Bengal Famine of 1943

THE AMERICAN RESPONSE

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DEAN OF SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
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TO

Sri V. B. Nataraj Sastrigal

Preface

Twenty-one years ago, in the small university town of Lawrence, Kansas, I met an Indian student of Kashmiri origin. We talked for a little while, and he invited me to have a meal with him. When I entered his tiny basement apartment I was struck by about half a dozen pictures stuck on the wall with cellophane tape. They portrayed men, women and children—Indians all—in an extreme state of emaciation. My new-found friend told me that the human wrecks shown in the photographs were the victims of the Great Bengal Famine of 1943.

Of course, I remembered similar pictures that I had seen in newspapers during the year of the Famine. I asked my friend why he kept those pictures around him in his flat in America. He replied simply that they would remain with him to remind him of that dark page in recent Indian history when our people, reduced to helplessness and impotence, and unable to unite for concerted action, meekly witnessed the tragedy of hundreds of thousands of their compatriots dying of starvation.

It is noteworthy that so terrible a cataclysm as the Bengal Famine did not linger significantly in the Indian consciousness for any length of time. Perhaps it is a good thing; perhaps not. Be that as it may. But from that encounter with an unknown Indian in Lawrence, Kansas, the Bengal Famine has remained a theme of continuing interest to me. I still continue to hope that some scholar in the field of contemporary Indian history will write a comprehensive and interpretative account of the Famine, answering the many perplexing questions about the response of our people, their leaders, and their alien rulers of the time to the death by starvation of three million men, women, and children. It is easy enough to shift the blame on to others, especially foreigners, but was that all that there was to it?

During 1951, the first year of my stay in the United States, there was considerable public discussion in that country about the so-called "wheat loan" to India. On the request of the Government of India, the United States was to send to India two million tons of wheat to enable our country to tide over a critical shortage of food. In the years that followed, as is well known, substantial quantities of foodgrains flowed from the United States to India. When I returned to India in 1955 and joined the newly established Department of American Studies in the Indian School of International Studies, it was but natural that I should begin to give some attention to an examination of the role of food as an instrument of American foreign policy.

It was then that I began to look for information concerning the response of the United States to the Bengal Famine. Based on such sources and materials as were available, I wrote a paper that was published initially in *International Studies* and subsequently in a slightly expanded form in my *Undercurrents in American Foreign Relations* (Bombay, 1965). While they attracted some attention for the new light they threw on a neglected issue, I regarded them as unfinished and incomplete. I thought that it was necessary to find out whether the President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and his principal civilian and military advisers were aware of the magnitude of the calamity in Bengal and whether any serious discussion took place among them on an appropriate American response to the crisis.

In two successive visits to the United States I examined a wide range of materials including unpublished files of the Department of State, the papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the personal papers of a number of prominent personalities of the Roosevelt Administration. These materials enabled me to have a much clearer and fuller understanding than before of the response—or the lack of it—of the United States to the Bengal Famine.

As I see it, a substantial burden of responsibility for the calamity in Bengal should rest on Winston Churchill. President Roosevelt and his principal associates were aware of the nature and magnitude of the famine, but failed to initiate any concrete action because of their preoccupation with the war effort and their reluctance to offend Churchill on matters relating to India.

The Americans were, in effect, virtually silent onlookers of Churchill's actions, if not his accessories. I have used the expression "Churchillism" a few times in my work. While Churchill is regarded as a great champion of liberty in the Western world, "Churchillism" was a monstrous abomination as far as the nations under British colonial rule were concerned. By "Churchillism" I mean a philosophy of imperialist arrogance, buttressed by a racist belief in "the white man's burden," expressed in Machiavellian, repressive, and callous actions to preserve and promote imperial interests regardless of the agonies they inflicted on the subject peoples. For decades Churchill harboured and propagated his malady. But during the years of the Second World War when he was the undisputed leader of Britain, "Churchillism" came into its own, with consequences that hardly add lustre to the history of the country that he loved passionately.

When, about a year ago, Mr B.R. Nanda, Director of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, invited me to deliver a lecture on any significant theme of my choice, I gladly accepted and presented my views on the attitude of the United States towards the Famine. Subsequently, in response to his suggestion, I prepared the material for publication. I am grateful to the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library for sponsoring the publication of the work.

A word of explanation may be in order on the longish appendix included in this volume containing excerpts from the debates in the U.S. House of Representatives. The debates on the denial of assistance to India through the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation constituted the only time when the Famine and its aftermath in our country were discussed comprehensively in the United States Congress. In fact, there was only one other occasion, during the entire period of the Second World War, when India came up for discussion at all in the U.S. Congress. That occasion was in August 1942 when the developments in India following the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi and other nationalist leaders figured in a few speeches in the Senate. The debates on UNRRA in the House have, in my opinion, some importance for the student of Indo-American relations.

I would like to express my gratitude to Dr A. Appadorai,

Founder-Director of the Indian School of International Studies; Mr Girja Kumar and his colleagues of the School's Library; Mr A.S. Hebbar, our Editor of Publications; the staff of the libraries in the United States where I gathered American source materials; Mr J.J. Singh who gave our Library the valuable archives of the India League of America; and Mr A.L. Anand who patiently and efficiently took care of all typing relating to this work.

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Chapter One

AGONY OF BENGAL

One of the great human tragedies of the Second World War—indeed in all human history—was the murder of millions of Jews organized by the Nazi leaders of Germany. The gruesome story of Hitler's efforts to find a "final solution" for the Jewish problem has been chronicled in many works. Recently a crime of equal magnitude was perpetrated in East Bengal as the military dictator of Pakistan, General Yahya Khan, sought to work out not only a "final solution" for the vast Hindu minority of the area but also to impose by brute force, a colonial status on the people of Bangladesh—Hindu and Muslim alike. Anguished appeals for help from the beleaguered people of East Bengal failed to evoke any meaningful response from several of the major Powers of the world, including the United States. The slaughter continued and millions of East Bengalis became refugees in India. These developments bring to one's mind an earlier calamity that the sons of Bengal endured—one that involved the death by starvation of many hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children. I refer to the Great Bengal Famine of 1943.

The present work is concerned with the attitude of the United States Government headed by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt towards the tragedy of Bengal. An attempt will be made to examine whether the leaders of the United States Government were aware of the onset and development of the crisis and the magnitude of the calamity that fell to the lot of the people of India, who at that time were under the rule of America's ally, Britain. What was the response of the American leaders to such

information as they received, and what were the factors that influenced their response? Such a discussion needs to be placed in the perspective of the conditions posed by the war, the American alliance with Britain, and the Roosevelt Administration's attitude towards the struggle of the Indian nationalists for emancipation from British rule. The present writer has dealt elsewhere in detail with these issues; however, it will be appropriate to give a brief description of the American approach towards Indian developments till the eve of the Great Famine.[1]

Till the outbreak of the Second World War no significant interest was taken in Indian affairs by leaders of the United States. Britain was securely entrenched in India and American leaders evinced no particular desire to advise the British to withdraw from India. After Dunkirk, Britain sorely needed American assistance and the Roosevelt Administration had an opportunity to exert some influence. A small group in the State Department that included A. A. Berle, Jr., Assistant Secretary, and Wallace Murray, Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, vainly urged, in May 1941, that the United States should call upon the British Government to explore the possibility of bringing India into the partnership of nations on terms equal to those of other members of the British Commonwealth. Subsequent efforts by Berle and Murray, and by Louis A. Johnson, Personal Representative of the President in India, to promote an American initiative for the solution of the Indian political crisis found no favour with Roosevelt, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, and Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles.

Already, at the Atlantic Ocean meeting with Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Roosevelt had publicly committed his country, which was not a belligerent, to the cause of supporting Britain in the war against Hitlerism. The President also committed the United States, in effect, to a policy of silence and of non-interference, at least for the duration of the war, in respect of Great Britain's imperial "possessions." America's entry into the war only served to reinforce his conviction that Anglo-American solidarity was of supreme importance for winning the war as well as the peace that would follow. Issues like independence for India were not to be allowed to deflect the United States from the course

of co-operation with Britain. Such matters could wait and receive attention once the enemy was defeated.

The President believed that the cause of democracy and the well-being of all mankind would be promoted by the course that he had embarked on. He could, therefore, see little point in responding positively to the communications that he received from Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru as well as from a few individuals and groups in the United States stressing the importance of an American commitment to the objective of freedom not merely for peoples under Nazi domination but for those under Western colonial rule as well.[2] He had little sympathy for the demand voiced by the Indian National Congress in the spring and summer of 1942 that the British should "Quit India." Viewing the Indian situation from a military point of view, he was perturbed by the prospect of widespread anti-British disturbances breaking out in India. Both he and Hull tended to regard the actions of Gandhi and Nehru as hindering the Allied war effort and thus, consciously or otherwise, indirectly helping Axis designs.[3] The mood of the U.S. Congress reflected that of the President.

Early in 1942 many American newspapers had criticized the British Government for adopting an intransigent attitude towards the Indian demand for self-government. But Winston Churchill's shrewd manoeuvre in sending Sir Stafford Cripps to India and the skilful manner in which the British point of view was propagated in the United States under the guidance of Ambassador Lord Halifax brought about a significant change in the attitude of the Press. The failure of the Cripps Mission was attributed to the blindness and unreasonableness of the nationalist leaders. When the "Quit India" demand was announced by Gandhi, American Press comment was, in general, adverse. The *Washington Post* wrote:

> If at this extremely critical moment the Indian nationalists choose to pursue a course which gives aid and comfort to the enemies of mankind they will forever bar themselves from all communion with decent men. They will brand themselves as traitors to civilization and by helping the enemies of freedom will make it abundantly clear that they do not merit the freedom they professedly seek.[4]

Other editorial writers were even less inhibited in their characterization of Indian leaders than their Washington contemporary.

Thus, as the year 1942 drew to a close, American opinion, as reflected in the Congress and in the Press and as expounded by the Roosevelt Administration, did not view with favour any action that might arouse the opposition of the British Government or even embarrass it in any way. The crystallization of this attitude on the part of elite groups in the United States had an important bearing on the American response to the Great Indian Famine of 1943 and its aftermath. While waging a crusade against the evil forces of Fascism, the leaders of the United States and the moulders of opinion allowed their vision to be blurred by the heartless dogmas of Churchillism.

On 5 September 1942 the State Department received a long telegram from the American Mission in New Delhi concerning the political situation in India. In the telegram was a paragraph with a single sentence that was to prove to be of tragic significance:

"Consular officers throughout India report increasing shortages of food."[5]

In October 1942 a cyclone of extraordinary force, followed by three tidal waves, struck the western districts of Bengal, causing enormous loss of life and destruction of standing crops. British military authorities clamped down so severe a censorship on news relating to the disaster that for nearly three weeks the rest of India and the world remained unaware of what had happened. When the authorities were ready to allow some news to trickle through, they probably did not realize that the cyclone and the tidal waves were only the prelude to an immensely greater catastrophe.[6] Death by starvation was the doom that was marked out for hundreds of thousands of the men, women, and children of Bengal.

It was early in January 1943 that the first reports began to appear in the American Press to the effect that India faced a difficult food problem. The Commerce and Food Member of the British Viceroy's Executive Council, Nalini Ranjan Sarkar, had declared in a speech in Calcutta that the food situation in the country "has become truly serious." Quoting this statement—virtually the first acknowledgment by a high-ranking representative of the Government of India of the existence of a critical situation—the corres-

pondent of the *New York Times* in India, Herbert L. Matthews, wrote that food shortage was the most important problem confronting the country and that political agitators might use it as a club to attack the Government.[7]

On 11 January 1943 the American *chargé d'affaires* in London informed the Secretary of State that the British Press had suddenly begun to give prominence to the food shortage in India. He quoted an article from the Delhi correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* to the effect that the economic distress in India was assuming "formidable proportions." He cited another despatch in *The Times* that described the food situation in Calcutta as "truly serious."[8]

A few weeks later the widely circulated American magazine, *Time,* featured a story entitled "Death by Hunger," in which it spoke of the dark days that lay ahead for India's famished millions. The title might well have appeared to many American and even Indian readers as yet another example of *Time*'s flamboyant sensationalism. To them it must have been inconceivable that large numbers of men, women, and children would be left to starve to death. Had not the *New York Times* "revealed" that the Personal Representative of the President in India, William Phillips, was carefully studying the Indian food situation? The newspaper had also reported, quoting "informed sources," that lend-lease agreements would soon be concluded between the United States and India.[9] Would not those accords assure India of timely and generous help from America even as in the case of Britain and the Soviet Union? Indeed, had not America's President, in his eloquent message to Congress on lend-lease operations early in December 1942, proclaimed his determination to send succour to suffering humanity? He had said:

> The Nazis and Japanese have plundered innocent men and women in a campaign of organized terror. They have stripped the lands they hold of food and other resources. They have used hunger as an instrument of the slavery they seek to impose.
>
> Our policy is the direct opposite. United Nations forces will bring food to the starving and medicine for the sick. Every aid possible will be given to restore each of the liberated countries to soundness and strength. . . .[10]

If food was to be assured to the countries freed from the Axis yoke, would it not be made available even more generously to India—a bastion of the Allies and a founding member of the United Nations?

It was not long before Bengal was in the grip of the most severe famine of the twentieth century. Conditions of acute scarcity afflicted various other parts of the country as well. Even as the propaganda mills of the Allies turned out countless leaflets proclaiming "Freedom from Want" as one of the basic objectives of the United Nations, hungry men, women, and children left hearth and home in the famine-stricken districts of Bengal and trekked wearily towards Calcutta. Not food but slow death awaited many of them in the great metropolis, which, at that time, was playing host to a large number of British and American soldiers. The death toll in the famine, as estimated by a commission appointed by the Government of India, was one and a half million. Responsible non-official circles were of the opinion that *fully three million Indians perished owing to starvation.* The thousands who lost their lives in the Great Bengal Famine of 1943 were, as shall be seen as truly the victims of the Second World War as were the casualties in battlefields and bombed cities.[11]

Even in the years before the war India was not self-sufficient in food, viewed in terms of meeting the nutritional requirements of its population. Food producers were subsistence farmers who had only a small marketable surplus. Though imports of food-grains were not of great magnitude compared to total production (they averaged a million tons a year), they provided the indispensable margin of safety and contributed to the maintenance of public confidence. Even when a million tons of imports were available, the per capita consumption in India was among the lowest in the world. A report prepared by the Government of India in 1946 (while the British were still ruling the country) thus described the pre-war food problem in India:

> As the supply of other foods such as milk, milk products, fats, fruits, vegetables, fish, meat, etc., was not substantial, the nutritional content of the food supply available per head was both inadequate in quantity and poor in quality. In view of the

> fact that even what was produced was not equally distributed among the entire population, it was estimated that roughly 30 per cent of the population was very inadequately fed and had a much smaller quantity of cereals, pulses, etc., per head than the national average. This meant that more than 115 million in India were suffering both from under-nutrition and malnutrition before the war and were therefore not really in a position to face further shortages.[12]

British Indian authorities could not have been unaware of the fact that any serious food shortage would have a far more disastrous effect on India than on a country where the people were relatively well fed. Since the country did not have any surplus to draw on, a substantial reduction of imports was bound to result in widespread starvation.

The war in the East and the loss of Thailand, Indo-China, and, most important of all, Burma, to the Japanese thus posed a tremendous danger to India's food position. These countries were the principal exporters of rice to India. The stationing of a large number of British and American troops in India inevitably imposed some additional strain on available food supplies. Further, the British authorities did not hesitate to draw on India's rapidly diminishing food stocks for supplies to other countries which they regarded as strategically important for the war effort. The American Minister in Iran, for instance, informed the State Department in April 1942 that the British had furnished Iran about 40,000 tons of foodgrains during the previous nine months, drawn mostly from India, and that they were "now sending 3,000 tons monthly to East Iran from India."[13] Writing to Josef Stalin in July 1942, Churchill stated that "there is enough" food in India. Learning about these glad tidings, the United States Government approached the British Government in November 1942 with a request for additional supplies to Iran from Indian stocks.[14] The Americans were aware and appreciative of Churchill's generosity in this respect. If railroad equipment was the bottleneck holding back the flow of supplies to West Asia and the Soviet Union, the Prime Minister was willing to take rails, rolling-stock, and equipment away from India. Major-General S. Woodburn Kirby, in his official

British history of the Second World War, records that in 1939 and 1940, India "generously released ten per cent of her railway equipment and many key operators" to meet military requirements elsewhere.[15] When to these factors is added the tremendous strain on the Indian transport system imposed by military and internal security requirements within India itself, the effects on food distribution in the country can be easily perceived.

Early in January 1943 the British Prime Minister took another decision that was to have a direct bearing on the developing tragedy in India. Deeply concerned over the stock position of the United Kingdom in respect of foodstuffs and raw materials, Churchill ordered the reduction of sailings to the "Indian Ocean region" by 60 per cent. The Indian people and British military units in West Asia, he decreed, "must live on their stocks and on their share of the 40 ships per month. The Ministry of War Transport drew Churchill's attention to the possibility that such a drastic reduction of sailings to the region might result in *"violent changes and perhaps cataclysms"* in the sea-borne commerce of countries like India. The Prime Minister remained unmoved.[16]

While these developments, brought on by the war, contributed to a critical food situation in India as a whole, additional adverse circumstances brought tragedy to the people of the province of Bengal.

The British military defeat in Burma had put Bengal virtually on the frontline of the war. From areas exposed to possible enemy attacks military authorities removed stocks of rice as part of a "rice denial" policy. In addition, they seized nearly two-thirds of the boats belonging to the local citizens as part of their "boat denial" policy. In the delta area of Bengal, where river transport was the most important and often the only means of transportation, this step had especially grave consequences. The cyclone and tidal waves of October 1942 and their devastating impact on agricultural production brought on the people of Bengal a period of misery, degradation, starvation, and death on a vast scale. Neither Germany nor Japan in its hour of defeat nor any of their victims had been left to face the problem of hundreds of thousands of citizens starving to death. Such a traumatic experience fell only to the lot of India.

The failure of the British-controlled Government of India to formulate adequate plans to meet the crisis, the unhelpful attitude of provincial Governments having surplus food stocks, the ineptitude of the Government of Bengal to concert effective measures of relief following the natural calamities, and the insensitivity of many Indians to the sufferings of their own brethren—these tragic developments were evident for all to see. No Indian can look back on this period of ethical and moral breakdown without experiencing a sense of shame and horror. This must be borne in mind particularly when we examine critically the response of other countries like the United States to the famine in India.

In normal times a combination of several adverse circumstances could have been met by increased imports from abroad. But 1943 was a year of war. The British rulers of India and their allies had their attention focussed exclusively on military victory with the minimum possible loss of lives among their own peoples. The tide of war was, however, clearly beginning to turn in favour of the Allies. To the great warlords—British, American and Russian—engrossed in planning future blows against the Axis, the calamity in Bengal was of far less concern than these military developments.

NOTES

[1]M.S. Venkataramani and B.K. Shrivastava, "The United States and the Cripps Mission," *India Quarterly* (New Delhi), 19 (July-September 1963), pp. 214-65; "The United States and the 'Quit India' Demand," *ibid.*, 20 (April-June 1943), pp. 101-39; "America and the Indian Political Crisis, July-August 1942," *International Studies* (New Delhi), 6 (July 1964), pp. 1-48.

[2]The Personal Representative of the President in India (Louis A. Johnson) to the Acting Secretary of State (Sumner Welles), "For the President and Acting Secretary Welles," 13 April 1942, enclosing the text of a letter addressed to the President by Jawaharlal Nehru, 12 April 1942, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1942* (Washington, 1959). I, pp. 635-37. This source will hereafter be referred to as *FR 1942*, I. Officer-in-Charge at New Delhi (George R. Merrell) to the Secretary of State, enclosing a report of an interview with Nehru by James L. Berry, an official of the American Mission 25 May 1942, *ibid.*, p. 664. Nehru to Johnson, 25 May 1942, *ibid.*, p. 665. Officer-in-Charge at New Delhi to the Secretary of State, enclosing the text of a message from Nehru to Johnson, 4 June 1942, *ibid.*, pp. 668-69. M.K. Gandhi to the President, 1

July 1942, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (hereafter to be described as FDRL), Hyde Park, New York.

[3]Secretary Hull told Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai, British-appointed Agent-General for India in Washington, that "Gandhi is evidently doing all in his power to play into the hands of the Japanese by preaching non-resistance" and that "no practical steps of resistance were being advocated by other leaders, including Nehru." Memorandum of Conversation with the Agent-General of India by the Secretary of State, 15 June 1942, *FR 1942*, note 2, I, pp. 670-72.

[4]Quoted in the *Hindu* (Madras), 6 August 1942, p. 5.

[5]The despatch from the officiating Officer-in-Charge at New Delhi discussed political developments in India since the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, and other leaders of the Indian National Congress on 9 August 1942. Officiating Officer-in-Charge at New Delhi (Norris Haselton) to the Secretary of State, 3 September 1942, *FR 1942*, I, p. 731. About a month earlier the Officer-in-Charge had informed the State Department of shortages and high prices of foodstuffs in the Bombay region. The Officer-in-Charge at New Delhi (George R. Merrell) to the Secretary of State, 8 August 1942, *ibid.*, p. 707.

[6]*Famine Inquiry Commission Report on Bengal* (New Delhi, 1945); (Sir) Henry Knight, *Food Administration in India 1939-47* (Stanford, 1954), pp. 67-106. On British censorship concerning the cyclone and the famine that followed, see Ian Stephens, *Monsoon Morning* (London, 1966), pp. 71-2, 187-89. Stephens, a British national, was the editor of the *Statesman* of Calcutta.

[7]*New York Times*, 8 January 1943, p. 16.

[8]The *Chargé d'Affaires* in London (H. Freeman Matthews) to the Secretary of State, 11 January 1943, 845.5018/13, Files of the Department of State, National Archives, Washington DC.

[9]*Time* (Chicago), 41 (8 February 1943), pp. 26-7. *New York Times*, 22 January 1943, p. 16.

[10]*New York Times*, 12 December 1942, pp. 1, 11.

[11]*Famine Inquiry Commission Report on Bengal*, note 6. In a speech before the United Nations General Assembly in London on 14 February 1946, Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar, delegate from India, stated that according to non-official estimates the death toll in the Bengal famine was three million. United Nations, *General Assembly Official Records*, 1 Sess., 33rd Plenary Meeting, 14 February 1946, p. 490.

[12]Note by Vishnu Sahay, 20 March 1946, Government of India, Department of Food, File No. Py 66 (174)/46.

[13]The Minister in Iran (Louis G. Dreyfus, Jr) to the Secretary of State, 6 April 1943, *Foreign Relations of United States, 1942* (Washington, 1963), IV, p. 122.

[14]Winston Churchill to Josef Stalin, received by Stalin on 18 July 1942, text in Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, *Correspondence Between the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain During the Great Patriotic War* (Moscow, 1957), I, p. 55. The Minister in Iran to the Secretary of State, 14 November 1942; Memorandum of Conversation with W. G. Hayter and G. F. Thorold,

First Secretaries in the British Embassy, by John D. Jernegan of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs. 17 November 1942; the Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the United Kingdom (John A. Winant), 18 November 1942; *Foreign Relations of the United States 1942*, note 13, IV, pp. 195-96, 197-99, 205. The American Government proposed that the quantity of foodgrains furnished by India to meet the emergency could be replaced later by shipments from North America.

[15]Government of India, *Report of the Foodgrains Policy Committee 1943* (New Delhi, 1943), pp. 28-31. (Major-General) S. Woodburn Kirby, *History of the Second World War: The War Against Japan* (London, 1958), II, pp. 188-89.

[16]Excerpts from the Prime Minister's memorandum in C. B. A. Behrens, *History of Second World War, United Kingdom Civil Series: Merchant Shipping And the Demands of War* (London, 1955), p. 320. Emphasis added.

Chapter Two

THE BOARD OF ECONOMIC WARFARE

In its public posture at this time the Roosevelt Administration represented itself as profoundly concerned over the question of assuring adequate food for the world's millions. Early in 1943 Roosevelt was engaged in discussions with a group of advisers on holding an international conference, under the auspices of the United Nations, to discuss post-war food and agricultural problems. The President made an announcement concerning the proposed conference at a Press conference on 23 February 1943. Less than three months later the idea was transformed into reality as representatives of 38 Governments gathered at "The Homestead," a luxurious resort hotel in Hot Springs, Virginia.

"The eyes of the world will be focussed on the conference," Secretary of State Cordell Hull wrote to members of the American delegation. The goal of the conference, declared the leader of the British delegation, was to "insure to all mankind a supply of food which is secure, adequate, and suitable." In a message read at the opening session of the conference, Roosevelt declared that the nations of the world, individually and collectively, "must see to it that no hindrances, whether of international trade, of transportation or of internal distribution, were allowed to prevent any nation or group of citizens within a nation from obtaining the food necessary for health."[1] These were bold and challenging words and it was not to be very long before the President was confronted with the problem of how to live up to his own professions in responding to the famine in India.

The British delegation had no intention of bringing to the notice

of the conference the developing crisis in India. Even before the conference began, the British Government had obtained the concurrence of the United States to the view that no issues of a general or political nature likely to provoke controversy should be brought before the delegates. "It is better to have vague resolutions than to embark on controversial topics," the British Embassy had urged in a note to the State Department.[2] In a Declaration of Principles placed before the conference, the British delegation asserted that the conference should not concern itself with *wartime production or distribution of food nor with the organization of relief.*

Representatives of European Governments, however, made no secret of their impatience over considering post-war problems and sought to know what sort of assistance could be expected by their countries immediately after their liberation from Axis occupation. The Soviet delegation loudly called for urgent shipments to feed the Red Army as well as civilians in areas won back from the Germans. So vocal were the European delegates that the State Department was constrained to send Assistant Secretary Dean Acheson to Hot Springs to calm the Europeans and to give them a specific assurance that a separate United Nations conference would be held in the near future to discuss the provision of relief to countries liberated from the Axis yoke.[3] Amidst all this clamour the Indian delegate, Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai, a diligent and loyal servant of the British, remained a model of propriety and self-restraint. Faithfully abiding by the British "Declaration of Principles," he remained mute on the question of the food situation in his country and stoically refrained from any attempt to win the sympathy of the delegates of other nations.

The conference adopted a series of resolutions that were unexceptionable from the point of view of the criteria that the British had demanded. "Its conclusions, for the most part, consist of a set of platitudes that no one would dream of questioning," wrote the *New York Times.*[4] *Amerasia* was virtually alone among American newspapers and journals in referring to the Indian food crisis in its appraisal of the conference, and in asserting that there was a close connection between the food situation and the political deadlock in that country. The journal argued that if the aim of the Hot Springs conference was to bring about a world-wide increase in

the production and consumption of food, primary attention must be given to the problems of India and China.[5]

One important result of the conference was the setting up of an Interim Commission on Food and Agriculture which held its inaugural session in Washington on 15 July 1943. Highlighting the show, which was held at the Pan American Union, were an address by Acheson and a response by the ever-obliging Agent-General of India, Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai. "We must pool our energies in the fight against hunger and drought just as we do against the Axis," the Assistant Secretary declared. The Indian delegate spoke in a vein that must have won the applause of the Americans and the approbation of his British superiors. Not one word did he utter about the march of starvation in his motherland. Eloquently he proclaimed his profound gratitude to the United States Government and his deep admiration for President Roosevelt's dedication to the cause of the uplift of struggling humanity. Bajpai did not neglect to pay his tribute to the memory of the fathers of the American nation, who, according to him, had wisely ranked the pursuit of happiness among man's highest activities.[6]

At the time when the Hot Springs conference was being planned, the British Government had sought to give the impression that the food situation in India was not very critical. The Secretary of State for India, L. S. Amery, announced in the House of Commons: "There is no famine and no widespread prevalence of acute shortage." The Agricultural Attaché of the American Embassy in London informed his Secretary of State that despatches had appeared in the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* to the effect that the food situation in India had improved. The Department also received from a British officer of the India Supply Mission in Washington a copy of a note on the food position in India prepared by the Government of India which did not contain any indication that a disastrous famine was in the offing.[7]

The American Mission in New Delhi probably received reports from the Government of India that the food situation was being vigorously tackled. Towards the end of January 1943 the Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, touched briefly on the food issue in the course of a wide-ranging discussion with William Phillips, Personal

Representative of President Roosevelt in India. "There was nothing particularly new in what he had to tell me," Phillips wrote in his diary. The reports that Phillips received from his own staff in the weeks that followed were perhaps not particularly alarming. On 20 April 1943, Norris S. Haselton, a Secretary in the Mission, submitted a comprehensive memorandum to Phillips in which he presented an optimistic picture of the food situation. He wrote:

> A shortage of rice is expected to develop later in the year, but with ample stocks of wheat, millet, and other foodgrains in its possession, and the largest wheat crop in the country's history now being harvested, the Central Government should be able to keep the food situation under control in future without too much difficulty.

The State Department was thus not particularly alarmed about the Indian situation around the time when Roosevelt made his initial announcement regarding the convocation of an international conference on food. When an Indian businessman residing in New York urged immediate steps to meet the food shortage in India, Wallace Murray, Adviser to the State Department on Political Relations, stated that officers of the Department's Division of Near Eastern Affairs "have of course been following the food situation in India with regard to its possible effect on political matters." He added that the Department of Agriculture and the Board of Economic Warfare (BEW) were also undoubtedly studying the problem in greater detail.[9]

Meanwhile, life proceeded in serene fashion in New Delhi. As a special mark of appreciation of the contribution of the United States to the common war effort, Lord Linlithgow decided on an unprecedented move—a gala affair in the Viceregal Mansion to commemorate the Fourth of July, the American Independence Day. Several hundred American military personnel were invited for the celebration and they solemnly filed past "Their Excellencies," who stood in the centre of the great Darbar Hall. After the reception, a select group of Very Important Persons accompanied the Viceroy and his wife downstairs for a special dinner while the smaller fry partook of a buffet supper in several rooms. The Royal Air Force

band was in attendance and the American guests danced gaily.

The representatives of the United States Board of Economic Warfare were, around that time, putting finishing touches to a report on the food situation in India. The document, entitled *Indian Agriculture and Food Problems,* was submitted to the American Government some time in July 1943. The appraisal of the situation contained in the document was startlingly different from that made by Haselton of the New Delhi Mission three months earlier. The document deserves to be described in some detail because of the nature of the information and the dire prediction that it placed before American policy-makers. The report said:

> *Food Crisis in India:* . . .Famine has been a real and ever present threat, and it is now reliably estimated that unless substantial quantities of food-stuffs are forthcoming from outside *sources, hundreds of thousands of deaths from starvation will occur in India during the current year.*
>
> . . Statistics show that the average person in India has been eating less than a pound of food per day, consisting chiefly of starches. Except for prisoners in Indian Jails, whose diet is fixed by law within safe subsistence limits, the average daily diet is equivalent to about 1600 calories. The average Englishman or American, by comparison, consumes between 3500 and 3800 calories daily. According to nutrition experts, a minimum subsistence diet should contain 2000 calories per day, and consist of proteins, protective foods as well as starches. . . .
>
> *Effect of the War:* Since the outbreak of war, India's food situation has grown progressively more critical. Supplies that formerly came from Burma and Thailand were cut off as soon as those countries fell into the hands of the enemy. Small and irregular imports of wheat continue to come from Australia whenever communications permit, but rice imports are negligible and wheat is beyond the reach of most of the Indian people. The war has added thousands of new consumers to India's already under-nourished population—refugees from the Japanese-invaded countries to the east, technical experts who have been sent to India to help speed war production, and the armed forces of the United Nations. . . . Since the Indian people's physi-

cal resistance has been depleted by years of living below the subsistence level, there has been a large increase in nutritional-deficiency diseases and in sickness of all kinds.

Implications for the United Nations: It is reasonable to assume that any large scale military operation to dislodge the Japanese from South-Eastern Asia and China will require a suitable land base. India alone, at present, provides a favorable operating base from which a large scale offensive can be launched against the enemy.... However, India will continue to be only a *potential* source of supply until definite steps are taken to help solve the domestic food crisis. Not only are *deaths from starvation on the increase;* there are also growing unrest and some industrial strikes....

Food imports from Australia, Africa, and the United States while helping to feed the technicians, refugee population, and United Nations forces in India, are not sufficient to provide entirely for these groups, much less to relieve the food shortage of the native population.... *Immediate relief shipments of large quantities of foodstuffs will ameliorate the situation during the winter of 1943-1944.*[10]

Thus, early in July 1943 itself an important agency of the United States Government had categorically declared that deaths from starvation were on the increase and that unless large shipments of foodgrains were despatched, hundreds of thousands more would be doomed to starve to death in India. The leaders of the American Government had thus received a clear indication of the likely magnitude of the catastrophe. The men who were doomed belonged not to a hated enemy nation. Nor were they people of an occupied country who were being driven by their Axis overlords to work in factories manufacturing weapons that might deal death to Americans. These were men, women, and children who belonged to one of the United Nations. About their country's contribution to the war effort the United States Office of War Information (OWI) had released a very laudatory report on 3 June 1943. The OWI report asserted that India's contribution to the Allied victory in North Africa was an "outstanding example" of the way in which members of the United Nations were carrying out their pledges.

During the first 30 months of the war in Africa, it pointed out, India had supplied the theatre with the bulk of its stores, amounting to over one and a half million tons. The delivery of the supplies had rested on Indian convoy ships. In addition, Indian troops had "played a magnificent part in smashing Mussolini's African Empire and in the rout of the Afrika Korps," the OWI report had stated.[11]

What about the sons of Bengal who were marked for death by the hundreds of thousands? General George Marshall, Chief of Staff of the United States Army, wrote thus about their labours side by side with American GIs during this time of travail:

> The Asiatic operations had been maintained at the end of the most precarious supply line in history.... United States port battalions at Calcutta worked in intolerable heat and humidity with native labor weakened by disease, heat, and famine. Despite these handicaps, they established records exceeding those of every other military port in the world for quick unloading and turnaround of our ships.[12]

Around the country factories hummed with activity as Indian workers laboured round the clock on war orders. The whole of India was a vast base for the United Nations. The OWI report had acknowledged and praised the contribution to the cause of the United Nations. It remained to be seen whether the United Nations would remain true to its pledged objective of ensuring freedom from want, and whether the President of the United States would honour his own declaration that "United Nations forces will bring food to the starving and medicine to the sick" and that no hindrances of transportation should be allowed to prevent any nation from obtaining food.

APATHY IN THE WHITE HOUSE

In August 1943 the Mayor of Calcutta addressed an appeal to New York City's first citizen, Fiorello La Guardia, to send some help to relieve "unprecedented distress" in Bengal where people "are dying by the thousands." The New York Mayor is not known to have made any concrete response to the appeal.[13]

On 22 August 1943, the *New York Times* reported that the Calcutta Municipal Corporation had decided to cable President Roosevelt appealing for aid to the victims of the famine. In pursuance of the resolution the city's Mayor sent the following telegram to Roosevelt:

> Acute distress prevails in city of Calcutta and province of Bengal due to shortage of foodstuffs. Entire population being devitalized and hundreds dying of starvation. Appeal to you and Mr. Churchill in the name of starving humanity to arrange immediate shipment of foodgrains from America, Australia and other countries.

Roosevelt passed the cable along, in routine fashion, to the State Department. The Department was well aware of the grim situation in Bengal and the hardships of people in other parts of India because it had been receiving detailed reports from its Mission in Delhi and other consular offices in India. On 6 August 1943, for instance, the Department received a despatch from New Delhi which stated:

> The steady incursion by famished villagers is partly responsible for the rising number of deaths by starvation in the streets of Calcutta. . . . The English President of the Calcutta Rotary Club has written to the local newspapers urging that starving people not be turned away from hospitals when brought there in a state of collapse, and that the Municipality find some more adequate means of gathering the bodies of those who die in the streets. These grim reminders that famine is living in the streets of the Second City of the Empire do not exaggerate the situation.[14]

Political Adviser Wallace Murray, who had always taken a keen interest in Indian affairs, was deeply perturbed over the reports from Delhi and Calcutta. He apparently won the concurrence of his superiors to the view that the United States should explore the question of providing some relief to the starving people of Bengal. The arguments that he employed were intended, as in the report of the Board of Economic Warfare, to stress American self-interest

in providing some assistance. They related to the strategic position of Bengal in regard to projected military operations against Japan and to the repercussions on such operations of a hostile and starving local population. Outlining these arguments and expressing the concern of the Department, Murray urged the Chief of the War Commodities Division, T. Ross Cissel, to prevail upon the Combined Food Board—the agency concerned with the allocation of supplies—"to set aside a contingent allotment of rice. . . to be used to alleviate the alarming situation in Bengal if shipping space can be procured."[15]

At the insistence of representatives of the United Kingdom, responsibility in respect of India's food requirements had been left to the British Government and had not been brought under the purview of the Combined Food Board. This was yet another concession to the demands of Churchillism. Nevertheless, at a meeting of the Combined Food Board held on 30 August 1943, Cissel raised the question of an allotment of rice for India. The British representative of the Board, Cissel subsequently reported to Murray, immediately professed to be greatly surprised "that there was any particular need of rice" in India. The Briton admitted that India faced "an enormous deficit of cereals" but added that "the problem was a matter of shipping not of supply" and that foodgrains were available in Australia.[16]

The State Department had soon additional evidence to indicate that the British Government in London did not welcome any display of American interest in the Indian food situation. The British representative told the Combined Food Board that he had checked with London and had been informed that the Government of India was "coping with the situation." When, however, a representative of the Government of India's Mission in Washington petitioned repeatedly for permission to appear before the Committee on Fats and Oils of the Combined Food Board, the British member of the Committee vetoed it on the ground that no information on the Indian situation should be received from any channel other than the British Government. Officers of the Near Eastern Division of the State Department received confidential information from K. C. Mahindra, the most senior Indian official of the Indian Supply Mission, that a small amount of wheat

that he had been able to obtain from Canada was likely to be diverted by the British Government to Ceylon.[17]

Mahindra repeatedly told the American officials that "he could perceive no concern in London over the Indian famine." The officials asked Mahindra to indicate whether the United States could be helpful to him in any possible way, but he was pessimistic that anything could be done in the face of the British attitude. The query itself was more in the nature of a formality because the American officials had little hope that they might be able to do anything constructive. *Their superiors were not seriously interested in making a vigorous fight over the issue.* Secretary Hull wrote plaintively to the American Mission in Delhi about the attitude of the British Government:

> The British member of the Combined Food Board and British representatives on the commodity committees of the Board have depended on London for information on Indian requirements. Generally speaking they have not appeared to be concerned regarding statements as to Indian needs presented through other channels. For example, the Combined Food Board Committee on Rice received urgent advice, through State Department channels, of a serious shortage of rice in some districts of India. The British member asked to have this advice checked in London and later reported that there appeared to be a speculative movement of rice into stocks and that the Government of India was coping with the situation. Again a representative of the Government in the United States on several occasions asked to appear before the Committee on Fats and Oils, but *the British member of the committee objected to the committee receiving information on the Indian situation through that channel.*[18]

It was not merely the British Government that was insensitive to the implications of the crisis in India. One important agency of the United States Government blocked any American assistance to India. Officials of the Near Eastern Division tried to find out whether the military authorities would permit the utilization of some space on Army ships bound for India for the despatch of wheat or any other foodgrains that might become available. The

War Department indicated that such a course might be possible but that approval would have to be obtained from the War Shipping Administration (WSA). The WSA bluntly opposed any such move and warned that "if the Army could spare space for grain on its ships bound to India, the Army had vessels which the WSA would be obliged to take from it to meet other needs."[19]

It was a fact of life in wartime Washington that in the absence of strong White House support or substantial pressure from the military authorities one could not hope to get speedy action. The efforts described above had been made by officials of the Near Eastern Division of the State Department and they were frustrated at every turn. Their chief, Cordell Hull, was in full possession of the true facts of the Indian situation. He knew that the British Government was unwilling to permit even its own hand-picked Indian officials in Washington to appear before any committee of the Combined Food Board. He was aware of the intransigent attitude of the War Shipping Administration. The Secretary could have, had he so desired, taken up the matter directly with the President and pressed for some concrete measures of assistance. But Hull also knew that it was not very healthy for one to get entangled with any aspect of Indian affairs. He, therefore, chose to adopt a tragically circuitous route when the situation warranted most urgent and bold action. To George R. Merrell, Officer-in-Charge of the American Mission in New Delhi, the Secretary despatched the following telegram:

> For your confidential information, it is not thought that American ships will be available to assist unless strong representations regarding the matter are made by the American military authorities in India. If the latter feel that the arrival of some grain from this continent would be helpful in forestalling developments to such military efforts as may be contemplated from India, a statement to that effect to the War Department by the CBI [China-Burma-India] Command would undoubtedly be very helpful.[20]

Precious days passed as the Department awaited word from Delhi about the attitude of the American military authorities. The latter had all along remained insulated from contact with India's domestic

problems and, therefore, not been much affected by the tragedy around them. They were not stung into action by the sight of innumerable corpses that disfigured Calcutta's streets because there was no dearth of coolies in Calcutta harbour to unload the unending procession of American ships bringing war materials. They paid the coolies fair wages, did they not? It was no part of America's responsibility to feed the natives. That was for the "Limeys" to work out in whatever fashion they chose. Merrell reported to the Secretary of State that the American military leaders in India were "indifferent to the Bengal situation and implications and regard them as exclusively a British concern." The Mission was apprehensive, he added, as "growing Indian criticism of Washington's ignorance and indifference may soon affect our prestige and economic and military operations more than the Army realizes."[21]

The Army's "realization" on any issue could be speeded up remarkably if only there was some unmistakable nudging from the White House. In this case there was no sort of indication that the President, desired some American gesture to famine-stricken India. While Hull had backed away from any direct approach to the President. William Phillips ventured to urge Roosevelt to take some concrete measures not only to relieve distress in India but to resolve the political deadlock. After summarizing the gruesome facts that the American Mission had regularly reported to the State Department, the envoy stated:

> Is it not therefore important that the attitude of the people near and around our principal base [Bengal-Assam] should continue to be friendly and cooperative? If only from the point of view of strategy, should we not avoid having a hostile population close to our important base and to our lines of communication? And yet so far as I know, nothing has been done or is being done by the British Indian Government to remedy the situation which, in my opinion, has become serious.
>
> .... I am venturing to bring this matter to your personal attention because I do not want anything in the records to appear to indicate an indifference on my part to a situation in India which might affect and even hinder our operations.[22]

It is noteworthy that Phillips, eager to obtain a favourable response from the President, presented his arguments almost exclusively in terms of American self-interest. He went on to make a pointed reference to the unsatisfactory political situation in India and to reiterate his belief in the necessity of an early resolution of the deadlock:

> May I repeat that it is not alone the continuation of the political deadlock nor is it merely the famine conditions among the masses of Bengal that disturbs me, for, it is only too true, that in the past India has suffered from famines of similar severity. But it is the combination of the two, the deadlock and the famine, and the fact that there are Indians of high and low degree, many millions of them, who are resentful against their present conditions, hostile to the British because of the failure of the British to help them, and distrustful of Americans because of our close association with the British, that to me renders the situation of consequence to our military effort.
>
> The remedy, if there is one, is for the British to open the door to negotiations and to do everything possible to lessen the famine conditions in the province in Bengal.

Phillips' appeal proved fruitless. There was no indication available to the State Department that the President intended to take any initiative in the matter. The Department's task became one of ensuring that American "prestige" in India was not adversely affected as a result of the absence of any American assistance. To cover up what both Merrell and Phillips had described as "indifference," it became necessary to create the impression, as was done on previous occasions in regard to political matters, that the top leaders of the United States were paying the closest attention to the situation in India. Acting on the instructions of the Secretary of State, the US Consul General informed the Mayor of Calcutta, three weeks after the latter had despatched his cable to Roosevelt:

> ... the responsible officials of the Government of the United States have not been unmindful of the situation described by you but that, as you must undoubtedly realize, the shipment of grains is

a matter dependent upon many factors complicated by the war. As you are perhaps aware, British officials in the United States are engaged in efforts which it is hoped will be helpful in alleviating the situation and you are assured that the American Government will facilitate these efforts in every appropriate manner.[23]

The assurances were nothing more than empty words. And the State Department authorized their use in profusion. An elaborate background note was supplied to the Mission in New Delhi to be used at its discretion and that of the Office of War Information to show that the United States could do little by way of supplying rice to India and that "there would be no advantage at all in attempting to move wheat supplies from North America to India." The brief query that Cissel raised at the meeting of the Combined Food Board and an inconsequential exchange of letters between the State Department and the India Supply Mission in Washington were to be presented as examples of determined efforts by the American Government to help India. This was how the Secretary of State wanted those puny efforts to be presented to the Indian public by the propaganda organs of the American Government:

... the Department of State has continually indicated its desire to assist in every appropriate way in alleviating the Indian food crisis. Efforts were made to secure from the all too inadequate rice stocks in this hemisphere an allocation of rice for India and the possibility of utilizing American shipping space was explored in the event that the shipment of any grain from this country to India was found to be practical or possible. Appropriate officials of the Government have invited suggestions from the British Indian authorities in the United States with regard to means by which this Government could be of help and had any means been perceived as practicable, suggestions would presumably have been made by the latter.

Since it would be helpful to give "assurances" to the Indians, the Secretary suggested the lines on which they could be offered:

The United States Government has been prepared and remains prepared, both on humanitarian grounds and on the basis of its

> interest in India as one of the United Nations, to render any assistance in the matter which the exigencies of the war render possible.[24]

The stage was thus set for a skilful public relations campaign. The story was released to the United Press, and the *Hindustan Times* of New Delhi promptly featured it under the headline "American Helplessness." The State Department's draftsmen sent ingenious adaptations of the Secretary's draft to correspondents who sought to raise the issue. "The prevailing situation with its many implications is a matter of deep concern to this Department," wrote Wallace Murray to the President of the India League of America, J. J. Singh. When Eleanor Roosevelt asked for advice on whether or not she should send a message to a meeting to be held in Los Angeles to raise funds for the relief of famine victims, Assistant Secretary Adolf Berle suggested that a courteous letter could be sent "expressing the concern which Americans feel regarding the famine in India; the desire of Americans to alleviate the famine in any appropriate manner, and stating that appropriate action is being taken by the various governments."

The Department's draftsmen refrained from describing what exactly was being done or was contemplated by the United States Government "to alleviate the famine." When Senator Claude Pepper (Democrat, Florida) forwarded to the Department a communication from a constituent asking whether "a sincere attempt" was being made by the Government to help the starving people of Bengal, the Department sent a response that neatly ducked the issue. "Our own Government," wrote Paul Alling, Chief of the Near Eastern Division, to Pepper's constituent, "has long felt much concern at the situation and the British and Government of India authorities are aware that this Government has been and remains prepared to assist in any way which might be found to be practical."[25]

THE FORGOTTEN COUNTRY

The British writer John Connell, biographer of Field Marshals Auchinleck and Wavell, thus recounts his impressions of Calcutta in the summer of 1943:

> From the beginning of July onwards the starving dragged themselves in from the surrounding countryside and the teeming slum areas to the centre of Calcutta, where—since the provincial government instituted no system of relief—they rotted and died. They haunted the area around the main railway station at Howrah, they lay down on the pavements of the big, bustling streets, the lobbies of shops and hotels, they crawled up the stairs of blacked-out office buildings—to die.[26]

That a great calamity was in the making and that hundreds of thousands would perish was known, in the United States, only to the leaders of the American Government. The general public was virtually unaware of the macabre nightmare of Bengal because the British censors in India had laboured assiduously over the despatches of American correspondents, removing undesirable statements and unpleasant words like "starvation," "famine," and "corpses." It was the British-owned paper, the *Statesman* of Calcutta and Delhi, that spoke out against the local and central authorities for perpetrating blunders of colossal dimensions. The authorities did not dare to muzzle the *Statesman*, but they took steps to prevent the news from getting abroad.

It was only in mid-September 1943, less than a month before Viceroy Linlithgow was to relinquish his post to Lord Wavell, that the Indian authorities permitted the use of the term "famine" in despatches by correspondents. On 20 September the London *Times* carried an editorial entitled "Bengal Food Crisis," while the *Manchester Guardian* featured one under the title "Famine in Bengal." While these were forwarded to the State Department by the American Embassy in London, the Consul General in Calcutta sent a clipping of another strongly worded editorial in the *Statesman* entitled "Reflections on a Disaster." The Calcutta newspaper described the famine in Bengal as a "most reprehensible administrative breakdown" for which responsibility "inescapably rests in the last resort upon Authority in Britain and its immediate representatives here."[27]

The American Press, noted for its ingenuity in bypassing unreasonable censorship, showed little enterprise in reporting the story of Bengal. Even after the British-Indian censor was constrained to

permit the transmission of some news about the famine, the American Press showed, generally speaking, extraordinary restraint in its treatment of the story. The *New York Times*, which claimed to carry "all the news that is fit to print," handled the Bengal story in a very casual fashion. On 19 September 1943 it carried a reference to the "famine" in a brief report on page 51. Three days later, after British newspapers had written editorials on the tragedy, the *New York Times* carried, on page 7, a brief despatch entitled "Food Crisis Hits India," with an unamplified sentence to the effect that the death toll from starvation in Calcutta alone exceeded 50 a day. On 28 September the newspaper advanced the Bengal story to page 4:

FAMINE IN CALCUTTA GETS STEADILY WORSE

> The plight of Bengal's hungry millions has grown worse in Calcutta and the hinterland where hundreds of persons are dying from starvation and scores more are reaching the point where food and medical care can not fully restore damaged minds and bodies.
>
> A large proportion of those starving in Calcutta is from rural districts where the situation is deteriorating rapidly. Persons able to move attempt to reach Calcutta, where they hope for help, and many die along the roadside. . . . Last week Calcutta hospitals, filled to capacity, received 5,000 cases. One thousand were suffering from starvation, while the remainder had diseases resulting from hunger.

Brief reports were carried subsequently on inside pages under such headlines as "India Starvation Toll Soars" and "India Famine Death Soars." On 28 October, the newspaper put on page ten an Associated Press report from New Delhi quoting a statement by K. Santhanam, a well known Indian journalist and a former member of the Central Legislative Assembly, to the effect that no less than 100,000 men, women, and children were dying of starvation *each week* in Bengal and that the figure was likely to increase weekly till the end of December.[28]

The *New York Times* refrained from getting unduly exercised over the developments in Bengal. By and large, the attitude of the American Press was similar to that of the *Times*. Referring to the army of "foodless, homeless, hopeless" destitutes roaming in the streets of Calcutta, *Time* magazine observed that no "voice of

influence" had been raised in the United States on behalf of famine relief in India."[29] America's New Deal liberals took in the news from Bengal with stoical calm. Harvard professors of the "American Defence" group, who took a keen interest in international developments, did not call for any dinner meeting to discuss the famine in India. (It may be mentioned, in passing, that in 1940 Harvard professors showed noteworthy alacrity in establishing a Faculty Committee for the Care of European Children for the wholly laudable purpose of assisting youthful victims of the holocaust in Europe.) In their attitude to the Indian situation, the Harvard dons had plenty of company in other American campuses. American churchmen too, generally speaking, were so impressed with the objective of "winning the war" and of fostering Anglo-American friendship that they were not inclined to devote sermons to the tragedy in India.

A small number of Americans refused to remain silent. Socialist leader Norman Thomas was among the first to speak out:

> One of the things which it would be a crime against humanity and our own destiny to underwrite is the kind of arbitrary British rule in India which is responsible for the present ghastly famine now devastating that unhappy land—Bengal worst of all.
>
> For the sake of the war, our Government and people have kept still about the autocracy of the Viceroy in India; the denial of civil liberties; the continued confinement of thousands of patriots, including two of the world's outstanding men, Gandhi and Nehru; and the hypocritical farce played by the British Government which professes that it hangs on to India only because of lack of unity of the Indian people, and then fosters disunity.... *Will our tolerance extend to the starvation of the people?*[30]

Other Americans who were associated with the India League of America as members or sympathizers as, for instance, Oswald Garrison Villard, Roger Baldwin, John Haynes Holmes, Victor Reuther, Louis Bromfield, Pearl Buck, and Dorothy Canfield Fischer supported the League's efforts to make the plight of the victims of famine known to the public. The President of the

League, J. J. Singh, in a telegram to Roosevelt, appealed for immediate steps to alleviate human suffering in Bengal through the machinery of land-lease or other available agencies of the United Nations. "Any help from you or the United Nations will evoke the spontaneous gratitude of the people of India," Singh declared.

Singh travelled to Washington and, in discussions with officials of the Department of State and members of Congress, pleaded for speedy assistance to India. Paul H. Alling, Chief of the Near Eastern Affairs Division of the State Department, replied to Singh that the United States had made and would continue to make efforts to help alleviate famine conditions in India. What exactly had been accomplished and what was intended to be done were not spelled out by Alling.[31]

COMPREHENSIVE REPORTS RECEIVED BY STATE DEPARTMENT

Meanwhile, reports from its New Delhi Mission and the Consulate General in Calcutta continued to pile up at the State Department. It will be sufficient at this point to give only a few examples of the kind of reports that the Department regularly received at this time.

A despatch from the Consul General, K. S. Patton, on 15 September quoted at length from a statement of Sir Jagdish Prasad, a former member of the Indian Civil Service who had served as a member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. According to Patton, Sir Jagdish had said:

> I would suggest to high-placed officials in Delhi, who deprecate the over-dramatization of the sufferings of the people of Bengal, to pay a visit to the province.... The evidence of their eyes will soon convince them that Bengal is faced with one of the worst famines in living memory.
>
> .... At one of the kitchens in Faridpur I noticed a man lapping up gruel like a dog. I saw abandoned children in the last stages of emaciation; men and women who had been without food for so long that they could now be fed only under strict medical supervision.... A man after vainly wandering for food collapsed on the doorsteps of the Collector's court room. As the body was being removed, a woman huddled in a corner thrust out a bundle and cried "take that also." It was her dear [dead?] child....

Consul General Patton added that the problem of the disposal of the corpses from the streets of Calcutta was "seriously over-taxing the facilities available."[32]

A week later Patton spoke of the "truly desperate situation" in most rural districts of Bengal and the appalling record of starvation deaths in metropolitan Calcutta itself. The burning of unclaimed bodies went on non-stop and authorities had made no further efforts to restrict publication of the "gruesome facts," he reported.

On 13 October Patton reported that the death toll in Calcutta continued at an alarming rate. "The record obtained and published by the local Press of starvation cases handled by the hospitals and the dead bodies removed from streets continues to reveal an appalling situation which still grows from week to week," he stated. In yet another report the Consul General informed the Department that police authorities had set up roadblocks and controls at important transit points to stop further movement of destitutes into Calcutta. They had also initiated a drive to remove as many of the destitutes as possible out of the metropolitan area. Patton spoke of the horrors that this "removal project" involved:

> Numerous reports have been current about the tragic separation of families through this removal project, and previously through the unregistered system of placing destitutes in the hospitals within the Calcutta area. There appears to be no doubt that many such instances occur, in some cases for almost inexcusable reasons or carelessness. Unfortunately, it is the opinion of a responsible official that the chances for reunion in most such instances are rather remote.[33]

A few days later there arrived in the State Department from Calcutta a set of about 20 pictures of "famine scenes" in Calcutta that had been published in the *Statesman*. They were so starkly gruesome that Political Adviser Wallace Murray immediately forwarded them to Assistant Secretary Berle and Under Secretary Edward R. Stettinius drawing their attention to "the ghastly famine conditions now spreading in India."[34]

The Roosevelt Administration had thus first-hand and authoritative information from its own representatives on the toll of famine

in Bengal. The photographs that Murray had sent to Berle and Stettinius were no less horrible than those of the corpses and the living human wrecks of Dachau and Auschwitz that shocked American citizens when they were published after the defeat of Germany. The Nazi crimes were committed in diabolical slaughter houses hidden from the world's view. The tragedy of Bengal was enacted on the streets of Calcutta and the countryside, with the American, British, Commonwealth, and Indian Press in full attendance and with American foreign service officers dutifully forwarding weekly mortality figures and reporting on the progress made in the round-the-clock burning of unclaimed corpses.

The Roosevelt Administration remained passive in the face of such a tragedy. The President is not known to have made any public or even private reference to it.

After the dimensions of the crisis had become clearly known to Washington, the President had an opportunity to spend an extended period of time with Winston Churchill. The Prime Minister was a house guest at Hyde Park for a week in August and later the two leaders participated in the "Quadrant" conference in Quebec. The President listened to Churchill's long expositions on problems posed by amphibious operations in the Bay of Bengal. There is no evidence to indicate that the famine situation in Bengal itself was touched on in the course of their discussions.

The thrill and enthusiasm that Churchill induced among many Americans were no less in evidence during this visit. After the Quebec conference the Prime Minister spent three weeks in the United States. On 6 September he received an honorary degree from Harvard University. In an eloquent address, Churchill hailed the common devotion of Britain and the United States to the ideals of rightness and decency, of fairplay "especially to the weak and the poor," of justice, and of personal freedom. Audaciously did he touch on the theme of a possible future union of Britain and the United States. "The gift of a common tongue is a priceless inheritance and it may well some day become the foundation of a common citizenship," he proclaimed.

When such a thrilling prospect was placed before them by the greatly admired British hero, few American leaders or intellectuals, businessmen or clergymen, could find it possible to raise any

questions about the rightness and justice of British rule in India or about the unpleasantness in Bengal.

At the time when reports of starvation deaths began to arrive with sickening regularity at the State Department, Churchill was attending meetings of the American cabinet and holding discussions with the President and his advisers on the progress of the Allied invasion of Italy. On 11 September, the President having gone to Hyde Park, Churchill summoned and presided over a conference of the Combined Chiefs of Staff and of senior British and American officials. The conference was held in the Council Room of the White House. It was an extraordinary and unprecedented affair—"an event in the Anglo-American history," as Churchill himself put it.

In such an atmosphere and when momentous decisions relating to the war were being made, Roosevelt might hardly have been interested in discussing either the political deadlock in India or the starvation deaths in Bengal with his British visitor. Materials published by the State Department on the Cairo and Tehran conferences held later in the year indicate that the issues did not come up for discussion in the meetings of Churchill and Roosevelt.[35]

None of the men close to the President chose to interest himself in India's plight and to urge Roosevelt to make at least some gesture to its starving people. The State Department, more particularly individuals like Wallace Murray and some officials of the Near Eastern Division, did evince concern over the developments in Bengal. The Secretary of State, however, showed extraordinary timidity in dealing with the matter and apparently made no effort to appeal directly to Roosevelt to overrule the War Shipping Administration's refusal to divert even one ship to carry food to India. The Secretary was busy drafting a major speech in which he was to exhort his countrymen "to chart for the future a course based on enduring spiritual values."[36]

It may be added at his point that the State Department was, during this period (August 1943), in the throes of a serious internal convulsion that ended finally in the resignation of Under Secretary Sumner Welles. Despite the fact that Welles had done very little to change the Administration's "hands off" policy towards the Indian situation, he was, theoretically at any rate, a

"liberal" on such issues when compared with men like Assistant Secretary Breckinridge Long and even Hull himself.

Long, for instance, was firmly of the opinion that while the United States might help "natives" to help themselves, it should not do it in such fashion as would make them "get the impression that all they needed to do was to sit around with their mouths open for us to drop biscuits in." Both he and Secretary Hull were fearful that Vice President Henry Wallace was a wild visionary who fully subscribed to a policy of leaving a bottle of American milk at the door of every family around the world. They had been particularly concerned over a speech that Wallace had made on 25 July 1943 in which he had proclaimed: *"The world is a neighborhood.* We have learned that starvation in China affects our own security —that the jobless in India are related to the unemployed here."[37]

The anxiety of Hull and Long was unwarranted, at least as far as Wallace's reference to India was concerned. There could be little doubt that Wallace would have accorded very low priority to Bengal in any milk distribution scheme that he might have evolved, even assuming that he remembered India at all. Wallace made no reference whatsoever to India when he delivered the major address at the National Consumers' Food Conference held in Cleveland in October 1943. He called upon his listeners to keep Britain and the Soviet Union always in their thoughts. "The more food we can put into Russian stomachs, the more American blood will be saved." Wallace then spoke of others who needed American help:

> Next after the indomitable British and the magnificent Russians, I think of the starving millions in Europe, which [*sic*] we shall liberate in 1944. We must plan it so that the hundreds of millions now under Axis slavery will at least have as much to eat during the first year of freedom as they had during the last year of slavery.[38]

The conference had been sponsored by a national group known as Food for Freedom Inc. Representatives of 87 organizations participated in it. "What can we do to help supply the food needs of our allies and liberated people?" was the theme of a round table

discussion. The discussion centred exclusively on European relief requirements; there was no reference whatever to the crisis in India and what Americans might do to relieve distress in that country.[39]

Equally forgetful of the existence of India was Herbert Lehman, whom Roosevelt had appointed as Director of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Operations. Oratorically, Lehman's vision of the scope of his work was comprehensive and non-restrictive. The cry of nations and their peoples for assistance presented democracy with a supreme test, he proclaimed at a banquet at the Waldorf-Astoria, sponsored by the Foreign Policy Association. "Let me recognize frankly that freedom from want is a basic component of any enduring peace," he said. His "recognition" did not, however, extend to India. "Immediately the guns stop firing *in Europe*," he declared in another address, "we must be ready with staff, with plans, and with provisions to provide food to stop starvation... and materials to prevent the pestilence bred of starvation and malnutrition...." Lehman glowed with pleasure and satisfaction as he recalled his visit to Britain in April 1943. He had been received not merely by Churchill but by Their Imperial Majesties as well. "The ground has been well-prepared for intimate collaboration," he said on his return.[40] This "intimate collaboration" was eventually to involve the exclusion of India from the scope of Lehman's benevolence. The implications of his non-recognition of India were to become poignantly evident when a new international relief orgazation came into existence in November 1943 with Lehman himself as Director General.

Among high-ranking American officials, only Ambassador William Phillips ventured to urge Roosevelt to undertake measures to relieve suffering in India. When Phillips arrived in London on his new assignment as Political Adviser to the Supreme Allied Commander, he reiterated his concern over Bengal's plight. "I have read with deep concern reports of suffering in Bengal and I sincerely hope the distress will be alleviated in the near future," he told the London correspondent of the *Hindu*. Phillips did not give any indication that American assistance might be forthcoming, presumably because he was aware that there was no prospect of such assistance in the foreseeable future.[41]

The London *Times* described on 23 June 1944 the impressive response of the American military authorities in India to an appeal for assistance from the Governor of Bengal. No less than ten motor launches, ten "sea mules," and 20 barges had been made available by the Americans for food distribution in river areas, the newspaper reported.[42] Ten motor launches, ten "sea mules," 20 barges!

NOTES

[1]The Secretary of State to the American Delegates to the United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture, 15 May 1943, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1943* (Washington, 1963), I, pp. 841-44. This source will hereafter be cited as *FR 1943*, I. *New York Times,* 15 May 1943, pp. 1, 6. Text of the President's speech in *Department of State Bulletin* (Washington), 8 (22 May 1943), pp. 455-56.

[2]The British Embassy to the Department of State, 29 March 1943, *FR 1943*, note 1, I, p. 826. The State Department pointed out that the agenda itself precluded controversial issues and that matters germane to the agenda should be discussed fully and freely at the "expert technical level." The Department of State to the British Embassy, 13 April 1943, *ibid.*, pp. 835-36.

[4]*Ibid.*, 22 May 1943, p. 28; ed., "Progress at Hot Springs," 22 May 1943, p. 22.

[5]"India's Agrarian Problem," *Amerasia* (New York), 7 (June 1943), pp. 157-79.

[6]*Department of State Bulletin,* 9 (17 July 1943), pp. 33-8.

[7]Amery's statement quoted in *Time,* 41 (8 February 1943), pp. 26-7. The Acting Agricultural Attaché in London (Alton T. Murray) to the Secretary of State, 18 February 1943, 845.5018, Files of the State Department. A. C. B. Symon, Indian Supply Mission, Washington, to the Chief, Division of Near Eastern Affairs (Paul H. Alling), 3 February 1943, 845.5018/16, *ibid.*

[8]Diary entry, 26 January 1943, India Diary II, Papers of William Phillips, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. Memorandum by Norris A. Haselton to the Personal Representative of the President in India (William Phillips), 20 April 1943, India Diary III, *ibid.*

[9]B.N. Gupta to the Adviser on Political Relations (Wallace Murray), 27 February 1943; Murray to Gupta, 6 March 1943, 845.5018/19, Files of the State Department.

[10]Board of Economic Warfare, Technical Branch, Industrial Engineering Division, "Indian Agriculture and Food Supply Problems," July 1943, National Archives of the United States. Emphasis added in the first, fourth, and last paragraphs.

[11]The *Hindu,* 4 June 1943, p. 5.

[12]"Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, July 1, 1943 to June 30, 1945, to the Secretary of War," *The War Reports* (Philadelphia, 1947), p. 216.

[13]*New York Times*, 25 August 1943, p. 4.

[14]The Mayor of Calcutta (Syed Badrudja) to the President, 23 August 1943, 845.5018/50, Files of the State Department. M. H. McIntyre to the Secretary of State, 1 September 1943, Official File 892, 1943-1945, Box 5, FDRL. Despatch from the Officer-in-Charge at New Delhi, cited in Memorandum by the Adviser on Political Relations to the Chief of the War Commodities Division (T. Ross Cissel, Jr.), 28 August 1943, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1943* (Washington, 1965), IV, p. 297. This source will hereafter be referred to as *FR 1943*, IV.

[15]*FR 1943*, note 14, IV, pp. 297-98.

[16]Memorandum by the Chief of the War Commodities Division to the Adviser on Political Relations, 1 September 1943, *ibid.*, pp. 298-99.

[17]Memorandum by the Adviser on Political Relations to the Assistant Secretary of State (Adolf A. Berle), 30 September 1943, FW 845.5018/49, Files of the State Department. Unsigned memorandum on the Indian food situation, 6 October 1943, 845.5018/58, *ibid.*

[18]The Secretary of State to the Officer-in-Charge at New Delhi, 9 October 1943, *FR 1943*, note 14, IV, pp. 305-08. Emphasis added.

[19]The Adviser on Political Relations to the Assistant Secretary of State (Berle), 30 September 1943, FW 845.5018/49, Files of the State Department. The War Shipping Administration argued that since India was an area of British responsibility, the British should make available more ships for the India-United States route if they wanted to transport grain from the Western Hemisphere to India.

[20]The Secretary of State to the Officer-in-Charge at New Delhi (George R. Merrell), 3 September 1943, *FR 1943*, note 14, IV, p. 299.

[21]The Officer-in-Charge at New Delhi to the Secretary of State, 26 September 1943, *ibid.*, pp. 301-02.

[22]The Personal Representative of the President to India, to the President, Washington, 9 September 1943, *ibid.*, pp. 330-31. Wallace Murray specifically drew the attention of Hull to Phillips' letter to the President. Memorandum from the Adviser on Political Relations to the Secretary of State, 10 September 1943, 845.00/9-943, Files of the State Department.

[23]The Secretary of State to the Consul General in Calcutta (K. S. Patton), 4 September 1943, *FR 1943*, note IV, pp. 299-300. The Consul General in Calcutta to the Secretary of State, 15 September 1943, enclosing a copy of a communication sent to the Mayor of Calcutta dated 13 September 1943, 845.5018/52, Files of the State Department.

[24]The Secretary of State to the Officer-in-Charge at New Delhi, 9 October 1943, *FR 1943*, note 14, IV, pp. 304-05. The memorandum appears to have been drafted by Berle, who was of the view that "something needed to be done...which might delimit to some extent the popular assumption of American responsibility." Memorandum to the Adviser on Political Relations, by the Assistant Secretary of State (Berle), 2 October 1943, FW 845.5018/49, Files of the State Department.

[25]J.J. Singh to the Acting Secretary of State (Edward R. Stettinius, Jr.), 3 November 1943, 845.5018/68, Files of the State Department; the Adviser on Political Relations to Singh, 10 November 1943; The Assistant Secretary of State (Berle) to Singh, 11 November 1943, 845.5018/76, *ibid.*; R. Lal Singh to Eleanor Roosevelt, 27 October 1943; Melvina C. Thompson, Secretary to Mrs. Roosevelt to the State Department, 5 November 1943; The Assistant Secretary of State (Berle) to Thompson, 17 November 1943, 845.5018/82, *ibid.*; W.H. Curtis, Daytona Beach, Florida to Claude Pepper, 14 November 1943; Pepper to the Secretary of State, 17 November 1943; The Secretary of State to Pepper, enclosing a copy of a letter from the Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs to Curtis, 26 November 1943, 84.5018/80, *ibid.*

[26]John Connell, *Auchinleck* (London, 1959), p. 736.

[27]The Agricultural Attaché in London (Loyd V. Steare) to the Secretary of State, 20 September 1943, enclosing clippings from two British newspapers, 845. 5018/53, Files of the State Department. Ed., "Reflections on a Disaster," *Statesman* (Calcutta), 23 September 1943."Every British citizen is necessarily shamed and sullied when his fellow subject dies of starvation in Bengal," the editorial added. In forwarding the editorial to the Secretary of State, Merrell stated: "In the opinion of this Mission, the views expressed in this editorial reflect a clear conception both of the facts and of the utility of various remedies advocated." The Officer-in-Charge in New Delhi to the Secretary of State, 24 September 1943, 845.5018, Files of the State Department. See also Ian Stephens, *Monsoon Morning* (London, 1966), pp. 181-82, 187-89.

[28]AP despatch and a report from Tillman Durdin, *New York Times,* 28 October 1943, p. 10.

[29]"The Raj that Failed," *Time,* 42 (18 October 1943), pp. 32-3.

[30]Norman Thomas, "Four Things We've Neglected Calling for Immediate Attention," *Call* (New York), 9 (29 October 1943), p. 1. Also ed., "Indian Horror", *ibid.,* 9 (5 November 1943), p. 8.

[31]J. J. Singh to the President, 29 September 1943, reprinted as a leaflet entitled "Appeal of India to Roosevelt," Archives of the India League of America, School of International Studies Library, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Alling's reply to Singh described in *New York Times,* 30 October 1943, p. 7.

[32]The Consul General in Calcutta to the Secretary of State, 15 September 1943, 845.5018/51, Files of the State Department.

[33]The Consul General in Calcutta to the Secretary of State, 22 September 1943, 845.5018/54, 13 October 1943, 845.5018/65; 20 October 1943, 845.5018/66; 10 November 1943, 845.5018/88, *ibid.* Consul General Patton reported that according to a confidential statement that his office had received from a high official of the Bengal Government, the situation in the following two or three months would be "very grim." The *New York Times* reported (26 September 1943, p. 38) that a preliminary survey of 504 families of destitutes conducted by the Department of Anthropology of Calcutta University showed that nearly 25 per cent of the families had disintegrated under the strain of the food crisis.

[34]Memorandum by the Adviser on Political Relations to the Assistant Secretary of State (Berle) and the Under Secretary of State (Stettinius), 19 October

1943, enclosing a despatch from the Consul General in Calcutta to the Secretary of State, 27 September 1943, 845.5018/60, Files of the State Department.

[35]Excerpts from the Prime Minister's Harvard address in Winston Churchill, *History of the Second World War: Closing the Ring* (London, 1952), pp. 110-11. The meeting in the White House is described by Churchill, *ibid.*, pp. 122-23. Interestingly enough, Churchill did not include the reference to common citizenship in the excerpts. That reference is to be found in Robert Sherwood, *The White House Papers of Harry L. Hopkins* (London, 1949), II, p. 746. Sherwood states that Churchill must have consulted the President before making his remarks on common citizenship. Also *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran 1943* (Washington, 1961).

[36]Text in *New York Times,* 13 September 1943, p. 4. It is appropriate to add that no specific recommendation for American assistance appears to have been made by officers of the American Mission in New Delhi. Their despatches to the State Department generally took the line that the famine was due not to any grave shortage of food in India but the failure of the Government of India and the provincial Governments to enforce measures for the procurement of grain from surplus areas and their distribution in the deficit areas. Cf. The Adviser on Political Relations (Murray) to the Assistant Secretary of State (Berle), 30 September 1943, FW 845.5018/49, Files of the State Department Confidential Memorandum on "Famine in British India," by the Chief, British Empire Unit (Thomas R. Wilson), 4 November 1943, Record Group 151, File 495, Files of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, National Archives, Washington DC.

[37]Diary entry, 1 December 1944, Papers and Diaries of Breckinridge Long, Library of Congress, Washington DC. Long wrote that he made the statement to Hopkins at a White House luncheon and the latter did not appear to like it. Text of Wallace's speech in *Voices of History 1943-44* (New York, 1944), pp. 280-84.

[38]*Cleveland Plain Dealer,* 28 October 1943, p. 1. There was no response from Wallace to a letter from a Los Angeles Indian requesting support for a meeting to raise funds for relief to famine victims. R. Lal Singh, editor, *Indian News,* Los Angeles, to the Vice-President, 1 November 1943. Papers of Henry A. Wallace, Box 96, FDRL.

[39]*Report of the National Consumers' Food Conference* (Washington, 1963). The files of Food for Freedom, Inc., now located in the Library of Congress, were examined. They show that the group paid no attention to India during the period surveyed in this work.

[40]Address by Herbert Lehman on "Relief and Rehabilitation," speeches—Miscellaneous State Department Personnel 1942-43, Leo Pasvolsky Collection, Box 263, Papers of Cordell Hull, Library of Congress. *New York Times,* 1 June 1943, p. 10, emphasis added. Allen Nevins, *Herbert H. Lehman and His Era* (Los Angeles, 1963), p. 233.

[41]The *Hindu,* 4 October 1943, p. 1.

[42]The *Times,* 23 June 1944. Earlier in December 1943, transport aircraft of the US Tenth Air Force, stationed in India, helped in ferrying some supplies to places like Dacca and Chittagong. *Daily Herald* (London), 10 December 1943.

Chapter Three

DENIAL OF UNRRA BENEFITS TO INDIA

American friends of India who were disappointed by their Government's failure to offer direct assistance to the victims of famine in India harboured the hope that the United States could still find a way of indirectly helping India through a new world organization that was being established. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) had officially been launched on 9 November 1943 on the basis of an agreement signed by representatives of 44 nations, including India.

UNRRA was an outgrowth of the Inter-Allied Committee on Post-War Requirements, which had been set up on the initiative of the United Kingdom in September 1941 with Sir Frederick Leith-Ross. The Committee's task was to draw up a plan for providing relief to the people of European areas freed from Nazi rule. After American entry into the war the British were content to accept a subordinate role in a new international organization for relief and rehabilitation. Proposals for such an organization were drafted in the State Department by Dean Acheson, working in consultation with Sir Frederick. The Acheson draft was discussed by representatives of the Big Four—the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and China—and finally a draft Agreement was produced. Some further revisions were made on the basis of comments offered by other Allied Governments and the United States Senate, and the final text was released to the Press on 23 September 1943.[1]

It was quite clear from the start that American funds, personnel, and influence would be dominant factors in the operations of

UNRRA. Since the new organization was an international body believed to be specially intended to provide relief to the hungry and the needy, American friends of India entertained the hope that their Government might find it possible to channel some aid to India through it without provoking open opposition from the British. Unfortunately, however, they had reckoned without the "fine print" in the draft Agreement that Dean Acheson had so laboriously wrought for the first international organization to be launched by the United Nations.

On 9 November 1943, in the historic East room of the White House, representatives of 44 nations gathered to sign the draft Agreement establishing the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. In one of his characteristic talks, President Roosevelt spoke about UNRRA's future role.

> So it will be the task of UNRRA to operate in these areas of food shortage until the resumption of peaceful occupations enables the liberated peoples once more to assume the full burden of their own support. It will be for UNRRA, first, to assure a fair distribution of available supplies among all of the liberated peoples, and, second, to ward off death by starvation or exposure among these people. . . .

The UNRRA Agreement showed, the President asserted, that "we mean business in this war in a political and economic sense, just as surely as we mean in a military sense."[2]

Many Americans who heard the speech on the radio might well have felt a surge of excitement in contemplating the noble task that the Chief Executive had set before their country and its associates. Republican Senator Arthur Capper of Kansas was so moved by the White House ceremony that he promptly wrote a note to the President expressing gratitude for having been invited to "the most impressive State occasion in which I have participated in my twenty-five years' experience as a member of the Senate."[3] The eloquent words of the President naturally raised hopes in India that assistance might not be long in coming from the United States. A few days later those hopes were dashed to the ground and the blow was delivered by Dean Acheson of the

United States who presided over the first session of the Council of the UNRRA in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

The India League of America, a small but active group of Indians and Americans, had looked forward with great interest to the Atlantic City conclave. Its President, J. J. Singh, had mailed copies of a report that he had prepared on the Indian famine to Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of the President; Herbert Lehman, Director General of UNRRA; and Dean Acheson. Singh had earnestly urged that the UNRRA Council should give top priority to the despatch of assistance to the stricken areas in India. Mrs Roosevelt was impressed by the seriousness of the situation described by Singh and immediately placed his report before the President. On the very day of the White House ceremony launching UNRRA, Roosevelt sent a memorandum to his wife on Singh's report. "This is a matter which the new UNRRA can properly take up," he wrote.[4]

The President's instinctive response was that India deserved help and that UNRRA could be the agency through which aid could be made available. Once again, however, Roosevelt did not follow his own instinct. No hard evidence is available on why he completely abandoned his view and accepted the line of persons like Acheson that relief to the famine-stricken areas of India was outside the scope of UNRRA. The Acheson line—warmly applauded and endorsed by the British—was but the logical extension of Roosevelt's unwritten agreement with Churchill at the Atlantic meeting. The policy of public silence in respect of developments in the British Empire and of "non-embarrassment" of Britain that the President had embraced had led the British to assert and win their demand that India's food requirements should not come under the purview of the Combined Food Board. For a fleeting moment, when confronted by evidence of colossal suffering in India, his humane instincts led him to envisage help to India through UNRRA. But he reversed himself in a hurry because he realized that he had bound himself, at least for the duration of the war, to a course of acquiescence to Churchill's wishes on matters relating to India.

It was Acheson who informed J. J. Singh that the famine in India was outside the purview of UNRRA, as defined by the

Agreement of 9 November 1943 which had established the organization. Wrote Acheson:

> You will note that, under the Agreement signed on November 9, 1943, whereby the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was established, the scope of activities of the Administration is limited in substance to the relief of victims of war in areas liberated by the armed forces of the United Nations. The Council of the Administration which is now in session here has no power to amplify the scope provided for in the Agreement. Consequently, I regret to inform you that the unfortunate situation that you refer [to] in your letter is not within the competence of the Council to discuss at this session.[5]

Acheson's argument was that the preamble of the Agreement had restricted relief to the population of areas *liberated from the enemy* and that since India had not been invaded or occupied by the enemy it was ineligible to receive UNRRA aid. Acheson was opposed even to discussion by the UNRRA Council of what he euphemistically described as "the unfortunate situation" in India.

Singh answered Acheson in a long and careful letter. He pointed out that notwithstanding what was stated in the preamble, assistance could be provided to India under Clause 2(*a*) of Article 1 of the Agreement. That Clause defined the functions of UNRRA as follows:

> To plan, coordinate, administer or arrange for the administration of measures for the relief of victims of war in any area under the control of any of the United Nations through the provision of food, fuel, clothing, shelter and other basic necessities, medical and other essential services.

Were not the starving thousands of Bengal the victims of war? Singh asked.

Singh had hit the nail on the head by drawing attention to Clause 2(*a*) of Article 1 of the UNRRA Agreement. What is noteworthy in this connection is that the State Department itself, in its presentation of the Agreement before the Senate Foreign

Relations Committee, had explained that Clause 2(*a*) "would make it possible to assist victims of war in United Nations areas which had been hit directly by the war although they were never occupied by the enemy." When, however, Singh raised the specific issue of India's eligibility to receive aid under Clause 2(*a*), the Department chose to make itself the protagonist of a narrow interpretation that would exclude assistance to India.[6]

THE INDIAN SKELETON IN ATLANTIC CITY

Singh travelled to Atlantic City to campaign actively against Acheson's interpretation. In an appeal addressed to the Council of UNRRA he asserted that considerations of military necessity and of humanity should lead the United Nations to send food to an area where a hundred thousand persons were reportedly dying of starvation each week. Singh buttonholed delegates in the lobbies and sought their support for India's cause. T. F. Tsiang, head of the Chinese delegation, was soon won over; he said in a public statement that while he regarded the question as one for the Council to decide, he had assured Singh that if the subject of relief to Bengal was raised in the Council "it would receive my personal favourable consideration." The India League President declared in a press conference that in addition to Dr Tsiang, representatives of Chile, Mexico, South Africa, and Australia had agreed to support any special resolution concerning assistance to India if the Indian delegate took the initiative in the matter.[7]

The Indian delegate at the Council meeting was the Agent-General, Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai. He once again proved to be a mere echo of the chief British delegate, Colonel John J. Llewellin. Bajpai conducted himself "with a propriety becoming in a servant of the British Raj," sarcastically observed I. F. Stone, columnist for the New York weekly, *Nation*. Bajpai made no attempt to raise the question of the Indian famine before the meeting because the British Government was opposed to any such course. To counter the hectic one-man campaign that J. J. Singh had launched, Llewellin called a press conference in which he strove hard to convince reporters that the Indian food situation fell outside the purview of the UNRRA Agreement. Passing a resolution on India

would not result in any practical assistance to the victims of famine, he asserted. The Colonel tried to leave the impression that there really was nothing new that needed to be done for India. Arrangements had been made in London, he said, to ship to India as much grain as it was possible to transport.[8]

In the Council itself, Llewellin spoke in ecstatic terms concerning the "crusade" on which he and his fellow delegates had embarked, "a crusade to bring food to the hungry, shelter to the homeless, clothing to those who are in rags; a crusade against the spread of epidemics which so often follow the surge of war...."[9] The Colonel, however, spared no efforts to ensure that his fellow crusaders kept their attention firmly away from India. He refused to concede that the starving Indians were "victims of war" and as far as Acheson was concerned that assertion was apparently tantamount to proof. But even if Acheson was not ready to permit UNRRA to rush assistance to India, he was by no means unwilling to throw in a floral tribute as the Indian question was solemnly interred. "Take the case of India," said the future American Secretary of State, at the closing session of the Atlantic City meeting. "She is afflicted today with widespread distress due to insufficiency of food over large areas, *caused by the war.* We all feel profoundly for her people. But her special situation has not prevented her from joining our work here. We are grateful for this token of her cooperation...."

The Indian delegate was apparently so overwhelmed by these phrases that he jumped to his feet to deliver an impassioned oration on the "devotion to liberty" of those who had joined together to launch a great humanitarian enterprise. "I thank you for your reference to my country," he said, turning to Acheson, "and wish UNRRA the fullest success in its beneficent and pressing task of carrying succour to those whose heroic and steadfast resistance has lent to the concept of liberty a new glory and to the spirit of liberty a new meaning." Thereupon, as the *Nation's* columnist aptly put it, the Indian skeleton was hastily pushed back into the cupboard. The *New York Times* gave its report of the proceedings the erroneous—indeed deceptive—headline: UNRRA RECOGNIZES INDIA'S FOOD CRISIS.[10]

It is to be noted that Acheson, perhaps inadvertently, admitted

that India's "special situation" was *caused by the war.* The report of the Board of Economic Warfare, cited earlier, also described the famine in the same manner. However, as far as Acheson—and the United States Government—were concerned there was to be no change in the position that India would not be eligible to receive UNRRA assistance. The *New York Times* reported that Acheson's speech had earlier been "approved" by Llewellin.[11] A dyed-in-the-tweed Anglophile, Acheson would have required no special persuasion to accept the British point of view on a matter of this kind. His own personal predilections were reinforced by the Roosevelt-Hull policy of avoiding unpleasant pressure on the British Government concerning India. Using what many newspaper correspondents described as the "steamroller technique,"[12] Acheson ran the first session of the UNRRA Council in exactly the way he wanted and the "insufficiency of food" in India was not raised on the floor at all till he chose to refer to it in his closing address.

The deep disappointment of politically-conscious Indians over this entire episode was reflected in an editorial in the *Hindustan Times,* of Delhi. "The first big organization for world cooperation is beginning its work as a colossal hoax..." the paper wrote. The editorial stated that if the UNRRA Agreement as it stood could not admit of assistance to India, then it was time that it was "differently and more worthily worded." Asserting that UNRRA should have cast aside the fear that any offer of assistance to India would have displeased the British, the *Hindustan Times* stated that the United States had a special responsibility to prevent the Atlantic City Charter becoming even more infructuous than the Atlantic Charter.

Sadness and bitterness were reflected in *India Today,* the organ of the India League of America. It wrote:

> India will survive this famine as she has survived famines in the past. But the memory of the hundreds of thousands of Indians who died *because no help came to them from their allies,* will be a ghost not quickly laid. India is patient, but there comes a time when human patience can endure no more.

By and large, the American Press paid little attention to the

manner in which the UNRRA Council ignored the Indian famine. The *New Republic* was among the few journals to denounce the Council's attitude. Every delegate "must in his heart be ashamed" for accepting the "flimsy pretext" that the famine sufferers of Bengal were not victims of war, it asserted. The *Amerasia* wrote:

> The apparent acquiescence of the United States Government in British policy in this matter will certainly increase the disillusionment and suspicion which many Indians already feel over what seems to them a readiness on the part of American authorities to follow obediently in the steps of the Secretary of State for India, Mr Amery.[13]

The National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party of America condemned the attitude of the American and British representatives on the UNRRA Council and asserted that their promises of aid to the suffering would sound hollow if famine continued to ravage India. Appealing to the American people to express their concern over the tragedy in India, the Party declared: "Let our voices be heard in the demand that the American and British Governments work together in supplying food to the starving millions of India." Were Indians to be left to starve because their country had been overrun not by the Nazis but by the British, asked the *Call*, the official organ of the Party.[14]

CONGRESSMAN MUNDT CHALLENGES ACHESON

It seemed a hopeless cause to all but the President of the India League, J. J. Singh. An incurable optimist and an indefatigable worker, he was spurred on by the faith that somehow and through somebody the situation would be reversed and American help would not be denied to his country. When the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives scheduled hearings on UNRRA, Singh wrote letters to all its members explaining India's need and asking for an opportunity to present relevant information in person. Only a single Congressman, Karl Mundt (Republican, South Dakota), cared to reply to the importunate Indian.

Singh's meeting with Mundt was to have important consequences. After carefully studying the information presented by Singh, Mundt decided to wage a fight to undo what he regarded as an injustice done to India at Atlantic City. In the course of the hearings that ensued, Mundt intensively cross-examined Dean Acheson concerning India's eligibility to receive assistance. His questioning brought forth a significant admission from Acheson concerning his own role in the matter. Said Acheson:

> In correspondence which I had on the subject as chairman of the [UNRRA] council during the time I was chairman, I expressed the view that the geographical scope of UNRRA activities is limited to areas which have been liberated from army [enemy?] occupation and that therefore at the present time India does not come within the scope of UNRRA activities.

Mundt asked whether Acheson's comment meant that India would not be one of the beneficiaries of UNRRA. Replied the Assistant Secretary: "If you are talking about the same sort of distress which now exists in India you are correct."[15]

Acheson's unresponsive attitude served only to strengthen Mundt's determination to carry the fight forward. He wrote a letter to Herbert Lehman, Director General of UNRRA, suggesting that the UNRRA Agreement should be amended promptly to make India eligible to receive assistance. A narrow interpretation of UNRRA "which would compel it to ignore the starvation and suffering of one of the United Nations' most populous and patient associates is both cruel and unjustifiable," he asserted.[16]

In a speech in the House of Representatives on 21 December 1943, Mundt exhorted the United States to take the lead in influencing UNRRA to revise the Agreement. It would be tragic, he warned, if a supposedly benevolent organization like UNRRA should "start off with such a malevolent bias as to exclude long-suffering India from its benefits." Why was such a situation allowed to develop? Were there some hidden factors behind the UNRRA Agreement and the American reluctance to contemplate its modification? Acheson and other witnesses before the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mundt said, had been "very tactful and very diplo-

matic" and members of the Committee could "pry behind that to find whether there was any reason or motive for such omission or whether it was simply an accident of language." If the latter was the case, then an amendment of the language could promptly be undertaken. But, he warned, "If it is done deliberately with some motive, the reason can be exposed, I think and exploded."[17]

Mundt was unable to carry with him a majority of his colleagues on the Foreign Affairs Committee. He was, however, encouraged by the fact that Republican Congressmen Walter Judd and H. Carl Andersen of Minnesota also voiced misgivings concerning the manner in which India was excluded from the scope of the UNRRA Agreement. Mundt began to set the stage for another bid to raise the matter when the Bill was to be brought before the House for a final vote. With careful coaching from Mundt, J. J. Singh launched a remarkable lobbying campaign to win the support of other Congressmen. On 21 January 1944, when the final debate began in the House, Mundt delivered a stirring address calling for an amendment of the Bill on the UNRRA. He said:

> I think that Congress should seriously consider amending this legislation in order to take out a rather strange quirk of language legerdemain by which India becomes the only member of the United Nations in serious distress which is excluded from the act.
>
> .... I think that excluding India from relief is wrong, and the only way by which she is being excluded is by a tortured definition conceived by an anonymous somebody behind a curtain of secrecy up at Atlantic City.
>
> It is wrong in the first place, psychologically, because the Indians in this war are our allies. There are 400,000 Indian soldiers fighting with our boys in Italy and throughout the world. She [India] is threatened with invasion, her troops are fighting by our side, she is a great base for military preparation, our own troops are billeted there at this moment, yet she is excluded from the benefits although she is asked to contribute.[18]

Mundt asked his colleagues whether it was wise or just for the United States to help feed Italians and Sicilians and at the same

time tell the people of India that "unfortunately they should be 'included out' because of somebody's definition." The Congressman continued:

> I want this act to create goodwill. I want this act to relieve suffering. I want this act to be devoid of all discrimination. I want this act to be free from any imputations as to race, color, religion, politics, nationality, geographical location, or preferential status. I beg of this House to support an amendment which will make this possible, which will make India and any other people among the United Nations who suffer distress as victims of war eligible for the benefit of UNRRA in so far as funds and facilities permit. Let us treat our... good friends everywhere with equal respect, with equal charity, and with equal justice in traditional American manner regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

Mundt appealed to his colleagues not to pay heed to reports that the Agent-General of India, Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai, was quite satisfied with the decisions made by the Atlantic City meeting of the UNRRA Council. The people of India, he said, did not share Sir Girja's enthusiasm and the latter himself did not reflect the "true attitude" of the Indian people. The United States could not hope to strengthen its bonds of friendship with the Indian people by means of "kind words, pious phrases, futile hopes, and adjectives of sympathy...." America should try to remove from UNRRA any basis of ill-feeling "by a mighty and proud people whose misfortunes are great, whose contributions to the war are prodigious [and] whose friendship is essential in this drive for victory," he urged.

Congressman Louis Ludlow (Democrat, Indiana) endorsed the sentiments that Mundt had voiced, describing them as "anchored in sheer justice." The United States should not be a party to the unjust exclusion from UNRRA's benefits of "a worthy people who have rendered valuable assistance to the cause of the United Nations—the people of India," he emphasized.

The powerful Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Sol Bloom (Democrat, New York), took up cudgels against

Mundt. Bloom's views clearly reflected those of the Roosevelt Administration and were recognized as such by the House. He was ready to offer in profusion expressions of sympathy to the Indian people, but that was as far as he was prepared to go. He noted that the wording of the UNRRA Agreement was such that no country could get aid unless it had been occupied by the enemy. He reminded the House that the Agent-General for India in Washington had never raised any sort of fuss over the exclusion of his country from UNRRA benefits. Bloom said:

> The representative of India signed this Agreement at the White House. He went to Atlantic City, and I believe he was there all the time. He is a gentleman... a very highly cultured, educated gentleman. He signed this document... and up to now I do not know but I have not heard any protest of any kind.

The Congressman tried to convince his colleagues that the crisis in Bengal was virtually a thing of the past. He read out a press release of the British Information Services in Washington entitled "THIRTY-SEVEN FOOD SHIPS REACH INDIA IN 3 MONTHS." The press release made the happy announcement that "food shortages in Bengal are now practically over except in remote areas." Bloom went on to contend that in any event "India has funds today in foreign exchange that she may use if it is necessary for her to buy anything."

Without mentioning Mundt by name, Bloom asserted that persons should stop indulging in "shadow-boxing" gestures intended to proclaim that they were great humanitarians. "Let us be sincere and honest about this thing," he declared.[19]

Bloom's conception of "sincerity" and "honesty" was not shared by Mundt who, by this time, had become quite determined to offer an amendment to the Bill giving effect to his point of view. Ably aided by J. J. Singh, the Congressman worked very hard to win the support of his colleagues. Mundt was a Republican and without the support of large numbers of Democrats he could not hope for success. A number of Democrats privately expressed sympathy but were reluctant to come out in support of Mundt's position because they thought that such action would be viewed

as opposition to the Administration. They could not overlook the fact that it was Dean Acheson, Assistant Secretary of State and official American delegate to UNRRA, who had opposed Mundt's demand. For help in meeting this serious problem Singh turned to James B. Carey, National Secretary of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). Responding sympathetically, Carey contacted eighteen liberal Democrats in the House and told them that the CIO favoured assistance to India and fully supported Mundt's move. Carey's intervention proved to be of decisive importance.

With growing evidence that Mundt's amendment was gathering support, the State Department deemed it prudent to review its stand. Officials of the Department informally indicated to Singh that they would neither support nor oppose the proposed amendment. This neutral attitude itself was of decisive significance.[20]

As the time drew near for a final vote, Chairman Bloom remained confident that he could mobilize the necessary votes to defeat the Mundt amendment. In the lobby of the House Mundt asked Bloom whether he still wanted a fight. "Sure, we have you licked," Bloom replied. Mundt thereupon broke the news to Bloom that a number of Democrats including some members of the Foreign Affairs Committee had decided to switch over to his side. "We've broken your Democratic ranks," he said. Bloom made hurried inquiries and when he discovered that Mundt did indeed have the edge, he promptly decided to drop his opposition and to look for other ways and means by which the Administration's objectives could be safeguarded.[21]

When the House was ready to vote on the Bill, Mundt offered the following amendment:

> In expressing its approval of this joint resolution, it is the recommendation of Congress that in so far as funds and facilities permit, any area important to the military operations of the United Nations which is stricken by famine or disease may be included in the benefits to be made available to the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.

As soon as Mundt had read out the text of the amendment, Bloom stood up to announce that he had no objection to it. After

Mundt delivered a short speech explaining the amendment, not a single voice was raised in opposition to his proposal. A young Democratic Congressman from Montana, Mike Mansfield, made an effective speech in support of the amendment. The Congressman said:

> ...the question of India is a vital one for the United Nations today. In my opinion we would be doing a disservice to the Allied cause if we refuse to recognize the need now for relief in that country. We are all well aware—in spite of censorship restrictions—of the terrible famine there. While conditions have been ameliorated in that stricken country, the need for relief is still acute.
>
> In considering India we know that it is a difficult and complex area to understand. However, we must realize that some 350 million people live there. Those people are human beings—they eat, live, breathe, and have the same emotions that we have. ....We have the history—the recent history—of the Burmese, Thailanders, and other Asiatic people turning against us, not because we did not understand them so much as because they understood us better.
>
> ....If we extend relief under UNRRA to India we will strengthen our hand in the Far East and give hope to other subject populations. If we ignore India and her legitimate pleas, we are helping to sow a whirlwind which we will reap some day.
>
> The choice, and the responsibility, of helping India become our real friend and possible ally, rests, I believe, with UNRRA. This Congress, by its actions, now can either hinder or advance the cause of the United Nations and our ultimate victory in the Far East.[22]

After a brief expression of enthusiastic support for Mundt's proposal by Democratic Representative Jerry Voorhis of California, the House adopted the amendment without a dissenting vote. The Bill, as amended, was approved by the Senate in February 1944. In the course of the Senate debate a few speakers referred to the Mundt amendment as specifically intended to make India eligible to receive UNRRA assistance. Senator Bennett C. Clark (Democrat,

Missouri) asked why there should be any doubt over India's eligibility. Of course, "if occupation is the test, the British have been in hostile occupation of India for nearly 200 years," he added drily.[23]

What Acheson and Llewellin had declined to propose was now presented to the UNRRA Council in the form of Section 4 of US Public Law 267. At its next session the UNRRA Council meekly adopted it as Resolution No. 54, thus demonstrating beyond any doubt that had the Roosevelt Administration so desired, India need not have been "included out" in the first instance.[24]

The adoption of the Mundt amendment by Congress was an outstanding personal triumph for the flamboyant J. J. Singh who had tirelessly stalked the corridors of the House and Senate Office buildings and tenaciously wooed members of Congress. Hardly anybody believed that the labours of a little known alien might have some impact on the august legislative bodies of the United States of America. When finally success crowned his efforts, congratulations came pouring in from far and near. *Time* magazine wrote an appreciative story on Singh's "one-man lobby" in Washington.[25] "You did a real job for India," wrote Colonel Louis Johnson, former Personal Representative of President Roosevelt in India, in a letter to Singh. "The people of India owe you a great debt," said Democratic Congressman Will Rogers, Jr., of California. Congressman Herman P. Eberharter of Pennsylvania said, in a message to Singh, that the adoption of the Mundt amendment "is due almost entirely to your efforts."

American writers sympathetic to India's cause warmly congratulated Singh on his unexpected achievement. "Knowing Washington and the hard-boiled, busy, unapproachable manner of Senators and Congressmen I marvel the more at your tremendous success," wrote Louis Fischer. "Attaboy J. J. Keep it up!" said Frances Gunther. Striking a more solemn note, Pearl Buck wrote that as an American she was grateful to Singh for what he had accomplished because of its significance for future relations between the Indian and American peoples. Publisher Richard Walsh described Singh's success as "a victory for common sense and international decency, won by bringing forth the true facts and letting them speak for themselves."

Professor William Ernest Hocking, the noted Harvard philosopher, was among many others who conveyed warm congratulations to Singh. "It was a splendid deed: it looked like a perfectly hopeless enterprise, and you scored Ten!" the Harvard philosopher wrote.[26]

Adoption of the Mundt amendment by the United States Congress and UNRRA's acceptance of the "India Clause" came as thrilling developments to American friends of India. Excited by his own unexpected success, J. J. Singh too believed that the action of Congress was of immense significance. It represented, he wrote to a compatriot, the first move suggestive of American intercession on India in the face of British opposition.[27]

In India the action of Congress was welcomed by all sections of opinion, Merrell reported to the Secretary of State. India's membership of UNRRA was welcomed by spokesmen for various parties in the Indian Central Assembly and, on 5 April 1944, the Assembly adopted the following resolution:

> This Assembly approves of the UNRRA Agreement signed at Washington on 9 November 1943. In expressing its approval, this Assembly recommends that any area important to military operations of the United Nations which is stricken by famine or disease should be included in benefits made available by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.[28]

Indians and their American friends expected that the Government of India would promptly take advantage of the clause and apply for assistance to meet the continuing food crisis in Bengal and Assam. But the Government of India, reflecting the attitude of the Churchill Government, had no intention to permit any UNRRA relief activities in India. Under the terms of its Resolution No. 1, UNRRA could carry on its activities in any area only if the "government or authority (military or civil) exercising administrative authority in the area concerned agreed." The Government of India made no request for any UNRRA assistance, but showed great alacrity in paying UNRRA a contribution of $24 million which made India the sixth largest contributor to the organization. The intent of the Mundt amendment as embodied in the Joint Resolution of

the United States Congress and Resolution No. 54 of the UNRRA Council was thus nullified.

Dean Acheson and his associates were probably not unaware of the fact that the adoption of the "India Clause" by the UNRRA Council was an empty formality to appease the American Congress. Even as the Council wound up its session in Montreal, Director General Lehman told a press conference that UNRRA had no plans to send supplies to India. Relief could be considered for a country only if there was an application for assistance from its government and no request had been received from the Government of India, Lehman declared. India, he went on, was a contributing member of UNRRA and countries under that category would not normally receive assistance, he added. The passage of the enabling resolution by the UNRRA Council did not constitute a "decision" to assist India. "The India resolution had no effect as far as the country for whose benefit it was intended was concerned . . ." noted UNRRA's official historian, George Woodbridge.[29] The United States Government is not known to have criticized such a state of affairs or to have made any effort to bring about a change. It faithfully followed in the footsteps of its British ally.

NOTES

[1]George Woodbridge, *UNRRA: The History of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration* (New York, 1950), I, Ch I.

[2]*New York Times,* 10 November 1943, pp. 1, 4.

[3]Arthur Capper to the President, 9 November 1943, Official File 4996, "UNRRA," FDRL. The Mayor of Atlantic City, New Jersey, where the UNRRA Council was scheduled to hold its first meeting, issued a proclamation praying that the Council's deliberations "will be crowned with the greatest success, to the relief and salvation of a distressed humanity." *Ibid.*

[4]"Famine in India: A Factual Report, Prepared by Sirdar J. J. Singh, President of the India League of America," mimeographed, Archives of the India League of America. Memorandum for Mrs Franklin D. Roosevelt, by the President, 9 November 1943, Official File 48-H, FDRL.

[5]Quoted by J. J. Singh in a letter to Dean Acheson, 22 November 1943, Archives of the India League of America.

[6]"Memorandum of Conversation, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, November 8, 1943", Subject File, State Department 1939-44, Box 211, Long

Papers. The presentation was made at a special meeting of the full Committee by Assistant Secretary of State Francis Sayre and two other officials of the State Department.

[7]*New York Times,* 2 November 1943, p. 8; *ibid.,* 27 November 1943, p. 7; William O. Player, "China Ready to Put India Aid Up to UNRRA," *New York Post,* 26 November 1943. William O. Player, "Starving India Stalks Relief Council's Halls," *New York Post,* 29 November 1943; text in *Congressional Record,* 90 (1944), p. 553.

[8]I. F. Stone, "The Indian Skeleton at Atlantic City," *Nation* (New York), 157 (11 December 1943), pp. 686-87. *New York Times,* 27 November 1943, p. 7. In an editorial the *New York Herald Tribune* (5 December 1943) noted that the official Indian delegate from famine-stricken India had "refrained from pointing out that it was ironical for India to be planning how to feed other peoples." See also William O. Player, "Hope of UNRRA Aid for India Ebbs," *New York Post,* 30 November 1943.

[9]Woodbridge, note 1, pp. 28, 29.

[10]*New York Times,* 2 December 1943, p. 16. Emphasis added. Also Stone, note 8.

[11]*New York Times,* 2 December 1943, p. 16.

[12]Cited by Professor Phillip C. Jessup who was a member of the UNRRA Secretariat at the time. Phillip C. Jessup, "UNRRA, Sample of World Organization," *Foreign Affairs* (New York), 22 (April 1944), p. 374.

[13]"The Famine in India," *New Republic* (New York), 109 (20 December 1943), p. 868; *Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 30 November 1943; text in *Congressional Record,* 90 (1944), pp. 552-53; *India Today* (New York), 4 (December 1943), p. 4; *Amerasia,* 8 (7 January 1944), p. 3.

A perusal of the documents relating to negotiations held during 1942 for the establishment of UNRRA bring out clearly that the idea of ever making any assistance available to India did not enter the thinking of British and American planners. Sir Frederick Leith-Ross, the British representative, was mainly concerned over post-war problems in Europe and his anxiety eventually came to be shared by the State Department. Sir Frederick had told the Secretary of State in August 1942 that the European peoples under German rule would be disheartened unless they had an assurance from the United States and Britain that relief would be promptly forthcoming at the end of the war. Hull had agreed that if anarchy resulted in Europe as a result of inadequate relief measures, "the effect would be disastrous and far reaching to the country [the US]. . . . This Government, therefore, is definitely interested in dealing with the relief problem in a timely and adequate manner so far as is feasible." "Negotiations for the Establishment of a United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration," *Foreign Relations of the United States 1942* (Washington, 1959), I, pp. 89-162. Memorandum of Conversation with Sir Frederick Leith-Ross by the Secretary of State, 22 August 1942, *ibid.,* pp. 132-33. The onset and intensification of famine in India did not induce the American and British planners to modify their views on the scope of UNRRA's operations. A report that Under Secretary Stettinius submitted to President Roosevelt on 20 October 1943, described as representing the consensus of

the State Department, Governor Lehman, and Richard Law, representatives of the British Government, envisaged UNRRA aid only to "liberated territories." The Under Secretary of State (Stettinius) to the President, enclosing a "Memorandum on the scope of Operations of UNRRA," 20 October 1943, Official File 4966, FDRL.

[14]Harry Fleischman, "Demand Aid for Starving India," *Call*, 9 (10 December 1943), p. 7. Ed., "India Gets Sympathy", *ibid.*, 9 (10 December 1943), p. 8. "Act Now to Feed India, Is SP Plea", *ibid.*, (24 December 1943), p. 8. Norman Thomas asserted that the leaders of the Big Three Powers had offered "not one word of hope" to Indians who have been dying by the tens of thousands. Speech to the National Association of Teachers, 28 December 1943, Papers of Norman Thomas, New York Public Library, New York.

[15]US House of Representatives, 78 Cong., 1 and 2 Sess., Committee on Foreign Affairs, Hearings, *To Enable the United States to Participate in the Work of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration* (Washington, 1944), pp. 188-89, 199 ff., 273-86. The hearings were held on 7-17 December 1943 and 11 January 1944. Acheson explained that he was relaying to the Committee the position and definition generally accepted by delegates at the UNRRA Council meeting at Atlantic City without putting his own stamp of approval or disapproval on the matter.

[16]Karl Mundt to Herbert Lehman, 21 December 1943, *Congressional Record*, 89 (1944), pp. 1110-11.

[17]*Ibid.*, pp. 1089-91.

[18]*Ibid.*, 90 (1944), pp. 548-67.

[19]*Ibid.*

[20]A Report of an interview with J. J. Singh by a representative of the United Press, 5 March 1944.

[21]*Ibid.*

[22]*Congressional Record*, 90 (1944), pp. 684-88.

[23]US Senate, 78 Cong., 2 Sess., Committee on Foreign Relations, Hearings, *United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration* (Washington, 1944). Edward Carter of the Institute of Pacific Relations who had returned from a visit to India sent a telegram to Senator Elbert Thomas stating that approval by Congress of aid to India through UNRRA would promote the war effort. The Senator endorsed Carter's point of view. Edward C. Carter to Elbert Thomas, 11 February 1944; Thomas to Carter, 17 February 1944, Papers of Elbert Thomas, FDRL.

[24]Woodbridge, note 1, III, pp. 95, 96. According to the author, the Council did not find anything in it that was incompatible with the UNRRA Agreement or the resolutions of its own first session.

[25]*Time*, 43 (28 February 1944), p. 19. Columns by Charles Van Devander and William O. Player in *New York Post*, 14 February 1944. *Washington News*, 24 March 1944.

[26]Congratulatory letters to Singh, February-March 1944, from—Louis Johnson, 29 February; Will Rogers, Jr., 1 March; Herman P. Eberharter, 29 February; Pearl Buck, 21 March; Frances Gunther, 15 December; William Ernest Hock-

ing, 2 March; Louis Fischer, 3 March; Richard J. Walsh, 20 March; John Haynes Holmes (Minister, Community Church of New York), 28 February; and Anne O'Hare McCormick (*New York Times*), 14 February. Papers of J. J. Singh, School of International Studies Library, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. The *New York Times* columnist wrote that she was "delighted" over the passage of the Mundt amendment. However, it is to be noted that she had made no use in her columns of the material that Singh had sent her. While the writers of the *New York Times* did not interest themselves in publicly espousing the Mundt amendment or the efforts of J. J. Singh, vigorous support came from such columnists as William O. Player and I. F. Stone.

[27]Singh to Mumtaz Kitchlew, 18 February 1944, Singh Papers.

[28]The *Hindu*, 6 April 1944, p. 5.

[29]Report of Lehman's address in The *Hindu*, 22 September 1944, p. 4. Before the "India clause" was adopted Lehman told reporters that "unless a decision to do so is made at the present council meeting, we do not at present intend to send supplies into India. *Ibid.*, 20 September 1944, p. 4. Woodbridge, note 1, I, p. 115.

Chapter Four

THE WAR FUND

On 15 December 1943, shortly after the UNRRA Council's first meeting, there appeared in the *New York Times* a letter to the editor from Swami Nikhilananda of the Ramakrishna Mission. The Swami stated that each week during the previous four months 50,000 persons had died of starvation in India and he urged Americans to contribute any assistance they could, however small, to their fellow human beings in India.[1] It was clear by this time that no assistance could be expected from the United States Government either directly or through UNRRA. The India League of America, while carrying on its campaign in support of the Mundt amendment, came to the conclusion that speedy measures must be initiated to secure assistance from private individuals and groups. Under the leadership of Pearl Buck, an Emergency Committee to Aid India was set up to publicize India's need and to collect funds. The India League of America turned over to this Committee about $1,000 which individual Americans had donated after reading I.F. Stone's articles on the Indian famine in the newspaper *PM*.[2]

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) raised, through an organization known as the India Famine Relief Committee, $100,000 for its activities in India. In Boston a New England branch of this Committee was set up with Professor Henry J. Cadbury as President to arouse Americans to a consciousness of their duty to the victims of war in distant Bengal. From the community of Rockway in New York came a cheque for $175 to the Committee's office, raised during a special benefit evening in support of India's famine sufferers. An organization known as the

"Caravan of East and West" staged a musical play at New York's Metropolitan Opera to raise funds for Indian children.[3]

The efforts of the India Famine Relief Committee and the American Friends Service Committee to organize a modest programme of relief in India received official encouragement in the initial stages. A meeting called by the President's War Relief Control Board to discuss aid to India was attended by representatives of these organizations as well as by the Assistant Chief of the Special War Problems Division of the State Department, E. K. Kuppinger. It was reported at the meeting that the Red Cross had arranged to send to India 500,000 pounds of milk powder and 1.8 million doses of vitamins to be distributed by its sister organization in India. The AFSC was to send 20,000 cases of milk powder to be distributed under the supervision of its own representatives.[4] Subsequently, the Board approved, and the National War Fund sanctioned, a budget of $100,000 per month for a nine-month period from January to September 1944 to be appropriated through the British War Relief Society for the relief programme of the AFSC in India.

In the spring of 1944, the Foreign Service Secretary of the AFSC, James G. Vail, visited India, and after studying the situation, urged that the War Fund should vote additional funds to enable relief activities to continue beyond September for at least one more year. Vail sent cables to his home office describing the "pathetic scenes" that he witnessed. "Visited region 1942 cyclone. Recovery only partial.... Centres for destitute still necessary. Distressing condition malignant malaria and skin diseases. Doctors fear epidemics will follow rain..." he declared in one cable. In another message he stated that the enlargement of medical services was essential as "there are millions suffering....We have conferred with the highest officials of the Central Government and also with the Delhi American Mission by whom this work is encouraged firmly," Vail added.[5]

The State Department agreed with the view of the AFSC that the continuance of the relief programme in India would have considerable "goodwill value." Kuppinger wrote to the Executive Director of the War Relief Control Board that the Department regarded as "highly desirable" the continuance of the AFSC's work and that it would welcome favourable action by the Board on the

matter. A month later the Board informed the State Department that it had decided to recommend to the National War Fund to make an allocation to the AFSC to enable it to continue relief operations at a cost of $100,000 per month.[6]

The AFSC was thus under the impression that its budget of $900,000 to cover expenses till September 1944 was secure and that there was a good possibility of its obtaining additional funds to enable it to continue its work. But aid to India was not a cause that enjoyed powerful support in the National War Fund. On 31 July 1944 the Fund unceremoniously cut down the budget for India by nearly $356,000 and further announced that there would be no new appropriation for India with the exception of a sum of $200,000 that had been earmarked for aid to India by the CIO and the AFL. The action of the National War Fund, said the India Famine Relief Committee, "coming so late in the year and so unexpectedly, was a bewildering blow to everyone connected with American relief for India." Contemplating with dismay the prospect of sudden termination of relief activities, an American Quaker worker appealed to the Committee to explore urgently "if there is any way of bringing us out of the hole we are in...."[7]

The National War Fund's attitude was a reflection of the fact that no widespread sentiment existed at this time among the American people to provide assistance to India. The cause, as has been pointed out earlier, was not vigorously espoused by top echelon figures of the Roosevelt Administration, the political and economic leaders of America or by the controllers of the media of communication. In contrast, there were powerful individuals and groups incessantly drumming up support for Britain and for the Soviet Union. The relative support extended by the American people towards India and the Soviet Union in 1943 could be gauged from the fact that while only a very modest amount was contributed for famine relief in India, Russian War Relief received $16,273,393. The word "India" could not be found in the pamphlets and publicity material of the National War Fund, while many were the touching references to the importance of helping "starving Greece," "gallant Russia," and "stricken China." President Roosevelt too did not mention India in his appeal to the American public for contribution to the Fund.[8]

Early in 1945 the India Famine Relief Committee decided that a new money-raising organization should be set up "with the purpose of finding among the American people support for the India relief project... the continuation of which is so important both for humanitarian reasons and for the building of goodwill between our two peoples." The new group which was named American Relief for India Inc. had Rufus M. Jones as Honorary Chairman, Henry F. Grady as Chairman, and William Phillips as Vice-President. It registered itself with the President's War Relief Control Board and, on 16 February 1945, it submitted a petition to Winthrop Aldrich, President of the National War Fund, for membership in the Fund and for financial assistance at the rate of $100,000 a month for a seven-month period beginning 1 March 1945. Of the amount, $647,500 was to be expended almost wholly in the United States for the purchase of medical supplies and dietary supplements. The letter to Aldrich, which was signed by Grady, Phillips, and Henry R. Luce, publisher of *Time* and *Life*, asserted that assistance of the kind requested would serve "to cement enduring bonds of friendship between the Indian and American peoples...." The writers frankly stated that "India is a casualty of war.... The famine itself was largely war-caused and because of the war, relief measures are impeded.... Today India needs help.... Our help today is a moral obligation; tomorrow it may prove to be a foundation of international goodwill."

Exactly seven days later Aldrich informed Grady that the National War Fund was unable to accept American Relief for India Inc., as a member or to provide any financial assistance to it. The following is the text of the letter:

> I regret to inform you that after a full and sympathetic discussion of your letter of February 16th, our Budget Committee has found itself unable to accept the application of American Relief for India, Inc., for membership in the National War Fund.
>
> Mr. Swope and his associates have urged me to stress the fact that we recognize as you do the vastness of the need in India and the impelling nature of the consequent appeal to American sympathies.
>
> Indeed, the fact that the National War Fund was able to

channel $450,000 to India Relief in 1943-44, and $200,000 during the current budget year is probably proof enough that we have recognized the extent of the problem, and the opportunity for expressing American sympathy in a practical way.

The reason our Budget Committee has felt impelled to decline the application is simply because the National War Fund, in order to make the most effective use of the limited funds available for foreign relief, must of necessity concentrate its resources on liberated areas.

I am sure that all of the officers and directors of the National War Fund would join me in expressing the hope that your important programme may be financed adequately in some other way.[9]

Once again relief for India was to be denied on the ground that it was not a "liberated country." The eminent gentlemen who constituted the National War Fund adopted the same definition of criteria for eligibility for aid as the American draftsmen of the UNRRA Agreement. They were unwilling to examine the relative need for assistance between India and the "liberated countries." Forlornly the President of American Relief for India Inc., J. Edgar Rhoads, wrote to associates and sympathizers: "We have failed to gain National War Fund support.... Now we must take the case to the public."[10]

AMERICA REJECTS REQUEST FOR SHIPS

The Great Famine in Bengal abated slowly in the course of 1944 and a bumper crop of rice in the province contributed to the process. Malnutrition and epidemics were, however, widespread, especially in areas where people had been devitalized by the famine. Lord Wavell, who had taken the place of the hapless Linlithgow as Viceroy of India in October 1943, brought to the task of famine relief a vigour and determination that his predecessor had sorely lacked.

The Viceroy took serious note of the warning of the Foodgrains Policy Committee appointed by the Government of India that a recurrence of famine in India could be avoided only by arranging

to import 1.5 million tons of cereals in 1944 and one million tons annually thereafter. The Committee had urged the Government "to press the United Nations to arrange for imports" at the rate suggested "until further notice."[11] To Wavell the recommendations appeared to be quite sensible and he strove to impress on the British Government the importance of averting a second ghastly round of mass starvation in India.

Wavell informed the British Prime Minister in the most solemn terms that a minimum of one million tons of foodgrains should be imported into India in 1944. The Supreme Commander in the South-East Asia Command, Lord Louis Mountbatten, supported Wavell's appraisal and informed Churchill that he might well have to release military cargo space intended for his Command in order to avert another calamity in India. Churchill tried his best to resist the efforts, but Wavell intensified his warning when he learned that the spring wheat crops had been seriously affected by storms. To bring home to the Prime Minister the gravity of the situation, the Viceroy deputed a senior British member of his Council, Sir Archibald Rowlands, to describe the position in India to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, General Alan Brooke.[12]

At this time the Japanese had made their desperate thrust into north-eastern India and the decisive battle of Imphal lay ahead. A British success in the encounter would remove the threat to India and break the back of the Japanese hold over Burma. Distasteful as it undoubtedly was to him, Churchill was constrained to appeal to the President of the United States for assistance in getting food supplies into India so that domestic discontent might not impair the morale of the Indian Army and adversely affect British military objectives.

On 29 April 1944, Churchill sent a telegram to the President appealing for assistance:

> The food situation in India and its possible reactions to our joint operations is of serious concern to me.... The gravest warnings have been given to me by Wavell who is very anxious about our position.
>
> During the first 9 months of 1944, I have been able to make arrangements for shipping 350,000 tons of wheat to India from

> Australia by cutting down military shipments and by other means.... I see no other way of doing more. We have the wheat (in Australia) but we lack the ships. I have had much hesitation in asking you to add to the great assistance you are giving us with shipping but a satisfactory situation in India is of such vital importance to the success of our joint plans against the Japanese that I am impelled to ask you to consider a special allocation of ships to carry wheat to India from Australia without reducing the assistance you are now providing for us, who are at a positive minimum if war efficiency is to be maintained. For some time I have resisted the Viceroy's request that I ask your view of Mountbatten's representations. I believe that I am no longer justified in not asking for your aid. Wavell is doing his utmost in India by special measures. I would let you know immediately if he should find that he is able to revise his estimates of his requirements.[13]

Here was an unusual situation—a request for American assistance in a matter relating to India from no less a person than Winston Churchill himself. True, it was not couched in the positive and extremely urgent tone that Churchill could employ with telling effect whenever he seriously wanted a favourable response from the President. He had only been able to bring himself to say that he was "no longer justified in not asking" for American help and he made it clear that such help should not be conditioned on any sacrifice of what Britain itself had been allocated in terms of shipping. The State Department, to which the matter was referred by the President, promptly forwarded it to the Joint Chiefs of Staff with a favourable recommendation.

About two months earlier Roosevelt, in a directive to the War Shipping Administrator and the Director of Defence Transportation, had stated that it was of great importance to make available to all "liberated areas" the supplies that would be necessary to carry out "essential relief and rehabilitation programmes." He had described the attainment of the objective as "a matter of national policy."[14] Assistance to India apparently did not fall into any such category. Roosevelt did not take any personal interest in urging the agencies concerned to make available to India the ships that were requested.

It is not clear whether any of his principal advisers made efforts to direct his interest to the problem and to obtain a favourable decision. The powerful voice of Harry Hopkins and the passionate pleading of Lewis Douglas, Deputy Administrator of the War Shipping Administration, had often been raised in the past in support of shipping space to transport a multitudinous variety of supplies to Britain and the Soviet Union. Only a year earlier, when the shipping situation was much more tight, the two had urged the President to overrule his own Joint Chiefs of Staff and provide Britain with the shipping that it requested. The President had "needed little convincing" and had promptly accepted their recommendation. It only remained, Roosevelt had told them, "to settle it with the military."[15]

Roosevelt's apathy towards India was in striking contrast to his instantaneous and munificent response to an earlier request for food supplies from Stalin. "I have given orders that no effort be spared to keep our routes fully supplied with ships and cargo in conformity with your desires," Roosevelt wrote to Stalin. Stalin had made the request in October 1942—the same month when the cyclone hit Bengal. The President gave a solemn promise to ship to the Soviet Union two million short tons of wheat (by June 1943), as well as *monthly shipments* of 15,000 tons of meat, 20,000 tons of canned meat, 12,000 tons of lard, and 10,000 tons of vegetable oil. On 6 January 1943, at virtually the same time when Churchill was cutting down sailings to the Indian Ocean area by 60 per cent, Roosevelt issued a directive to Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson to provide the Soviet Union "with the maximum amount of supplies that can be delivered to her ports...." Hopkins, Douglas, and a host of other luminaries were ever eager and ready to urge the President to do more and ever more to help the Soviet Union. It was no secret to anybody in Washington that there existed "tremendous political pressure behind the Soviet aid programs...."[16]

Whenever the President was known to have adopted the kind of posture that he assumed in regard to assuring food supplies for Great Britain and the Soviet Union, the concurrence of the Joint Chiefs of Staff with whatever course he favoured was speedily forthcoming.

Apparently in the case of Churchill's weakly-worded request for

ships for India, the Joint Chiefs received no token of Presidential interest. On 29 May 1944, the Joint Chiefs of Staff informed the State Department that they could not approve the diversion of ships as requested by Churchill because of the adverse effect such diversion would have upon military operations already undertaken or in prospect.

The President promptly endorsed the decision of the Joint Chiefs and sent a reply to Churchill. He had given the "most urgent consideration" to the Prime Minister's letter, said Roosevelt in his telegram. "The appeal has my utmost sympathy and you may be sure that there is full realization of the military, political, and humanitarian factors involved.... Needless to say, I regret exceedingly the necessity of giving you this unfavourable reply."[17]

During the period April 1944-March 1945 the United States Government did not send a single ton of cereals to India; nor did it divert a single ship to carry food from other sources to the victims of famine in India.[18]

NOTES

[1]*New York Times,* 15 December 1943, p. 26. The Mission, a respected and well-known order of monks, devotes itself, among other things, to humanitarian operations in various parts of India. Branches of the Mission function in a number of major American cities.

[2]*CIO War Relief News* (December 1943); *India Today,* 4 (November 1943), p. 4; *ibid.,* 4 (December 1943), p. 3; *New York Times,* 23 November 1943, p. 7. "I am sick of the silence of India," Stone wrote in one of his columns, *PM* (New York), 16 November 1943.

[3]The *Hindu,* 15 April 1944, p. 5. *New York Times,* 7 December 1943, p.16; mimeographed bulletin issued by the Indian Relief Committee, 17 February 1944, Archives of the India League of America.

[4]Memorandum by the Assistant Chief, Special War Problems Division, Department of State (E. K. Kuppinger), "India Famine Relief," n. d., December 1943, 845.48/360, Files of the State Department.

[5]James Brunot, Executive Director, President's War Relief Control Board, to Kuppinger, enclosing cables from James G. Vail, 22 May 1944, 845.48/380, *ibid.* India Famine Relief Committee, Inc., Report to Members and Contributors, 14 October 1944, "India Relief's Dilemma," mimeographed, Archives of the India League of America.

[6]Gilbert D. White of the AFSC to Brunot, 9 May 1944; Brunot to Kuppinger, 15 May 1944; Kuppinger to Brunot, 24 May 1944, 845.48/376, Files of the State Department. Kuppinger also sent Brunot a copy of an article by J. R. Symonds of the Friends Ambulance Unit published in the *Statesman* of Calcutta. The article noted that malaria, scabies, and kala-azar were widely prevalent in Bengal. Children who "are merely bags of bones" needed help as did about two to three million adults who had been demoralized by the dole. Symonds urged that "we must be prepared for extensive relief schemes in selected areas." Kuppinger to Brunot, enclosing a copy of an article dated 19 April 1943 in the *Statesman* by J. R. Symonds, 20 May 1944, 845.48/367, Files of the State Department. Brunot to Kuppinger, 30 June 1944, 845.48/6-3044, *ibid.*

[7]India Famine Relief Committee, Inc., Report, note 5. The situation in India was described in a report dated 31 October 1944 from J. S. Everton who was in charge of the distribution of American relief supplies in India. The report, sent to the American Friends Service Committee, was published in a bulletin issued by the India Famine Relief Committee, Inc., 12 December 1944. "The present situation," Everton summed up, "is that there are serious epidemics in several parts of India; that while the food situation is improved, there is still scarcity of certain basic items and that there are tremendous areas of need still to be met."

[8]"Russian War Relief—Facts in Figures," *American Review of the Soviet Union* (New York), 6 (May 1945), p. 27; *The National Budget of the National War Fund* (New York, 1943).

[9]Henry F. Grady and others to Winthrop Aldrich, 16 February 1945; Aldrich to Grady and others, 23 February 1945. Texts in *The Case for American Relief for India* (New York, 1945).

[10]J. Edgar Rhoads to Singh, 23 March 1945, Singh Papers.

[11]Government of India, *Report of the Foodgrains Policy Committee 1943* (New Delhi, 1943), pp. 33,34.

[12]Arthur Bryant, *Triumph in the West 1943-1946* (New York, 1948), pp. 33,34.

[13]The Prime Minister to the President, 29 April 1944, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1944* (Washington, 1965), V, pp. 271-72. This source will be cited hereafter as *FR 1944*, V.

[14]The President to the Chairman, War Production Board, The War Food Administrator; the Director, Office of Defence Transportation; the War Shipping Administrator; and the Petroleum Administrator for War, 22 February 1944, Official File 4996, FDRL.

[15]Richard M. Leighton and Robert W. Coakley, *United States Army in World War II, The War Department: Global Logistics and Strategy 1940-1943* (Washington, 1955), p. 700. On this point see also C. B. A. Behrens, *History of the Second World War, United Kingdom Civil Series: Merchant Shipping and the Demands of War* (London, 1955), pp. 364-65,377. "Many prominent individuals and groups in America were devoted champions of British claims [for increased shipping]," Behrens wrote. There were some who were hard to convince and it was necessary for the British to tackle them with "much patience, tact and skill," she added.

[16]Leighton, note 15, pp. 587, 597. Roosevelt to Stalin, 19 October 1942, *Correspondence between the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the*

Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain During the Great Patriotic War (Moscow, 1957), II, p. 38.

[17]Memorandum by the Secretary of State to the President, enclosing a draft telegram to the British Prime Minister, 31 May 1944, *FR 1944*, note 13, V, pp. 272-73.

[18]Source: Government of India, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Directorate of Economics, *Food Situation in India 1939-53* (New Delhi, 1954), pp. 28-31.

Chapter Five

END OF AN ERA

In April 1945 American Relief for India Inc. opened a campaign to collect $1.2 million for relief activities in India. The group published a brochure entitled *The Case for American Relief in India.* In a message published in the brochure, William Phillips earnestly pleaded for a gesture of sympathy from the United States towards India. Phillips said:

> My recent assignment in India convinced me that India's acute distress has been greatly aggravated by the war. The lack of rice due to the stoppage of imports from Burma is only one of the several conditions caused by the war which have brought hideous suffering to the people of Bengal and Southern States. And then too, the presence in large numbers of our own forces, especially in Assam and Bengal, has contributed to diminish the limited food supply of the native population. I believe that a gesture of sympathy from this country is greatly needed, now more than ever.

Former Assistant Secretary of State Henry Grady, who had led the American Technical Mission to India in 1942, said in his message that "Americans must continue to show the Indian people our friendship for them by sending them essential and impartial aid that only America can supply."[1] "Help These Forgotten Victims of War in India," declared a leaflet circulated by the group.

The fund-raising campaign was launched at a meeting held at Hotel Commodore in New York City. Speaking on the occasion,

James Vail of the American Friends Service Committee declared that the people of India were looking hopefully towards the United States for help in their hour of trial. "India's plight," declared Phillips, "is the direct result of the war and as such it becomes an American responsibility to help." With thousands of American troops based on Indian soil, "the United States cannot afford to turn a deaf ear to India's cry for help," he asserted. The Ambassador also highlighted another reason why the United States should interest itself in winning Indian goodwill. After the war India would form an important link between East and West. It was of the utmost importance to keep India "looking westward"— towards Britain and the United States, Phillips said.[2]

The group's appeal for funds was endorsed by Lord Halifax, British Ambassador to the United States. Apparently, by this time the British Government was not terrified by a monthly flow into India of a hundred thousand dollars worth of vitamin pills and milk powder from a private American group.[3] Two of America's leading newspapers, the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald Tribune,* which had long buried famine news from India in their inside pages, came out with editorials entitled respectively "Our Stake in India" and "Aid to a Distant Ally." The *Tribune* revealed to its readers the fact that the great famine in India was "in part a result of war's drain upon her goods," while the *Times* described India as "a casualty of the war and one of the heaviest sufferers." "The famine that swept that land in 1943-44 was a war-created famine," it added.

The same great newspapers had failed to assert these home truths when in 1943 the Roosevelt Administration found it expedient to exclude India from the scope of UNRRA. It seems reasonable to surmise that Lord Halifax's support of appeal for funds for India might have led the newspapers to conclude that British opposition to American assistance was slackening. The imminent end of the war must also have influenced the newspapers to think about the future of America's relations with India. On 20 April 1944, the *Tribune* had reported without comment a statement by Viscount Leverhulme, head of the great mercantile house, Lever Brothers, that during 1943 no less than two million had died of starvation in Bengal alone. Now the newspaper was ready to assert editorially

that there was an urgent need "to reassure India's suffering people that their Western Allies have not abandoned normal humanitarian concern nor forgotten a far-away ally."[4]

The *New York Times* wrote eloquently of America's stake in India:

> For American businessmen India is one of the mightiest potential markets on the globe, about to enter upon an industrial era that will release the latent energies of one-fifth of the human race. She will want machinery for farm and factory; she will want tens of thousands of products that America can provide. We of this country have a stake in India. For our own well-being, if for no higher reason, we can no longer think of India as outside our world. We cannot deny her our interest or leave her ills and misfortunes for others to cure.[5]

The *New York Times* looked into the future and envisaged for the United States the role of principal physician for the "ills and misfortunes" of India. Its prescription was a far cry from Roosevelt's statement to Churchill on 10 March 1942 that the Indian problem was "strictly speaking, none of my business." Six weeks before the *New York Times* editorial about America's stake in India, President Roosevelt had passed away. Shortly thereafter, Churchill was removed from the helm of affairs in London by the verdict of the British electorate. Soon the greatest war in mankind's history came to an end. The guns fell silent on battlefields around the world. The gates of Indian prisons opened. A new era began in the relations of the United States with India.

In this work we have been concerned only with the attitude of the Roosevelt Administration and of the American public towards the Great Indian Famine which brought death to many hundreds of thousands and wasting disease to countless others. No food from the United States Government came to the starving Indians. Roosevelt made not even a gesture of sympathy. Not only did his Administration fail to take advantage of the launching of UNRRA to create an indirect change in American policy, but it even sought to ensure that India received no benefits from that organization. The Congress of the United States took no initiative

to formulate a programme of assistance to the victims of famine in India. But the adoption by the Senate as well as the House of Representatives of the so-called India clause to the UNRRA Bill indicates that if Roosevelt had suggested a modest programme of assistance to India, Congress might probably have gone along without much opposition.

The United States need not have made a free gift of food to India. Nobody in India had suggested such a course. India could have paid for every grain sold by America because it possessed the necessary reserves of foreign exchange. The principal stumbling-block was Winston Churchill and his deputies in India. The critical shortage of shipping was undoubtedly a factor to which some weight must be given. But it was not beyond the ingenuity of the planners and executors of the gigantic American programme of "global logistics" to find a few ships for a humanitarian mission, at least as a gesture to the dying and starving people in India.

After UNRRA was launched, its Director General began using his prestige and connections on behalf of the relief requirements of countries covered by his organization. Lehman's frequent references to his world-wide operations contributed to the spread of a general impression among the American public that he was indeed meeting the urgent needs of hungry peoples everywhere. There was not much awareness of the fact that India was not a beneficiary of the programmes launched by UNRRA.

With the "relief scene" dominated by UNRRA and Lehman, the prospects of India's needs getting some consideration from the Administration became even less than before. It is true that Lehman had his own problems and difficulties in obtaining shipping for UNRRA requirements. On one occasion, chagrined by the obstacles he encountered, Lehman took his case to Admiral William Leahy, Military Adviser to the President. Leahy told him brusquely: "Now, look here young man, I want you to know just one thing. I've no doubt that you need the supplies, and I'm very sorry that people are suffering. But I'm here to look after the Army, and I'm going to see that the Army gets everything they want. No use your coming and arguing with me any more because that's my position and I'm going to stick to it."[6]

Lehman was a resourceful man and worked very hard to get the

maximum possible shipping resources allocated for UNRRA, though he could not get as much as was required. His continuing efforts pre-empted the field and made the prospects of shipping being diverted to Indian relief very dim. In the absence of powerful sponsorship, the military was unlikely to be responsive to any such suggestion. Since Churchill's lukewarm and left-handed request for the diversion of a few ships was merely forwarded to the Joint Chiefs in routine fashion, they responded predictably in the negative. A direct and forceful expression of Presidential interest in the diversion of a ship or two to India was likely to have produced a different response from the Joint Chiefs. But Roosevelt and his advisers did not think that even a small gesture to the Indian people would be a worthwhile proposition, not only from the humanitarian point of view but from that of America's own interests in the future.

The guiding principles of the American Joint Chiefs are clearly brought out in a document that they made available to the British early in 1945:

> ...the basic truth is that the best help we can possibly give the population of the liberated territories in Europe or elsewhere is to win the war as quickly as possible.... The vital military point involved to the United States Chiefs of Staff is the cost in American lives which would almost certainly result from placing non-military requirements in a priority where they could compete with military needs essential to ending global war successfully at the earliest possible date. A definite but secondary consideration is the cost in money and resources to the United States resulting from any prolongation of the war.[7]

The Joint Chiefs must have evaluated the request of ships for India on the basis of such criteria and must have determined that the request had no merit. Their evaluation was, naturally, based purely on military considerations. Their "grand strategy" gave primary importance to the war against Germany in Europe. In the war against Japan in Asia, the CBI Theatre was to remain secondary to the Pacific operations. The Joint Chiefs viewed the shipping situation in terms of their own military priorities, and they were

not concerned with the political or humanitarian aspects of the matter. It was for the President to examine all relevant factors before taking a final decision. The President too was content to view the issue of releasing a few ships—even a single ship—to carry grain to India exclusively on the basis of short-range military considerations.

Not a single reference to the tragedy of Bengal can be found in *The White House Papers of Harry Hopkins* or *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt.* Churchill did not devote a single line to it in his mammoth history of the Second World War. Secretary Hull makes a passing reference to it in his memoirs but avoids any assessment of his country's role.[8]

It is noteworthy that this tragedy of immense dimensions has had little impact on many Americans who had held positions of responsibility in those days. Dean Acheson says not a word about it in his memoirs, but looks back with satisfaction on his role at the Atlantic City meeting of UNRRA. He had looked over the long-forgotten resolutions adopted at the meeting, Acheson writes, and he was "impressed with their sensible approach."[9] Allen Nevins, biographer of Herbert Lehman, apparently found little in the latter's papers that might have indicated Lehman's concern over the plight of India. Nevins writes with enthusiasm and admiration about Lehman's gallant efforts in a world-wide arena "for the rescue of perishing masses." Lehman's "strong belief in justice, his conviction that the rich should share with the poor and the strong help the weak, were satisfied by the whole basis of UNRRA," writes Nevins.[10] He simply fails to ask the question: How truly just was UNRRA's "whole basis"?

There were many Americans who were broadminded enough to support the idea of rushing relief even to Italians and Germans. George F. Kennan was profoundly moved not only by the plight of Germans in East Prussia overrun by the Russians but also by the fate of "500,000 horses, the 1.4 million cattle, the 1.85 million pigs that were once to be found in the place." He bemoaned the "indifference of our statesmen and our public to these circumstances."[11] That men like him could feel saddened over German pigs but fail to take note of millions of human beings starving to death in India is a commentary on the scale of values of many sophisticated and sensitive Americans at the time.

The decisions of Churchill, seconded by Roosevelt, had calamitous consequences for the lives of millions of men, women, and children in Bengal. In discussing the very tight shipping position, Roosevelt had informed Churchill on 31 March 1943: "We cannot escape the fact that something must give. . . ."[12] The two leaders and their advisers were in agreement that what was sacrificed must not be something vital to the winning of the war. Predictably, for Churchill, India became a prime candidate for despatch to the sacrificial altar. The proceedings concerning the effects of the policies on India are described with philosophic detachment in a volume of the official British history of the Second World War. The great achievements in the sphere of transportation of military and civilian supplies to various war theatres, especially of foodstuffs and raw materials "to which the British were entitled in order to maintain health, morale and war production in the United Kingdom ... were won at the cost of *transferring the crisis* to the territories of the Indian Ocean area," wrote the British historian C.B.A. Behrens. With unintended irony she concludes: "In the Indian Ocean area, the burden of paying for victory—shifted from place to place to ease the weight—finally came to rest."[13]

Not only during the crisis year of 1943, but in the remaining months of the war, India's case did not get a fair or favourable hearing. When it appeared that even India's minimum requirements could not be met except at the cost of sacrifices elsewhere, "India was harshly treated," the British historian notes in passing.[14] The United States Government was aware of this history of harsh treatment accorded to India and of its gruesome consequences.

President Roosevelt subordinated his judgment to that of a neanderthal imperialist in respect of American policy towards Britain's Empire. He failed to realize that the forces released by the war against Hitlerism would also spell the doom of decadent Churchillism. That aspects of Churchillism had become repugnant to growing numbers of the British people themselves was not adequately comprehended by Roosevelt and his associates. So they held their self-imposed blinders securely in place. They remained content in their conviction that they were headed in the course that was right not only for the United States but for all mankind.

It is interesting to note in this connection that Roosevelt did not

feel that he was really playing second fiddle to Churchill on matters involving America's own traditions and interests. A supremely self-confident person, he was not only untroubled by any such thoughts, but he was probably convinced that he could outsmart the British any time he chose. A few years earlier, when a Cabinet member told him that he was pro-British, Roosevelt replied:

> I have known the British ever since I was a small boy. I am on to their tricks; I know them, every one of them. I know them when they are trying to slip something over on me. One reason they like me is that when I catch them, I tell them. And they have got to the point now where they say, "I guess I can't fool the President; he is on to us." Well, it is a good thing to be in that position.[15]

Roosevelt was certainly not "on to" Churchill's tricks as far as the Empire was concerned. He did not "catch" Churchill because he was by no means vigorously hostile or antagonistic to imperialism of the British variety. "We believe that the British Empire, to a certain extent, has stood for the democratic way of life..." he once told members of the American Society of Newspaper Editors.[16] He believed that the British could be depended upon to do the right thing at the appropriate time because they were gentlemen and democrats. He did not react to the fact that Churchill played the game according to different rules as far as the Empire was concerned.

The British Government took great care to ensure that the Roosevelt Administration remained a non-interfering partner as far as imperial areas were concerned. Ambassador Halifax noted with satisfaction in September 1944 that the Administration, with the support of American public opinion, had gone "immeasurably further than ever before" along the road of cooperation with Britain. "In fact," Halifax wrote to Lord Beaverbrook, "we have made progress towards a working partnership with the U.S. such as we have never made before and beyond most people's expectations."[17] Churchill manipulated the partnership skilfully to ensure that a non-military American presence and activities in any part of the Empire were kept down to the irreducible minimum. He was fearful that

increased American activities would inevitably bring in their train increased American influence detrimental to Britain's imperial interests and objectives. He was not the kind of person who would ask for American assistance even to meet so grave a crisis as that of Bengal. The Roosevelt Administration had an inadequate understanding of this situation and remained passive as Churchill viewed with stoic calm the calamitous impact of his action on a people whom he considered as dispensable.

An idea of the magnitude of India's tragedy can be obtained if one compares the number of persons who died in the famine with the number of casualties suffered by Britain and the United States during the Second World War. The total number of Britons—civilian and military—who lost their lives as a result of enemy action during the war was, 357,116, according to a statement by Prime Minister Clement Attlee in Parliament in June 1946. A United States War Department announcement issued during the same month listed the number of American dead at 396,637.[18] Many thousands of Indian soldiers, sailors, and airmen lost their lives in the war against the Axis. In addition, as one of the prominent Indian supporters of the British Raj, Sir A. Ramaswami Mudaliar, acknowledged subsequently, millions died in India "not in concentration camps, not in occupied countries, not through the cruelty and torture of the enemy, but merely because they could not have enough to sustain body and soul." Mudaliar said:

> While a million and the half people, officially, were dying of starvation and three millions... unofficially were estimated to have died, not one foreign person in my country, man, woman or child, prisoners of war from Italy or Germany, refugees from Poland by the thousands, not one foreign person was allowed to suffer in any way during all that terrible period.

When death was on the rampage in India, Mudaliar pointed out, the Indian people received "little encouragement and less of the grain we needed so badly" from the Allies.[19]

Subservience to Churchillism resulted in America's failure even to lend "the countenance of her voice and the benignant sympathy of her example" to the Indian people. One American scholar who read

a draft of this paper commented with some irritation on what he described as the "peevishness" of the present writer in subjecting the role of the United States to critical scrutiny. It was not as though India was deliberately singled out for punishment by the Roosevelt Administration, he asserted. Another thought it fit to remind the writer that a war was in progress during the time. The present writer fully acknowledges the tremendous pressures imposed on the Administration by the war, especially the heavy military demands on available shipping. It is further acknowledged that the Roosevelt Administration was moved by no malevolent bias against India and its people, as was the case with Churchill. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Roosevelt remained inactive in the face of a terrible tragedy because, to a substantial extent, he had abdicated his initiative and independence of action with regard to areas under British imperial rule. It is difficult to envisage a similar indifference on the part of the American Administration to the plight of European people, even on a very much smaller scale.

On 2 January 1945, for instance, the President responded positively to questions from reporters on what he had done concerning cables from Churchill urging prompt assistance to the people of Greece. "The most important thing to do in all our dealings with rescued countries," Roosevelt said, "is to see that the population doesn't starve to death. We have all been thinking about that for a long time. Of course, we continue to think about it."[20] The President's words truly and sincerely expressed his approach, primarily as far as the European peoples were concerned, and to a lesser extent, other peoples whom he regarded as falling within the area of American responsibility. The scope of his thinking did not extend to India even though his public pronouncements, couched in lofty terms, were all-embracing and non-discriminatory. He had spoken with feeling of the "sufferings of the little men and women" and had proclaimed the need to "utilize the production of *all* the world to balance the want of *all* the world."[21] His deeds did not match his words. Among those around him very few had the time or the inclination to weigh the implications of his course. "It always seems to me," wrote Chester Bowles, head of the Office of Price Administration at the time and a future Ambassador to India, to novelist Pearl Buck, "that too many of us are willing to

look the other way when the East is concerned on the general theory that Asia and India are remote and that the people there are accustomed to privation. I have had some personal experiences with individuals here in Washington along this line which were very shocking indeed."[22]

During the years of the last phase of the Indian struggle for freedom and of America's "crusade" against fascism, President Roosevelt might have played a dynamic and imaginative role, if not in the political sphere where he felt constrained by the exigencies of war, at least in the humanitarian area of feeding the hungry and saving lives. It was not beyond his ingenuity and capability to make at least a gesture of goodwill to the starving millions in an Allied nation. Franklin Roosevelt failed, ironically enough, in an area in which the record of achievement of his country and of its humane people was second to that of none in the history of nations. America's record suffered a blemish because its leaders were content to remain as mute onlookers of the machinations of a dying British imperialism.

NOTES

[1]American Relief for India, Inc., *The Case for American Relief for India* (New York, 1945). Also American Relief for India, Inc., *American Relief for India* (New York, 1945), p. 2.

[2]Report of Phillips' speech in *New York Times,* 18 April 1945, p. 4. Louis Fischer made similar comments in a letter to the *New York Times,* 5 May 1945, while Edgar Snow voiced support to the cause in a communication to the *New York Herald Tribune,* 4 May 1945. *The Hindu,* 19 April 1944, p. 4; 20 April 1944, p. 4.

[3]Halifax's statement, in *American Relief for India,* note 1, p. 16. "I wish the American friends all success in their great humanitarian task," wrote Richard Casey, Governor of Bengal. With the green signal apparently having been given, the Agent-General for India in Washington made a bold reference to the famine in Bengal. "American sympathy and aid during the famine in Bengal won the gratitude of India. Further help in removing its after-effects will be widely welcomed with similar feelings," Bajpai wrote. *The Case for American Relief for India* note 1.

[4]Ed., *New York Times,* 27 May 1945, p. 8; ed., "Aid to Distant Ally," *New York Herald Tribune,* 4 May 1945.

[5]Ed., *New York Times,* 27 May 1945, p. 8.

[6]Herbert H. Lehman, Oral History Memoir, Columbia University Library, quoted in Allen Nevins, *Herbert H. Lehman and His Era* (Los Angeles, 1963), p. 226. It was Lehman's complaint that the military's attitude was that a lion's share was not enough. He noted that the Secretary of State, Hull, and the Secretary of the Navy, Knox, exuded sympathy, but hardly lifted a finger to make their sympathy effective. *Ibid.,* p. 227.

[7]C. B. A. Behrens, *History of the Second World War, United Kingdom Civil Series: Merchant Shipping and the Demands of War* (London, 1955), pp. 412-13. The British, according to the author, viewed the statement as "a dangerous doctrine" in so far as it related to shipping required to transport civilian supplies to the United Kingdom!

[8]Cordell Hull, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (New York, 1948), II, p. 1496.

[9]Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation* (New York, 1969), p. 78.

[10]Nevins, note 6, p. 238.

[11]George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1928-1950* (Boston, 1967), p. 266.

[12]Behrens, note 7, p. 359.

[13]*Ibid.,* pp. 317, 321. The direct connection between Churchill's decision on sailings to the Indian region and the onset of famine in Bengal is also mentioned, in passing, by Samuel Eliot Morrison, *The Two Ocean War: A Short History of the United States Navy* (Boston, 1963), pp. 242-43.

[14]Behrens, note 7, pp. 434-35.

[15]Off-the-record remarks by Roosevelt at a press conference for members of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, 18 April 1940, Press Conferences of Franklin D. Roosevelt, microfilm, FDRL.

[16]*Ibid.*

[17]Diary entry, September 1944, in The Earl of Birkenhead, *Halifax* (London, 1965), p. 549.

[18]Source: *Encyclopedia Americana* (New York, 1956), XXIX, pp.559YY-559ZZ. In May 1946 the Allied Military Government reported that 2.25 million Germans of the Wehrmacht were killed during the war and that 1.5 million others were "missing."

[19]*General Assembly Official Records,* 1 Sess., 33rd Plenary Meeting, 14 February 1946, p. 490.

[20]Press Conferences of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 2 January 1945, microfilm, FDRL.

[21]Phrases from Roosevelt's comments on the occasion of the signing of the draft UNRRA Agreement by representatives of 44 nations. Text, *New York Times,* 10 November 1943, pp. 1, 4. The President spoke of the "little men and women who have been ground under the Axis heel. . . ."

[22]Chester Bowles to Pearl Buck, 10 April 1946, Files of the India Famine Emergency Committee, Archives of the India League of America.

Appendices

Appendix I

TEXT OF A LETTER SENT BY PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT TO THE OPENING SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON FOOD AND AGRICULTURE, HOT SPRINGS, VIRGINIA, 18 MARCH 1943.*

In your capacity as Chairman of the United States Delegation, and as temporary Chairman of the United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture, will you convey to the delegates assembled my heartfelt regret that I cannot be present in person to welcome them upon this historic occasion. Urgent matters in the prosecution of the war make it impossible for me to attend, and until we have won the unconditional surrender of our enemies the achievement of victory must be pressed above all else. Nevertheless, I hope that later I shall be able to meet the delegates and express to them personally my profound conviction of the importance of the task on which they are about to embark.

This is the first United Nations Conference. Together, we are fighting a common enemy. Together also, we are working to build a world in which men shall be free to live out their lives in peace, prosperity, and security. The broad objectives for which we work have been stated in the Atlantic Charter, the Declaration of the United Nations, and at the meeting of the 21 American republics at Rio de Janeiro in January 1942. It is the purpose of this conference to consider how best to further these policies in so far as they concern the consumption, production, and distribution of food and other agricultural products in the post-war period.

We know that in the world for which we are fighting and working, the four freedoms must be won for all men. We know, too, that

*(The letter was read to the Conference by Marvin Jones, Chairman of the United States Delegation.) See *Department of State Bulletin* (Washington), 8 (22 May 1943), pp. 455-56.

each freedom is dependent upon the others; that freedom from fear, for example, cannot be secured without freedom from want. If we are to succeed, each nation individually, and all nations collectively, must undertake these responsibilities. They must take all necessary steps to develop world food production so that it will be adequate to meet the essential nutritional needs of the world population. And they must see to it that no hindrances, whether of international trade, of transportation, or of internal distribution, be allowed to prevent any nation or group of citizens within a nation from obtaining the food necessary for health. Society must meet in full its obligation to make available to all its members at least the minimum adequate nutrition. The problems with which this conference will concern itself are the most fundamental of all human problems—for without food and clothing life itself is impossible. In this and other United Nations Conferences we shall be extending our collaboration from war problems into important new fields. Only by working together can we learn to work together, and work together we must and will.

Appendix II

TEXT OF AN ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT ON THE OCCASION OF THE SIGNING OF THE AGREEMENT CREATING THE UNITED NATIONS RELIEF AND REHABILITATION ADMINISTRATION, NOVEMBER 1943.*

On behalf of the host nation I welcome you to this historic occasion.

Here in the White House, seated about a table in the historic East Room, are representatives of 44 nations—United Nations —and those associated with them.

The people of these 44 nations include approximately 80 per cent of the human race, now united by a common devotion to the cause of civilization and by a common determination to build for the future a world of decency and security and, above all, peace.

Representatives of these 44 nations—you gentlemen here—have just signed an agreement creating the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration—commonly known by a simpler word as UNRRA.

This agency will help to put into practical effect some of the high purposes that were set forth in the Declaration of the United Nations of January 1, 1942.

Coming after the Declarations of Moscow, recently, this agreement shows that we mean business in this war in a political and humanitarian sense, just as surely as we mean business in a military sense. It is one more strong link joining the United Nations and their associates in facing problems of mutual need and interest.

The agreement which we have all just signed is based on a preamble in which the United Nations declare that they are "determined that immediately upon the liberation of any area... the population thereof shall receive aid and relief from their sufferings, food, clothing and shelter, aid in the prevention of pestilence and

in the recovery of the health of the people, and that preparation and arrangements shall be made for the return of prisoners and exiles to their homes and for assistance in the resumption of urgently needed agricultural and industrial production and the restoration of essential services." That is the preamble of the agreement which has just been signed here today.

All of the United Nations agree to cooperate and share in the work of UNRRA—each nation according to its own individual resources—and to provide relief and help in rehabilitation for the victims of German and Japanese barbarism.

I think it is hard for us to grasp the magnitude of the needs in occupied countries.

The Germans and the Japanese have carried on their campaigns of plunder and destruction with one purpose in mind: that in the lands they occupy there shall be left only a generation of half-men—undernourished, crushed in body and spirit, without strength or incentive to hope—ready, in fact, to be enslaved and used as beasts of burden by the self-styled master races.

The occupied countries have been robbed of their foodstuffs and raw materials and even of the agricultural and industrial machinery upon which their workers must depend for employment. The Germans have been planning systematically to make the other countries economic vassals, utterly dependent upon and completely subservient to the Nazi tyrants.

Responsibility for alleviating the suffering and misery occasioned by this so-called "New Order" must be assumed not by any individual nation but by all the united and associated nations acting together. No one country could—or should for that matter—attempt to bear the burden of meeting the vast relief needs—either in money or in supplies.

The work confronting UNRRA is immediate and urgent. As it now begins its operations, many of the most fertile food regions of the world are either under Axis domination or have been stripped by the practice of the dictatorships to make themselves self-sustaining on other peoples' lands. Additional regions will almost inevitably be blackened as the German and Japanese forces in their retreat scorch the earth behind them.

So it will be the task of UNRRA to operate in these areas of

food shortages until the resumption of peaceful occupations enables the liberated peoples once more to assume the full burden of their own support. It will be for UNRRA, first, to assure a fair distribution of available supplies among all of the liberated peoples, and, second, to ward off death by starvation or exposure among these peoples.

It would be supreme irony for us to win a victory, and then to inherit world chaos simply because we were unprepared to meet what we know we shall have to meet. We know the human wants which will follow liberation. Many ruthlessly shattered cities and villages in Russia, China, and Italy provide horrible evidence of what the defeated retreating Germans and Japanese will leave behind.

It is not only humane and charitable for the United Nations to supply medicine, food, and other necessities to the peoples freed from Axis control; it is a clear matter of enlightened self-interest and of military strategic necessity. This was apparent to us even before the Germans were ousted from any of the territories under their control.

But we need not any longer speculate. We have had nearly a year of experience in French Africa—and later experience in Sicily and in Italy.

In French North Africa, the United Nations have given assistance in the form of seeds, agricultural supplies, and agricultural equipment, and have made it possible for the people there to increase their harvest.

After years of looting by the Germans, the people of French Africa are now able to supply virtually all of their own food needs, and that in just one year. Besides, they are meeting important needs of the Allied armed forces in French Africa, in Sicily, and Italy, and giving much of civilian labour which assists our armed forces there in loading and unloading ships.

The assistance rendered to the liberated peoples of French Africa was a joint venture of Great Britain and the United States.

The next step, as in the case of other joint operations of the United Nations, is to go further, to handle the problems of supply for the liberated areas on a United Nations basis—rather than the cooperation of only two nations.

We have shown that while the war lasts, whenever we help the liberated peoples with essential supplies and services, we hasten the day of the defeat of the Axis powers.

When victory comes there can certainly be no secure peace until there is a return of law and order in the oppressed countries, until the peoples of these countries have been restored to a normal, healthy, and self-sustaining existence. This means that the more quickly and effectually we apply measures of relief and rehabilitation, the more quickly will our own boys overseas be able to come home.

We have acted together with the other United Nations in harnessing our raw materials, our production, and our other resources to defeat the common enemy. We have worked together with the United Nations in full agreement and action in the fighting on land, on the sea, and in the air. We are now about to take an additional step in the combined actions which are necessary to win the war and to build the foundation for a secure peace.

The sufferings of the little men and women who have been ground under the Axis heel can be relieved only if we utilize the production of *all* the world to balance the want of *all* the world. In UNRRA we have devised a mechanism, based on the processes of true democracy, which can go far toward accomplishment of such an objective in the days and months of desperate emergency which will follow the overthrow of the Axis.

As in most of the difficult and complex things in life, nations will learn to work together only by actually working together. Why not? The nations have common objectives. It is, therefore, with a lift of hope, that we look on the signing of this agreement by all of the United Nations as a means of joining them together still more firmly.

Such is the spirit and such is the positive action of the United Nations and their associates at the time when our military power is becoming predominant, when our enemies are being pushed back—all over the world.

In defeat or in victory, the United Nations have never deviated from adherence to the basic principles of freedom, tolerance, independence, and security.

Tomorrow I am glad to say the UNRRA begins its first formal

conference—and makes the first bold steps toward the practicable, workable realization of a thing called freedom from want. The forces of the United Nations are marching forward, and the peoples of the United Nations march with them.

So, my friends, on this historic occasion I wish you all the success in the world.

Appendix III

INDIA AND UNRRA: EXCERPTS FROM DEBATES IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, 21 AND 25 JANUARY 1944*

II. Washington 21 January 1944.

Mr Mundt: Mr Chairman, in considering the adoption of this Joint Resolution 192, this Congress is considering a highly important piece of legislation and is being asked to do three separate things which we should keep in mind, I believe, as we examine the various ramifications of this bill.

In the first place we are being asked to approve of the findings which were made at the Atlantic City Convention which gave birth to an organization which has come to be known as UNRRA.

In the second place we are asked to adopt a policy of wartime and post-war international cooperation with other members of the United Nations from the standpoint of providing relief to the unfortunate people of the nations requiring assistance.

In the third place we are being asked to provide a considerable sum of money in order to do our part in implementing this relief programme.

Before discussing the bill in detail I want to make my own position crystal clear. While this legislation was not reported out of the Committee on Foreign Affairs by a unanimous vote, since there were several who either voted against it or refrained from voting, I want to say openly that I was one of those who voted in the committee to report the bill favorably.

I want to say, however, that while voting to report the bill out favorably, I was one of those who signed or endorsed or appro-

**Congressional Record*, 90 (1944), pp. 548-67, 684-86.

ved the committee report which accompanies the bill. I might say a word or two about that at this time.

I had several reasons for not putting my personal stamp of approval on that committee report, despite the fact I was in favour of reporting it out. Fundamentally, my reason for opposing the committee report, or not approving the committee report, I should say, is that it seems to me the report seeks to paint too rosy a picture of UNRRA and what it is likely to do. I think, consequently, it lacks candour, because it fails to present both sides of the question and tends to make the Congress and the country believe that everything hoped for in UNRRA is a foresworn reality. I might just illustrate that by pointing to a statement or two in the committee report which made it impossible for me to approve of the report in the form in which it is printed.

Page 335, for example, of the committee report, if you will turn to it, and it is in the back of the hearings available to each of you, contains the following statement, "UNRRA is the first civilian operating agency of the United Nations. Its organization is simple and workable."

As a matter of fact, its organization is not simple. Its organization is complex. It is in fact very complex. I think its organization is necessarily complex. I know of no simple form in which it could be put, but I for one have refused to sign my name to a report which would mislead the American people who have not had an opportunity to consider it carefully, into thinking this is a simple piece of legislation. Such is definitely not the case and the report is in error in so describing it....

Further, on page 338 of the report, is another statement to which I cannot give approval, because it says: "The victims of war must be fed as soon as possible. Chaos and anarchy caused by human suffering would endanger us all."

I agree with the facts of those two sentences, but I disagree with the finding in the committee report which, based on this statement, would exclude India, the greatest sufferer of them all, from coming within the confines of the bill. I shall have something more to say about that a little later on.

... I think that Congress should seriously consider amending this legislation in order to take out a rather strange quirk of language

legerdemain by which India becomes the only member of the United Nations in serious distress which is excluded from the benefits accruing from the act. This is true despite the fact that India is being asked to appropriate $35,000,000 for the support of UNRRA. We have the definition of terms relayed to us by the Assistant Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, himself, that India shall not be eligible to obtain any of the benefits from UNRRA.

I now yield to the gentleman from Pennsylvania.

Mr Wright: I am rather curious as to why the gentleman wishes to include in India. I am referring to page 2, line 9, which seems to limit this relief to those areas which are liberated by the armed forces of the United Nations as a consequence of the retreat of the enemy. The gentleman does not suggest that India is occupied by the enemy.

Mr Mundt: I have the question; now let me answer it. The gentleman was reading from the preamble. If he will turn the page he will find that this relief was supposed to go—and I read from subsection (*a*) of Section 2 of the bill on page 3—

The Chairman: The time of the gentleman from South Dakota has expired.

Mr Eaton: Mr Chairman, I yield the gentleman three additional minutes.

Mrs Rogers of Massachusetts: If the gentleman will yield, I will let him have five minutes of the time that has been assigned to me.

Mr Mundt: I thank the gentlewoman from Massachusetts very much.

The Chairman: The gentleman from South Dakota is recognized for eight additional minutes.

Mrs Rogers: Does the gentleman care to yield at this point or would he prefer to yield later?

Mr Mundt: I was cut off as I was about to read a paragraph. After I have finished I shall be pleased to yield. I am reading now subsection (*a*): The purposes of this act were:

> To plan, coordinate, administer, or arrange for the administration of measures for the relief of victims of war in any area under the control of any of the United Nations through the provision of food, fuel, clothing, shelter, etc.

I believe the gentleman from Pennsylvania will agree with me that that automatically would include India. It does not include India, however, according to an interpretation relayed to us by the State Department because it appears there is a conflict of language between the preamble and this section. There is a conflict of language there and consequently the definition—and let me point out that the definition has not been made by our Department of State, the definition appears no place in print in the resolutions adopted at Atlantic City—has been accepted by UNRRA authorities that India is ineligible for benefits and relief. The State Department cannot provide you any written evidence anywhere of the author of this definition, but it was generally understood at Atlantic City, so I am told, that because of this conflict India is "included out." Thus from what one might describe as a source representing "diplomatic anonymity" comes the heart-rending report that India's suffering people are beyond the pale in so far as UNRRA is concerned.

I now yield to the gentlewoman from Massachusetts.

Mrs Rogers: A great deal is being said about humanitarian measures. Certainly it would not be humane to go into these countries and try to re-educate them in any form of religion that they do not like. They have a right to their own kind of education, they have a right to their own kind of religion. If under UNRRA it should be attempted to re-educate them, to change their religion, it would be in the nature of Hitlerism. That is what Hitler is doing.

Mr Mundt: I thoroughly agree with the gentlewoman that neither this country nor UNRRA should go into foreign countries and try to change their religion or try to inculcate any "isms" or doctrines alien to them.

Now Mr Chairman, I shall have to proceed for a time, if I may, although, first, I must yield to my colleague from South Dakota, because it would appear that there were disunity in our delegation did I not do so.

Mr Case: I merely wanted to give the gentleman an opportunity to answer the question. He suggested the gentleman from Tennessee [Mr Courtney] asked him if he desired the answer. Who wrote the report? [*Sic.*]

Mr Mundt: I have no desire to answer the question unless it is asked by the gentleman from Tennessee who interrogated me

and who is a member of our committee. I asked him if he wanted to ask me the question who wrote the report. If he wants to ask that question I will be glad to answer it; otherwise I am precluded from doing so since it would involve revealing information given out in an executive session of our committee. Now, I should like to continue to develop for a while this strange relationship existing between UNRRA and India.

Mr Hoffman: Mr Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr Mundt: I really have no time.

Mr Hoffman. I just wanted to find out what was back of that curtain of secrecy. Who wrote the report?

Mr Mundt: I do not yield, Mr Chairman; and Mr Chairman, I ask now that I be not further interrupted, for my time is fast running out.

The Chairman: The gentleman declines to yield further.

Mr Mundt: I think that excluding India from relief is wrong, and the only way by which she is being excluded is by a tortured definition conceived by an anonymous somebody behind a curtain of secrecy up at Atlantic City.

It is wrong in the first place, psychologically, because the Indians in this war are our allies. There are 400,000 Indian soldiers fighting with our boys in Italy and throughout the world. It was an Indian corps that captured the greatest single individual captive of this war, General Von Arnheim in north Africa. I think it is psychologically wrong to omit a great and active ally like India from the benefits of UNRRA. The Japanese propaganda minister could ask for no better propaganda for effective use in India. She is threatened with invasion, her troops are fighting by our side, she is a great base for military preparation, our own troops are billeted there at this moment, yet she is excluded from the benefits although she is asked to contribute. I am not giving you my own opinion solely on that, Mr Chairman, but I am going to read to you now a part of an editorial which appeared in the November 30 edition of the *Hindustan Times*, one of the three or four largest newspapers published in India. That newspaper published in India says this :

The Bengal famine has at least been attributed in part to the

> loss of Burma and supplies from that country, and is India to be victimized for it without being technically called a victim of Axis aggression? India has borne the burden of war—and there is no use raising technical questions about the nature of that participation. Her soldiers have won resounding victories in Africa and Italy; she is now the base for the reconquest of Burma and as a base she has had to strain her resources to keep Allied armies supplied. Under the UNRRA agreement India can remain starved while Burma must be relieved. Were it not too tragic, it would be utterly farcical.

This is being read by the people of India. It is the editorial opinion of people who are our partners in this war and in whose towns and cities American service men and women are now employed. The propagandists from Tokyo who are inflaming the people because of this distinction have easy work when the Indians themselves resent the special and peculiar treatment accorded their crying needs for food and especially for medicine. I think you will agree with me that Congress should so act now that it at least make a recommendation that when the Council meets next in May it consider the possibility of including India as far as funds and facilities permit in the benefits available from the UNRRA.

In the second place I think it is unwise and unjust and unwarranted to exclude India for military reasons. We are helping the people in Sicily and Italy because Sicily and Italy are a base for military operations if you please. India is also a base for military operations, military operations into Burma, military operations into the whole southern Pacific area, military operations to help China, and to destroy Tokyo. It is destined to become increasingly important as the defeat of Germany becomes more imminent and as we have to fight the final stages of the war in the southern Pacific. How can we on the one hand through UNRRA make relief available to peoples participating in the way of furnishing a military base in Italy and Sicily and on the other hand tell the Indians that unfortunately they should be "included out" because of somebody's definition?

Let me point out furthermore that there are almost a million refugees from Burma in India at the present time who under the

terms of this act become eligible for the benefits of UNRRA, but whose hosts and neighbors, the Indians, equally hungry, starving from the same lack of food, dying from the very same diseases, are excluded from the benefits. Would that make for good relations? Does that make for simplicity of operation? Does that make for the simple workable arrangement which the committee report claims UNRRA enjoys?

I want this act to create goodwill. I want this act to relieve suffering. I want this act to be devoid of all discrimination. I want this act to be free from any imputation as to race, color, religion, politics, nationality, geographical location, or preferential status.

The $1,300,000,000 which is asked is, if you please, more money than the United States has ever yet been able to save in any one year in its history. Think of that. The most we have ever saved as a Republic has been in 1920 when as a Nation we saved $1,184,116,007 which was that year applied to the reduction of our national debt. So $1,300,000,000 is not small change. A billion three hundred million dollars is an important sum of money when we think of it in terms of collecting the money from our taxpayers rather than the ease with which modern Congresses pass multi-billion dollar appropriation bills.

Here in Congress, we sometimes seem to lose our sense of perspective in money matters because we deal in such astronomical sums. Someone even referred to a billion three hundred million as a "modest sum." Mr Chairman, modest or immodest, it amounts to about $10 for every man, woman and child in the United States or to a payment of $50 for the average family of five. I mention this, Mr Chairman, not because I am unwilling to have the United States underwrite this much of the world-wide relief programme to follow this war and to be administered through UNRRA, but I mention it because it seems in my mind to underscore and emphasize the importance of this Congress making sure that this expenditure result in the relief of human suffering, in the nondiscriminatory aid of misery among our allies wherever it is found, and in the increase of the goodwill which we all hope people throughout the world have for the United States. I beg of this House to support an amendment which will make this possible,

which will make India and any other people among the United Nations who suffer distress as victims of war eligible for the benefits of UNRRA in so far as funds and facilities permit. Let us treat equally good friends everywhere with equal respect, with equal charity, and with equal justice in traditional American manner regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

Mr Chairman, may I refer those of you primarily interested in insisting on a policy of equal consideration for equal suffering as a guiding principle for UNRRA to the *Congressional Record* for December 21, 1943, starting on page 10989, where I went into this matter in some detail. May I also suggest that you read the hearings on House Joint Resolution 192 which you have before you starting on page 273 and continuing for some ten pages. In those hearings you will find the situation concerning India developed rather fully.

Some Members have asked where they can find evidence that India is not eligible under present circumstances to receive relief through UNRRA. It is possible some Members may argue that India is not excluded, that India will receive benefits, that India is not being asked for $35,000,000 in contributions and being told in advance that relief will not return to her to give succour to Indian sufferers in India. Let there be no mistakes about the facts, Mr Chairman. Let the record be clear. Let us proceed with a full knowledge of the situation as it is. Let me, to that end give you the direct quotation from Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson, speaking as the American member on the Council of UNRRA. The evidence is crystal clear. Turn, if you will, to page 199 of the hearings and look at the paragraph on the bottom of that page. I shall read it, now, for the benefit of Members who may not have the hearings before them, and I shall also read the first four sentences at the top of page 200. Here are the words of Dean Acheson himself, in phrases so clear and so candid that they remove all doubt about the relationship of India and UNRRA:

> In correspondence which I had on the subject as Chairman of the Council during the time I was Chairman, I expressed the view that the geographical scope of UNRRA activities is limited to areas which have been liberated from army occupation and that

therefore at the present time India does not come within the scope of UNRRA activities.

Now, Mr Chairman, let me read the first four sentences of the testimony appearing on the top of page 200 which immediately follows the remarks I have just quoted by Mr Acheson. They read as follows:

Mr Mundt: Which summarizes itself, as I understood it, to mean that India will not be one of the beneficiaries of UNRRA, is that correct?
Mr Acheson: If you are talking about the same sort of distress which now exists in India you are correct.
Mr Mundt: That is right.

Mr Chairman, I want to emphasize right here a fact that Mr Acheson made clear in later testimony and on which he has given me his personal assurance in private conversation, later, that in the foregoing statements he was not defining the limitations of UNRRA with respect to India in terms of the policies proposed or recommended by the State Department of the United States but that he was simply relaying to the Foreign Affairs Committee the position and the definition generally accepted at Atlantic City by the delegates to the UNRRA organization meeting. He was merely giving us the statement of the facts as they are and the definition by which India was left out of the relief picture without either putting his own stamp of approval or disapproval on the matter.

Thus the picture is clear. Unless Congress takes some step to recommend inclusion of India to the next Council meeting of UNRRA which will be held next May, India will remain in the incongruous and unconscionable position of being a contributor to UNRRA's budget but being ineligible for UNRRA's benefits. I do not propose to make our approval of House Joint Resolution 192 contingent upon a reservation that India must be included, but I do propose that this House should adopt an amendment to House Joint Resolution 192 which would make clear our recommendation that in so far as funds and facilities permit—no further and no less—India should be made eligible for assistance from

UNRRA even though the present enemy attacks made upon her are in the form of occupation of her normal bread basket and by bombs dropping on her cities from the air rather than by the actual marching of enemy troops through her fields and in her cities. I shall offer such an amendment on Monday next.

In this connection, Mr Chairman, I shall include with my remarks at this point, under permission previously granted me by the House, the full text of the editorial appearing in the *Hindustan Times* for November 30, 1943, nearly a full month before I first called this bizarre business to the attention of the House on December 21. I hope Members will read this editorial over carefully with the full appreciation of the fact that it is published by an ally of ours in this war, by a fellow member of the United Nations, and by people in whose country our American troops are now encamped as a base for military operations essential to the winning of the war against Japan.

May I also suggest that in reading this editorial, Members give special heed to the following points:

1. That to the people suffering in India, Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai, who will be quoted I am sure by Members unfriendly to my proposal as being entirely satisfied with India's exclusion, failed to reflect their true attitude. This is found in the first paragraph of the editorial.

2. That what the *Hindustan Times* refers to as technical objections and what I have termed "a most unfortunate and tortured definition" in an attempt to reconcile a conflict between the preamble and article 1 of the Agreement do not appeal to the Indians of India as being good and sufficient grounds for excluding them from the benefits of a UNRRA to which they are being asked to contribute generously. This is found in paragraph 2 of the editorial.

3. I have previously quoted from paragraph 3 to show the bitter feeling of loneliness which India feels at being excluded from UNRRA's benefits.

4. The final paragraph of this editorial contains this curt criticism reflecting the public opinion in India. "The first big organization for world cooperation is beginning its work as a colossal hoax." Mr Chairman, those are not nice words to come from a

member of our United Nations, and those are not lovely sentiments to be shared by the people in whose land so many American soldiers are now housed. If UNRRA is to create goodwill rather than ill will—and that is what we all hope UNRRA will produce —it is important that we remove from UNRRA any basis for ill-feeling by a mighty and a proud people whose misfortunes are great, whose contributions to the war are prodigious, whose friendship is essential in this drive for victory, and whose cause for disappointment is obviously existent under the prevailing definition for circumscribing the benefits to flow from UNRRA.

Mr Chairman, I shall now insert the complete text of the editorial in the *Record* at this point:

[From the *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, India,
of November 30, 1943.]

TEXTS AND PRETEXTS

While Vice President Wallace has characterized as a "shocking slur" Senator Butler's criticism of American expenditure in Latin America and high dignitaries of the Church are praying in England for our salvation, India has met with her first rebuff at the hands of the UNRRA. Even Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai should be knowing it. If he does not, the fact that the 44 nations which signed the agreement have decided to be blind to the harrowing facts of famine in India does not absolve even a Bajpai of his blindness. Relief and rehabilitation are in no way connected with politics except the politics of hunger, and none of the delegates to the UNRRA could have feared that by rushing to the relief of Bengal he would be recognizing a single political fact. Certain facts are, however, indisputable. India has signed the agreement, subject to the approval of the legislature. India will have to pay for it, the principal aim is to give relief to liberated areas, 44 countries have decided to pool together their resources in giving that relief, and India needs relief at this moment.

Technical objections have been raised by both Dean Acheson, the Chairman of the Council of the UNRRA, and Colonel Llewellin, the British delegate, that the Indian famine is "not within the

competence of the Council to discuss at this session." These objections are primarily based on the assumption that India has not been a victim of Axis aggression. It would be difficult to find a parallel for this purblind adherence to the letter of a declaration in an age of broken pacts. Mr Roosevelt himself interpreted its terms broadly as the utilization of "the production of all the world to balance the want of the world." But others more loyal to literal renderings prefer to stick to the patent text of the preamble which says that "immediately upon the liberation of any area, the population thereof shall receive aid for relief from their sufferings in the form of food, clothing and shelter, aid in the prevention of pestilence, and the recovery of the health of the people." Mr Roosevelt subsequently used the phrase "victims of German and Japanese barbarism," without intending to narrow down the construction of the preamble.

Is it contended that victims of Axis aggression would exclude, shall we say, victims of Allied advances? If there were to be a famine in the Azores, would it be a responsibility only of the Portuguese or the British or the Americans? The Bengal famine has at least been attributed in part to the loss of Burma and supplies from that country, and is India to be victimized for it without being technically called a victim of Axis aggression? India has borne the burden of the war—and there is no use raising technical questions about the nature of that participation. Her soldiers have won resounding victories in Africa and Italy; she is now the base for the reconquest of Burma and as a base she has had to strain her resources to keep Allied armies supplied. Under the UNRRA agreement India can remain starved while Burma must be relieved. Were it not too tragic, it would be utterly farcical. The Atlantic City Charter would be more infructuous than the Atlantic Charter.

The Council of the UNRRA has, of course, the pretext that the Indian famine is purely a pathological problem for the British Government. That Government is watching—maybe with concern, or maybe with disdain—the helplessness of the Indian Government. That the Indian Government, composed as it is at present, is not any nearer a solution of the problem does not appear peculiar to the motley crowd in Atlantic City. Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai has

evidently not told them that shipping space is not available even to make use of offers of help. Nor are the other delegates in a mood to take the risk of telling some home truths to the major nations represented on the Council of the UNRRA. The Indian delegate is unwilling to bring the matter up; why should others? The Chinese delegate is reported to be willing to give India's case favourable consideration and press for discussion in the Council and so also are the delegates of Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Mexico, and South Africa. As Sirdar J. J. Singh, President of the Indian National Congress in the United States, who has taken an active and vigilant part in this matter, has stated, the delegates to the UNRRA should bear in mind the possible psychological reaction in India to the fact that while India is to contribute to the relief of other countries, she herself is not to receive consideration. Even the central legislature, moribund as it is, will have to bear this in mind.

Colonel Llewellin has tried to dispose of the matter cursorily by reminding himself that it has been already announced in Parliament that arrangements have been made to ship as much grain to India as it is possible to transport and handle for the remainder of the year, and that in any case a resolution passed by the Council of the UNRRA would not mean practical help. This is not facing the facts. Mr Roosevelt, in his eloquent address to the representatives of 44 nations, declared that it was a matter of enlightened self-interest, of military and strategic necessity to give relief to countries liberated from the Axis yoke, and only a desire to ignore one of the ugliest facts in the British Empire can inspire the argument that the relief of Bengal is not a strategic necessity. If the UNRRA agreement does not admit this interpretation, then it is time the declaration is differently—and more worthily—worded. It is perhaps useless to remind even ourselves that India was often the first country to think of going to the relief of distress anywhere in the world.

The United States, whose soldiers have been billeted in this country for so long, has as Mr William Fisher, the American journalist, stated in an article in *Life,* a special responsibility in the matter. Mr Fisher makes the obvious suggestion that a dozen ships temporarily diverted from elsewhere and shuttled between

India and Australia would have an immediate effect in relieving the famine. That such suggestions should pass unheeded is a matter which the UNRRA can take cognizance of. We are, perhaps, talking too much of gruesome realities and too little of the complexity of committee work and the domination of the Big Three or Big Four. The first big organization for world cooperation is beginning its work as a colossal hoax and there is the prospect of relief being in the end left only to AMGOT and advisory commissions. World pools look inherently, and tragically enough for India, connected with politics. Is it our misfortune the Allies have failed in every test applied by India? The situation in Atlantic City seems to be that there is a fear that, if the UNRRA takes up Indian famine, it might be impinging on British responsibility for the safety and welfare of India. That may lead to the recognition of certain other facts. Whatever Mr Roosevelt might say, there is no freedom from fear among the delegates of UNRRA. In their fear of ugly facts they prefer to go about in blinkers.

Mr Chairman, I have no desire to belabour the record with overwhelming evidence to establish the point for which I plead. However, a quotation or two from the American Press might be in order. Under permission secured earlier today, therefore, I now call attention to an exhibit in the form of a news story from the *New York Post* of November 27, 1943, written by staff correspondent William O. Player, Jr. The news story is short and it speaks for itself. It might be appropriate, however, to highlight two rather significant points.

1. The news story throws some additional light upon why the people of India do not share Sir Girja Bajpai's enthusiasm for the arrangements by which UNRRA fails to provide any relief to India and why they are disappointed over his failure in not having India made eligible for consideration in this world-wide relief program.

2. I call your attention to the statement of Dr T. F. Tsiang, the Chinese delegate to the Atlantic City UNRRA conference. Dr Tsiang states he would favour relief for Bengal—the most seriously stricken province of India. Mr Chairman, thus not only the people of India, but the Chinese delegate to the UNRRA

conference, representing the other great Asiatic ally which we have in the Pacific, would look with approval upon any action taken by this Congress to extend the consideration to India which seems so amply indicated by both logic and facts. I now call your attention to this news story from the *New York Post:*

STARVING INDIA STALKS RELIEF COUNCIL'S HALLS

(*By William O. Player, Jr.*)

Atlantic City, November 27.—Starving India's right to aid from the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration which until now only the *New York Post* and the India League of America have actively defended—has suddenly flared into one of the most burning issues of the UNRRA Council meeting here.

It was forced into the open at a press conference held yesterday by Sirdar J. J. Singh, President of the India League of America, who, brushing aside the diplomatic delicacies which had previously balked discussion, bluntly asserted:

1. That Sir Girja Bajpai, official UNRRA delegate of the Indian (British) Government, had failed in his responsibility to the Indian people by not going ahead and presenting his country's case to the Council, regardless of what the outcome might be.
2. That Sir Girja privately took the position that it would be unwise to make any request on India's behalf unless assured in advance it would be granted.
3. That in view of Sir Girja's actions, the Indian Legislature—unrepresentative of the people as it might be in many respects—quite possibly would refuse to ratify India's participation in UNRRA at all.

SOUNDS OF SENTIMENTS

Singh, who has been here since Wednesday, quietly sounding out the sentiments of UNRRA officials and delegates, admitted some of the officials seemed convinced that famine conditions in India didn't come within the legal scope of the Washington agreement.

On the other hand, though, he reported finding deep sentiment

for India's plight among a number of delegations, particularly the Chinese. Singh's reference to the Chinese was the stroke that really started the ball rolling, because the Chinese delegate, Dr T. F. Tsiang, soon afterward issued a formal statement saying that though he regarded the question of jurisdiction one for the Council to decide, he nevertheless had assured Singh that: "If the question of relief in Bengal should be raised in the Council, it would receive my personal favorable consideration."

Mr Chairman, I shall call the attention of the Congress to but one other news story or editorial statement from the many appearing in American newspapers. I refer now to an article appearing in the New York newspaper *PM*, and signed by I. F. Stone. I think Members of this House realize that I do not ordinarily string along with *PM* and that *PM* does not ordinarily string along with me, so that makes matters even. However, I believe the following news report merits being brought to the attention of the Congress and the country. It is not very long, so I shall include its text in full at this point in my remarks. I believe Members will find the final three paragraphs of the article especially illuminating and thought-stimulating. News item from *PM* :

THE UNRRA AND INDIA

Atlantic City.—"Have you ever been to India?" the British delegate asked, with the air of a man who has scored a crushing point. I had to confess that I had never been to India. And I can't read a word of Sanskrit.

We managed to write of British heroism in 1940-41 without having been in London during the "blitz." Is starvation so esoteric that we cannot comment on the famine in Bengal without a Cook's tour of India?

India's position at the UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) Conference here and UNRRA's position on India breed embarrassing questions. There are United Nations represented here and Associated Nations. France is an Associated Nation, its national committee being but imperfectly recognized. India has full status as a United Nation. And her

delegation has agreed with the others on the principle that each shall contribute one per cent of her national income to feed the people of liberated areas.

This agreement is subject to approval by each nation "in accordance with its constitutional processes," a phrase intended for dulcet effect on the ears of our Congress. The Indian delegation is understandably worried about the moment when, back home, someone says, "Why didn't UNRRA do something about our own starving people? Why the one-way bargain?"

I can imagine nothing more likely to infuriate Indian opinion than the request that India be asked to make a large contribution to relief for the hungry elsewhere while no attention is paid to her own. That should certainly be *sukiyaki* for Japanese propaganda.

There are answers, of course, but they won't read well in Urdu or Hindustani. UNRRA was set up to feed people in liberated areas—and India, as the preferred circumlocution goes, is not an area to be freed from Axis domination. It is outside the scope. It is not in the agenda. (Pontius Pilate should have had an agenda.)

While not as satisfying as a bowl of rice it may be of some comfort to hungry Indians to know that they did not occasion the slightest breach of diplomatic decorum.

"Chin up, old fellow," one can hear a returned Indian delegate explain to an emaciated untouchable in the streets of Calcutta, "we saved the agenda."

The agenda and the realities are not in accord. Why do we feed the people of southern Italy? Because that is the base from which our Army is moving north and we cannot have that base disorganized by starvation. Why should we feed the people of Bengal? Because that is one of the Anglo-American bases for push into Burma.

India has plenty of money. Financially she has done well in the war. Her sterling balances are enormous. But you cannot eat sterling.

UNRRA, without stepping outside that sacred scope and sanctified agenda, could pass a resolution asking the Combined Shipping Board to make some extra tonnage available for foodstuffs to India.

"That," said the British delegate, "would only be a gesture." It need not be. The American and British Governments run the Combined Shipping Board, and if they want to send extra food to India they can—even though it mean that some of us get along without a third cup of coffee.

I am told that the Japanese have been dropping tiny packets of rice on Bengal. Of course, this is propaganda. But possibly better propaganda than posters on the "four freedoms," including freedom from want. A few shiploads of food would be better than either, and I still hope UNRRA will take steps to send them before it adjourns on Wednesday.

Mr Chairman, let me make one other point, and I am through. From the very beginning one of the strong arguments made on behalf of UNRRA by Mr Acheson, Mr Crowley, Dr Sayre, and other witnesses before our committee was that the operation of UNRRA would eliminate competition in the markets of the world by which individual countries would try to outbid each other in a frantic effort to get food and supplies for their post-war needs. It was a persuasive and plausible argument. It seems logical that one organization, if it buys for all, can better utilize the surplus supplies of the world than if each country must buy for itself in a race against time and diminishing supplies in order to avoid starvation, pestilence, and human misery. However, it should be apparent to all Members that when a great country like India is excluded from the benefits of UNRRA it established a competitor of vast size in the markets of the world. Either India will compete with UNRRA for medicine, supplies, and food wherever it is available, or, while barring India's present needs from consideration, UNRRA will determine for India how much she will be permitted to buy and thus insult will be added to injury and ill will will be pyramided upon India's present sense of loneliness.

In two different places on page 475 of yesterday's *Record* the gentleman from New York [Mr Wadsworth], who is one of the foremost advocates of UNRRA in this House, stressed this freedom-from-competition argument in convincing terms. Let me read you both of his statements in their entirety. They are as follows, in response to interrogatories by the gentleman from Minnesota [Mr Andresen]:

Mr August H. Andresen: Can any of those countries which have dollar exchange buy anything here in the United States, or in any other country, with that exchange that might be delivered to them outside of UNRRA?
Mr Wadsworth: Will the gentleman yield?
Mr Bloom: I yield.
Mr Wadsworth: One of the purposes of this agreement is to prevent the countries that have money competing against each other in the world markets for supplies, and thus the country with the most money would get the most supplies and result in starving out a country with less money. Under this agreement all procurement of supplies must be with the approval of the joint organization which is charged with the duty of seeing to it that the available supplies are honestly and equally distributed, even though in many cases the country to be benefited will pay for it herself.
Mr August H. Andresen: Then UNRRA will control all exports to those countries of essential and other commodities?
Mr Wadsworth: When the supplies are finally procured, wherever they are procured, anywhere in the world, their distribution will be seen to by the central organization charged with the duty of seeing that it is done fairly, and stop competition between nations.

One does not have to be the second cousin to a lexicographer, Mr Chairman, to understand the import of those statements, as they may full well work out for India. At least in so far as purchases outside of the United States and the United Kingdom are concerned—certainly for purchases in such neutral countries as Turkey and Argentina—India must either do one of three things: First, compete with UNRRA and thus upset one of the basic reasons for UNRRA; second, keep out of the market and thus aggravate her own serious shortcomings, especially in the fields of medicine and skilled medical and nursing talent; or, third, silently and patiently hope that while India is prevented by "anonymous definition" from being eligible for relief from UNRRA she will in some way be given a few crumbs of comfort from a table which at best is unlikely enough to have supplies sufficient for all the guests for

whom chairs are already conveniently placed and place cards conspicuously arranged. Neither alternative is very inviting. Much more inviting, in my opinion, would be the recommendation by this Congress that the UNRRA Council next May redefine its relationship to India so that the world's distress can be included in a common poll in so far as the United Nations are concerned and then such relief as funds and facilities permit be made available to the deserving people in the distressed areas of India, more especially those of great military significance to our common cause.

Mr Chairman, I submit that such a recommendation by this House and such action by the next UNRRA Council will help make UNRRA workable. It will help end confusion and competition. It will avoid any basis for a feeling that discrimination has entered a field where only charity and human kindness should parade. It will increase goodwill in an area where it is most important in this war. It will pay dividends in humanity and it will reap dividends in kindly treatment and acceptance for our troops in India. It will be a great victory in our psychological war against the Japanese and deprive them of one of their greatest propaganda weapons. It will win the plaudits of our gallant Chinese allies. It will pool in one place the existing famine and pestilence problems of those of our United Nations with the greatest victims of this war and provide an opportunity for surveying the picture as a whole and meeting the problem in so far as we are able.

Finally, it will not add to the financial burdens of UNRRA since India has the resources to pay for her relief, but it will round out its programme so that especially the medicine, the nursing and medical talent, and the equipment so badly needed to stop death by disease in India can be distributed in its fair share to Mother India. Mr Chairman, kind words, pious phrases, futile hopes, and adjectives of sympathy will not suffice to strengthen the sinews of war and increase our bonds of friendship with India, but appropriate action on our part on Monday by appropriate amendment to House Joint Resolution 192 will do the job. Let us meet this challenge squarely and wisely act when opportunity presents itself on Monday next.

Mr Bloom: Mr Chairman, on this Indian question, I am in great sympathy with India; we all are, but I want to call the attention of the committee at this time to what is already in the report. The Indian Agent-General to the United States, Sir Girja Shankar Bajpai, speaking as a member of the Council from India at the conference at Atlantic City made a statement which is on page 203 of the State Department document publication No. 2040, Conference Series 53, which is referred to on page 4 of the committee report. India is a signatory of this agreement. On page 202 of the same document you will find a statement on the subject of India by Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson. Let me read their statements:

> The active cooperation of the 44 United and Associated Nations to bring help to their neighbours has been demonstrated here. It is a tribute to our solidarity and a guarantee of success. It is of special significance that no individual burdens, however grievous, have served to make a breach in this solidarity. Take the case of India. She is afflicted today with widespread distress due to insufficiency of food over large areas, caused by the war, distress in which, I am sure, we all feel profoundly for her people. But her special situation has not prevented her from joining in our work here. We are grateful for this token of her cooperation and devoutly hopeful that, through the efforts of all those who are now engaged in the task, the ravages of famine and disease may swiftly be brought under effective control.

....Mr Chairman, the Indian question is also dealt with in full in the letter written by the gentleman from South Dakota [Mr Mundt] to Assistant Secretary of State Dean Acheson which appears on page 275 of the hearings, and in Mr Acheson's reply, which appears on page 276. All of these questions were considered day after day. If the membership wants to understand the Indian question—and we are all in sympathy with India; there is no question about that at all, we all would like to do something—I ask them to read the testimony on the pages I have indicated. It is not very long, but I do not want to take the time now to read it. You will then find out what the situation is. India has funds to-

day in foreign exchange that she may use if it is necessary for her to buy anything.

For the information of the committee I wish to call attention to a news release of the British Information Services dated Washington, D.C., January 10, 1944, reading as follows:

THIRTY-SEVEN FOOD SHIPS REACH INDIA IN THREE MONTHS

Seven ships bringing 43,000 tons of wheat reached India in the month of December 1943 alone, 30 wheat ships arrived in October and November, and further shipments are expected there shortly, British Information Services announced today on the basis of advices to the Indian Agency General in Washington from New Delhi.

Food shortages in Bengal are now practically over except in remote areas, and the Indian Army, in cooperation with the civil authorities, is energetically combating disease which followed the famine, latest reports from the Government of India say.

The Government of India has arranged to import into Bengal from overseas and other Indian areas 646,000 tons of foodgrains during 1944 to implement its decision to relieve the Bengal Government of the responsibility of feeding the city of Calcutta and its environs.

Striking facts show the extent of work done by the Indian Army in Bengal. Army transport has covered 130,000 miles, delivering thousands of tons of food. An Indian battalion has in the districts of Khulna, Barisal, and Dacca, mobilized river transport to take tons of rice to outlying villages.

Transport bottlenecks are being eliminated. In one day alone 5,000 tons of foodstuffs were handled in Calcutta. Civil storage depots are being constructed and Army Nissen huts will help solve the storage difficulty in the districts.

Work is now directed towards completing food relief in outlying areas, fighting illness, providing thousands of blankets and clothing, and building up food reserves.

Drums and posters are used to announce to villagers the opening of new military hospitals. Already thousands of malaria cases have been treated and thousands of cholera inoculations and vaccina-

tions have been carried out. In this fight field ambulance units and established hospitals are issuing new clothing to those patients who need them.

RECORD RICE CROP FORECAST

India's total rice crop this year is expected to be a record one, greater than any produced during the last ten to 15 years, and will, it is believed, exceed 28,500,000 tons. Every province in India will share in the increase, Bengal leading with a 16 per cent increase in acreage and 45 per cent in production. Assam comes next with three per cent in acreage and ten per cent in production, as against the all-India figures of six per cent and 16 per cent, respectively. Bengal should have a rice crop of 9,700,000 tons and the final forecast may even show a crop of over 10,000,000 tons.

Unfortunately, however, the agreement is worded in such a way that no country, not even England, although England has been bombed and other countries may be bombed and destroyed, can get relief through UNRRA unless they are occupied. The agreement is very brief and very plain on this point. I quote from page two, line seven:

> Being United Nations or being associated with the United Nations in this war.
>
> Being determined that immediately upon the liberation of any area by the armed forces of the United Nations or as a consequence of retreat of the enemy the population thereof shall receive relief from their sufferings, food, clothing—

And so forth. According to the agreement, they must be an occupied area. To my way of thinking—and I believe I am right—to amend the resolution with respect to India would put her in no different position than she is today, because she has the foreign exchange to pay for it. But UNRRA will pay for any displaced people in India who must be transported, say, back to China, or to some other country that has been occupied by the enemy.

The representative of India signed this agreement at the White House. He went to Atlantic City, and I believe he was there all the

time. He is a gentleman who on former occasions appeared before the Foreign Affairs Committee, a very highly cultured, educated gentleman. He signed this document. The document is signed by him, and up to now, I do not know but I have not heard any real protest of any kind. If you were to do anything at all, how are you going to help India by inserting anything in this resolution?

Mr Mundt: Will the gentleman yield?

Mr Bloom: No.

Mr Hoffman: Will the gentleman yield to me?

Mr Bloom: Mr Chairman, I decline to yield. I have been very fair yesterday and today.

Mr Mundt: The gentleman used my name. Now he declines to yield.

Mr Bloom: The gentleman mentioned my name, too.

Mr Hoffman: Mr Chairman, a point of order. The gentleman speaks so infrequently that I insist we have order so we can hear him now.

Mr White: Will the gentleman yield to me at the proper time?

Mr Bloom: I decline to yield.

Mr White: I said "at the proper time."

Mr Bloom: No.

Mr White: Mr Chairman, if he does not yield to anybody I suggest the absence of quorum.

The Chairman: Does the gentleman make the point of order that a quorum is not present?

Mr White: Mr Chairman, I make that point of order. I mean it and I want it in the *Record.*

The Chairman: The Chair will count. [After counting.] One hundred and nineteen Members are present, a quorum. The gentleman from New York [Mr Bloom] is recognized.

Mr Bloom: Mr Chairman, I do not want to repeat what I have said. If anyone can show me any way that they can amend this agreement that will be beneficial, all right, because whatever we do here in amending this agreement must go back and the amendment must be approved by the other 43 nations.

Mr Mundt: I will accept the challenge of the gentleman. Will he yield?

Mr Bloom: No. I stated I would not yield. I want to finish my statement.

Mr Mundt: I just wanted to show the gentleman how that could be done.

Mr Bloom: After I get through I will be very glad to try to answer questions. The gentleman refused to yield to me after he mentioned my name. Let us play the game fairly. I have not a prepared speech. I am trying to give you some information. The committee is entitled to it.

Mr Chairman, if anyone can show me any way whereby this agreement can be amended that would really mean something, not this shadow-boxing gestures, "I want to be a great humanitarian," which does not mean a thing. Do not try to give the message out that, "I want to save the people of India." Let us be sincere and honest about this thing.

Mr Mundt: Will the gentleman yield? He is now questioning my sincerity.

Mr Hoffman: And your honesty.

Mr Bloom: Mr Chairman, I am not questioning the sincerity nor honesty of my esteemed colleague from South Dakota. I refuse to yield.

Mr Hoffman: Mr Chairman, a parliamentary inquiry.

The Chairman: The gentleman will state it.

Mr Bloom: Mr Chairman, I do not yield for a parliamentary inquiry. I do not yield for that purpose.

Mr Hoffman: Does not the gentleman yield for a parliamentary inquiry?

Mr Bloom: No. Please let me finish.

Mr Hoffman: Mr Chairman, I make the point of order that the gentleman's words be taken down, those words he said where somebody lacked a sincerity of purpose.

Mr Bloom: I did not say that....

Mr Jonkman: ... Another restriction which recommends the programme is that relief will be confined to liberated areas or countries which have been liberated from occupation except in so far as it is necessary to carry on operations in enemy or ex-enemy territories in case of epidemics or disease or other impelling considerations. There may be and actually are other nations or areas

properly the subject of relief but only very indirectly as a result of the war. These are from the very nature of the undertaking not included. The purpose of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration is solely to afford relief and relief only in the war-stricken and war-ridden countries as they are liberated, and relief to any other country, however urgent or appropriate and meritorious, is not within the scope of the Administration. For instance, the famine in India, while an indirect result of the war because of inability to obtain shipping—India having sufficient exchange to purchase supplies—would have to be met by agencies other than the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration ....

Mr Ludlow: Mr Chairman, there is one feature of this bill I doubt anyone can defend successfully, and that is its discriminatory character.

It is rather incongruous and foreign to the beneficent and altruistic intentions of the act that we should entirely exclude from its benefits a worthy people who have been friendly to America and who have rendered valuable assistance to the cause of the United Nations—the people of India.

Some of our citizens may have doubts as to how far we should use our means to assist the world after the war is over, seeing that we will have our own tremendous problems of rehabilitation right here at home, but I think that every fair-minded person will say that UNRRA should not be a closed corporation. It should not pick favourites. It should not discriminate among equally worthy friendly nations, giving to some and denying to others.

The United States is a great democracy founded on the ideal of equality. The founding fathers denounced special privilege as the greatest of all evils in government.

It does violence to our splendid traditions to stop our democracy at the water's edge. In dealing with equally deserving foreign nations under this bill we should not make fish of one and fowl of another.

The gentleman from South Dakota Mr Mundt has an amendment he intends to offer that would wipe out this discrimination. I commend it to every Member of this House. Its text is as follows:

In expressing its approval of this act, it is the recommendation of Congress that in so far as funds and facilities permit any area important to United Nations military operations which may be stricken by famine or disease shall be included in the benefits available through the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.

II. *Washington, January 25, 1944.*

Mr Mundt: Mr Chairman, I offer the following amendment, which I send to the desk and ask to have read.

The Clerk read as follows:

Amendment offered by *Mr Mundt:* Add a new section at the end of the joint resolution to be known as Section 4, and to read as follows: "In expressing its approval of this joint resolution, it is the recommendation of Congress that in so far as funds and facilities permit, any area important to the military operations of the United Nations which is stricken by famine or disease may be included in the benefits to be made available by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration.

Mr Bloom: Mr Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr Mundt: Yes.

Mr Bloom: Mr Chairman, I have asked the gentleman to yield, that I may say to him that I have no objection to that amendment.

The Chairman: Does the gentleman from South Dakota desire to be heard upon his amendment?

Mr Mundt: Yes; I desire to explain it to the House.

The Chairman: The gentleman from South Dakota is recognized for five minutes.

Mr Mundt: Mr Chairman, this amendment has been discussed at considerable length by the present speaker on December 21—starting on page 10989 of the *Record*—and again on January 21—beginning on page 548 of the *Record.* I appreciate the statement of the gentleman from New York [Mr Bloom] that the committee now has no disagreement with it. I will explain it very briefly, therefore, since I think some members of the committee who may be considering whether or not to vote for UNRRA may be

influenced to vote for UNRRA when they recognize one of its objections has been erased by this amendment.

The situation I am seeking to correct by this amendment grows out of the conflict in definitions existing between the preamble of the bill and article 1. Under the preamble of the bill, as written, relief, under UNRRA, is available only to nations which have been liberated and available to people only in liberated areas. According to article 1 of the bill, however, it is available to victims of war in any area under the control of the United Nations. Obviously some definition had to be arrived at in Atlantic City as to how those two statements should be interpreted. Therefore the definition was accepted at Atlantic City and publicized in the Press that under those two interpretations India would be excluded from the benefits of UNRRA. This was in my opinion an unfortunate interpretation. And the declaration encompassed in my amendment would eliminate that unfortunate situation.

I want to say briefly why I think we are all interested in seeing India, and perhaps other areas of vital importance to military operations, included. Here we have on this map which I have displayed on the wall of the House the Burmese border and the Indian border, and here we have American and Chinese troops striving under General Stilwell, to get over to the Burma Road, fighting along with some of our Indian allies. Down here we have British, American and Canadian troops, with Indian troops, trying to take Akyab which is to be a base to enable us to get down to Rangoon.

In these three provinces of India, Assam, Bihar, and Bengal, we find a great population which has just been undergoing a serious famine and where they are now under the scourge of disease and pestilence, sweeping over India and jeopardizing the health and lives of American troops now stationed in this section of India.

Consequently, whatever UNRRA can do in so far as funds and facilities permit, to eliminate this disease and this unfortunate situation, will help in our action against Japan by strengthening India and giving assistance to the people working along with our troops. It will also safeguard the lives of American and English troops.

Mr Bloom: Mr Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr Mundt: I yield to my Chairman for a question.

Mr Bloom: Of course, I do not want the impression to get out that the amendment which is agreed to, from your explanation, is confined to India. I would like to have the gentleman explain this amendment that he offered and to explain that it embraces any area where the same conditions exist throughout the world; is that correct?

Mr Mundt: That is exactly correct.

Mr Bloom: So I would like to get away from the impression that it is limited to India alone.

Mr Mundt: If a similar situation should affect, for example, China or Africa, or any other place in the world, of importance to our military operations, then UNRRA step in with their assistance and this provides a very important additional reason, in my opinion, why members of the committee should vote for UNRRA, because it is of assistance not only after the military operations, but if they are called upon by the military, it is of assistance at the time the military operation is taking place or being planned.

Mr Bloom: Mr Chairman, will the gentleman yield for one further question?

Mr Mundt: I yield.

Mr Bloom: This is merely a recommendation or a suggestion that whenever these conditions exist, UNRRA should take cognizance of them if it is possible to do so?

Mr Mundt: The gentleman is correct. It is a recommendation by the Congress of the United States.

Mr Rizley: Mr Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr Mundt: I yield.

Mr Rizley: I commend the gentleman upon the amendment he has offered, but I am wondering whether this amendment does not modify the agreement that has been heretofore entered into between the 44 nations.

Mr Mundt: No; there is nothing we can do to specifically modify that agreement. As has been stated many, many times, the agreement is encompassed in the bill. My amendment expresses the conviction and desire of the American Congress on behalf of the American people that India and other similar areas will be made eligible for the benefits of UNRRA. We want to make its

benefits available to areas of military importance wherever they are, and it does not in any way modify the text of the original agreement. Only UNRRA itself can do that either by amendment at the next Council meeting or by a modification of the prevailing definition with relationship to India.

This recommendation which we make is wise from a military standpoint, as I have pointed out. It is wise from a psychological warfare standpoint, because the Japanese have been trying to poison our allies in India by making them believe we do not care for their needs. This will belie that propaganda. It is wise from the standpoint of being practical, because it will enable UNRRA to go into India with medicine and medical assistance, which is highly essential. India's big need of the moment is not so much for ships and food, nor is it a need for financial help; rather it is a need for medicine, for medical services and nursing talent, for health-protecting and health-preserving equipment. This medicine and this personnel can be flown to India by plane so my amendment provides a practical way of giving relief to India.

Finally, this amendment is wise from the standpoint of justice and equity. It removes the last vestige of discrimination from the operations of UNRRA. We who fight to promote justice and equity throughout the world cannot blind ourselves to the importance of practicing now the precepts which we promise for the future. Expressions of sympathy and pious adjectives are all right in their place but they will not relieve the current suffering in India. However, UNRRA has that power and it will have that possibility if we today manifest the will by the adoption of my amendment as a part of this resolution.

Mr Chairman, in terms of aid to our war effort and the saving of lives of American troops as well as in terms of creating goodwill in India and defeating the current Japanese propaganda in that area of the world, I submit that the amendment I have proposed will do more good than all of the other features of UNRRA combined. I hope the amendment will be adopted by a strong vote and if it is I am confident that the other body of this Congress will see that it remains as a part of this joint resolution.

Mr Mansfield (of Montana): Mr Chairman, I move to strike out the last words.

Mr Chairman, I am sorry that we cannot see our way clear to aid the children in the occupied countries. They have been crying out to us for aid over the years of this war, but because of the blockade imposed against Europe we are unable to send the necessary food and materials to them.

I am hoping that UNRRA will be the medium to send food and medicine to the children so much in need. I am also hoping that the administration of this relief will be of assistance in safeguarding our soldiers in occupied countries from disease and pestilence and all the other myriad evils which attend war on a scale such as this.

There are many questions in my mind at the moment.

There is the matter of an appropriation, a huge one even if it is only one per cent of an unnatural fiscal year; there is the matter of administration and all its problems; and there is the matter of humankind—the little people—who need help badly and who have no place and no one to turn to for succour. There is the question of laying the foundation for a permanent peace so that these barbaric struggles will be done away with and our sons and daughters given a chance to enjoy the decency and security which is theirs by right.

Mr Chairman, the question of India is a vital one for the United Nations today. In my opinion we would be doing a disservice to the Allied cause if we refuse to recognize the need now for relief in that country. We are all well aware—in spite of censorship restrictions—of the terrible famine there. While conditions have been ameliorated in that stricken country, the need for relief is still acute.

In considering India we know that it is a difficult and complex area to understand. However, we must realize that some 350,000,000 people live there. Those people are human beings—they eat, live, breathe, and have the same emotions that we have. Potentially, they can be our friends or our enemies. We have the history—the recent history—of the Burmese, Thailanders, and other Asiatic peoples turning against us, not because we did not understand them so much as because they understood us better. Imperialistic policies are things of the past and will no longer work because peoples, all over, have seen the evils which develop in connection with them.

A spirit of nationalism is sweeping the Far East and we cannot—and must not—ignore it. Under UNRRA, an international organization, the United Nations will have a right and an interest in India's affairs. We want her help—in manpower, in material, and in her effect on other people's thinking in the East. We have the opportunity now to show to these downtrodden and oppressed people that we are their friends. If we do not grasp it they may well become—to a greater and more menacing degree—our mortal enemies.

We have in excess of 100,000 troops in India. They are dissatisfied and discontented. They know there is a war on and they want to fight it, get it over with, and come home. However, they are being kept in India awaiting developments and while there, they are witnessing at first hand the distressing conditions affecting the native population. What are they thinking about when they witness this unnecessary starvation, malnutrition, and disease? They are thinking of the same things that we are discussing here this afternoon. They know they can do nothing to better the lot of those people but they do know that we can. What is the use of preaching about the "four freedoms" if we do not mean what we say?

India is important in this war because it is the gateway to China and Burma. With a friendly population at our back we will be helped tremendously in our reconquest of Burma and our reopening of transportation outlets into China. We will have more tools and a better spirit to aid us. If we extend relief under UNRRA to India we will strengthen our hand in the Far East and give hope to other subject populations. If we ignore India and her legitimate pleas, we are helping to sow a whirlwind which we will reap some day.

The choice, and the responsibility, of helping India become our real friend and possible ally, rests, I believe, with UNRRA. This Congress, by its actions now, can either hinder or advance the cause of the United Nations and our ultimate victory in the Far East.

Mr Voorhis (of California): Mr Chairman, will the gentleman yield?

Mr Mansfield (of Montana): I yield.

Mr Voorhis (of California): I just want to thank the gentleman for his very effective speech and to say I am personally very glad the committee has accepted the amendment of the gentleman.

Appendix IV

TEXT OF A UNITED PRESS REPORT ON THE ADOPTION OF THE MUNDT AMENDMENT BY THE US CONGRESS, BASED ON AN INTERVIEW WITH J. J. SINGH, PRESIDENT OF THE INDIA LEAGUE OF AMERICA, MARCH 1944.*

Mr J. J. Singh, President of the India League of America, whose dogged persistence and persuasive eloquence insured Congressional passage of an amendment permitting extension of UNNRA funds to India, does not like lobbying.

"It is exhausting, nerve-racking work, and I wouldn't want to do it again," he said in a recent interview. "One needs a big organization, technical staff, and powerful connections who can exert pressure on the right people at the right moments."

But Mr Singh had none of these. He went to Washington on January 12, armed only with a briefcase and inexhaustible energy born of the conviction that his mission was a just one. To the latter, he attributes his success. "The cause was right and had to be persistently followed up," he declared. That he was able to change the minds of so many Congressmen, strengthened his faith in the American people, he said. "It shows that when they get to know the facts they will rise to the occasion and do the right thing."

It was an uphill fight, and when Mr Singh arrived in Washington the outlook looked dark indeed. The House Foreign Affairs Committee, which had been debating UNRRA legislation, unexpectedly closed its hearings that very afternoon, after defeating by a vote of 12 to 6, the amendment introduced by Representative

*Betsy Piper (?) of the United Press, New York, to J. J. Singh, 5 March 1944, enclosing a report on the interview, 5 March 1944, Singh Papers.

*American Relief for India, Inc., *The Case for American Relief for India* (New York, 1945).

Karl E. Mundt of South Dakota, extending the scope of UNRRA to include aid to India.

Once defeated in committee, an amendment has scarcely a chance of being passed by the House or Senate. But not in the least daunted, Mr Singh proceeded to contact the members of the Foreign Affairs Committee who had voted against the amendment.

He talked ardently and convincingly, pointing out that UNRRA's "cold-blooded and technical approach" toward India would create more enemies than friends in Asia. He told the Congressmen they were forgetting the psychological aspects of the Asiatic war, the strategic position that the provinces of Assam and Bengal occupied in the United Nations' campaign for the reconquest of Burma. He pointed out that reconquered Burmese territory would be considered a "liberated" area and thus entitled to help from UNRRA. "Imagine the bitterness of the Indian people," he declared, "when UNRRA's field operators give milk, medicine, and warm clothing to the Burmese children and refuse to give the same aid to the disease-ridden and dying Bengali children next door." Furthermore, he told them, such a policy would only be another weapon in the hands of Japanese propagandists—proof that the Western nations were not interested in the welfare of Asiatic peoples.

When some committee members continued to insist that UNRRA was designed to aid invaded countries which had been liberated, and that India did not fit into this category, Mr Singh would report that this was partly true and partly not true. "We have been invaded but not liberated," he told them.

The most frequent objections he encountered were that aid to India would make UNRRA a "universal WPA," and "if India today, it will be Peru tomorrow," or any other country suddenly afflicted with national disaster such as famine, flood, or earthquake.

To meet this objection, Mr Singh suggested to Mundt that specific mention of India should be deleted from the amendment. Accordingly it was changed to read that "any area important to the United Nations military operations which may be stricken by famine or disease may be included in the benefits available through UNRRA." This was a strategic move and won over new support.

But in pleading the cause of India before Congress, Mr Singh encountered another obstacle. Many Democratic members of the

House were sympathetic but felt that support of aid to India through UNRRA would be registering opposition to the Administration, since Dean Acheson, who had opposed the amendment, was not only official U.S. delegate to UNRRA but also Assistant Secretary of State. Also, the fact that Mundt was a Republican made many Democrats wary of taking a stand. "Thus the whole issue of party politics entered into the picture," Mr Singh declared.

But after conferences with various State Department officials, Mr Singh finally received the official reply that the Department was neither for nor against the amendment. This neutralization of attitude strongly influenced many Democrats who for political reasons had previously been unwilling to declare themselves. One very high official of the State Department told Mr Singh that the American Government was extremely concerned over conditions in India and would continue to do all that it could to alleviate the suffering of the Indian people. The official emphasized that any objections which the Government had to include India in UNRRA's scope were on purely technical grounds.

Mr Singh next appealed to James Carey, National Secretary of the CIO. When informed of the situation, Carey immediately contacted 18 liberal Democratic Congressmen, told them that the CIO was fully behind aid to India, that Congressional support would be an expression of the will of the American people. He reminded them that the CIO, at its two previous national conventions, had gone on record in favour of Indian independence and an immediate breaking of the political deadlock in India. Emphasizing the importance of Carey's influence, Mr Singh said his last-minute efforts "really turned the trick."

The showdown on the floor of the House began on January 21st. Mr Singh had only the highest praise for Mundt, who eloquently pleaded the cause of India before his fellow Congressmen. "If I had been given the choice of selecting a spokesman for our cause I couldn't have chosen a better one than Congressman Mundt," Mr Singh declared. At the conclusion of Mundt's speech, Sir Srinivas Sarma, presently lecturing in the United States, rushed up to congratulate him, declaring that he was in "whole-hearted agreement. It made me think I was listening to a National Congress speech," he remarked.

However, the battle was not yet won. In the next three days of debate amendment after amendment was thrown out by the House, but at the eleventh hour a surprise move saved the day. According to Mr Singh, as the final voting was about to occur, Mundt accosted Representative Sol Bloom, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, in the private lobby of the House, with the words, "Do you still want a fight?" "Sure, we have you licked," Mr Bloom replied. Thereupon Mundt proceeded to tell Bloom the large number of Congressmen who had reversed their position in the past week, including members of his own committee. "We've broken your Democratic ranks," he said.

Bloom was completely taken aback, Mr Singh related. He immediately held an impromptu meeting of the Committee and when he learned for himself that Mundt was right, he conceded defeat and decided to drop the fight in the House. "This was all that was needed," Mr Singh declared, "and the amendment sailed through."

The Senate had yet to pass on UNRRA legislation, but winning the battle in the House was the major victory. However, Mr Singh returned to Washington in the middle of February in case any further opposition should arise. But after two days of hearings and three days of debate on the floor, the Senate passed the UNRRA bill on February 17th with the Mundt amendment.

Congressional support of aid to India through UNRRA is highly significant. Dean Acheson told Mr Singh that he would consider passage of the amendment as a directive from Congress. "It means," said Mr Singh, "that the American delegation will be committed to supporting any move made for helping India in conformity with the wishes of the American people as expressed through their Congress."

Mr Singh is modest about his accomplishment and objects to being called a lobbyist since, he said, the term connotes payment by some organization. He stated emphaticlly that he was not being paid "a single cent" by anybody and that all his expenses were paid from his own pocket.

Indefatigable in his efforts, he is now carrying his campaign into the halls of Parliament. He has just written letters to about 30 Parliament members, reviewing the action taken by the

Congress of the United States, urging the members to raise the issue in Parliament and to see that the British delegation to the next UNRRA Council meeting is instructed to vote for aid to India.

"I am almost sure," Mr Singh concluded, "that the Government of India, in view of United States' support, will have to similarly instruct the Indian delegates or else the position of the Indian Government will be most untenable."

Appendix V

TEXT OF AN APPEAL FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF AMERICAN RELIEF FOR INDIA, INC., TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL WAR FUND*
(The Appeal did not receive a favourable response.)

Written to Winthrop Aldrich, President of the National War Fund on February 16, 1945.

American Relief for India, Inc., recently has been organized by citizens interested in seeing American relief continued in India so long as India suffers from the war emergency. It is registered with the President's War Relief Control Board and has been certified by that Board for membership in the National War Fund.

The programme which it supports has been endorsed by American government agencies, the Viceroy of India, the Governor of Bengal, and the Agent-General for India in the United States. Under date of February 9, 1945, Lord Halifax has written to us as follows:

> I have consulted our people in the Indian Agency General and, as I expected they would, they commend the proposed enterprise of the American Friends' Service Committee. If, therefore, my name would be of any use to you as a sponsor of the appeal, I shall be delighted for you to use it.

As representatives of American Relief for India, Inc., we are writing to make formal application for inclusion of our organization in the National War Fund as a member or participation agency. This letter outlines the distress caused by war in India, the history

*The amount required for the entire calendar year 1945 is $1,200,000.

of American efforts to help, the prospective needs, and our reasons for feeling that the current effort should not be halted.

India is a casualty of war. In normal times, to be sure, life was hard in India. The least shock to the economic system might cause distress. But normally the government was able to deal with emergency problems. The war upset the economic balance. The famine itself was largely war-caused and because of the war, relief measures are impeded. War causes hardship in many ways. The Japanese invasion cuts off Burma and other rice-producing countries from Indian consumers. Military needs place an overwhelming strain on the transportation system. Ocean shipping is restricted to military purposes. War concentrates American troops in the most needy provinces. Food prices have risen to three to seven times pre-war prices, and wages have not kept pace. Refugees and new diseases have come over India's borders.

In 1943 the food crisis affected more than 60 million people, causing mass starvation and more than one million deaths. Today, as an aftermath of famine, the inhabitants of entire regions—especially of Bengal—are physically and economically ruined, and fall easy victims of epidemic diseases.

America's effort to lend a helping hand to India began last year. After meeting on February 18, 1944 in the offices of the National War Fund, at which various interested parties participated, it was decided that the American Friends' Service Committee would act as purchasing and distributing agency for all private American relief efforts in India. Mr James Vail, the director of the Friends' foreign relief services, was sent to India in order to investigate the stricken areas, to set up a distribution organization, and to report back on further relief needs. It was agreed to appropriate through the British War Relief Society for the first four months the total sum of $400,000 and to envisage continuation of the programme on a basis of an expenditure of $100,000 a month if Mr Vail's report should indicate the emergency nature of the need and the practicability of American relief.

Orders for condensed milk and selected drugs immediately were placed. Mr Vail left this country late in March of 1944, and the relief distribution began in May of the same year. He returned to this country in July with a fervent plea for continuation of

American relief in India. In August, the National War Fund decided to discontinue allocations for India. Contributions have subsequently been received from the National War Fund labour projects and from outside sources. To date, the Committee has spent or committed more than $800,000 for this supply programme. The aid was and still is restricted to emergency projects for sufferers from war. That work has shown that it is possible to administer and distribute relief in India on a strictly non-partisan, non-political, and non-sectarian basis. We enclose a partial list of local agencies through which American supplies reach millions of the Indian people.

We believe that it is essential to continue American relief on the scale of $100,000 a month. The net amount which this would require from the National War Fund for the seven months beginning March 1, and ending September 30, 1945, would be $700,000.* This budget has been submitted to the President's War Relief Control Board for approval. It provides $647,500 for medical supplies and dietary supplements, which, as in the past, will be bought almost wholly in the United States, $35,000 for field operations in India, and $17,500 for administration in this country. We would, of course, expect our agency to bear the same responsibilities, here and abroad, as other agencies which share in the budget of the National War Fund.

Our sole aim is the continuation of the present American relief programme in India with as little difficulty as possible. The competent American and British government officials testify to the widespread relief and goodwill that already has resulted from the American programme. Supplies from the United States are having a tremendously beneficial effect upon the health of India. Moreover, they are reducing epidemics in that strategic base of Allied operations in which many thousands of troops, including American, are unavoidably exposed to the diseases that ravage the country. The United States has great stakes in the well-being of the Indian people, especially at this time because of the presence of large numbers of our armed forces.

Today India needs help. We welcome the opportunity to cement enduring bonds of friendship between the Indian and American peoples by means of relief carried out in a spirit of strict impar-

tiality. New confidence and understanding will grow out of this humanitarian effort. Our help today is a moral obligation; tomorrow it may prove to be a foundation of international goodwill.

If you have any questions about our application we will be happy to discuss them with you at your convenience.

Sincerely yours,

J. Edgar Rhoads

Henry F. Grady

William Phillips

Henry R. Luce

Guy Emerson

David Hinshaw

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