The Punjab is basically an agrarian province. The colonial state tapped the resources through colonization and canalization which led to appropriation of agrarian surplus. The Punjab agrarian society is multiform. By agriculturist, we mean those who hailed from any of the notified agricultural tribes. It was defined under the Punjab Alienation of Land (Amendment) Act, 1919. The term "agriculturist" was modified in 1940 by observing, “an agriculturist is a person who derives the main portion of his income from land.”

In 1926, efforts of the Punjab government in the field of land revenue reforms began when the Punjab Land Revenue (Amendment) Bill was passed by the Punjab Legislative Council. Hence, the Punjab Government could not charge the land revenue more than 1/3rd of the net assets when earlier the rate was 1/2 of the net assets. One more important feature of the Bill was that in every subsequent re-assessment land revenue could not be enhanced by more than 1/3rd excepting areas, either urban or where irrigation would develop fast. However, the Governor vetoed it, as he was having political differences with the native Government in the province. But being not discouraged, the Government intensified its efforts. It further raised its demand by asking that maximum land revenue should be assessed at 1/4th of the net assets. In subsequent re-settlement, revenue may be enhanced by not more than 25 per cent of the preceding assessment. Ultimately, the Government passed the Punjab Land Revenue Act 1928. It conceded the preceding

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demands. By implementing this Act in settlements, wherever these became due, land revenue was reasonably reduced. In 1930, it was reduced by Rs. 2,23,000; Rs. 1,04,000; Rs. 2,28,000; Rs. 86,000; Rs. 36,000; Rs. 1,38,000; and Rs. 1,83,000 in the settlement circles of Shahpur, Gujranwala, Sheikhupura, Attock, Mianwali, Gujrat and Jhang respectively. During the period 1928-35, the Punjab government with a view to benefiting the self cultivators went on pressing the Government that the land revenue should be fixed on the basis of self-cultivator’s net assets instead of rent receiving landlords. Also, it should properly account for the cost of cultivation. This cost must include the sum due to cattle depreciation connected herewith. The Government refused to accept this proposal. The Government introduced the sliding scale of assessment of land revenue. It was done on experimental basis in districts of Montgomery and Lyallpur, in 1930. This wholesome feature was applied on large scale since 1937. Under this system land revenue could not be raised beyond the decided rate. The crop might have been bumper, but there was no end to its downward revision, if the crop or its current price was otherwise. The only existence of the foregoing land revenue reforms, though salutary, did not result in much profit to the agriculturists until 1937. Thereafter, these were enforced anxiously by the Punjab Government. Important result of this combination was that in re-settlement made during 1937-44, land revenue was assessed much below 25 per cent of the net assets. Thus, the Punjab cultivator became the lowest land rate payer in the country.

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6 Punjab Land Revenue Act, 1928, Section 48/B; See also A. Husain, Fazl-i-Husain, 149; See also The Tribune, 6/2/1933, 7; See also, P.L.C.D., Vol. XXVI, 6/2/1935, 818.


Assessment of land revenue on income tax principles was another feature advocated by the leadership during 1927-35. Since 1940, some of them opposed it.\textsuperscript{12} Their arguments for its adoption were: (i) for income tax purpose income upto Rs. 2000 was exempted. There was no such exemption in the assessment of land revenue. Thus, the latter was, in fact, a tax on the fruits of the labour of the agriculturists;\textsuperscript{13} (ii) Maximum rate of income tax was 2.5 \textit{annas} in a rupee, whereas land revenue was assessed minimum at 1/4\textsuperscript{th} of the net assets;\textsuperscript{14} (iii) The suspended payment of land revenue on account of a poor harvest was charged along with the next year, if the yield came to 10 \textit{annas} in a rupee but under the income fell short of the minimum assessable in any year, he was not to pay any income tax for that year though his return for the succeeding year might have been Rs. 5000/\textsuperscript{15}; and (iv) No enhancement, howsoever small, in the rate of income tax was easy to be effected. Since it had to be sanctioned by the Central Legislature, yet beside land revenue could be enhanced even through the discretionary powers of the Governor.\textsuperscript{16}

The significant cause of opposition to this scheme since 1940 can be best explained in these words, "The cry was raised for the assimilation of the principles of assessment of land revenue to the assessment of income tax in the hope that Government might, in order to avert the threat, agree to make other reasonable concessions to \textit{zamidars}.\textsuperscript{17} Another argument given was that it would not be workable, because the

\textsuperscript{12} Chhotu Ram's evidence before the Simon Commission, cited in Mitra's \textit{Indian Quarterly Register}, o. cit., 1928, Vol. II, 123; See also \textit{P.L.C.D.}, Vol. XI, 8/5/1928, 1028; See also Vol. X, 7/3/1927, 139; See also Vol. XXVI, 25/3/1935, 816; See also \textit{P.L.A.D.}, Vol. XII, 4/3/1940, 47; See also Vol. XIV, 13/3/1942, 327-28; See also \textit{J.G. (tr.)}, 8/6/1927, 8-7; See also 22/1/1930, p. 5.


\textsuperscript{14} \textit{The Tribune}, Lahore, 6/2/1933, 7; See also \textit{P.L.C.D.}, Vol. XI 8/5/1928.


\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Ibid}.

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{P.L.A.D.}, Vol. XII, 4/3/1940, 47; See also Vol. XIX, 13/3/1942, 327-28.
illiterate cultivators could not maintain their accounts. Two more factors appeared to be that one the party was in power since 1937, did not need to adopt underhand means for affording relief to the agriculturists. Moreover, success of the sliding scale of Land Revenue had appealed to many members of this party as the best. Another proposal advocated by the ruling party since 1927, which it was the inseparable part of the above discussed proposal, 'Application of the principles of income tax to the Assessment of Land Revenue', too met similar fate in 1942 at their own hands in favour of the 'Peasants Welfare Fund'. It was to exempt holdings up to two irrigated acres from the payment of Land Revenue or 5 un-irrigated acres of land or land revenue up to Rs. 5/- The reason for this preference for the Peasants Welfare Fund exhibited its wider aim of setting aside the backwardness of the agriculturists of lower strata.

On the contrary, it was held that this Fund rather should have been augmented so that the provincial Government in case of necessity could grant some relief to the small cultivators. It appears that the Peasants Welfare Fund had been designed by them to fill in this gap; (ii) Patwaris, Girdawaras and Tehsildars were under the impression that by giving remission, the Government treasures would be emptied. So, they made false reports. But if they would know that booked payments could be made out of this fund, they would report the real nature of the crops and yields; and (iii) Since the Unionists greatly espoused the cause of consolidation of small holdings, therefore, any exemption in land revenue up to Rs. 5/-, etc. would have negated these efforts by promoting the

18 Ibid.
19 It was initiated by the Unionists in 1927.
21 Chhottu Ram's speech at Rawalpindi in September, 1943; reported in J.G. (tr.), 8/9/1943, 8; See also P.L.A.D., Vol. XVIII, 12/1/1942, 574-23; See also Vol. XXII, 7/3/1944, 405-06, 2001; See also Vol. XXI, 12/3/1943, 216.
22 Jat Gazetter (hereafter J.G.) (tr.), 8/9/1943, 8; See also P.L.A.D., Vol. 12/1/1942, 574-23; See also Vol. XXII, 7/3/1944, 405.
fragmentation of holdings. Thus, the much desired Peasants Welfare Fund Act was passed in 1942 unanimously. By 1944, Rs. 1.5 Crore had already been accumulated under this head. For future, the Punjab Government promised to contribute Rs. 55 lakhs annually.

So far the means were concerned through which the Punjab government got reduced the land revenue, it was mostly persuasive. But it warned the British Government several times with dire consequences, if it failed in doing its duty to the agriculturists. In 1932 and 1933, the Unionists threatened if certain revolutionary change was not introduced in the land revenue system. Agriculturists awakened to their miseries would manifest uncontrollable riots and unrest. Apart from reduction in land revenue, they pressurized upon the Government, particularly during the ‘Great Economic Depression (1929-30)’ to give very liberal remission in land revenue. Abolition of acreage rates was another reform, which the agriculturists emphasized. Through this tax, the Government had been charging Rs. 1.63 per acre six monthly to recover in 7 years the sum of Rs. 60 lacs, the amount that the Government had spent on digging water courses, on culverts construction and on preliminary surveys and demarcation. In 1936, the demand made for its abolition made in 1936 was justified, as return from harvest due to poor yields and slack prices were very meager. Besides, the water course and culverts were either not built or proved futile. Even surveys and demarcations done by the contractors were highly defective. Their efforts resulted in an assurance by the Government that acreage rates would either be reduced or abolished.

Excessive malikana rate, that was realized as a part of rent from the grantees in colonies was the next cess that every one strongly in general as well as Fazl-i-Husain

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24 Report by the Punjab Land Revenue Committee, 1937, 123.
25 Jat Gazetter (hereafter J.G.) (tr.), 8/9/1943, 8; See also P.L.A.D., Vol. 12/1/1942, 574-23; See also Vol. XXII, 7/3/1944, 405.
26 The Tribune, Lahore, 6/2/1933, 7; See also P.L.C.D., Vol. XXI, 10/3/1932, 355; See also Vol. XXIII (Abdur Rehman's speech), 21/3/1933, 667.
28 Rent was equal to malikana plus land revenue.
and Sir Chhotu Ram in particular denounced it. However, some persons wrongly interpreted it as the interest charged by the Government on the price of the land until the grantees had paid off the whole price.\textsuperscript{30} When asked the Government to reduce malikana rate and place it on fluctuating standard, it was argued as follows:\textsuperscript{31} (i) Earlier malikana rates were between Rs. 2/- and Rs. 6/- per acre. During 1920-28, the prices of the crops had increased, it was enhanced from Rs. 2/- to Rs. 3.80/-. So when prices fell during 1929-33, the old rates should have been restored; (ii) at the outset, it was charged on fluctuating basis i.e. on the matured acres alone. But by 1934, local officers began to charge it for all the areas allotted to a grantee; (iii) Colonies Committee Report had too recommended malikana rate at Rs. 6/- per acre in the new colonies to start with, which it suggested should be further reduced to Rs. 4/- in the near future; and (iv) While replying the reactionary argument of M.L. Darling and Mukand Lal Puri it was demanded that grantees should vacate these lands, if they felt malikana so rack-renting. Consequently, the Government suspended the realization of malikana for three harvests. It further assured to reconsider the issue at proper time.\textsuperscript{32} The Unionists Party also objected to the system of distribution and base of the crown lands on the two grounds: (i) Nearly 83 per cent of such Land was disposed or leased out to the capitalist landlords\textsuperscript{33}; and (ii) The landed capitalists were very unfair, as they passed on these lands to the poor tenants on difficult terms.\textsuperscript{34} In 1942, merely three thousand acres were to be given to the landed gentry and that also to those who did not own more than hundred acres.\textsuperscript{35} He got enacted the Colonization of Government Land (Punjab Amendment) Act in 1941 permitted the widows of the predeceased sons and grandsons of the grantee to become tenants of

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., XXIV (Habib-Ullah's views), 5/3/1934, 515-16, 48-50.


\textsuperscript{32} P.L.C.D., Vol. XXIV, 1934, 312 and 322.


Government land.\textsuperscript{36} In 1944, the above said Act was amended and thereby eliminated the bad practice followed by widows under the pressure of the designated persons. The former after acquiring proprietary rights of the Crown lands in colonies, transferred them to the latter. Such transfers were upheld as valid by the courts also. Although the actual Act had laid down that such lands would normally go to the reversionary of the widows. Eliminating the drawbacks, the amended Act provided, if any condition of any grant was violated, the concerned collector could resume that land.\textsuperscript{37} Crown lands were reserved for the agriculturists as well as for the scheduled caste every year. In 1942, three thousand \textit{acres} were reserved for them;\textsuperscript{38} and vigorously revived the scheme of graduate \textit{chaks} (blocks of land) in the distribution of crown lands. About 81 such grants were made in 1938.\textsuperscript{39} The scheme giving blocks of 50 \textit{acres} each of crown lands to 73 agricultural science and arts graduates had been initiated in 1932. Thus their policy in this regard was that self-cultivator oriented so far as the developed crown lands were concerned. In the distribution of the undeveloped lands entailing big initial investments more or less he favored the big landlords. The point stands supported by the fact that large tracts of undeveloped lands in Bora, he gave to big landlords in 1944.\textsuperscript{40}

The Punjab Government also attempted to introduce several modern techniques for enhancing the agriculture of the province.\textsuperscript{41} Need for developing agriculture had also been stressed by the Indian Industrial Commission having in mind to ensure the supply of food to the growing population; also for the betterment of agriculturists’ lot and to enhance the progress of industries.\textsuperscript{42} Another step taken by The Punjab Government was the reclamation of waste lands. Since 1941, it plunged in this project. Every subsequent

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Punjab Government Gazette} (Extraordinary), 5/9/1941, 868; See also \textit{P.L.A.D.}, Vol. XVIII, 1/12/1941, 32; See also Vol. VIII, 1939, 1146.


\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Ibid.}, Vol. XIX, 13/3/1942, 332.

\textsuperscript{39} \textit{Report on the Operations of the Agriculture Department, 1939}, 88.

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{P.L.A.D.}, Vol. XXII, 10/3/1944, 490-93.


\textsuperscript{42} M.L. Darling, \textit{Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt}, Manohar, Delhi, 1977, pp. 29-30, 84, 133-34, 256.
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year witnessed better accomplishment. About 14,790 in 1941; 20,000 in 1942; and 30,000 in 1943 acres were reclaimed. A remarkable feature of its efforts was that it undid a long standing injustice to the small landowners. While under the previous policy, big landholders could get much above the quota of additional canal water permitted for the purpose. But under the new policy introduced by the Punjab Government reclamation work commenced. It began from the head of a tributary with the lands affected greatest by Ahur (barrenness). Whether these belonged to small agriculturists or big landlords, slowly reached the tail. A notable financial profit to the agriculturists and the Government as land revenue, etc. was the result of the Punjab Governments’ efforts. In 1942, in reclamation lands, 8 lac tons of grams both worth Rs. 95/- lac were harvested. Its third effort towards the progress of agriculture was collective farming. After 1938, the Government never helped it despite opposition Benches in the Punjab Legislature pressed for it during 1939-43. Its failure was due to the Punjabi agriculturists being full of independent character. It did not give up the right to ownership of soil, when they felt a sense of dignity, self-respect and superior social status. This view was also shared by the contemporary Government Officers serving in the Province.

The Government’s fourth step was setting up of the Government seed farms. It was done to evolve new strains of different crops and to grow the already known improved seeds in sizable quantity for supply to the agriculturists. Though its party's programme of launching one Government seed farm in each tehsil had been accepted in principle in 1927, but tangible results could be seen only during 1937-44. During this period, some important inventions of improved seeds were made. The chunk of land was cultivated with these seeds. It resulted in handsome financial gain to the agriculturists. In 1938, at Kala Shah Kaku Government Farm, a new variety of rice giving two crops a year was evolved. Improved quality of indigenous potato, cultivable in Kangra district that replaced at half price the seed earlier imported from Bihar, was produced. By 1938, the

The number of village Farmers Associations in the Punjab rose to 4500 from 2600 in 1935-36 and 3129 in 1936-37. Their members were using these seeds themselves as well as popularizing among others. In the subsequent years their use progressively increased. Additional acres covered by the improved seeds of rice, maize, bajra, sugarcane, American cotton, wheat and pulses increased heavily in 1937-38.

To remove these ills, the Unionists made a modest beginning in 1924, by enhancing the number of cooperative commission shops for the sale of agriculture produce. The following year, they also introduced the Punjab Agricultural Produce Marketing Bill. In the Provincial Legislature though explained, it was passed but it was vetoed by the Governor. The Unionists seized the first opportunity as soon as they constituted the ministry. They got enacted the Punjab Agricultural Produce Marketing Act in 1939, amending it further in 1941 whereby the number of the Governor’s representatives were kept higher than the combined strength of the representatives of the traders, weight men and the Government on the Market Committee. The punitive clause of the Act subjected traders, brokers, weight men measures ware-housemen etc. for the violation of any of its clauses, to a fine extending up to Rs. 500/-. Since the above stated

49. Reports on the Operations of the Agriculture Department for the year ending 30th June 1939, 82; See also P.L.A.D., Vol. I, 13/7/1937, 416; See also Vol. III, 16/3/1938, 345; See also Vol. VIII, 20/3/1939, 44.
50. Ibid., Vol. VIII, 578.
51. Report of the Committee on Cooperation in India : 1915, para 9 (Simla, 1915); See also Punjab Administration Report for 1919-20, 69; See also Report on the Working of Cooperative Societies in the Punjab for the year ending 31st July, 1925, 19; See also year ending 31st July 1929, 31; See also see for the years 1/8/1939 to 31/2/1944.
52. J.G. (tr.), 15/6/1927, 4; See also P.L.C.D., Vol. XXVIII, 25/10/1935, 245.
53. Punjab Government Gazette (Extraordinary), 11/5/1939, 105-11; See also J.G. (tr.), 4/6/1941, 3; See also P.L.A.D., Vol. VII, 19/1/1939, 384; 466-67, 594, 903; See also Vol. XV, 26/11/1941, 71; See also Vol. 7/7/1938, 783-814; See also Vol. VI, 14/11/1938, 231-308, 321, 323, 555.
54. Department of Education, Health and Lands, Year 1941, File No. 4-3/41-A, NAI, also J.G. (tr.), 11/6/1941, 3; See also 13/8/1941, 5.
Act did not protect the agriculturists to the extent as desired by the Unionists, they therefore, got enacted another measure, i.e., the Punjab Weights and Measures Act in 1941.\(^{56}\) Similarly, with a view to protect the peasants from the arbitrary dealings of the sugar mills got the Sugarcane (Punjab Amendment) Act passed in 1943. While the Weights and Measures Act (1941), declared the manufacture and use of false weights and scales a criminal offence. It too made the use of the Government approved weights and measures obligatory. The Sugarcane Act made a break through by providing that the income from this tax would be spent on improving roads leading to sugar factories, on providing shelters for the agriculturists and their carts.\(^{57}\) Another significant measure, for the development of agriculture, was the procurement of reasonable cost for their produce to the tillers of the soil; by pleading an agriculturist-oriented food policy with the British Government. The Government was pressed to force the Central Government on the following points:\(^{58}\) (i) British Government of India should either stop the import of wheat or levy a substantial import duty thereupon; (ii) It should reduce railway freight from rupee, 1 \textit{anna 3 pice per mound} to 6 \textit{annas per mound} from Punjab stations to Karachi, Bombay and Calcutta as the Australian Exporters were in a more advantageous position vis-a-vis the Punjab producers as their wheat was shipped to India just for 6 \textit{annas per mound}; (iii) It should revise the exchange rate from Rs. 1 to 18 d. to Rs. 1 to 16 d., as it existed before. It’s much denounced revision by the Mittal Young Commission in 1924 resulting in the reduction of return from the export of wheat etc. by 12.5 per cent; and (iv) The Punjab Government should send its agents to the important milling stations like Calcutta and Karachi to convince the millers of those places of the superiority of the Punjab wheat.

\(^{56}\) Department of Education, Health and Lands, Year 1941, File No. 4-3/41-A, N.A.I., New Delhi; See also Mitra’s Indian Annual Register, 1941, Vol. 1, 267; See also Punjab Government Gazette (Extraordinary), 30/10/1941, 161; See also J.G. (tr.), 21/4/1941, 3; See also 30/4/1941, 3; See also P.L.A.D. Vol. XVII, 1/4/1941, 40-2, 54-62; See also Y. Shastri (tr.), \textit{op.cit.}, 628.


\(^{58}\) P.L.C.D., Vol. XVII, 17/1/1931, 263-86; See also Vol. XXVIII (Ujjal Singh), 931; Vol. XVIII, 17/1/1931, 326-27; Vol. XIX, 15/5/1931, 373-74; See also J.G. (tr.), 20/5/1931, 7.; See also J.G. (tr.), 27/1/1931, 1. also J.G. (tr.), 25/5/1927, 7; See also 1/6/1927, 8; See also 8/6/1927, 7; See also 27/1/1931, 1.
It appears that the British Indian Government responded favorably to at least two, at least, to of their suggestions. An analysis of the step taken by it to implement that leads to the conclusion, the de-facto agriculturists did not gain anything. The British Indian Government did reduce railway freight from Punjab Stations to Karachi in January 1931, just after three months. Similarly, in April 1934, it imposed an import duty of Rs. 2 and 8 annas per quintal on wheat but reduced it to Rs. 2 per quintal in February 1935, while the price of wheat was just 2 rupees and 12 annas per mound. Yet, its adverse effect was that the prices of wheat could not rise in the following years. During 1934-35, the prices of food-grains recovered slowly to the pre 1929 level. So, except once, when the Government was impressed upon in 1936 to increase import duty on wheat, it seems that the political factions were almost satisfied with the policy followed by the Government relating to food grains. Food Production in India declined at a annual rate of 02 per cent during 1924-44. On the eve of the Imperial War, food situation was ‘ explosive.’ The Punjab had the largest irrigation system with 20 million acres under irrigation; canal network had 2000 miles. Total irrigated area accounted for 52 per cent of the total cropped area in the Punjab. Improved varieties of wheat, cotton and sugar reached 50 per cent, 70 per cent and 64 per cent respectively. With massive irrigation networks, the Punjab had emerged as ‘a new agrarian frontier’ Consequently, the Punjab agriculture transformed

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59. Ibid.
61. G. Kaushal, Economic History of India (1757-1966), Kalyani Publishes, New Delhi 1997, 159-60
into ‘the most expert-oriented in the whole of Asia.’ Total agrarian production was ‘grown for the market’. 65

II
The outbreak of the World War II created hopes of a boom. The peasants expected increasing employment and the rising prices of their produce would minimise the effects of agricultural depression. 66 From 1939 onwards, the Imperial War precipitated the crisis. When the prices of food grains due to the increase in the number of British troops stationed in India and due to the shipment shortage shot up, the price of cotton fell steeply. 67 Government policy added chaos to the confusion. While it promulgated price control order with a view to arrest any rise in the prices of the essential goods, it did nothing to support the price of cotton. There was a need to extricate the peasants from this chaotic state of affairs. Following steps were suggested to the Government of India at two food grains conferences, convened by it in 1941 and 1943 respectively. 68 It should impose heavy import duty on cotton at least for three years. On the pattern of the cotton purchase policy of the Government from Egypt, they suggested that the same should be followed by the British imperial government in India. The condition of price control on the sale of food grains by the agriculturists was proposed to be governed by a similar price control on the goods like kerosene oil and cloth sold by the non-agriculturists. They laid down the following principles to be carried out by the Government in the implementation of the price control policy: (a) the underlying principle of the United States Price Control Order, that fixed its price as the average of the prices of a commodity for the years 1919-29, should be adopted in the Punjab; 69 (b) as in England, the Government should subsidize price control

65 M.M. Islam Irrigation, Agriculture and the Raj, 144; Mridula Mukherjee, Colonialising Agriculture: The Myth of Punjab Exceptionalism, Sage, New Delhi 2007, 56
68 Proceedings of the Punjab Regional Price and Supply Board Meeting, held at Simla on 20/6/1942, Department of Education, Health and Lands, Year 1942, File No. F-31/60/42-A, NAI, New Delhi; P.L.A.D., Vol. XV, 23/1/1941, 185-86; J.G. (tr.), 14/7/1943, 3; See also P.L.A.D., Vol. XVIII, 11/12/1941, 257 and 273; See also Vol. XXI, 16/3/1943, 359; See also The Tribune, Lahore, 21/12/1941, 4.
in India too; (c) Punjab peasants should not be forced to supply food grains at cheap rates to the deficit areas, as there the local Government were earning huge profits in food grain trades;\textsuperscript{70} (d) special importance should be given to the perpetually famine stricken regions of South-East Punjab;\textsuperscript{71} (e) price control should be applied to the food commodities, the principle underlying the control order that permitted a gain of 25 per cent. Afterwards, it was reduced to 20 per cent;\textsuperscript{72} and (f) if the Government felt unable to enforce the above principles, it should permit the agriculturists to raise the prices of their commodities by many times as the prices of their needs had gone up.\textsuperscript{73}

Apart from advantage to the rural population, it brought considerable hardship in the shape of inflation and growing shortage of consumer goods \textsuperscript{74} By the end of 1941, the supply of food was running desperately low in India. The shortfall for dominant staple rice had exceeded 2.8 million which could not be met by imports.\textsuperscript{75} Government of India asked for imports of food grains into India. London rejected as it would cause division of shipping services that would effect naval operations of the Allies.\textsuperscript{76} In January 1942, the Punjab Government issued an order to all farmers to declare stocks of wheat exceeding 20 mounds of rumours of official intentions to requisition stocks without payment began circulating and started the unsettle solders who had been concerned about economic conditions in their village.\textsuperscript{77} The Unionist party advocated the introduction of price control over the goods required by the agriculturists.\textsuperscript{78} Its members were rather adamant on this issue. Another gain that accrued to the cultivators as a result of their incessant criticism of the Government for having fixed low rate of wheat i.e. Rs. 6 and

\textsuperscript{70} J.G. (tr.), 13/10/1943, 1; See also \textit{P.L.A.D.}, Vol. XXI, 16/3/1943, 359.
\textsuperscript{72} \textit{Ibid.}, Vol. XXII, 4/11/1943, 115
\textsuperscript{73} \textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{74} Ian Talbot, \textit{Punjab and the Raj (1849-1947)}, p. 144
\textsuperscript{75} Ran Tai Yong, \textit{The Garrison State}, p. 292.
\textsuperscript{77} Tan Tai Yong, \textit{The Garrison State}, p. 293.
\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Ibid.}, Vol. XXIII 7/3/1944, 405; See also \textit{The Tribune}, Lahore, 21/12/1943, 4; See also \textit{J.G.} (tr.), 8/12/1943, 5.
annas 6 per mound for the Punjab after the First Food Grain Conference (1941) was that with a view to pacify the Unionists, the Government revised the rate of wheat to Rs. 5 per mound in the Second Food Grains Conference held from 13 to 16 October, 1941. But as this concession was too meager to bring any satisfaction to him, so his fury against the Government remained unabated. It is true that by the close of 1943, he had become almost rebellious against Government's unjust food grains policy. It is clear from the directions, the Unionists gave to the agriculturists of the Punjab; they should not sell their wheat crop at less than Rs. 10/- per mound. Thereupon, the Unionists declared in the face of a large number of the officials of the Central Government that if price control of agricultural produce resulted in an untoward situation in the Punjab the Local Government would not be responsible for it. Under the Grow More Food programme, area under cultivation increased substantially: 30 Million areas 1939 and 35 million areas in 1942. Thus, the Punjab farmer were growing more and selling more. They were securing higher prices for their produce.

Winston Churchill categorically declared that it will be a long War and one full of sorrow and disappointment for the British Empire. Even the American President, F.D. Roosevelt prepared for a prolonged War. The food shortage became important not only in India but throughout the world. The question of food was rooted in political and social conditions ushered in during the War. By 1943, scarcities began to be felt in the markets. The supply of manufactured consumer goods fell because of the decline or cessation of imports, fall in production in India and practically, the diversion of existing industrial capacity to the production of goods required for the War. The Indian people’s sacrifice was the sacrifice of consumption forced on them by the diversion of goods and

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79 P.L.A.D., Vol. XVIII, 113-15; See also Vol. XXI, 359; See also J.G. (tr.), 14/7/1943, 2; 20/10/1943, 2.
80 P.L.A.D., Vol. XII, year 1940, 113-15; See also J.G. (tr.), 8/12/1943, 5; 27/10/1943, 5; 29/12/1943, 5.
81 R.S. Nakra, Punjab Villages in the Ludhiana District during the War, p. 1
83 The Tribune, Lahore, September 20, 1942.
productive power to War use. V. K. R. V. Rao argued that the main reasons for the price rise lay in the shortages caused by low production and by speculation. The rural population also suffered from the shortage of consumer goods. The rural population was rallied to intensify the area under cultivation through a “Grow More Food” campaign in the Punjab. The Government of India launched in 1943 the campaign of ‘Grow More Food’. The Punjab Government decided to increase the production of rice and millets and expected to exceed the export targets. With the average of three years ending 1939, the area under grain crops in 1943-44 had increased by over 11 million acres providing an additional yield of 4 million tons of foodgrains. With the beginning of the War, the official Gazette announced the control of prices of flour, oils, vegetables, milk, butter, meat, fruits, coarse cloth etc. The Deputy Commissioners got the authority.

The prices of food and other necessities of life were soaring, the cost of living was mounting and the black market was thriving. With the progress in the War, inflation wiped out the profits which resulted from the increase in price of such crops as wheat, maize, gram and Bajra. The whole process brought untold miseries and sufferings of the mass of workers and peasants. The people has to bear hardships of manifold wage cuts, food and cloth scarcities and destitution. After meeting the members of the Lahore Chemist Association, the prices of medicines were enhanced by 10 per cent on the stocks

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87 *Akali*, Lahore, September 14, 1939.
91 Satya M. Rai, *Punjabi Heroic Tradition*, p.150
92 *Akali*, Lahore, September 14, 1939.
which were there on 1 September. With a view to control the rising prices of commodities, it was decided by the Central Government to convene a conference of representatives of Provinces and States. The Government had to spend much larger sums and proportions of the budget on defence. The money supply was increased to finance the deficit as never before. It caused massive inflation, causing serious erosion of real incomes. The local merchants in the Punjab sharply reacted to price regulations. In the month of April 1941, the merchants openly protested against the sales tax. They called for the provincial merchant conference in Amritsar. It created a deadlock in different commercial centres in the Punjab. The provincial government made many concessions to the shopkeeping class. Owing to shortages caused by the diversions to the War needs, the prices of essential commodities especially clothing and wheat had gone up by almost 300 per cent by the end of 1941. Moreover, the disruption in imports led to an acute shortage of consumer goods and other daily necessaries in the times as were in the countryside of the Punjab. The rumors and propaganda played an important role in creating scarcity. The War time control and rationing led to the hoarding and black market. As early as 1943, in the Punjab, it became increasingly difficult to obtain without prescribed rates any commodity while price has been controlled and black market transactions were so common that it was generally felt that the entire system of price control either be drastically revived or else abandoned altogether. The opening of the depots in the large towns helped to some extent to check illegal transactions, but the inconvenience experienced by the public in making small purchases at these depots after long waits in queues detracted considerably from their value. The prices differences

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95 Akali, Lahore, September 21, 1939.
96 Akali, Lahore, September 22, 1939.
98 Akali, Lahore, April 9, 1941.
among different provinces led to smuggling and hoarding owing to the wide disparity of prices of rice between the Punjab and the UP border and the large purchases of paddy and rice.\textsuperscript{103} In December 1942, shortage of foodgrains were reported from thirteen districts, of fuel from ten, sugar from six and salt from four.\textsuperscript{104} The rumors of scarcity caused hoarding of grains with peasants and merchants. In the Punjab in August 1943, it was reported that as much as one million tons out of an estimated harvest of 3.5 million tons had not yet come to the market.\textsuperscript{105} By early October 1943, the Punjab exported about 1,62,000 tons foodgrains.\textsuperscript{106}

It was generally alleged in the Punjab that insufficient action was taken to prevent inflation, hoarding and profiteering. The official purchases of wheat had also been considered one of the main cause for increase in its prices as the Punjab Ministry represented landowning interests.\textsuperscript{107} Rapid rise in inflation caused great distress amongst the poor.\textsuperscript{108} The Axis Radio propaganda during the months of Sept. 1943 was concentrated almost exclusionary on exploiting India’s food difficulties which were attributed to the British rule.\textsuperscript{109}

The Government of India introduced statutory price control by December 1941. The fixing of prices proved to be utterly useless as there was no machinery for implementing it. It proved extremely unpopular with wheat producing cultivators in the Punjab. The Punjab cultivators resorted to hoarding. Consequently, black market developed.\textsuperscript{110} Meanwhile, an independent Department was created by the Government of India in December 1942 which organized Food conferences with the representation of the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{103} Home/Political (I), File 18.11.1943 (Poll. II), GOI, NAI, 1943, p. 31.
\bibitem{104} Ian Talbot, \textit{Punjab and The Raj (1849-1947)}, p.1 46.
\bibitem{105} Home/Political (I), File 18.5.1943 (Poll. I), GOI, NAI, 1943, p. 148.
\bibitem{107} Home/Political (I), File 18.5.1943 (Poll. I), GOI, NAI, 1943, p. 169.
\bibitem{109} Home/Political (I), File 18.9.1943 (Poll. I), GOI, NAI, 1943, p. 43.
\bibitem{110} Tan Tai Yong, \textit{The Garrison State}, pp. 292-93.
\end{thebibliography}
Princes. Mr. K.H. Henderson, District Magistrate, Lahore stated that owing to very heavy military demands on wheat supply of the Punjab, there was likelihood of shortage of wheat. Moreover, the expert of wheat was criticized in the Punjab Legislative Assembly in March 1942. The Punjabi peasant had retaliated by withdrawing supplies from the market. The Punjab appeared on the a famine in itself. Government of India agreed to buy wheat through a central purchasing agency in every province. Admittedly, the price controls had failed. The Governor, B.J. Glancy reported to the Viceroy Sir Linlithgow that the organisation by the trading classes of widespread movement designed to defeat certain economic enactments passed, in particular the Agricultural Produce Markets Act and the General Sales Tax Act. The Government postponed the enforcement of the Market Act till September as it was thought that the closing down of grain markets would have been a calamitous affair leading almost inevitably to extensive outbreaks of disorder. The colonial state became more interventionist with a wide range of regulations. The officer became a hated figure in the village. The Government reacted immediately and introduced changes in the Acts. The producers in some places sold out their grain by secret transactions instead of in the open market suffered financially. The District Magistrate, Lahore, Mr. K.H. Henderson issued an order fixing retail prices of fire-wood.

In consultation with the Wheat Commissioner of India, the Punjab Government though reluctantly agreed to allow exports of wheat and wheat products to the maximum

112 *The Khalsa*, Lahore, March 1, 1942.
115 Tan Tai Yong, *The Garrison State*, p., 293
119 *The Khalsa*, Lahore, February 8, 1942.
permissible limit of 900,000 tons during 1942. Such policy of export of wheat amidst shortages made the Unionist Government unpopular. Between May and October 1943, 265,100 tons of foodstuffs were sent from the Punjab to Bengal. 120 By August 1943, about one million tons of grain had been procured. 121 The shortage of foodgrains began to felt in the Punjab. 122 The Punjab Government decided to build up a reserve to the extent of 40,000 tons of wheat, to be stored at various centres to ward off artificially engineered shortages. It would have the effect of stabilizing prices at a level which would ensure a fair share of increased price of wheat going into the hands of the cultivator. 123 Food was characterized as ‘a munitions of war’. 124 The Central Food Department made arrangements for providing storage accommodation for foodgrains. New constructions were contemplated in the Punjab. Accommodation for 60,000 tons had already been hired in the Punjab. The space was expected to increase upto 1.5 Lakh tons. 125 By the beginning of July 1945, about 7632 tons of foodgrains were dispatched from the Punjab to the deficit provinces in India. 126 Despite such stringent steps, there was increase in the prices of food stuffs and other commodities. On the whole, the district officers were successful in their efforts to enforce the orders passed. However, there were well founded complaints that dealers withheld all but small stocks from the market or had sought to evade control by means of adulteration. 127 A fair number of offenders had been prosecuted which produced some statutory results. It was feared that a prolonged scarcity of supplies in a particular area could well head to looting and riots. 128

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123 *The Khalsa*, Lahore, May 17, 1942.
124 *Indian Information*, April 1, 1944, p. 405.
128 Ibid, 288-89.
The Punjab Ministry adopted a conciliatory attitude to the moneyed classes and modified various proposals calculated to cause resentment among the urban community. The District Magistrate, Lahore, Mr. K. H. Henderson fixed the maximum retail prices of firewood throughout the Lahore district. Any breach would be treated as an offence under sub rule (4) the Defence of India Rules. Through its policies of food requisition, rationing, and price control, the Raj, compromised its cardinal principle of maintaining rural stability. In fact, during the last years of the War, the Punjab rural population became subject to a wide range of regulations. The district officer became a hated figure in the village. On the recommendations of the fifth Price Control Conference, the Government of India have issued a food grains control order under which all persons, other than producers of food grains engaged in any undertaking which involves the purchases, sale or shortages for sale in whole sale quantities (i.e. quantities exceeding 20 maunds in any one transaction) of any of the specified food grain will be required to apply to the provincial government of a licence. The food grains specified were paddy, rice, wheat (including wheat products), jowar, bajra, barley, grain and maize. The licence holders will be required to keep accounts in a prescribed manner and to submit monthly returns of their purchases, sales and stocks. The objective was to maintain close supervision over the prices and stocks of food grains throughout British India and to put an effective check on the hoarding of foodgrains by consumers which had caused ‘Rise in Prices’. The rationing was first introduced in July 1943 in 13 cities and areas in India. The devastating famine in Bengal led to change in public opinion. The London Government was ready to compromise its naval operations for the transportation of food. Both Lord Amery and Lord Linlithgow agreed that India was not in the mind of

129 Ibid, 289.
130 The Khalsa, Lahore, February 8, 1942.
132 The Khalsa, Lahore, May 24, 1942.
133 Ibid.
London. Hence, the Government of India had no option but to look internally. It had to forced requisitioning and price control. The Government of India regarded total urban rationing as a fundamental part of all India food Policy. However, the Provincial Government suggested a partial rationing. Earlier the Punjab Government criticized the Central Government for passing the ‘freezing of stocks of food grains pledged to certain banks’ without consulting the Provincial Government. The Punjab Government could prevent the Central Government from acquiring all surplus for the deficit regions. The Punjab Legislative Assembly warned that price control moved result in very keen resentment and discontent among agricultural classes. As the Bengal Famine crisis deepened further, the forced food requisitioning was introduced in 1943 in the Punjab. Thus, the Government of India forced rationing and requisitioning upon the Punjab in September 1943 and price control in November 1943. The Unionists were deeply ‘disappointed’. The hopes of bumper harvests and handsome profits proved ‘illusory’. Political insecurity and good prospects in black market created a situation or a result of which maize, wheat and grain had virtually disappeared from the open market by December 1945. By November 1944, 460 towns and municipal areas were brought under rationing covering 42 million people; by February 1945, the number reached to 516 with a population of 50 million. By October 1946, about 771 times and rural areas with 150 million were brought under rationing; the number reached 878 cities and 159.5

137 Indian Information, March 15, 1944.
141 Tan Tai Yong, The Garrison State, pp. 294-95.
million population in India.\footnote{Henry Knight, \textit{Food Administration in India 1939-47}, pp. 189-90.} Thus, the food scarcity created during the War continued till the departure of the British in 1947.

In September 1943, grain requisitioning was introduced. It turned unpopular. At the command of the Central authorities, the Punjab Government ordered its district officials to induce the release of all surplus stocks of foodgrains lying in the villages or \textit{mandis}.\footnote{Tan Tai Yong, \textit{The Garrison State}, p. 292.} The Punjab Government questioned the policy of requisitioning from small landholders. Furthermore, it was considered difficult to lay down any satisfactory dividing line between small and big landowners. The issue of food requisitioning created immediate tension between the Central Government and the Punjab Government and Unionists.\footnote{Ian Talbot, \textit{Punjab under the Raj (1849-1947)}, pp. 146-47.} The Government preferred requisitioning in the Punjab and in certain other Provinces, be confined to stocks held by traders and middlemen unless there is a serious danger of unrest.\footnote{Glancy to Linlithgow, Lahore, dated 30,1943 : Lionel Carter (ed.) \textit{Punjab Politics (1940-43) : Strains of War}, 408.} The ministers thought that such a policy would help ‘to induce the growers to cooperate’. The Punjab Ministry also opposed the imposition of maximum limit confined to the Punjab.\footnote{Ibid.} In early November 1943, the Punjab Legislative Assembly adopted without division an unofficial resolution to the effect that any attempt to control the price of wheat ‘would result in very keen resentment and discontentment among agricultural classes’.\footnote{Ibid.} Sir Chhotu Ram, Revenue Minister openly called for cultivators to hoard their wheat until they could secure higher price for their products.\footnote{Ian Talbot, \textit{Punjab and the Raj (1849-1947)}, p. 147.} The Viceroy condemned such ‘ruthless political opportunism’ with the general food position in India. He asked the Government of Punjab, Sir B.J. Glancy ‘to admonish him (Chhotu Ram) very severely’. However, the Governor knowing the predicament of the
Unionists ‘attempted to defend Chhotu Ram’. The Viceroy remained unmoved.\textsuperscript{150} Lord Linlithgow feared ‘an agrarian revolution’ in the Punjab and ‘reaction the Punjab soldiers serving oversees knowing that their houses were being invaded and their families insulted under the pretext of requisitioning and their legitimate claims out of food profits being taken from there’. \textsuperscript{151} Lord Linlithgow knew that his would have ‘an unsetting effect on the military districts’.\textsuperscript{152} Social groups, such as the rich farmers of the Punjab, expected to make large profits from rising grain prices. However, they were prevented from doing so by the colonial state’s procurement and price-control policies. The Punjab peasants ‘complained bitterly’ about the state’s heavy-handed interventions which they deemed to be ‘deterimental to their own interests’.\textsuperscript{153} Moreover, the rural poor, workers and the fixed income groups in urban areas suffered seriously; those who did not receive fixed wages, they registered high profits.\textsuperscript{154} He resorted to this measure under the pressure from the Cabinet to ensure that grain was adequately supplied to the famine-stricken areas of Bengal. He further blamed that the Punjab Ministers are engaged in blackmailing thus starving peasants of Bengal so as to make inordinate profits at a time when they have already made very substantial profits indeed. He even wrote to B.J. Glancy in September 1943, ‘the procurement of the necessary surplus wheat from the Punjab is more important than any political considerations, any interest of the Ministers and even continuance of Provincial Autonomy in the Punjab’. That signed the end of putting the Punjabi Zamindar’s loyalty above other all other political consideration. Thus, the British

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\item\textsuperscript{151} Linlithgow to Amery, 21 September 1943: Nicholas Mansergh, (eds.), \textit{Transfer of Power}, Vol. XI, 301.
\item\textsuperscript{152} Tan Tai Yong, \textit{The Garrison State}, p. 293.
\item\textsuperscript{153} Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, \textit{Modern South Asia}, p. 130.
\item\textsuperscript{154} Ian Talbot, \textit{Punjab and the Raj (1849-1947)}, pp. 148, 176.
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destroyed the political system they so carefully created.\(^{155}\) The Unionist were successful ‘to stave off price controls’.\(^{156}\)

Economic conditions within the Punjab continued to deteriorate during the final years of the War. In October 1944, Sardar Baldev Singh led the deputation to discuss the food situation with the Central Food Department. However, the Food Department continued ban on the free movement of grain between the Punjab and UP. By 1944, even countryside suffered economic dislocation as badly as the towns from shortages of consumer goods and inflation. The Lahore Retail Price Index rose from a base of 100 in August 1939 to 206 in 1942 and 376 in August 1945.\(^{157}\) Until 1944, the high prices which the farmers gained for their produce largely outweighed the increased prices and shortages of consumer goods. During the Autumn 1944, a substantial and sustained fall in agricultural prices set in.\(^{158}\) In February 1945, in the Fifth All India Food Conference, the Punjab representative argued that ‘the Punjab Government was not convinced that rationing is at all necessary in urban areas of a surplus province like Punjab.’\(^{159}\) Nevertheless, the Premier, Khizr Hayat Khan Tiwana was unable ‘to prevent the reintroduction of price control.’\(^{160}\) In December 1944, supplements on marriage and death were specified. Foodgrains from 32 lbs to 100 lbs for wheat for marriage and from 5 lbs to 50 lbs on death. In the case of sugar from 3.2 lbs to 34 lbs for marriage and from 3.2 lbs to 16 lbs on death.\(^{161}\) The supplementary quantities were often reduced arbitrarily. The confectioners were often unable to prepare sweets for the festive occasions due to controlled supply to sugar. The Confectioners Association of Kasauli decided to close

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\(^{158}\) Ibid, p.152-53.

\(^{159}\) Henry Knight, *Food Administration in India (1939-47)*, p. 191.


their business due to ‘drastically reduced’ quota of sugar. The Central Food Advisory Council had met in April 1945 at New Delhi. It passed a resolution that no supplementary ration be given for religious, social or marriage purposes during the War. Grain prices staged a recovery in the early months of 1945. However, the Zamindar’s became increasingly reluctant to market their produce. Political insecurity, unfavourable prospect for the rabi crop and enticement of the black market led to such a decision. Many farmers regarded the high black market prices as a legitimate compensation for their other economic difficulties. Rationing continued after the War. On 18 August 1945, Mr. F.B. Wace, Civil Supplies Secretary, the Punjab, announced that ‘as long as acute shortage of supplies existed, control would continue’. He expected rationing for another two years. He further elaborated that ‘while army demands would decrease as a result of the cessation of hostilities, civilian demands would increase with return home of soldiers’. The All India Radio aired a weekly broadcast on every Monday morning. In the first speech R.H. Hutchings, Secretary, GOI, Deptt. of Food, remarked ‘the War forced rationing on us, and the result has been something in the nature of an economic and social revolution. The individuals have had to accept rationing without regard to class, wealth and privilege. The Foodgrains movement with order of 1944, which prohibited the export of foodgrains from the Punjab was brought into force with effect from September 2, 1945. The Punjab Government fixed the statutory maximum price for wheat, atta, rice, maize, bajra and jowar and made their sale in wholesale quantities at prices higher than statutory maximum, a punishable offence. Food prices in wartime Britain rose about 18 per cent; in India about 300 per cent for rationed foods. W.H. Kirty, Rationing Advisory to the GOI, Deptt. of Food argued that through rationing ‘we

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162 The Tribune, 1.10.1945.


165 Food Deptt/Rationing, File No. RP-1000/49, 1945, GOI, NAI, p.29.


have curtailed wastage’. By December 1945, wheat, maize and grain had virtually disappeared from the open market. Many towns including in the canal colonies began to experience a wheat famine. The Unionist Ministry resorted to use force to requisition grain from the villages. Disturbances broke out in Ludhiana, Hoshiarpur and Ferozepur in the middle of the elections of 1946. During 1945-46, 4,15,886 tons of wheat, 96,813 tons of rice and 18,055 tons of millets were exported from the Punjab.

Cakes etc. and of milk, cream and sugar making sweetments, chocolates and ice-cream etc. should be strictly followed. The Punjab Government passed an order which banned the consumption to bread at all the food shops. The notification stated:

“These restrictions would be applicable to all caterers and persons in charge of hotels, restaurants and eating houses, tandoors, clubs, boarding houses, tandoors, clubs, boarding houses, canteens, railways, refreshment rooms or restraint, bars, cafes and all other similar establishments and places of refreshment open to public. Only three dishes comprising of one substantial dish on subsidiary and one sweet or savoury dish exclusive of the soup dish, can be served to secured at any one meal irrespective of whether these dishes are served successively or together. A substantial dish may be replaced by a subsidiary dish. Meat, cooked fish, poultry or game fish carry or rice and meat ‘pillaus would be taken be constitute main ingredients of a substantial dish, whereas cooked eggs or cereals or vegetables, dish or rich with vegetables or egg curry or ‘dal’ or both would be ingredients of a subsidiary dish. No bread pastry, rolls, rusks and biscuits can be served with lea or with lunch or dinner except the main ingredients of a subsidiary or a sweet or savory dish. Bread according to these notifications would mean and include, loaf, bread, ‘chapatis’, ‘poories’, ‘paranthas’, ‘Phulkas’, and ‘nans’. The people complained that they were not accustomed to eat only curries like Western nations. The notifications warned to punishments. The colonial state targeted the ‘luxury items’. The Extraordinary Punjab Governor Gazette issued on 12 March 1946 ordered that no person shall manufacture for

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172 The Tribune, 9.3.1946.
173 The Tribune, 23.3.1946.
sale, or sell, takes and pastry in which the flour of any cereal or other food grain is an ingredient.\textsuperscript{174}

Opposition to rationing manifested in different forms. A memorandum was passed and sent to the Deptt. of Food signed by 6000 residents of Karnal against the rationing. It argued: “The Karnal is mainly an agricultural district... the population of Karnal consists mostly of agriculturalists, Zamindar, or tenants and others dependent on agriculture viz. the field labourers and other coolies working with agriculturists... that the time of harvesting the crop labourers here have usually preferred, from time immemorial, to be paid in kind and to store their requirements in food grains for the full season till next harvest comes in. They do not want to take risks and chances and always provide themselves beforehand against all eventualities in their near future. They are not prepared to part with this, their little stock at all costs which they earn to toiling in the fields... it is proposed to introduce wheat rationing in two towns only i.e. Karnal and Panipat and not in the villages. With the introduction of wheat rationing in the towns, all labourers will result a huge loss to agricultural activities as well as industries. It is considerable that they would let their own find stock for the year to be take or sealed by the Rationing authorities and then latter on themselves go a begging for bad and mixed wheat from month to month at a much higher rate.”\textsuperscript{175}

The Government spokesman alleged that ‘a curious agitation was engineered by hoarders and black-marketers. In this ‘mischievous propaganda’ every effort was made to organise hartals and processions in which ignorant people are made to shout anti-rationing slogans. It was argued that the border towns in the Eastern Punjab figure prominently in a shame to stop smuggling of food grains into the U.P.\textsuperscript{176} The press voiced the feelings of the people of Karnal:

“This is scarcely surprising in view of the fact that Karnal is situated in a surplus area; it is impossible to allay with words, real or imaginary fears of

\textsuperscript{174} The Tribune, 9.3.1946.

\textsuperscript{175} Food Deptt/Rationing/ Fill RT-1032-7, GOI, NAI.

\textsuperscript{176} The Hindustan Times, 25.9.1946.
food shortages in a district from which large exports of foodgrains are a daily and a public occurrence. Many, too many have found rationing a curse instead of a blessing”177

The memorandum further stated that “the people of Karnal are already fed up with rationing of sugar, kerosene oil and cloth. There is end of corruption in Government departments dealing with these things. People can live without sugar, kerosene oil or cloth, but what is their staple food and they cannot do without it.”178 However, the Punjab Government finally introduced rationing in Karnal. Ration and other government control measures placed increasing, power in the hands of the districts officials, notably the tehsildars and naib-tehsildars.179 The growing wartime discontent favoured the Muslim League. The Punjab Peasant began resenting state procurement and price control policies when they considered profits from the rising grain prices legitimate.180 During 1945-46, 4,15,885 tons of wheat 96,813 tons of rice and 18,055 tons of millets were exported from the Punjab.181 The actual exports of foodgrains from the Punjab from 1st March 1945 to the beginning of February 1946 stood about 6,80,000 tons: wheat and products 4,72,000 tons; Rice 1,00,000 tons; Grain 56,000 tons; Barley 20,000 tons; Millets 23,000 tons and maize 9,000 tons.182

Many incidents of popular protest took place against rationing in the Punjab. On 21st February, new reached that in Kaisarganj mandi, 400 bags of wheat were lying waiting to be exported from the city. Immediately, a procession of 3000 workers and women reached the spot. They demanded the distribution to the grain. The officials refused and instead called in lathi police. The people were determined to secure the grain. Soon the Congress and Communist leaders reached the spot, met the Deputy

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177 The Civil and Military Gazette, 23.9.1946.
178 Food Deptt/Rationing/File RT-1032 RT-1032-7, GOI, NAI.
180 Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal, Modern South Asia Political Economy, OUP, Delhi, 1999, pp. 159-60.
182 The Civil and Military Gazette, 17.2.1946.
Commissioner and made him distribute ten bags of grain there and then. Similarly, in Hoshiarpur, on the February 27th, ‘a stirring procession of 1500 hungary people led by the Communist party marched around the city and demonstrated in front of the grain depots, all of which had been ‘reserved’ for government servants by a fantastic edict passed a few days earlier’. The procession marched to a hoarder’s shop where 500 bags of wheat were surrounded by a crowd of women. With the Police and the Additional District Magistrate looking on not daring to stop them, the crowd peacefully sold a large portion of wheat at controlled rates. The police threatened to lathi charge but dared not. Finally, the magistrate arrested the leaders Thakur Waryam Singh and Attah Rakha Chaman. During 1945-46, rationing of wheat, atta, sugar was in force in four cities such as Lahore, Amritsar, Rawalpindi and Simla. The basic ration was fixed at 8 Chhattaks per adult per day and a supplementary ration of 4 Chhattaks per day was allowed to those engaged in heavy manual work, with effect from February 12, 1946. However, a cut of 2 Chhattaks per adult per day was made in the basic ration with a view to avoiding the wastage of foodgrains and sparing every grain for the deficit areas. Rationing of rice was enforced in Lahore, Amritsar and Rawalpindi from March 23, 1946. The people strongly protested against this compulsory inclusion of rice in the basic ration. The Government allowed 66 per cent of the ration to be drawn in the form of wheat with effect from April 14, 1946. Rationing rapidly became a communal issue. The Muslims of Lahore and the other large towns claimed that the predominantly Hindu and Sikh Civil Supply Officers openly discriminated against them in the distribution of rationed goods. In the Ambala Division, villages complained that they received smaller quotas than the urban population. Supplies of kerosene did not find way to the villages. Peasants of Rohtak demanded replacement of Civil Supply Officer. The supplementary rations for sugar were allowed to Hindus, Muslims and Hindus at their religion festivals.

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such as Navratas, Ramzan etc.\textsuperscript{187} The food crisis drove a wedge into the system of patronage that the British had built in the Punjab.\textsuperscript{188} In fact, the prices rose rapidly during the early 1940s and continued at very heavy levels into 1947.\textsuperscript{189} In the Punjab, the year 1945-46, proved to be even more expensive to live in than the previous War years. The price of all the commodities of daily use ‘appreciably advanced’. The rice was greatest the in the luxury goods. An acute scarcity was being felt in respect of many commodities and prices had registered an all round rise.\textsuperscript{190} The colonial state starved the Indian lower classes.\textsuperscript{191}

Improvement in irrigation and opening of the canal colonies ushered in Punjab an era of abnormal prosperity and rise in the price of land. Price of Land rose in rupees per \textit{acre} from 30 in 1880-81 to 59 in 1895-96, 71 in 1901-02, 129 in 1910-11, 215 in 1919-20, 406 in 1929-30 and 478 in 1933-34. By 1939, out of the total cultivated area of about 30 million \textit{acres} in Punjab, nearly 10 million \textit{acres} and 5 million \textit{acres} were being irrigated by canals and wells respectively.\textsuperscript{192} The rise in cost attracted the small peasants to sell their lands or borrow amongst them, since the money-lenders who once held land as useless, were now eager to lend against its fruits due to the creation of property in soil and the freedom with which that property could be alienated.\textsuperscript{193} The complicated legal system of the British forced them to engage lawyers on heavy fees;\textsuperscript{194} Family feuds,

\textsuperscript{188}Tan Tai Yong, \textit{The Garrison State}, p. 295.
\textsuperscript{189}Dharma Kumar (ed.), \textit{The Cambridge Economic History of India (1757-1970)}, Vol. II, p. 879
\textsuperscript{193}B.B. Misra, \textit{The Indian Middle Classes}, 15; See also Barrier, N.G., The Formation and Enactment of the Punjab Alienation of Land Bill (1900); \textit{The Indian Economic and Social History Review}, Vol. II, No. 2 (April, 1965, Delhi), p. 160.
complex revenue and tenancy laws, and altercations over canal waters resulted into excessive litigation;\textsuperscript{195} People indulged in extravagance on occasions of marriages and other rituals/ceremonies while in years of prosperity. All spent extravagantly on drinking, gambling, bribery, etc. During the scarcity years lowering of standard was not possible in order to keep up a false prestige. It had to increase indebtedness. Debts were incurred mostly for unproductive purposes. At the most less than 5 per cent of the debt was incurred on improvement of lands;\textsuperscript{196} Due to uncertainty of animal life, and high cattle morality, cultivator was compelled to keep reserves of cattle, which he failed to feed properly resulting into the increase of his debts;\textsuperscript{197} A sudden increase in Punjab population that rose by 24.3 per cent during 1885 and 1891, retrieved the holdings still smaller making uneconomical; this trend continued afterwards too except in 1911;\textsuperscript{198} and quite a potent factor constituted the unscrupulous methods of the money-lenders like the falsifications of accounts, the high rate of interest that doubled money.\textsuperscript{199}

The rate of interest was no less in twenties and early thirties of the twentieth century. It was as high as 20, 30 or 40 per cent and some time even 75 per cent whereby Rs. 18/- could swell to Rs. 6.71 lac in 78 years.\textsuperscript{200} On litigation alone, three to four crores rupees were being spent annually.\textsuperscript{201} About 40 per cent of the adult population attended courts.\textsuperscript{202} As the Government was drawing the large number of army recruits from among

\textsuperscript{195} S.S. Thorburn, 47; Report on Peasant Indebtedness. See also Report of the Indian Famine Commission, 1901, p. 110.


\textsuperscript{197} Abridged Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture. 1928, para 236. Also see publication. No. 52, 26 of the Board of Enquiry.

\textsuperscript{198} This conclusion has been derived from the figures given in the Census Reports of the Punjab for 1881, 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931 and 1941.

\textsuperscript{199} Accepted rate of interest was described as ‘dam deorhe Jins dooni’ per year. Vide. S.S. Thorburn, Report on Peasant Indebtedness and Land Alienations to Money-Lenders, ; See also H. Calvert, Wealth and Welfare of the Punjab, p. 372.


\textsuperscript{202} H. Calvert, Wealth and Welfare of the Punjab, p. 372.
the Punjab peasantry. If land owners were reduced to the condition of tenants or laborers they would constitute political danger of firm dimension. Thus, the ratio in Punjab of the money-lenders to its total population during this period stood over three times of the ratio for the rest of India. Debt in the Punjab swelled to Rs. 90 crores; Rs. 135 crores and Rs. 200 crores in 1921, 1929 and 1934 respectively. Interest on it, at the modest rate of 18.75 per cent per annum stood at rupees thirty crores being nearly ten times the provincial land revenue and almost equal to the total annual sale price of the agricultural produce. Per capita debt in 1934, in Punjab being ninety rupees was the highest in British India. The open fact was that the capital invested in the rural money-lending business in Punjab was higher than the investment in any trade or industry. Cumulative consequence of these evils was that the peasants continued to fall deeper in debt. Their perpetually increasing amount shackled the agriculture. The non-agriculturists money-lenders did not invest any capital to improve the land. They contended themselves with obtaining the best rent they could. The enhanced

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210 *Annual Reports on the Working of the Punjab Alienation of Land Act for the years 1902-03*, 12; See also 1906-07, 1-2; 1919-20, 19; See also *Punjab Provincial Banking Enquiry Report*, *op.cit.*, Vol. 1, 137-38; See also *The Tribune*, Lahore, 12/1/1939, p. 3.


agricultural wealth due to rising prices of foodgrains and war remittances was used to redeem mortgaged land. The total cultivated area which was redeemed in 1940 was 203,669 which went up to 482,641 in 1942.\textsuperscript{213} Moreover, the consumer goods became costlier. The peasant resorted to redeeming their mortgaged lands.\textsuperscript{214}

The Unionist, rubbing out this snag was notable achievement that in 1938, they got Enactment of the Punjab Alienation of Land Amendment Act (Act X of 1938) commonly known as the \textit{Benami} Act. It provided that the \textit{Benami} transactions tending to evade the provisions of this Act were to be declared as null and void.\textsuperscript{215} Through another step, Act of 1938, the Punjab Government checked the alienation of land by agriculturist to another agriculturist. Deputy Commissioner, after making inquiry, could declare such transactions as null and void. He, thereafter, could restore the possession of such lands to the alienators. By 1940, the Act had gone a big way in releasing agriculturists land worth Rs. 15-16 crore. The money-lenders had usurped that land through fraudulent transactions.\textsuperscript{216} However, after sometime the High Court and the Federal Court struck it down as being against Section 298 of the Government of India Act 1935. It was to be operative when the beneficiary was a non-agriculturist. At this Punjab Government got legislated another measure i.e. Alienation of Land (Amendment) Act, 1943, which was immune to the above lacuna.\textsuperscript{217} The urban moneylenders misused the Restitution of Mortgaged lands Act by transferring their land of friends or relatives who were on active military service.\textsuperscript{218} Moreover, a breakdown in the relationship between the landlords and their village labourers developed. The war remittances gave new economic independence to labourers.\textsuperscript{219} Furthermore, the financial stringency forced the unionists to abandon

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\bibitem{213} Gulshan Rai, \textit{Agricultural Statistics of the Punjab 1940-43}, PBEI, Lahore 1945, Table 54, 21.


\bibitem{215} \textit{Department of Finance}, Year 1938. File No. 22(80), FD (1948); See also \textit{Punjab Government Gazette} (Extraordinary), 17/9/1938, 119; 16/6/1938, p. 80.

\bibitem{216} \textit{P.L.A.D.}, Vol. XII, 5/3/1940, 134; See also Vol. XV 31/1/1941, p. 603.

\bibitem{217} \textit{Ibid.}, Vol. XXII, 8/11/1943, 196, p. 201-04.

\bibitem{218} \textit{Eastern Times}, 11.2.1944.


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many of their ambitious programmes of rural uplift. The competition of That Canal Colony project got delayed. They could not reduce the water rates in the canal colonies and to introduce a sliding scale of land revenue charges which the smaller farmers were pressing hard.\textsuperscript{220}

Hence, it is to be noticed that the development made in three spheres i.e. agriculture, industry and irrigation was greatly required due to the changed scenario of the province of Punjab. This changed scenario was the direct result of the impact of the World War II and also the change that had occurred due to the World War II which had commenced in 1939 and ended in 1945. The War had completely changed the thinking of the people of this province because each and every family of Punjab had contributed in this War both in men and material. Due to the impact of the War, almost all the sections of the society living in both rural and urban areas realized that if they did not bring revolutionary changes in the field of agriculture, industry and irrigation, they would not be able to stand on their legs in the changed scenario of the country and on the whole, of globe.