarified butter or oil equal to one-fourth part of (Supa) will suffice to form one meal of an Arya. One sixth prastha of supa for a man: and half the

above quantities of oil will form one meal for low castes (avara). The same rations less by one fourth the above quantities will form one meal for a woman; and half the above rations for children. . . .

A "prastha" is said to have been about one-hundredth of a bushel.

Normally the prices of rationed foodstuffs were based on the cost of procurement, but in some cases the common man's food was sold below cost and the loss recouped by raising the selling rate for the better qualities usually consumed by the middle and upper classes. This sometimes had an anti-inflationary effect, as in Bombay, where the well-paid mill hand began to spend part of his increased wages in buying first-quality Konkan rice instead of the low-grade Burma rice that he ate before the war.

Retail prices under rationing had to be kept as low as possible, and in some provinces subsidies had to be given until control should bring the market prices down to more reasonable levels. This policy was endorsed by the Government of India in 1946 when much of the supplies were perforce of high-priced imported grain.

A possibly less justified measure was the sale of grain at cheap subsidized rates to certain classes of "essential civil personnel," such as to Central Government servants drawing less than Rs. 300 a month, to railway employees by the Railway Department through their own distributing stores, and to the coal-mine labor under what was commonly known as the "Young Plan." The Government of India justified this distinction of treatment between the privileged and the general public on the ground that any increase in dearness allowance given in cash would add to inflation, and that essential civil personnel must be subsidized lest those categories of workers, so necessary to the war effort, should be weakened. Obviously such favored treatment was open to abuse. But it may have been justified in India toward the close of hostilities in diverting skilled labor from less important occupations to those directly connected with the prosecution of the war.

Description of the difficulties in the introduction and administration of rationing everywhere in India would take more space than is available. Details are therefore confined to an account of rationing in Bombay City, given later in this chapter.

A feature of rationing in India to which attention was sometimes drawn was that the actual consumption of cereals was usually shown as well below the ration prescribed. This was sometimes quoted as indicating that a large part of the population were too poor to buy the food provided. But the variation in the offtake of the ration was

chiefly statistical and not real. Where other foods were procurable outside the ration, as was inevitable in areas closely allied with farming communities, the cheapness or palatability of these would decrease the consumption of the government ration. Where the efficiency of the ration machinery and the control of card holders leaving the area was less good than elsewhere, there were inevitably larger numbers of undrawn rations and these would reduce the average content of the individual offtake. It may probably be taken as normal that in any system of rationing of staple foodstuffs the actual offtake will not exceed 85 to 90 percent. An offtake of 100 percent, as was recorded for Baluchistan in 1945, must indicate something wrong either in the administration or in the compilation of the figures, while an offtake of 27.8 percent given for the Deccan States in that year probably showed the weakness of some state administrations or the facility of getting supplies from the surrounding British Indian Districts. There were of course times when some local authorities had to distribute less than the sanctioned ration owing to failure of supplies to come to hand, as happened in parts of south India in 1946. But the general level of ration offtake being below the nominal quantum does not indicate that the people generally could not afford to buy the food provided; when the offtake of cereals was shown as either unduly high or unduly low it was rather a sign that the administration was less efficient. The offtake of such commodities as sugar of course took a different course, as resale for profit came into play.

Rationing did not work equally well in every part of India, and conditions varied greatly. Some provinces had less efficient administrations than others, for instance most of the permanently settled areas, as explained earlier, had no local village staff. The available manpower appropriate for taking on as officials was scarcer in some provinces than in others. In areas with a tradition of military service more men went to the Defence Forces and their ancillary departments. In some underdeveloped parts the supply of educated candidates was small; in the Punjab and the United Provinces the proximity of the headquarters of the Civil and of the Defence Forces Administrations was a drain on available clerical supply; few places had, like Bombay, a large number of educated women competent to staff government offices. Some administrations were slower than others in increasing pay scales, if not to correspond with, at least to follow at a distance the wartime rise in the cost of living. Some governments seem not to have realized that, in its importance to the well-being of the public,

rationing administration demanded an adequate staff of competent officials trained in their new duties, and that in view of their opportunities, the officials must above all be honest. Where this need was not realized, the authorities failed to create posts in food administration of a pay or a rank that officers of seniority or of capacity would accept, or to provide for the enforcement of rationing a staff sufficient either in numbers or pay.

To give an example, in one town the number of ration cards increased by over 30 percent between March and October 1946 without any noticeable immigration, an improbable rate of natural increase. Inquiry showed that not enough officers had been appointed for administering a ration scheme and that no proper orders had been issued to control supplies, the import of rationed articles, the business of traders, and the enumeration and registration of ration card holders. Such staff as there was did not suffice to enforce even such regulations as had been issued, and it was entirely inadequate to promulgate and enforce the orders elsewhere found necessary to administer rationing successfully. The result inevitably was a remarkable black market in scarce foodstuffs and in consumers' ration cards. But such inefficiency was not the rule throughout India, and, whatever its faults, the rationing system did work and pulled India through the crop failures of 1946.

RATIONING IN BOMBAY CITY

Bombay City was the center of India's textile manufacture, with mills employing some 120,000 laborers, a great engineering industry, and, even more important, the vital port for the arrival of overseas goods and munitions of war once the Japanese occupation of Burma had restricted sea traffic through the Bay of Bengal. The business of Bombay had to be kept running for the sake of the war effort and for the clothing of India.

Bombay Province, with its two great manufacturing cities of Bombay and Ahmedabad and the large important towns of Poona and Sholapur, in normal times had to rely on food from outside the province to feed its population. In prewar days the average imports of foodgrains were 710,000 tons from other parts of India and 359,000 from overseas which, after deducting exports, gave a net average import of 901,000 tons. With the war this rose in 1939–41 to an average of 972,000 tons a year. Of the 707,000 tons of rice, wheat, and millets imported on the average before the war, 291,000 tons went to feed Bombay City and Bombay Suburban District (*9*).

To keep a large industrial city working, especially one with a well-organized trade union movement among the textile workers, food had to be available for the people to eat and at prices which they could pay, and until November 1941 the Bombay Government devoted its attention to ensuring that stocks were available and prices not unduly raised by profiteering. The Government of India almost immediately after the outbreak of war had promulgated an ordinance empowering the Provincial Governments to control the prices of a number of the necessaries of life, and "The Bombay Regulation and Control of Prices Order" was passed in September 1939. It was not particularly effective in practice; and when prices rose suddenly in the first week of December, the Government of Bombay appointed a Controller of Prices for Bombay City and a Price Consultative Committee of representatives of trade and industry, and these authorities opened a number of government "fair price" grain shops and issued a weekly list of fair wholesale and retail prices for the information of the public.

During the first half of 1940 there were modifications in the Government of India's price control policy, but these were not successful, and by the middle of the year price control had practically ceased to exist in Bombay City. By August 1940 the price of one variety of Burma rice known as "Bassein Small Mills" had risen to 67 percent over the prewar level; yet this price was in parity with prices in Burma, for, owing to the enormous purchases of Burma rice by Japan, China, Malaya, and other Far Eastern countries, prices in Rangoon had risen very high, and the Government of Burma had placed no control on the export of rice.

During 1941 still more difficulties arose. It was only on the urgency of the Government of Bombay's representations to the Government of India that shipping was provided for the replenishment of Burma rice stocks in Bombay, and these replenishments had to be obtained at a high price owing to Japanese competition on the Rangoon market. The Bombay merchants importing Burma rice to Bombay, a well-organized body, agreed to a voluntary fixing of Bombay prices on the usual parity with Rangoon, an example of commercial moderation which might have been beneficially followed by others. An increase in prices of vegetables and livestock was caused by damage to the growing crops by pests and floods, by large purchases of supplies by Army authorities and suppliers at centers of production, and by difficulties of transport to the city. Much of the vegetables of the smaller producers usually came into the city by the local morning bus, and petrol rationing greatly reduced the number of lorries and

motor buses running to Bombay. There were also prolonged stoppages of railway booking of foodstuffs owing to the pressure of war and other supplies, though this was overcome to a large extent by the co-operation of the railway authorities, who, when informed what commodities needed replenishment to feed the city, did their best to get them there.

Toward the end of 1941 the situation of Bombay's food supply deteriorated seriously. Between May and December the index number of wheat prices based on 100 for August 1939 rose from 140 to 212 and of rice from 152 to 172. The Government of India was having its own troubles with the supply of wheat from the Punjab and the United Provinces, and in December fixed a statutory price for wheat in the main markets. The Government of Bombay had to concentrate on maintaining the flow of foodgrains to the city at whatever price it must pay. It was better to have dear food than no food at all.

Supply crisis, 1942.—With the entry of Japan into the war on December 8, 1941 the real crisis began. Bombay City labor was largely drawn from the Konkan, the narrow strip of land lying southeast and south of Bombay between the Arabian Sea and the Western Ghats which form the western edge of the Deccan plateau. The cereal crop of the Konkan is, except for a few hill millets, rice of an excellent quality. It paid the Konkan growers to export much of the crop to other parts of India and themselves to eat cheap rice imported from Burma. The Konkan rice production and sale were not, however, nearly enough to support the industrious and numerous inhabitants, and many of the men for generations past have emigrated to earn their living, many as soldiers in the Maratha regiments of the Indian Army, many as policemen in the Bombay City Police and elsewhere, and more as laborers in the mills and other industries of Bombay. Thus they added to the proportion of Bombay City's people whose normal diet was rice. Other labor came from the Deccan and other millet-eating areas, and the numerous Pathan and Punjabi craftsmen and artisans, who did much in Bombay's engineering and heavy industries, were accustomed to eat wheat. Bombay, therefore, if its trade and industry were to be kept in operation, needed adequate supplies of the staple foods of rice, wheat, and millets.

Japan's entry into the war "brought the end of the era of 'fair prices' and of endless deliberations on the theory of price control" (*9*), and the Provincial Governments were given all powers under Rule 81 of the Defence of India Rules. They could now control movements, fix prices, and take measures to secure foodstuffs without

consultation with the Government of India. The Government of Bombay had to turn its attention from usually unsuccessful attempts to control prices to the securing of supplies and to the prevention of scarcity and of profiteering. A Secretary to Government was appointed Director of Civil Supplies, the Controller of Prices was made executive head of the government grain shops and other activities in Bombay City, and powers for their own districts were delegated to the District Collectors outside Bombay City. The grant of these powers to the Provincial Governments much simplified the task of the Government of Bombay in dealing with the internal food problem, while the exercise of similar powers by other provinces added to Bombay's difficulties. The stoppage of Burma rice meant a scramble for supplies from the rice-growing areas of the country and the imposition of bans on the movement of grain by those provinces and states which needed to conserve their supplies for their own people. This greatly increased the difficulty of maintaining supplies by private trade, and the eagerness of those who had supplies to hoard them or to delay putting them on the market.

The Bombay Government soon saw that movement must be controlled if the supplies in Bombay City and those parts of the province whence supplies might be drawn were not to be exported to areas where the people had more money and were anxious to profiteer, or to hoard, or to invest in a staple commodity as a hedge against currency depreciation or an unfavorable outcome of the war. In March 1942 abnormal exports of rice and wheat from Bombay City to Kathiawar and Northern Gujarat appeared. The export of rice, wheat, and wheat flour from the province was banned, and this had soon to be followed by a ban on the movement of these commodities from Bombay City and Bombay Suburban District. Exporters then extended their activities to other foodgrains, and export bans had to be largely extended throughout the province. Other provinces were taking similar action and the City of Bombay was a serious sufferer. Its stock of the principal cereals declined from 62,748 tons in February 1942 to 42,542 tons by May; stocks of rice dropped from 46,216 to 24,467 tons. By April the stocks of wheat were down to 3,527 tons and in June millets were down to 955 tons. It was clear that private trade could not keep up the food supply of the city and that the government would have to take action.

The Government of Bombay therefore approached the Government of Madras for supplies of rice, and that government under its rice purchase scheme allotted Bombay a quota of 6,000 tons from

July to September and later extended this to October. From the Government of Sind a rice quota of 4,000 tons was secured. For millets H.E.H. the Nizam's Government allotted 30,000 tons of jowar from Hyderabad, and later raised the amount to 40,000 tons. Wheat from without the province could only be secured in accordance with allotments by the Wheat Controller of the Government of India, and the permits so secured were distributed by the Government of Bombay among wheat merchants and millers on the average of past imports. But of this wheat it was soon found that an appreciable portion was going into the black market, and therefore the import of wheat under the Wheat Controller's permits was thereafter allowed only to a single government agent, the largest of the Bombay flour mills.

These purchases were made by government, which issued them to the minor wholesalers and to the retailers. In fact before the end of 1942 the Government of Bombay was the biggest, and almost the sole, importer of wheat, rice, and millets, a position into which it had been forced by the pressure of circumstances. In Bombay City by November 1942 the government held 11,021 tons of rice out of a total stock in the city of 15,540; 6,723 tons of wheat out of 10,764, and 3,343 tons of jowar out of 3,674. Taking all cereals together, government held some 21,000 tons out of 34,000 tons in the city, a great step toward the physical control of Bombay's food supply.

It had long been seen that the internal movement of foodgrains would have to be controlled if hoarding was to be prevented and supplies were not to disappear into the black market. Hence, in January 1942 reports of stocks held by merchants and traders were called for, the first of a gradually lengthening list of essential commodities of which it was necessary to know the stocks and the offtake from time to time.

When soon it was apparent that attempts were being made to "corner" and to speculate in foodstuffs, declared wholesale stocks were "frozen," which meant that sales from these to customers could only be made in accordance with the issue of government permits. Where imports were freely coming forward there was of course no need to freeze stocks, but where imports were short it was inevitable. Thus stocks of rice and paddy had to be frozen in June 1942, wheat later in the year, and bajra early in 1943.

Government participation in distribution started with the setting up of government grain shops soon after the war began, and by the end of 1941 there were 13 operating in Bombay City. Thereafter with the rise in prices and the growing scarcity of supplies, the demand for

such shops grew rapidly, and by June 1942 they had increased to 50. It was by now getting clear to the authorities in charge of food that government would have to take over distribution on an increasing scale in Bombay City and that the only logical outcome must be rationing. This is not to say that it was apparent to the public at this time. Some months were to pass and much persuasion was needed before the growing difficulties of getting their day's grain made rationing not merely acquiesced in but welcomed by the public of Bombay. By October 1942 there were 81 government grain shops and grain stores (a larger type of shop). Thereafter it was possible to reduce the number in some degree as arrangements were made for sale through large employers and other controlled agencies. As the food difficulties of the city increased, the pressure of public opinion had required the opening of more grain shops. The long queues always to be seen outside these shops were a sign of their popularity, or rather of their necessity, among the poorer classes of the people. Purchasers often had to stand all day in the hot-weather sun or the monsoon downpours to get the family's food at a reasonable price, or, when supplies were short, to get it at all. Sometimes indeed they did not get it at all, for the queues were too long for the later arrivals to reach the shop before it closed, the day's allotment having been exhausted. Sometimes the buyer's place in the queue had been "jumped" by some "Goonda," buying for a black-marketeer, pushing his way into the queue ahead of orderly customers and housewives. A new profession was growing up, children and youths standing in the queues at grain shops to buy for grocers grain which they in turn would later sell "under the counter" at exorbitant rates to favored customers. On the other hand, great help was given in organizing the queues and the purchases at government grain shops, especially in helping women shoppers, by a number of volunteer lady workers under the guidance of Lady Cowasjee Jehangir.

Toward the end of 1942 when supply difficulties were daily increasing, the Bombay Civil Supplies Administration was reorganized. Although, from the beginning, nonofficial association with the food administration had been a feature of the scheme, it was decided that it must now be reinforced. A Food Advisory Council of 38 members was constituted for Bombay City, comprising representatives of important trade associations, the general public and labor, and some officials. This body, which took the place of the Price Consultative Committee, met once a fortnight or once a month as needed, though its Standing Committee was available to advise the Supply Commis-

sioner on day-to-day problems. "It was a convention that the advice [of the Food Council] would generally be accepted and that if it were not, adequate reasons would be given. The fullest details about the stock position, the working of past plans, proposals for the future were placed before them" (*10*). Without the advice and help of the Council and the Standing Committee, the difficulties and problems of the city's food supply and distribution, especially the introduction of rationing, could not have been solved.

Increasing difficulties, 1942/43.—On the supply side the last few months of 1942 saw a rapid deterioration. In the province the kharif harvest had been poor in many places and the rabi crop failed entirely in several districts; in some the seed was not even sown owing to lack of rain. Bijapur and parts of two other districts had to be declared famine areas, and "scarcity" was noted elsewhere. The Bombay Government was thus faced with the necessity of feeding not only Bombay City, which was a key position of the war effort, but also a large area in the Deccan and the Karnatak. Supplies from outside were becoming more and more difficult to obtain and more and more irregular in arrival. On occasion food had to be sent to the famine districts from the city's exiguous stocks. January 1943 started with a chronic shortage of rice and an imminent wheat famine in the city; the population had greatly increased during the war and there were cereal stocks in the city to feed the people only for 32 days. Nearly all the inhabitants of Bombay had no wheat for three months, until 32,000 tons arrived from Australia. Under such conditions the government had to buy what supplies it could and where it could, and it was not surprising that some were of a quality that caused justified grumbling among the consumers. The bad quality of grain supplied by the government seems to have been a common complaint whenever the government had to take over supply. The reasons probably were various: the pressing need for grain, the impossibility of adequate inspection before dispatch, fraud and carelessness among suppliers, comparison with the grain supplied formerly by one's own grocer who lost his customer if he gave poor quality, etc. In Bombay extensive arrangements had to be made to clean all grain before issue to grain shops. The fact may represent—as one wishes—either the superiority of private enterprise or the imperfectibility of human nature.

Under the original Basic Plan, Bombay Province was due to receive 540,000 tons of foodgrains. But when the Plan had to be revised, only 130,000 tons were allotted out of a balance due under the

Plan of over 300,000 tons. This made extremely difficult the task of feeding Bombay City, and even more that of feeding two million people in the famine districts.

The Government of Bombay had for some time been convinced that the only effective solution of the problem of Bombay City must lie in rationing. As early as June 1942 an officer was put on special duty to work out a plan for this. But the introduction of rationing was delayed by two causes, one the Congress campaign of mass anti-government action, which for some months kept the Provincial Government and its officers fully occupied in the maintenance of order and caused considerable transport difficulties, and the other the need to prepare Bombay opinion for what was considered a "revolutionary" measure. The public, when rationing was first suggested, did not welcome the idea; some people opposed it outright; others—and among these were some of the leaders of responsible opinion—were afraid that if rationing was started and then failed, the failure would produce disastrous reactions, and therefore they wanted an assurance from the Government of India that supplies would be provided sufficient to feed the city and the famine areas until the next harvest. Grain is sold retail in Bombay by volume and not by weight, and the proposed quantum of the ration of a "paylee" a week, the nearest equivalent of 1 pound a day, for adults was criticized as quite inadequate. The Grain Merchants Association—naturally, perhaps—thought the proposal "absolutely inadvisable because it could not be made effective." The Indian Merchants Chamber also opposed rationing as impracticable "because of the economic circumstances of the people, their habits and methods of life . . . The economic and dietary structure of the country had been fixed for hundreds of years and it is very difficult to change the structure in a short time."

On the other hand, organized labor demanded the rationing of all essential commodities. However, the growing scarcity of foodgrains, the ever longer queues at the government grain shops, the strike of grain merchants, and the apprehension by "upper income groups" that hungry men might perhaps take the law—and their neighbors' food hoards—into their own hands, caused a change of popular opinion. This was shown by the recommendations of the Food Advisory Council concerning rationing. On November 14, 1942 the Council approved "that Government should immediately undertake the arrangements necessary so that a rationing scheme for foodstuffs based on that in force in Great Britain could be introduced, if and when needed, but that the Government should not introduce any

rationing scheme until the Council has had a further opportunity of considering it" (*11*, p. 6). When the Council met again on December 21, 1942 it was predisposed toward the idea but not inclined to minimize the difficulties, considering that large-scale rationing had nowhere been tried in India, that Bombay would have to make the first experiment, that the task would be very complicated, and above all that no guaranty could be obtained that adequate supplies would be forthcoming to provide even a subsistence ration till the next harvest. However, the situation got worse and worse and on March 3, 1943 the Food Advisory Council approved the introduction of rationing into Bombay City.

To explain the scheme the government undertook propaganda in the press, by lectures and meetings, by broadcasting and by the cinema. Shortly before rationing was actually introduced, a film showing the procedure for getting a ration card and for drawing one's ration was, with the full co-operation of the local cinema managements, shown in the cinemas in Bombay and was very effective in explaining matters to the public in general. The Bombay artisan or laborer, even if he could not read, was often a keen cinema "fan," especially after the wartime rise in wages had put spare cash in his pocket.

Though the Government of India was not able to give any assurance of a supply of foodgrains enough to ensure the continuance of rationing, the Bombay Government decided that it must go ahead with the scheme.

The first formal step was to promulgate an "Essential Articles Restricted Acquisition Order," which prohibited anyone from acquiring more than a specified quantity of foodgrains, and during March and April 1943 the preliminary inquiries and enumeration were carried out. During this time the whole population of a cosmopolitan city of over a million and a half people speaking half a dozen languages was enumerated, every house was numbered by the Corporation staff, every family was visited, a ration card was written out for the head of each family, public holidays were declared so that on certain dates those concerned could stay at home and have their ration cards delivered to them, a census was taken of all retail food shops, and the large staff needed for running rationing recruited and trained. Much detailed work was needed; for instance, on a chosen night all homeless persons and beggars were searched for throughout the whole city, their particulars were recorded, and they were told where they would get their ration cards. Tests had to be made of how long it took to

write up a ration card so that the correct number of clerks might be employed, and of how many rations could be issued in an hour from an ordinary grocer's shop, so that the number of shops needed could be calculated and the number of card holders appropriate to each shop decided. The staff had to be instructed in their duties and the ration shopkeepers in the method of registering customers, of keeping the ration accounts, and of recording the rations issued.

Supply was to be made through 184 government grain shops, 560 approved retailers, 103 co-operative stores, and 281 shops run by mills and other large establishments for their employees. Every ration card holder had to register at the shop of his choice, and without sanction of the local food authority he could not change his retailer.

Many of the wheat-eating people of Bombay bought their wheat as grain, got it ground into flour at one of the small grinding mills existing throughout the city, and made it at home into chupatis, the flat unleavened bread generally eaten in India. Some, however, mainly Moslems and Europeans, were accustomed to eat bakers' bread, so arrangements had to be made to issue to them coupons for bread calculated to equal the quantity produced by the amount of the grain ration. Incidentally, to begin with, there was difficulty in that some of the bread sold obviously contained other matter than pure flour, but inspection and other measures put this right.

Rationing begins.—Eventually rationing of foodgrains was introduced in Bombay City on May 2, 1943. Despite the gloomy prophecies that it could not work, it was a success from the start. The queues at the grain shops vanished, the uneducated found no difficulty in understanding and applying the procedure, the grocers did not find the keeping of the accounts as burdensome as they had anticipated, and the staff worked with zeal. There were of course difficulties and failures, but these were minor. And government soon found it could count on the full support of the public.

Several factors helped in this. Every effort had been made to give the public all possible help and information both through the press and through food offices in all wards of the city as information centers, to answer inquiries and investigate complaints. Nonofficial opinion from the first was associated with the scheme. At the top was the Food Advisory Council of 40 members, and its Standing Committee met two or three times a week; a Consumers Advisory Committee representing salary and wage earners of various classes and income groups was formed and met weekly under the Controller of Prices; in every ward there was a Ward Rationing Committee to see that the

fixed prices of rationed goods were observed, that the food was not adulterated, and that the shops treated the customers properly, and to help in the verification of ration cards in case of doubt.

In addition, there were gradually added a Godown Advisory Committee, a Godown Inspection Committee, and a Quality, Weighment and Measuring Committee, all comprising members of the various trade associations dealing with the commodities concerned, and a Nutrition Committee of doctors and experts. The Food Advisory Council was assisted by a number of "panels" representing the expert knowledge of various trades and businesses.

The basic ration amount was fixed at approximately 6½ pounds of rationed grain each week for those over 12 years of age and half this for children over 2 and up to 12. "Heavy manual labourers" doing hard work got an extra amount equal to half the basic ration.

The rationed foodstuffs at the outset were rice, wheat, jowar, bajra, and their flours. The price of rationed articles was normally the economic rate worked out on the cost to government of that foodgrain, but at times, having regard to the supply position and the need to keep down the price of the food of the poor, the price of the cheaper sort of rice or millets was lowered and the loss set off by an increase on the better qualities. Taken as a whole, rationed food was not subsidized.

Sugar was in short supply but considerable misgiving was felt as to whether a commodity of which the consumption varied so widely could be rationed. However, on the advice of the Food Advisory Council, from June 6, 1943 sugar was rationed at 10 ounces per week per adult and raised to 12 ounces in July, and no difficulty was found in practice. From March 1, 1944 kerosene was rationed for lighting purposes, and for other domestic purposes from September 1, 1944. Most of the cooking in Bombay was done over kerosene stoves or charcoal fires, and the rationing of kerosene and special arrangements to ensure an adequate supply of charcoal and firewood at controlled prices were found inevitable. In addition, at intervals coconut oil needed for cooking, vegetables, potatoes, and gur were controlled in movement and price and distributed partly through government agency.

Supply was the key to the rationing system. Any failure to keep up the full ration would in the early days have wrecked the scheme. The supply was always difficult. From the beginning it was clear that the rice supply was not enough to allow the rice eater to take the whole of his ration in rice, and the proportion he could so draw had from

time to time to be cut down. The same applied to wheat, and there was one difficult period when the wheat ration had to be supplemented by barley from Persia. No bakers' bread was allowed to be made from wheat flour alone, but all had to be from a flour of mixed wheat and barley which produced a very unappetizing comestible. Fortunately this "barwheat" period did not last very long and ended in April 1944, but it produced very justified complaints from consumers; it was, however, the only method possible at the moment to keep up the quantum of the ration.

For the first six months of rationing the system was based on the family as a unit and a ration card was issued to the head of each family to cover his family members and servants for the next six months. Experience showed, however, that some family cards included fictitious names and that deaths and departures from the city were not being notified. Therefore, shortly before the expiry of the first six-months cards, a house-to-house—or rather, in much of the city a room-to-room—inquiry was made and in November 1943 individual ration cards to the number of 1,800,000 were issued to all the inhabitants. The inquiry resulted in an initial saving of some 450,000 rations (*12*). It was held, however, that, although the family ration card had thus allowed excess consumption, it had been the right method with which to start the scheme; it saved time, and the inquiries were less inquisitorial, and caused less anxiety among a population uneducated and suspicious of all government action affecting themselves.

It was soon clear that the 250,000 people of Bombay Suburban District, the dormitory and industrial area just across the creek that separates Bombay City island from the larger island of Salsette, were in as great difficulty as the residents of the city proper, and that the villagers in that district were largely dependent on the shops in the towns. Therefore, rationing was extended to the municipal areas of the Bombay Suburban District on August 4, 1943 and to the other areas of the district from February 6, 1944, covering some 240 square miles and including nearly 100 villages in the jungles far from all means of communication and transport (*12*).

On the advice of the Food Advisory Council, measures were taken to limit the consumption of various foods in short supply, and to show the public that rationing meant fair shares for all, not merely the provision of a modicum for the less fortunate citizens. The tradition of many Indian occasions of social and religious importance, such as marriages, involved the obligations of hospitality on a large scale.

At such occasions "more food is cooked than is served, more is served than is eaten, and more is eaten than is needed" (*11*, p. 11). Therefore, on January 30, 1943 an order was passed prohibiting the distribution of eatables of any kind to 50 or more persons at any social or religious gathering without the permission of the Supply Commissioner, and this permission was extremely rarely granted. Though some few people resented the limitation of their well-meant hospitality, or of the exhibition of their social importance among the less well to do, the order was welcomed by the majority; they could now plead "government orders" and avoid the ruinous entertainment of the large numbers of relations, friends, acquaintances, and strangers which custom imposed on various occasions, and a useful social reform among both Indians and Europeans was thus a by-product of food control—at least during the war.

The order had also the effect of preventing the ostentatious display of the rich feasting in sight of the poor and helped the people to realize that all were in the same food boat.

Owing to the shortage of wheat and the need to conserve it for making the city's daily bread, on December 26, 1943 the use of wheat flour and other wheat products was prohibited in making cakes, pastries, sweets, and the like for sale, and, shortly after, similar restriction was placed on the use of rice flour. This did not mean the entire stoppage of the trade in cakes and the like; substitutes such as gram flour were employed, but admittedly their palatability was not so very high!

People arriving in 1942 and early in 1943 in Bombay from austerity-fed Britain commented unfavorably on the generous menus available in Bombay's restaurants and clubs. It was felt that, though the quantity of food to be saved might not be great, the psychological effect of a change would be valuable—as indeed proved to be the case. After consultation with the Hotels Panel of the Food Advisory Council, meals both under European and Indian menus in all restaurants, clubs, and eating houses were restricted to three courses only. As mentioned elsewhere, the demand from the Army for chickens and eggs caused shortages. To check this consumption in some degree, no dishes containing poultry might be served in any eating establishment on Mondays and Fridays.

For years past Bombay's milk supply had been expensive, inadequate, and mostly of poor quality and adulterated. In the hope of diverting the available supply from less essential uses, in August 1943 the use of milk in making ice cream and "kulfimalai," whether for

private consumption or for sale, was stopped. The use of milk in preparing any articles for sale, except, for example, tea, coffee, curds, and buttermilk, was prohibited in June 1944.

Much of the milk supply for Bombay was used in the innumerable small eating houses and teashops throughout the city. In order to conserve milk for children and others whose need was greater, orders were issued that fresh milk should not be used for tea or coffee in any restaurant, teashop, etc., in Bombay City, but that in its place milk reconstituted from imported dried milk must be utilized. This order at first met with difficulty, for preparation of the milk was troublesome and was made more so by the fact that much of the available supply was roller dried milk, which needed special care in mixing, and additionally some of it was not in the best condition. But the Food Department officers gave instructions and held demonstrations in its preparation, and the difficulties were overcome and a very considerable saving in fresh milk was effected.

Some of the "Gowlis," the milkmen of Bombay, felt that these restrictions on the use of fresh milk were inimical to their trade and one morning a few brought their milk to the Secretariat, the chief government office, and as a protest poured it out on the doorstep. The resulting public indignation at this futile waste at a time when children were going short of milk was that thereafter the Bombay Government had public support for whatever further measures were necessary in trying to provide Bombay with more and better milk.

An incident which did much to convince the public that rationing in Bombay really aimed at fair shares for all and that the rich and influential could not escape the discipline of food control was the prosecution by the Bombay Food Department of the Royal Western India Turf Club for a technical offence in failing to make some returns of grain stocks. The conviction of the Club was eventually reversed in the Bombay High Court, but the moral effect was great of prosecuting an almost sacrosanct institution, on the committee of which were some of Bombay's leading merchant princes and which provided the chief amusement for both rich and poor in Bombay City.

By May 1944 the rationed supply of foodgrains was held in about 100 godowns, where it was cleaned and packed into standard-sized bags. About 100,000 bags of grain were being issued weekly to some 708 retail shops, 120 co-operative stores, 301 mill and factory shops, and 239 government grain shops.

This incursion of government into wholesale and retail trade, which by May 1945 served some 1,400 wholesale and 2,700,000 retail

customers, needed a large staff, and here Bombay City was fortunate. The "purdah" system of seclusion of women has never existed to any appreciable extent in Bombay City, the Bombay Deccan, and the Konkan; the education of their daughters has been a tradition of the upper and middle classes of society; and this had greatly extended in later years in Bombay City with its advanced ideas and cosmopolitan population. In consequence, although the earlier demands of the Defence Forces and of expanding departments of the Government of India had drawn off most of the available young men, the Bombay Food Department was able to organize an efficient staff, starting with 1,500 but amounting by May 1945 to 3,500, largely by the engagement of educated women and girls. They proved most efficient and it is not too much to say that without the help of Bombay's womenfolk rationing could not have succeeded, for they provided half the staff which ran it. This opportunity for employment had also a social effect, for inevitably the middle and professional classes on fixed salaries and pensions were badly hit by the wartime rise in the cost of living, and service in the food administration converted a daughter from a liability into a financial asset.

Inevitably the food supply and distribution of Bombay City's 2 million people meant a vast number of orders and regulations and, more difficult, the enforcement of the orders.

Hoarding, profiteering, failure to give cash memos, non-declaration of stocks, unpermitted transport of foodgrains, use of wheat, sugar or milk in certain food preparations and a host of rationing offences added enormously to the work of the Police. A special police division was created to deal with these offences and an army of Rationing inspectors also assist the Police. Three Presidency Magistrates' courts are dealing exclusively with cases arising from these emergency restrictions and prohibitions (*13*).

However, the public and the food administration of Bombay City were able to regard rationing as a success, to which on May 3, 1944 one of Bombay's principal newspapers paid tribute (*14*):

Despite the gloomy forecasts of a year ago, there is little doubt that the public of Bombay has been pleasantly surprised by the excellent results which this scheme has shown not only in making supplies available without the necessity of waiting in queues, but in preventing serious fluctuations in prices. Many people were frankly sceptical a year ago about the feasibility of rationing in India.

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CHAPTER 15

FOODGRAINS PRICE CONTROL AFTER 1943

After the middle of 1943 the continuous and rapid increase of the price level, which had been in progress since the beginning of 1942, was stayed. Despite currency expansion, prices did not show any marked or permanent upward rise during the three following years (*1*, p. xi).

The Foodgrains Policy Committee, however, had recommended the statutory control of the price of all the major foodgrains in all provinces, partly with a view to restoring the normal price structure throughout India, which had become badly distorted by the excessive rise in prices in parts of India consequent on the Bengal famine and the "free trade" experiment. This was particularly marked in the case of rice, and may be illustrated by the harvest prices for 1938/39 and for 1943/44 (*2*, p. 139):

	1938/39 *Rs. as.*	1943/44 *Rs. as.*
Assam	3 15	20 9
Bengal	3 8	15 0
Bihar	3 8	12 10
Bombay	5 0	21 6
Central Provinces	3 4	12 0
Madras	3 15	8 11
Orissa	2 9	9 11
Sind	4 0	9 7
United Provinces	4 3	18 13

Further, with the ever-increasing need for government procurement of foodgrains for the Basic Plan, which was to enable the surplus provinces to feed the deficit provinces, control of foodgrains prices was of great importance to get supplies at reasonable prices and to feed the people within their means.

The Government of India's attempt to control the price of wheat in the great markets of northern India had been abandoned in January 1943, having failed owing to lack of the ancillary measures such as control of transport, declaration of stocks, and sanction against holding grain, which were recognized and recommended by the Foodgrains Policy Committee as essential to effective price control.

WHEAT, MILLETS, PULSES, AND RICE

The Government of India accepted the Foodgrains Policy Committee's recommendation, and in December 1943, after consultation with the main wheat-producing provinces, decided that statutory control of wholesale wheat prices should be reintroduced for the rabi crop which would be reaped in the spring.

In January 1944 the Government of India held a conference to consider what steps could be taken to implement the control policy for the principal kharif grains which were then on the market after the 1943 kharif harvest, and decided that maximum prices in primary wholesale markets throughout British India should be fixed for bajra and jowar. The Provincial Governments in consequence notified the maximum prices of Rs. 7 as. 8 for bajra and Rs. 7 for jowar. For rice, though it is a kharif grain, the differences of price were found to be too great for a co-ordinating effort then to be made (*3*).

In January 1944 the Government of India set up a Price Advisory Committee under the Economic Adviser to the Government of India, comprising representatives of the government departments concerned, of the various chambers of commerce, of Punjab and Bengal producers, and of the trade. The Committee held its first meeting on March 15, 1944 and recommended that statutory maximum prices should be fixed for wheat throughout all India and that, as a uniform All-India price was not possible, differentials should be allowed between province and province and between markets and markets, etc. The maximum price for the Punjab should be between Rs. 9 as. 8 and Rs. 10, with prices as. 12 higher in the United Provinces. Prices for barley and gram should be seven-tenths and eight-tenths of those fixed for wheat. The Government of India accepted these recommendations and asked Provincial Governments to fix statutory wholesale prices for fair average quality wheat as follows:

	Rs.	*as.*
Punjab and North West Frontier Province.....	9	8
United Provinces	10	4
Central Provinces	10	8
Sind.....(not exceeding)	9	8

Barley and gram prices were fixed as suggested and small differentials were permitted between various markets in a province, subject to the approval of the Government of India (*1*, p. 6).

These were prices for the rabi crop of 1944/45, that is, for the crop to be reaped in the spring of 1944, and they were maintained

for the years 1945/46 and 1946/47 although, as will be seen, there were difficulties toward the end of the period.

The above were maximum prices, and to protect the cultivator against possible "bearish" pressure, the Government of India a month later stated that they would buy all wheat of fair average quality that might be offered them in the main assembling markets of the Punjab and Sind at Rs. 7 as. 8, or two rupees below the maximum price. Further, in May 1944 the government announced that, in order to encourage bringing under food crops land normally sown to short-staple cotton, for which by then there was neither a market nor storage space remaining, it would buy all jowar and bajra of the 1944/45 crop in the main assembling markets at Rs. 5 as. 8 and Rs. 6 throughout British India. This offer was shortly extended to the markets in Indian States. Bombay, however, was excluded from this scheme, for the Government of Bombay had enacted legislation, the "Bombay Growth of Foodcrops Act," for the compulsory growing of food crops in a specified proportion of every holding and had promised to pay for the 1944/45 millet crop not less than the statutory maximum prices in force at the time of sowing, Rs. 7 for jowar and Rs. 7 as. 8 for bajra. "Despite criticism the [Bombay] scheme worked successfully and proved a very steadying influence when acute shortage reappeared in 1946" (*4*, p. 349).

The Price Advisory Committee at its first meeting in March 1944 had suggested the All-India control of pulse prices, but the Provincial Governments considered this impracticable in view of the numerous varieties of pulses and the large number of producing areas involved. The Committee discussed the matter again at its second meeting in August 1944 and agreed that All-India prices, though desirable, were impracticable. It suggested, however, that such provinces as had not controlled pulses at reasonable levels should do so, and that provinces where pulse prices were then high, such as Bengal, Assam, and Orissa, should gradually try to bring them down by fixing ceiling prices. The Government of India in April 1945 asked the provinces to do this, but the response was unsatisfactory. Only the United Provinces, the Central Provinces, and some Indian States fixed such ceilings.

After the Rabi Plan Conference in April 1946, the Government of India again approached the Provincial Governments and suggested statutory maxima for pulses and in July indicated what such maxima might be. Some governments accepted these prices and notified them, while others took no action (*1*, p. 7).

This long-drawn-out controversy about the control of a necessary article of diet illustrated both the difficulty of the Central Government in inducing quasi-independent Provincial Governments to accept advice and the difficulty of those governments in accepting advice which, however desirable, they might not be able to put into effect, either because of the multiplicity of the crops to be dealt with, or because of lack of administrative staff, or on account of the pressure of public opinion.

The fixing of an All-India price for rice was far more difficult than for wheat or millets. The varieties of rice grown in India were almost innumerable, each with its specialized clientele of consumers, and the conditions under which rice was grown and the cost of cultivation varied enormously. It was therefore essential to leave the fixing of the maximum prices to the Provincial Governments. In November 1944, however, the Government of India approved a price being fixed for coarse rice in the Punjab, the United Provinces, and the North West Frontier Province of Rs. 13 as. 8 to eliminate some of the difference in price.

In the Eastern Region, under the advice of the Government of India, a series of reductions in statutory prices was effected. In Bihar the price of rice was thus brought down from Rs. 17 in September 1943 to Rs. 9 in January 1945; in Assam the price of *aus* and *boro* rice was brought down from Rs. 21 in October 1943 to Rs. 9 in 1946; in Bengal the statutory prices, which had ranged between Rs. 20 and Rs. 30 in November 1943, were reduced to between Rs. 12 and Rs. 13 by March 1946 (*5*, pp. 73–74).

The question was raised whether, as in the case of wheat and millets, it was necessary to fix a "floor" price to prevent loss to the grower. But it was decided that in view of the numerous varieties of rice it would be practically impossible to fix a satisfactory level at which government would buy, and in any case the demand for rice was so great that the grower was assured of a ready market at any time. However, the Government of India agreed to step in and support the rice market if ever need should arise—a very safe offer!

For the other kharif crops of bajra and jowar, the maximum statutory prices of Rs. 7 as. 8 and Rs. 7 were continued for the crop year 1944/45, but for the year 1945/46, that is, for the crop which was harvested late in 1945 and early in 1946, the prices were reduced to Rs. 7 as. 4 and Rs. 6 as. 12. This was recommended by the Price Advisory Committee at its meeting on October 12, 1945 and the full extent of the failure of the kharif sowings cannot then have been ap-

parent. As regards rabi, by March 1946 crop prospects were clearly ominous and no reduction was suggested.

DEMAND FOR HIGHER PRICES

When later in 1946 the full extent of the crop failure was seen, there was a demand that the statutory prices for the 1946/47 harvest should be raised. But the Interim Government of India adhered to the price policy of the previous government. In the Central Legislative Assembly the Food Member on November 4, 1946 admitted that in some places grain was being sold in the markets at two or two and a half times the government control rate. "It may sometimes be the greed of the various men through whose hands the grain has passed. It may be—probably it is in some cases—corruption of those who are entrusted with the control of these prices," or it might be "an additional profit which is to be charged as the result of smuggling."

He went on to say, however, that he had to consider two classes of persons, the producer who was entitled to a reasonable profit for his labor and the consumer who must not be made to pay more than he could bear. He himself had to look to the interest of both sides and "sometimes I feel that I am in the position of a man with two wives, both of whom he loves equally, but does not know whom to neglect or ignore." He said that, taking August 1939 as 100, the price-index figures for September 1946 were:

Rice	322	Iron	107
Wheat	373	Hides and skins	200
Sugar	169	Kerosene	151
Cotton	192	Cotton manufactures	261
Jute	227	Cement	182
Linseed	357	Galvanized cast iron sheets	229

The Food Member concluded from these figures that the prices of agricultural products, especially foodstuffs, had risen much higher than those of cloth, kerosene, and other manufactured articles used by the farmer, and that there seemed to be no case for raising the price of foodstuffs in the country. Some of the Provincial Governments, under pressure of their agricultural interests, were urging upon the Food Department a policy of increasing agricultural produce prices, and these demands the Food Department must resist, unenviable though the task might be. The Government of India therefore had decided not to increase the prices of foodgrains (*6*).

It is possible that this decision overlooked to some degree the

effect on future procurement of the failure of the authorities to control the extensive black market in foodgrains which was admitted to exist. The farmer, used to getting higher prices in a year of shortage, naturally would dispose of his crop otherwise than to government, if he could do so at a higher price—and he could usually get a much higher price—and with little risk of trouble to follow. It was arguable that the control prices ought to have been raised above the 1946 figure for the 1946/47 harvest. Against this view was the fact that there was no free market for grain, either for that exported from other countries into India or throughout the greater part of India itself. The adjustment of the price by demand and supply was inoperative owing to government controls. Within India there is no reason to think that the raising of the government purchase prices would have led to easier procurement, but rather the reverse, for experience in the Punjab and elsewhere had shown that the black market would always outbid government. This experience was not confined to India; for example, during the war, in order to keep the towns of the Near East from starvation, a Wheat Commission was established in Syria and was given the monopoly of purchasing all the wheat grown there. "The price which the [Syrian] Government fixed as compensation for the requisitioned grains, as well as the prices fixed for purchase from the Wheat Commission, were extremely generous. The Government's generosity was not, however, an unmixed blessing. Among other things it had the logical, unavoidable, and highly undesirable effect of sending the Black Market prices sky-high" (*7*).

The real question in India was not whether the black market prices were higher, but whether higher procurement prices would cause more grain to be grown in the country, and there is no reason to believe that this would have happened.

Realizing the danger ahead, the Government of India in February 1947 appointed a Commodity Prices Board, on the ground that "it is essential to maintain a reasonable relationship between the prices of cash crops and the prices of foodgrains, on the one hand, and between agricultural prices and industrial prices, on the other, if producers and consumers alike are not to be put under a constant sense of grievance and agrarian and industrial unrest to be prevented" (*1*, p. ix).

The Finance Member of the Government of India stated in the Legislative Assembly that "the real reason for the appointment of this Board is because we found that there is no co-relation between the prices of various commodities of various kinds and the Government felt that it was necessary to have a scientific method of stabiliza-

tion of prices" (*8*). The appointment of the Board showed an appreciation of the fact that controls imposed on food alone would not solve the problem. The Board, before its members resigned in September 1947, presented a number of reports to the government, and, if the suggestions in these had been adopted, it seems probable that some future difficulties might have been avoided.

PRICE-CONTROL DIFFICULTIES

By 1945 the Government of India and most of the Provincial Governments had established systems of statutory price control over the chief foodgrains. These were of great value. The governments had their difficulties of course. For instance, in June 1945 the Government of Sind found that grain dealers were buying large quantities of wheat at prices in excess of the official procurement rate and were storing it, in anticipation that, in order to get its quota for export to deficit provinces, the government would be compelled to requisition the wheat from them and to pay them the statutory maximum price as compensation. As the government's buying rate was Rs. 8 as. 10 and the statutory maximum was Rs. 9 as. 8, the transaction would have yielded an attractive profit to the dealer, with the added piquancy of outwitting the authorities without illegality. With the sanction of the Government of India, the Government of Sind reduced the statutory maximum to Rs. 8 as. 10, its buying price, so that in the event the wheat was requisitioned at that price.

The working of all price-control systems, however, depended on the efficiency of their administration, and especially toward the end of the period this was too often in defect. The imposition of bans on movement of grain between provinces and states resulted in cases where the price on one side was more than on the other, and, unless there was an extraordinarily efficient control over transport, the farmer would get his grain across to the higher side for sale, and a black market would result. The Commodity Prices Board reported that "some Provincial Governments have in recent months increased the rates of payments for transport of grain or have in other manner effectively increased the price paid to the producer in their areas over the price paid formerly. This changes the normal differential fixed in relation to prices in neighbouring administrations, which find that discontent is created in their areas."

Unfortunately some of the Provincial and State Governments were even more lax in enforcing the statutory maximum prices. For instance, in 1947 it was quite clear from the price returns supplied by

trade agencies and from the official publications of the United Provinces Department of Economics and Statistics that the wholesale price of wheat in the great assembling market of Hapur was significantly above the statutory maximum price fixed by the Government of the United Provinces itself. Though representatives of that government alleged that these published prices were only in respect of negligible black market transactions, the Commodity Prices Board definitely concluded that these higher figures did actually represent the effective prices in the Hapur market. The failure of the United Provinces Government to enforce its legal maximum prices was creating difficulty for neighboring administrations, particularly for the Punjab, where farmers were justly complaining of missing the unlawful profits permitted in the adjoining province. The Board emphasized "the need for Provincial Governments making every effort to see that the statutory maxima declared by them are enforced and observed for all transactions within the province" (*1*, p. 23).

It may be pointed out, however, that this was written in March 1947, when the disturbing political and communal factors were affecting the administration's efficiency.

It will be noticed that no mention is made of the theoretical basis on which foodgrain prices should be fixed. In 1945 the Famine Inquiry Commission in its report tentatively sought a basis for the fixation of foodgrain prices in the transition period from a war to a peace economy, but events did not fulfill the Commission's estimates of future price movements. In March 1947 a Sub-Committee on Agricultural Prices published its report recommending that fair prices should be fixed on the basis of parity between agricultural prices and costs, but much of the data assumed was open to challenge (*1*, p. 10), and its views need not be discussed. The fact of course was that there were no statistics which could be relied on to provide a reasoned basis on which to calculate the statutory prices which ought to be fixed for foodgrains, and that the rapidly changing economic conditions of the war and of the immediate postwar period would have rendered fruitless any such calculation. The Food Department had to do the best it could on informed common sense.

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CHAPTER 16

DEVELOPMENT OF THE FOOD DEPARTMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

The Government of India Food Department was established in December 1942, and, from August 1943, it became the separate portfolio of a Food Member of the Governor General's Council. The general structure of the Department remained the same, though considerably expanded, until 1947, but in the interval it undertook a number of activities beyond those originally contemplated. An account of some of these may be given so as to indicate the complexities of India's food problem.

The Government of India, in order to associate public and expert opinion as closely as possible with the working of the Food Department, in 1944 replaced the former Central Food Advisory Council by a more widely representative body, to advise and assist the Department of Food and the Department of Education, Health and Lands, which still had charge of agriculture. The first meeting of this new Food Council was held in July 1944, when some forty non-official members attended, and a subcommittee was formed to look into the question of procurement and to advise on the best methods of ascertaining and securing the surpluses of the growers and of linking up production with procurement.

In January 1945 a new Directorate was formed in the Department to deal with various problems of nutrition which were becoming of importance, such as the feeding of children, nutritional and balanced diets, provision for heavy manual workers of cooked food in industrial canteens, milk priority schemes, and food and nutrition publicity, by publications, lectures, posters, radio talks, and films. During 1944 the Food Department began the issue of two periodical brochures, *Nutrition* (monthly) and *Canteens in Industry* (quarterly), in order to stimulate public interest in dietetics (*1*). The former of these was possibly the more successful, as the middle classes were becoming "food conscious" with the increasing shortages in many directions, and much of the information given in *Nutrition* was reproduced in the local press. Industry, however, for various reasons was slow to take up the workers' canteens; probably the workers'

conservatism, the custom of boarding houses including a midday meal in the monthly charge, the trouble involved to the management in organizing a canteen, the difficulty of supplies, old-fashioned prejudices regarding cooking and eating, were some of the reasons. In the event the canteen system, except where established before the war, made little progress. Mention might be made, however, of the successful canteens of Messrs. Tata Iron and Steel Co., Jamshedpur, of the Ahmedabad Manufacturing and Calico Printing Co. Ltd., and of the Indian Tea Market Expansion Board (*2*).

The Food Department soon found the need of a headquarters laboratory of its own, where food and grain samples could be examined, storage tests and experiments could be carried out, etc., and accordingly in 1944 such a laboratory was set up under a Chief Technical Adviser (*3*).

Technical advice on the highest level was also necessary, not only for the various industries producing, or designed to produce, processed foodstuffs for the Defence Forces, but for all aspects of India's food problem. The Food Department therefore formed in 1945 a technical panel of a group of scientists, with the Director of Scientific and Industrial Research to the Government of India as chairman, to advise on the scientific, nutritional, hygienic, and agricultural problems involved. The following individual committees were soon after established:

1. Food Processing Committee
2. Edible Oil and Fats Committee
3. Vitamin Technology and Food Fortification Committee
4. Food Standards Committee
5. Entomological Committee
6. Alcoholic Beverage Committee
7. Microbiological Committee

During 1946 the Technical Panel met twice and on its recommendations the following schemes of research were sanctioned (*4*):

1. Erection of a pilot plant for the preparation of soya bean milk, on which a good deal of research had been done at the Imperial Research Institute at Bangalore
2. Construction of a plant for the heat treatment of grains
3. Improvement in the quality of foreign liquors produced in India
4. Studies in the use of oilseed cakes as human food

The somewhat contradictory-sounding third item perhaps needs explanation. Under the Indian excise system locally produced potable spirits were of two classes: "country liquor," manufactured often by traditional methods out of a variety of bases for the taste of those who by religion or by custom were habituated to the use of spirits; and "foreign liquor," which was spirits manufactured for many years past in India as a substitute for imported spirits for those accustomed to, or having a liking for, Western liquor but who could not afford the high cost of the imported brands. With the wartime shortage of imported spirits, the demand for Indian-made "foreign liquor" greatly increased, and improvements and standardization were needed if the latter was safely to take the place of the former. "Foreign liquor" in India was produced from a basis of sugar or molasses, and, except for rum, normally consisted of the same spirit flavored with varying essences and sold under the descriptions of "gin," "brandy," "whisky," "curaçao," "crème de menthe," etc. Properly prepared, though perhaps not acceptable to the cultivated palate, these liquors were no more noxious than imported liquors. Improperly prepared, however, they might be unwholesome, and regulation of their manufacture was desirable.

Considerable research was being done in the Headquarters Laboratory of the Food Department, some of which was connected with the schemes mentioned above. It included (*4*):

1. Determination of the moisture limits of dried fruits
2. Storage tests of dehydrated meat, fish, onions, and potatoes
3. Conversion of groundnut, mustard, and sesame cakes for human food
4. Standardization of vanaspati
5. Different culinary uses of dehydrated potatoes
6. Uses of groundnut flour for making chupatis, biscuits, etc.
7. Fortification of atta with calcium carbonate
8. Suitability of soya bean products as substitutes for milk
9. Analysis of American surplus foods in respect of their storage life

A number of other schemes of research were undertaken on behalf of the Food Department at scientific institutions all over India. In September 1945, in addition to the nutrition research in progress at the Nutrition Research Laboratories in Coonoor, twelve other schemes under various experts were in hand covering such subjects as the method of treating sick starving destitutes in Calcutta, inquiry

into poor rice diets and food preparations in common use in southern India, and other more abstruse problems such as the factors affecting normal calcium metabolism in certain areas in the Punjab, or the role of nutritional factors in hepatic cirrhosis.

The Food Department, in view of the expansion of India's food industry, undertook the planning and development of some forty industries, and set up five panels to advise on various schemes and to find out what control, encouragement, and help each might need from the government or otherwise. An Information Bureau was established to provide information about the availability and cost of the equipment needed. "Two of the five panels met in December 1946 and formulated plans for the biscuit, roller flour milling, and confectionary industries. The plans have related the obligation of Government to help the industries with controlled materials and technical assistance, with the obligation of the industries to maintain desirable price and quality standards" (*5*). The results of these plans, whether or not carried through, are, however, outside the period of this study.

The final report of the Famine Inquiry Commission was published toward the end of 1945, and in the Commission's own words the bulk of it was concerned "with the tremendous item, the possibility of improving the diet of the people and the quality and yield of foodcrops, which, as is at once apparent, is for practical purposes co-extensive with the whole future of the development of the country" (*6*, p. vii). To follow up the recommendations of the Commission, the Food Department in November 1945 created a "Special Commission Branch," and the policy of the Government of India was expressed in a Joint Statement of Policy for Food and Agriculture, published in January 1946.

The duty of the Special Commission Branch of the Food Department was to examine the Five-Year Development Plans, which all provinces had submitted to the Government of India as part of the general development of the country planned for after the war, and to extract the plans relating to agriculture and cognate subjects such as minor irrigation, nutrition, and antimalarial measures, and to consider these with the provinces and states concerned, especially in relation to their collective contribution to the general objective. The method of approach was as far as possible by personal discussion with the provincial and other authorities, which saved time by avoiding official correspondence and, while not trespassing on the sensibilities of the provinces and their *amour-propre*, would enable the Food Department to emphasize the needs of India as a whole, the duty of the

provinces and states toward these needs, and the imperative necessity of combined effort if India was not to continue to go short of food (*5*).

STORAGE

The Famine Inquiry Commission stated that storage was one of the most difficult problems with which the Food Administration in India was faced (*6*, p. 35). Even in normal times a considerable portion of the food crops was lost by deterioration and pests, and the Commission put the normal loss during storage as at least 5 percent of India's total crop (*6*, p. 163). This was inevitable under the storage methods traditionally used in India, where the bulk of the grain produced was stored at one stage or another by hundreds of thousands of producers and traders throughout the country, either in bulk in pits, in baskets smeared with cowdung, in pottery jars or bins, or bagged and piled in ramshackle godowns. In 1945 it was estimated that annually a million tons of foodgrains were damaged by rodents, another million by insects, and another by moisture (*7*). The Food Department had therefore to take action to increase the available pest- and moisture-proof storage throughout the country.

The Foodgrains Policy Committee had recommended that the Central Government should hold some 500,000 tons of imported grain as a reserve, but suitable storage was not available even for the lesser quantity that was actually secured. In November 1944 the Food Department set up a Storage Directorate, and took up schemes for additional storage accommodation at certain ports and elsewhere designed to hold 140,000 tons, for the extension of the existing storage at the port of Karachi to 200,000 tons, and to provide further and improved storage for 175,000 tons at strategic points in the surplus provinces, whence grain could quickly be put on rail. The cost of this last scheme was to be shared between the Government of India and the provinces concerned.

A survey by the Storage Directorate showed that, if the policy of bringing first into consumption the imported grain, and of meanwhile storing the indigenous crop, was to be put into force, more accommodation would be needed, especially in the Punjab, Sind, the Central Provinces, and Orissa. The Government of India provided storage for 60,000 tons of imported grain at Bombay, Coimbatore, and Vizagapatam, and for long-term storage of 30,000 tons of local produce at five places in Sind; and, on a fifty-fifty cost basis, for 30,000 tons in the Punjab, a further 25,000 tons in Sind, 24,000 tons in the Central Provinces, and 15,000 tons in Orissa. Also, as extra

storage was badly needed in some of the eastern states where communications were bad, the Government of India gave a subsidy of three-eighths of the cost of four godowns in three states, holding some 5,000 tons.

The schemes above were for new construction, but of course storage, where available, had been leased from semi-official bodies and private owners. For instance, in 1943 the Government of India had hired from the Karachi Port Trust and others the godowns needed to store imported grain as well as such of the surplus of the Punjab and Sind as had to be moved to the southern parts of India by sea. In Calcutta a central depot was formed in February 1945, and accommodation for 70,000 tons was hired from two agents. In the United Provinces, part of the central reserve was held in "khattis" owned by the Provincial Government at Hapur, Meerut, Muzaffarnagar, etc.

The Provincial Governments also took steps to improve and increase storage. The Food Department helped them by the provision of controlled materials, such as cement and steel, and marked progress was made in Bombay, the Central Provinces, and Bihar, while the Punjab undertook the construction of bulk storage bins to hold some 70,000 tons at some 40 important local market centers (*1*).

By 1946 the Central, State, and Provincial Governments throughout India either owned or leased storage for over three and a quarter million tons of grain, and had accommodation for another three-quarter million under construction (*8*, p. 182).

The Storage Directorate was concerned not only with the space needed for storage but also with the loss caused by inefficient storage. This was more than ever important with the realization of the food difficulties which were inevitable in the future of India. When great quantities of grains were being handled by official agencies, largely unfamiliar with the merchandising of grain, such losses were likely to be much higher than normal, and with the extension of official procurement systems and centralized government storage, the problem of damaged grain forced itself on the notice both of the authorities and of their critics. Where rationing was in force, the latter included every member of the public when, or if, the rationed grain was dirty, spoiled, weeviled, or otherwise below standard.

Therefore, in 1944 and 1945 the Storage Directorate held classes in Delhi to demonstrate to officials correct and hygienic methods of storing grain. A manual of practical advice, *The Principles of Cereal Storage*, was issued to the public at a nominal price; radio talks were

given, and a film entitled *Save the Nation's Food* was prepared. Experimental work on the most efficacious insecticides and methods of fumigation for grain stored under Indian conditions was carried out.

STAFF ORGANIZATION

The Food Department of the Government of India continued to develop. At the beginning of 1946 the New Delhi Headquarters were organized under four Divisions. The first, under the Secretary to the Department, dealt with general policy, planning, finance, research, and control over provincial food administration. The second, under the Director General of Food, was concerned with purchase of foodgrains, their movement, storage, inspection, and with the organization of statistics and rationing. The third, under a Joint Secretary with a Chief Director of Purchase, handled purchases other than foodgrains, such as meat, ghee, and dairy products; dealt with lend-lease, the ghee-heating centers, etc., and controlled the Technical Advice Branch. The Fourth Division, under a Joint Secretary, covered the work of the Sugar and Vegetable Oil Products Controller.

The headquarters of the Food Department combined the framing of policy and plans with the actual execution of policy in many fields. The extent of its activities can be judged to some degree from the list of the department's officers given in Appendix XVIII.

Outside headquarters were the Regional Food Controllers and their staffs for the six "Regions" into which the country was divided, primarily for the supervision of movement of foodgrains under the Government of India's Basic Plan and for advice and assistance to provincial and state governments in food matters. These were the Northwestern Region comprising the Punjab and the North West Frontier Province; the United Provinces Region; the Eastern Region of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and Assam; the Madras Region; the Bombay Region; and the Sind and Baluchistan Region. The various Indian States were included in the regions appropriate to their geographical or economic relations.

Many of the smaller Indian States fell into local groups with similar conditions, and to co-ordinate their food administration "Group Liaison Officers (Food)" were appointed for the Central India States, the Punjab States, the Bundelkand States, the Baroda Agency, Rajputana, Kathiawar, the Deccan States, and the Eastern States.

It is not necessary, or possible, to detail the organization by which food was administered in the various provinces and states throughout

India. There were variations but broadly the system was to have an officer such as Controller of Civil Supplies, who sometimes combined this duty with those of a Secretary to Government, in that case uniting policy and executive functions. The bulk of the practical control of food administration was added to the normal duties of the Revenue staff, the Commissioners of Divisions and the Collectors or Deputy Commissioners of Districts, the Subdivisional Officers, the Assistant and Deputy Collectors, the Tehsildars and Mamlatdars, the Circle Officers and Circle Inspectors, village accountants and village headmen. In addition there were of course many officials temporarily recruited for special duties and to assist the already heavily worked permanent staff. How many thousands all these numbered by 1946/47 it is not now possible to say.

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CHAPTER 17

DEFENCE FORCES SUPPLIES

The Foodgrains Policy Committee had devoted a chapter of its report to the purchase of foodgrains for the Army. The reason for this was the inordinate number of rumors and the frequently voiced popular suspicions about the purchase of grain for the Defence Forces —that the Army was buying supplies far in excess of its real needs, so that the civil population was going short; that it was paying needlessly high prices; that it was paying prices so low as to be unfair to the grower; that it had vast reserves of foodgrains lying unused which ought to be released for civilian consumption or used to bring down market prices; that much of the Army's stocks were wasted by inefficient handling and insufficient care in storage and in transport, etc.

Clearly the need of the Defence Forces for "security" prevented disclosure to the public of all purchases and stocks. The self-interest and wishful thinking of growers and merchants wanting higher prices, and of consumers wanting lower prices, helped to exaggerate facts and to stress minor incidents, and led to much rumor and suspicion. In 1942/43 these were undoubtedly used as a political weapon in an attempt to discredit the administration and at times to hamper the war effort.

An example of how far such suspicions could go was provided at the Fourth Price Control Conference on February 7, 1942, when the Punjab and the Sind representatives accused the Government of India of deliberately fixing the price of wheat at an unjustifiably low level in order to buy wheat cheaply for Army supplies. This accusation was repudiated in the strongest terms by the Honourable Member in charge of the Commerce Department of the Government of India. It is nevertheless significant that ministers of the governments of two of the largest grain-supplying provinces had apparently shared such a popular belief.

The Committee therefore emphasized for public information certain facts about Army supplies: that the Indian soldier was not a net addition to the number of the consumers to be fed from India's resources; even if the soldier had not joined the Army but had stayed

in his village, he would have been eating foodgrains there; if the Army were to cease to exist, that would not decrease the number of persons to be fed. But it was true that, as in most cases the Indian soldier's grain ration was more than his normal consumption at home, the Indian Army purchases did lessen the balance available for other people.

The Army demand, however, was primarily for wheat and only to a much less extent for rice, the foodgrain which was most seriously in short supply. In 1943, of the total Army demand of 650,000 tons of foodgrains, 500,000 was for wheat and only 150,000 for rice. This 650,000 tons was a "global" figure, including not only grain bought through the Food Department or centralized Army agency, but also that purchased direct by the Army locally to save transport or for an emergency. Full figures for the Defence Forces purchases of foodgrains are not immediately accessible, but the following, in thousand tons, give some idea of their magnitude (*1*, p. 18):

	1940/41	1941/42	1942/43
Wheat	88	238	312
Rice	22	47	115

Further indication is given by the supplies made under the Basic Plan to the Defence Forces (thousand tons):

	1942/43	1943/44	1944/45	1945/46	1946/47
Wheat	—	503	428	356	112
Rice	170	196	232	88	33

While the extra food eaten by the Indian soldier was not a very serious factor in India's grain consumption, the Army demand included the provisioning of British and American troops in India, and any increase in the number of such troops must affect the food supply. The most important effect of the presence of such troops, however, was not on the consumption of wheat, but in the increased demand for the supplementary foods such as meat, eggs, vegetables, and the like, which at the best of times were inadequately produced in India. The Committee's report—as indeed was necessary in September 1943—was commendably cautious on the Allies' military plans, which contemplated using India as the base for large-scale operations against the Japanese, but it "desired to draw the attention of the military authorities as well as the Food Department to . . . the direct and indirect effect upon available supply and prices of additional demands which may be involved in the strategical discussions now proceeding." This tactful warning had effect.

Many rumors had been afloat about the Army's grain stocks; some said that these amounted to six, or even nine, months' consumption, at a time when parts of India were suffering from famine! The Committee for obvious reasons could not reveal the size of the Army's actual food reserves, but it stated that the authorized reserves were less than six months' needs and that the actual reserves in existence were below those authorized. Other rumors alleged that much food was being wasted by being insufficiently protected against the monsoon and other climatic conditions. Admittedly, owing to lack of covered storage, supplies did at times get damaged. But in 1941/42, the latest year for which Army headquarters could then give figures, the value of "the total loss of all foodstuffs both in storage and in transit including deterioration amounted to Rs. 80,000." This figure the Committee did not consider alarming in comparison with the totals handled in that year, viz., Rs. 159,300,000. (Perhaps this figure of loss, about .05 percent, should be viewed with reserve, as the Famine Inquiry Commission Report estimated the normal loss through deterioration of food products, particularly foodgrains, during storage to be at least 5 percent of India's total production.)

SUPPLIES OTHER THAN FOODGRAINS

In accordance with the recommendation of the Foodgrains Policy Committee, in 1943 the Food Department of the Government of India was entrusted with the procurement of the grain needed for the Basic Plan and for the needs of the Defence Forces, operating, in the case of internal procurement of the seven major foodgrains, through the provincial organizations for purchase.

Regarding foodstuffs other than grain needed by the Defence Forces, there was a growing realization of the effect of Army purchase of these commodities on India's economy, and of the need to coordinate such purchases with the requirements of the civilian population. At the same time it was clear that, in the light of the wartime overseas transport crisis, as much as possible of these must be met from within India. The Indian Army eventually reached the total of 2 million men, the biggest volunteer army in history; although all these were not of course in India at one time, a great part were, and there were also thousands of Allied troops gathering for the attack on Burma and the Far East. In addition to grain supplies this great force needed many other foods; the Indian soldier enjoyed a better and more balanced diet, with more variety and more protective foods, than he had had as a villager; the other Allied troops, American and

British, were accustomed to eating meat, eggs, fish, and vegetables on a scale alien to the Indian economy.

In peacetime and in the early part of the war, such of these foods as were needed by the Indian Army and the small British garrison were usually bought by a system of local contracts placed with local suppliers. In proportion to India's consumption the demand was small, and well-established producers and traders had become accustomed to providing for it. But, when faced with greater and greater demands on a progressively increasing scale as the war went on, prices rose and kept rising; the Army had to pay more as the contractors found it more difficult to fulfill their contracts. The town dweller found meat, milk, and vegetables getting costlier and scarcer daily. The villager, tempted by the prices offered by butchers and faced with the difficulty of keeping his cattle during the off season, owing to the high price of cattle food and fodder, was inclined to sell his young stock and even his working cattle, in the vain belief that prices would drop and he would be able to replace them before the plowing season started. If only the useless cattle had gone to the slaughterhouse—the old plow bullocks past work, or the barren cows past calving—this would have meant a clear economic gain to the country. But it soon became obvious that many animals required for the cultivation of the land and for the supply of the dairy products always so badly needed were being killed for meat.

Clearly the minimum demands of the Defence Forces for the minor and subsidiary foodstuffs which could not be imported would not be met unless the supply was directly increased. In one way this was not a new task for the Army in India, as for many years the Military Farms Department had most efficiently run grass farms for fodder and dairy farms for the supply of milk and other products to troops and their families. The military dairy farms were increased and enlarged, though with a heavy drain on the milch buffalo resources of the country and some hardship to the civilian population in the cities.

There was, however, undoubtedly during the early part of the war a lack of co-ordination between military and civil authorities over the procurement of minor food supplies. The local Army authorities did not always realize the effect of their increased purchases on local economy, or the difficulties caused to residents of areas where supplies were sought, nor did they envisage the eventual permanent danger of depleting India's cattle, so badly needed for the growth of food crops. The civil authorities, burdened with numerous additional duties, possibly did not always appreciate the urgency of the Army's

food-supply difficulties, and were aware of the waste of slaughtering draft and milch cattle for food, and of the discontent arising among the civil population at the results of the Army's absorbing local supplies of protective foods.

Early in 1944 the Army Department and the Food Department of the Government of India had realized the danger and asked the various Provincial Governments to set up "Purchase Coordination Committees for each Army Command to eliminate uncontrolled or uncoordinated buying of such items as fresh meat, fish, vegetables, fowls, eggs, etc., for civilian as well as military consumption" (2). The object of these committees was to check price inflation and competitive buying, to fix suitable sources of supply, to regulate consumption so as "to protect animal breeding stocks, cows in milk and working bullocks used for agricultural and transport purposes," to avoid depletion of seed requirements, and to endeavor to make good the deficit in supply. The work of the committees in the Commands was co-ordinated by a central committee in General Headquarters, Delhi. The Deputy Assistant Directors of Local Purchase were required to work in close contact with the civil authorities in securing information about what was available in their districts. The need for such information was recognized and by February 1944 the Madras and the United Provinces governments had started surveys of resources.

In 1944 the military authorities agreed not to slaughter (1) cattle under three years of age, (2) male cattle between 3 and 10 years of age which were used or likely to be used as working cattle, (3) cows between 3 and 10 years of age which were capable of giving milk, other than those unsuitable for bearing offspring, (4) cows which were pregnant or in milk. The Government of India asked the provinces to issue similar instructions in respect of civilian slaughterhouses and to establish some meatless days a week where feasible (3). It would have been well if these measures had been adopted earlier, for by 1945 there was "an acute shortage of bullocks for agricultural purposes practically all over the country" (4, p. 9).

The deliberations of the Coordination Committees also led to the import of various foods to supplement or replace local supply, such as frozen meat, tinned fish, and dehydrated meat and potatoes.

By August 1945 the Honourable Food Member of the Government of India could tell the Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay:

> In order to relieve the drain on civil supplies by the demand for vegetables and fruits for meeting the military requirements, steps were taken to encourage the military authorities to start their own farms. These farms had

proved a considerable success and in almost all centres of military activity, the entire requirements of vegetables for the military were being met from the production of these farms. In other places also the purchases made for military purposes were controlled. The arrangement was that the Provincial Government concerned got the vegetables produced by ordinary cultivators on their own holdings, the military authorities agreeing to take over all that was produced at a fixed price. This device ensured that military demand did not unduly interfere with the normal flow of supplies to the civil population.

The measures taken by the Defence Forces themselves to produce locally their own food supplies fall in the history of Army organization in India during the war rather than within the scope of this study. But much was done, not only in the expansion of the Army dairy farms, but in organizing vegetable-growing and pig and poultry farms, and in encouraging units themselves to produce as much as possible of such additional foods.

An example may be given of the Eastern Command, which included Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and parts of Assam. In February 1944, to meet the needs of British, Indian, American, Chinese, and other Allied Forces in the area, there were started unit vegetable gardens, some run by military units, others by joint provincial and army agency, and others by the Military Farms Department. In July five gardens in the Darjeeling hills produced 475,287 pounds of vegetables, and three more gardens were to open in September. There were 400 goat-breeding herds under Army supervision; military piggeries in Calcutta had 500 pigs of imported breeds; the first duck farm in Bengal had been started in May and a Chinese expert in mass incubation of duck eggs was expected shortly (*5*).

Much was done by Provincial Governments acting through their Agricultural and Cooperative Departments to organize vegetable growing for the Army by local farmers and co-operative societies. And considerable success was obtained once the military authorities realized that methods applicable to peacetime and competitive contracts would not work in wartime, when the farmer, who could make good money growing ordinary crops, would not turn his land to producing vegetables for the Army unless assured of fixed and remunerative prices and a long-term offtake.

PROCESSED FOODS

Various processed food products needed by the Army were not normally produced in India in adequate quantity for the needs of the Defence Forces in wartime, and the Food Department had to organize increased production. For instance, by February 1945, 19

factories had been selected for the dehydration of onions and potatoes for the Army; 6 meat dehydration factories were working at Nowshera, Poona, Patna, Madras, Agra, and Delhi, producing 4 tons of meat a day, and 3 other such factories were under construction; and a fruit-canning factory at Nasarpur was in production.

The Food Department had set up a headquarters laboratory under the supervision of a Chief Technical Adviser assisted by a Technical Adviser, and these two officers were sent to the United Kingdom and the United States to investigate modern methods of dehydration of foodstuffs needed for the Defence Services.

In 1945 there were reported to be 134 factories producing processed foodstuffs for the Defence Forces, with an annual output of 91,315 tons of various supplies. These included army biscuits, dehydrated potatoes, onions, and goat meat, dried fruits, golden syrup, ground coffee, condiment powder, salt, curry powder, chutney, lemon and lime juice cordial, and canned fruits, in quantities ranging from 34,238 tons of biscuits to the 8 tons of dehydrated goat meat. The 25,050 tons of condiment powder may seem excessive but it would represent little over an ounce a day for each man in the India forces (*6*, p. 181).

An essential article of traditional Indian diets generally should be "ghee," or clarified butter, which gives the principal intake of fats. But with the increase of the population and the insufficiency of dairy products, for many years pure ghee had been in short supply and often, if not usually, it reached the city consumer adulterated by various animal, vegetable, or mineral substances. The place of ghee therefore had been largely taken by a manufactured product, a hydrogenated oil compound mainly produced from groundnuts, commonly known as "vanaspati," or "vegetable ghee."

Ghee was an item in the rations of the Indian Army. To secure unadulterated supplies, the government opened ghee-heating centers in various dairying areas of India, where ghee for the Defence Forces' consumption was prepared. But enough real ghee could not be obtained, and the Food Department undertook to develop the production of artificial ghee toward meeting both military and civilian demands.

At a conference in September 1944 the Government of India decided to help the industry to increase its capacity by some 100,000 tons, to control the industry to prevent unfair competition and waste of transport of raw material, and to appoint an advisory commission of representatives of the industry.

The vegetable-ghee factories working in India in 1945 numbered 17 with an annual output of 117,245 tons, more than half of which was manufactured in Bombay (*6*, p. 180). The Government of India sanctioned the establishment of 27 more factories, 18 in British India and 9 in the Indian States, with a total capacity of 136,500 tons, and helped these factories to get plant and machinery from overseas (*7*).

The end of the war and the consequent demobilization inevitably resulted in a considerable reduction in the Defence Services' demand for foodstuffs for 1946/47, as is shown by the following figures, in tons, of indents placed on the Food Department by the Army (*8* and *9*):

	1945/46	1946/47 (revised)	1947/48 (revised)
Wheat and wheat products	404,903	115,179	84,603
Rice	181,728	39,334	27,197
Pulses	71,297	15,834	15,783
Ghee	8,249	8,680	6,528
Vanaspati	18,340	3,764	6,311

By January 1947, of the 24 installations producing processed food for the Defence Forces which had been worked by government, only two remained in operation, the ghee-heating centers at Bangalore and Agra. The privately owned factories which had been occupied in similar processing of food were assisted by government, as far as was possible, to turn to production for the civil market, but were greatly hampered by the continued shortages of supplies, especially of wheat, and of tin plate for packing.

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CHAPTER 18

SUGAR AND GUR

The administrative problem of the supply of sugar in India during the war provided an example of how the control of an article manufactured by a compact and highly organized industry might be ineffective unless control was extended over the production of the raw material as well.

The traditional sweetening in India was gur or jaggery; that is, sugar-cane juice, boiled, clarified, and reduced to a semi-solid condition in open pans and cooled to a hard, dry crystalline mass. Gur has always been made wherever sugar-cane was grown in India, as a village industry. The product was consumed locally and the surplus was bought by traders for sale in the towns or for export to other parts of India. In addition to gur, a small amount of white sugar (khandsari) was manufactured by indigenous but uneconomical methods.

Later, modern factories were set up in India to make high-grade white sugar, in order to compete with the imported sugar, which was used by the well to do and by much of the urban population. For a number of reasons, however, these factories failed to prosper, until in 1932 the Government of India imposed a protective tariff on imported sugar under the Sugar Industry (Protection) Act. Thereafter the sugar industry increased in importance until in 1939/40 there were in India 145 factories producing 1,241,700 tons of sugar (*1*, p. i).

In 1945 it was estimated that India then had over 35 percent of the total sugar-cane area of the world, was producing 26 percent of the world's cane sugar, including gur, and was the largest single sugar-producing country in the world (*2*, p. xxxvi). The bulk of the sugar cane in India was grown in the United Provinces and Bihar and some 80 percent of their production was exported to other parts of the country. Though the number of sugar factories in these two provinces dropped from 102 in 1939/40 to 95 in 1946/47, in the latter year they produced 670,927 tons out of an All-India production of 928,206 tons.

In 1939/40 the consumption of refined sugar, imported and home produced, was 1,019,100 tons, equivalent to 6.4 pounds per head

per annum, and the estimated consumption of gur was 2,441,000 tons (*1*, p. ii).

With the entry of Japan into the war and the stoppage of imports of sugar from Java and the Far East, the Indian sugar industry found that it had not only to replace the sugar imports, which in 1939/40 had amounted to about 250,000 tons, but to meet a greatly increased home demand, both from the farmer who was getting good prices for his crops and living better himself, and from the urban laborer who was drawing greatly enhanced wages in war work. The industry had also to meet the needs of the Allied Forces in India. The problem was further complicated by the suitability of sugar as a commodity for hoarding by those who thought they could make money out of the war, or who wanted a hedge against inflation or the victory of the Japanese. As an example, the small Indian State of Jetpur had stocks of sugar sufficient for ten years' consumption, which in 1943 it was unloading onto the black market at a substantial profit to itself (*3*).

Tariff protection to the sugar industry having been granted in 1932 for only seven years, the Government of India had had to keep it under review to see whether protection should be continued. Meanwhile the governments of the United Provinces and Bihar had found necessary various measures of control, such as fixing the price which the factories should pay the grower for his cane, so as to ensure that all parties got a fair deal. Also the Government of India for revenue purposes had increased the import duty on sugar, and at the same time had imposed an equal excise duty on factory-made sugar.

When in 1942 it became clear that sugar would have to be controlled, the governments were thus dealing with an organized industry, about the working of which they already had a considerable amount of information. A Sugar Controller was appointed and the Sugar Control Order 1942 fixed the price of sugar, the conditions under which it could move from the factories, and the quotas for the various provinces.

This Control Order was not entirely satisfactory, however, and at the Food Conference early in 1943 the need for the control of gur was emphasized. The areas where sugar-cane could be grown were confined to those where there was a good supply of water for irrigation; its cultivation needed heavy manuring while fertilizers were in short supply; few of the factories had their own land or reserved areas where the growers were under contract to supply cane; the factories were competing with the khandsari manufacturer and gur maker for the available supplies of cane, and these were limited. The grower

of course turned his cane to whichever use would give the best profit, or if he could do better by growing some other crop, grew that instead of cane.

Therefore, to secure the best use of the possible cane supply and of its products, in July 1943 the Government of India issued two new orders.

The Sugar and Sugar Products Control Order (2, p. xxiv) defined "sugar" as any article containing more than 90 percent of sucrose, and a "sugar product" as any article with not less than 50 percent of its weight in sugar. The order provided that no producer of sugar should dispose of his product except to a recognized dealer or a person authorized by government. The Sugar Controller could prohibit or limit the manufacture of any kind of sugar, fix the prices at which any sugar might be sold, allot quotas of sugar to any province, area, or market, and direct producers or dealers to supply any such quota. No sugar could be transported except under permit.

The Gur Control Order 1943 (2, p. xxvii) was generally similar to the Sugar and Sugar Products Order, and further provided that, if in his opinion the unregulated production of gur was likely to affect the production of sugar contrary to the needs of the community, the Gur Controller could prohibit the export of cane from that area, direct that growers should deliver cane to the factories, and prohibit or restrict the manufacture of gur in that area.

Under these orders the Government of India assumed a more direct control on all aspects of the sugar problem. The industry cooperated well in the working of the Sugar and Sugar Products Order. In fact, the President of the Indian Sugar Mills Association said on September 16, 1944, "The drive on the 'Indian Sugar Front' has been a success" (2, p. 23).

The Sugar Controller each year allotted the probable surplus sugar production of the United Provinces and Bihar among the Defence Forces and the various provinces and states. For this he had to take into account the prewar consumption of the province or state concerned and the estimates of sugar to be locally produced, and these allotments were revised, as the season went on, in accordance with actual production as it became known. In 1946/47 the Controller allocated for civilian consumption 904,662 tons of sugar. The United Provinces and Bihar retained 161,200 tons of their production of 700,439 tons, and 523,587 tons were distributed for civilian consumption to the remaining provinces and states to supplement their own production of 219,875 tons. Only Assam, Baluchistan, the Cen-

tral Provinces and its states, Delhi, and Sind are recorded as producing no sugar for themselves (*1*, p. xviii).

The internal distribution of these quotas was left to the provinces and states. In normal times the consumption of white sugar was greater in the large towns than in the villages and small towns, for the latter used principally gur. When sugar came into short supply, local governments had to ration the various areas in the light of what was known about past consumption of sugar and gur. Before the war the inhabitants of the great industrial city of Bombay were calculated to have a sugar consumption of 65 pounds a head annually, but, when sugar rationing was introduced, the ration for the year had to be fixed at a little over 30 pounds, something over 9 ounces a week. Since the people in the small towns had eaten less sugar in the past, the rations for people in urban areas outside Bombay City were scaled down to 7 ounces, 6 ounces, 5 ounces, and 4 ounces a week, and rural areas had to make do with allotments on the basis of 2 to 1.5 ounces (*1*, p. 29). This of course was only a rough and ready method of distribution and could not allow for the movement of gur from the villages to the towns where better prices could be got.

In some other provinces sugar was officially regarded as a commodity for consumption by the well to do, rather than by the poor. For instance, in Madras City in 1946/47 the quantity of sugar provided varied with the consumer's income, and in regulated towns in the United Provinces those with an income of Rs. 100 would receive a ration of one seer (2 pounds) a head a month and those with less income only 8 ounces (*1*, p. 29).

This inegalitarian system was probably justified as, under fair shares for all, those who normally ate gur would have sold their sugar ration on the black market.

The Sugar Controller had not only to allot the sugar which the factories produced, but also to fix the price at which they sold it. Since before the war the governments of the United Provinces and Bihar had prescribed from season to season the prices which the factories should pay the growers for their cane, the Controller used the prices paid for cane in these provinces as the basis from which the selling price of sugar was calculated. The "D. 24 grade" of the sugar standards laid down by the Bureau of Sugar Standards was taken as the norm and the prices of other grades were adjusted to that (*2*, p. 26).

The cane produced by the grower was sold to the factory by weight, and not according to its sucrose content. Probably in deal-

ing with hundreds of thousands of small farmers no other method was practicable, but of course it did not promote the growing of the cane most productive of sugar.

In the matter of cane prices the Government of India tried an experiment in "compulsory saving" as a measure to combat inflation in 1943. Orders were issued that the price to be paid to the grower in the United Provinces and Bihar should be increased by two annas the maund, but that these extra two annas should be paid, not in cash, but in Defence Savings Stamps or National Savings Certificates, which could be cashed only at the end of the war. The expedient was not well received. The factories disliked the extra office work involved; the growers thought they were being victimized by the factory or by the government for purposes which were not understood. They saw other farmers get the full price of their crops paid in cash, while the sugar-cane grower alone was penalized, and in any case they needed the money for current expenses and to finance the heavy cost of next year's cane cultivation. The experiment was not a success and was stopped late in 1945 (*2*, pp. 3, 10).

Despite the measures of control imposed by government and the co-operation of the factories, production of white sugar in India during and immediately after the war fluctuated considerably. From a million and a quarter tons in 1939/40 it dropped to three quarters of a million in 1941/42, rose to nearly a million and a quarter in 1943/44, and then dropped to below a million tons for the rest of the period. This was a very serious decrease, in view of the great need for sugar in the country (*1*, p. i).

Various reasons were given for this; for instance, difficulties of transport for cane and for sugar, discouragement of cane growing due to the Grow More Food Campaign, the dislike of the cane grower for the compulsory savings of two annas per maund of his cane, deterioration of the quality of cane, and shortage of fertilizers, stores, and chemicals needed for manufacture. But there seems no doubt that the main cause was that the making and selling of gur, and to a less extent of khandsari sugar, were not effectively controlled. The United Provinces, Bihar, Madras, and Kolhapur were the chief gur-producing areas. The difficulties of control would of course have been great in the case of so essentially a rural business, and perhaps might have been politically undesirable. When more profit could be made by making cane into gur than by selling it to the factory at a fixed price, the factories failed to get their supplies of cane and production of sugar dropped.

The Gur Control Order took longer than the Sugar and Sugar Products Order to become effective. A widespread village industry was not easy to supervise and until the provincial governments imposed adequate regulations and the Gur Controller could arrange adequate transport, stocks accumulated in some areas and in others black markets appeared. But with the co-operation of the provinces the situation was to some degree brought under control (*2*, pp. 37–38).

From 1943/44 the governments of the United Provinces and Bihar limited the manufacture and movement of gur in factory areas and in 1946/47 they wholly banned its manufacture in those areas and endeavored to arrange for an import supply as cheaply as possible from other areas.

In 1946, however, "the popular Governments were unable to make up their minds between (1) the need of increased sugar production, and (2) alienation of the sympathy of cane growers by discouraging gur production unduly" (*1*, p. 19). It is not necessary to go into the vacillations of policy in gur control which affected some governments at the time, but the need for control over gur was emphasized, for instance, by the experience of the Government of Bombay. Before that government decontrolled gur in August 1946, "it was confidently said that the amount of gur hoarded by traders was so considerable that prices would fall as soon as control was lifted. It is not possible to say to what extent new supplies did appear on decontrol. The fact remains that prices, instead of coming down, ruled from 50 to 100 per cent higher than controlled prices not only up to the beginning of the production season but even afterwards. . . . When the Government of Bombay reimposed control a month after the beginning of the production season, it had to bring down the price level which had become abnormally high on account of the previous decontrol. It had therefore to incur considerable opposition and odium which would have been unnecessary if there had been no decontrol" (*4*, p. 54).

Though a further stringent Gur Control Order was issued in 1947, the conflict of gur prices with those for sugar still remained. The competition between sugar and gur for the available supplies of cane was not resolved.

Sugar figured largely in the black market toward the end of the period of this account. Unlike gur, sugar did not deteriorate quickly in storage, it was comparatively easily handled, and the demand was very strong among the well to do. Distribution of supplies allotted by the Sugar Controller was not as efficient in some provinces as in others,

and it was said in one area that from 20 to 50 percent of the sugar sent for local consumption might never reach the consumer, but disappeared into the black market for sale at an exorbitant price. A more than usually spectacular example was an incident elsewhere reported in 1947 "of one hundred and fifty wagons of sugar—a consignment of three thousand tons—completely disappearing on its journey from the Mills in Cawnpore to the market in Calcutta. Fifty of these wagons had been traced after six months; the rest had disappeared into the blue as effectively as if they had been loaded on to a ghost train. The sugar was doubtless being sold at black market prices from some wayside station on a branch line in the jungle" (5, p. 75).

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CHAPTER 19

SOME ASPECTS OF FOOD ADMINISTRATION

FOOD CONTROL STAFF

The war necessarily affected and greatly increased the activities of the Government of India and of the Provincial Governments, yet for this the structure of the civil administrative machine could not be radically altered. The war effort had to evolve from a peacetime system designed for a predominantly rural economy and based on a comparatively small number of experienced administrators, the majority of whom were in charge of districts throughout British India, while smaller numbers were serving in the Secretariats of the Central and Provincial Governments. It was this body of administrators, of the Indian Civil Service and the senior Provincial Civil Services, which had to form the background of the multifarious improvisations and the specialized activities which developed for the prosecution of the war.

This inevitably meant the concentration of a high proportion of officers at the headquarters of the governments and left fewer officers to serve the districts. For instance, "in 1939 the Central Government Secretariat was run on the basis of, approximately, thirty senior administrative officers, but by the end of the war the number of equivalent grade had risen to three hundred" (*1*, p. 353). The Indian Civil Service itself had not a large cadre; in 1939 it numbered 1,186 officers, of whom 599 were Europeans and 587 Indians, and recruitment to the Service was discontinued early in the war. The result was that districts had to be more and more served by officers of less experience.

The prewar role of the general administrative service had to be greatly extended to deal with all sorts of new duties. In the matter of food, with the failure of the Burma rice supply, "on the general administrator, especially in the deficit provinces, in the cities and the big towns to begin with, and later in the rural areas, a tremendous responsibility devolved. . . . Improvisation was the keynote of the time. No plans had been worked out, no preparations made. It would seem to have been taken for granted that the war was a matter for the West and that this country's role would be confined to serving as a base of supply. That conception had to give way almost in the

twinkling of an eyelid. In the larger deficit Provinces, Bombay and later Madras, Supply Departments sprang up and, soon after, the Centre too converted its office of Wheat Commissioner into a Food Department" (*2*). Supplies had to be secured from somewhere or anywhere and distributed through special shops in cities, with "queues of 500 strong standing outside the grainshops from early hours of the morning to get their minimum quantities, and people returning to buy again and again, until it seemed that however great the stocks put into the shops, they would never suffice" (*2*). It was soon clear that rationing of cities alone would not suffice and that the resources of the countryside had to be mobilized, and government procurement, the grain levy, rural distribution centers and rural rationing inevitably followed.

> The role of the general administrator had altered with a vengeance. In addition to his other duties, he had now become a monopolist, the only wholesale dealer in grain throughout the province with full control over all retail dealings, except for very small quantities within village boundaries, and was responsible for the actual conduct of the majority of the retail grain shops in the province. One of the largest businesses in this country was being run by a government department staffed by general administrators with the general administrators in the districts as its agencies. All the ramifications that go with trade in such bulky commodities as grain were being handled by ordinary government methods. Nor was there overmuch talk of red-tape and the inability of government servants to understand the needs of business. The people after a little astonishment at the way in which the thing was working, on the whole seemed not dissatisfied (*2*).

The above extract refers primarily to the Province of Bombay, and such complete taking over of the functions of the grain trade did not extend throughout all India; indeed, it could only be undertaken in rayatwari areas with efficient local revenue staffs. But nowhere in India did the general administrator not have to deal in, or supervise the dealing in, grain and other foodstuffs. Nor in all areas did government's operations escape criticism, sometimes unfortunately justified.

In addition to his care of the food supply, the District Officer had to deal with numberless other matters outside his ordinary run of duties, such as wartime security measures, discontent caused by shortages and high prices, difficulties of transport, assisting recruitment for the Defence Forces, the problems caused by the presence of large bodies of troops, Allied and Indian, and the relations of the local people with the Army. That these were surmounted is a tribute to

the permanent government servants in the districts of all grades, from the lowest and worst-paid village servant upward.

But to work the various schemes of control of food, cloth, etc., required a very large body of officials. With few permanent officers available, and the need for controls expected to disappear shortly, the new officials had to be recruited on a temporary basis without the stabilizing effect of long-term service, where the prospects of a pension might mitigate the low scale of government pay and provide an inducement to good conduct. This added to the task of the district officers, for "the success with which these responsibilities [of controls] were discharged depended often upon the ability of the individuals concerned, and their power to obtain honest service from their subordinates" (*2*).

In every country it seems that wartime, with its detailed control over everybody's wants and conduct, its hordes of officials, its contractors, speculators, and profiteers, and its high wages and high agricultural prices, leads to a lower standard of morality and an increase in corruption. In India the traditional idea of the minor official extorting bribes from the poverty-stricken coolie or cultivator was reversed during the war; and it was often the well-to-do person who pressed his bribe upon the official who might have it in his power to give or to withhold some concession, some privilege, or some "under the counter" supplies. In the account of his journey in the Punjab and the United Provinces in 1946/47, Sir Malcolm Darling writes (*3*, p. 316):

> The decensus Averni began in the war. For then prices soared, demand outran supply, and officials multiplied, mostly on a temporary basis, which is no sure basis for honest dealing . . . the high prices brought the peasant wealth and, as one official said, he can now offer any bribe, and whereas it was once the petty official who corrupted him, it is now the other way round.

It must be pointed out, however, that this refers to 1947 and does not necessarily apply to all other provinces; in fact, "in the debates on decontrol, the most important labour leader in a great industrial city, stated that not more than 1 per cent bought supplies in the black market" (*2*).

The evil was aggravated by the failure of both the Central and Provincial Governments to raise the scales of pay for government servants to correspond with the increase in the cost of living due to the war, or to compete with the salaries earned, or the profits made, in private business, under war conditions. This lag in adjusting pay to conditions was not peculiar to India, and seems almost an occupa-

tional disease of governments in wartime. But it was perhaps more disastrous in India than elsewhere, for the prewar standard of salaries was low and afforded little margin against an increase in the cost of living; for instance, of the Punjab in 1947 it was reported that "though prices were three hundred per cent up, the dearness of living allowance was less than fifty per cent" (*3*, p. 316). The reasons for this delay belong rather to the financial or political history of India than to its food administration. They probably derive from various causes, including the tradition of financial parsimony inherited from the East India Company and continued by the Government of India in the interests of the Indian taxpayer, the desire during the war, when popular government was suspended, not to impose further financial burdens on the provincial revenues, the failure of headquarters to realize the difficulties of the lesser official, and the innate reluctance of legislatures to increase the pay of government servants.

Corruption was not peculiar to India, nor within India to the Food Administration. Its prevalence seems to have varied in different provinces, and evidence suggests that it greatly increased after the end of hostilities. But no one would dispute what Pandit Jawaharal Nehru stated in 1951:

> Unhappily during the War and afterwards various types of corruption have grown. Controls have added to them and general standards have fallen, both in Government servants and in the public. Blackmarketing in India is not merely an individual offence, but a social evil.

CONTROL AND THE TRADE

It is necessary, however, to refer to one particular feature accompanying Food Administration in India, the attitude of a part of the Indian trading community. Almost every deficit province and state, which had to organize its food supplies soon found itself compelled to eliminate the wholesale dealer from the import and export of grain and from much of the internal trade. For instance, at the Third All-India Food Conference in July 1943, the representative of Travancore said: "I have tried every form of indulgence given to the wholesale trader. On every occasion our indulgence was misused and abused. Some of the most prominent of them were guilty of the most atrocious practices." And he advised the Government of India not to rely on wholesale merchants, "however big, however influential, however well supported, they may be in certain quarters." The representative of Cochin said: "That is the whole secret of any successful solution of the Food problem in India. To eliminate the grain specu-

lators, big or small, who are adopting a callous and antisocial attitude in order to get rich quickly, never mind how many people starve. In fact, it is in their interest to create a feeling of panic and food shortage, whether real or artificial." The experience of some provinces with the unreliability of trade agencies in dealing with foodgrains was not dissimilar, and the orgy of speculation and profiteering which accompanied the Bengal famine and the brief "free trade" interlude emphasized the danger. In the event government procurement, distribution, and rationing took the place of the private trader in grain throughout much of India.

It was inevitable, therefore, that the trading community, the livelihood and profits of which had been severely restricted, greatly disliked the Food Administration and made efforts to have the trade in foodstuffs returned to private enterprise. In this they had the support of Mahatma Gandhi, who advocated the total abolition of food controls. How the danger of these interests gaining power over India's food policy developed, and to what it led, lie outside the period of this study, but the warning was clear.

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CHAPTER 20

AFTER THE BENGAL FAMINE

The Foodgrains Policy Committee's report was published in September 1943, and the attention of the Food Department of the Government of India during the next two years was largely devoted to putting the recommendations of the Committee into effect. The details of the measures taken have been described in other chapters.

To quote the Memorandum on the food situation in India presented by the Department of Food to the Central Legislature in February 1945:

During the past year there has been a steady improvement in the food situation throughout the country. Conditions of acute shortage experienced in the previous year have ceased to exist. The enforcement of Government's policy with regard to Government controlled agencies and rationing has yielded good result. Progress has also been made towards stabilising market prices, under ceiling statutory controls at levels which will ease the burden on the consumer and at the same time will provide an incentive to the producer to maintain and increase production. In the case of certain specific crops we have announced the level at which we are prepared to buy all grain offered in the principal assembling markets in the main producing areas, should prices fall. We have also tried to reduce undue disparities between the levels of prices prevailing for the same grain and class of grain in different areas. The progress which has already been achieved in this direction has been brought about by the statutory control of prices supported by the importation of foodgrains from abroad and by the planned movement of internal stocks to the areas where they are required. Distribution under Government control to the consumer is being increasingly done through rationing in urban areas and in some cases in rural areas also. Steady progress has also been made towards monopoly procurement of foodgrains by government, which has already been adopted by certain provinces and States. The principle of monopoly procurement has been fully discussed and approved at the Fifth All India Food Conference of official representatives of the Governments in the light of an examination of existing foodgrains monopolies conducted by the Food Department.

The crops of the year 1943/44 were well above the average. Though the yield of wheat was below normal, the yield of cereal crops totaled about 63 million tons, well above the normal of rather below 60 million. Bengal had one of the largest, if not the largest rice crop on record, about 11.8 million tons against 6.9 million the year before

and an average of 8.4 million since 1931/32, and this did much to repair the damage done by the famine of 1943 (*1*, pp. 29, 32).

The Government of India had recognized the need for imports of foodgrains as vital for the country and from 1943 "had steadily and consistently pressed upon His Majesty's Government the imperative need and urgency of importing into India substantial quantities of grain from abroad with a view to offset the overall deficiency in foodgrains, to facilitate the procurement of local supplies, to hold and maintain the accepted price policy, and to build up an adequate reserve for meeting emergency needs" (*2*).

For the five years up to 1941/42 the net import of foodgrains had averaged about a million tons, but in 1942/43 there had been a net *export* of some 361,000 tons including pulses. Thereafter the import of cereals (in tons) was only:

1943/44	326,000
1944/45	726,000
1945/46	931,000

Despite the efforts of the Government of India, the general food situation during the war—and in particular the growing shortage of shipping—made it impossible to secure the million tons which the Committee had recommended as needed for India's current needs, and still more impossible the additional half a million tons suggested for the central reserve. This latter amount was little more than three months' needs for the deficit provinces and states and for the Defence Forces, and obviously would not meet the shortage which would result from any widespread failure of the monsoon. But for meeting emergencies, for maintaining morale, and for preventing panic, such a reserve was most desirable. "India is a predominantly agricultural country and opinion reacts quickly to any sign of failure of the rains. It is just at this stage that the knowledge that the centre has a reserve would be of great value" (*3*, p. 57).

As a matter of fact, the highest reserve that the government attained at any time was 120,000 tons and this had to be dissipated in rescue operations in the United Provinces in 1944. Fortunately, however, the year 1942/43 had produced a very good wheat crop and in 1943/44 Bengal had its bumper rice crop. Thereafter there followed the crop failures of 1945/46.

CROP FAILURES: 1946

With the end of the war in Burma on August 15, 1945, India hoped for an improvement in food supplies and for relaxation of food

controls. But this hope was not fulfilled, for the supply conditions of the year 1946 were worse than in any of the war years.

The rainfall of 1945 had been irregularly distributed even in those areas where it was adequate in quantity. In the south of India it was both irregular and inadequate. In Madras, the districts of Anantapur, Bellary, Kurnool, Cuddapah, and Chittoor, and in Mysore the districts of Kolar, Bangalore, Tumkur, and Chittaldurg received totally insufficient rain from the southwest monsoon. During October strong winds with heavy rain and tidal waves in some coastal districts severely damaged the rice crop, then ready for harvesting; East and West Godavari, Kistna, and Guntur districts, which form a compact block of surplus rice-producing lands, were hit by a cyclone and in the two former districts the damage was estimated at 60 percent, a loss of 400,000 tons. In Bombay, rain in the Deccan and the Karnatak, especially in Satara, Sholapur, Bijapur, Dharwar, and Belgaum, was short in September, October, and November. The kharif crop was badly damaged, the hopes of a fair rabi crop ruined, and a shortage of 400,000 tons was estimated. On the other hand, heavy floods in Gujarat did much damage. In Madras and Mysore the northeast monsoon almost completely failed and a drought of unprecedented severity occurred (*4*).

In January 1946 the Honourable Member in charge of the Food Department of the Government of India admitted that the crop prospects were unsatisfactory, and by February scarcity areas were being announced in the Bombay Deccan and in other southern districts (*5*, p. 350).

The prospects for the Punjab wheat crop early in 1946 were poor owing to inadequacy of the winter rains in December and January; consequently the procurement of wheat for export to other parts of India was small during the first three months of the year, and the wheat requirements of the deficit areas during this period had to be met almost entirely from imports from overseas, which amounted to 370,000 tons between January 1 and April 30.

The kharif Basic Plan for the movement of internal grain supplies for the period November 1945 to October 1946 had originally assumed a movement of 1,120,000 tons of rice, millets, and maize from surplus to deficit areas. This quantity was quite inadequate to meet even the originally declared deficits of the provinces in need. When these deficits increased considerably owing to drought and failure of crops, it was clear that only imports would save the position (*2*).

Public opinion indicated extreme anxiety. For example, in February 1946 the Indian Merchants' Chamber, Bombay, sent the following telegram to the Viceroy:

> From the experience of the past, it is necessary to treat India as a composite unit without any distinction as between surplus and deficit provinces and frame and enforce a programme of procurement and distribution, the keynote of which should be uniformity of treatment for the country as a whole. The food produced in the country belongs to the people of the land and any unsocial tendencies in producing provinces to retain more than their proportionate share should be nipped in the bud and put down with a firm hand. The country as a whole would support firm action in this regard and the Government of India should lose no time in dealing with the procurement and distribution aspect on the basis of India being treated as one unit. The morale of the population should be sustained and this can only be done by creating a feeling of confidence that the problem is being tackled vigorously, Government should enlist the co-operation of representative leaders of public opinion in the country in the arrangements they propose to tackle the problem.

The Government of India met the crisis with decision, and in March 1946 announced a Five Point Plan to deal with the food scarcity. Under this the statutory ration, which had normally been 16 ounces a day for each adult, was reduced all over India to 12 ounces; rationing was extended to many more towns and areas; grain procurement in the provinces was tightened up; statutory price control was extended; and a country-wide austerity drive was undertaken (*5*, p. 350). Of the reduced ration the Food Department stated: "The present ration is 12 oz. of cereals equivalent to about 1200 calories. Accurate estimates of the calorie value of supplementary foods cannot be made, but considering the diet of the average Indian, it is certain that the additional calories available from supplementary foods like pulses and vegetables are small. Only a fraction of the population eat meat or eggs regularly."

The provinces and states in the south of India were the first to act upon the Government of India's directive that the ration should be reduced. Imports did not arrive according to schedule, stocks got lower and lower, and even this insufficient scale had to be abandoned in various places. In April and May 1946 Travancore State had to reduce the rural ration to much less than 12 ounces, and in Mysore, which had a system of discriminatory rationing under which people in villages got less than those in towns, it was reported that rations in some areas were reduced to 5 ounces a head and even that in some remote areas no rations at all were issued (*6*, p. 20).

In November 1945 the Government of India had made substantial reductions in the rations of flour, atta, rice, sugar, and dal issued to the Defence Forces, but effective from June 1, 1946 "in view of the most critical period of the food situation now approaching," a further cut was made in the rations of all officers and other ranks in the British and Indian Defence Forces which was calculated to save some 1,300 tons of flour and 7,000 tons of rice and atta (*7*).

In the matter of price control the Government of India determined to adhere to the existing food prices, which in their opinion were fair both to the consumer and to the producer, as it was felt that any attempt to raise prices during a period of acute scarcity would have disastrous results on the food economy of the country, and should therefore be resisted. The Food Member told the Central Advisory Council on March 2, 1946, "When the full facts of the present shortage were made known by the Food Department, there was a natural reaction on prices, and a certain amount of instability . . . but prices are again coming down and on the whole price levels have been maintained" (*8*).

POPULAR GOVERNMENTS TAKE OFFICE IN THE PROVINCES

In April 1946 after elections in the provinces, popular ministries once more took office throughout British India, and these had to deal with the food situation. Methods of approach varied. In the United Provinces the Congress Ministry introduced a compulsory procurement scheme on a scale the previous government had not been willing to enforce, and made it work far beyond expectation (*6*, p. 14); in Madras another Congress Ministry appointed village "Vigilante Committees," which perhaps in action did not increase efficiency of food administration; in Bombay the previous close relations between the official food organization and unofficial bodies was continued under the Congress Ministry; the Punjab at last agreed to introduce monopoly procurement of foodgrains. Under the stress of this emergency nearly all over India both the renewed popular governments and the public recognized the danger and generally co-operated to mitigate it by keeping food outside party politics. This was perhaps not easy in the Punjab where the ministry was largely dependent on the votes of the landowners and grain traders, and in Bengal distrust of the official food policy was used as a political weapon (*6*, p. 13).

At the end of June 1946 the Food Department could state that "the whole of the deficit South, namely Bombay, Deccan States,

Madras, Mysore, Travancore and Cochin, is under a rationing system which ensures that, as long as stocks hold out, no person will starve. As regards procurement, . . . in the greater part of India, arrangements exist whereby the whole of the producers' surplus becomes available to Government for distribution through approved channels independently of trade tendencies." Though this perhaps rather glosses over the lack of stocks and rations in parts of southern India and does not mention Bengal's failure to make proper procurement arrangements, yet broadly speaking it was correct and the food organization throughout India did save much of the country from starvation.

In June 1946 an unofficial American Famine Mission under the leadership of Dr. Theodore W. Schultz of the University of Chicago visited India, inspired by anxiety about conditions there and anxious that whatever might have to be done to help India should be done before it was too late. The Mission traveled widely in India, and in the words of the Government of India, "saw for itself the supply position, the administrative measures taken to prevent starvation, and the condition of the people." The report of the Mission, entitled *India's Hunger*, describing conditions in India up to the end of June 1946 and making recommendations to deal with the crisis of the latter half of the year, is a valuable account of India's food needs and administration. Permission to quote from it has been freely used here.

The Mission found that, despite crop shortages of 7 million tons of foodgrains, India had postponed famine for the first six months of the year "by a highly successful system of rationing and enforced procurement of foodgrains from cultivators," but that for the rest of the year imports of 4 million tons were essential.

No country in the world, with perhaps the exception of Russia, has gone so far in controlling basic food distribution—not even Germany under the Hitler dictatorship. As the shortages have become acute, in more and more areas monopoly procurement has been instituted. More and more of India's people have gone on rations. Lower and lower have fallen food allowances, reaching in some districts the starvation level of seven, six, even five ounces a day for adults. The massive difficulties confronted by government can be appraised only by taking into account the fact that 60 percent of India's people are small cultivators clustered around India's 700,000 villages in which live 85 percent of the population; inadequate supplies, inadequate transport, widespread illiteracy have piled up the task to apparently impossible heights. Yet the job has been done. Popular provincial governments and skilled public administrators together have accomplished extraordinary results. Taking due account of human weakness and selfishness, it was yet found that in nearly every area visited, achievements were far above expecta-

tions. Regrettably the least that was being accomplished was found in the important province of Bengal (*6*, p. 6).

By the middle of the year the position was that, if the rationing system was to be kept going, about 4 million tons would have to be supplied to ration shops for the period July–December 1946. It was hoped that some 1,600,000 tons would be secured in India, largely from the kharif harvest which would be ready in November and December. By reducing the government stocks of grain from an eight weeks' to a six weeks' supply (below which it would not be safe to go in face of transport and distribution difficulties) another 400,000 tons could be released for consumption. This left India with a food gap of 2 million tons, which, or the great part of which, would have to be imported between July 1 and October 1, since it was in the months of August, September, and October that the heavy deficits would occur. How the need for imports was met is described later in this chapter.

The Mission pointed out what had not been everywhere appreciated, that the food controls had by 1946 compelled both cultivator and consumer to depend on the official rationing and procurement system. The reserves of former days had been consumed, or gone to supply others under the procurement arrangements; even in surplus areas the farmer had not reserves on the old scale, and in deficit areas he had to draw from the ration shops or starve. If the stocks to supply the ration shops failed, disaster would be inevitable.

Of the 2 million tons of grain which the Mission recommended for import, the Government of India would need to use 250,000 tons as a "special strategic reserve" to deal with conditions in Bengal.

Bengal, with over 60 million people, is the largest province in India. Bengal is a special case, an exception to the rest of India. The food procurement programme of Bengal has been wholly inadequate. As prices rise, people fear famine with vivid memories of the tragedy of 1943. Normally, world rice supplies have acted as a stabilizer of the rice market in Bengal. In other parts of India, Government procurement and distribution have achieved control. Bengal is the notable exception. To hold prices and thus keep famine conditions from developing, a special stock of rice is required (*6*, p. 8).

POLITICAL CHANGES

Meanwhile developments were taking place concerning the future Government of India, and, after discussions with the political parties during the summer, the Executive Council of the Governor General was modified so as to provide *de facto* an interim government, "which

should have the greatest possible freedom in the exercise of the day-to-day administration of this country" (*9*). The Interim Government took office on September 2, 1946.

The Member for Food and Agriculture in the Interim Government was faced with a very difficult situation. His task of feeding India was not made easier by a terrible outbreak of communal violence in Calcutta in August, followed soon after by massacres of Hindus in East Bengal and of Moslems in Bihar.

An All-India Conference of Provincial Food Ministers and representatives of Indian States was called in Delhi on August 9, 1946, and there the following resolutions were adopted (*10*):

I. After carefully examining the overall picture of the foodgrains position in India including the import situation this Conference is definitely of the opinion that the present overall ration of 12 oz. is already inadequate and a further cut is bound to have disastrous consequences on the health and life of the people. Such a course will also defeat its very object by slowing down procurement, shaking public confidence and causing general confusion and unrest. This Conference speaking in the name of 400 million Indians calls upon the Government of India and regards it as their clear duty to redouble their efforts, to secure additional supplies from overseas without which a breakdown on a large scale cannot be avoided.

II. This Conference is of the opinion that the time has now come when in every Province and State, surplus or deficit, procurement of rice and of wheat shall be by Government monopoly, and by compulsory levy wherever necessary and possible. Where other cereals are important, they should be procured by similar Government monopoly. Only by such step can the resources of the country be best mobilised.

The seamen's strike in the United States of America held up the shipment of 224,000 tons of grain for some weeks just when the need in India was greatest, and the Minister in a broadcast toward the end of September had to issue the warning that though the situation "was not altogether dark," it might become necessary to reduce rations still further, in order to tide the country over till the kharif crops were available in November and December.

Stocks of food were falling, and it was estimated that by November 1 they would be down to three weeks' supply and that they would be even less by December 1, and the public was justifiably anxious.

Further, the powers "to control the production, supply, and distribution of, and trade and commerce in, certain essential commodities, including foodstuffs," had been based on the Defence of India Act and were due to expire on October 1, 1946. As the continuance of these for a limited period was necessary, and as the Interim Government had not taken office early enough to have the needed legisla-

tion passed by the Indian Legislature before the end of September, the Governor General had to make provision by an "Essential Supplies (Temporary Powers) Ordinance" which was promulgated on September 21, 1946. Thereafter, foodstuffs control was under this ordinance which continued the previous rules and orders (*11*).

Explaining the policy of the Interim Government in the Central Legislative Assembly on November 4, 1946, the Food Member said that the Government of India favored monopoly procurement and that in almost every province there was, or was going to be, such, though "it had taken time for all the Provinces to fall in line with the policy of the Central Government." Up to that date 3,800,000 tons of foodgrains had been procured by monopoly procurement against 1,700,000 tons by import from overseas, and he estimated that the amount procured in the country was about a sixth of the available surplus. The efficiency of procurement varied from province to province; in Madras something like 94 percent and in Bombay probably around 60 percent of the surplus left with the farmer after meeting his own needs had been obtained by government; in the United Provinces, which had hitherto depended on help from the Government of India to meet its deficits, the Ministry's plan of rigorous procurement freed that province from immediate anxiety. But "on the other hand coming to a Province like Bengal or Bihar, the procurement has been poor" (*12*).

There was considerable demand that the level of prices for the 1946/47 harvest should be raised above that of the previous year, but, as mentioned earlier, the Interim Government adhered to the price-control policy of the previous government, and decided not to increase the statutory maximum prices of foodgrains.

Other criticisms alleged that sufficient pressure had not been put on overseas sources to provide supplies, and that surplus provinces were keeping unnecessarily large reserves (*5*, p. 350). Neither criticism seems justified; the statement of imports during 1946 given later in this chapter shows no slackening of the effort to secure foodgrains wherever they might be available, and the surplus provinces had shown their concern for the rest of India by giving "loans" to deficit areas, which by October 30 amounted to 172,000 tons, and had offered additional surpluses of 45,000 tons under the Basic Plan.

The year 1946 marked an important stage in India's internal food administration. The lessons of the Bengal famine of 1943 had been learned and the Government of India did not delay to indicate to the provinces and states what action they must take, and itself acted

promptly in matters within its own sphere, such as the import of foodgrains from overseas.

The Provincial Governments throughout India greatly extended their government procurement systems. That the Government of Bengal did not, despite the lesson of 1943, take effective measures to secure the 1945 rice crop throws into greater prominence the success of the action taken elsewhere. The surplus provinces were found willing to cut down their own consumption, to reduce their own reserves, and to share some of the hardships of the deficit areas. Supplies secured in India and from overseas provided enough, not to feed the country fully, but to keep the people from starvation.

The rationing system throughout India was improved in efficiency and extended to cover a greater and greater part of the population, until by the end of 1946 some 150 million people were covered by rationing arrangements of some kind.

The popular governments which took office in the provinces in the spring mostly showed a grasp of the situation and a willingness to face the emergency with measures that could not appeal to popularity, and carried public opinion with them. The Interim Government of the Government of India used every endeavor to obtain imports from other countries and to distribute fairly the supplies secured.

WORLD FOOD SHORTAGE

India's internal difficulties in 1946 were aggravated by world events, for, when late in 1945 anxiety was felt lest the kharif crop might fail over a large part of southern India, there were signs of a possible world shortage of food, and this shortage did take place (*13*). The average world production (excluding the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) of rice (paddy) and of wheat during the years 1934 to 1938 had been 90 million tons and 103 million tons respectively. But the production in 1945, part of which might be available to help feed India in 1946, was only 79 million tons of rice and 90 million tons of wheat (*18*, pp. 92, 93).

During the war a Combined Food Board had been set up with headquarters in Washington, to deal with the procurement of supplies needed by the Allies under war conditions at a time when the main difficulty was the shipping, rather than the procuring, of grain. The Board was not a world-wide representative body, nor had it any executive powers. At the beginning of 1946 it faced a different situation, for crops had failed and food was getting short not only in India but in many other parts of the world. The Board was quite unable to find

sufficient supplies or to recommend programs which would anywhere near satisfy the competing demands of claimants.

Later the Combined Food Board was replaced by the International Emergency Food Council, on which 24 nations were represented, and with an executive Central Committee of 8 members, of whom India provided one. The Council was constitutionally merely a recommendatory body, and not all the world's surpluses were placed unreservedly at its disposal (*2*).

Recognizing India's difficulties, the British Government had promised 760,000 tons of foodgrains for the calendar year 1945. By January 1946, 621,364 tons had arrived and the rest was expected by February. Also a quota of 75,000 tons of rice was allotted and received from Burma for the last quarter of 1945. Valuable as this help was, it was well below the million tons of grain import which had been considered by the Foodgrains Policy Committee as normally necessary.

But the situation in southern India toward the end of 1945 was not normal, and was clearly so serious that a million tons would not have been nearly enough. In fact, in a debate in the Central Legislative Assembly in February 1946, a Government of India spokesman stated that a deficit in India's cereal supply was expected of some 7 million tons, about 10 percent of the normal production of foodgrains.

The Government of India, therefore, in March 1946 sent a special mission to lay India's case before the Combined Food Board and to ask for the supply of 4,200,000 tons of foodgrains—2,200,000 tons in the first half of 1946 and 2,000,000 tons in the second half. In response the Board, "struggling to distribute an estimated 12,000,000 tons of food stuffs to people estimated to require 21,000,000 tons" (*5*, p. 350) made a tentative allocation of 1,400,000 tons for the first half and left that for the second half to be decided later.

Some doubt shortly arose over this figure, and eventually by agreement between the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada 1,165,000 tons were promised for the period May to September 1946. Between January and May India had received about 511,000 tons, while total imports to the middle of the year amounted to 682,000 tons.

Considerable anxiety over India's food supply was being felt in the United States. In April 1946 Herbert Hoover, who had organized relief in Europe during and after World War I, visited some of India's scarcity areas to see the situation. He estimated that India would need

imports of 2,336,000 tons of foodgrains from May to September 1946, by the end of which time he thought the food crisis would be over (*5*, p. 350). In this he was mistaken, for, even if the 1946 monsoon was favorable, no large home-grown supplies could come into consumption until after the kharif harvest was reaped in November–December.

Probably partly in consequence of this estimate, some criticism was heard that the demands of the Government of India were excessive in view of the country's real needs and the needs of other areas. At first sight this criticism seemed justified by the fact that during the year the Government of India reduced its original demand from 4,200,000 tons to 3,200,000 tons. Having got 800,000 tons in the first quarter, it asked for 1,500,000 tons in the second quarter and 900,000 tons in the third. But the change was thus explained by the Government of India (*6*, p. 24):

> Originally we had included in our demand an overall 2 months reserve. We have now been compelled to reduce it to 1½ months supply. (The Madras Government has been finding it difficult to arrange distribution in some areas, even with 2 months stocks. In both Travancore and Cochin stocks have come down to a six weeks basis and this reduced supply situation is causing anxiety.) Secondly, in rural areas over the greater part of Southern India, owing to shortage of supplies, only ⅓ to ½ of the ration of 12 oz. has been supplied since the beginning of this year. Thirdly, local procurement during the period May–June, has on the whole, been better (except in Bengal) than the Provinces had expected. Fourthly, since the failure of the rabi crops has been less than we had originally estimated, the main rabi areas, Sind and the Punjab, have found it possible to produce some surplus as loan, and the United Provinces has been quite successful with her food grain levy on cultivators. These developments account for the reduced demand of 3.2 for the year with which we find we can now manage.

As the year went on, it was clear that the International Emergency Food Council could not keep in close enough touch with the situation in southeast Asia, and its allocations of supplies from that area had little relation to the amounts which could actually be shipped. The situation was mitigated by the presence in Singapore of the Special Commissioner, South East Asia, who acted as a co-ordinating authority on the spot for supplies, including those for India, under the Council's allocations, and a series of conferences was held at Singapore to secure the best possible programing of shipments under the difficult circumstances.

As the International Emergency Food Council could not help to the extent needed, India had to search for other sources of supply by direct negotiations with the countries concerned. Unfortunately rice

was the prime need of India, and the rice-growing countries of the East were not able to assist as much as had at first been hoped.

The economy of Burma, before the war the main source of imported rice, had been disrupted by the Japanese invasion. In some areas public security had not been fully re-established by the middle of 1946, and this made things difficult both for the Burmese farmer, who wished to grow rice in his fields undisturbed by bandits, and for the trader, who wished to buy rice upcountry and move it to the ports without having the rice boats plundered on the way. The area sown to rice for the 1946 harvest was estimated to be only a third of the prewar normal, and the former rice trading and milling industry, which had been largely in Indian hands before the war, had shrunk with the departure of the bulk of the Indian community from Burma. As a result, in 1946 Burma could provide India with nothing like the prewar import of some 1,500,000 tons a year, even though the Government of Burma was doing its best to induce growers to increase plantings by making available consumers' goods such as kerosene and cloth, and by giving a bonus of Rs. 12 an acre for additional land sown to rice (*6*, p. 23). The negotiations for rice for India from Burma were unfortunately hampered by prejudices on both sides, which it is not necessary now to examine. The fact that in the year 1946 India imported from Burma 198,000 tons of rice showed how successfully the various difficulties were overcome (*14*).

The Government of India hoped to get rice from Siam, where from all accounts there was at the close of hostilities a large available surplus for export. It accepted the invitation to become a member of the Siam Rice Commission, an international body of representatives of the United Kingdom, the United States, Siam, and China, which was intended to stimulate and regulate the export of rice in accordance with the allocations of the International Emergency Food Council. But although India made a loan of Rs. 5 crores (about 15 million dollars) to Siam and supplied some needed consumers' goods, during the year 1946 the supplies from Siam continued "to remain extremely unsatisfactory" (*14*).

Great hopes were entertained also of supplies from Indonesia, whence the Premier of the Republic offered India 500,000 tons of rice or 700,000 tons of paddy. The offer was gratefully accepted. A formal agreement was signed and the Government of India provided 200 motor trucks to help movement of this rice to Indonesian ports for shipment. With the co-operation of the Dutch Government it would probably have been practicable to ship rice at the rate of some

50,000–70,000 tons a month. But it proved impossible in the end to reconcile the view of the Indonesian leaders that the rice should go to benefit India alone, with that of the Dutch that the Netherlands East Indies must have first claim, as the food deficits of these countries were normally covered by the Indonesian rice surplus. To ship the rice to India the use of the larger Indonesian ports was needed, and for this the help of the Dutch was required (*6*, p. 21). Eventually India got 54,461 tons of paddy in 1946 and the Indonesian Government promised to supply the rest in 1947.

From Argentina the Indian Trade Commissioner and business firms bought over 300,000 tons of maize and millets, but considerable difficulties and delay arose over the issue of export permits by the Argentine authorities. Eventually, however, in the last five months of the year 220,000 tons were received in India.

Though the USSR was not a member of the International Emergency Food Council, India made an attempt to import foodgrains from that country, but Russia did not find it possible to make any available.

Other sources of supply were also investigated with varying success, as is shown by the figures below, giving the imports of grain (in thousand tons) and the various countries of origin in the year 1946:

Country	Cereal	Quantity
United States	Wheat	490
	Wheat flour	23
	Maize	95
	Milo	56
Australia	Wheat	385
	Wheat flour	134
	Millets	1
	Barley	1
Argentina	Millets	17
	Maize	205
Canada	Wheat	293
	Oats	24
Burma	Rice	228
	Maize	5
Siam	Rice	26
French Indochina, Brazil, Indonesia	Rice	72
Iraq, Egypt, Abyssinia, Turkey	Wheat	15
	Wheat flour	5
	Millets	44
	Barley	131
		2,250

In total, imports of wheat and wheat flour were 1,345 thousand tons, rice 326, maize 305, barley 132, and other grains 142.

Thus, after intensive efforts India got through 1946, a year of widespread crop failures, with an import of only some 2,250,000 tons of foodgrains, against an original estimated need of 4,200,000 tons of imports and a revised demand of 3,200,000 tons. This was not without hardship to many of India's people, who in places had to exist on a most exiguous ration, but wholesale famine and starvation were avoided. Nevertheless, as the Food Member said, "It is a tragic sight to see [India's] representatives going from one end of the earth to another—literally from Persia to Peru—with the begging bowl in their hands for food which she ought to be able to produce" (*15*). But no agriculture could have stood up against a failure of the rains such as that of 1945/46.

DIFFICULTIES OF 1947

Though the 1946/47 harvest was better than that of 1945/46, it was not good; the rice crop was fairly normal in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and the United Provinces, but excessive rain did damage in Madras, Bombay, the Central Provinces, Mysore, and Hyderabad; and in these areas and in the Punjab and in Sind the yield was below normal. The wheat crop was fair in the Punjab and Sind, though less than the previous year, but in the Central Provinces, Bombay, Central India, and the Central Indian States it was very badly damaged by rust and in places was completely destroyed. The jowar crop also was unsatisfactory. There was therefore a considerable over-all deficit to be filled. With the continuing difficulty of imports from overseas, there was no prospect of raising the general ration level over the 12 ounces of 1946 (*14*).

Meanwhile the political situation was getting more and more complicated. The Cabinet of the Interim Government comprising both Congress and Moslem League members was suffering great internal tension, and the two great communities of Hindus and Moslems were becoming more and more doubtful of each other and of their own prospects under the obviously imminent political and constitutional changes. In February 1946 Mr. Attlee, the British Prime Minister, announced in the House of Commons that the British Government had decided to give independence to India and that Lord Mountbatten was to come as Viceroy to implement the handing over; during March bloodthirsty outbreaks of communal violence in the Punjab reduced that prosperous province to confusion and its ad-

ministration had to be handed over to the Governor under Section 93 of the Government of India Act; and in June the announcement was made that from August 15, 1947 India would become the two independent Dominions of the Commonwealth, India and Pakistan. In the light of such hopes and under the shadow of such fears and tragedies, India's food administration became inevitably more difficult than ever during the year 1947.

At a press conference in Bombay on April 13, 1947 the Food Member warned the country that the Food Department could only provide as much food as it could secure, and that, unless production was stepped up considerably in India, the food difficulties would increase. Removal of controls would afford no remedy, but "could only lead to larger consumption by certain sections and further reduction in consumption by the poorer sections. It may even mean complete starvation for a considerable section of the poorest part of the population" (*16*).

The demands of India and other needy countries on the world's cereal supplies much exceeded those available. Though the International Emergency Food Council allocated to India 230,000 tons of wheat and 600,000 tons of maize for the year July 1946 to June 1947, and 485,000 tons of wheat for January to December 1947, these quantities were far short of India's needs, and supplies had to be sought wherever possible. In all, during the first six months of 1947, 1,176,900 tons of foodgrains were received in Indian ports from Australia, the United States, East Africa, Turkey, Canada, Argentina, Egypt, Iraq, Burma, Siam, French Indochina, Java, and Brazil.

Prices of grain in the exporting countries had risen sharply; Burma rice, which at the beginning of 1946 had been about Rs. 10 a maund, was about Rs. 14 by June and Rs. 17 early in 1947; Australian wheat rose from Rs. 8 to Rs. 12 and Turkish wheat was over Rs. 16. Such prices were a serious drain on India's resources of foreign exchange, and also involved heavy expenditure on food subsidies, so that imported grain might be sold at the price of Indian grain. These subsidies cost the Government of India some 200 million rupees from April 1946 to March 1947, roughly 15 million pounds or 60 million dollars.

In addition to the difficulties in importing food, the procurement of foodgrains within India was getting more and more troublesome. Supplies and stocks were steadily falling, popular dislike of controls was growing, there were complaints of the lowness of official prices

compared with cost of production or with black-market prices, and of unfair differences of prices between different parts of the country. A vocal section of the public, encouraged by the view of Mahatma Gandhi, sought for various reasons to abolish controls and restore unrestricted private trade in the necessities of life. In fact, by the middle of 1947 it was becoming doubtful whether the rationing system could be maintained at all (*17*, p. 38).

In July 1947 the Government of India called a conference of the Secretaries of the Food Departments of the various provinces and states, at which some suggestions were made for the abolition of rationing and the revival of free trade in foodgrains. But these were opposed by the deficit areas, especially Mysore and Travancore, and although the United Provinces decided to experiment with "derationing" in 15 large towns, public outcry caused the idea to be dropped.

Opposition to the system of controls and of rationing continued, however, and after the declaration of Indian Independence on August 15, the Government of the Indian Union appointed a Foodgrains Policy Committee to recommend a policy for the future. Though the action taken on its recommendations lies outside this account, the Committee's Interim Report, which was presented in December 1947, usefully reviewed the food and procurement situation in India during the early part of the year, and in particular a dissenting minute by some of the members gives a valuable analysis of the food position.

The minute explains that the shortage of food was certainly greater in 1946 and 1947 than in 1945, but that this did not mean that the system of controls had failed, but rather that, despite increased imports, there was less food in the country than before. The average annual yield of the four main cereals (rice, wheat, jowar, and bajra) over the five years ending 1943/44 had been 50 million tons, but thereafter the yield was 51.8 million tons in 1944/45, differing from the average by +1.8 million; 46.4 million tons in 1945/46, differing from the average by −3.6 million; 46.8 million tons in 1946/47, differing from the average by −3.2 million. The total shortfall in production for these three years was thus some 6.8 million tons. But the increase of imports, compared with the average of the same five years, was only 2.1 million tons. The course of net imports of all foodgrains (in million tons), including pulses had been as follows:

Average, 10 years ending 1923/24	...
Average, 5 years ending 1928/29	0.2
Average, 5 years ending 1933/34	1.0
Average, 5 years ending 1938/39	1.4

1939/40	2.2
1940/41	1.0
1941/42	0.4
1942/43	0.4[a]
April 1943 to end 1945	1.8
1946	2.2
First six months of 1947	1.2

[a] Net export.

The minute concludes that from about the middle of 1941 to about the end of 1945 the country was not getting the imports of grain needed to balance internal production and consumption.

Nevertheless it was consuming more than it produced and imported. Except for the Bengal Famine and occasional low rations in the South, there was no effective reduction of consumption as long as the one-pound ration was maintained. On the other hand consumption actually increased because the population was increasing, higher prices enabled the poorer producers in rural areas to eat more and sell less, and the millions in the Army and War Industries had steadier employment and better wages and did not have to go hungry. The controls which were in operation simply enabled the country to draw upon its working stocks and hold on, with its "carry-over" diminishing from year to year.

All would have been well, if increasing imports had coincided with good harvests. But instead, the poor crops of 1946 and 1947 visited the country when it was already holding a much smaller "carry-over" than it used to in normal times. That is why no real comparison is possible between the food situation in 1946 and 1947 and the situation at any time before or during the War (*17*, p. 42).

Though in 1946 and 1947 the shortage of normal imports was made up, in these two years, of the three main staple foodgrains of India, one rice crop was very poor and the next normal, one wheat crop was poor and the next very poor, and one millet crop was poor and the next very poor. And this crisis had to be faced with depleted stocks and an increased demand by an administration severely handicapped by political difficulties and by a people divided against itself and in many parts fearful of immediate dangers.

Procurement of foodgrains became more difficult than it had been during the war. The farmer found that, though his 1947 crop was less than that of 1945 and so might have been expected to fetch a better price, he had to sell it to government at the old rates. At the same time grain prices in the black market had risen and were still rising. For instance, "on November 11 wholesale wheat was selling at Hapur in the United Provinces at Rs. 24 a maund against a statutory maximum of Rs. 10–4–0, and rice was selling at Jainagar in

Bihar at Rs. 23, more than twice the official price" (*17*, p. 38). The need to secure all the growers' surplus was more and more urgent, but the farmers' reluctance to sell was getting more and more determined.

During 1944 and 1945 it had been possible, with few exceptions and for short periods, to provide a cereal ration of 1 pound a day per adult throughout the rationed areas, but in 1946 this could not be done and the ration had to be reduced to 12 ounces, and even this could not be kept up, and in various areas it had to be cut "to 10 oz., sometimes 8 oz. occasionally even to 6 oz." (*17*, p. 38). If rationing was to continue to be effective, the supplies available and the working stocks had to be sufficient, and neither of these could be assured in 1947.

The dissenting minute summed up the position as follows (*17*, p. 39):

> The foregoing difficulties react upon one another so as to aggravate them. Thus, as ration scales decrease the blackmarket thrives actively, more and more people break the controls and sell in the blackmarket, and procurement drops still further in consequence. In these circumstances, rationing and controls emphasise the feeling of insecurity and indirectly aggravate hoarding. As the price of imported foodgrains rises, the discontent among producers is still further aggravated by the knowledge that the increase of price denied to them is being paid to foreign countries. The resulting position has been to render foodgrain controls unpopular among increasingly large sections of population. The traders as a class never used to like them. During 1944 and 1945, however, producers were not discontented because they had recently received price increases, and the prices of other commodities and wages of labour had not moved against them. During 1946 and the current year, the producers who have a surplus to sell have generally become discontented. During 1944 and 1945 consumers grumbled, with reason, about quality; but they nevertheless supported rationing, in view of the great improvement it effected over conditions prevailing in 1943. When however the ration scales were reduced so as to become inadequate, they also became discontented.

Other factors also contributed to the situation. Prices were rising and from the last half of 1946 an inflationary movement was in progress, and, as always with the expectation of a sellers' market, both producer and trader turned to hoarding in the hope of profit. Such is of course especially likely when people think that the commodities concerned may soon be released from control, and in 1947 everyone knew that a large section of the principal political party favored the abolition of all controls and the return of the trade in food to private enterprise.

Not only the farmer and the trader were hoarding; the nonproducer in the deficit provinces remembered how government control of foodgrains had saved him from the starvation which the lack of it had produced in Bengal, and therefore he was anxious to buy in the black market household stocks against the coming days of decontrol.

There was also a weakening of the administrative machinery by which the authorities bought and distributed foodstuffs. The largest political party, the Indian National Congress, had abstained from participation in the government of the country for five years. When popularly elected ministries once more took office in the provinces in 1946, these naturally tended to substitute for the bureaucratic methods of the war years agencies more under popular and political control, and to allow organized bodies concerned with various interests to influence the administration. The permanent official therefore became uncertain of his own position, and the public uncertain of the official's ability to enforce his orders, and as a result the controls over movement, possession, and prices were slackened just when the need for enforcement was greatest. This was aggravated by the disastrous communal outbreaks between Hindus and Moslems in some parts of the country during 1946, which shook public confidence in authority generally.

When in September 1946 the Interim Government took office at the Center and the Government of India became in effect a free government, it was faced first with the crop failure of 1946 and then in 1947 with the urgent and hurried preparations for the handing over of India and for its partition into the two Dominions by August 15. The anticipation of this change and the consequent political controversies and violent disturbances still further disorganized the administrative machine. In Bihar for some time procurement practically stopped, and from March 1947 many areas of the Punjab were gravely disturbed. Elsewhere such experiments as the decontrol of gur in Bombay and the handing over of grain purchase to local co-operative societies in Madras shook public confidence.

Under these conditions it is not to be wondered at that the food administrations faced great difficulties. Some of these were unavoidable, for instance the rise in the cost of imported grain, the bad harvest of 1946, the gradual depletion of the carry-over since 1943, and the uncertainty of the country's political future. Other difficulties, it now seems, were due to the hesitation of the Government of India in deciding on its future food policy, especially whether to abandon control for free trade, and to its failure to realize that, in order to ensure

the provision of the people's food, there must be control over the supply, the prices, and the movements not only of foodgrains but of various other commodities and services as well. It was not easy at that time to heed the warning of the Commodity Prices Board that "A government which is not able or willing to undertake the supplementary controls required to enforce its price policy must inevitably find itself both unsuccessful and discredited" (*19*, p. iv).

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CHAPTER 21

LOOKING BACK

The object of this study has been to trace how food administration in India during and after the war developed from nothing to almost as complete a system of food control as in any Western country, and to state briefly the measures taken to increase India's food production.

Before 1939 the Government of India had made no plans for the food supply for the civilian population. It had been a reasonable presumption that the movement of rice from Burma would not be interrupted, and it was felt that with this and with home production India could feed herself.

At first, therefore, after the start of the war the attention of the authorities was turned to price rather than to supply. Increase in the prices of foodgrains and other agricultural produce was welcomed rather than not, in the belief that the farmer had had "a raw deal" during the low prices of the previous decade, and that it would be to the advantage of the country as a whole that such prices should rise. This view was pressed especially by the great wheat-producing province of the Punjab, where a ministry, based largely on the rural vote, remained in office after the Congress ministries in some seven other provinces had resigned.

As the war went on, however, the increase in foodgrain prices in the cities began to affect labor in the war industries, and doubts arose whether the comfortable theory that nothing need be done was sound.

But with Pearl Harbor, and the entry of Japan into the war in December 1941, it was clear that there might be danger to the supply of rice from Burma and that India's food might become a problem. Even then, however, it was not realized what hardship to many might result from even a 5 percent shortage of rice.

For an emergency such as was then imminent, the Government of India was handicapped in various ways. Constitutionally it had no direct authority over the two-fifths of India which were ruled by the Indian Princes. In British India, in the provinces where elected ministries were in office, the Government of India was rightly anxious to preserve the working of democratic institutions and of provincial autonomy. In the provinces where the Constitution had been sus-

pended, and in theory the executive had full authority, there were practical limitations imposed by public opinion and administrative expediency. Within the Government of India's own sphere there were still in operation the Upper and Lower Houses of the Central Legislature, the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly, and neither of these could be overruled except in an emergency. The Governor General and his Executive Council of seven members, of whom three were Indian public men, had to carry public opinion with them as far as possible in any measures undertaken. The largest and best-organized political party in India, the Congress Party, had gone into the wilderness in October 1939, and the authorities had "for some years of the war period to work against important sections of the people" (*1*, p. xii).

Whatever decisions the Government of India or the Provincial Governments might make to meet the food emergency, these had to be carried into effect by the available administrative machinery. In the permanently settled provinces there was little direct official contact with the villager; in some of the Indian States the administration was in no way geared to modern methods; and, where staff had to be increased or improvised, it was sometimes insufficient, or inefficient, or both.

In addition, public opinion on food questions varied greatly. The interests—or the self-interest—of the farmer and the urban laborer, of the big landlord and the big industrialist, of the villager and the townsman, of the surplus and the deficit provinces, of the customer and the shopkeeper, of the agricultural and the industrial areas, were, or seemed to be, irreconcilable.

In these circumstances, when emergencies arose or important interests clashed, improvisation in policy and hesitation in execution were at times inevitable.

The year 1942 opened with a shortage of wheat in the big cities. Attempts to control wheat prices by fixing maximum prices without controlling supply and possession proved useless. But more serious trouble was arising with the stoppage of rice imports from Burma. There was a scramble by the deficit provinces and by Ceylon to buy rice, wherever it could be got in India, and, to protect their own people, the rice-growing provinces had to impose bans on the movement of rice from their areas. Though the Government of India promulgated in May 1942 the Foodgrains Control Order, which gave power to control possession, movement, etc., of foodgrains, its application was left to the provinces, and in the absence of any over-all

plan for the movement of surpluses to deficit areas, the provincial restrictions on export prevented normal trade transactions. Meanwhile the war situation was getting worse. Burma had been lost, crowds of refugees were arriving in great distress, the Japanese were on India's eastern frontier, and in August and September there were widespread civil disturbances. It was not easy to develop a consistent food policy amid such rapidly changing emergencies.

But toward the end of 1942, on top of the rice shortage there came the Midnapore cyclone in Bengal and the widespread failure of crops in parts of southern India. The problem of feeding the people could no longer be regarded as a local matter little affecting the war effort. The Government of India therefore established a Food Department, and held the First All-India Food Conference in December. Though a plan for moving foodgrains from surplus to deficit areas was proposed, it could not, owing to provincial delays, be got working in time to feed Bengal, when the extent of the famine became known a few months later in 1943. The Government of India therefore jettisoned the plan, and embarked on an ill-judged experiment of free trade in foodgrains.

The pressure of public opinion, and of the governments of some of the provinces, compelled the calling of the Third Food Conference, the abandonment of free trade, and the appointment of the Foodgrains Policy Committee in July 1943. This Committee laid down the lines of policy which thereafter guided the Government of India in food administration.

The policy frankly recognized that, without Burma, India could not feed itself on its normal scale, and therefore not only must more food be grown in the country, but still more must be imported from overseas. The Grow More Food Campaign, started in the spring of 1942, was pressed on and gave a striking increase in cereals for 1942/43. Although the hoped-for reserve of half a million tons of imports was never attained, every effort was thenceforward made to get imports, and without these disaster would have been inevitable in 1946 and 1947.

It was wisely decided that the purchase of grain within India should be left to the governments of the provinces and states, under the supervision of the Food Department. Conditions of production, of public opinion, and of administrative organization differed so greatly that no central agency could have worked satisfactorily. With experience and under the pressure of events, most provincial procurement agencies became more and more efficient, until eventually some

were perhaps not very far from the ideal of getting from the farmer the whole surplus of his crop.

For the movement of the foodgrains thus procured, the Basic Plan was improved and enforced. By this the Government of India and the Provincial Governments agreed on an estimate of the surplus and the deficit of the individual provinces at the beginning of the season, and crop movements then began. As the season progressed the Plan was modified in the light of actual crops. The Plan worked well, though finally in the difficult days of 1946 supplies were so short and uncertain that a system of monthly food budgets had to take its place.

"Fair shares for all" was laid down as the policy in food administration, and this of course implied rationing in those places where there were shortages. It also implied the control of supplies in cities and large towns in surplus areas, for otherwise these would have absorbed too much of the farmers' surplus and hindered procurement for needs elsewhere. In deficit provinces the rationing of towns was welcomed, but in some surplus provinces it was for a time regarded with suspicion, until the extensive shortages of 1946 showed its necessity. By early in 1947 the population under rationing or controlled distribution was reported to be 159 million in 887 cities, towns, and rural areas.

The cereal ration for an adult was intended not to fall below a pound a day, but the shortage of supplies in 1946 forced the Government of India to prescribe 12 ounces a day as the maximum ration throughout India, and in fact in parts of southern India it was sometimes far short of this.

By the middle of 1943 the war, the food shortages, the free trade experiment, and the rise in prices of consumer goods had not only raised foodgrain prices generally, but had destroyed the normal relation between those prices in various parts of India. Without control of prices the normal structure could not be restored, nor could the farmers' surplus crop be effectively procured for the deficit areas. Without maximum prices the public was at the mercy of the farmer, the landlord, the trader, and the speculator. Price control needed the full co-operation of the provincial governments, which alone could apply, and effectively enforce, the subsidiary controls on possession, movement, and sale of grain, which were necessary for compulsory or even for efficient purchase of foodgrains for government. Eventually this co-operation was obtained, and maximum prices for wheat and millets were made effective throughout India. This, however,

could not be done for rice, as the price differences between various parts were so great that local prices had to be laid down.

It may perhaps be said that the autumn of 1943 was the turning point in food administration in India. There seems to have been, thereafter, better appreciation of one another's difficulties by the Center and the provinces, and less insistence on the extreme "states' rights" position of some of the latter. The Government of India still had, however, to rely on persuasion rather than dictation in dealing with the provinces, and not till 1946 was there full adoption of the policy laid down in 1943.

Undoubtedly the Government of India was slow to realize its responsibilities for feeding the common people of India. With constitutional propriety it relied for this on the provinces, whose responsibility it was under the Government of India Act. Admittedly the Government of India could not move far in advance of public opinion, but in its anxiety to keep the Punjab from discontent, and to preserve the façade of democratic popular government in Bengal, some thought that it misjudged both the needs and the public opinion of much of the rest of India. However, it is idle now to speculate whether this was right or wrong.

The Government of India was also slow to control the supply and the price of the commodities which the farmer needed to produce India's food—the steel for his farm implements, the cattle for his plow, the clothes for himself and his family, etc. For instance, "the prices of cloth reached levels more than five times the prewar levels before the Government intervened" (*1*, p. xiii). The farmer blamed the government for such shortages and prices, and therefore chafed at the government grain controls.

This lack of co-ordination between the various departments of governments, and between the Central and the Provincial Governments, was probably inevitable in any country in time of expansion and stress, but it made the task of the Food Department in India more difficult. Earlier recognition of the fact that the various aspects of the economic structure of India were interdependent, and more urgent action to deal with commodities other than food, might perhaps have avoided some of the difficulties of 1947.

The rise in the price of foodgrains during the war undoubtedly benefited the Indian farmer. He had to sell less of his crop to pay his rent or his revenue, and had cash to pay off some, at least, of his debts to the moneylender or the Cooperative Society. How much agricultural debt was thus paid off it is difficult to say, possibly 60 to 80 per-

cent of the total amount. But it is probable that new debts incurred in the bad seasons of 1946 and 1947 offset some of this decrease. Even where in some provinces the prices of foodgrains were strictly controlled and government procurement was in force, the cultivator continued to benefit, as he got a fair price for his crop promptly paid to him in cash. Where price control was ineffective, the farmer made more by selling in the black market. Thus the farmer and his family ate better and had more cash to spend than before 1941.

In many of the towns and cities of India, however, only rationing of foodstuffs averted trouble. Without it, shortages and excessive prices would have put their daily bread beyond the means of a large part of the people. Serious industrial discontent would have been inevitable, and the war effort would have suffered. In introducing rationing some of the deficit provinces and states led the way, and despite gloomy forebodings that it would never work, rationing was successful and appreciated. Though people might complain that the grain sold by the government shops compared unfavorably with what they had bought before the war at the grocer's, they could get it at a fair price and without waiting hours standing in a queue for an uncertain supply.

From the turning point of August 1943, under the pressure of events and of public and official opinion the Food Administration of the Government of India increased in efficiency, and by patience and unceasing endeavor both secured imports of food from overseas, and put the procurement of foodgrains within the country on a sound basis.

The actual distribution of food for the daily needs of the people was the task of the provincial and the state administrations. While some of these had shown the way to the rest of India in all food matters, others were slower to take up their responsibility, and their organization was not always efficient. And a similar difference appeared in the conduct of the Grow More Food Campaign.

But, taken as a whole, the food crises in India showed the capacity of the traditional administrative system to improvise and to expand to meet unexpected emergencies, and the willingness and the ability of the Indian public to accept unusual and inconvenient measures when such were necessary. That there were exceptions to this was proved by the Bengal famine. But it is true to say that the really remarkable thing about Indian food administration from 1939 to 1947 was that there was only one famine. The crop failures in southern India in 1943, and in various parts of the country in 1946 and 1947

might easily have developed into disasters but for the energetic action taken by the Government of India and the provincial and state governments concerned. That the food crises of 1946 and 1947 were safely passed is proof that the policy laid down in 1943 by the Foodgrains Policy Committee was sound, and its practical application saved India.

CITATIONS

1 N. V. Sovani, ed., *Reports of the Commodity Prices Board* (Gokhale Inst. Pol. and Econ., pub. 20, Poona, 1948).

APPENDIX, GLOSSARY, AND INDEX

APPENDIX NOTES

Note I

SIGNIFICANT DATES AND EVENTS CONCERNING FOOD ADMINISTRATION IN INDIA, 1939–47

1939:	September	3	World War II began.
		8	Government of India gives Provincial Governments limited powers to control necessaries of life.
		29	Defence of India Act enacted.
	October	18/19	First Price Control Conference at Delhi.
1940:	January		Wheat Conference.
		24/25	Second Price Control Conference.
	May	25	Provincial Governments empowered to control prices of foodgrains, pulses, and flour.
1941:	September	30	Import duty on wheat reduced from Rs. 1 as. 8 to as. 2.
	October	16/17	Third Price Control Conference.
	November		Provincial Governments given powers to regulate production, distribution, consumption, and prices of commodities.
	December	5	Government of India fixes maximum price of wheat at Lyallpur and Hapur at Rs. 4 as. 6. Import duty on wheat abolished. Wheat Commissioner appointed.
		8	War with Japan began.
		11	Punjab Legislative Assembly protests at the low price fixed for wheat.
1942:	January		Acute scarcity of wheat in cities—Punjab bans wheat export.
		23	First air raids on Rangoon. Disorganization of rice supply from Burma.
	February	6/7	Fourth Price Control Conference.
	March		Wheat maximum price raised to Rs. 5.
		7	Rangoon evacuated.
	April	5	Fifth Price Control Conference.
		5/6	Japanese bomb Ceylon and east coast of India.
		6	Food Production Conference which led to the Grow More Food Campaign.
	May	21	The Foodgrains Control Order issued.

June	1	Madras prohibits export of rice. Regional Price and Supply Boards set up.
July		Government of India makes first request to British Government for imports of wheat. Civil Supplies Commissioner (Rice and Wheat) appointed. Government of Bihar prohibits export of rice.
	1	Government of Bengal fixes maximum price of rice at Rs. 5 as. 12.
	21	Government of Bengal fixes maximum price of rice at Rs. 6 as. 12.
August/September		Civil disturbances hinder food supplies in various areas.
September		Provincial Governments empowered to control agriculture. Sixth Price Control Conference.
October	16	Cyclone in Midnapore and other Bengal coastal districts.
November	21	Government of India informs the provinces that it will buy wheat through a Central Organization.
December	2	Food Department of the Government of India established.
	14/15	First Food Conference.
	20–28	Japanese air raids on Calcutta. Bengal food crisis starts.
1943: January		"Inflationist wave" begins. Travancore State acquires all grain stocks.
	25	Government of India abolishes statutory maximum price for wheat.
	26	Government of India sends to provinces a draft of a basic plan for procurement and distribution of foodgrains.
February		Shortages in Madras, Bombay, Travancore, and Cochin. Famine developing in Bengal.
	24/26	Second Food Conference.
March		Regional Commissioners appointed by Government of India.
April	1	First Rabi Basic Plan issued.
May	2	Rationing introduced in Bombay City.
	18	Unrestricted free trade in rice introduced in Eastern Region. Basic Plan suspended.
June	15	Date fixed for introduction of unrestricted free trade throughout all India except the northwest.

July	5/8	Third Food Conference rejects free trade.
	8	Foodgrains Policy Committee begins sittings.
	23	Export of rice stopped.
	27	Foodgrains Policy Committee recommends extension of rationing.
August	16	Free trade formally abolished and control over foodgrain movements restored to provinces.
September	1	Export of all cereals prohibited. Import of foodgrains on private account prohibited.
	11	Foodgrains Policy Committee reports.
October	15/16	Fourth Food Conference. The Viceroy, Lord Wavell, visits Bengal, and military help given thereafter to deal with the famine.
1944: January		Price Advisory Committee appointed. Maximum prices fixed for jowar and bajra. Defence of India Rule 80B empowers governments to regulate growing of crops, etc.
	31	Rationing introduced in Calcutta on the orders of the Government of India.
February		Food Council appointed. 103 towns and cities by now under rationing.
March	15	First meeting of Price Advisory Committee.
April		Government of India offers to buy all wheat offered, at Rs. 7 as. 8.
May		Government of India offers to buy all jowar and bajra offered, at Rs. 5 as. 8 and Rs. 6.
	20	Bombay Growth of Foodcrops Act notified.
July	18	Famine Inquiry Commission's first meeting.
	20	Central Food Advisory Council appointed.
October	20	Monopoly Procurement Report.
November		Department of Food sets up Storage Directorate.
1945: January 29–February	2	Fifth Food Conference. 515 towns and cities by now under rationing, covering 42 million people.
April	10	Famine Inquiry Commission report on Bengal signed.
May	8	V-E day; surrender of Germany.
August	15	V-J day; armistice with Japan.
September	12	Final surrender of Japanese Expeditionary Force.
October	12	Prices Advisory Commission recommends reduction of jowar and bajra prices. Failure of monsoon in five districts of Bombay and cyclone in some districts of Madras.

	November	29	Import of Burma rice resumed.
	December		Failure of monsoon in Madras and Mysore, crop failures in Deccan and western Indian States. Government of India Mission sent to Combined Food Board.
1946:	January		Winter rains fail in United Provinces and north-west India.
	February		Government of India Food Mission goes to London and Washington.
	March		Government of India announces Five Point Plan to meet food shortage, and orders reduction of standard foodgrain daily ration to 12 ounces.
	April		Newly elected ministries take office in the provinces. Monopoly procurement of wheat introduced in the Punjab.
		23	Herbert Hoover arrives in Delhi.
	May		Monthly Food Budgets replace the Basic Plan.
	June 24–July 14		American Famine Mission visits India.
	August	9/10	All-India Food Ministers Conference.
	September	2	Interim Government established as the Government of India.
	October	5	Defence of India Act and Rules lapse and Ordinance XVIII take their place. 771 towns and rural areas by now under rationing, covering 150 million people.
	November	4	The Food Member in Central Legislative Assembly states government's policy not to raise foodgrain prices.
1947:	January	15	Food Production Conference.
		17	Agricultural Prices Conference. 878 towns and rural areas now under rationing, covering 159 million people.
	February	6	Commodity Prices Board set up.
		20	The Prime Minister announces in the House of Commons that the British Government has decided to hand over control in India and that Lord Mountbatten will succeed Lord Wavell as Viceroy.
	March		Grave disturbances in the Punjab.
	July	5	Indian Independence Bill introduced in British Parliament.
		18	Indian Independence Bill receives the Royal Assent and becomes law.
	August	15	Inauguration of the Dominion of India and the Dominion of Pakistan.

NOTE II

AN EXPLANATION OF THE DUTIES OF DISTRICT OFFICERS[1]

"It seems desirable . . . to give a brief sketch of the system of District Administration that obtains in Bombay and over the greater part of India. The Bombay Presidency consists of four Divisions, Northern, Southern, Central and Sind. In charge of each Division is a Commissioner, who exercises general supervision over its six or seven Districts, and, as the channel of communication between the latter and Government, passes on to one or the other, with such observations as may be needed, all communications requiring attention.

"Next below him comes the Collector and Magistrate in charge of a District. His title is, to the uninitiated, suggestive of a gentleman with a receipt book who calls at regular but inconvenient intervals. In India he is a very important person indeed, for on his efficiency largely depends the peace and administrative well being of an area that may extend to 5,000 square miles or more, with a population that is sometimes reckoned in millions. He is the 'collector' of the Land Revenue and, as Chief Magistrate of the District, is responsible for law and order and the supervision of the subordinate magistracy. This, however, is only the beginning of his labours, for he must further busy himself, not only with every department of the administration, education, local self-government, hospitals, sanitation, factories, jails and police, but with everything that concerns the daily welfare of the people entrusted to his charge. . . .

"Next below the Collector comes the Assistant and Deputy Collectors. . . . They hold charge of a subdivision of the District, comprising two or more Talukas or sub-talukas, the latter being known as Mahals."

[Since this was written, the Sind Division of Bombay Presidency has become the Province of Sind.]

NOTE III

GRAIN CONTROL IN KASHMIR FOLLOWING WORLD WAR I[2]

"The problem of food supplies and the distribution which has recently absorbed the attention of the Durbar is by no means of recent origin. In one form or another, it has given anxiety to successive rulers and successive dynasties for hundreds of years. It has been the tradition of an idle city population to demand cheap rice at the expense of the cultivator. It has been the practice of the administration to gratify these demands, and the cultivator has been expected to part with his best produce far below its value and reserve the coarser forms of grain for his own consumption. The adage of King Lalataditya who ruled Kashmir in the eighth century may be cited as an illustration; his words as quoted in the Rajtarangni are as follows: 'Cultivators must be repressed and their style of living must be lower than

[1] Sir Evan Maconochie, *Life in the Indian Civil Service* (Chapman and Hall, London, 1926), p. 32.

[2] India, Dept. Food, *Outline of Government Grain Monopoly Schemes Operating in India in 1944* (1944), p. 18.

that of the city people or the latter will suffer.' During the Sikh Raj of the first half of the 19th century as much as nine tenths of the produce is said to have been exacted from the zemindar."

The origin of the Kashmir scheme was the "Mujawaza" system under which the State recovered two-thirds of the land revenue from the cultivator in kind, a system which had been in force for hundreds of years till replaced by cash payments toward the end of the nineteenth century. In 1917–18 when the effects of World War I were felt in rising prices and dislocation of trade, "an outcry arose from the poorer inhabitants of Srinagar" who "looked to the State authorities to provide the usual relief."

The scheme which after considerable trial and experiment was adopted involved the assessment of every individual holding to a levy of about 75 percent of the cultivator's surplus paddy. That quantity the cultivator had to deliver to government officials at the nearest river *ghat* (landing place). The cultivator had been advanced one-third of the price some months earlier for the cost of cultivation, and he received the balance some eight or nine months later after delivery of his quota. The paddy was transported by boat to Srinagar and other towns and there distributed to the consumer under a rationing system or stored until required.

Black markets did not exist when government controlled 75 percent of the surplus grain and bought it at a price fixed by itself. The "trade" on twenty years' experience of working the scheme had been entirely excluded in favor of government agency.

NOTE IV
FOODGRAINS CONTROL ORDER OF 1942, AS AMENDED TO 1949[3]

No. Econ. Ad. (P.G.) 550/42.—In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-rule (2) of rule 81 of the Defence of India Rules, the Central Government is pleased to make the following Order, namely:—

1. (1) This order may be called the Foodgrains Control Order, 1942.

(2) It extends to the whole of British India, but shall come into force in any Province only on such date as the Provincial Government may by notification in the official Gazette appoint in this behalf.

2. In this order, unless there is anything repugnant in the subject or context—

(*a*) "Foodgrains" means such one or more of the commodities specified in the First Schedule to this Order as the Provincial Government may from time to time by notification in the official Gazette declare to be a foodgrain to which this Order applies;

(*b*) "Form" means a form as set forth in the Second Schedule to this Order;

(*c*) "Purchase in wholesale quantities" means purchase in quantities exceeding 20 maunds in any one transaction and includes purchase by any person on behalf of another as a commission agent or as an arhatiya;

[3] India, Min. Agr., Econ. and Stat. Adviser, *Indian Food Statistics* (1949), p. 100.

(*d*) "Sale in wholesale quantities" means sale in quantities exceeding 20 maunds in any one transaction and includes sale by any person on behalf of another as a commission agent or as an arhatiya;

(*e*) "Storage for sale in wholesale quantities" means storage in quantities exceeding 20 maunds for purposes of sale, whether wholesale or retail, and includes storage by any person on behalf of another as a commission agent or an arhatiya and storage by an employer for the purpose of supplying, on payment or otherwise, food or foodstuffs to any of his employees.

3. (1) No person shall engage in any undertaking which involves the purchase, sale, or storage for sale, in wholesale quantities of any foodgrain except under and in accordance with a licence issued in that behalf by the Provincial Government or by an officer authorised by the Provincial Government in this behalf.

Provided that, if in any Province other legal provision exists for the licensing of persons engaged in any such undertaking as aforesaid, the Provincial Government may by notification in the official Gazette direct that licences for the time being in force issued under that provision shall be deemed for all the purposes of this Order to be licences issued thereunder;

Provided further that the Provincial Government or an officer authorised by the Provincial Government in this behalf may by a special or general order exempt subject to such conditions as may be specified in the Order, a purchaser other than a retail dealer from the operation of this clause;

(2) For the purposes of this clause any person who stores foodgrain in quantities exceeding 50 maunds may, unless the contrary is proved, be deemed to store the foodgrain for the purposes of sale.

4. Licences issued under this order shall be in Form A, and shall specify—

(*a*) the foodgrain or foodgrains in which the licensee may deal;

(*b*) the place or places at which the licensee may carry on the licensed undertaking.

5. Application for licences under this order shall be made in Form B to the Provincial Government or to an officer authorised by the Provincial Government in this behalf.

6. (1) No person being the holder of a licence issued or deemed to be issued, under this order shall contravene any of the conditions mentioned in Form A, and if any such person contravenes any of the said conditions, then without prejudice to any other action that may be taken against him, his licence may be cancelled by order of the Provincial Government or of an officer authorised by the Provincial Government in this behalf.

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-clause (1) the Provincial Government may, in special circumstances without giving any previous notice or without assigning any reason, suspend or cancel a licence issued, or deemed to be issued, under this Order.

7. Any person authorised by the Wheat Commissioner for India or the Provincial Government in this behalf may enter upon and inspect any premises in which he has reason to believe that the purchase, sale or storage for sale, in wholesale quantities of any foodgrain is taking place contrary to the provisions of this order.

7A. If any person contravenes the provisions of clause 3 or clause 6 of this Order, then without prejudice to any other punishment to which he may be liable, any court trying the offence shall order that any stocks of foodgrains, together with the packages and coverings thereof, in respect of which the court is satisfied that the offence has been committed, shall be forfeited to His Majesty, unless for reasons to be recorded in writing the court is of opinion that the direction should not be made in respect of the whole, or as the case may be, a part of the property.

8. Except in such areas as the Provincial Government may from time to time notify in the official Gazette, nothing in this Order shall apply to the sale or storage for sale by any person of any foodgrain produced by himself or by his tenant.

THE FIRST SCHEDULE

(See clause 2(*a*))

1. Wheat and Wheat products (including ata, maida, rawa, suji and bran (Triticum Spp inclusive of the different species).
2. Rice in the husk (paddy) (Oryza sativa).
3. Rice husked (Oryza sativa).
4. Maize (Zea mays).
5. Jowar (Sorghum vulgare).
6. Bajra (Pennisetum typhoides).
7. Gram any variety (Cicer arietinum).
8. Barley (Hordeum vulgare).
9. Ragi or mandua (Eleusine coracana).
10. Rahar (Cajanus indicus).
11. Masur (Lens esculenta or Ervum lens).
12. Kodra (Kodon) (Paspalum scrobiculatum).
13. Korra (Tenai) (Setaria italica).

THE SECOND SCHEDULE

Forms

Form A

(See clause 4)

No._____

The Foodgrains Control Order, 1942.

Licence for purchase, sale, or storage for sale, in wholesale quantities of foodgrains.

(Free of all fee)

Subject to the provisions of the Foodgrains Control Order, 1942, and to the terms and conditions of this licence .....

.....

is/are hereby authorised to purchase, sell or store for sale, in wholesale quantities all or any of the undermentioned foodgrains:—

.....

2. The licensee shall carry on the aforesaid business at the following place(s):

.....
.....
.....

3. The licensee shall maintain a register of daily accounts for each of the foodgrains mentioned in paragraph 1, showing correctly:—

(*a*) the opening stock on each day;

(*b*) the quantities received on each day showing the place of origin;

(*c*) the quantities delivered or otherwise removed on each day showing the places of destination if consigned to places outside the district; and

(*d*) the closing stock on each day.

4. The licensee shall in respect of each of the foodgrains mentioned in paragraph 1, submit to the officer issuing this licence so as to reach him not later than the fifteenth day of each month a true return in Form C of the Second Schedule to the Foodgrains Control Order, 1942, of stocks, receipts and deliveries of the foodgrain during the preceding month.

5. The licensee shall not in any one transaction, sell any of the foodgrains mentioned in paragraph 1, in quantities exceeding 20 maunds, to any person who does not hold a licence under the Foodgrains Control Order, 1942, nor is otherwise authorised to purchase the foodgrain in wholesale quantities.

6. The licensee shall, except especially exempted by the Provincial Government in this behalf, issue to every customer a correct receipt or invoice as the case may be, giving his own name, address and licence number, the name, address and licence number (if any) of the customer, the date of transaction, the quantity sold, the price per maund and the total amount charged, and shall keep a duplicate of the same to be available for inspection on demand by any authorised officer of Government.

7. The licensee shall prominently display at each of the places mentioned in paragraph 2 a correct list written in the language of the locality, of the prices of all foodgrains in which he deals.

8. The licensee shall give all facilities at all reasonable times to any authorised officer of Government for the inspection of his stocks and accounts at any shop, godown or other place used by him for the storage or sale of any of the foodgrains mentioned in paragraph 1 and for the taking of samples of such foodgrain for examination.

9. The licensee shall comply with any directions that may be given to him by the Provincial Government or by the officer issuing this licence in regard to the purchase, sale, or storage for sale, of any of the foodgrains mentioned in paragraph 1 or to the authentication and maintenance of the registers mentioned in paragraph 3.

.....

Signature of the officer
issuing the licence.

Dated the 194

Note:—The licensee's attention is drawn to clause 6 of the Foodgrains Control Order, 1942, which reads:—

(1) No person being the holder of a licence issued, or deemed to be issued, under this Order shall contravene any of the conditions mentioned in Form A; and if any such person contravenes any of the said conditions, then without prejudice to any other action that may be taken against him his licence may be cancelled by order of the Provincial Government or of an officer authorised by the Provincial Government in this behalf.

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-clause 1, the Provincial Government may in special circumstances, without giving any previous notice or without assigning any reason, suspend or cancel a licence issued or deemed to be issued under this Order.

NOTE V

MADRAS FOODGRAINS PROCUREMENT ORDER OF 1944[1]

In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-rule (2) of rule 81 of the Defence of India Rules, His Excellency the Governor of Madras is hereby pleased to make the following Order:—

1. (1) This order may be called the Madras Foodgrains Procurement Order, 1944.

(2) It extends to the whole of the Province of Madras.

(3) It shall come into force in any local area on such date as the Provincial Government may by notification in the Official Gazette appoint.

2. In this Order unless there is anything repugnant in the subject or context:—

"Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Civil Supplies, Madras.

"Family" means persons who permanently reside with the landholder and have a common mess and includes servants of the landholder who reside in his premises and are supplied by him with meals.

"Foodgrains" means paddy, ragi, cholam, cumbu, samai, varagu and korra.

"Grain Purchase Officer" means an officer appointed as such by the Provincial Government or by the Commissioner and includes a Taluk Grain Purchase Officer.

"Landholder" means any person, company, association or body of individuals, whether incorporated or not—

(*a*) owning, cultivating or in possession or management of, any land situated in an area in which this Order is in force; or

(*b*) entitled to a share of the produce of such land and includes a landholder as defined in clause (5) of section 3 of the Madras Estates Land Act, 1908, and a tenant as defined in clause (v) of section 3 of the Malabar Tenancy Act, 1929.

"Notified foodgrain" means any foodgrain which the Provincial Gov-

[1] G.O. Ms. No. 3380, Development, Aug. 5, 1944.

ernment may by notification in the official Gazette in respect of any area specify in this behalf.

3. (1) The whole produce of any crop of a notified foodgrain shall be at the disposal of the Commissioner.

(2) Out of the produce of any crop of a notified foodgrain, the Grain Purchase Officer or an officer authorized by him in this behalf shall permit the landholder to retain with him—

(i) the quantity necessary for the domestic consumption by himself and his family at such rates as may be fixed by the Commissioner from time to time; and

(ii) in case the landholder is the actual cultivator, the quantity necessary as seed for the land, and he may also permit, in case the landholder is the actual cultivator, to retain with him the quantity necessary for the agricultural expenses of the land, if any, payable in kind.

The balance of the produce shall be sold by the landholder to the Grain Purchase Officer or any person authorized by him in this behalf.

4. No landholder shall remove the crop of any notified foodgrain without the written permission of the Grain Purchase Officer or any Officer authorized by him in this behalf, from the place of storage at the thrashing floor.

5. No notified grain shall be transported from the village in which it is grown to any place outside such village without the written permission of the Grain Purchase Officer or an officer authorized by him in his behalf:

Provided that a landholder may without such permission transport the notified foodgrain to his usual place of storage situated in an adjoining village.

6. The landholder shall be responsible for the safe custody of the produce of any crop of a notified foodgrain grown on his lands till it is taken delivery of by the Grain Purchase Officer or a person authorized by him in this behalf:

Provided that nothing contained in this clause shall be deemed to prohibit the landholder from removing or using the quantity of the notified foodgrain which he would be entitled to retain with him under sub-clause (2) of clause 3 for the domestic consumption by himself and his family if he had been permitted by the Grain Purchase Officer.

7. For the notified foodgrain that is taken delivery of by the Grain Purchase Officer or a person authorized by him in this behalf the landholder shall be paid compensation at such rates as may be fixed from time to time by the Commissioner.

8. No landholder shall, without the written permission of the Grain Purchase Officer, sell any notified foodgrain to, or enter into any contract for the sale of any notified foodgrain with any person other than the Grain Purchase Officer or a person authorized by him under sub-clause (2) of clause 3.

9. If any person contravenes any of the provisions of this Order or of any regulation made thereunder then without prejudice to any other punishment to which he may be liable any Court trying the offence shall direct that any stocks of notified foodgrains, together with the packages and coverings thereof, in respect of which the Court is satisfied that the offence has been committed, shall be forfeited to His Majesty, unless for reasons to be

recorded in writing it is of the opinion that such direction should not be made in respect of the whole or any part of the notified foodgrain.

10. (1) The Commissioner or any officer authorized by him in this behalf may enter upon and inspect any premises and seize any notified foodgrain in respect of which he has reason to believe that a contravention of this Order has been committed and any books, accounts or other documents relating thereto:

Provided that in exercising the power of entry, due regard shall be paid to the social religious customs of the occupier of the premises.

(2) The Commissioner or any officer authorized by him in this behalf may ask of any person all necessary questions and the person so questioned shall be bound to answer truthfully the questions asked of him.

11. The Commissioner or any officer authorized by him in this behalf may require any person to produce any books, accounts or other documents in his possession or under his control relating to a notified foodgrain. On receipt of such requisition such person shall produce the books, accounts or other documents in his possession or under his control at the time and place indicated in the requisition.

12. The Provincial Government may in respect of any area in which this Order is in force make regulations providing for:

(*a*) the procedure to be followed for the payment of money for the notified foodgrain acquired from the landholder;

(*b*) calling upon landholders and dealers to submit such returns as may be necessary;

(*c*) the production of such records as may be necessary; and

(*d*) any other matter connected with the acquisition, storage, transport and distribution of any notified foodgrain.

13. Notwithstanding any provisions of this Order, the Commissioner may in any special case or class of cases authorize the sale, purchase or distribution of any notified foodgrain, in any manner he thinks fit.

14. The Provincial Government may exempt any landholder or class of landholders from the operation of all or any of the provisions of this Order and may at any time suspend, or cancel such exemption.

NOTE VI

HIGHER PERSONNEL OF THE FOOD DEPARTMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA, MARCH 1946[1]

The Honourable Member of the Council of the Governor General in charge of Food.

DIVISION I

Secretary, Department of Food
Special Commissioner
Joint Secretary
Commercial Adviser

[1] From *Combined Civil List for India and Burma, Jan.–March 1946* (Civil and Military Gazette, Lahore, 1946).

Planning Adviser
2 Deputy Secretaries
Special Officer
Under Secretary
3 Assistant Secretaries
Budget and Accounts Officer
2 Research Officers (Planning)
4 Superintendents

DIVISION II

Director General of Food
2 Deputy Secretaries
Rationing Adviser
4 Under Secretaries
Officer on Special Duty (Storage)
Director of Purchase (Foodgrains)
Director of Movements
Director of Statistics
Director of Inspection and Storage
Deputy Director of Statistics
2 Deputy Directors of Rationing
2 Deputy Directors of Purchase (Foodgrains)
Deputy Director of Storage
Deputy Director of Movements
2 Assistant Directors of Purchase (Foodgrains)
2 Assistant Directors of Accounts
Assistant Director of Storage
2 Assistant Directors of Statistics
Storage Construction Officer
4 Assistant Directors of Rationing
Assistant Director of Inspection
Food Execution Officer
3 Technical Officers (Storage)
7 Superintendents

DIVISION III

Secretariat

Joint Secretary
Deputy Secretary
Coordination and Claims Officer
3 Assistant Secretaries
3 Superintendents

Purchase

Chief Director of Purchase
Deputy Chief Director of Purchase
Director of Purchase (Misc. Lease/Lend)
Director of Purchase (Controlled Flour Mills and Grain Depots)
Director of Purchase (Meat)

Director of Purchase (Ghee and Dairy Products)
Director of Purchase (Priorities and Packing Materials)
2 Deputy Directors of Purchase (Lease/Lend)
Deputy Director of Purchase (Vegetables)
Deputy Director of Purchase (Controlled Flour Mills and Grain Depots)
Deputy Director of Purchase (Packing Materials)
Deputy Director of Purchase (Ghee and Dairy Products)
Deputy Director of Disposals
Deputy Director of Purchase (Pepper)
Liaison Director (Factories)
Deputy Director (Factories)
3 Officers on Special Duty (Ghee)
Assistant Director of Purchase (Priorities)
2 Assistant Directors of Purchase (Controlled Flour Mills and Grain Depots)
Assistant Director of Purchase (Packing Materials)
Assistant Director of Purchase (Ghee)
Assistant Director of Purchase (Dairy Products)
2 Assistant Directors of Purchase (Lease/Lend and Miscellaneous)
Assistant Director of Purchase (Vegetables)
2 Assistant Directors of Purchase (Meat)
Assistant Director of Purchase

Inspector

Inspector, Ghee Heating Centres

Technical

Chief Technical Adviser
2 Technical Advisers (Engineering)
Technical Adviser (Research)
Assistant Technical Adviser
Assistant Technical Adviser (Engineering)
Senior Chemist
Junior Chemist

Progress

3 Deputy Progress Officers
16 Assistant Progress Officers

DIVISION IV

Joint Secretary
Deputy Secretary
Under Secretary
2 Superintendents

OFFICE OF THE SUGAR AND VEGETABLE OIL PRODUCTS CONTROLLER FOR INDIA

Sugar and Vegetable Oil Products Controller
Deputy Vegetable Oil Products Controller

Deputy Sugar Controller
2 Assistant Sugar Controllers
Inspector
Statistician

REGIONAL FOOD COMMISSIONERS

North Western Region (Lahore)
Regional Food Commissioner
Officer on Special Duty (Storage)
2 Deputy Regional Food Commissioners
5 Assistant Regional Food Commissioners (Lahore, Rawalpindi)
Assistant Director (Inspection)

United Provinces Region (New Delhi)
Regional Food Commissioner
Assistant Regional Food Commissioner
Assistant Director (Inspection)

Eastern Region (Calcutta)
Regional Food Commissioner
4 Deputy Regional Food Commissioners (Calcutta, Patna, Shillong)
2 Assistant Regional Food Commissioners (Calcutta, Cuttack)
Storage Officer
Assistant Director (Inspection)

Madras Region (Madras)
Regional Food Commissioner
Additional Regional Food Commissioner
Assistant Regional Food Commissioner

Bombay Region (Bombay)
Regional Food Commissioner
2 Deputy Regional Food Commissioners (Bombay, Nagpur)
Assistant Director (Inspection)

Sind and Baluchistan (Karachi)
Deputy Regional Food Commissioner
Assistant Regional Food Commissioner

GROUP LIAISON OFFICERS (FOOD)

Central India States (Indore)
Punjab States (Lahore)
Bundelkhand States (Nowgong, Central India)
Baroda Agency (Baroda)
Rajputana (Mount Abu)
Kathiawar (Rajkot)
Deccan States (Kolhapur)
Eastern States (Calcutta)

APPENDIX TABLES

Abbreviations and Symbols

C.P.	Central Provinces
N.W.F.P.	North West Frontier Province
U.P.	United Provinces
S.	State, or States
C.I.S.	Central India States
W.I.S.	Western India States
...	Data not available
—	None, negligible quantity, or entry not applicable
1935/36	Year beginning in 1935 and ending in 1936
Kharif year	November–October for rice, millets, and maize
Rabi year	May–April for wheat and barley

Totals and other calculations have been made from unrounded figures, hence they may not check exactly with the individual items as shown.

Table I.—Area and Population, 1941*

Item	Area (*1,000 square miles*)	Population (*million persons*)			Persons per square mile
		Urban	Rural	Total	
Total	1,581	49.7	339.3	389.0	246
British Provinces	865	37.5	258.3	295.8	342
Indian States	716	12.1	81.0	93.2	130
Major provinces:					
Madras	126	7.9	41.5	49.3	391
Bombay	76	5.4	15.4	20.8	272
Bengal	77	5.9	54.4	60.3	779
United Provinces	106	6.9	48.2	55.0	518
Punjab	99	4.4	24.1	28.4	287
Bihar	70	2.0	34.4	36.3	521
C.P., Berar	99	2.1	14.7	16.8	170
Assam	55	.3	9.9	10.2	186
N.W.F.P.	14	.6	2.5	3.0	213
Orissa	32	.3	8.4	8.7	271
Sind	48	.9	3.6	4.5	94
Baluchistan	54	.1	.4	.5	9
Specified states:					
Gwalior	26	.6	3.5	4.0	154
Hyderabad	82	2.2	14.1	16.3	198
Kashmir, including Feudatories	82	.4	3.6	4.0	49
Mysore	29	1.3	6.0	7.3	249
Travancore	8	.7	5.4	6.1	792
Cochin	1	.3	1.2	1.4	953

* India, Dept. Food, *The Food Statistics of India* (1946), p. 10.

TABLE II.—AREA AND PRODUCTION OF FOOD CROPS, 1931/32–1946/47*

Year	Cereals and pulses: Total	Cereals[a]	Pulses	Oilseeds[b]	Sugar cane	Tea[c]	Coffee	Subtotal	Fruits, vegs.	Spices[d]	Other	Total[e]
					AREA (*Million acres*)							
1931/32	239	201	38.4	16.0	2.97	.807	.172	259	4.50	1.90	3.73	269
1932/33	235	198	36.3	17.7	3.32	.809	.177	257	4.56	1.89	3.23	267
1933/34	239	200	39.0	18.4	3.31	.818	.184	262	4.37	1.74	3.74	272
1934/35	234	198	35.9	14.3	3.48	.826	.187	253	4.64	2.27	3.66	263
1935/36	233	197	36.9	14.8	4.02	.832	.188	253	4.67	2.80	3.43	264
1936/37	238	201	37.1	16.8	4.44	.834	.190	260	4.75	2.47	2.97	270
1937/38	235	200	35.0	18.9	3.87	.834	.182	259	4.60	2.35	2.69	268
1938/39	235	201	33.9	18.5	3.13	.834	.181	258	5.10	2.55	2.09	267
1939/40	234	200	34.2	18.6	3.64	.833	.184	257	5.40	2.79	1.95	267
1940/41	235	201	34.7	19.1	4.60	.833	.182	260	5.35	2.65	2.22	270
1941/42	237	203	33.8	17.3	3.52	.835	.187	259	5.38	2.34	2.10	269
1942/43	249	212	36.9	17.9	3.60	.839	.192	272	5.28	2.39	2.15	281
1943/44	252	214	37.4	18.2	4.11	.839	.194	275	...	...	...	...
					PRODUCTION (*Million long tons*)							
1931/32	68.4	60.1	8.26	3.70	3.98	394[f]	34[f]	...	...	...	...	...
1932/33	66.1	58.2	7.91	4.47	4.68	434[f]	33[f]	...	...	...	...	...
1933/34	65.2	57.1	8.16	4.62	4.90	384[f]	35[f]	...	...	...	...	...
1934/35	64.8	57.0	7.78	3.02	5.14	399[f]	33[f]	...	...	...	...	...
1935/36	62.2	54.2	8.02	3.53	5.93	394[f]	41[f]	...	...	...	...	...
1936/37	67.8	59.6	8.20	4.17	6.48	395[f]	34[f]	...	...	...	...	...
1937/38	66.3	58.7	7.56	5.05	5.40	430[f]	34[f]	...	...	...	...	...
1938/39	61.7	54.5	7.19	4.59	3.39	452[f]	40[f]	...	...	...	...	...
1939/40	64.8	57.2	7.57	4.75	4.66	453[f]	35[f]	...	...	...	...	...
1940/41	62.2	54.8	7.37	5.24	5.79	464[f]	31[f]	...	...	...	...	...
1941/42	63.6	56.6	7.09	4.09	4.37	501[f]	34[f]	...	...	...	...	...
1942/43	66.9	58.7	8.14	4.35	5.08	564[f]	34[f]	...	...	...	...	...
1943/44	70.4	62.9	7.52	4.67	5.70	556[f]	35[f]	...	...	...	...	...
1944/45	65.9	57.9	7.99	5.28	5.48	511[f]	40[f]	...	...	...	...	...
1945/46	60.0	52.1	7.89	4.77	5.42	576[f]	47[f]	...	...	...	...	...
1946/47[g]	60.6	52.3	8.35	4.84	5.58	534[f,h]	37[f]	...	...	...	...	...

* Except for the last four columns, data through 1943/44 from India, Dept. Food, *The Food Statistics of India* (1946), pp. 28-29; for 1944/45–1946/47 specially compiled by the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. For production of individual cereals, pulses, and oilseeds see Table III. Data for fruits and vegetables, condiments and spices, and other food crops, *ibid.*, p. 20, not strictly comparable with other crops.

[a] Including nonreporting areas.

[b] Edible oilseeds, including sesamum for which data are not shown in Table III.

[c] Figures relate to calendar years 1931 to 1945.

[d] Spices and condiments.

[e] Sum of the items shown.

[f] Million pounds.

[g] Final forecast.

[h] Indian Union only.

TABLE III.—PRODUCTION OF SPECIFIED CROPS, 1931/32–1946/47*

(Thousand long tons)

Year	Rice[a]	Wheat[a]	Jowar[a]	Bajra[a]	Maize[a]	Barley[a]
1931/32....	30,810	9,299	6,919	3,462	2,983	2,711
1932/33....	28,230	9,730	7,182	3,415	2,846	2,673
1933/34....	27,810	9,645	7,099	3,234	2,613	2,735
1934/35....	27,747	10,004	7,025	3,165	2,875	2,835
1935/36....	25,248	9,709	6,932	3,303	2,855	2,648
1936/37....	29,990	10,048	7,869	2,905	2,566	2,645
1937/38....	28,834	11,072	7,249	3,143	2,717	2,408
1938/39....	26,069	10,267	7,233	3,014	2,503	2,145
1939/40....	27,467	11,040	7,298	2,898	2,870	2,293
1940/41....	23,838	10,283	7,866	3,711	2,867	2,589
1941/42....	27,004	10,317	7,014	3,658	2,641	2,309
1942/43....	26,594	11,242	7,361	4,732	2,977	2,552
1943/44....	32,393	10,016	7,446	4,249	2,952	2,374
1944/45....	28,185	10,551	7,122	3,837	2,676	2,311
1945/46....	26,696	9,038	5,739	3,294	2,489	2,087
1946/47[b]...	28,141	7,788	5,314	2,994	2,373	2,547

Year	Ragi	Small millets	Gram	Other pulses	Ground-nuts	Rape, mustard
1931/32....	2,166	1,761	3,895	4,368	2,225	1,025
1932/33....	2,266	1,881	3,543	4,371	2,932	1,042
1933/34....	2,181	1,734	3,874	4,287	3,204	943
1934/35....	1,827	1,566	3,566	4,217	1,766	900
1935/36....	1,807	1,675	3,766	4,255	2,159	957
1936/37....	1,973	1,582	4,028	4,170	2,768	964
1937/38....	1,801	1,515	3,449	4,116	3,567	1,021
1938/39....	1,614	1,623	2,927	4,260	3,275	923
1939/40....	1,791	1,587	3,294	4,273	3,222	1,116
1940/41....	1,911	1,743	3,355	4,013	3,702	1,103
1941/42....	1,909	1,698	3,131	3,960	2,586	1,089
1942/43....	1,707	1,561	4,090	4,046	2,821	1,070
1943/44....	1,869	1,626	3,327	4,195	3,263	955
1944/45....	1,638	1,622	3,869	4,123	3,856	1,034
1945/46....	1,170	1,622	3,764	4,123	3,466	919
1946/47[b]...	1,476	1,622	4,227	4,123	3,492	1,002

* For sources of data see Table II. Data for 1944/45–1946/47 for small millets and other pulses are seven-year averages ending 1943/44 from source cited for earlier years.

[a] Includes data for nonreporting areas; rice is milled basis.

[b] Final forecast.

TABLE IV.—TRADE IN FOODGRAINS AND PULSES, 1931/32–1943/44*

(Thousand long tons)

Item	Total[a]	Paddy	Rice	Wheat	Wheat flour	Jowar, bajra	Barley	Gram, pulses
IMPORTS:								
1931/32.....	1,592	203	1,161	113	—	—	—	77
1932/33.....	1,341	135	1,037	46	—	1	—	86
1933/34.....	2,089	184	1,755	30	—	3	5	86
1934/35.....	2,782	353	2,317	14	—	3	1	72
1935/36.....	2,215	315	1,721	22	—	4	4	117
1936/37.....	1,965	171	1,596	9	—	1	3	142
1937/38.....	1,596	68	1,354	34	—	1	2	74
1938/39.....	1,872	125	1,437	165	—	1	2	71
1939/40.....	2,714	360	2,068	99	—	8	11	95
1940/41.....	1,519	61	1,314	24	—	1	1	72
1941/42.....	1,202	14	1,053	20	—	—	...	85
1942/43.....	186[b]	11	57	102[b]	—	—	—	8
1943/44[c].....	384	...	...	234	18	—	128	...
EXPORTS:								
1931/32.....	618	3	263	75	61	59	27	65
1932/33.....	520	4	252	40	40	17	17	89
1933/34.....	466	1	244	49	32	5	—	80
1934/35.....	488	4	231	54	34	4	14	90
1935/36.....	422	4	212	41	42	8	4	64
1936/37.....	720	1	257	263	50	7	10	80
1937/38.....	966	1	256	477	62	4	35	86
1938/39.....	828	3	306	300	61	24	9	81
1939/40.....	493	4	286	29	50	7	—	74
1940/41.....	556	2	276	78	66	2	—	88
1941/42.....	770	28	328	193	87	5	1	113
1942/43.....	378	11	269	13	14	6	—	38
1943/44.....	86	...	24	26	11	9	—	...
NET IMPORTS[d]:								
1931/32.....	974	200	898	38	(61)	(59)	(27)	12
1932/33.....	821	131	785	6	(40)	(16)	(17)	(3)
1933/34.....	1,623	183	1,511	(19)	(32)	(2)	5	6
1934/35.....	2,294	349	2,086	(40)	(34)	(1)	(13)	(18)
1935/36.....	1,793	311	1,509	(19)	(42)	(4)	—	53
1936/37.....	1,245	170	1,339	(254)	(50)	(6)	(7)	62
1937/38.....	630	67	1,098	(443)	(62)	(3)	(33)	(12)
1938/39.....	1,044	122	1,131	(135)	(61)	(23)	(7)	(10)
1939/40.....	2,221	356	1,782	70	(50)	1	11	21
1940/41.....	963	59	1,038	(54)	(66)	(1)	1	(16)
1941/42.....	432	(14)	725	(173)	(87)	(5)	(1)	(28)
1942/43.....	(192)[b]	—	(212)	89[b]	(14)	(6)	—	(30)
1943/44[c].....	298	...	(24)	208	7	(9)	128	...

* Data for Apr.–Mar. years, including trade for the maritime states and movements over land frontiers, as well as the trade of British India by sea. Burma treated as a foreign country throughout. Data from India, Dept. Food, *The Food Statistics of India* (1946), pp. 83–84.

[a] Includes other foodgrains and pulses not shown separately.

[b] Includes 100,000 tons of wheat imported on government account (not shown in source cited above), from India, Off. Econ. Adv., *Review of the Trade of India in 1942–43* (1945), p. 19.

[c] Imported on government account.

[d] In parentheses net exports.

TABLE V.—IMPORTS OF CEREALS ON GOVERNMENT ACCOUNT, 1943/44–1947/48*

April–March	Total	Rice	Wheat	Wheat flour	Millets	Maize	Barley	Milo
			QUANTITY (*Thousand long tons*)					
1943/44[a]...	326	—	176	18	—	4	128	—
1944/45....	726	—	664	62	—	—	—	—
1945/46....	931	75	856	—	—	—	—	—
1946/47....	2,578	416	1,085	175	71	379	297[b]	155
1947/48[c]...	2,656	593	739	219	22	414	195	474
			VALUE (*Million rupees*)					
1943/44[a]...	84.4	—	33.4	3.6	—	1.0	46.4	—
1944/45....	157.6	—	143.6	14.0	—	—	—	—
1945/46....	260.0	21.0	239.0	—	—	—	—	—
1946/47....	889.1	157.8	361.7	62.7	25.6	127.3	106.7[b]	47.3
1947/48[c]...	1,087.5	303.2	318.6	121.9	6.3	125.4	69.6	142.5

* Data from India, Min. Agr., Directorate of Econ. and Stat., *Indian Food Statistics* (1949), p. 40. From Sept. 1, 1943 all imports and exports of cereals on private account were banned.

[a] Sept. 1, 1943–Mar. 31, 1944.

[b] Includes oats 32,000 tons valued at 10.0 million rupees.

[c] Indian Union only from Aug. 15, 1947.

TABLE VI.—CEREAL SUPPLIES, 1931/32–1944/45*

(*Million long tons, except as indicated*)

Year	Production			Net imports	Supplies		Population (*millions*)	
	Total	Seed, waste[a]	Net		Total	Per adult unit (*lbs.*)	Total[b]	Adult units[c]
1931/32....	60.1	7.5	52.6	1.0	53.6	437	343	275
1932/33....	58.2	7.3	50.9	.8	51.8	416	348	279
1933/34....	57.1	7.1	49.9	1.6	51.5	408	353	283
1934/35....	57.0	7.1	49.9	2.3	52.2	408	358	287
1935/36....	54.2	6.8	47.4	1.8	49.2	379	364	291
1936/37....	59.6	7.4	52.1	1.2	53.4	405	369	295
1937/38....	58.7	7.3	51.4	.6	52.0	390	374	299
1938/39....	54.5	6.8	47.7	1.0	48.7	360	379	303
1939/40....	57.2	7.2	50.1	2.2	52.3	382	384	307
1940/41....	54.8	6.9	48.0	1.0	48.9	352	389	311
1941/42....	56.6	7.1	49.5	.4	49.9	355	394	315
1942/43....	58.7	7.3	51.4	(.3)[d]	51.1[e]	358[e]	399	319
1943/44....	62.9	7.9	55.1	.3	55.4	383	404	323
1944/45....	59.5	7.4	52.1	.7	52.8	361	409	327

* Data from India, Dept. Food, *The Food Statistics of India* (1946), p. 111. Includes production of nonreporting areas.

[a] Calculated at 12.5 percent of production.

[b] Calculated at constant arithmetic increase based on 1931 and 1941 censuses.

[c] Calculated at 80 percent of total population.

[d] Net exports, as shown in source cited (see Table IV for corrected figure).

[e] Using the corrected net-export figure in Table IV supplies total 51.2 million tons or 359 pounds per adult unit.

TABLE VII.—CEREAL SUPPLIES BY TRADE BLOCKS, 1937/38–1939/40 AVERAGE*

(Million long tons, except as indicated)

Trade block	Production			Net imports[b]	Supplies		Population (*millions*)	
	Total	Seed, waste[a]	Net		Total	Per adult unit (*lbs.*)	Total[c]	Adult units[d]
Assam[e]	1.74	.22	1.52	.008	1.53	434	9.9	7.9
Bengal[e]	8.45	1.06	7.40	.315	7.71	370	58.3	46.6
Bihar	4.47	.56	3.91	.228	4.14	326	35.5	28.4
Bombay	5.12	.64	4.48	.711	5.19	455	32.0	25.6
C.P., Berar ...	4.07	.51	3.56	(.207)[f]	3.36	459	20.5	16.4
Delhi	.03	—	.03	.055	.08	273	.9	.7
Madras	8.38	1.05	7.33	.796	8.12	405	56.2	45.0
N.W.F.P.[e]	.55	.07	.48	.022	.51	487	2.9	2.3
Orissa	2.46	.31	2.15	(.177)[f]	1.98	480	11.5	9.2
Punjab	5.75	.72	5.03	(.662)[f]	4.37	362	33.8	27.1
Sind	1.11	.14	.97	(.328)[f]	.64	367	4.9	3.9
U.P.	8.24	1.03	7.21	.045	7.26	372	54.6	43.7
Central India..	1.46	.18	1.28	(.144)[f]	1.14	283	11.2	9.0
Hyderabad ...	2.12	.27	1.86	.086	1.94	341	16.0	12.8
Kashmir	.92	.12	.80	.001	.80	571	3.9	3.2
Mysore	.88	.11	.77	.052	.82	321	7.2	5.7
Rajputana	1.02	.13	.89	.171	1.06	215	13.8	11.1
Total[g]	56.79	7.10	49.69	.972	50.66	380	373.2	298.5

* Data from India, Dept. Food, *The Food Statistics of India* (1946), p. 136.

[a] Calculated at 12.5 percent of total production.

[b] Excluding barley, maize, ragi, and small millets, for which data are not available.

[c] Calculated at constant arithmetic increase based on 1931 and 1941 censuses.

[d] Calculated at 80 percent of total production.

[e] Excluding states.

[f] Net exports.

[g] Sum of trade blocks shown.

TABLE VIII.—BASIC PLAN STATISTICS FOR RICE, 1945/46 AND 1946/47*
(*Thousand long tons*)

Province, state, other	1945/46			1946/47		
	Declared surplus (+), deficit (−)	Net allotment to (+), from (−)	Net dispatches to (+), from (−)	Declared surplus (+), deficit (−)	Net allotment to (+), from (−)	Net dispatches to (+), from (−)
Assam	+ 126.0	− 126.0	− 82.0	+ 40.0	− 40.0	− 34.0
Bengal	−1,369.0	+ 89.7	+ 38.9	...	+ 78.3	+ 65.4
Bihar	− 200.0	+ 99.5	+ 99.5	− 303.0	+ 127.0	+ 127.0
Bombay	− 250.0	+ 149.2	+ 149.2	− 192.0	+ 166.3	+ 166.3
C.P., Berar	+ 177.0	− 182.8	− 182.8	+ 100.0	− 100.0	− 43.8
Madras	− 96.0	+ 213.9	+ 213.9	− 379.0	+ 162.6	+ 162.6
N.W.F.P.	− 4.0	+ 4.0	+ 2.4	− 3.0	+ 2.0	+ 1.2
Orissa	+ 70.0	− 84.9	− 84.9	+ 55.0	− 125.0	− 125.1
Punjab	+ 150.0	− 148.0	− 135.2	+ 120.0	− 119.4	− 107.7
Sind	+ 200.0	− 200.0	− 166.5	+ 180.0	− 182.6	− 182.6
U.P.	− 200.0	+ 40.0	+ 38.2	− 93.7	+ 41.6	+ 41.6
Ajmer-Merwara	− 2.0	+ 2.0	+ 1.3	− 2.0	+ 3.0	+ 3.0
Baluchistan	+ 10.0	− 8.4	− 8.4	+ 8.5	− 8.3	− 8.3
Coorg	+ 19.0	− 19.0	− 11.5	+ 16.5	− 17.0	− 12.8
Delhi	− 17.0	+ 12.0	+ 10.7	− 16.0	+ 21.6	+ 21.6
Total provinces	+ 752.0	− 769.1	− 671.3	+ 520.0	− 592.3	− 514.3
	−2,138.0	+ 610.3	+ 554.1	− 988.7	+ 602.4	+ 588.7
Hyderabad	− 27.0	+ 7.0	+ 3.4	...	+ 29.6	+ 29.6
Mysore	− 68.0	+ 59.4	+ 59.4	− 85.0	+ 40.9	+ 40.9
Kashmir	—	—	—	—	+ 1.4	+ 1.4
Trav.-Cochin S.[a]	− 265.0	+ 235.7	+ 235.7	− 464.0	+ 352.3	+ 352.3
Bahawalpur	—	+ .1	+ .1	—	—	—
Khairpur	− 2.0	—	—	− .3	+ .3	—
Other Punjab S.	− 4.0	+ 1.0	+ ..	− 4.0	+ 1.0	+ .5
Punjab Hill S.	—	+ 1.0	+ .4	—	—	—
Gwalior	− 7.0	+ 1.0	+ .4	− 5.0	+ 2.5	+ 2.5
Rewa	+ 8.0	− 8.0	− 4.2	+ 6.6	− 6.0	− .1
Other C.I.S.	− 5.0	+ 4.0	+ 1.0	− 6.5	+ 7.0	+ 7.0
Baroda	− 7.0	+ 5.0	+ 1.2	− 16.0	+ 7.4	+ 7.4
Kutch	− 6.0	+ 5.0	+ 1.5	− 6.0	+ 4.0	+ 2.8
Deccan S.	− 22.0	+ 13.5	+ 13.5	− 30.0	+ 12.0	+ 4.5
Gujrat S.	+ 7.0	− 5.8	− 5.8	+ 6.0	− 6.0	− 4.1
W.I.S.	− 21.0	+ 13.6	+ 13.6	− 25.0	+ 10.0	+ 8.2
Eastern S.	+ 70.0	− 70.0	− 46.5	+ 60.0	− 60.0	− 56.8
Rajputana S.	− 7.0	+ 4.0	+ 1.0	− 13.0	+ 5.0	+ 2.9
Total states	+ 85.0	− 83.8	− 56.5	+ 72.6	− 72.0	− 61.0
	− 441.0	+ 350.3	+ 331.7	− 654.8	+ 473.4	+ 460.0
Chandernagore	—	+ 2.0	+ 2.0	—	+ 9.0	+ .3
Goa	—	+ 5.0	+ 2.3	—	+ 1.8	+ 1.8
Diu, Daman	—	+ 1.0	+ 1.0	—	+ .3	+ .3
Ship stores	—	+ 6.0	+ .3	—	+ 10.0	+ .2
Defence Services	—	+ 130.0	+ 88.1	—	+ 33.4	+ 33.4
Depots	—	+ 29.9	+ 29.9	—	+ 24.4	+ 24.4
Others	—	+ .3	+ .3	—	+ 50.0	+ 6.6
Imports	—	− 281.9	− 281.9	—	− 540.4	− 540.4
Total other	—	− 281.9	− 281.9	—	− 540.4	− 540.4
	—	+ 174.2	+ 123.9	—	+ 128.9	+ 67.0
Grand total	+ 837.0	−1,134.8	−1,009.7	+ 592.6	−1,204.7	−1,115.7
	−2,579.0	+1,134.8	+1,009.7	−1,643.5	+1,204.7	+1,115.7

* Data specially compiled by the Ministry of Food. See India, Dept. Food, *The Food Statistics of India* (1946), pp. 152–53, 158–59, for 1942/43–1944/45.

[a] Travancore and Cochin States.

TABLE IX.—BASIC PLAN STATISTICS FOR WHEAT, 1945/46 AND 1946/47*
(*Thousand long tons*)

Province, state, other	1945/46			1946/47		
	Declared surplus (+), deficit (—)	Net allotment to (+), from (—)	Net dispatches to (+), from (—)	Declared surplus (+), deficit (—)	Net allotment to (+), from (—)	Net dispatches to (+), from (—)
Assam	— 40.0	+ 17.3	+ 17.3	— 24.0	+ 20.8	+ 20.8
Bengal	— 300.0	+ 259.7	+ 259.6	— 300.0	+ 200.0	+ 199.3
Bihar	— 136.0	+ 25.2	+ 25.2	— 120.0	+ 80.7	+ 73.8
Bombay	— 189.0	+ 246.1	+ 234.6	— 237.0	+ 230.0	+ 229.0
C.P., Berar	— 124.0	+ 46.8	+ 45.1	— 65.0	+ 48.2	+ 48.2
Madras	— 148.0	+ 61.9	+ 61.4	— 239.0	+ 242.4	+ 242.4
N.W.F.P.	— 112.0	+ 44.7	+ 43.8	— 65.0	+ 38.7	+ 38.7
Orissa	— 6.0	+ 2.9	+ 2.7	— 7.0	+ 5.2	+ 5.2
Punjab	+ 400.0	— 472.5	— 469.1	—	— 35.7	— 35.7
Sind	+ 180.0	— 15.0	— 15.0	+ 40.0	— 81.0	— 55.1
U.P.	— 100.0	+ 221.9	+ 213.3	—	+ 75.0	+ 73.4
Ajmer-Merwara	— 15.0	+ 17.7	+ 17.7	— 25.0	+ 18.1	+ 18.1
Baluchistan	...	+ 5.3	+ 3.6	— 14.0	+ 29.5	+ 29.5
Delhi	— 114.0	+ 96.6	+ 94.9	— 114.0	+ 75.4	+ 75.4
Total provinces	+ 580.0	— 487.5	— 484.1	+ 40.0	— 116.7	— 90.8
	—1,284.0	+1,046.1	+1,019.2	—1,210.0	+1,064.0	+1,053.8
Hyderabad	— 9.0	+ 9.5	+ 9.5	— 7.0	+ 9.6	+ 9.6
Mysore	— 25.0	+ 26.3	+ 26.3	— 80.0	+ 57.2	+ 56.2
Kashmir	— 10.0	+ 15.3	+ 14.6	— 32.0	+ 11.6	+ 11.6
Trav.-Cochin S.[a]	— 134.0	+ 2.2	+ 1.9	— 10.0	+ 83.5	+ 69.3
Bahawalpur	+ 100.0	— 84.3	— 62.3	+ 30.0	— 52.9	— 52.9
Khairpur	+ 12.0	— 4.6	— 4.5	— 1.0	— 5.0	— 5.0
Other Punjab S.	+ 35.0	— 52.6	— 52.6	+ 3.0	— 8.3	— 8.3
Punjab Hill S.	—	+ 2.8	+ 2.8	—	—	—
Gwalior	—	—	—	— 1.0	+ 2.0	+ 1.5
Rewa	—	—	—	— 5.0	—	—
Other C.I.S.	— 8.0	— 20.4	— 1.4	— 10.0	+ 2.7	+ 2.7
Baroda	— 8.0	+ 7.8	+ 3.6	— 23.0	+ 8.3	+ 8.3
Kutch	— 6.0	+ 1.7	+ 1.7	— 9.0	—	—
Deccan S.	— 12.0	+ 10.2	+ 9.9	— 27.0	+ 21.4	+ 21.4
Gujrat S.	—	— 3.6	— 2.4	— 2.0	—	—
W.I.S.	— 35.0	+ 22.6	+ 22.3	— 33.0	+ 24.7	+ 24.7
Eastern S.	+ 1.0	— .2	— .2	—	+ 1.0	+ 1.0
Rajputana S.	— 3.0	+ 25.4	+ 24.2	— 53.0	+ 14.9	+ 14.9
Total states	+ 148.0	— 165.7	— 123.4	+ 33.0	— 66.2	— 66.2
	— 250.0	+ 123.8	+ 116.8	— 293.0	+ 236.9	+ 221.2
Gwadur	—	+ 1.0	+ 1.0	—	+ .3	+ .3
Chandernagore	—	+ .3	+ .3	—	+ .1	+ .1
Goa	—	+ 1.0	+ 1.0	—	—	—
Diu, Daman, and ship stores	—	+ 2.3	+ 2.3	—	+ 1.1	+ 1.1
Defence Services	—	+ 368.1	+ 356.8	—	+ 112.8	+ 112.8
Depots	—	+ 20.7	+ 20.2	—	+ 5.5	+ 5.5
Others	—	+ 1.1	+ 1.1	—	+ 4.4	+ 4.4
Imports	—	— 911.2	— 911.2	—	—1,242.2	—1,242.2
Total other	—	— 911.2	— 911.2	—	—1,242.2	—1,242.2
	—	+ 394.5	+ 382.7	—	+ 124.2	+ 124.2
Grand total	+ 728.0	—1,564.4	—1,518.7	+ 73.0	—1,425.1	—1,399.2
	—1,534.0	+1,564.4	+1,518.7	—1,503.0	+1,425.1	+1,399.2

* Data specially compiled by the Ministry of Food. See India, Dept. Food, *The Food Statistics of India* (1946), pp. 154, 160–61, for 1943/44 and 1944/45.

[a] Travancore and Cochin States.

TABLE X.—BASIC PLAN STATISTICS FOR MILLETS, 1945/46 AND 1946/47*

(*Thousand long tons*)

Province, state, other	1945/46			1946/47		
	Declared surplus (+), deficit (−)	Net allotment to (+), from (−)	Net dispatches to (+), from (−)	Declared surplus (+), deficit (−)	Net allotment to (+), from (−)	Net dispatches to (+), from (−)
Bengal	− 3.0	+ .1	+ .1	—	—	—
Bihar	—	—	—	—	+ 8.6	+ 8.6
Bombay	− 265.0	+ 120.0	+ 103.5	− 344.0	+ 184.0	+ 184.0
C.P., Berar	+ 50.0	− 16.0	− 4.4	—	+ 123.9	+ 123.9
Madras	− 18.0	+ 40.0	+ 39.9	− 89.0	+ 44.3	+ 44.3
N.W.F.P.	—	—	—	− 1.5	+ .1	+ .1
Orissa	—	—	—	—	—	—
Punjab	+ 50.0	− 30.0	− 14.0	—	+ .6	+ .6
Sind	—	+ 1.0	+ .5	—	—	—
U.P.	—	+ 7.2	+ 7.2	− 11.0	+ 1.0	+ 1.0
Ajmer-Merwara	− 4.0	+ 3.5	+ 1.3	—	—	—
Baluchistan	+ 20.0	− 20.0	− 10.1	+ 8.8	− 4.0	− 4.0
Delhi	− 11.0	+ 11.0	+ 4.7	− 11.0	—	—
Total provinces	+ 120.0	− 66.0	− 28.5	+ 8.8	− 4.0	− 4.0
	− 301.0	+ 182.8	+ 157.2	− 456.5	+ 362.5	+ 362.5
Hyderabad	+ 40.0	− 64.5	− 64.5	—	+ 16.7	+ 16.7
Mysore	− 61.0	+ 33.0	+ 33.0	− 32.0	+ 18.5	+ 18.5
Kashmir	—	—	—	− .4	—	—
Trav.-Cochin S.[a]	—	− .2	− .2	+ 7.1	+ .7	+ .7
Bahawalpur	+ 7.0	− 1.7	− 1.7	—	− .6	− .6
Khairpur	—	+ .1	+ .1	− 1.5	—	—
Other Punjab S.	+ 26.0	− 27.7	− 27.7	+ 11.0	− 3.4	− 3.4
Gwalior	+ 7.0	− 19.2	− 19.2	+ 15.0	+ 11.7	+ 11.7
Rewa	+ .3	− .1	− .1	− 5.0	—	—
Other C.I.S.	− 6.0	+ .2	+ .2	− 10.0	+ 46.1	+ 46.1
Baroda	+ 18.0	—	—	− 20.0	+ 9.0	+ 9.0
Kutch	− 6.0	+ 6.0	+ .6	− 10.0	—	—
Bhopal	—	—	—	—	+ 10.2	+ 10.2
Deccan S.	− 47.0	+ 1.6	+ 1.6	− 90.0	+ 11.0	+ 11.0
Gujrat S.	—	—	—	—	—	—
W.I.S.	− 54.0	+ 5.3	+ 5.3	− 90.0	+ 43.5	+ 43.5
Eastern S.	—	—	—	—	—	—
Rajputana S.	—	+ 7.0	+ .5	− 85.0	+ 1.1	+ 1.1
Total states	+ 98.3	− 113.4	− 113.4	+ 33.1	− 4.0	− 4.0
	− 174.0	+ 53.2	+ 41.3	− 343.9	+ 168.5	+ 168.5
Diu, Daman	—	+ .4	+ .4	—	+ .1	+ .1
Others	—	—	—	—	+ .6	+ .6
Imports	—	− 57.0	− 57.0	—	− 523.7	− 523.7
Total other	—	− 57.0	− 57.0	—	− 523.7	− 523.7
	—	+ .4	+ .4	—	+ .7	+ .7
Grand total	+ 218.3	− 236.4	+ 198.9	+ 41.9	− 531.7	− 531.7
	− 475.0	+ 236.4	− 198.9	− 800.4	+ 531.7	+ 531.7

* Data specially compiled by the Ministry of Food. See India, Dept. Food, *The Food Statistics of India* (1946), pp. 155, 162, for 1942/43-1944/45.

[a] Travancore and Cochin States.

TABLE XI.—BASIC PLAN STATISTICS FOR MAIZE, 1945/46 AND 1946/47*

(*Thousand long tons*)

Province, state, other	1945/46			1946/47		
	Declared surplus (+), deficit (—)	Net allotment to (+), from (—)	Net dispatches to (+), from (—)	Declared surplus (+), deficit (—)	Net allotment to (+), from (—)	Net dispatches to (+), from (—)
Bengal	—	+ 3.5	+ 3.5	—	+ 13.7	+ 13.7
Bihar	— 74.3	+ 35.3	+ 35.2	— 43.0	+ 22.1	+ 22.1
Bombay	— 37.0	+ 53.6	+ 53.6	— 10.0	+ 23.4	+ 23.4
C.P.	—	—	—	—	+ 21.9	+ 21.9
Madras	— 40.0[a]	+ 87.7	+ 87.7	— 3.0	—	—
N.W.F.P.	— 3.0	+ 5.7	+ .6	— 3.0	+ 10.4	+ 10.4
Punjab	—	— 30.0	— .3	+ 15.0	+ 17.8	+ 17 8
U.P.	—	+ 6.0	+ 6.0	— 1.6	+ 36.3	+ 36.3
Ajmer-Merwara	— 3.1	+ 1.5	+ .2	—	—	—
Delhi	—	+ 3.0	+ 3.0	— 5.5	+ 2.0	+ 2.0
Total provinces	—	— 30.0	— .3	+ 15.0	—	—
	— 157.4	+ 196.3	+ 189.8	— 66.1	+ 147.6	+ 147.6
Hyderabad	—	— 3.0	—	— 2.6	+ 8.7	+ 8.7
Baluchistan S.	—	—	—	—	+ 2.0	+ 2.0
Mysore	— 277.0[b]	+ 28.7	+ 28.6	—	+ 9.1	+ 9.1
Kashmir	— .7	—	—	— 1.5	+ 1.0	+ 1.0
Trav.-Cochin S.[c]	—	+ 15.9	+ 15.9	—	+ 2.9	+ 2.9
Bahawalpur	—	— .5	— .5	—	—	—
Other Punjab S.	— 3.8	— 9.4	— 1.4	—	— 5.2	— 5.2
Punjab Hill S.	+ .4	—	—	—	—	—
Gwalior	— 3.5	—	—	—	+ 5.6	+ 5.6
Rewa	+ .4	— .3	— .3	— 1.0	—	—
Other C.I.S.	— 5.3	—	—	— 27.0	+ 12.8	+ 12.8
Baroda	—	—	—	—	+ 1.4	+ 1.4
Deccan S.	—	+ 8.4	+ 8.4	—	—	—
Gujrat S.	— 6.8	—	—	—	+ .9	+ .9
W.I.S.	—	+ 2.0	+ 2.0	—	+ 8.5	+ 8.5
Eastern S.	+ .2	—	—	—	+ .1	+ .1
Rajputana S.	— 38.8	+ .3	+ .5	— .5	+ 1.7	+ 1.7
Total states	+ 1.0	— 13.2	— 2.2	—	— 5.2	— 5.2
	— 355.9	+ 55.3	+ 55.4	— 32.6	+ 54.7	+ 54.7
Andamans	—	—	+ .1	—	—	—
Diu, Daman	—	—	—	—	+ .1	+ .1
Defence Services	—	+ .1	+ .1	—	—	—
Starch factories	—	+ 34.4	—	—	—	—
Others	—	+ 1.8	+ 1.8	—	+ .8	+ .8
Imports	—	— 244.7	— 244.7	—	— 198.0	— 198.0
Total other	—	— 244.7	— 244.7	—	— 198.0	— 198.0
	—	+ 36.3	+ 2.0	—	+ .9	+ .9
Grand total	+ 1.0	— 287.9	— 247.2	+ 15.0	— 203.2	— 203.2
	— 493.3	+ 287.9	+ 247.2	— 98.7	+ 203.2	+ 203.2

* Data specially compiled by the Ministry of Food. See India, Dept Food, *The Food Statistics of India* (1946), pp. 156, 163, for 1943/44 and 1944/45.

[a] Includes millets.

[b] Includes rice and millets.

[c] Travancore and Cochin States.

TABLE XII.—PRODUCTION OF SUGAR AND GUR, 1939/40–1946/47*

(Thousand long tons)

November–October[a]	Sugar production			Gur production
	Cane factories	Refined from gur	Khandsari	
1939/40.....	1,242	26.5	125	2,441
1940/41.....	1,095	44.7	200	3,414
1941/42.....	778	20.4	100	2,829
1942/43.....	1,071	7.8	214	3,015
1943/44.....	1,216	7.7	150	3,499
1944/45.....	954	6.4	125	3,633
1945/46.....	945	4.0	117	3,578
1946/47.....	928	4.0	100	3,630

* Data from M. P. Gandhi, ed., *The Indian Sugar Industry (1946–47 Annual)* (Bombay, 1947), Tables 1, 27. Figures for khandsari are conjectural estimates; for gur calculated by deducting from the estimated total yield of cane in terms of gur, the gur equivalent of the cane used for purposes other than gur manufacture.

[a] Except for sugar refined from gur, which is for calendar years.

TABLE XIII.—RICE AND WHEAT, ANNUAL AVERAGE HARVEST PRICES, SELECTED PROVINCES, 1931/32–1943/44*

(Rupees and annas per maund of 82⅔ pounds)

PROVINCE	1931/32 Rs. As.	1932/33 Rs. As.	1933/34 Rs. As.	1934/35 Rs. As.	1935/36 Rs. As.	1936/37 Rs. As.	1937/38 Rs. As.	1938/39 Rs. As.	1939/40 Rs. As.	1940/41 Rs. As.	1941/42 Rs. As.	1942/43 Rs. As.	1943/44 Rs. As.
							RICE						
Assam	2 15	2 6	2 11	3 1	2 15	2 13	3 0	3 15	3 11	4 4	4 12	8 14	20 9
Bengal	3 5	2 10	3 0	3 4	3 8	3 6	3 4	3 8	4 7	5 2	5 6	14 0	15 0
Bihar[a]	3 3	3 2	2 14	3 3	3 8	3 5	3 4	3 8	4 0	4 12	5 7	8 0	12 10
Bombay[b]	5 0	4 13	4 7	4 4	4 7	4 12	4 12	5 0	5 3	5 11	8 0	12 13	21 6
C.P., Berar	3 4	3 1	2 13	3 3	3 3	3 5	3 4	3 4	3 11	4 13	6 6	9 0	12 0
Madras	4 3	3 10	3 2	3 11	3 13	3 11	3 14	3 15	4 5	4 12	5 6	8 6	8 11
Orissa	...	...	...	...	2 10	2 10	2 8	2 9	3 1	3 10	4 3	6 3	9 11
Sind	...	...	...	...	4 10	4 0	4 14	4 0	4 5	5 4	6 1	7 4	9 7
U.P.	4 0	4 7	3 11	3 12	4 1	4 3	4 5	4 3	4 7	5 5	6 11	10 0	18 13
							WHEAT						
Bengal	3 8	3 2	3 0	3 0	3 0	3 6	3 4	3 8	3 14	4 3	5 0	15 0	12 1
Bihar[a]	3 8	3 8	3 3	3 6	3 7	4 2	3 15	3 11	4 3	4 7	5 12	10 0	16 0
Bombay[b]	3 10	4 0	3 11	3 10	3 9	5 3	4 6	4 0	5 0	5 0	6 11	16 6	16 6
C.P., Berar	2 8	2 14	2 9	2 8	2 15	3 14	3 2	2 15	3 11	3 12	5 15	12 6	11 9
N.W.F.P.	2 3	2 14	2 6	2 4	2 6	2 11	2 5	2 7	3 1	3 6	5 1	7 11	10 2
Orissa	...	...	...	...	3 5	3 6	3 4	3 10	4 0	4 4	5 14	11 14	15 0
Punjab	2 1	2 12	2 2	2 2	2 5	2 14	2 2	2 4	2 10	3 1	5 0	10 0	8 15
Sind	...	...	...	...	2 14	4 0	2 15	2 11	2 11	4 9	4 2	5 5	6 12
U.P.	2 9	2 15	2 9	2 13	2 14	3 10	2 14	2 15	3 12	3 8	5 5	10 11	12 11

* Data from India, Dept. Food, *The Food Statistics of India* (1946), pp. 139–40. Figures represent median average of the district figures. Figures for years 1931/32–1937/38 from *Agricultural Statistics of India*, Vol. I, and for years 1938/39–1943/44 either from *Season and Crop Reports* or supplied by the government concerned.

[a] Figures for years prior to 1935/36 relate to Bihar and Orissa.

[b] Figures for years prior to 1935/36 relate to Bombay and Sind.

TABLE XIV.—INDEX NUMBERS OF WHOLESALE PRICES OF SELECTED FOODGRAINS, 1939–46*

(Last week of August 1939 = 100)

Item	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.
RICE												
1939/40.....	112	110	116	116	116	116	117	122	125	123	129	132
1940/41.....	136	133	142	143	145	149	151	152	157	165	170	165
1941/42.....	160	162	161	161	149	147	149	155	159	194	191	193
1942/43.....	207	199	217	217	217	217	365	335	382	563	572	525
1943/44.....	451	406	394	351	346	402	366	339	323	323	*323*	323
1944/45.....	323	323	*323*	316	312	*305*	*303*	*303*	*304*	*305*	*305*	*305*
1945/46.....	*305*	*305*	*305*	*305*	*308*	*309*	...	...	...	...	...	...
WHEAT												
1939/40.....	113	114	141	146	132	134	128	138	119	110	122	118
1940/41.....	128	134	153	153	154	127	149	130	131	144	159	170
1941/42.....	180	187	199	194	187	191	191	209	195	207	212	211
1942/43.....	219	212	220	220	344	307	290	298	304	311	349	348
1943/44.....	366	358	365	359	346	366	367	367	363	358	361	360
1944/45.....	253	354	356	359	362	362	362	369	356	351	350	347
1945/46.....	348	352	357	357	359	359	...	...	...	...	...	...
JOWAR												
1939/40.....	96	98	104	105	116	96	96	92	84	88	84	84
1940/41.....	78	78	84	84	88	88	84	84	84	86	102	104
1941/42.....	92	84	100	96	84	88	80	86	92	96	92	94
1942/43.....	98	96	103	103	112	112	184	196	248	252	228	240
1943/44.....	224	184	220	152	148	148	148	163	167	167	167	167
1944/45.....	167	167	167	167	167	167	167	167	167	167	167	167
1945/46.....	167	*167*	*167*	*167*	*167*	167	...	...	...	...	...	...
BAJRA												
1939/40.....	100	91	92	91	91	91	89	89	89	88	96	78
1940/41.....	76	67	72	70	65	72	76	74	74	73	89	92
1941/42.....	89	85	102	98	88	87	85	98	98	122	133	117
1942/43.....	113	135	139	139	139	152	170	174	220	222	230	235
1943/44.....	230	209	209	174	174	174	174	192	186	199	199	199
1944/45.....	199	199	202	169	171	180	180	180	180	180	180	*180*
1945/46.....	*180*	*180*	*180*	180	*180*	180	...	...	...	...	...	...
GRAM												
1939/40.....	107	113	125	132	127	107	102	98	98	97	105	104
1940/41.....	102	110	108	105	97	87	90	90	89	96	105	107
1941/42.....	107	108	132	131	131	99	115	108	128	141	158	175
1942/43.....	180	183	212	225	231	196	209	241	228	374	351	359
1943/44.....	321	328	308	297	242	263	254	244	229	231	242	247
1944/45.....	229	233	232	219	227	231	235	233	234	250	263	267
1945/46.....	266	266	263	265	271	301	...	...	...	...	...	...

* Economic Adviser's index from India, Dept. Food, *The Food Statistics of India* (1946), pp. 150–51. Data in italics are estimated.

TABLE XV.—WORKING-CLASS COST-OF-LIVING INDEXES, QUARTERLY 1939–47*
(*August 1939 = 100*)

Date	Bombay	Ahmedabad	Cawnpore	Madras	Lahore
October 1939	103	103	105	106	104
January 1940	109	111	114	109	108
April 1940	105	107	110	108	110
July 1940	108	108	109	109	102
October 1940	108	108	112	111	111
January 1941	111	108	110	110	113
April 1941	115	111	107	111	120
July 1941	120	121	126	115	114
October 1941	119	126	134	117	133
January 1942	130	130	145	119	143
April 1942	131	136	149	121	146
July 1942	160	160	190	136	166
October 1942	164	166	206	155	186
January 1943	193	237	225	164	264
April 1943	214	256	268	176	267
July 1943	225	288	341	185	275
October 1943	236	329	349	188	320
January 1944	227	293	304	197	293
April 1944	220	278	319	205	292
July 1944	230	289	327	207	282
October 1944	228	303	329	208	264
January 1945	218	282	301	217	283
April 1945	215	256	311	224	302
July 1945	229	267	307	227	290
October 1945	230	297	318	230	284
January 1946	230	267	305	230	293
April 1946	236	273	308	233	305
July 1946	255	308	351	242	298
October 1946	251	300	340	240	309
January 1947	255	284	348	256	319
April 1947	257	285	342	277	323
July 1947	261	299	401	276	...

* Data from P. J. Thomas, *War-Time Prices* (Oxford Pamphlets on Indian Affairs No. 18, Bombay, 1943) and successive issues of India, Dept. Labour, *Indian Labour Gazette*.

TABLE XVI.—INDEX NUMBERS OF WHOLESALE PRICES OF FOODGRAINS AND OTHER ARTICLES REQUIRED BY CULTIVATORS, QUARTERLY 1939–47*
(*August 1939 = 100*[a])

Year	Foodgrains				Other articles			
	Jan.–Mar.	Apr.–June	July–Sept.	Oct.–Dec.	Jan.–Mar.	Apr.–June	July–Sept.	Oct.–Dec.
1939.....	...	...	105[b]	112	...	...	104[b]	121
1940.....	110	104	104	107	129	124	112	112
1941.....	105	105	120	128	118	130	150	155
1942.....	120	138	160	180	159	168	185	216
1943.....	219	288	334	305	241	264	256	248
1944.....	265	265	266	258	240	239	238	237
1945.....	252	251	255	254	237	218	219	218
1946.....	264	266	282	295	217	218	232	240
1947.....	306	316	360	...	236	228	233	...

* Data from India, Min. Food, *Memorandum on the Food Situation in India and Policy of Government up to 15th November 1947* (1947), Appendix III. Foodgrains include wheat, rice, jowar, bajra, gram, and dal. Other articles include sugar, kerosene, cotton manufactures, leather, and galvanized corrugated sheets.

[a] Last week of August for foodgrains, week ending Aug. 19 for other articles.

[b] September 1939.

TABLE XVII.—RETAIL PRICES OF RICE AND WHEAT IN SELECTED MARKETS, ANNUAL AVERAGES 1938/39–1943/44*
(*Rupees and annas per maund of 82⅔ pounds*)

Market	1938/39	1939/40	1940/41	1941/42	1942/43	1943/44
	Rs. As.	Rs. As.	Rs. As.	Rs. As.	Rs.. As.	Rs. As.
RICE						
Calcutta (Bengal)...	4 5	4 12	5 5	6 4	8 15	28 0
Bombay (Bombay) ..	4 10	5 4	5 14	8 3	9 5	10 15
Karachi (Sind)	3 12	4 0	4 7	6 10	7 13	10 0
Delhi (Delhi)	5 12	6 5	7 0	9 11	17 0	23 8
Cawnpore (U.P.) ...	4 12	4 13	5 0	6 13	10 1	18 12
Amritsar(Punjab)..	3 10	3 11	4 8[a]	6 7	10 2	16 0[a]
Madras (Madras) ...	3 15	4 5	4 12	5 4	8 7	9 14
Dibrugarh (Assam) .	3 12	4 9	4 14	5 12	8 0	23 1
Peshawar (N.W.F.P.)	4 7	4 7	5 3	7 5	10 10	17 15
Cuttack (Orissa)....	2 9	2 15	4 1	4 9	5 12	12 12
Nagpur (C.P.).....	3 6	4 0	4 14	5 14[a]	7 13	15 15[a]
Lahore (Punjab)....	4 3	3 11	4 8[a]	6 8	9 11	17 2
WHEAT						
Bombay (Bombay)..	4 4	4 6	4 15	6 5	7 6	13 15
Karachi (Sind)	3 9	4 0	4 6	5 3	6 4	8 0
Patna (Bihar).....	3 0	3 14	4 4	5 2	7 2	17 5
Lahore (Punjab)....	2 9	2 15	3 6	4 5	6 3	11 1[a]
Lyallpur (Punjab) ..	2 9	2 12	3 3	4 0	6 3	11 4[a]
Delhi (Delhi).....	2 14	3 10	3 15	4 11	7 11	12 8
Cawnpore (U.P.) ...	3 5[a]	3 9	4 0	4 15	7 5	14 0
Amritsar (Punjab)..	2 8	3 0	3 4	4 2	6 4	10 14[a]
Peshawar (N.W.F.P.)	2 6	2 14	3 6	4 7	5 15	9 13
Cuttack (Orissa)....	3 15	4 5	4 12	6 6	10 7[a]	...
Nagpur (C.P.).....	3 8	3 14	4 1	4 15	7 12[a]	16 8

* Data from India, Dept. Food, *The Food Statistics of India* (1946), pp. 146, 149.

[a] Average of less than 12 months.

GLOSSARY[1]

Adhikari: Village headman (Madras).
Aman: Rice crop in Bengal sown in May and June and harvested in November and December.
Anna: Indian coin; one-sixteenth of a rupee; about a penny or two cents.
Artiya: See *Pucca artiya.*
Ata, atta: Coarsely ground wheat flour.
Aus: Rice crop in Bengal sown in April and harvested in August and September.
Babool, babul: Common thorny tree (*Acacia arabica*).
Bajra, bajri: Bulrush millet (*Pennisetum typhoideum*).
Bania: Hindu trader who is generally also a moneylender.
Bazar: Market; street lined with shops.
Bigha: Measure of land varying widely; the standard *bigha* is generally five-eighths of an acre.
Boro: Rice crop in Bengal sown in November and harvested in February and March.
Bund: Dam; field embankment.
Candy: See *Khandy.*
Chakki: Hand mill or quern for grinding wheat and millets.
Chapati, chappati, chupati: Thin flat cake of unleavened bread.
Chaukidar, chowkidar: Watchman.
Chittak, chattak: Measure of weight or volume; 1/16 of a *seer*, or 2.057 ounces.
Cholam: See *Jowar* (Madras).
Circle: Subdivision of a *taluk, taluka* or *tahsil.*
Collector or *Deputy Commissioner*: Chief civil officer in charge of a district, responsible for all revenue administration and for law and order.
Commissioner: Officer in charge of the civil administration of a division, consisting of several districts.
Crore, karor: Ten million.
Dak, dhak: Jungle tree with scarlet flowers (*Butea frondosa*).
Deputy Commissioner: see *Collector.*
Drona: Measure of volume; 1/7 of a bushel or 16 *prasthas* (Sanskrit).
Durbar: Ceremonial court presided over by a Chief, Viceroy, Governor, etc.; audience hall; government of an Indian State.
Ghat: Landing place or steps on river bank; mountain pass; in European usage, mountain range (especially applied to Western and Eastern Ghats).
Ghee, ghi: Butter clarified by heating just beyond boiling point; it has a high fat content (70–80 percent) and is used for cooking purposes.
Godown: Storeroom or warehouse.
Goonda: Gangster; bully; racketeer.
Gram: Chick-pea (*Cicer arietinum*).

[1] Many of the items in this glossary are taken from *The Indian Year Book and Who's Who for 1947* (Bennett, Coleman and Co. Ltd., Bombay).

Gur, jaggery: Sugar-cane juice, boiled, clarified, and reduced to semisolid consistency in open pans, where on cooling off it produces a more or less hard, dry crystalline mass, ranging in color from yellow to dark brown.

Hariali: Couch grass (*Cynodon dactylon*).

Hectare: Measure of land; 2.471 acres.

Jaggery: See *Gur*.

Jagir, jaghir: Land grant; estate given as a reward or on a service tenure.

Jowar: Large millet (*Andropogon sorghum* or *Sorghum vulgare*).

Kachcha artiya: See *Pucca artiya*.

Kans: Deep-rooted grass (*Imperata arundinacea*).

Khair: Gum-producing and timber tree (*Acacia catechu*).

Khal: Canal; creek (Delta region of Bengal).

Khandy, candy: Measure of weight; 784 pounds of cotton lint (Bombay market).

Kharif: Autumn harvest; crops sown at beginning of rains and harvested from October to December, e.g., rice, jowar, bajra, sesamum.

Khatti: Grain-storage pit.

Korra: Minor millet (*Setaria italica*).

Kulfi malai: A dish prepared from cream, nuts, and ice cream.

Lakh, lac: Hundred thousand.

Malguzari: System of land tenure under which a village is held in proprietary right by an individual who is responsible for paying the revenue, and to whom the tenants pay rent (Central Provinces).

Mamlatdar: Officer in charge of a *taluka* (Bombay).

Maund: Measure of weight varying in different places; the standard *maund* is 82.28 pounds.

Monsoon: Periodic rain-bearing winds, applied to the two rainy seasons in India—the southwest monsoon, from June to September, and the northwest monsoon which prevails in the southeast from October to December (from Arabic *marsam*, a season).

Paddy: Rice grain (*Oryza sativa*) in the husk; 1.16 pounds of paddy equals 12⅔ ounces of rice; approximate relation of paddy to rice is 4:3.

Patel: Village headman (Bombay).

Patwari: Village accountant.

Pinjrapole: Refuge home for cattle.

Prastha: Measure of volume; 1/16 of a *drona*, or 1/112 of a bushel (Sanskrit).

Procurement: Purchase of supplies by government.

Pucca artiya: Wholesale dealer, as distinguished from *kachcha artiya*, or commission agent.

Purdah: Veil or curtain; practice of keeping women in seclusion.

Rabi: Spring harvest; crops sown in autumn and harvested at the end of the cold weather, e.g., wheat, gram, linseed, rape, mustard, barley.

Raj: Government; sovereignty.

Rayat, rayatwari: See *Ryot* and *Ryotwari*.

Rice: Husked paddy.

Rupee: Indian coin; in 1946, Rs. 13 was equivalent to £1 sterling, or $4.02, or R. 1 was equivalent to 1*s*. 6*d*. or 30 cents.

Ryot: Agriculturist; peasant; farmer.

Ryotwari: System of land tenure in which land revenue is imposed on the actual occupants of holdings.

Samai: Minor millet (*Panicum crus-galli*, var. *frumentaceum*).

Seer: Measure of weight or volume varying in different parts of the country; the standard *seer* is 2.057 pounds, 16 *chittaks* or 80 *tolas*.

Sesamum: Oilseed (*Sesamum indicum*).

Shanbog: Village accountant (Mysore, Kanara).

Supa: Curry; soup; sauce; etc. (Sanskrit).

Tahsil: Revenue subdivision of a district.

Tahsildar, tehsildar: Officer in charge of a *tahsil*.

Talati: Village accountant (Sind, Gujarat).

Taluk, taluka: Revenue subdivision of a district (Bombay, Madras, Mysore).

Tank: Lake; reservoir; pond.

Til: Oilseed (*Sesamum indicum*).

Tola: Measure of weight or volume; 1/80 of a *seer*, or 179.665 (180) grains Troy.

Vanaspati: Tall tree, especially one that bears fruit without blossoms; tree, plant, vegetation, etc.; "artificial ghee," hydrogenated oil manufactured from oilseeds, etc., as a substitute for ghee in cooking (modern usage).

Varagu, varigalu: Minor millet (*Panicum miliacem*).

Zemindar, zamindar: Landholder.

Zemindari, zamindari: System of land tenure in which land revenue is imposed on a landlord instead of on the actual occupant.

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