CHAPTER IV

IMPACT OF WAR ON ECONOMY

With a view to enlist the support of public for the War efforts in the Presidency, the Government of Madras undertook propaganda measures on a large scale. As a first step, the Government set up War committees both at the District and the provincial levels.\(^1\) The purpose of these committees was to give full and accurate information to the public as to the causes of War, its progress and its objects; to assist in such matters as recruitment and the care of soldiers’ families and to stimulate and encourage the Indian Defence Savings’ Scheme. Further in order to sensitize the people of Madras City about all the activities with regard to War effort, it established a War Information Office at Mount Road, Madras.\(^2\) Messrs Simpson & Co., Madras presented motor vans equipped with film projectors, wireless sets, microphones and speakers for relaying speeches made from the van for publicity work.\(^3\) In order to co-ordinate the War publicity activities of all kinds throughout the Province, the Governor inaugurated the Madras Provincial War Committee at Madras and named it ‘Victory House’.\(^4\) A big map of Germany and four other maps were displayed there to tell the public, the daily progress of the War.\(^5\) The Provincial War Committee brought out its own journal the *Madras War Review* in English and its counterpart *YuddhaSanchika* in Tamil.\(^6\)

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2. G.O.No.77, Public (War)Department, 15 Jan. 1941.
For effective propaganda in the City of Madras, the Madras District War Committee constituted a propaganda sub-committee in July 1940. The sub-committee formed itself into two groups, one to arrange public meetings in educational institutions and public halls and the other to deal with other methods of propaganda like distribution of War series pamphlets in schools and colleges, corporation reading rooms, labour unions and Mercantile Associations. With a view to motivate the students of schools and colleges, the Government thought of making the War, a subject of study and even suggested to give grants-in-aid to educational institutions on the basis of their efficiency in handling the subject of the Second World War.

Apart from all these measures, the Government fully utilized the mass media for publicity work. The All-India Radio arranged for a number of talks on War subjects in English, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada. The Film Advisory Board, Bombay helped the cinemas in Madras city to screen War shots like *War Time Factory, Children Overseas, Tools for the Job, Seaman of India* and *Madras Must Not Burn*. The ballad singers and entertainment troupes carried on propaganda through music. The Government also organised exhibitions to highlight the various aspects of War. The Air Raid Precautions (A.R.P.) and the women’s A.R.P. jointly organised the War services exhibition in Madras city on 27 August 1943. A variety of equipments used both by the Allies and enemy including aircraft, balloons, tanks and guns of every description, naval armaments and models of warships were displayed in the exhibition.

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Economic Measures

Due to the impact of War, people experienced certain difficulties such as scarcity of foodstuffs, rise in prices of essential commodities and inflation. In order to tackle such economic problems the Government introduced rationing, grow more food campaign, etc. and helped to relieve the distress of the people.

The outbreak of War in 1939 did not seriously affect the import of foodgrains in Madras and there was no serious shortage of food in the first two years. The beginning of the War in December 1941 with Japan produced an abrupt change in this position. Early in 1942 the rice areas of Burma and Siam were overrun by the Japanese and imports from these areas stopped completely. The problem was further aggravated when the adjacent areas of Madras such as Ceylon, Travancore, Cochin and Bombay began to purchase rice from Madras. Consequently Madras, which had been a rice importing province till then became a rice exporting area. The reason for the shortage of food was the tendency of the businessmen to hoard foodstuffs in order to make quick money. The scarcity of food led to sharp rise in prices.

Several factors contributed to the rise in prices; the partial failure of the rice crops in different parts of India, the shortage of shipping for imports from Burma, the broadening of export demand for raw products like cotton and groundnut and the irregular behaviour of the monsoon in July 1941. The entry of Japan into the War in December 1941 shot up the prices. Since then the prices of paddy and rice showed a steady upward trend till the middle of 1943. The year also witnessed the maximum price increase, the

price index rising from 135 in 1941-42 to 189 in 1943.\textsuperscript{17} The existing inflation contributed to shortage of small coins. This made a few business establishments such as hotels and restaurants to give postage stamps instead of coin change.\textsuperscript{18}

With a view to solve the food crisis the Government took measures to strengthen its control over export of food grains and spiralling of prices. To ensure fair distribution of essential commodities, it introduced rationing for the first time in Madras. As a first step, the Government prohibited export of food stuffs to other areas. On 13 June 1942 it issued a notification prohibiting the export of rice outside the province except on governmental permission.\textsuperscript{19} To control the increase in prices, the Government gave effect to the foodgrains control order of the Government of India.\textsuperscript{20} According to its provisions, the obtaining of licence was made compulsory for the wholesale merchants of paddy, rice and wheat and suspended the licence of those who indulged in black marketing or hoarding. Gradually it extended control to other commodities like textiles, iron, steel and other consumer goods.\textsuperscript{21} Besides, the Government set up a Prices Advisory Committee for Madras city with the Collector of Madras as the Chairman, the Thashildar of Madras as the Secretary and the Mayor of Madras, the Statistical Officer and two representatives of wholesale merchants as members.\textsuperscript{22} This Committee fixed the fair price to be charged in the markets in the light of local conditions and published the lists of such prices to serve as a guide to the public.

Apart from the fixation of prices, food control included the introduction of rationing. Madras city stood first in South India in the

\textsuperscript{18} F.N.R., 27 Dec. 1942.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{A Survey of Procurement and Rationing of Food in the Madras State, 1942-49}, p.11.
\textsuperscript{20} ibid.
\textsuperscript{21} Madras in 1942, p.51.
\textsuperscript{22} G.O.Ms.No.468, Development Department, 28 Nov. 1942.
implementation of rationing.\textsuperscript{23} The Government issued ration cards and passed regulations to check malpractices. Two kinds of ration cards were issued; a daily card on which ration could be drawn daily to suit the convenience of poor people and a weekly card on which ration could be drawn once or twice a week.\textsuperscript{24} In order to check malpractices, the Government made it necessary for the holders of ration cards to get themselves registered and rewarded those who supplied information relating to offences under the Madras Rationing Order.\textsuperscript{25}

With a view to make rationing more effective the Government introduced statutory rationing in September 1943, which made any violation of the rationing rules a penal offence.\textsuperscript{26} At the same time it guaranteed a ration of one pound of rice per head per day to each adult of above twelve years of age and two-thirds pound per day per child of two to twelve years of age.\textsuperscript{27} In 1944 it introduced rationing of wheat also in all districts including Madras city.\textsuperscript{28} In order to reduce the consumption of rice, the Government encouraged the use of wheat, maize and Barley and reduced the price of these unfamiliar food grains.\textsuperscript{29} It issued a statutory order prohibiting persons owning hotel, restaurant or eating house in the city of Madras from feeding more than thirty persons at any party in which rice was served as one of the main courses.\textsuperscript{30}

For the supply of essential foodstuffs and milk to the people, the Government sought the help of institutions like the Triplicane Urban Cooperative Society (T.U.C.S.) and the Madras Co-operative Milk Supply Ltd.
The T.U.C.S. helped the Government in the supply of essential foodstuffs to the people and the M.C.M.S.U. with the work of production and distribution of milk to the public in the city in times of emergency. The M.C.M.S.U. had its cattle feed depots at Ayanavaram, Basin Bridge, Choolai, Triplicane and Kosapet. These two institutions rendered remarkable service during the War period.

The War generated a great demand for items like wood, kerosene and petrol. To meet the increasing demand for wood, the people cut down casuarina trees and jungle wood plantations and sold them for very high prices. This wholesale exploitation affected adversely the supply of fire-wood to Madras city particularly in 1943. The poor people found it impossible to obtain fuel for their domestic requirements. The Government took steps to bring in more supplies of firewood from the neighbouring districts of Chingleput, South Arcot and Nellore. When the firewood situation became acute, it introduced statutory rationing of firewood by which the families got firewood according to the income and the quantity of rice given to them. With regard to the supply of kerosene, the Madras Kerosene Control Order introduced a new system of kerosene supply in the city. Accordingly tickets were issued to the heads of families and each head was entitled to half a bottle of kerosene irrespective of the size of the family. It also prohibited wholesale business in kerosene which led to the withholding of stocks and profiteering by dealers. The War conditions also necessitated the introduction of rationing in petrol and electricity. The Government encouraged the use of producer gas on motor vehicles and reduced the non-essential services of buses. The introduction of rationing

33. AnandaVikatan, 6 Feb. 1944, p.17.
34. G.O.Ms.No.470, Development Department, 29 Nov. 1943.
35. G.O.Ms.No.471, Development Department, 29 Nov. 1943.
in electricity was due to the generation of electric power in Madras city by the use of diesel, oil and coal. The rationing order provided for the payment of a penalty for every unit consumed in excess of the limit permitted. In the meantime the administration did not reduce the use of electricity by industrial concerns, for it would result in unemployment of labour and restrict output for War purposes.

**Public Health**

The scarcity of foodstuffs and other necessities of life affected the health of the people. The Corporation Council came to their rescue. The economic condition of the middle and lower income groups deteriorated considerably due to the sharp rise in prices of essential commodities and consequently people fell easy victims to diseases. Further the scarcity of accommodation facilities led to overcrowding in the city and that also seriously affected their health. In order to help the weaker sections the Corporation started a ‘Corporation Poor Fund’ and established a special Home for the destitutes and the infirm. It was feared that the acute shortage of milk would increase the mortality rate especially among children and expectant and nursing mothers. Hence the Government approved a scheme for the free supply of 1,500 measures of milk at its cost to poor children and expectant and nursing mothers. The Corporation bore the cost of distribution. In addition to this the Government opened a nutrition laboratory which undertook survey of diets in the city and examined the children for deficiency prone diseases. The Poonamalle Health Unit served as a demonstration centre and as a training ground for public health workers. The King Institute, Guindy acted as the main bacteriological laboratory and centre for the manufacture of bacterial vaccines and sera.

Grow More Food Campaign

The Government of Madras launched the ‘Grow more food campaign’ in 1943 as recommended by the Food Grains Policy Committee to solve the food crisis.41 Under this scheme, the administration adopted several measures to increase production. It advised the farmers to change over to food crops from cash crops, to repair old irrigation works and build new ones, to use only the best seed, to cultivate every foot of waste soil and to dispose of surplus cattle.42 It also distributed seeds free of cost to poor and deserving ryots who strove hard to bring uncultivated lands under cultivation of food crops.43 It advised the public to grow vegetables themselves in their gardens so that they could obtain the cheapest and at the same time the best vegetables.44 The Government threw open all unoccupied, assessed and unassessed lands wherever possible and disafforested lands for temporary cultivation of food crops.45 The campaign became very popular and it showed an increase of area under food crops and a reduction in the area under non-food crops.

The Government of Madras adopted a number of measures for the defence of Madras city and to overcome the shortage of food and other essential commodities caused by the War. Yet the people of Madras city could not extend their whole-hearted support to the Government because of the political agitation launched by the Congress.

The Second World War created far greater demands in industrial sector which stimulated the process of speedy industrialization. Along with the attempt at industrialization, the problems of industrial labour came to the forefront leading to the progress of trade union movement. Taking advantage of the anti-Congress attitude of the administration, the

42. Pudukottai State War Information Bureau Bulletin, 1943, p.95.
45. Madras in 1942, p.66.
Communist Party involved actively in the problems of workers and imparted an aggressive attitude in them.

**Decline of Trade and Commerce**

As an immediate effect of the War the volume of trade declined. On account of the preoccupation of the exporting countries with the War effort, the volume of imports too was reduced to the minimum. The quantum - of exports declined due to the loss of the continental markets and an acute shortage of shipping space. The loss of Burma and the Far Eastern markets and the imposition of export restrictions in India also accounted for this trend.\(^{46}\)

The Port of Madras felt the repercussions of the War. The value of trade which passed through the Port of Madras during the year 1939 was 32.5 crores.\(^{47}\) On account of the War, imports fell by 34.7 percent and exports by 22.5 percent in 1940.\(^{48}\) The imports of grain, chemicals, dyeing and tanning substances fell, while the export of rice, fruits and vegetables increased slightly. The total quantity of goods handled at the Port of Madras dropped by nearly 50 percent.\(^{49}\) However, the passenger traffic increased in 1942 due to the large number of evacuees from Ceylon, Singapore and Federated Malay states due to their occupation by the Japanese forces.\(^{50}\) The situation reversed in 1945 with the cessation of hostilities when the value of the trade of Madras Port went up to 52.65 crores.\(^{51}\)

**Industrial Sector**

During the course of the War, the Government became more conscious of the necessity of industrial expansion in India. The entry of Japan in the War in 1942 cut off the supplies of practically all industrial

\(^{47}\) Madras Administration Report, 1939-1940, p.128.  
\(^{48}\) Madras in 1940, p.27.  
\(^{49}\) Madras in 1941, p.29.  
\(^{50}\) Madras in 1942, p.29.  
goods from western countries and India became a supply base for the Middle East and the Far East.\textsuperscript{52} The War gave a fillip to the starting of new industries in the Madras Province. Further, a number of industrial undertakings set up before the War restabilished their financial position.\textsuperscript{53} The textile mills in Madras made very huge profits during War years. As in the First World War, the demand for the textiles increased. The huge demand and limited supply boosted up the prices. Hence the Government in 1943, imposed controls to check this trend.\textsuperscript{54}

In order to stimulate the process of industrialization, the Government gave assurance to entrepreneurs of granting protection after the War if they started new industries to meet War demands.\textsuperscript{55} The Ordinance Factory, at Avadi, the Motor Works of Messrs. Simpson & Co., the Baluchi Battalion at St. Thomas Mount, the Engineering College at Guindy and the Joint War Charities Depot were the places and institutions associated with the War work.\textsuperscript{56} In 1941 the Government passed the War Risks (Goods) Insurance Ordinance according to which goods awaiting transhipment at the Port of Madras were insured for a sum not less than their value against War risks.\textsuperscript{57} Owing to War, all the industries were put to high pressure in order to meet the government demands. The administration granted exemption to the authorities to make changes in the system of work at short notice without waiting for official sanction.\textsuperscript{58} Then in order to provide food facilities to the employees, the Government urged all firms in the City to start messes.\textsuperscript{59} Responding to this call, the office of \textit{The Hindu} started a mess in 1942.

Several of the workers got their food free of cost and many others at

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{52}RuddraDutt, \textit{Evolution of the Indian Economy}, Delhi, 1979, p.55.
\item \textsuperscript{53} \textit{Madras Administration Report, 1944-1945}, p.208.
\item \textsuperscript{54} Bhogendranath, N.C., \textit{Development of the Textile Industry in Madras upto 1950}, Madras,1957, p.75.
\item \textsuperscript{55} \textit{The Hindu}, 23 July 1941, p.5.
\item \textsuperscript{56} F.N.R., 23 June 1941.
\item \textsuperscript{57} G.O.No.778, Development Department, 23 Apr. 1941.
\item \textsuperscript{58} G.O.No.920, Development Department, 24 Apr. 1941.
\item \textsuperscript{59} G.O.No.1848, Development Department, 5 Sept. 1942.
\end{itemize}
concession rates ranging from One Rupee to eight rupees per head per month. In order to feed the poor people who could not afford to pay for the mess, the Government offered financial assistance to public spirited people who were willing to run messes for the poor.\(^6^0\) The Government granted incentives to the employees to make them work extra hours with a view to meet the increasing needs of the War.

**Transport**

The War resulted in shortage of vehicles and the entry of Japan endangered the coastal traffic. The Government requisitioned all the ships for War needs and diverted the Railways and motor lorries mostly to the transport of troops and War supplies. This led to inordinate delays in the transport of ordinary goods. To meet this situation the Government discouraged rail travel. Posters carrying the slogans ‘Travel only when you must’ and ‘Travel light’ appeared in different parts of the city.\(^6^1\) The Madras Provincial War supplies Advisory Committee made a reference to the transport difficulties in a special meeting held on 10 April 1941 and suggested that something should be done to solve this problem.\(^6^2\) The Mayor’s City Safety Committee considered this problem and suggested improvement of transport by canal which got the approval of the Government.\(^6^3\) As early as in 1935-36, the boatmen and boat owners, the Southern India Chamber of Commerce and the Andhra Chamber of Commerce made a series of representations to the Government to improve the Buckingham canal for river water way in Madras city. It connected all the coastal districts from Guntur to South Arcot.\(^6^4\) The Government took up the issue of the improvement of this canal and during 1940-44 it sanctioned a large sum of money for deepening it and in keeping the canal in proper

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\(^6^0\) *Victory*, May 1942, p.13.
\(^6^1\) Kaushal, G., *op.cit.*, p.450.
\(^6^2\) G.O.No.1131, Development Department, 23 June 1941.
\(^6^3\) G.O.No.468, Development Department, 28 Oct. 1942.
condition. This step helped to reduce the pressure on railways to some extent.

The citizens of Madras faced transport difficulty due to the reduction in the number of buses available for passenger traffic and also due to shortage of petrol and tyres. The tyres were used for the mechanised army and the Government neglected the civilian transport. The Hindu made a suggestion to organize jutka services to overcome the problem. It described the travails of the bus passengers:

Like Hitler, the citizen of Madras-misses the bus every time.
The Madras bus service gets worse every day. What is the cause and what the remedy. The cause seems to be the shortage of tyres. The Japs have the rubber and we have to walk. Madras is a city of distances and though walking is an excellent exercise, time is a limiting factor on pedestrian activity.....

Housing Problem

Housing problem formed another difficulty experienced by the people of the City. The people faced this problem even prior to the War due to a sharp increase in population. The position became worse during War time. The condition of uncertainty engendered by the War was not conducive to house construction which involved long-term investment of capital. Further, the cost of building sites had increased to three or four times the pre-War level and the minimum cost of a house site ranged from Rs.2000 to Rs.4000. Building materials like cement, iron, steel and timber were also not available for civilian use as they were in great demand for military purposes. The development of War industries resulted in a considerable number of residential quarters being utilised for factories or offices, thus reducing the number available for dwelling purposes. In order to meet the steadily growing accommodation difficulty in Madras, the Government issued the

Madras City Control of Accommodation Order according to which every house owner was required to inform the Controller of Accommodation within twenty four hours after his house became vacant.\textsuperscript{66} And the house owner should let his house only to such persons as the Controller specified. Moreover there was a tendency on the part of the house owners to charge excessive rents taking advantage of the situation. So the Government issued the Madras House Rent Control Order to check this trend.\textsuperscript{67}

**Labour Unrest**

The establishment of War industries generated employment opportunities for workers; yet the soaring prices, low wages and rising cost of living adversely affected the standard of living of labourers. Hence the War period was marked by labour unrest in Madras and under the Defence of India Rules the Government declared strikes illegal in many essential industries.\textsuperscript{68} The rise in prices reacted on the standard of living of labourers and the organized labour agitated for dearness allowance to meet the increased cost of living.\textsuperscript{69} Presided by V.V.Giri, the third annual conference of the Madras Press Labour Union was held on 1 September 1940.\textsuperscript{70} It passed resolutions demanding the grant of a dearness allowance to workers and condemning the use of Defence of India Rules against the labour. The Government yielded to the demand, but the dearness allowance -did not keep pace with the level of the cost of living.\textsuperscript{71} The following table shows the position of cost of living index from September 1939 to December 1945.\textsuperscript{72}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{66} Housing Problem in the Province of Madras, 1942, pp.2-3.
  \item \textsuperscript{67} Victory, Sept. 1942, p.19.
  \item \textsuperscript{68} The Hindu, 3 Oct. 1939, p.8.
  \item \textsuperscript{69} Madras in 1942, p. 13.
  \item \textsuperscript{70} F.N.R., 22 Sept. 1940.
  \item \textsuperscript{71} Chelladurai,P., Working Class Movement in Tamilnadu, 1918-1947, Virudhunagar, 2004,p.203.
  \item \textsuperscript{72} Extracts from Government orders, Development Department, 1939-1945. The items included in the index were divided into five major groups viz., food, fuel, and lighting, clothing, rent and miscellaneous.
\end{itemize}
In order to meet the increasing cost of living the labourers demanded increase in wages and organised strikes to achieve their demand. In March 1940 members of the Corporation Workers Union held a demonstration outside the Ripon Buildings demanding increased wages recommended by an adhoc committee appointed by the Corporation.\(^{73}\) In May 1940 the socialists organised a strike of beedi workers in Madras over the questions of wages when it was reduced from twelve annas per 100 beedies to nine and half annason the introduction of tobacco tax.\(^{74}\) The workers called off the strike when the management offered eleven annas per 100 beedies. In August 1940 tailors employed by the contractors of the Army Clothing Depot agitated for an increase in wages and settled the question through negotiation.\(^{75}\) In May 1941 the workers of Messrs. Simpson & Co., where important contracts for military vehicles were carried out, threatened to go on strike over the question of their pay.\(^{76}\) The workers of Buckingham and Carnatic Mills went on a strike over the question of bonus and the management closed the Mills.\(^{77}\)

In 1942 the demand of the labourers changed due to the situation created by the Japanese aggression. With the Japanese advance towards Madras, people started leaving the city. The labourers demanded an advance of wages to send their families away from Madras. The employees of Messrs.

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\(^{73}\) F.N.R., 4 Apr. 1940.  
\(^{74}\) Ibid., 23 June 1940.  
\(^{75}\) Ibid., 5 Sept. 1940.  
\(^{76}\) Ibid., 24 May 1941.  
\(^{77}\) Ibid., 21 Aug. 1942.
Gordon Woodraff & Co., Pallavaram, the Premier Metal Factory, Madras, the Binny’s Engineering Works, Madras and the scavengers of the Madras Corporation struck work because of non-payment of bonus and of an advance of wages to send their families to places of safety and security. The number of strikes went up in 1943 when there was sharp rise in prices of food stuffs. The workers were discontented. Apart from the problems of dearness allowance and low wages, the labourers experienced other difficulties also. The exemption granted to the mills with regard to the working hours and the shift system caused physical strain on the part of the workers. Excessive hours of work resulted in absenteeism. Workers in textile mills and engineering workshops demanded reduction of working hours; but the Government did not yield to their demand. Ultimately the discontent of the labourers found expression in trade union activity dominated by the communists.

**Growth of Communist Party**

The growth of Communist Party as a potential force formed one of the most important outcome of the Second World War in the industrial sector. This was due to diverse circumstances. It should be recalled that since 1934 a socialist faction worked within the Congress under radical leadership. Taking advantage of the local difficulties among the workers, they took efforts to consolidate their position.

The attitude of the Communists towards the Allies was determined by the stand taken by Russia in the War. They engaged themselves in anti-government activities by organising strikes in mills and factories. Mohan Kumaramangalam, P. Ramamoorthy, M.R. Venkataraman and Anandan Nambiar were the prominent leaders of the Party. In 1941 under the provisions of the Defence of India Rules, the Government imposed a ban

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on the Communist Party for its subversive activities. \(^81\) In 1942 the attitude of the Communists towards the Government underwent a change with the change in the trend of the War. When Germany declared War on Russia, they had become pro-British and extended their support to the War efforts of the Government. They issued circulars recognising the War as a ‘People’s War’ \(^82\) in which the Indian people must in their own interest make common cause with the united freedom loving nations and co-operate with the War efforts of the Government. \(^83\) The changed attitude of the Communists enabled the Government to remove the ban on the Communists in July 1942. At a meeting held in Madras City, S. Mohan Kumaramangalam exhorted the people to extend their wholehearted support to the Government against the aggressors. \(^84\)

From 1942 to 1945 the Communists acted against the interests of the Congress Party and competed with the Congress to gain control over the labour unions and the student organisations. In August 1942, when the Congress launched the Quit India Movement, the Government imposed a ban on the Party which gave the Communists a free hand to carry on their activities. \(^85\) They intensified their propaganda work among the students, the mill and factory workers as well as among the kisans. They goaded the industrial workers under their influence to abstain from strikes. In 1943 they started a new organisation called the MatharSangam to spread Communist idea among women. \(^86\) Branches were opened in Madras City. In May 1944 T.V. KalyanaSundaraMudaliar inaugurated a branch of the ‘Friends of the

\(^81\) Madras in 1941, p.11.
In 1941 the Communists conspired to overthrow the British Empire and the case came before the Second Presidency Magistrate, Madras. It lasted for eight months. Seven Communists including Mohan Kumaramangalam, P.Ramamoorthy, SubramanyaSarma and C.S. Subramanian were tried and sentenced to imprisonment.(Sivagnanam, M.P., *ViduthalaiporilTamilagam*, Madras, 1983, p.389).

\(^82\) Till then it condemned the War as an ‘Imperialist War’.

\(^83\) *Indian Information*, 15 June 1942, p.4.

\(^84\) F.N.R., 22 July 1942.

\(^85\) Mathur, Y.B., *Quit India Movement*, Delhi, 1979, p.75.

Soviet Union’ in Madras. The students who supported the cause of the Communists organised the All-India Students Federation, a rival organisation to the All-India Students Congress. Finally in 1945 the Communists broke off completely with the Congress and decided to contest the elections for the provincial legislatures independently.

The Second World War quickened the process of industrialization in Madras. The rise in prices, increase in cost of living and the low wages paid to the labourers affected the relationship between the industrial labour and the Government. In fact the War situation came in handy for the Madras administration to put down any form of political or economic movement. However, its relaxed stand towards the Communist Party, when the latter showed pro-War attitude, contributed to the growth of trade union movement on Communist lines.

Towards Normalcy

The progress of the War formed the subject of appreciative reviews in the press in 1945. The collapse of German resistance, the death of Mussolini and Hitler and the surrender of German forces in May 1945 took place in bewildering rapidity one after another.

The people of Madras received the news of ‘Cease Fire’ in Europe on 8 May 1945 with relief and joy. The churches and temples conducted informal thanks giving services in many places. The press celebrated the most outstanding event by the issue of special V-Day editions containing articles reviewing the War and photographs of leading personalities who played a great part in it. In August 1945 the public received with overwhelming joy the Japanese surrender offer and the final official announcement of Japan’s acceptance of the Allied terms. In November

87. F.N.R., 8 June 1944.
88. Ibid., 16 Aug. 1944.
89. Ibid., 12 Dec. 1945.
90. Ibid., 22 May 1945.
91. Ibid., 24 Aug. 1945.
1945 a short interdenominational service was held at the War Memorial attended by detachments from the various branches of the Armed Forces and by high ranking government officials. The people of Madras City heaved a sigh of relief at the end of hostilities mainly with the belief that War-time restrictions would be lifted soon.

Till the beginning of 1945 the civil defence measures remained in force. In due course the activities of the National War Front and the allied schemes came to an end. The Government converted the National War Front into the Field Publicity Organisation to explain the government’s post-war plans.92 ‘Madras War Review’ contained after the cessation of hostilities; but it changed its name to ‘Madras Review’. The Governor’s War Fund became the Governor’s Amenities and Relief Fund with a view to help the troops and the released prisoners of War.93 The A.R.P. organisations were disbanded. The Government demolished all the street shelters and withdrew all the lighting restrictions.94 It constituted the women A.R.P. corps as ‘Indian Women’s Civic Corps’ to undertake work among women in matters of social welfare.95

After the closure of civil defence measures, the Government took efforts to secure employment for the discharged personnel. In this attempt many were employed in the defence services and in leading firms of the city.96 Arrangements were made to absorb the retrenched ministerial servants in other departments such as Fire Services, Madras Port Trust, Rationing and Civil Supplies. Some of the A.R.P. personnel got training in anti-malarial operations and others underwent Sanitary Inspector’s Course.97

The food problem continued after the War, for the countries that exported rice to India earlier were devastated by the War and could not

92. Ibid., 24 Sept. 1945.
95. Madras in 1945, p.74.
96. AnandaVikatan, 30 Sept. 1945, p.15.
97. Madras in 1945, p.82.
supply rice to Madras.\textsuperscript{98} Hence the people anticipated that rationing would be in force at least for five more years after the War.\textsuperscript{99} To meet the situation the Madras Government reduced the scale of ration from one pound per adult per day to twelvedojs and declared other food grains like wheat, flour, millets and barley as rationed articles.\textsuperscript{100} It made vigorous attempt to eliminate blackmarketing, hoarding and profiteering. It passed the Madras Milk Control Order to conserve the available supplies of fresh milk and to relieve the general shortage of milk. It prohibited the use of milk in the manufacture of any product such as ice cream and cream-cake for sale. Statutory rationing of firewood continued to be in force in Madras city. The administration of firewood rationing was separated from rice rationing and the Madras Firewood Restricted Acquisition Order 1945 was brought into force with a view to prevent hoarding of firewood.\textsuperscript{101}

**Political Situation**

The success of the Labour Party in the general elections of 1945 in England brought a ray of hope to the leaders of the national movement. The Labour Party had declared its main objective as to transfer power to the people of India.\textsuperscript{102} Following this, the Government of India released all political prisoners detained in connection with the Quit India Movement and removed the ban on the Congress.\textsuperscript{103} It observed ‘liberty week’ from August 9 to 16.\textsuperscript{104} Several meetings were held in Madras City and the people observed two minute silence in memory of the martyrs of the August 1942 disturbances. By 1945 a change took place in the Tamilnadu Congress Committee (T.N.C.C.). The leadership was shifted from C.

\textsuperscript{99} Madras in 1945, p.82.
\textsuperscript{100} AnandaVikatan, 29 July 1945, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{101} A Survey of Procurement and Rationing of Food in the Madras State, 1942-1949, p.50.
\textsuperscript{102} Bhargava, History of Modern India, Delhi, 1955, p.578.
\textsuperscript{103} Sivagnanam, M.P., EnathuPorattam, (Tamil), Madras, 1974, p.301.
\textsuperscript{104} F.N.R., 24 Aug. 1945.
Rajagopalachari to Kamaraj, the President of Tamilnadu Congress Committee (T.N.C.C.). In September 1945 he inaugurated a National Youth Federation in Madras for co-ordinating the activities of all youth organisations with the object of carrying on the constructive programme of the Congress. The struggle between the Congress and the Communist Party for getting control over the workers continued after the War. This compelled the Congress to expel the Communist loyalists from the Party. In November 1945 the plenary session of the Tamilnad Communist Party was held in Madras when they themselves decided to break off completely with the Congress and to contest the elections for the Provincial Legislature. Except the Communist Party the other opposition parties more or less disappeared from the scene.

In September 1945, the Government announced general elections to the Central and Provincial legislatures, so long postponed due to War in India. On 29 September 1945 the Governor of Madras issued a proclamation dissolving the Legislature and ordering fresh elections. When the Congress High Command decided to contest the elections, K. Kamaraj and his followers conducted strenuous tour throughout Tamilnad, addressing numerous meetings and creating enthusiasm in favour of the Congress. The elections were held in March 1946 and brought an astounding success to the Congress. The Congress obtained an overwhelming majority, securing 164 seats out of 215 seats in the Legislative Assembly and thirty two out of fifty two seats in the Legislative Council. The Congress chose T. Prakasam as the leader of the Parliamentary Party and formed the ministry under his leadership in April 1946.

107. F.N.R., 8 Nov. 1945.
109. Ibid.
Normalcy was restored in Madras at the end of the War. However, some of the measures taken by the Government during the War time like rationing and other restrictions on essential commodities continued to remain in force. The Congress Party took full advantage of the War to enhance its popularity and once again succeeded in capturing power in Tamilnadu. The War time period appeared dismal time in all fronts. The urban and rural population alike felt the impact of this world catastrophe in diverse forms. With close restrictions and curfew orders normality came to be eroded mainly in the cities and towns. As a result social mobility and organized industrialization came to a confusing halt. The diversion of governmental attention from the main area of administration of the State resulted in theft, stealing and human follies in an increasing nature. However, the production towards War purposes and War-related materials earned some relief by way of European orders. In a developing society, such scanty production efforts seemed to have very limited scope for meeting the necessities of life for a large population. Yet, taking advantage of the slumpt in economic life, the political analysts of the time representing different parties took all efforts for the consolidation of socio-political aims. The Communist Party came to play a crucial role in organizing the working class and the peasants for gaining socio-economic status. This course ultimately resulted into the clash of interests between the capitalists and landlords on the one hand and the labour force and the peasants on the other.