'Radha Writing a letter to Shri Krishna'

STORY OF THE INDIAN POST OFFICE

Edited by

MULK RAJ ANAND

FOREWORD

AMONG THE many things, good and bad, that the modern world has produced, surely the postal system, which covers the world, is one of its most beneficent activities. There is nothing bad about it, it is all good, and it affects every individual, wherever he may be in this wide world, connecting him with millions of others. That connecting link is the postal system which has grown from age to age till it is what we see today. This story is full of fascination and the spirit of adventure. It is growing still, of course, and will continue to do so bringing fresh discoveries and inventions in its train and, thus, helping the growth of human relations and human welfare; also, ultimately, perhaps helping somewhat in the realization of that ideal which seems so distant today and which, nevertheless, might not be very far—the World State. The postal system is a world organization, one of the great international services which have grown up, more especially in the last hundred years or so.

The postal system is a part of the story of communications. The science dealing with communications grows more intricate and far-reaching and today perhaps the highest form that we have is that of Radar. Radar has nothing to do with the postal system as such, but it has taken us to a new region of adventure of the human mind.

India, during the past hundred years, has built up a great postal system of her own, which is part of this world system. We celebrate

the completion of these hundred years and I am glad that this record of the story of the Indian post-office has been prepared as a witness of what has been done as well as of what we hope to do.

JAWAHARLAL NEHRU.

NEW DELHI;
The 13th October, 1954.

PREFACE

THE HISTORY of the Indian Post Office cannot be considered in isolation; it is part of the history of the nation itself. In writing such a book on one aspect of a country's history, it is very necessary to correlate it with all other factors that go to make a complete historical picture. It must take into account a number of other aspects such as the demographic, the geo-political and the socio-economic and even the physiographic aspect. It must take into account the growth of the country's social institutions; the changes in its economic set up; the gradual but effective utilisation of its natural and other material resources, of the strength of its public weal that ultimately leads on to the creation of a 'Welfare State'. All these are different, but at every point they impinge on one another and one has to take into consideration the inter-actions of different aspects to obtain a proper perspective.

When it was decided that the History of the Post Office and of India Postage Stamps was to be written, we had in mind an objective study of the growth of the postal organisation and of its services and its inter-action with other facts of national life. To a great extent, we have succeeded in our objective. We have presented a picture of the birth and the growth of an institution to the heights it has attained in the present day, and we have endeavoured to trace, objectively, its effect on the economic activity and the social consiousness of the people.

The story of communications is as old as the hills—maybe in the early cave-man days communication was not so great a necessity as it is today, but all the same the necessity was there. After methods of recording had been invented, the question of transmission arose. Human agency was, of course, there, but other methods were also tried. The one that was very successful, was the use of the "homing" pigeon for carrying messages to and fro. The system was meant for the purposes of the state only. The public had little or no opportunity of using this state agency for transmission of their own messages.

Efforts were made to provide some facility to the public also. By 1837, however, we find that the Government had taken the first important step towards turning this into a public utility organisation by the establishment of a state monopoly without which there could be no organised agency nor a proper schedule of rates. This experiment bore fruit seventeen years later. The Indian Postal Organisation came into being in 1854 with the

skeleton network of 701 post offices and a staff of 24,500 to man the services which carried 2½ million letters along 33,000 miles of runner lines. A uniform rate of postage was fixed by weight and not by distance. The common man could now use a utility which was once the privilege of only the heads of states or state officials. Today the post office presents a wide-spread network with 46,000 post offices, over 200,000 miles of postal lines consisting of air lines, railway lines, road lines, runner lines and other lines. The Indian P. & T. Department has today a staff of 2½ lakhs, with a Director-General at its head. It handles over 2500 million letters per year and also caters to other needs of the public undertaking to perform other functions, postal, quasi-postal and sometimes even non-postal. The post office, which has such a country-wide network, has been found to be an excellent distributory and collecting agency for every Department of the Government and many are the claims made on its time and resources.

The post office system, as such, carried out quite a useful function for the British, who introduced it in its present form in 1854. It may be true that the postal lines followed the military lines, that the district post had as its "raison d'etre", the exigencies of the police and of the revenue system, that the post office was means to facilitate the dissemination of "anglicisation", and it may be true that we could have fulfilled by ourselves our own destiny like many other countries who did not have the British connection. It is equally true that credit must accrue to the British for setting up an organisation that ultimately helped to knit this country together and to take education, trade and industry to the farthest corner of India even if this was in their own interests. This postal organisation of ours celebrates a 100 years of its existence this year. It has gone on from strength to strength and all the time it has kept in the forefront the motto "Service before self".

In this book are traced, objectively, the steps in the gradual course of evolution by which the Department came to be what it is today. It has always endeavoured to give its customers the best service it was capable of, it is doing this today, and it will always, if I know anything of its working, endeavour to give better and more worthy service for all time to come.

Shri G. Borkar on whom was cast the difficult task of collecting the material for the book and compiling has worked hard. I take this opportunity to express my thanks to him.

JAGJIWAN RAM.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Apart from the fascination of the study of an institution which we all take for granted, there is to be derived from this book a great deal of factual information, which is important at this stage of our preoccupation with nation building. For, it is becoming increasingly clear to me that the more facts we get to know the less danger is there of biased minds perverting policies through the exercise of prejudices engendered by parochialism and narrow-mindedness.

The relevant facts about the history of the Post Office during the last hundred years are in the possession of the expert members of the Postal Department and the National Archives. So, as a lay Editor, I have had to rely on the research carried out by the various officers of the Department and Dr. B. A. Saletore of the National Archives and the material compiled from their reports by Shri G. Borkar, Officer-in-Charge of Public Relations in the India Postage Stamp Centenary Celebrations. The historical evidence on the subject has seldom been adequately put into book form; and the co-operative team of authors has had to dig up many old files and dusty records to glean the information which ultimately went to the making of this tentative record, whose main value will be its continuity. If the names of these contributors do not appear on the title page, it is only because of the tradition of anonymity of an institution whose motto is 'SERVICE BEFORE SELF'. The gratitude of the public ought, therefore, to go to this team of researchers.

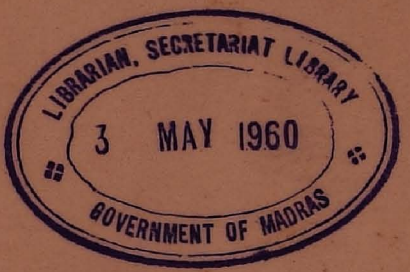
I must also take this opportunity to thank Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India and Shri Jagjivan Ram, Minister for Communications, who have very kindly written the foreword and preface, respectively, for this book.

The task of popularising the factual material has been considerably helped by the artist, S. Chavda, who has done the black and white illustrations for the headpieces and tailpieces, as well as the layout of the volume.

Miss Marian Evans helped me by rereading the text and in proof correcting. Shri S. Ramu of Tata Press, Shri G. Mehta of Sun Process Work, and Shri Neogy of Express Block Co., gave technical advice about preparation of illustration material. I want to thank these friends for helping to produce the volume in as aesthetic a get up as is possible within our present resources.

M. R. A.

Bombay,
28th September, 1954.



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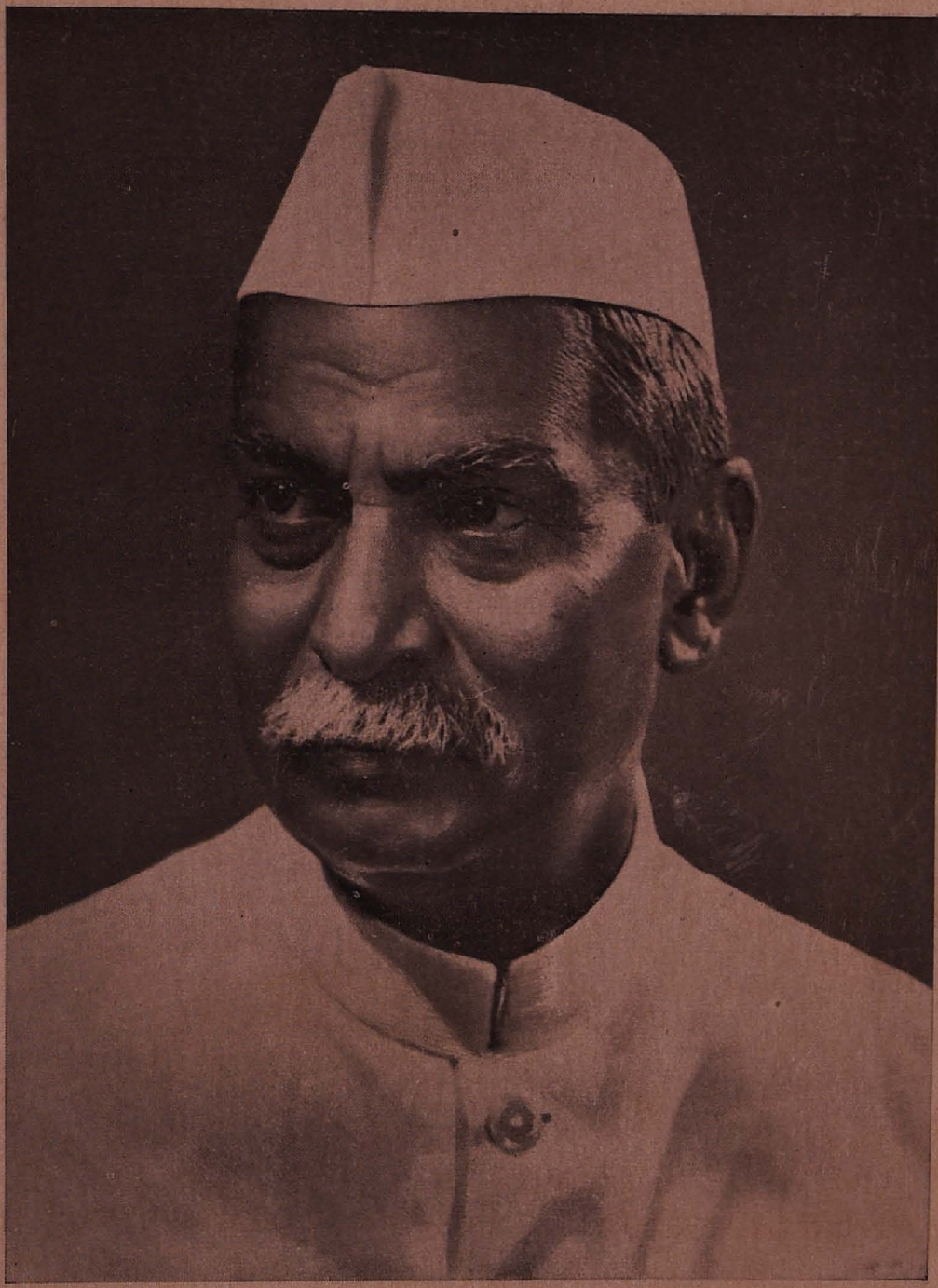
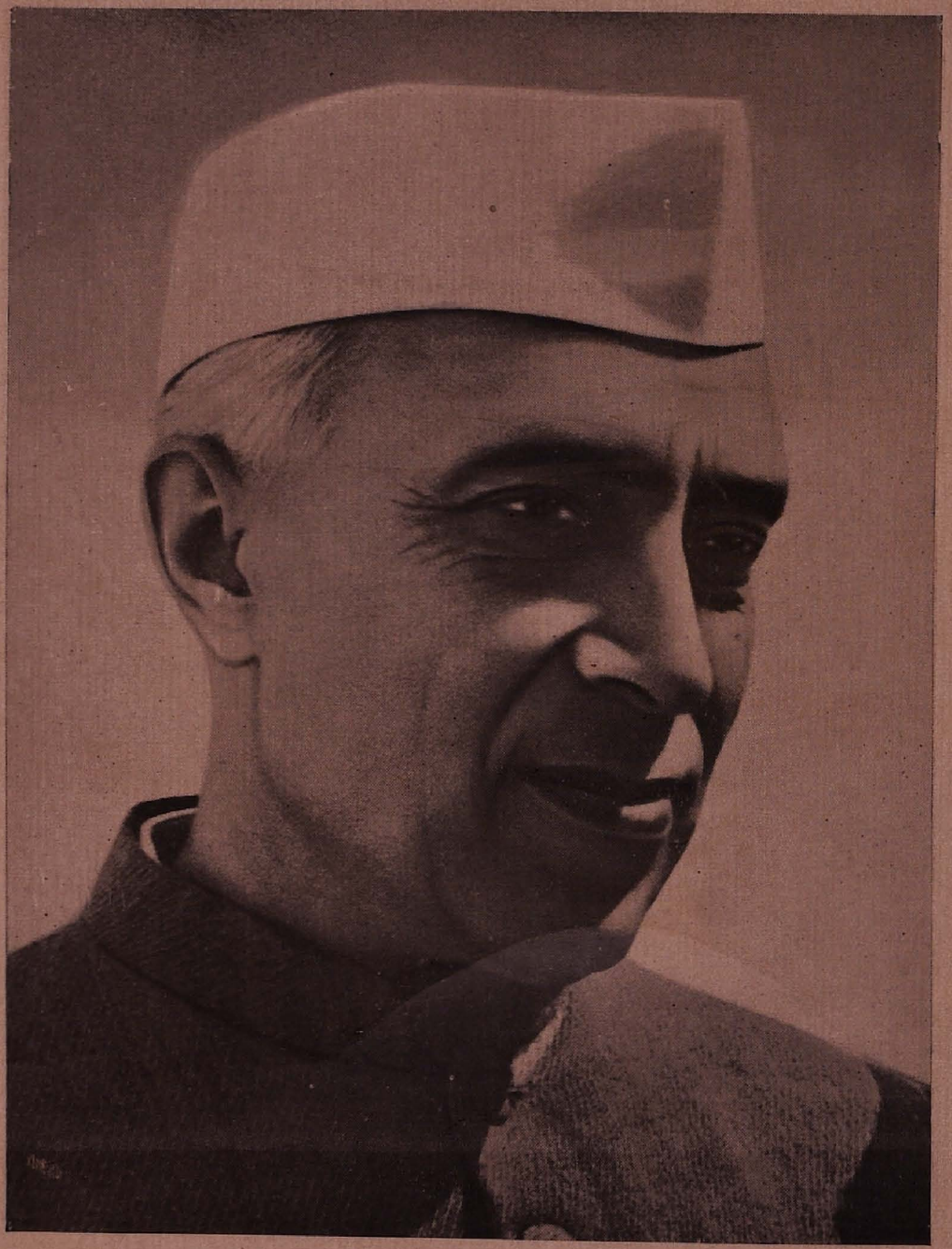


Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of India.



Shri Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India.

Reflections on the Centenary

ON THE 1st October 1854, exactly a hundred years ago, the postal system was born, in the form in which we know it to-day, and on the same date the first India Postage stamp was issued.

This historic occasion naturally inspires reflection and retrospect:

Of course, the postal system is a necessary and important public institution. And yet it is one of those public organisations which are more intimately bound up with human relations than other Governmental departments. For it deals with messages, helps to connect people, and makes communication between human beings possible, at all levels, through the letter.

When one comes to think of it—what an aroma of romance surrounds the letter! With what eager expectation one awaits the coming of a letter! How many of us have not felt like the little boy in Rabindranath Tagore's play, *The Post Office,* who anxiously awaits the message! And, perhaps, this has been so throughout known history, and even in pre-history. For, always men needed to communicate with other men. In fact, the whole of literature is based on the necessity for the expression and communication of facts, which are later transformed from ordinary expression into artistic expression.

Apart from the profound implications of the letter, it would seem that the letter, or message, as a means of ordinary expression of sentiment, emotion and fact, became known in Indian civilisation fairly early.

The Dravidians, the original neolithic inhabitants of India, are reputed to have carried certain sign messages on stone or leaf; and what is called the potsherd, in the old fairy tales of our country, was frequently used by 'witches' and medicine-men for communicating magical formulas.

In the Vedic age, the priests entrusted messages to human agents; and the kings made declarations of war by sending the challenging *Asvamedha* horse to the territory of the monarch, whom they wished to fight. Messages are heard of in the epic *Mahabharata,* which is the human history of the Aryan penetration into India.

There is evidence of an early postal system, though in a rudimentary form, in the time of Emperor Chandragupta (322, B.C.), the founder of the Mauryan Dynasty. In Kautilya's *Arthashastra,* attributed to Chanakya, the Emperor's Chief Minister, references are found to the semblance of the postal system which was then adopted by the administration. Chandragupta's empire stretched from Persia to Southern India, and was governed from the capital Pataliputra, which was situated where modern Patna stands to-day. Chandragupta split up this vast area into units, placed each of them under a Provincial Governor, and laid down a common code of governance. The difficulty of communications between the capital city and the provincial capitals was solved by the use of the pigeon post. Letters in little cachets were hung from rings above the feet of pigeons, who were trained to fly to various destinations.

This system continued into the time of Asoka (268-277 B.C.), the grandson of Chandragupta, when the Maurya Empire had been extended and had been stabilised. Asoka had one advantage. He had a number of royal princes, Kumars or Aryaputras, as they were called, who were deputed by him to govern the various sectors as viceroys. Asoka's son, Kunala, was the Viceroy in Taxila, the other Kumars governed Ujjain, Tosali and Savarnagiri as viceroys. He could rely on them to be loyal to the Imperial crown. The question of further development of communications between the capital and the viceregal capitals did not arise and old methods continued to

be used. There were *Serais* on the Imperial highways. These *Serais* of the Magadhan Empire are not referred to in any of the contemporary books as being used for the postal system, though similar *Serais* appear to have been used as rest houses by Imperial couriers in the time of the Moghuls.

Mention must be made of the internal communication system developed by the bankers, who, in their efforts to expand their trade, sent couriers with bills of exchange between important banking centres. This was probably the genesis of the 'Mahajan Dawk' of the 17th and 18th centuries.

By the time of the classical renaissance, the love-letter begins to be mentioned frequently. In Kalidasa's illustrious classic drama *Sakuntala,* the heroine writes a letter to her lover, Dushyanta; and his poem *Megh-Doota, (Cloud Messenger)*, is a love-message in the form of a poem, carried by a cloud from the lover to the beloved.

It is conceivable that in the Mediaeval period, various kinds of communications, in the interest of state-craft and commerce, and private-exchange, had already come into existence. But we know for certain that the Muslim and Moghul kings established a postal system, based on the couriers, who travelled on horse back or on foot. This Courier system became fairly swift in the time of Akbar, the great Moghul. And by the time the British East India Company began to operate in certain parts of our country, the courier, or the runner-service, was already in common use.

The credit for improving and expediting the runner-service and, later, for the establishment of the *regular* postal system, goes to John Company; for it was under Lord Clive that an elementary Post Office was initiated and under Warren Hastings that it was put on a formal basis. The latter also introduced copper tickets of two anna denomination which enabled a letter to be carried for a hundred miles. This postal system operated only in the areas where the Company held sway, while in the other parts of India the private post still flourished.

As the Company's rule extended to the various parts of the country improvements in the sending of post took place, until, in 1854, the Indian Post Office was reorganised as an institution, with a Director General in charge. The service applied to almost the whole of India. After the Mutiny of 1857, provoked by the rapacity, greed and mis-rule of the East India Company, and the will of the oppressed people to revolt against the foreign yoke, the company's power broke, even as the rebellion was suppressed, and India passed into the hands of the Government of Great Britain, becoming one of its chief dependencies. Later, Queen Victoria of Great Britain was crowned Empress of India and our country became an Imperial possession.

As was inevitable, postal routes in those years were identical with military routes. And mail services were extended along the main routes of communications, branching out into the districts where the British Indian Government was bringing its administration. Mail communications with outside countries, and more particularly with Great Britain, were developed, so that the Government and its British officers could be in constant touch with the British Government and their people at home. Even the policies for development of the Indian Post Office were governed by the concepts and forms derived by the superior British officers, from the British postal system. Seldom did these authorities go beyond the rules followed at home. So that if the people of India benefited, they benefited only incidentally.

Although India suffered from the ignominy of foreign domination, and the John Company initiated the postal system entirely in the interest of its own trade and in order to implement its political hold on the country, the introduction of a highly organised postal system, on modern lines, unconsciously helped to create a new unity in India. The disintegration of the Moghul Empire had left the country in a state of chaos. The British introduced a unitary administration in the country and made possible the development of public works, of trade and commerce and other social institutions. And, with

the railway and the telegraph systems, introduced later, a revolution was brought about in the social state of our sub-continent. Not only was our country to be linked henceforth with the rest of the modern world, but the establishment of these rapid means of communications was destined to break down many of the barriers of prejudice, superstition, narrowness of outlook, and parochialism, which had hitherto often disrupted our essential feeling of togetherness and common culture.

Thus the celebration of the hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the postal system, and of the issuing of the first India postage stamp is, indeed, a historic occasion.

The century that has passed has been replete with incident. In these hundred years the Indian Post Office has grown, from its humble 700 Post Offices of 1854, to the 45,907 Post Offices of to-day. These are dotted over the length and breadth of India and cater to the needs of all villages with a population of 2,000 or over. A hundred years ago, only about 28,000 postal articles were handled by the Post Offices. To-day, the department handles 2,672 million postal articles, 580 million money orders, 860 million registered articles, along 186,961 miles of mail-routes, of which 20,486 miles are operated by the air-routes.

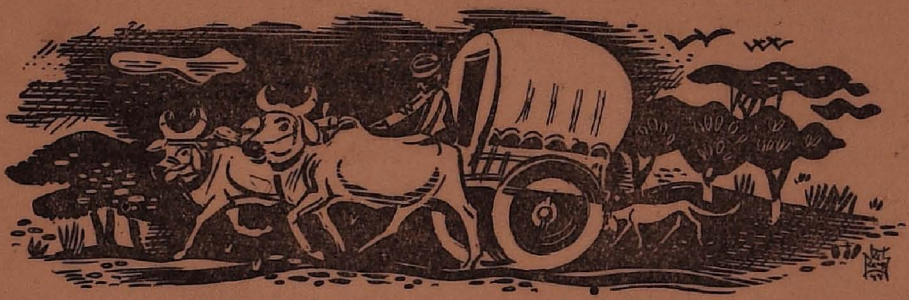
The Indian Post Office is one of the largest organisations in the world. And, with the anticipated rise in literacy and of the standard of living of our people, it might even become the largest public utility service in the world. The birth of this organisation has a tremendous significance and Government of our first Republic has decided to celebrate this occasion in a fitting manner and to mark the Centenary with a series of special activities.

One of these, has been the organisation through the dynamic urge of Shri H. L. Jerath of an International Philatelic Exhibition and an International Postal Services Exhibition, this being perhaps the first of its kind to be held anywhere in the world. More than seventy-five countries participated in the Exhibition, making it one

of the largest of such exhibitions in the world. The symposium on subjects of Philatelic interests, brought delegates from all the globe. The International Children's Stamp Designing Competition, with 'India as I see it' as the theme, and a complete series of Commemorative Postal Stationery,. have sown the seed of Philately amongst the younger generation.

The Indian Posts and Telegraphs Department, is also issuing an album of facsimile reproductions in original colours, dating from 1854, including the commemorative series issued on the occasion of the Centenary on the 1st October 1954.

The present volume, *The Story of The Indian Post Office* is also a part of the programme of these celebrations. It is essentially an historical and descriptive account of the birth and the growth of the Indian Post Office, and of the India postage stamps from 1854 onwards, when an adhesive stamp was affixed to a postal article, for the first time in India's long history. We hope that this factual narrative will help us to cherish our inheritance and give us the conscious purpose necessary for further reform, which is one of the fundamental principles of human progress.



1. The Regular Post Office In India

THE OLD WORLD AND THE MODERN WORLD

IF THERE IS any period in the history of India which may be said to have marked the ending of one cyle of our civilisation and the beginning of another, it is the small span of time during which the system of internal communications through the regular post office, the electric telegraph, and the railway, were formally established. For communications are the essential forerunners of the modern age. And the network of post and telegraph offices, of roads and railways, had only to be operated and the new era of the political unity of India, and of its industrial and social development inevitably began.

This fundamental change from the ancient to the modern world had begun in the West through what is known as the European renaissance. The efflorescence of the sciences and the arts, the discovery of new techniques of locomotion and industry, the whole illumination of the 15th to 18th centuries, and the rise of the middle classes, had led up to the great industrial revolution of the 19th century, in itself the first phase of the westernisation of the world and of the ultimate extension of the European empire to Asia, Africa and the Americas.

Why did the Post office and the other communication systems, *as we know them,* fail to arise in India until the European impact?

An answer to this question will help to make our perspective clearer.

THE VILLAGE SYSTEM IN INDIA

The whole of Indian polity was based, for thousands of years, until the British conquest, on the village system. This was a social order in which each hamlet was a kind of small republic or commune, connected only by dusty roads and tracks to the other hamlets. It was ruled by its *Panchayat,* the council of five elders, and was a tributary of some nearby Raja or Maharaja. The local chieftain sent his agent, yearly, to collect his dues, in kind, in lieu of his formal responsibility for keeping roads, tracks and water works in good repair, for defending the villagers against invaders and for sundry other public services. No one owned the land, but every one, the king as well as the peasant, had certain rights in land, the right to collect revenue or to till it. As there was no shortage of land, the farmers could always ask the *Panchayat* for the right to till more land if their families increased. Grazing land for cattle was held in common, and fuel could be gathered in the jungles without let or hindrance. The schoolteacher, the priest, the locksmith, the potter, the weaver, the carpenter and the other craftsmen got grain in return for services rendered, and a form of barter economy prevailed.

IDYLLIC ONLY IN NOSTALGIA

This seemingly idyllic state was not altogether so fruitful and happy as the nostalgia for the past would tend to make it. For the despotic Rajas on the top were frequently going off to the wars, and generally exacted more than their share of the produce of the peasant, while neglecting public works. The internecine wars often led to stagnation of the villages below, and the moribund communities perished in famine if the rains failed, for the waterworks were in disrepair and the means of communication did not exist or had fallen to pieces.

MAP OF INDIA

A quick glance at the physical and climatic map of India will help us area of 1,80,000 square miles, composed of three geomorphic units. These to understand these difficulties better. The Indian sub-continent has an

are the Himalayan range and its subsidiaries, the Indo-Gangetic plain, and the penisular portion, the Deccan Plateau, with an average elevation of 2,000 feet above sea level. The Indo-Gangetic plain is separated from this plateau by a number of smaller mountain ranges which once formed an effective barrier to communications between the peoples of the North and the South. The triangular Deccan plateau is flanked on its other two sides by the Western and the Eastern ghats.

It is natural that such a region, with its distinct geomorphic features, should present considerable climatic diversity. Temperature variations range from several degrees below zero in the hills to 120° F in Rajasthan's semi-desert areas. Likewise rainfall varies enormously, from over 500 inches in Assam to less than five inches in Rajasthan and the surrounding countryside. This complexity of physical and climatic features was naturally reflected, to a considerable extent, in India's demographic disposition. The difficulties of intercommunication between the different areas, and even between small districts, created a multiplicity of cultural, religious and linguistic differences. Less than two per cent of the total population gravitated to the towns. And, apart from the self-sufficiency of the village, the joint family system, through which the son joined the father in his profession, obviated the need for much travel or communication with distant villages.

And so kings came and kings went, but the villages remained intact.

ADVENT OF THE BRITISH

Then came the British and, unwittingly, altered all the old relations *by vesting private property in land where previously people only had certain rights in land.*

For the John Company was impelled, from the need to collect their revenue from the land without difficulty, to create, in the areas under their occupation, a land-lord class, which could pay the company a fixed sum while taxing the peasant or tenants on their estates as much as they liked. As the peasants could not always pay the heavy dues demanded from them, they began to be evicted and for the next fifty years there was a constant exodus of unemployed tenants towards the big towns, where British capital was just beginning to be invested in various enterprises based on cheap labour, easy accessibility to raw materials and contiguity to the markets in which the goods could be sold.

Actuated solely by the spirit of gain, and viewing the people merely as galley slaves, the John Company was yet forced by circumstances to bring into action all the forms of locomotion and communication necessary for the industrial society which began to operate alongside the new rural system.

THE PROCESS OF HISTORY

If we understand this process of history, we can see the contrast of the slow development in the means of communication in the old India and the comparatively rapid development under the impact of the West.

In the olden days there was very little need for the villager to travel or to communicate. The king or Emperor, who ruled a vast domain, with its far flung ramparts, guarded by the armies of provincial satraps, needed only to maintain regular communications for the administration of the territory under his control. And the privilege of using these communication services was extended to the nobles of the court and to the army and police officials. But the whole system was primitive and often led to the disruption of the regime itself, until in modern times communications became the very foundation of the unitary state.

THE EVIDENCE OF IBN BATUTA

The form of postal service current in the reign of Muhammad Bin Tughlak, King of Delhi. (1325—1361) has been described by Ibn Batuta, the Arab traveller and historian of the 14th century. There were two kinds of couriers employed for the relay system—the horse courier and the foot courier. The horse couriers were drawn from the Sultan's cavalry and were stationed at distances of four miles, while the foot couriers were placed at the distance of a mile. There were sentry boxes at a distance of every three miles, unless an inhabited village at the point made it unnecessary. There were three of these sentry boxes at each stage where the courier sat ready to take the despatches, to proceed to the next stage.

Each courier was provided with a whip about two cubits long with small bells attached to its head. Whenever the courier left the precincts of a city, he carried the mail in one hand and the whip in the other, which he shook as he approached his relay counterpart. The latter on hearing the noise of the bells came out, took over the despatches and proceeded to the next station. This method effected a great saving in time.

THE TRAVELLER FERISHTA

Another great traveller, Ferishta, has described the existence of a mounted post system which was in vogue in the reign of Sher Shah in the middle of the sixteenth century. Sher Shah was the first to construct a trunk roadway from Sonarung in Bengal, to the banks of the Indus in Sind, a distance of 2,000 miles. He appears to have been guided into this undertaking by political and military expediency. He placed two horse couriers on the road at a distance of every two miles to run the communication line.

UNDER AKBAR, THE GREAT MOGHUL

Later, the Emperor Akbar is said to have established a courier system by placing two swift horses and some mewias (runners) at a distance of five kos (ten miles) for the carriage of government letters. A hundred miles were covered by these couriers in a day and a night making it possible for a letter from Agra to reach Ahmedabad in Gujrat in five days. The unmetalled roads sometimes degenerated into tracks through jungles infested with tigers and brigands to the detriment of both the regularity and security of mails.

THE BRITISH EAST INDIA COMPANY

Although in the early stages of British domination of India, no regular system for the conveyance of mails existed, the East India Company, which had stabilised itself in Madras by 1639, in Bombay by 1660, and in Calcutta by 1688, soon found it necessary for the extension of its trade, to carry on a regular exchange of correspondence between these three cities and other places where their factories were located.

In the beginning, the Company availed itself of the services of the existing postal runner system, but with the increase in trade, it was found that a regular and systematic postal service was necessary to save time, expense and afford security. However, it is evident that the East India Company continued to use the existing organised 'dak' system even a hundred years later. A communication from Francis Sykes to Robert Palk dated 31st October 1765, specifically refers to the representation made by the Zamindars against the 'dak' arrangements of Emperor Shah Alam of Delhi between Allahabad, Calcutta and Murshidabad. The Select Committee Report of 1770 record a decision to continue the

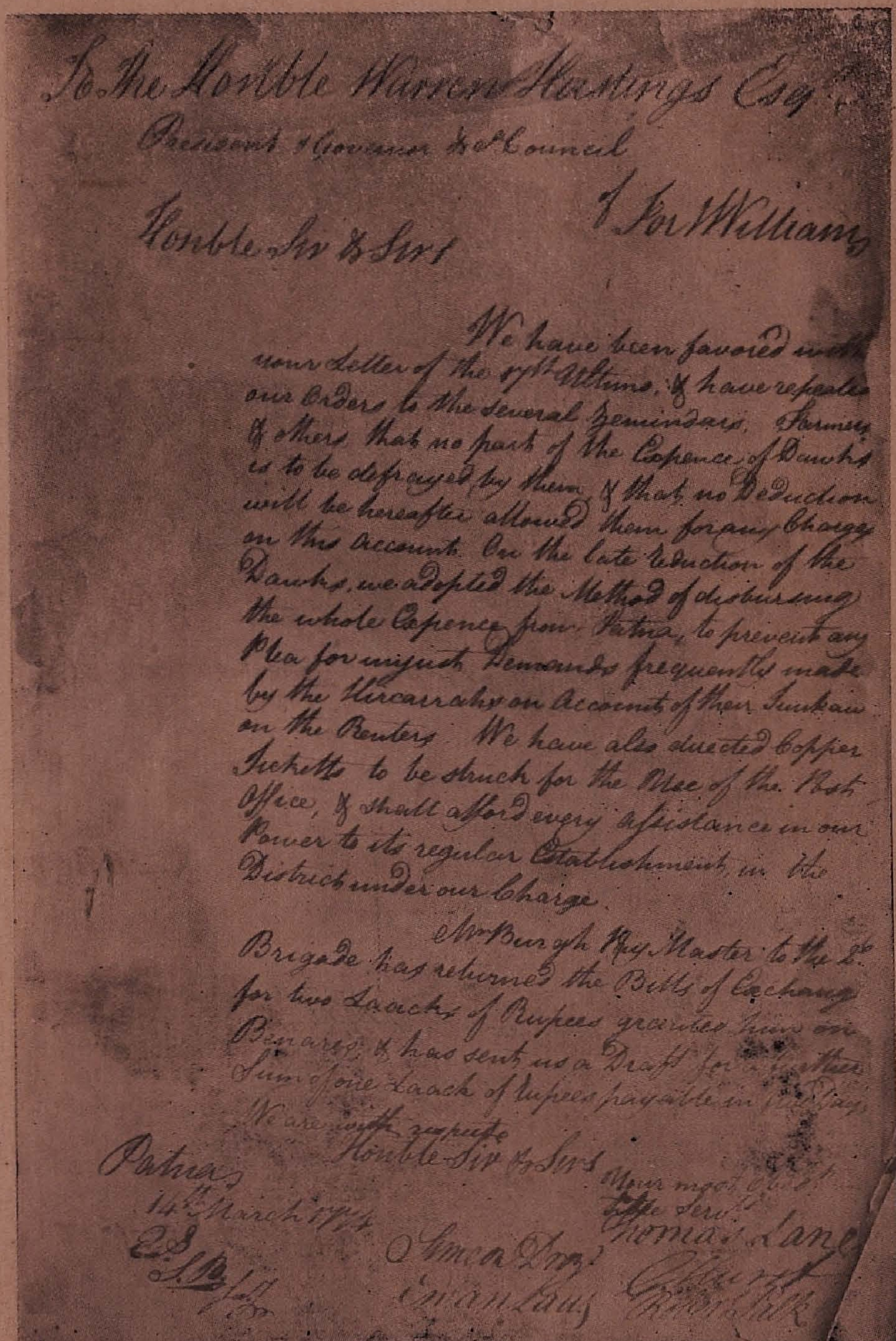
'Nawab's Dawk' but to restrict the 'Nizamat Dawk' to places where there was no company 'dak.' The East India Company had, however, introduced a scheme in 1688 whereby it ran a service with its own paid 'Postal Runners.' A Post Office was established in Bombay where all despatches were brought in and delivered out.

LORD CLIVE'S MINUTE OF 1766

With the expansion of the Company's territories it had to overcome the difficulty of establishing contacts with far flung regions of the country under its occupation. It, therefore, decided to establish postal communications connecting the principal towns in various provinces under its control. In 1766, Lord Clive wrote his Minute on the better regulation of 'Dawk', and ordered that all letters should be dispatched from Government House; a postmaster, then termed a postal writer, and his assistant, were to be at Government House every night to attend to the receipt, scrutiny and despatch of the dak. With the introduction of a regular postal system for the carriage of official 'dawk' by Lord Clive in 1766, the zamindars and landholders along the routes were held responsible for the supply of runners to carry the mails. This was merely the adoption of the old 'Nizamat Dawk' system. But private persons, and sometimes even the zamindars who ran the runner services, were not conceded the privilege of using them, and they had to depend mostly on other dak carriage agencies, which were both costly and uncertain the Government receivers, however, surreptitiously carried, for a consideration, private letters. From these underhand transactions sprang the idea of 'selling this service.' Apart from the Company's 'dawk', the bankers ran their own runner services, and these were called the 'Mahajan Dawk.' In many a case, when they were patronised, they actually proved cheaper than the use of the Company's runners.

THE COMING OF THE REGULAR POST OFFICE

During the administration of Warren Hastings, the Post Office was placed on a slightly better footing and steps were taken to make the post, established for official purposes, available for the carriage of private communications, but only to a limited extent. A few lines of couriers connecting the headquarters of the Government with the principal towns in the various provinces had, by then, been established for the conveyance



To the Hon'ble Warren Hastings Esq.
President & Governor &c. Council
of Fort William

Hon'ble Sir & Sirs

We have been favored with your Letter of the 27th Ultimo, & have repeated our Orders to the several Zemindars, Farmers & others that no part of the Expence of Dawks is to be defrayed by them, & that no Deduction will be hereafter allowed them for any Charge on this Account. On the late reduction of the Dawks, we adopted the Method of disbursing the whole Expence from Patna, to prevent any Plea for unjust Demands frequently made by the Hircarrahs on Account of their Tunkaw on the Renters. We have also directed Copper Tickets to be struck for the Use of the Post Office, & shall afford every assistance in our Power to its regular Establishment in the District under our Charge.

Mr Burgh Pay Master to the 2d Brigade has returned the Bills of Exchange for two Laacks of Rupees granted him on Benares, & has sent us a Draft for another Sum of one Laack of Rupees payable in [illegible] Days.

We are with respect
Hon'ble Sir & Sirs
Your most Obedt. Humble Servts.

Patna
14th March 1774

Thomas Lane
Simeon Droz
Evan Law
[illegible]
[illegible]

A letter addressed to Warren Hastings.

of government letters and parcels. In 1770, an overland route from Madras to Calcutta was proposed and a weekly service introduced. A similar service was inaugurated between Madras and Bombay in 1775.

The Post Office had also to cater to the transport needs primarily of those travelling on state business. Staging bungalows were under the charge of the Post Office officials, who were responsible for their upkeep and arrangements for the travellers. Provision of horses, palanquins and mail carts or tongas to travellers was also the responsibility of the postal officials. An elaborate organisation was thus maintained for the conveyance of dak and of travellers on state business.

On the 31st March 1774, a regular system of Post was brought into force by Warren Hastings. A Postmaster-General was appointed and postage was charged for the first time by way of two anna copper tokens per hundred miles. But this postal system existed only in those parts of India where the Company had its establishment or an officer stationed, so that private post still flourished in other parts. The private post continued till 1837 when the mail carriage and distribution became a monopoly of the Government.

On the 1st December 1784, revised regulations for the Post Office were introduced by Warren Hastings and, between 1784-89, considerable improvement was effected in services run between Bombay, Madras and Calcutta. The year 1789 saw the inauguration of the first regular weekly postal service from Masulipatam to Bombay, Madras and Calcutta.

Towards the tail end of the 18th century, mail bags in Bengal were conveyed by 'hurkaras' or 'runners', whose beats were of eight miles Each runner was accompanied by a drummer, who beat a loud tattoo while passing through jungly tracts. In dangerous tracts an escort of two torch bearers (masals) and two archers were also supplied after nightfall. Though the little troupe was normally secure from the attack of wild beats, instances have been known when tigers have braved the light and the noise and have carried away members of the party.

LORD WELLESLEY AND AFTER

In 1798, Lord Wellesley arrived in India, full of plans to extend Britain's dominion over India. With the expansion of the Hon'ble East India Company's territories, the postal services had also to be extended. But nothing spectacular was attempted or done, and, in his time and that

of Lord William Bentinck, the postal lines merely followed the military lines. The history of the Indian Post Office is colourless for the next forty years till the passing of Act XVII of 1837, by which the Government assumed the exclusive right to convey letters in the Company's territories.

DISTRICT POSTAL SYSTEM

Since the Imperial Postal System did not penetrate into the mofussil there developed a parallel organisation. viz., the District Postal System, connecting the headquarters of each district with police and revenue stations. This post was controlled and manned by the District officials and was supported by a cess levied on the Zamindars or on the local people, supplemented, where necessary, by an Imperial grant-in-aid. The primary object of the District Post was to deliver official correspondence, and parcels, but it undertook, on behalf of the Imperial Post Office, to provide for the collection and distribution of correspondence, not only in the towns, but also in the Circles of villages which the runners visited at intervals. All questions regarding the routes, stages, timings were, however, decided by the District Collector in consultation with the Post-master-General, subject to review by the Divisional Commissioner. The delivery of letters was effected through the police and village chowkidars. As these latter had neither the will nor the inclination to undertake the job, the results were unsatisfactory and about 15 per cent of the letters could not be delivered. There was no cohesive postal system and no central authority to co-ordinate activities and lay down uniformity of procedure. The services varied from area to area, and the charges for the conveyance of letters were levied in cash without reference to any proper polymetric tables. The public was entirely at the mercy of the unscrupulous postal officials.

1837—1851

In 1837 the Postal Regulations were revised and Act XVII, which gave the Government the sole right of conveyance of mail, made necessary the establishment of Post Office, within the Company's territories, and the banning of all private postal services, except a very few which ran under license.

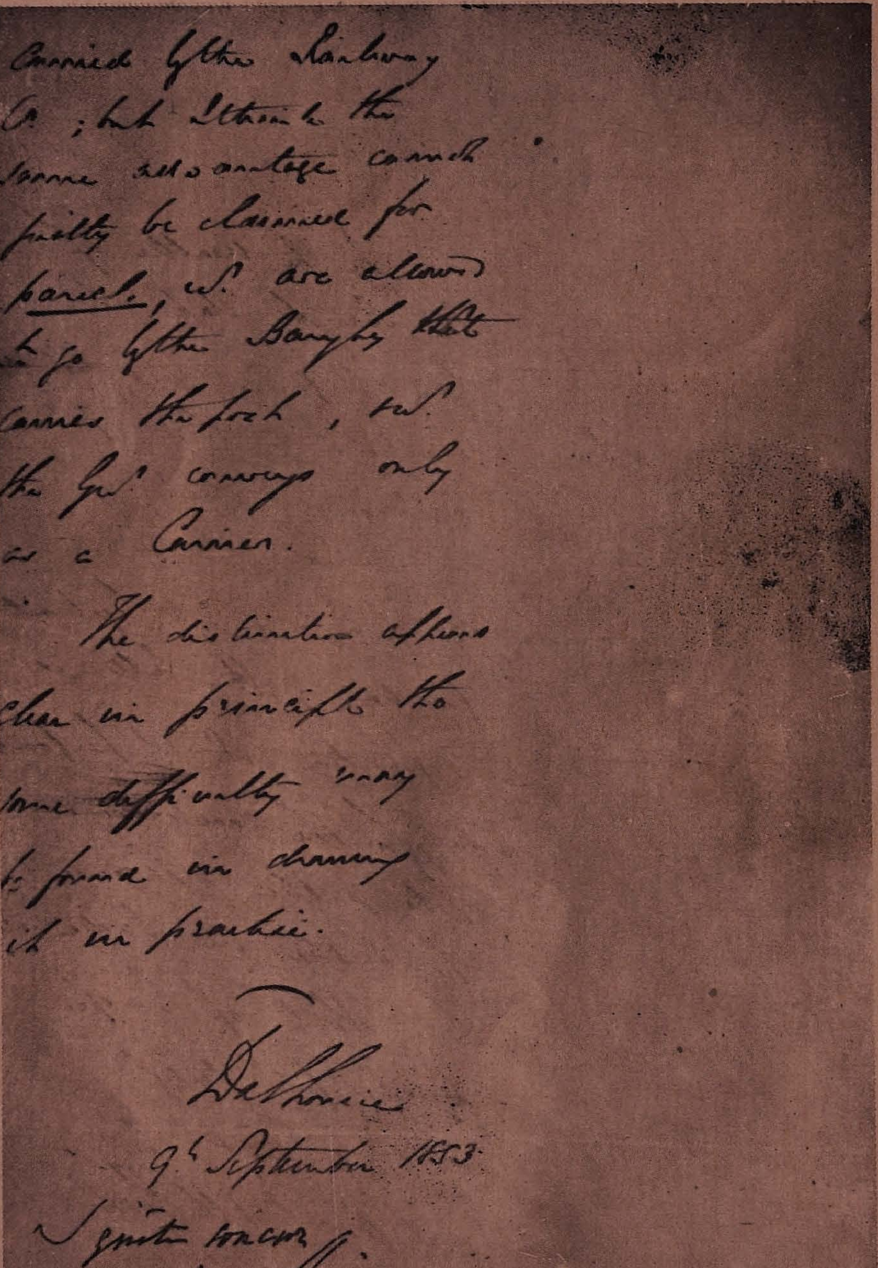
At this period the Post Office also had, under its management, the Government carrying agency, commonly known as the Government

Railway
Banghy Parcels

In the matter of the Banghy dak the Govt. performs two distinct functions – that of the postman & that of common carrier. The former is its legitimate function; the latter is a function wh. it performs only for the convenience of the public because the public in India will not like that of Europe provide for itself.

I think that the articles wh. ~~the Govt.~~ carries as postman fall within the contract & must be carried

Dalhousie's Minutes.


Carried by the Railway Co.; but I think the same advantage cannot justly be claimed for parcels, which are allowed to go by the Banghy that carries the Post, which the Govt. conveys only as a Carrier.

The distinction appears clear in principle tho' some difficulty may be found in drawing it in practice.

Dalhousie

9th September 1853

I quite concur
J. Lowis
10/9

So do I
J. Dorin
10th Sept.

Dalhousie's Minutes.

Bullock Train, with a main communication line from Calcutta to Peshawar, branching out to Darjeeling, Nagpur, Lucknow, Faizabad, Fatehgarh, Simla and Murree. Besides, the Post Office had occasionally to organise a military transport train for conveying annual military relief for which these bullock trains were used.

By the late forties it was obvious that the Post Office not only performed its legitimate functions but provided a large number of 'non-postal' facilities. In 1850, a Commission with a membership of three was appointed, 'to enquire into the methods for making the Post Office more efficient and more conducive to convenience of the public than it had been hitherto.' The three members were: Messrs. Courtney, Forbes and Beadon.

In 1851, the Commission, after enquiries, presented a report which dealt with every aspect of Post Office work, and on this report, which was implemented the next year, has been based the whole fabric of the present day Indian Postal Administration.

2. Eighteen Hundred and Fifty-Four

AS HAS ALREADY been indicated, the year 1854 ushers in a new era in the history of the Indian Post Office. During that year several memorable things happened, proving that, even under the most adverse conditions, men considered every achievement to be the departing point of the new.

FIRST POSTAGE STAMP

The Indian Post Office was recognised as a separate organisation of national importance. And it was placed, for the first time, under the unitary control of a Director-General of the Post Office in India. Also, on the 1st of October, 1854, the first postage stamp was issued on an all-India basis.

MANUAL OF RULES

Based on the recommendations made in the report of the three commissioners, Messrs Courtney, Forbes and Beadon, a new Manual of Rules was compiled and issued in that year. This comprehensive document was the first one of its kind to bring into the compass of one book the entire range of rules and regulations governing the collection, conveyance and delivery

of all postal articles, consigned to the care of the Post Office, both by the public and governmental agencies.

CONTRACT WITH P. & O.

It was in this year, too, that the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company implemented a contract, signed the previous year, under which they ran sea-mail service from Great Britain to India via Alexandria, reducing the transit time from 60 days to 28 days. Originally incorporated by Charter in 1840, the Peninsular and Oriental Company had fulfilled its Charter obligation by sending the 'Hindoostan', via the Cape route, to India, two years later. The contract entered into with this Company in 1844 was abrogated, and a new contract was entered into in 1853 for running a fortnightly communication service between Great Britain, India and China. This service was initiated on 7th July, 1854.

GENESIS OF RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE

Another important development was the recommendation to use the newly constructed railways to replace slower communication lines. This early use of the railway was the genesis of the present day Railway Mail Service. This service followed Lord Dalhousie's Minute of 9th September 1853, which imposed on the Railway Companies a definite obligation to carry both letter and 'banghy' (parcel) mails. A clause had been inserted in this contract with the Railways under which postal articles were carried gratis, and Provincial Governments were given the power and authority to compel the Railway Companies to run trains to carry mails over traffic-worthy sections. In 1854, the Sections were few and far between, a hundred mile service being something to talk about. A start had, however, been made and the seed sown which was later to grow into the modern Railway Mail Service Organisation, with its country-wide ramifications and a route line of 36,688 miles.

SCHEDULE OF FINES

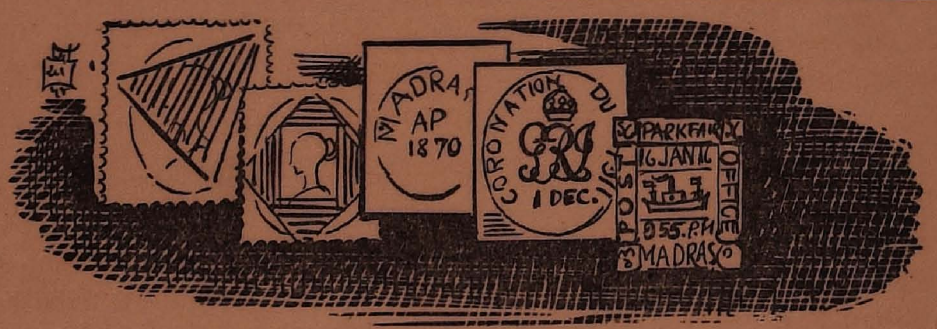
Apart from the many pioneering improvements introduced by Mr. Riddell, the then Director General of the Post Office, in the newly formed all-India postal services, his greatest achievement was undoubtedly the compilation of the first Manual of Rules. At the time this was published the Indian Post Office had 201 headquarter offices and 451 minor offices.

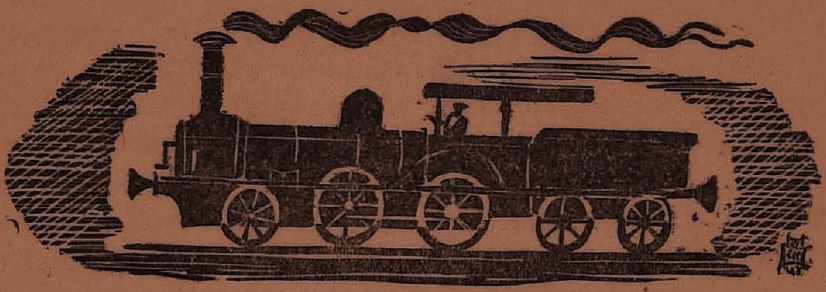
Curiously, while a comprehensive Schedule of fines against post offices, for indifferent work was introduced in the Manual, the rules did not envisage a proper sorting system, which was to come into force later. Under the 1854 rules, every post office situated on a line was expected to make up a separate mail packet for each individual office in the forward area and it received one from every post office in the rear area.

POSTAGE LABELS & 'BEARING' LETTERS

Perhaps the most revolutionary change, which had an almost immediate effect on the distribution of postal traffic and revenue, was the introduction of a system by which postage stamps, then called 'postage labels', were to be affixed to letters, which were thus prepaid. Letters not bearing stamps, called 'Bearing' letters, were charged double the postage at destination. The calculation of postage fee was based on elaborately prepared polymetric tables. Before the introduction of the half-anna postage the proportion of 'bearing' to prepaid letters was almost two to one. In a year the position was reversed. The comparative figures given in the following table offer eloquent testimony to the acceptance of the postage stamp by the public of a hundred years ago:

One month in year	Paid	Bearing	Total
Prior to introduction of ½-anna postage stamp.	378,989	35,417	10,14,406
In 1854-55	1,329,074	631,700	10,60,774





3. The First Decade

EARLY DEVELOPMENTS

WE HAVE GOT so used to the mechanical aids of the twentieth century, such as the morning post, the telephone, telegraph, wireless and even radar, that we take these miracles for granted. It requires a jolt of the imagination, therefore, to realise that only a hundred years ago, these conveniences were not available, and that they had to be achieved through the enlightened will of a few individuals who wanted to surpass man's earlier triumphs and reach a higher plenitude of being. With these inventive geniuses were thousands of devoted workers who carried out, in a spirit of adventure, the tasks of building the structures on which our present civilisation is based. Some of these institutions were undoubtedly brought into our lives by our alien rulers for their own ends. But today they belong to us to cherish and to take forward. The Post Office is one such institution.

In order, however, to view the development of postal communication in India in a proper perspective, it is necessary to see what conditions prevailed and what facilities were available for the transmission of mails in those early days.

POSTAL LINES FOLLOW MILITARY ROUTES

From the time of Lord Clive to the time of Lord Dalhousie, the history of India was the history of the expansion of the British commercial and imperial interests in our country. Postal lines either followed military routes or the army took advantage of expanding postal communication facilities for establishing their routes and locating their cantonments. It is difficult, at this stage, to state, with any degree of certainty, which particular lines were opened first and which came later. But, roughly, we can see from military route maps of that time, how the planning of military routes and of postal lines coincided. To travel from Madras to Bombay, a distance of 836 miles, the military-*cum*-postal road route passed through Nellore, Ongole, Mulkapur, Secunderabad, Gulburga, Sholapur, Poona, Khandala and Panvel. The journey was covered in 72 stages, of an average length of eleven miles. Six Post Offices, and nine tappal stations, ran runner lines all along the route, the entire journey being covered in a period of ten to twelve days.

Two other routes were also used between Bombay and Madras and one of them passed through Bellary, Bijapur, Pundharpur and Yanagaum. The distance was 764 miles and was covered in 71 stages. The other route which passed through the Mysore State through Bangalore, Harihar, Dharwar and Poona, was 820 miles long and involved 77 stages. Apart from the Post Offices and Tappal stations, the route was interspersed with staging bungalows located at convenient distances. The average weight of mails carried by an individual runner was 30 seers in the plains and 25 seers in the hills; and the average speed varied between three and three and a half miles per hour.

RAILWAYS CHANGED ALL THAT

The advent of the railways changed all that. The first railway line that ran between Bombay and Thana was about 30 miles in length. It was opened on the 16th April 1853. Ten years later in 1863, postal communication along the railway line reached a mileage figure of 2,473, while the

Dak travelling in 1832.

mileage of other postal lines was 5,156 by mail cart and horse dak; 33,853 by runners and boat lines; and 5,137 by sea. Five years earlier, the mails had been conveyed along only 2,973 miles by railways, 508 by mail cart and horse dak and 31,152 by runners and boats. The cost of conveyance of dak by lines other than railways varied from province to province. While in the Bombay, Bengal and North Western Province, the average cost per mile of foot lines was about Rs. 1/10/-, dak carriage by foot lines cost as much as Rs. 3/3/- per mile in Madras. The average cost of running mail cart lines varied from Rs. 11/2/4 per mile to Rs. 17/11/9 per mile. There could be no comparison of the cost of conveying mails by boat in Bombay and Bengal. In Bengal, boat carriage cost Rs. 1/4/6 per mile, while in Bombay it cost Rs. 11/5/1 or ten times as much.

The conveyance of mails was, however, far from satisfactory. An interesting eye witness account of the 'dawk' system is given by an English lady who was living in India at that time. In her diary note, dated 28th April 1859, she says:

> 'April 28.—Her Majesty's mail! What would Rowland Hill say could he witness the bi-monthly arrival of the overland here! Eight bare-legged coolies, bestriding as many spectral ponies, come scampering into the cantonment with a shout that might be mistaken for an Indian war-cry : and then depart, helter skelter, as they come, like a burlesque of a steeple-chase. This exhibition lasts through the three days following the arrival of the steamer at Bombay after which the eight ponies dwindle down to one. The stages are, I am told, from six to eight miles. I often marvel how this mode of conveyance can be a more economical one than the employment of a light mail-cart, involving the entertainment of only a single horse and man for each stage. It is true that the latter arrangement would necessitate the construction of a tolerable road; but road-making is not a very expensive work in this country, where the daily hire of a labourer is only about two annas (three pence) ; and where, too the prisoners are occasionally employed on the work."

Conveyance by railways meant an increase not only in the speed of transmission but also in the total weight of mails carried. Until the time when the railways managed to have the clause, under which they carried

mails free, abrogated, it also meant a saving in transportation costs. Transit speed increased from three and a half miles per hour on the foot line to, what was then thought a marvellous achievement—20 miles per hour on the railway line! Between Madras and Bombay, the average speed along the mail-line route, using variegated transport, was seven and a half miles per hour, while between Madras and Calcutta, where the entire distance was covered by foot lines, the average speed was three and a half miles an hour. Where the mail cart was used throughout the journey for the conveyance of mail, as in the run between Ranigunge and Burhee, the average hourly speed was nine and a half miles in the dry season and eight and a half miles during the monsoon. The Calcutta-Benaras railway run covered the distance at 20 miles an hour—the fastest train in those days!

The use of even intermittent railway sections, coupled with the use of mail-carts and horse daks, helped to decrease considerably the time taken between the different stations. From Madras to Bombay, the time was less than halved; whereas previously the mail took ten or twelve days, in 1863 it took only five days for the dak to reach the other end of the line. Gauhati in Assam was 18 days away from Madras and 14 days from Bombay.

Further confirmation of the fact that the railway and postal lines were projected on the basis of military or political expediency comes from the fact that while it took ten days for the Calcutta mails to reach there from Secunderabad, and five days to Calcutta from the nearby port of Chittagong, it took only seven to eight days for communications from Bannu, Peshawar, Kohat and Abbottabad to be received in Calcutta, the then seat of the Government.

Even in the decade ending with 1863, the course of postal development was not very smooth. There were constant squabbles with the Railways over the carriage of mails and a tussle went on between the Imperial Post and the Provincial Governments over the control of the District Post.

RUMBLINGS OF 'THE MUTINY'

The outstanding event of the period, however, was the first war of Indian independence, deliberately mis-called 'The Mutiny' by British historians. There had been rumblings before this revolt took place, for the policy of annexation, introduced by Lord Wellesley, and effectively pursued by his successor Lord Dalhousie, had not been favourably received. But the Government had relied on the support of 'native sepoys' who formed a

large part of the Company's forces in India to conquer the country. Now the sepoys themselves were seething with discontent, because of the oppression which their families suffered under the new taxes levied by the British and the corruption and favouritism they introduced in rewarding some while exploiting the others, and it only wanted a spark to ignite the explosion.

The spark was provided on March 29, 1857, when the Brahmin Sepoy Pandey killed a British Officer at Barackpore. Two months later the sepoys struck. Kuar Singh led his men against the British in Sasaram. On the tenth of May, the Meerut garrison rose up in arms and the conflagration spread to Kanpur, Lucknow, Delhi and many other places.

ARSON AND LOOT

An event of such historic importance, which almost succeeded in breaking the British hold on India, and which made the Crown take over the Indian administration from the East India Company, was not without its repercussions on the Indian Postal system.

The Post Office could hardly remain unscathed in such wide-spread disturbances. In the Bombay Circle ten travellers' bungalows, and seven Post Offices were burnt down and ten were evacuated. Every line was imperilled and interrupted. There was great animosity against postal officials and considerable difficulties were experienced in keeping the offices and lines open. Records and stamps were destroyed. The lines particularly affected were those through Rajputana, Malwa, Khandesh and Southern Maharashtra.

In the Bengal Circle, as a result of Kuar Singh's insurrection, the Grand Trunk Road between Sasaram and Benaras was closed, and some dak bungalows above Sherghotty burnt down. The revolt of the hill tribes near Sambalpur caused a stoppage of communications between Bombay and Calcutta.

A Deputy Postmaster and an overseer were killed, a runner wounded and a number of Post Offices in Bihar looted. In the North Western Province and Oudh practically all communication lines were closed and quite a number could not be reopened even a whole year after the violence had subsided.

The administration report of the Department for the year 1857-58 bemoans the deleterious effect of the disturbances on the revenue and traffic returns, and goes on to say, that 'a report of the transactions of the present

year is chiefly a narrative of the effects of the disturbances on the Post Office Department. The results shown herein cannot, therefore, be fairly compared with those of the previous years.'

Rai Bahadur Salig Ram (The first Indian Postmaster-General)

4. The Post Office Grows

BY 1863, the effect of the disturbances had practically worn off and the Government could now look forward to the future in a mood of chastened sobriety. In those days projected progress was not measured by the barometer of target figures. Though all plans and policies for advancement were still based on political and military expediency, difficult to overrule, public interest could not be completely ignored.

POST OFFICE FOR EVERY 5,000

Considerable progress could be reported in the expansion of the postal services by 1871. Almost every town possessing a minimum population of 5,000 was provided with a Post Office or a Receiving House. Smaller places were not neglected; they were equipped with letter boxes, which were served by itinerant messengers attached to the nearest post office.

SHEDDING OF NON-POSTAL FUNCTIONS

The most important development was, however, the gradual shedding of its non-postal functions by the Post Office. As the provision and maintenance of travellers' bungalows, the military van dak and 'banghy' (parcel) services, and the transport arrangements for travellers on state visit, were

not the concern of the postal department, these were transferred to the department whose primary responsibility they were or should have been. This was to prove very advantageous to the postal department, for it freed the postal officials from the unnecessary responsibility of looking after non-postal activities and consequently paved the way for the growth of purely postal functions.

DEVELOPMENT OF FOREIGN MAIL

While the Indian Post Office was consolidating its position inside the country, the development of foreign mail system had not been neglected. In 1867, a twelve-year contract was signed with Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Co., to run weekly services between Bombay and Great Britain. The subsidy of £400,000 was to be paid, but a proviso was added to the contract that this should be raised to £500,000 if the Company could not give to its shareholders a dividend of 6 per cent on their investment. This was palpably so inequitable that it was rescinded and, three years later, a clause was added fixing the subsidy at £450,000, unrelated to the dividend rate.

INDIA JOINS THE UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION

The necessity of fixing postal rates to various countries, with which India exchanged correspondence, made India decide to join the Universal Postal Union. The application was sponsored by Great Britain and presented to the first conference in 1875. The acceptance of Indian membership was, however, held in abeyance till July 1876, six months before which India and Great Britain had signed a treaty for a transit rate in addition to the international rate of 4d. fixed for overseas mail. This was done in order that the loss on the sea mail service, which amounted to £45,000, would be partially met by the Indian contribution of £25,000 on account of the increased rate in the postage. It is important to note that, in 1876, a special six anna stamp was issued for use in the overseas correspondence.

FIGURES TELL

By 1875-76, the postal railway line had reached 6549 miles, and the postal articles carried had touched 119·47 millions. Ten years earlier in 1865-66, the number of postal articles handled was only 60·9 million just about half the number carried in 1875-76. These are telling figures!

VALUE-PAYABLE PARCEL SERVICE

A year later, in 1877, the Indian Post Office started a valuable adjunct to its mail service—the cash on delivery system, or, as it is termed in India, value-payable parcel service. Under this the department not only undertook to deliver an article to the addressee, but also arranged to collect from him its value on delivery. This helped the people in outlying areas to make their purchases from cities without incurring the expenditure of a journey.

INSURANCE OF PARCELS

In the same year, insurance of postal parcels, at ½ per cent of the value, was introduced. At that time no limit was prescribed to the extent to which an article could be insured, but in the early nineties, as the Post Office had to fork out Rs. 10,000 on an insured parcel which failed to reach its destination, the limit had to be fixed at Rs. 1,000. Subsequently the limit was raised to Rs. 5,000.

CHEAP POST CARD

Another great need, that for cheaper postal stationery, was met when inland and foreign post cards were issued for the first time in 1879.

MONEY ORDER AND HOW NOT TO PAY NAZARANA

The year 1880 marks another milestone in postal progress. Till this year money orders were issued and paid at Government treasuries which numbered only 283. This caused considerable inconvenience to the public and large amount of potential traffic was lost. In this year, the 5,500 post offices were authorised to receive and pay money orders without the presence of the payee at the office being necessary. The introduction of the money order, and its use for revenue and rent transmission, saved the public the harassment of undertaking long journeys to pay these charges in person. At the same time it made it possible for them to specify the particulars of debts or of the charges, relating to which the money orders were sent. The remittances of money through the Post Office constituted evidence of payment and effectively precluded fraudulent entries being made in the registers of the landlords or his agents. Another advantage which the cultivators and others gained through payment 'in absentia', by money order, was that

it freed them from the obligation to observe the prevailing custom of *nazarana* or giving a present to the creditors, at the time of paying back the principal or the interest.

NATIVE STATES AND THE IMPERIAL ORGANISATION

While the Post Office was intensifying its services and increasing its activities gradually, large areas, which did not constitute British Indian territory but were ruled by Indian Princes, fell outside the ambit of the Indian Postal System. If the postal systems were to be territorially unified, or at least to be placed on a basis of uniformity of procedure, the Indian States had to come in and co-operate with the Imperial Organisation. Patiala was the first princely state in India which discussed the proposal to enter into a convention in 1880, but the issue between the Council of Regency and the Government of India was only decided in 1884. In his memorandum dated the 3rd July 1883, Sir Fredrick Hogg, the then Director-General of the Post Office, wrote:

> 'I have now under consideration a new system for an exchange of correspondence with the Patiala State. The measure is one of no small importance, for, if it succeeds, the system can be extended to other Native States in India and more especially to those situated in the Ambala Division. We shall thus, I trust, largely develop the correspondence of those States with British India and increase considerably our money order traffic and other branches of business.'

By 1885, Gwalior, Jind and Nabha had entered into the agreement with the Indian Government, followed by Chamba and Faridkot in 1886. But it was not until 1893, four years after the amalgamation of the Mysore Post Office with the Imperial Post, that the policy of postal unity was announced by the Government of India. During the next 16 years, 635 out of the 652 Indian States had cast their lot with the Indian Post Office.

THE POOR MAN'S BANK

The question of unification of the Post Office, and the spread of its influence in the non-British Indian territory did not occupy the minds of the Imperial Government to the exclusion of other projects of public importance. One such was the introduction of savings bank facilities in

the Indian Post Office. In 1882, it was decided that the savings bank accounts should be open for depositors with small savings. This was expected to provide facilities for the poor and the lower middle classes: they could put by small amounts with assured safety and liquidity of funds. Prior to this, without organised banking facilities, the people with small amounts of money never felt safe. Their money had either to be deposited with a mahajan, or hoarded in the form of gold or silver ornaments, a risky business at all times but much more in those days when scarcity of food often led to thefts in the lean months. The Post Office savings banks, which had, in 1883, 39,121 accounts and Rs. 2·796 million as deposits from customers, carried, in 1954, no less than 5·1 million accounts with Rs. 232 million in deposit.

CERTIFICATE OF POSTING

The now familiar certificate of posting and the express delivery are two facilities which were first made available to the public in 1897-98. In that year the public was given the privilege of obtaining for ½ anna, a certificate of posting from the post office for any number of unregistered parcels or value payable articles, or unregistered packets not exceeding six. Though the practice of issuing a certificate of posting was given up a little later, it had to be reintroduced.

EXPRESS DELIVERY SYSTEM

To see that the mail reaches the addressee as soon as possible, is the duty of the Post Office, but where mails are heavy and their delivery from door to door takes a lot of time, it is inevitable that the last addressee on the beat gets his mail hours after the first addressee. To expedite delivery, an express delivery system was introduced by which the sender, by fixing stamps for a nominal fee of two annas, could have the letter sent to the addressee by special messenger immediately the sorting was over, so that such letters might reach well in advance of the ordinary mail. This facility, of course, could only be made available in places where the telegraph office existed.

POST OFFICE ALSO BECOMES TELEGRAPH OFFICE

In the year 1883 a scheme was worked out and put into effect for 'utilising the Post Office in extending the operation of the Telegraph Depart-

ment.' Under this scheme, which was launched on 1st December 1883, all post offices became receiving offices for telegrams. By the end of the year, 55 combined offices were opened, and 270 postal servants were trained for telegraph work. By 31st March 1906, the number of combined offices had gone up to 2,029 and the number of signallers on the Post Office establishment was 2,866. Messenger boys in the combined offices numbered 907. With the large increase in telegraph work done by the Post Office, it was but natural that the proposal made in 1862 to combine the Post Office and the Telegraph Departments, should again be mooted in 1906. Though it was found unacceptable at the time, seven years later, the scheme for amalgamation was drawn up and the two departments were actually amalgamated on 1st April 1914, into a single department, with a Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs at the head.

5. The First World War

IT HAPPENED TO INDIA

LIKE ALL cataclysmic, earth-shaking events, the war of 1914-1918 engulfed the whole world. The Imperialist press told a garbled story of the beginning of this conflict through the murder of an arch-duke of *Serajevo,* but the actual causes of the bloody struggle were to be sought in the lust for colonies and possessions of those European continental powers, like Germany, which had come too late on the world scene to enjoy the spoils of conquest in the underdeveloped parts of Asia and Africa. And though this war did not happen in India, it happened to India. For India, as part of the British Empire, was declared to be at war with Germany and her allies. And every department of governmental machinery in our country was mobilised into the war effort. The Indian Post Office was no exception.

The postal history of the period 1914-18, therefore, covers two entirely different and yet complementary activities. On the one hand, the Indian Post Office had to cater to the needs of the Indian Expeditionary Forces overseas and, on the other, it had to maintain its services for the civil population at home. These tasks were carried out with a high sense of duty by all concerned, whether they believed in the war or not.

KEEPING UP THE MORALE OF THE TROOPS

The Chief Base Post Office was located in Bombay, and each of the Expeditionary Forces was provided with a Base Post Office, first located at Marseilles and then moved on to Orleans. It is a tribute to the efficiency of the Indian postal service that letters to the members of the Indian Expeditionary Forces despatched from London were delivered the next day in France, long before the British Tommy received his own home mail. The Indian Field Post Offices in East Africa were called upon to serve the amalgamated 'B' and 'C' Forces in addition to the British and South African troops. In the Middle East, a Base Post Office was opened at Basra, while in Egypt, where the Indian Expeditionary Force was sent to hold the Suez Canal, the Base Post Office, first located at Alexandria, was moved on to Salonica and then on to Chanak.

Throughout the war, the Indian Post Office actively cooperated with the Army Authorities in taking all steps possible to keep up the morale of the troops at the Front. For instance, the department granted to all members of the Indian Expeditionary Force, the privilege of sending correspondence of all classes to India free of postage. At the same time, letters and parcels and money orders were allowed to be sent free of charge to British and Indian prisoners of war in Europe. Postal articles, for and from prisoners of war, entering India, were also accepted free of postage and registration and insurance fees, and money order commission was waived.

In the second year of the war, the overseas mail had to face peculiar difficulties. The overland-route *via* Brindisi had already been closed in 1914 and the sea-route *via* Gibralter substituted. In June 1915, however, the overland route *via* Marseilles was reopened. Considerable amount of uncertainty was attached to the transit and receipt of mails during those troubled years. Two Peninsular and Oriental steamers, the 'Maloja' and 'Persia,' were sunk with a loss of all mails. The cross-channel steamer 'Sussex' was also sunk, though the mails were saved.

CAMP-FOLLOWERS

The Indian Post Office had put 2,000 men in the field. The department had mobilised, equipped and despatched original units to various theatres of war. The efficiency displayed by the units in the face of almost

insurmountable difficulties is evidence of the courage and resources of the men employed in this service. The chief handicap which the field post office had to face was that the Army Postal Service was not recognised as a full fledged combat unit. The army authorities were undoubtedly very anxious that the Army Post Office should arrange for the speedy receipt, despatch and distribution of mails, in order to boost up the morale of the Service. But the high command of regular forces neither felt any responsibility for, nor a pride in the association of the army with the Army Postal Service. The Post Office employees were merely camp followers. No day-to-day information about the location and movement of the forward army units was given and, in the absence of essential information, the base post office could not always serve the new locations. There were times when the Postal chief had to select his own headquarters, far away from the forces headquarters. But no permanent transport was detailed for the use of the Army Postal Services, and it had to depend for conveyance of mails on vehicles which it had managed to requisition from somewhere or the other. The units that had been sanctioned by the Postal administration were not adequate in strength or numbers. These units were formed in accordance with the rules and regulations laid down in the Postal Manual (war) and no firm estimate could be made of the lines of communication which had to be manned.

WAR LOAN BONDS

On 1st April 1917, the Post Office, for the first time in its history, undertook a new duty: that of issuing War Loan Bonds and Five-Year cash certificates.

REALIGNMENT OF CIRCLES

On the civil side during this period, a realignment of Circles was effected. The former Bengal and East Bengal Circles were replaced by two new Circles called the Bengal & Assam and the Bihar & Orissa Circles. For the first time, horse transport gave way to the new motor transport, which was introduced on a few routes between Madras and Calcutta.

DECLINE IN TRADE

During the period covered by the war, there was a considerable falling off in all classes of postal traffic with the exception of post cards, registered newspapers and unregistered parcels. This decrease was inevitable and can

be attributed to the decline in trade which occurred in the early days of the war.

CONGESTION

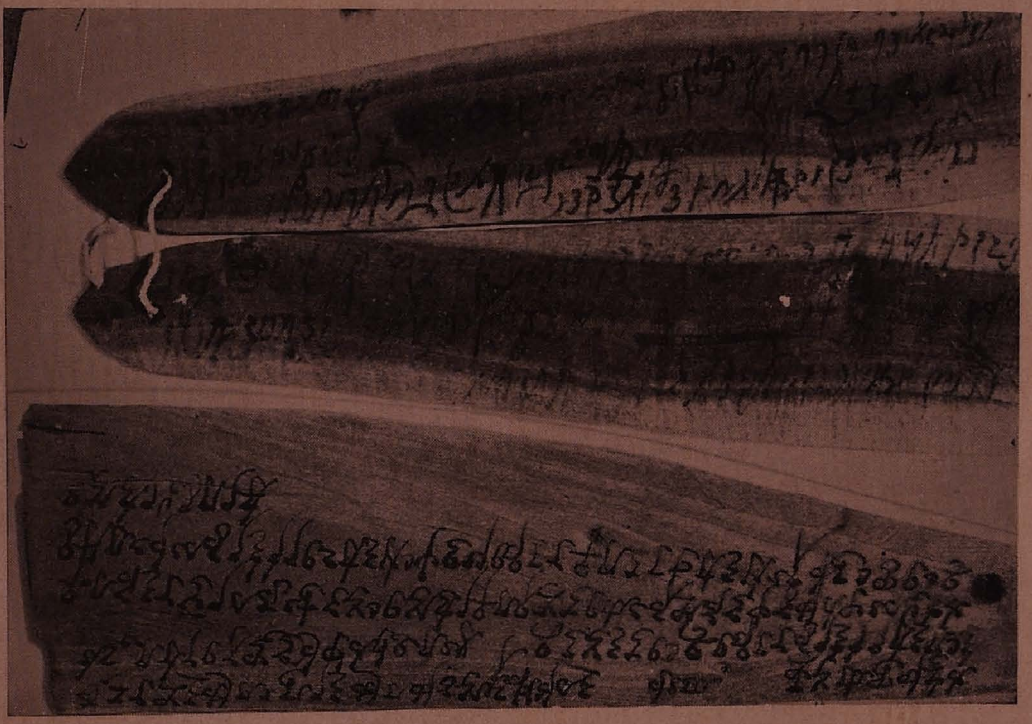
There were other emergency problems created by the war conditions. Towards the end of the holocaust, congestion on the railways had led to the diversion of a very large number of parcels, which would ordinarily have been carried by the railways, to the care of the post office. At one stage, it became impossible to deal with this parcel traffic or to find room for the parcels either in the postal premises or in the mail vans. Adjustments were soon made in this regard.

THE AFTERMATH

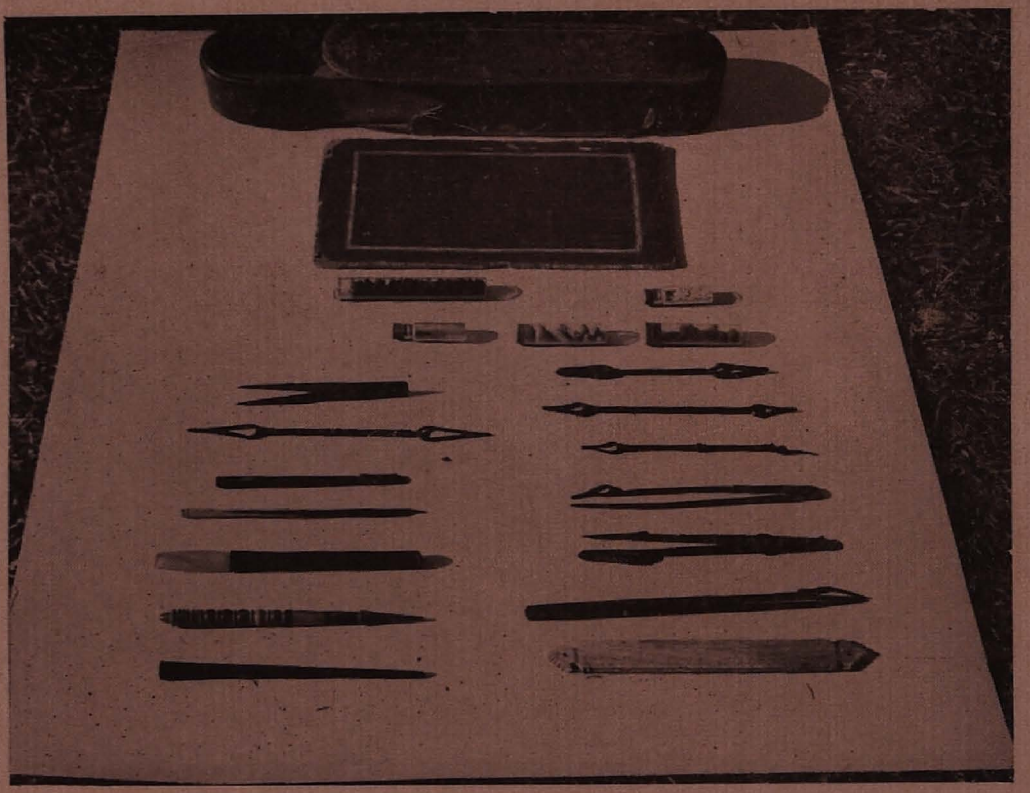
The war had left its mark not only on the defeated nations but even on the victors. The Treaty of Versailles, and the reparations it imposed on a crippled Germany, acted like a boomerang, even as Professor John Maynard Keynes had predicted in his prophetic book *The Economic Consequences of Peace*. It upset the political economy of the entire world and brought a recession which lasted for almost a decade. But long before the depression had set in, it was evident that British economy had been hard hit and that the body bolts of the Imperial structure had been loosened.

THE INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT

The war had also raised the political aspirations of many hitherto suppressed peoples, who felt that if the war had been fought for the preservation of democratic rights, then the principles of democracy ought to apply to the colonies of Imperialism. Popular feeling in India found expression in the voices of Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lajpat Rai and M. K. Gandhi. And the urges of the early liberal thought of Bengal gathered momentum in the new militant stand of the Indian National Congress for self-government. The imposition of the infamous Rowlatt Act, which restricted freedom of speech and movement immediately after the war, brought country-wide protests, which were sought to be suppressed by bloody violence by the Imperial Government. Sir Michael O'Dwyer's declaration of Martial Law in the Punjab, and the firing on a peaceful crowed in Jallianwallah Bagh in Amritsar, under General Dyer's orders, created a deep and unhappy impression on even the most moderate of the political leaders. The people



Letters on wooden blocks



Ancient writing and drawing instruments.

were in ferment. Indignation against British exploitation of India spread throughout the country. The intellectuals, the students, the peasants and workers all joined together, in growing numbers, behind the demands of the national movement.

POSTAL STRIKES OF 1920

About 1920 we see a new force coming to the force. The Postal Staff Union had till now been, more or less, quiescent. In 1919-20, the general revisions of pay and time scale were introduced, involving the postal department in an extra expenditure of Rs. 1·3 crores. The staff considered this to be insufficient. They had already been influenced by the nationalist non-cooperation movement of Mahatma Gandhi, which was creating new problems for established authority. In June 1920, the postmen and lower-grade workers of Rawalpindi went on strike, but resumed work unconditionally after about two weeks. This was followed by other strikes of varying intensity at a number of stations like Lahore, Multan and Nagpur. But the largest strike was in Bombay, which was the birth-place of the first Postal Employees' Union in India.

This Union of Bombay Postal Employees was founded by Barrister Dalvi in 1918. On the 20th September 1920, led by him and the other two redoubtable champions of labour, F. J. Ginwala and Joseph Baptista, affectionately known to millions as 'Kaka' Baptista, the postmen of the Bombay General Post Office and the various sub-offices struck work. The strike lasted for about five months, causing complete dislocation of the postal services in that area. The strike may not have been successful then, but it sowed the seeds of a country-wide movement.

This was symptomatic of the crisis of the times. Mills, factories, railways, all suffered, and the railway strikes quite naturally had a deleterious and demoralising effect on the postal services.

MONT-FORD REFORMS

The national and industrial ferment of the post war years was one phase of the Indian people's struggle for self-awareness. For a time, the country settled down under the Montagu-Chelmsford constitutional Reforms which were inaugurated in 1918-19. But Government had to face criticism and obstruction from the non-official members in the Central Legislature Assembly. And India battled in the legislatures, as well as through

Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent non-cooperation movement, for over twenty years to assert the right of the representatives of the public to have a say in the running of the administration.

PART I

6. 'The Long Week-end' and the Second Armageddon

ALTHOUGH a department of the state concerned with human relations and trade and other utilities of every day life may be formally outside the orbit of important political events, the experience of the First World War had shown that, in the modern world no sphere of human life can escape the effects of an international conflict.

Unfortunately, after the Treaty of Versailles had been signed in 1919 and peace declared, there was not much cause for jubilation among the bulk of mankind. For, while the Imperialist nations pleaded for peace, they actually prepared for yet another war. They were not ready to give up their colonial possessions, which had been the bone of contention between them and which had thus caused the First World War. The spirit

of good neighbourliness and internationalism which the saner minds of the world sought to cultivate was often brushed aside in the name of 'real-politik'. And by the dexterous use of half lies and quarter lies the Imperialist press subverted the very ideals of non-aggression, freedom of small nations and democracy, which they had help up as principles for which millions had been sent to the trenches to die. The atmosphere of untruth and intrigue was encouraged by the great powers, and their patent greed showed through the League of Nations, which the poet Iqbal uncannily characterised as,

'. . . a company of undertakers formed to allot the graves.'

A few years after the cease-fire, there were a million men under arms in Europe, and the Western allies were encouraging the enemy countries, whom they had but recently subdued, to build up reactionary, militarist and Fascist regimes. The allies were afraid that they may have to fight their previous enemies again, but hoped to create a balance of power which might save them. Meanwhile, through chauvinist propaganda the allies tried to create a screen to hide their own will for selfish domination of other peoples, only conceding to the subject peoples a few crumbs from the exalted Imperialist democratic table. Peace between the First World War and the Second Armageddon, which was to follow two decades later, was no more than an armistice, or 'the long week-end', as the poet Robert Graves has called it.

THE REFORMS

During this 'long week-end', the resurgence of Indian nationalism had forced the British Imperial power to concede a certain amount of self-government, under which some representation was allowed to the people in the central legislatures, and a system of dyarchy introduced in the provinces. At the Centre, a bi-cameral body, consisting of two chambers, the Council of States and the Legislative Assembly, had been set up. The Council of States consisted of 59 members, of whom 33 were elected and 23 nominated. Of the nominated members, 19 were official. The Legislative Assembly consisted of 143 members of whom 103 were elected and 40 nominated. Of those 40 nominated members 25 were official. The official and the nominated members, respected the Government whip and voted *en bloc*. They were more often than not joined by elected

waverers. On the other hand, the opposition could at times muster a strong vote, thus making it difficult for the Government to have an easy time securing the passage of each and every bill through a recalcitrant assembly, which could force the issue and call for certification by the Viceroy of all rejected bills.

THE BATTLE OVER THE POST-OFFICE BUDGET

This is what actually happened in the case of the Posts & Telegraphs Department, when the Government brought a proposal in the Legislative Assembly, in its Finance Bill to double the rates of postage on letters and post cards. The case of the Government was that the department could not pay its way with the existing postage charges, which were only a third of the British mail charges, though, on an average, the distances over which mails were carried were five times more than those in Great Britain. The post-war revisions of pay had increased the working expenses of the Indian Posts & Telegraphs Department from Rs. 3·54 crores to Rs. 6·29 crores. There was a very heavy annual deficit. In the spring of 1922, during the debate on the Annual Budget, the matter was thrashed out between the Government and the elected members of the Legislative Assembly and the proposal to double the postage rates on letters and post cards was carried against all opposition. The extra revenue that the Government expected from this increase in postage rates was of the order of Rs. 1 crore. While the actuals fell short of the estimates by only Rs. 20 lakhs, the immediate effect of the increased postage was a heavy reduction in ordinary mail traffic, some areas showing a drop of as much as 30 per cent. A temporary post-war boom, however, was on and the prognostications of the non-official members did not seem to be justified.

The elected members, however, returned to the charge again and again, and a battle royal was fought on the floor of the House, in the spring of 1924-25. During the discussion on the Finance Bill of 1925, a strong demand was voiced for a return to the ½ anna letter and ¼ anna post card. The protagonists of this measure were of the opinion that the loss in revenue on account of lowered rates would be compensated for by the enhancement in traffic.

The Government strongly resisted the move, believing that such a step would cripple the Department financially. It averred that the Posts & Telegraphs Department was a business concern and the prime consideration

was that it should pay its way. A reduction of rates, the Government argued, would be tantamount to subsidising private correspondence at the expense of the tax payer. And in this year the role of the Posts & Telegraphs Department was clearly defined as a commercial department of the Government of India.

It would be appropriate, in this context, to mention that a similar fight for reduced mail postage was being carried on, about the same time, in Great Britain. The British Post Office, which was earlier described by Henniker Heaton 'as the milch-cow of the treasury,' had become, according to members of parliament, merely a tax gathering machine for the Government, which had no money to spare for the improvement of the services. They demanded a return to the penny postage. The Postmaster-General, backed by the Treasury, successfully resisted the demand and pointed out that it would involve the exchequer in an annual loss of £5·5 millions. So both in India and in England, the higher rates of postage remained unaltered.

DECLINE AND RENEWAL

In the late twenties a major recession had set in and its effect on traffic can only be gauged by comparative figures of the traffic returns which showed a steady decline to the tune of 25 per cent. in the case both of letters and post cards. The total decrease of 292 million in all postal articles handled was a depressing factor indeed. The tabulated analysis below helps to show a correct assessment of the position.

(Figures in millions)

Years	Letters Ordy. & Regd.	Post Cards	Total No. of articles (letters & parcels) Ordy. & Regd.
1900-01	251	218	532
1929-30	575	586	1,392
1930-31	540	541	1,300
1931-32	481	493	1,175
1932-33	468	451	1,121
1933-34	457	439	1,100

By 1934-35, however, the corner had been turned and the traffic showed an upward trend. In 1939-40, the total number of postal articles handled reached 1,255 million which even then had not reached the peak figure of 1391 million of a decade earlier.

NEW PROJECTS

During the period between the two wars certain new projects were undertaken

CONTROL

In 1923, the Posts & Telegraphs Department passed from the administrative control of the Public Works Department to that of the Industries and Labour Department of the Government of India.

U.K.-INDIA AIR MAIL SERVICE

On the 26th April 1929, the U.K.-India Air Mail Service was inaugurated. Six months later, the Indian State Air Services began to operate between Delhi and Karachi.

IDENTIFICATION CARD

Even during the recession, the Post Office took steps to assist the commercial and business interests by introducing various new facilities. One was the Postal Identification Card, which was issued first in 1929. This document, which was issued on a nominal charge of Re. 1, was a great help to foreigners, and travelling agents of various commercial firms, who were put to a lot of inconvenience whenever they had to take delivery of parcels, insured letters and money orders, at places where they were not known, because it made their identification clear to the postal officials.

BUSINESS REPLY CARD

Another facility was the Express Delivery System which was revived in 1930, while, in 1932, Business Reply Cards and Envelopes were introduced. These became very popular amongst the traders, who were in the habit of sending stamped covers or cards to their prospective customers for reply, which were not utilised by the latter in a large number of cases. Under the new facility, the postage was collected by the Post Office from the addressee, and thus a prospective customer had no obligation to pay postage; he merely had to post the letter and the addressee did the rest.

'TIME-TEST' FORMULA

From the point of view of the postal workers, the year 1929 was

important. In that year the Bewoor-Mukerjee 'time-test' formula was evolved and subsequently adopted by the Government as a basis for determining the strength of Post Office establishments. The 'time-test' is first mentioned in the records of the Postal Directorate in 1895. The scheme, then worked out by Mr. Homan, and adopted in 1898, became out of date mostly as a result of the war, and a revision was ordered in 1920, the revised formula being adopted in 1932. This revision created more problems than it solved. New items of work such as value-payable post, insured articles and parcels, the introduction of new issues and cash certificates and the requirements of the audit office for different returns with regard to savings bank work and the new regulation requiring money orders being sent in closed bundles, all tended to outmode the formula. A deputation of Postal Unions waited on the Member of the Council-in-charge of the portfolio in March 1925, as a result of which a new enquiry was ordered by the Government.

Government nominee, Gurunath Bewoor, and Union representative, Tarapada Mukerjee, set about the task in 1928 and submitted their report a year later. Their recommendations were accepted by the Government and the formula then evolved has worked satisfactorily. It has survived a major economic depression, a world war and the partition of the country. And it still forms the basis for determining the strength of the postal and mail establishments.

INDIAN POSTAL ORDER

Members of the public, who normally remit small amounts, were catered for by the introduction, in 1935, of the Indian Postal Order.

EMPIRE MAIL SERVICE

In 1937-38, the Foreign Mail was put on a new footing, with the introduction of the Empire Air Mail Scheme. Under this, all first class mails, letters and post cards, were carried by air to various foreign countries. This scheme was later extended to other classes of postal articles. A mobile Post Office was introduced in 1938-39 for the benefit of late posters.

DECLARATION OF WAR

Meanwhile, world tensions were mounting, and so were the chances of world conflict. By 1938, it was obvious that active and implicit aid to

Germany, Italy and Japan by the British Imperialist Government had failed to pay dividends and war had become inevitable. It came on the 3rd September 1939. India, as a unit of the British Empire, was made to join a day later.

POST OFFICE AND THE ARMY

The men of the Indian Posts & Telegraphs Department, who shared in all the trials and tribulations of this giant conflict, were not found wanting in any respect. The story of the Indian Army Postal Service during the Second World War deserves a chapter to itself and has been dealt with elsewhere. But it must be recorded here that those who manned the services, both at the Front and at home, fulfilled the most difficult assignment with a quiet and patient courage.

The Second World War brought to the fore another important question on which the Government had been vacillating. Time and again, the question of the formation of a regular Army Postal Service during peace time had been brought up, only to be turned down on the grounds of expense. But, if not all, at least some of the lessons of the First Great War had been brought home, both to the Army and the Indian Post Office, such as the necessity of overhauling its organisation and procedures. In 1937, the Field Post Offices were brought under the Military Organisation and the unfair and humiliating system of 'relative' ranks was abolished, with the result that Postal Units were placed on an equal footing with other combatant units. The Postal staff and officers were also to be included in the war establishments of General Headquarters, Force Headquarters, and Corps Headquarters. Unfortunately, no provision was made for junior postal officers or Inspectors in the Headquarters divisions, or the Lines of Communications areas. As a result of this the overall organisation of the Army Postal Service was subjected to some strain in the early days of the war. When the first field post offices were mobilised on the outbreak of World War II, some of the shortcomings of the new organisation began to show through the shining coat of the newly obtained combatant status. Prejudice died hard, and the regular military refused to accept the new postal officials and treated them as mere 'parvenus.' This was partially due to the volunteers of the Army Postal Service, who, having neither the experience nor the knowledge of army organisation, could not fit themselves into the new surroundings without prior military training and pre-

paration. Another defect was the inadequate provision of supervisory staff. Quite a number of volunteers also were too old for camp life overseas.

While the mobilisation and technical administration of Army Postal Units were still in the hands of the Director General of Posts and Telegraphs, and the War Section in the Posts and Telegraphs Directorate looked after their needs, units were raised as the exigencies of the Army Headquarters demanded. These newly mobilised units, and commissioned postal officers, were sent to Headquarters and to the formations indicated by the Army authorities. The situation was anomalous, as the civilian headquarters were never fully agreed on the deployment of mobilised postal units, their supply problems regarding postal stationery, general mail links etc., and also of their conditions of employment while on actual service. The problem of administration became so acute that a Postal Section was created in the Quartermaster-General's Branch in the Army Headquarters, in March 1941. A year later this was expanded into a Directorate, with Lt.-Col. G. N. Naidu, as its first Director. But, still all was not well, because the men and officers in the field never properly adapted themselves to their surroundings and always looked for guidance and direction to the civilian side to whom they were ultimately to return. The War Section in the Posts and Telegraphs Directorate also had little knowledge of army procedures, and their application of civil procedural norms to army matters resulted in unnecessary importance being given to trivial things to the exclusion of all-important matters like the circulation of mails to troops and extension of postal concessions and facilities to them.

In December 1942, the Government of India appointed a Military Postal Services Committee to inquire into the working of the Posts and Telegraphs arrangements for the Defence Services, with special reference to: (a) Speed and efficiency; (b) division of functions between the Civil and Defence Postal and Telegraph Services; (c) the recruitment, training and efficiency of the Military Postal Personnel; (d) the adequacy or otherwise of equipment, and to make recommendations and report whether the existing arrangements were adequate for immediate and future requirements. The Committee submitted their report in February 1943, as a result of which the Army Postal Directorate at the General Headquarters in India took over the entire responsibility of co-ordinating control of the Indian Army Postal Units in all theatres of war.

INDIA'S CHALLENGE TO THE IMPERIAL POWER

The war ended in Europe in 1945, but the victory proved to be expensive to Great Britain. For the process of disintegration of the British Empire that had begun after the First War, but which had been halted by the machinations of successive Machiavellian British politicians, culminated in the loosening of the British hold on her dominions and, more particularly, on the pivot of her Empire, India.

There had been considerable political unrest in India. For the Indian National Congress, which had expressly taken a stand against Fascism, in the pre-war years, wished the British power to declare India a free country in consonance with the ideals of democracy and freedom for which it said it was fighting against Fascism. In response to this demand, the national leaders were all incarcerated in 1942.

There was a spontaneous movement of revolt against the Government, which has been called the 'Quit India Movement', after Gandhiji's historic slogan of those days. During the disturbances, aroused by British high handedness, the Postal system suffered. A number of Post offices and letter boxes, particularly, in Bihar were set on fire and mails could only be exchanged with the greatest difficulty until communications had been restored.

The tide of public feeling was, however, too strong for the British. At the end of the war they had to negotiate with the very people whom they had put behind bars. The exploits of our own troops during the war, the saga of Subhas Bose and his Indian National Army, and the moral stand taken by Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and Patel, fired the imagination of our people. The naval ratings, both in the ships and shore establishments of Bombay, rose against their foreign officers. And men of the Air Force declined to obey their superiors and staged a sit down strike.

The British found it impossible to quell this rising tide of anti-imperialism and they had to appeal to the Indian leaders to help them. Sardar Patel was requested to intercede with the naval ratings and they listened to him and returned to work. History had demonstrated that the British Government could no longer rely on the Indian soldier, the sailor, or the airman, to turn his weapons against his civilian Indian brothers. The British decided to withdraw as gracefully as they could.

Meanwhile, the Posts and Telegraphs Department was having its own

troubles. In 1946, working men in general were becoming restive and the staff of the Postal and Telegraph systems was no exception. The pre-war wages could not keep pace with the post-war rise in the cost of living.

THE POSTAL STRIKE OF 1946

On the 11th July 1946, the postmen and lower grade staff of the Posts and Telegraphs went on strike in most of the larger towns, as a result of which there was complete dislocation of postal services over the country. Railway Mail Service was threatened with a complete breakdown. The bottleneck at Moghulserai prevented mail from going to Bengal, Assam and Orissa. Even the Governors of the provinces of Assam and Orissa did not receive mails for a fortnight. Window delivery systems were introduced in cities like Bombay, Calcutta and Madras and the skeleton services were run, with the aid of army personnel and civilian volunteers. But though the strike was widespread, it lacked public support and the strikers returned to work after 'round the table' negotiations in which National leaders played an important part.

THE CABINET MISSION

Lord Wavell, the then Viceroy of India. called a conference of political leaders in Simla. This proved to be abortive, because the British Government still believed that they could, by a miracle, retain some power. Later, a delegation consisting of Lord Pethick-Lawrence, Lord Alexander and Sir Stafford Cripps came to India and held parleys with leaders of all shades of Indian political opinion. They found, however, that the claims of the Muslim League, with a large noisy fanatical following, could not be ignored. An interim Government was formed, with Jawaharlal Nehru in charge of External Affairs, Muslim League leader Liaquat Ali Khan, Jinnah's Second in Command, took over the Finance Portfolio, and Communications came under Sardar Abdul Rab Nishtar. This Government was short lived.

TRANSFER OF POWER

On 15th August 1947, Lord Mountbatten, the Viceroy, announced the transfer of power, at the same time partitioning the Indian sub-continent into two separate dominions, namely, India and Pakistan.

On that day Jawaharlal Nehru became the first Prime Minister of the

new India. He entrusted Rafi Ahmed Kidwai with the important task of looking after Communications, of which the Indian Posts and Telegraphs Department was an integral and important part.

7. Chaos, Order and Progress

GANDHIJI'S non-violence and the will of the Indian people, had worked the miracle of an almost bloodless revolution and the Imperial Power had been made to 'quit India'.

THE PARTITION RIOTS OF COMMUNALISM

But the virus of communalism had bitten deep into the Indian mind through persistent British propaganda and, for a quarter of a century, life had been corroded by fear and distrust and frequent disturbances among two big religious groups, Hindus and Muhammadans. Whatever the immediate cause that led to the frenzied rioting in every town and village in the newly born Pakistan, the fact remains that pogroms were staged by the communalists against their erstwhile compatriots, the Hindus and the Sikhs. The Pakistan disturbances had their repercussions on Indian sentiment. On both sides of the border, violent disturbances took place, bringing massacre, arson, loot and anarchy in their train.

DISLOCATION OF POSTAL LINES

The Posts and Telegraphs Department, and the Railways, with their network of lines and service, were the most seriously affected during the disturbances. In the affected areas, the Posts and Telegraphs services were completely dislocated and valuable Government property was lost. The parts of the country grievously affected were the States of West Bengal, East Punjab and Uttar Pradesh and the areas around Alwar, Bharatpur and Jaipur. Trouble had also spread, though to a lesser extent, to other parts of Northern and Southern India. Train services on the main lines had been drastically curtailed and the branch railway lines had ceased to operate. There was very little respect for life and property in the affected areas in those harrowing days.

A large number of districts were under curfew and Section 144(A) of the Indian Penal Code had been clamped down in many places. It became extremely difficult for the Postal Department to arrange for the dispatch and delivery of mails. But the service rose to the occasion. The failure of the trains made it necessary for the administration to arrange to connect district towns by mail motor and thus to establish, almost overnight, a new network of postal lines, as communication by rail or road was impossible in the East Punjab. The disruption of lines by the disturbances had been worsened by the Punjab floods of August-September 1947. Chartered plane services were introduced between Delhi and Ferozepur *via* Saharanpur, Ambala and Jullundur. On the invasion of Kashmir by Pakistani raiders, an air service was also opened from and to Jammu and Kashmir. Mails had to be flown by special air mail service between Calcutta and Gauhati, as the main railway link connecting Assam with Bengal passed through East Pakistan.

The foreign air mail terminal in the pre-partition days had been located at Karachi. As Karachi was in Pakistan, it became necessary that the new terminal should be established in India. The Palam Airport near Delhi was selected for the purpose and was declared in November 1947, a customs aerodrome, and airmail articles, containing dutiable goods, could, thereafter, be subjected to customs examination at the Delhi airport.

The disturbances had not only broken down communications, but also exposed state property to danger and loss. During the post-partition riots no less than 530 Post Offices in the East Punjab had to be temporarily

closed. No less than 405 Post Offices suffered at the hands of the rioters and the cash and valuables looted from them amounted to over a lakh of rupees. In spite of the state of tension prevailing in the country, the postal services continued to operate without any breakdown.

The partition of India had presented the Postal administration with other problems, one of which was the depletion of experienced staff.

DIVISION DEPLETES EXPERIENCED STAFF

On the partition of India, all employees of the Government of India were given a chance to opt for service in either of the two dominions. They were also given six months' time to change their minds and could make their option, provisional instead of final, for a final choice was irrevocable. The magnitude of the interchange of staff can be seen from the fact that 136,159 persons exercised their right to opt and 108,708 opted for India and 27,811 for Pakistan. Out of those that selected Pakistan, 1,527 subsequently revised their option and elected to remain in India.

THE REFUGEES AND THEIR POSTAL CERTIFICATES

There was another problem, with a dual aspect. On the one hand, the existing rules and regulations made it impossible for the Department to assist the refugees in withdrawing their holdings in Postal Certificates and the deposits in the Savings Banks; and, on the other hand, common humanity demanded that something should be done. The mass migration of millions of persons from West Pakistan, after partition, to India meant that the emigrants, terrorised by the frenzy of communal disorder, left all their possessions behind; sometimes leaving even their postal cash certificates, National Savings Certificates, and Savings Bank Pass Books. Even those who had these documents in their possession, could not have recourse to ready encashment, as the normal procedure was elaborate and cumbersome and the emigrees could not satisfy the elementary condition for encashment, which required pre-verification and transfer of assets from their post office of registration to the post office where the encashment was to take place. Special facilities on a reciprocal basis were arranged with Pakistan and under this the refugee depositors could register their claims with the local post office and tender supporting evidence on a form specially prescribed for this purpose. This system allowed for a consolidated statement of each such claim to be sent to either dominion, and

the holdings were transferred from one dominion to the other. People, who had their savings bank pass books were allowed, on being identified satisfactorily, to withdraw upto a maximum of Rs. 500; and an indemnity bond, with two sureties, entitled them to withdraw upto the maximum limit of Rs. 1,000. This concession was subsequently extended to refugees from East Pakistan. This arrangement had to be discontinued after joint conference between India and Pakistan, when it was decided that encashment should be permitted only after verification from the post offices where such accounts stood.

NEW MAP OF INDIA

Under the new conditions created by the redrawn map of the subcontinent, the question of land communication between the Indian Union, and its outlying state of Assam, was exercising the minds of the authorities. The Radcliffe award had served to isolate Assam and North Bengal from the rest of India, the two being connected by a narrow strip without any railway facilities. The rail route through Pakistan was unworkable, as, time and again, Indian mails were held up and tampered with while in transit through that dominion. The railway-cum-road route was, therefore, opened from Calcutta to Siliguri by train, from thence to Cooch-Behar by road and further by train to Gitaldah, where it joined the Assam railway system. This naturally entailed a large number of trans-shipments from broad gauge to metre gauge, over a number of ferries and along 130 miles of roadway in trucks. Till such time as the railway-cum-road route could work satisfactorily, the conveyance of mails by air without any surcharge, was continued between Calcutta and Gauhati. In the case of Tripura, however, all mails continue to be airlifted even today.

PAY COMMISSION AWARD

A Central Pay Commission had been appointed in 1945, to iron out many of the anomalies which existed in the pay structures of Central Government Servants. As the Indian Posts and Telegraphs Department was one of the two largest employers of labour, a postal officer who had varied experience both at the centre and in the circles, was selected to serve on the secretarial side of the Commission's activities. The Commission completed its investigations and submitted a report in early 1947. The recommendations were adopted by the Government and were put into effect in August

1947. The benefits that accrued to the Posts and Telegraphs staff from the revision amounted to Rs. 1.82 crores in 1948-49, the first complete year of working after independence.

KIDWAI'S 'ALL-UP SCHEME'

An important feature of this period was the 'All-up Scheme' which was launched in 1949. For a service which had started with the runner, the palanquin and the cart, and which had, through its century of progress, used the railway and the mail motor for quicker conveyance, the idea of using the aeroplane as the fastest available conveyance mode of mail transmission was undoubtedly a logical development. But utilising the service for all ordinary first class mail without any surcharge was, also, a revolutionary step. In its early stages, the plan encountered opposition, but the then Communications Minister, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, piloted the scheme through to ultimate operational success to the consternation of the Jeremiahs who had foredoomed it, and to the delighted appreciation of the public who got the benefit of a phenomenally accelerated transmission of their correspondence without having to pay anything extra for the facility. This step incidentally removed the congestion in the Railway Mail Service Mail Vans, caused by the increase in traffic and the inability expressed by the Railways to provide new vans from their existing carriage and wagon workshops.

MORE POST OFFICES AND MORE PROGRESS

In 1951-52, a decision had been taken to effect an expansion of the Post Office in the rural areas. According to the 1951 census figures, the number of villages, with a population of 2,000 and over, which had no post office of their own was 5,795. By the end of 1952, no less than 5,105 post offices had been opened in the villages with a population of 2,000 and over.

The historical development of the Post Office can be seen in proper perspective if we just cast a fleeting glance at the progress of the Post Office since the turn of the century. The Post Office during this period had grown from strength to strength. The revenue in 1951 had grown to ten times the 1901 figure, while the number of articles handled by the Post Office had risen from a little over 589 million in 1901 to 2,270 million in 1951. The revenue per head of population showed an increase of nearly

nine times in the course of 50 years, while the average number of postal articles per head of population rose from 2·05 to 6·37. The progressive figures in the table below are illuminating:

Year	Population	Revenue Rs.	No. of articles	Average per head of population	
	(Figures in thousands)			Revenue	Articles
1901	282,607	2,07,56	589,405	0·07	2·05
1911	319,480	2,20,41	963,078	0·10	3·01
1921	310,402	5,82,75	1,410,429	0·19	4·54
1931	336,702	7,36,84	1,75,299	0·22	3·33
1941	382,191	9,85,25	1,271,924	0·26	3·33
1951	356,661	21,03,53	2,270,068	0·56	6·37

The increase effected from time to time in the postage rate charge had undoubtedly a bearing on the rise in revenue, but the postal articles per head of population can only be gauged from the standpoint of literacy and the improvement or otherwise in real earning of the people. The literacy figures, calculated on the basis of the total population, are 5·3 per cent for 1901 and 5·9 per cent for 1911. The system of computation adopted from 1921 onwards, related literacy percentage only to the section of the population over five years of age, and hence can be considered a better index of literacy than the ones based on the aggregate population. The progressive increase for each decade from 1921 to 1951 are: 8·2 per cent, 9·5 per cent, 14·6 per cent and 16·6 per cent. About a quarter of a

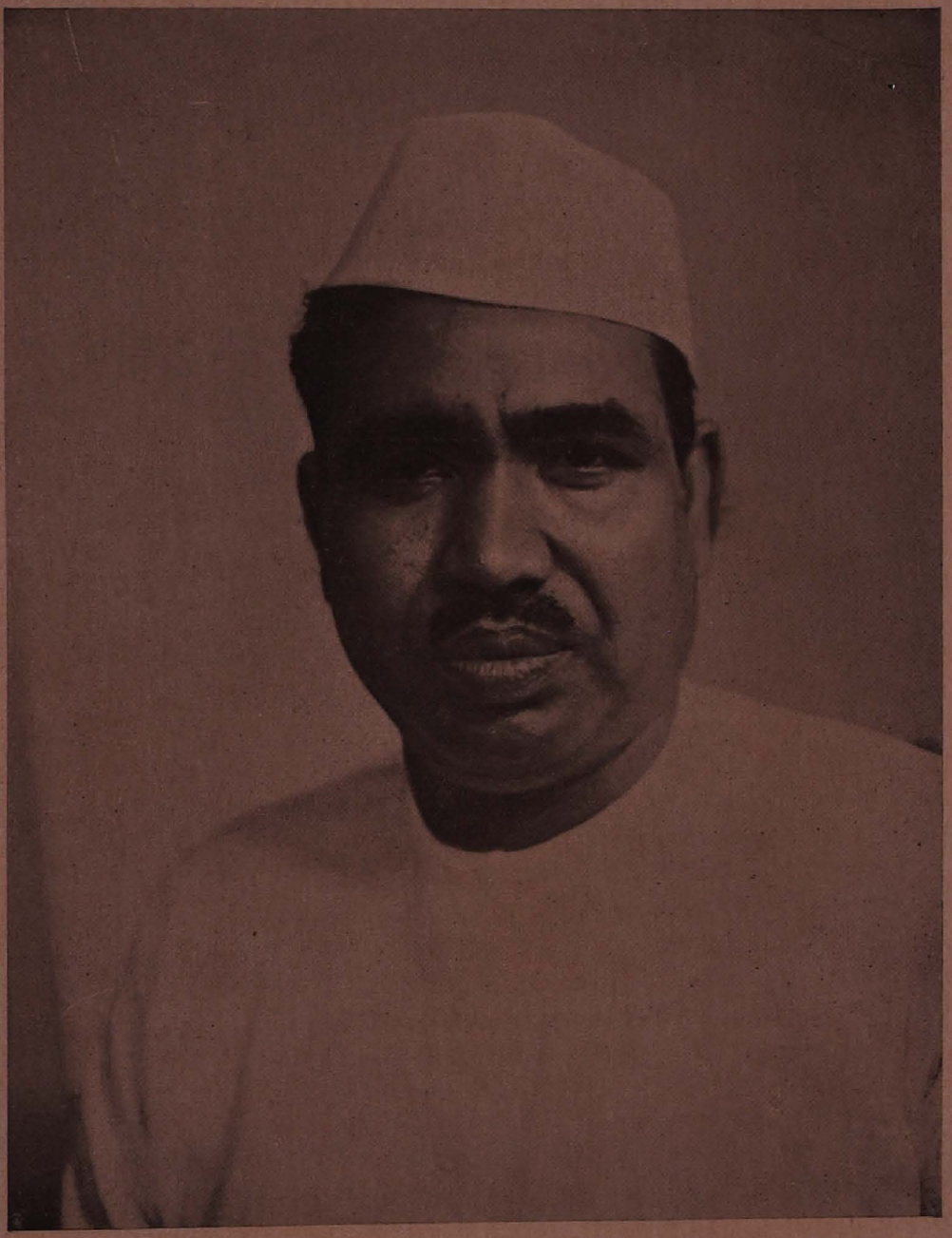
century ago, a Government Report stated that if the standard of literacy were to reach 70 per cent, the Indian Posts and Telegraphs Department would be the largest single public utility department in the world. Perhaps, we may not see this in our life-time, but the literacy curve is rising steeply and though we may not attain 70 per cent, in the immediate future, the time is not far off when we shall be able confidently to claim that more than half the adult population of this country is literate. And, with the increase of literacy, the traffic, and, incidentally, the revenue of the Indian Postal Department is bound to show a corresponding increase.

THE ROLE OF JAGJIVAN RAM

In May 1952, the Communications Portfolio changed hands. The new Minister, Jagjivan Ram, had been in charge of the Labour Ministry and brought to bear on his new charge not only his knowledge of labour problems, of which the Posts and Telegraphs have quite a few, but also his great love for the simple folk from the rural areas. It was natural that his mind should turn to the question of betterment of communications in the rural areas. A start had already been made by his predecessor, but more needed to be done. At the same time, concentration of post offices had to be avoided and an equitable distribution by communities worked out. To attain this objective, Government decided to open a post office not only in every village with 2,000 inhabitants, but to provide one each to a group of villages with an aggregate population of 2,000. One of the considerations for the opening of such offices was that no village in the group should be more than two miles away from the post office. The target fixed at the end of the financial year 1952-53 was 42,427 post offices, of which 5,686 were to be in rural areas and 3,674 in the urban areas. Actually on the 31st March 1953, the number of post offices in India had reached 43,203, a figure which exceeded the target—a remarkable achievement in itself. The target for the rural areas to be completed in the remaining three years under the First Five Year Plan has been fixed, at about ten thousand. So against 700 Post Offices in 1854 we have 45,907 in 1954. Thus during the last five years as many post offices have been opened as it had taken 100 years previously to establish.

HOUSING FOR POSTAL STAFF

Another important development in the 1952-54 period was the



Shri Jagjiwan Ram, Minister for Communications.

accelerated construction programme for postal buildings and residential quarters for the staff. From the earliest times the tendency had always been to locate the post offices in the cheapest available premise, whether acquired or rented. As a result the Post Office buildings have never been adequate, nor have they lent themselves when rented to the proper laying out of the office and public counters. Lighting and ventilation have mostly been poor, and the conditions under which the staff laboured were never conducive to high efficiency. Considerable credit must go to Communications Minister, Jagjivan Ram, for the accelerated tempo of construction, both of Post Office buildings and of staff quarters. In the case of the latter, the postal staff had been ill served in the past; for there was no proper provision of residential accommodation. The staff had expanded but the construction of quarters had lagged far behind. But with the new orientation of policy, in 1952, a different picture has emerged. In the three years 1949-52, the total number of staff quarters constructed was 433. In 1952-53, the number of new quarters that were added to the existing number came to 476. In 1953-54, there was further hectic building activity, with 200 quarters already completed, while sanction for the construction of 450 more had been accorded. Work on 400 of these quarters was near completion at the end of the financial year, and the 50 on which work had just been started, were scheduled for completion in 1954-55. On the office accommodation side, 16 new Post Office buildings and two postal stock depots at Lucknow and Patna, one Rest House at Delhi, were all constructed in the three years preceding the centenary. In addition to this, extensive alterations and extensions to ten existing Post Office buildings were effected in the same year.

OPTIMISM FOR THE FUTURE

The last year, preceding the centenary of the Post Office, closes on an optimistic note. There has been an all round increase in traffic and revenue. The sister departments of Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones, have been welded into one unified organisation. Increased attention has been paid to the betterment of the conditions under which the staff works and lives. And, above all, the Post Office has tried to project itself into the future with a better promise of things to come. More post offices, so that the smallest village need not be without postal facilities, better buildings, quicker transit of mails and a more efficient service—all these have been

kept in the fore-front of all new policies. The Post Office has lived upto its motto: 'Service Before Self.'

PART II
DESCRIPTIVE

1. The District Post

IN THE first part of this book, we have given a brief history of the Indian Post Office, barely touching upon the intricate ramifications of each section of this mammoth organisation of our country. Now we shall describe the various units and activities which make up this national enterprise, so that we can understand the past developments more intimately, study the evolution in detail and appreciate the importance of the cells which go to make the whole structure. A fundamental law of moral, as well as material progress, is the understanding of the functions of organisms, from which understanding the necessity for the evolution of higher and more efficient forms follows naturally. The changes that have been brought about in the last hundred years are in the nature of adjustments. The contingencies of our new welfare state may demand radical leaps forward. But, first, we must go into the prosaic facts on which this whole public utility service is founded.

THE NEED FOR THE DISTRICT POST

As is already evident, the evolution of the postal system into the present day organised and unified public utility has been a relatively slow process in our country. In the early stages of British rule in India, no regular system for the conveyance of letters existed, and it was extremely difficult for the central authority to establish contacts with far flung regions

of the country under its occupation. Political and administrative expediency demanded the establishment of postal communications connecting the main towns in various provinces under the company's control. The first step in the furtherance of this objective was taken by Lord Clive in 1761, as detailed in the Minutes of Consultations of the 24th March of that year. Private persons were not conceded the privilege of this postal system and they had to depend mostly on their own resources until 1837, when the use of the system was extended to them. The General Post, as then established, only connected the principal capitals with one another and with district headquarters. As the General Post, in its early stages, did not cover the entire area occupied by the Hon'ble East India Company's Government, another organisation, the District Post was developed, connecting the headquarters of each district with internal police and revenue stations, in accordance with the local requirements of the district.

HOW IT WAS PAID FOR

This localised postal system, established for official purposes, and known as the 'District Post', was manned by the District Officers or other local subordinates. And the expenditure on the service was met by a cess levied on the zamindars in Bengal and the North Western Province (now Uttar Pradesh), or on the local people in other areas, supplemented by central grants-in-aid. The cess on zamindars was the off-shoot of an earlier arrangement by which landholders were responsible for undertaking the conveyance of official correspondence. This was later commuted into money payments by Act VIII of 1862, when the money received on Zamindari Cess account fell short of the actual requirements for the maintenance of the District Posts. The deficit was met by grants-in-aid from the Imperial Government. Nearly in all cases, the revenue from cess had to be supplemented by these Imperial grants-in-aid. In the absence of a central authority to co-ordinate the activities and lay down uniformity of procedure, the services were extremely unsatisfactory and varied from area to area and there was no cohesiveness in the postal system as a whole.

THE VILLAGE CHOWKIDAR AS POSTMAN

The delivery of letters, received by the District Posts, was effected through the police and the village chowkidars, who had no inclination to take pains in discharging their responsibilities and delivered the mail 'in

quite a leisurely manner'. Although the primary object of the District Post was to deliver district and other official correspondence and parcels, it also undertook, on behalf of the Imperial Post Office, to provide for the collection and distribution of private correspondence, not only in the town areas, but also in villages which they served at intervals. As could be expected under such arrangements, a sixth of the covers sent to the police and other subordinates for delivery in the interior villages were returned by them as undelivered.

THE POSTMAN IS BROUGHT NEARER TO THE DOOR OF THE VILLAGE HUT

The introduction, in 1862, of new police arrangements, and the revision of judicial and revenue establishments in many parts of the country, brought home to the Government the necessity of placing the District Post on a more satisfactory basis. Any attempt to amalgamate the District Post, maintained by the local authorities, and the General Postal Services run by the centre, was considered untimely and the Government felt that the objective would be more effectively and appropriately realised by a graduated process of centralisation. The Provincial Governments had first to place the district postal services on an efficient footing and, if it proved self-supporting, the local service was to be taken over by the Imperial Post.

Under this arrangement, the District Posts in the North Western Province (now Uttar Pradesh) were the first to be transferred to the supervision and control of the General Post. A new office of Postmaster-General was created for the control and co-ordination of both the General Post and the District Post Services in the province. This was in 1864. The transfer included all districts except the border districts of Kumaun and Garhwal, where the control continued to rest with the District Officers till 1893. The transfer of the District Officers to the Imperial Branch of the Service began almost immediately after the decision was taken in 1863, 'thus liberating funds for bringing the postman nearer to the doors of the rural population.' As a result, almost all Tehsil headquarters, or towns, with a minimum population of 5,000, were to be provided with either a Post Office or a Receiving House. Smaller places were equipped with letter-boxes, served by itinerant messengers, who not only delivered correspondence and collected it from the regular letter-boxes, but also carried with them light portable boxes for carrying mail as well as postage stamps

for sale. The visit of this 'travelling human post office' had to be certified by the signature of the village patwari or any respectable resident of the area visited.

PROGRESS IN THE PROVINCES

The Province of Bombay followed suit and the control of the District Post Office was transferred from the local administration to the Postmaster-General in 1865. Here the District Post fund was utilised mostly for the provision of rural messengers, supervised by inspectors. The District Post in Madras was the third system to pass under the jurisdiction of the Imperial Post Office. In this service, prior to 1867, the arrangements for village delivery of correspondence were very primitive. Correspondence was delivered by subordinate village officials, who not only took no interest in the delivery of non-official correspondence, but even went to the extent of extorting illegal fees for delivering private letters. There were no letter boxes and no orderliness in the system, either in the matter of delivery or collection. The money grants were rarely spent in their entirety. In 1867 one district was transferred to the Imperial Post as an experimental measure but, by 1873, eleven more districts had passed into the hands of the Imperial Post. In the Central Provinces, the District Post was taken over by the Chief Inspector of Post Offices on the 10th December 1867. This province needed compartively small grants. Its own revenue from the District dak cess in 1874-75 was Rs. 38,749 and needed augmentation by way of Imperial grants to the extent of Rs. 8,700.

The Rajputana and Assam Postal Circles were perhaps the most difficult. The Rajputana Postal Circle being composed for the most part of Indian states had no proper means of delivery and the major portion of the correspondence found its way into the Dead Letter Office. In Assam the District Posts were most inefficient and were entrusted to the Police, who were already over-worked in that border province. Some improvement was noticed in Assam by 1874-75, when eight District Post Offices were turned over to the Imperial Post.

Bengal, of that time, presented a most unsatisfactory picture, in so far as postal matters were concerned. The pound keeper ran the district post; the pounds were located in police thanas, which precluded a very large number of people from using the post office. The correspondence was delivered by the chowkidar, who, with his other miscellaneous duties, found

little time to attend to his postal work. He was also not subject to supervision on the postal side of his duties. The distribution and collection of correspondence in the district was irregular and the tendency to correspond from, and to, the interior of the country, was naturally kept considerably in check.

HURDLES

A curious sidelight is thrown on the 'zamindari dawk' system in Bengal, which is synonymous with the District Post, by the fact that the cess levied under this was not normally utilised, prior to the advent of the Imperial Post, except in the furtherance of the needs of the revenue administration and of the district magistracy. The administration report of 1774-75 specifically mentions that the zamindari dak fund, during that year, amounting to more than three lakhs of rupees, had to be expended, under an existing law, on establishments required for police purposes, and could not be devoted to an improvement of the channels for the delivery and collection of correspondence.

'I am not without hope,' remarks Sir Frederick Hogg, the then officiating Director-General, 'that the Government of Bengal will see fit to alter the law in this respect.'

Although the decision to absorb the District Post Office gradually, into the General Post, had been taken as long ago as 1862, no less than 44 years had to elapse before the District Post Office ceased to exist. In 1903-4, there were 1,886 District Post and Receiving Offices, employing 2,824 persons. In 1904, the process of absorption of the District into the Imperial Post had been accelerated; and, a year later, there were only 927 District Post and Receiving Offices with a staff of 964. The administrative report of 1906-7 states that, by that year, all establishments maintained by the 'zamindari dawk' cess in Bengal and East Bengal, as well as those maintained by the local boards in Assam, were transferred to the Imperial establishment. The District Post in the Berars had also been imperialised. By the 1st April 1906, all District Post and Receiving Offices had been taken over by the Imperial Post Office.

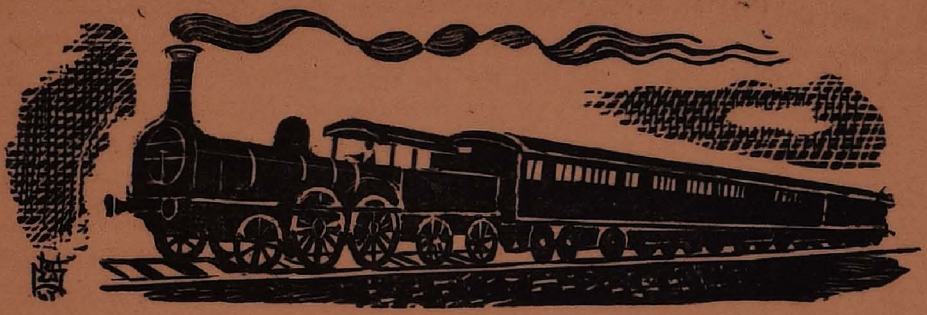
THE DISTRICT POST MERGES WITH THE IMPERIAL POST

The District Post was only meant for conveying official dak. Not only were private persons denied this facility, but even the zamindars, who main-

tained the district communication lines by employing 'hurkaras', paid out of their own pockets, were not allowed to use the organisation for their correspondence. The first time that the District Post was thrown open to the public, to a limited extent, was in the times of Warren Hastings. The District Post, which was controlled by the provincial administration and run by the district administration, saw further expansion under Lord Wellesley and Lord William Bentinck. After the Imperial Post had been placed on a sound footing, the need for the gradual abolition of postal 'dyarchy' arose, and the first step towards this was the realignment of the functions and responsibilities of the District Post *vis-a-vis* the Imperial Post. Though the original object was the provision of communications for revenue and police stations in the interior, by 1888, except in the province of Bengal, the district 'dawk' funds were 'largely spent on the rural delivery and opening of backward districts,' and this was recognised as one of the ultimate purposes for which they should be used.

By the end of Queen Victoria's reign, the British Government of India had firmly entrenched itself and it could, with equanimity, seriously consider the abolition of the system which had helped to extend and consolidate its empire in India.

The District Post had served its purpose and had outlived its usefulness. So it died. An epoch had ended.



2. The Railway Mail Service

THE MIRACLE OF THE RAILWAY

IN INDIA to-day while the modes of mail conveyance vary from the postal runner to the aeroplane, the railways have to bear the main burden of long distance transmission. The railways, as is well-known, form the main arteries through which the life blood of the postal organisation flows. And these main arteries branch out into other ancillary modes of transport, like the mail motor service, river craft, the bullock cart and the postal runner.

Till about the middle of the 19th century, transport in India was by means of pack animals, palanquins, bullock carts, river craft and small sailing vessels, just as it had been for centuries. The first railway project was mooted in the early 1840's, and a railway line opened for traffic on the 16th April 1853, between Bombay and Thana, a distance of about 30 miles, which seemed like a miracle to people of that time.

In his Minute of the 9th September 1853, Lord Dalhousie, whose initiative and drive had brought the railway and the telegraph to India, foresaw the effect railways would have on the development of the postal organisation and placed an obligation on all railway companies to carry mails free. The imposition of this obligation could not, however, produce results until there were railway lines of sufficient length to make quick transit possible. In the early days the growth of the railways was in sections, quite often discontinuous, and the railways could provide little assistance in the conveyance of mails along the trans-continental routes.

INITIAL STAGES OF THE RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE

In the initial stages of the use of the railway for mail service, no intricate problems arose; but, as the mileage or railway lines increased, difficulties began to be experienced with regard to the sorting of letters. Every post office had to make up a bag, or a packet, for other places, and these were carried in the guard van if the weight was small. But, if the mail was heavy or bulky, it was carried in a separate compartment and was put in charge of the mail guard who used to receive and despatch them at each station.

This system of railway sorting had originated at a time when the lengths of continuous railways were comparatively small.

The number of packets soon became unmanageable, and the mails had to be detained for a considerable time at points, before they could be despatched in direct bags to distant places. A Travelling Post Office became a necessity; and, in 1863, one such was established between Allahabad and Kanpur. No regular service was, however, organised until 1870, when a frontier Travelling Post Office was established under a Superintendent with headquarters at Allahabad.

By 1875, a number of frontier sections had been established on the East Indian Railway, specially for the disposal of mails passing from one province, or provincial area, to another. These frontier sections worked from:

(1) Dinapur to Allahabad and back.
(2) Etawah to Allahabad and back.
(3) Jabalpur to Allahabad and back.

Allahabad was the central station.

BARGAINING BETWEEN THE RAILWAYS AND POSTS

The Railway Mail Service was no unilateral affair. There were two parties to it, the Post Office, which was the public agency for carrying the mails, and the railways which had to provide the transport facilities. Though Lord Dalhousie's Minute had imposed certain obligations on the railways to carry mail free, the railways on their side had never taken kindly to the idea. They were, after all, private commercial organisations run for profit. There was tension on both sides and it was only after a prolonged battle that some arrangement could be arrived at.

In March 1872, it was decided by the Government that the postal department should bear the actual expenses on the carriage of mails on all state railways. However, the method of calculating the actual expenses, and apportioning the burden, led to much acrimonious debate until February 1879, when a settlement was arrived at. The new terms were for a fixed payment of 18 pies per vehicle per mile. Later on, these rules were somewhat modified; the Post Office being required to pay, with effect from 1st June 1878, 4½ per cent per annum on the original building cost of the vehicle or the cost of alteration on its de-requisitioning.

This settlement was short-lived. The railway companies refused to abide by their agreements and made repeated demands for haulage charges. Every attempt was made to embarrass the postal organisation and, in their feud, one railway went to the length of deliberately leaving mail behind! This was found to be an impossible position. So, fresh arrangements for the transport of mail had to be made with the Great Indian Peninsular Railway.

According to the new agreement the Post Office was to pay Rs. 6,000 for ordinary services and railways were to supply the required vans for foreign mails also. For the additional reserved accommodation, 30 pies more were to be paid, instead of 15 pies, chargeable before.

The Governor-General-in-Council, however, ruled in 1877 that all railways should be paid for conveyance of mails. The rules for payment stipulated on broad and metre gauges were:

(1) Haulage charges at 18 pies per vehicle, per mile.
(2) For w/s weighment system, charges to be paid at 1½ pies per mile per maund.
(3) Accounts to be settled half-yearly on the basis of 1st June and 1st December.
(4) (i) All officers and servants travelling in mail compartments to be carried without passes.
(ii) Other officials not going in mail compartments to be given passes.
(iii) Other officers to pay usual fees.

THE NECESSITY OF SORTING OFFICES AT RAILWAY JUNCTIONS

By 1887, the Railway mileage had reached 12,710 and to maintain the efficiency of Railway Mail Service, new sorting offices had to be opened, resulting in a marked increase in the expenditure. The growing expenditure

had to be kept in check and the Railway Mail Service came in for a very careful reorganisation.

For this, several money saving expedients suggested themselves. Since the cost of sorting letters in a railway mail carriage is considerably more than in a ground post office, sorting offices were opened at large railway junctions where the interval of time between arrivals and departures of trains was sufficiently long to permit the sorting of correspondence.

THE IMPOSITION OF THE 'LATE FEE'

With the opening of the new sorting offices, there grew up a tendency on the part of public to post their letters just before the departure of the train, thus putting an extra strain on the railway mail sorters. The staff had to be augmented and more office space had to be found with a consequent increase in the expenditure. Some way had to be found by which the late posting could be kept in check. To this end, a late fee was imposed on all letters posted in the sorting offices at stations. Another measure to reduce the burden on Railway Mail sorters was to transfer money orders, registered parcels, etc. to local post offices.

ADJUSTMENTS WITH THE RAILWAYS

With the constant growth of the railway system in India, the arrangement of through mail services provided an intricate problem, difficult of solution. The active co-operation of the railways was needed. So a conference between the railways and the Postal Department was held at Kanpur in 1890, at the instance of the Postal Department. The result of this was the introduction of fast mail services between Calcutta, Bombay and northern India.

Simultaneously, a system of picking up mails by means of a special apparatus was also introduced at some small stations on the East Indian Railway. This was an experimental measure to be extended later to other parts of the country.

At the instance of the Post Office, another conference of railway and postal officials was held at Nagpur in 1897. As a result of its recommendations, an improved mail service between Calcutta and Bombay was put into operation *via* Jabalpore and Nagpur, thus shortening the route timing by 12 hours.

Meanwhile, the railways had not forgotten their interests and they

revived their feud with the postal department in 1910 with the demand for increased haulage charges, which were raised to 25 pies per mile.

From then on the rules and rates for the conveyance of mails, and the construction and maintenance of postal vehicles, have undergone periodical revision. To-day, the haulage charges have been stabilised at 42 pies per mile for a four wheeled vehicle on the broad gauge, and 20 pies per mile for vehicle on the narrow gauge. On the metre gauge, the rate for non-postal articles, at 36 pies per mile for a vehicle, still obtains, and part vehicles are charged pro rata.

RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE ORGANISATION

The Railway Mail Service organisation had a very chequered history. When the travelling post office was introduced, it worked under a Superintendent, with headquarters at Allahabad. In 1877, the designation was changed to that of Chief Superintendent of the Travelling Post Office. In 1880, the post of an Assistant Director-General, Railway Mail Service, was sanctioned, and this officer of the Directorate functioned as Inspector-General of the Railway Mail Service. This position obtained till 1890, when he was given an independent administrative status. In 1905, the work had increased to such proportions that a Deputy Inspector-General to the Inspector-General was considered necessary. By 1907, it became evident that the Inspector-General could not effectively control the organisation from his centralised office and the organisation was split up into four Circles with Inspectors-General of Railway Mail Service and Sorting at their heads. The number of Circles was later reduced to three by the abolition of the Southern Circle, and the Inspector-General of the Railway Mail Service was redesignated Deputy Postmaster-General, Railway Mail Service.

In 1924, an Economy Committee was appointed by the Government of India for enquiring into the methods of work and for examining the possibility of effecting internal rearrangement and redistribution of duties without impairing efficiency. This Committee, consisting of Messrs. Ryan, Booth and Roy, submitted its report in February 1925.

On their recommendation the posts of Deputy Postmasters-General, Railway Mail Service, Eastern and Northern Circles, were abolished, with effect from the 1st January 1929 and 1st April 1929, respectively, the work being transferred to the control of the Postmaster-General of the Circle. Later, the Railway Mail Service was broken up into divisions, working

under Superintendents, who were placed under the control of the Postmaster-General. To-day, the system still prevails, except that a specialised officer of the rank of a Director of Postal Services assists the Postmaster-General on the Railway Mail Service side. The overall supervision, co-ordination and control, is vested in the Director-General of Posts & Telegraphs, who is assisted by an officer designated as Director of Mails under the control of the Senior Deputy Director-General.

RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE THEN AND NOW

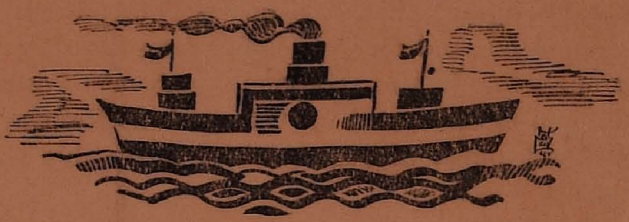
Those who see the well-lighted and ventilated Railway Mail Service vans running on the railways to-day can scarcely imagine the trying conditions under which their predecessors of the nineteenth century used to work, passing their working, waking and sleeping hours in poky, little carriages, in compartments badly lit, ill-ventilated and stuffy with the smoke of dingy paraffin lamps. Apart from those unhealthy conditions and handicaps to efficiency, the twelve hour working day would have roused the ire of any respectable present day trade unionist.

But the *fin de siecle* brought about a change which gradually improved the working conditions. The size of the postal bogies was increased, and the vans were provided with electric lighting and fan fittings. The staff was augmented sufficiently to meet the demands of increased traffic and reduced hours of work and rest room facilities were provided for the Railway Mail Service workers at all important stations.

Between 1947 and 1954, no less than 59 new mail vans have been put into service. All of them are provided with modern amenities, which leave the memories of the nineteenth century vans far behind. If the Railway Mail Service man of the early days had been vouchsafed the power of entering into the fourth dimension, he might have had a glimpse of the shape of things to come, a sort of railway mail sorters' paradise of air conditioned luxury, of easy-on-the-eye flourescent lighting, shower baths, electric stoves and free journeys. This is what has been projected under the Five-Year Plan for the main trunk routes. For other shorter routes, the place of air conditioning is taken by fans fixed at distances of three feet from each other.

The Railway Mail Service is to-day a busy organisation, handling millions of articles every day along the 38,775 miles of railway lines out of the total postal lines of 1,43,087 miles along which the mails are carried. No doubt, air transport has come to stay. But in a country of such vast

dimensions with 700,000 villages dotted all over, it is hardly likely that the railways will lose their importance as the principal mail carriers for the Postal Department for a long time to come. The railways already have a plan for rural expansion, and the Post Office aims at establishing itself in every community consisting of two thousand members. Postal and railway expansion will go hand in hand, and the future of the Railway Mail Service is assured through the promise of a harmonious partnership with the Indian Government Railways.



3. The Foreign Post And Customs

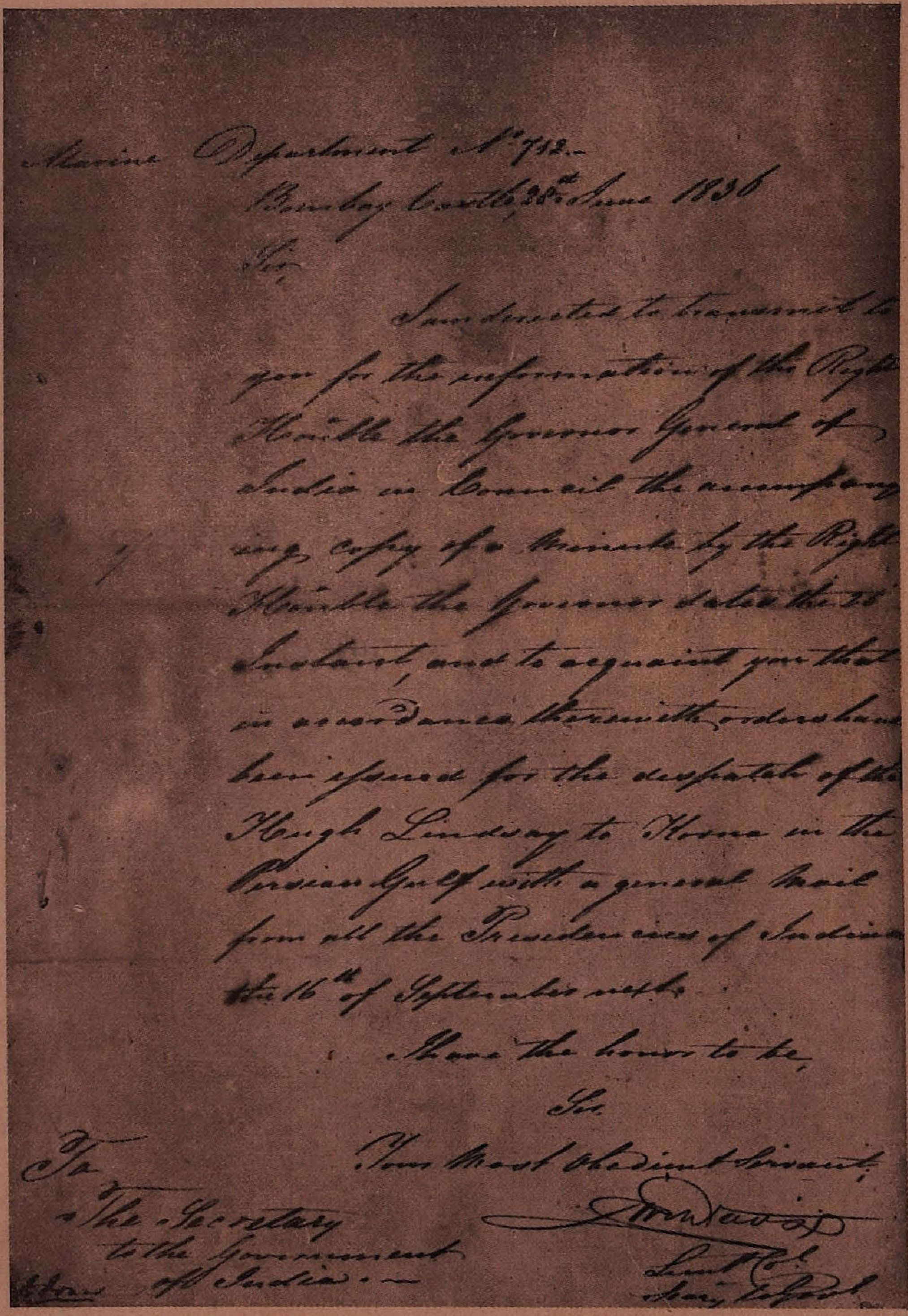
FROM TIMES immemorial India has had trade connections with neighbouring countries. Vessels from Arabia and East Africa used to ply regularly between those countries and our shores. Indian catamarans, and other sea craft, have been known to have taken Indian goods and civilisation to Java and other far flung places of the earth. Trade caravans used to move along the land routes, carrying merchandise to and from the Indies.

FIRST POSTAL ROUTES TO EUROPE

But it was not until 1777 that we find any historical reference to the use of the overland route for despatches from India to Great Britain. This route, which passed through Turkey, was closed by the Ottoman Porte in 1779.

In 1797, the Company's cruiser, 'Panther,' under the command of Captain Speak, carried the Company's despatches from India. The sea journey from Bombay to Suez took 58 days, and the ship had to wait for three months at Suez for the return despatches. But the actual journey back took her no less than 13 months due to the delay caused by contrary winds at Mocha.

A year later, Government established a mail route *via* the Persian Gulf and Turkish Arabia passing through Baghdad and Meppo. A number of packet boats plied between Bombay and Basra. Both the Company's mail



Marine Department No. 732.–

Bombay Castle, 28th June 1836

Sir,

I am directed to transmit to you for the information of the Right Hon'ble the Governor General of India in Council the accompanying copy of a Minute by the Right Hon'ble the Governor dated the 26 instant, and to acquaint you that in accordance therewith orders have been issued for the despatch of the Hugh Lindsay to Hosne in the Persian Gulf with a general mail from all the Presidencies of India on the 16th of September next.

I have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your Most Obedient Servant,

[illegible]

Lieut. Col.

Secy. to Govt.

To

The Secretary to the Government of India.–

Marine Department's letter of 1836.

and private mail was sent by this method and the cost of sending a letter 4 inches long and 2 inches wide was Rs. 10 for a quarter of tola; Rs. 15 for half a tola and Rs. 20 for a tola. The charges were so exorbitant that it is doubtful whether the service was patronised by private persons.

By 1823, Government and English residents were becoming increasingly conscious of the lack of communication with their homeland, and, after a meeting held in the Town Hall of Calcutta on the 5th November of that year, offered a premium of Rs. 10,000 to the first Company, or society, that would bring a steam vessel to India and establish communication between these two countries.

The first one to do so was Captain Johnson who brought the 'Enterprise' from England to India by the Cape route in fifty-four days.

The sea-*cum*-land route *via* Suez was first opened up through the efforts of Lt. Waghorn of the East India Company's marine. It was the 'Hugh Lindsay' which completed the first voyage from Bombay to Suez, but Waghorn's hour of triumph was in 1845, when he managed to carry the Bombay mails within 30 days to England. By now it was evident that a regular sea service between England and India was a possibility; and a new enterprise to handle this was promoted under Charter in 1840.

PENINSULAR AND ORIENTAL ENTERS THE PICTURE

This was the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company and, according to the terms of the contract, their first boat, the 'Hindustan', made its journey to India in 1842, although it was not until 1867 that arrangements were made for starting a weekly mail service between Bombay and Europe. The new contract with the Peninsular and Oriental Steamship Company provided accommodation for sorting of mails without any extra charge, as well as free passage for the sorters on board the mail steamer. Under this arrangement Bombay became the Indian port of embarkation and disembarkation of the entire overland mails. The overseas postage had to be increased by 75 per cent to meet extra costs.

In February 1868, arrangements were finalised for exchange of mails with the United States of America, *via* Hong Kong, by the vessels of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, plying between Hong Kong, Japan and San Francisco.

OVERLAND PARCEL POST

In 1871, the British Post Office declined to have any concern with

the parcel post traffic between India and the United Kingdom. Although some years prior to this the pattern post had been largely used for despatch of small parcels, Her Britannic Majesty's Postmaster-General thought it fit to restrict the use of the pattern post to *bona fide* patterns and samples of merchandise. Denied this facility, the public demanded some substitute method for exchanging parcels between India and England. A private agency to carry out the collection and delivery, from Great Britain to India, was the only way out. And a new organisation, called the 'Overland Parcel Post' which was really the extension beyond the Indian frontiers of the inland 'banghy' on parcel post was launched. Under this scheme, parcels were received at any Post Office in India, for transmission to Great Britain, upto a maximum of 50 lbs. in weight, at the rate of three annas per ten tolas. Similarly, parcels could be booked in the United Kingdom, through Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company or its authorised agents, for transmission to India. Although the sanction for this scheme was received in July 1872, it was not till March 1873, that it came into operation.

THE QUESTION OF CUSTOMS DUTY ON POSTAL ARTICLES

With the introduction of the parcel post service between the United Kingdom and India, there arose the question of customs duty on postal articles. In 1872, the sanction of Her Majesty's Government was accorded to a proposal of the then Director-General of Post Office in India, that the boxes containing these parcels should be sent directly from the steamer to the General Post Office, Bombay, and to avoid any difficulty, these should be marked on the outside as 'India Overland Parcel Post.' These were to be allowed to pass, without inspection, through the Customs House and thence conveyed by the postal authorities to the General Post Office, Bombay, either separately from the regular mails, or together with them, as suited the Post. A customs officer was deputed by Customs House to open these parcels at the General Post Office, in cases where a suspicion of fraud existed. Ordinarily, the declaration made by the sender was considered sufficient to secure exemption from inspection by a customs officer, but the latter was at liberty to exercise his discretion whenever doubts arose about the contents of various parcels. The parcels were opened under a joint verification and necessary corrections were made in the invoice, under the initials of both the Customs representative and the postal official. A duplicate copy was taken out, one copy made over to the customs repre-

sentative and the other one kept by the postal official. Any parcels, which were opened for verification of contents had to be reclosed in the presence of the postal officials and sealed with a customs seal. If any dutiable goods were found, the Post Office paid to the customs authorities a cheque for the total amount, before the customs officer left the General Post Office, all accounts with the customs being settled immediately. After this was over the parcels were despatched in the ordinary way by 'banghy' post. The total amount due from the addressee was entered into the book or *chalan* in the same way, as for an entirely unpaid postal article.

LOCAL PARCEL BILL

Although the customs officials had carried on work in the prescribed fashion, it was found that a more convenient way to settle the customs formalities was to furnish the customs authorities with a manifest, in duplicate, in a given form, of the parcels arriving by mail. In this way the clerical work of calculating the duty could be completed in advance of the customs house officer's visit to the post office. The Presidency Postmaster accordingly, arranged for a copy of the parcel invoice to be furnished to the customs authorities and a copy was handed over to the Customs officer immediately on the arrival of the steamer. This arrangement was the beginning of the 'Local Parcel Bill,' which is now the most important document of the Customs Examination Department of the Foreign Post.

EXTENSIVE PARCEL POST TRAFFIC

Agreements were signed with Germany, on 1st July 1875, and with Austria-Hungary, ten months later. Later, the traffic with Germany and Austria-Hungary were merged, as the service to Germany passed through the latter country. Parcels were also exchanged by the Austria-Hungarian route with the European continental countries of Belgium, Denmark, France, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. For this, Trieste was the port of entry on the Austria-Hungarian side, and Bombay the port of entry on the Indian side. The parcel post service was gradually extended to more and more countries till the service covered practically every part of the world.

RATES AND RULES FOR INTERNATIONAL PARCEL EXCHANGE

As more and more parcel post agreements were concluded, it was felt necessary by the postal administrations of various countries to have some

uniform rate and well defined rules for the international exchange of parcels. A conference was, therefore, convened at Paris in 1880, and it was attended by most of the delegates from countries which then comprised the Universal Postal Union. India also sent its representative. This conference adopted 6½ lbs. as the maximum weight for transmission by parcel post; and all parcels, light or heavy, up to a limit of 6½ lbs. were to be transmitted, at a uniform charge, by parcel post. This was acceptable to all the signatories to the Convention, except India, which had a well established parcel post service with the United Kingdom and most of the other countries of the world. Under agreements, which India had entered into, parcels up to 50 lbs. in weight could be transmitted by parcel post at a charge of eight annas, or one shilling per lb. Believing that this system of parcel post was more convenient to the public, India decided not to ratify the Treaty of Parcel Post Convention. It was only in 1897, that India subscribed to this agreement at the Universal Postal Union Congress held in Washington D.C. As soon as India ratified the Parcel Post Convention, the agreements with other countries, signed earlier, became defunct, except for countries like the United Kingdom, America, and some other States, which had not yet become signatories to the Parcel Post Convention.

A word about the parcel traffic between Great Britain and India would not be out of place. On the 20th January 1885, an agreement was signed regarding the exchange of postal parcels between the United Kingdom, India and Burma, and a regular parcel post service was established, between the Post Offices of Great Britan, Ireland and India, by steamers of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, leaving London for Bombay every Wednesday, and Bombay for London every Friday. The parcels were exchanged in close receptacles and limited in weight to eleven lbs. At present parcels are accepted by the service up to 22 lbs. in weight.

FURTHER CO-ORDINATION BETWEEN CUSTOMS AND POST

With the progressive expansion of the parcel service, the Post Office came into more and more contact with the customs, and the customs formalities involved the postal organisation in considerable expense. The Government of India, therefore, decided to levy a fee of two annas per

parcel with effect from 1st July 1919, recoverable from the addressee for the execution of customs formalities on all foreign parcels. In 1925, a customs fee levy was imposed on letter mail articles and both letters and parcels were subject to a fee of four annas per aritcle, which was double the original rate for parcels. In 1948, the fee on parcels was raised to eight annas and that on letters and boxes to six annas.

Articles liable to customs duty were prohibited from being sent by foreign letter post. The prohibition was contained in the convention of the Universal Postal Union and was in force till 1924. Any letters and packets received in India, and suspected to contain dutiable goods, when forwarded to their destinations by offices of exchange were marked 'doubtful.' The Aden-Bombay Sea Post Office also used to enclose them in envelopes with similar markings. Such articles were not sent out for delivery, but were opened at the post office in the presence of the addressee or his agents. If any dutiable items were found, these letters were only delivered after the amount of duty had been assessed and collected by the customs authorities. The system, however, caused great inconvenience to the up-country addressees, particularly the mercantile community. So, in 1903 the Post Office wisely advised the public to send anything liable to customs duty by parcel post and not by letter post.

These rules were relaxed in 1905, and it was decided that in places which had neither customs posts nor stations, the postmasters were to assess the duty, provided the value of the articles exceeded Rs. 10. This limit was later on raised to Rs. 100. The rules were also stipulated under which the article could be delivered if an invoice or bill was produced from the manufactures who exported the things.

Meanwhile, both the postal and the customs authorities were facing another problem. Diamonds were increasingly becoming a source of trouble to postal authorities. The Government of India issued orders on the 3rd July 1914, under the Post Office Act, 1898, authorising the presidency postmasters, and certain other postmasters, to cause search, and authorise a search, for contraband diamonds to be made amongst all articles in the course of transmission by post, to or from any place outside British India. The Import and Export Control restrictions, imposed about the same time, began to play a greater part in the customs examination of foreign parcels and letters.

With the outbreak of the First World War, the entire system of foreign post became unworkable. Duties were increased and numerous restrictions were imposed on the import and the export trade. As a consequence, a more direct control of the Customs Department on the flow of foreign postal traffic became inevitable.

On the 5th September 1921, a notification was issued by the Public Works Department of the Government of India, which controlled the Postal Department, giving effect to a new ruling:

> 'Postal articles of the letter mail landed in British India, under arrangements in force with the United Kingdom or with any British possession or foreign country for the transmission by post of postal articles between British India and the United Kingdom or such possession, shall not be transmitted by post within British India if they contain coin, bullion, precious stones, jewellery, articles of gold or silver or other articles liable to customs duty, unless and until the customs duty, if any, payable thereunder has been paid.'

AMENDMENT OF THE INDIAN POST OFFICE ACT

Shortly afterwards the Indian Post Office Act of 1898 was amended and a new section, 24(A) added to it. By this the Central Government could 'by general, or special order, empower any officer of the Post Office, specified in such order, to deliver any postal article, received from beyond the limits of British India and suspected to contain anything liable to customs duty, to such customs authority, as may be specified in the said order, and such customs authority shall deal with such articles in accordance with the provisions of the Sea Customs Act—1878 or of any other law for the time being in force.'

The presidency postmasters, and certain other postmasters, were, as a result, empowered to withhold delivery of the letter mail to the addressee, and to deliver to the Collector of Customs the postal articles received from foreign countries and suspected to contain dutiable goods. The details of the procedure to be followed were worked out jointly by the Postmaster-General and the Collector of Customs, Bombay, originating the 'Letter Mail Register' in which articles of the letter mail examined for customs purposes, were entered. This register corresponds to be 'Local Parcel Bill' on the parcel post side.

DISCUSSIONS AT UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION CONFERENCES

Although the convention of the Universal Postal Union prohibited the transmission of dutiable goods through the letter mail, this method was being adopted for importing goods into India from various foreign countries. At the Universal Postal Union Congress at Madrid in 1920, France proposed to eliminate this ineffective prohibition, but the proposal did not go through. At Stockholm, four years later, India put forward an indirect proposal suggesting the annulment of the embargo, and the levying of additional postal charge, in the case of letters which have been found, on inspection, to contain dutiable goods. The modification was partially accepted by the Postal Congress, in the sense that the consent of the country of destination should be a prerequisite of any such transmission. Simultaneously, the Stockholm Convention of 1924 provided for the levying of the customs clearance fee on articles of the letter mail containing goods liable to customs duty. A similar provision was also made in the Insured Letter and Boxes Agreement. In accordance with the new provisions of the convention and the Insured Letters and Boxes Agreement, the Government of India issued an order introducing the following Sub-Rule in the Indian Post Office Rules:

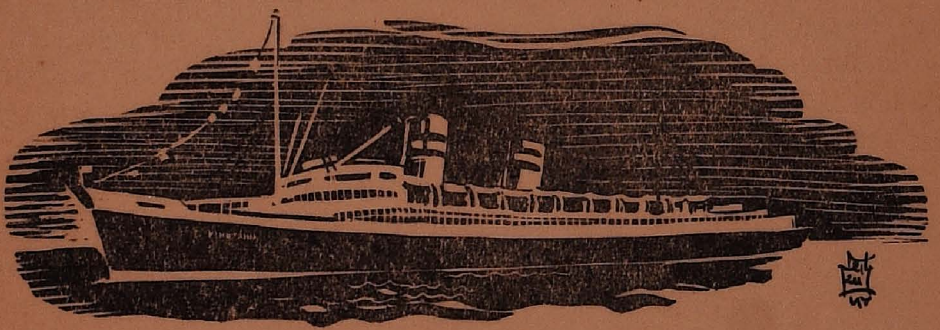
> 'For clearance through the customs, a fee of four annas recoverable from the addressee, shall be levied on all foreign parcels and foreign letters imported by post into India on which mail customs duty is payable.'

From the 1st December 1948, the customs clearance fee was enhanced to six annas in the case of letters, insured letters and boxes, and eight annas in the case of parcels.

SOME INTERESTING FIGURES

The figures for parcel and letter mail traffic show curious trends. It appears that the Post Office was being used, during and just after the war, for the transmission of dutiable goods much more than during peace time. Just before the Second World War, 1,46,429 postal parcels containing dutiable goods passed through the Bombay Customs, and the duty levied amounted to a little over Rs. 30 lakhs. The peak was reached in 1947-48, when the Post Office handled 272,850 such parcels, the duty collection amounting to Rs. 1,49,43,182, five times the pre-war figure.

In the case of the letter mail, no less than Rs. 22½ lakhs in duty were collected on 83,493 postal articles in 1947-48; but, in 1951-52, over two lakhs of postal articles yielded to the Bombay Customs authorities just Rs. 3·87 lakhs.



LETTERS OF YUAN CHWANG AND HIS INDIAN FRIENDS

THE GREAT CHINESE PILGRIM YUAN CHWANG WHO WAS IN INDIA FROM 630-645 A.D., PASSED FIVE YEARS AT THE NĀLANDĀ UNIVERSITY. THE PERSONAL CONTACT OF THE PILGRIM WITH HIS INDIAN FRIENDS CONTINUED EVEN AFTER HIS RETURN TO CHINA AND IS ILLUSTRATED BY THE THREE LETTERS EXCHANGED BETWEEN HIM AND THE TEACHERS OF THE NĀLANDĀ UNIVERSITY. THESE LETTERS, ORIGINALLY WRITTEN IN SANSKRIT ARE NOW PRESERVED IN CHINESE TRANSLATION. THEY WERE CARRIED BOTH WAYS BY THE CHINESE MONK FA-CHANG (652-54 A.D.).

I

Letter to Yuan Chwang from Prajñādeva and Jñānaprabha, his fellow students.

The Sthavira Prajñādeva who associates with men of great wisdom in the temple of Mahābodhi near the Vajrāsana of Lord Buddha sends this letter to Mokshāchārya of Mahāchina. He humbly wishes that the latter may ever be free from illness and suffering.

I, Bhikshu Prajñādeva, have composed a eulogy on the great divine transformations of Buddha (Trikāyastotra) and also a Comparative estimate of the Sūtras, Śāstras, etc. I hand them over to Bhikshu Fa-chang who will carry them to you. Among us the Ācārya, the Venerable Bhadanta Jñānaprabha joins me in enquiring about you. The Upāsakas, here, always offer their salutation to you. We all are sending you a pair of white cloths to show that we are not forgetful. The road is long. So do not mind the smallness of the present. We wish you may accept it. As regards the Sūtras and Śāstras which you may require, please send us a list. We will copy them and send them to you. This is Mokshāchārya, all that we want to inform you. This is for conveying to you from a distance our loving thoughts.

II

Yuan Chwang's reply to Jñānaprabha.

Bhikshu Yuan Chwang of the country of the Great Tang rulers humbly writes to Bhadanta Jñānaprbha of Magadha in Middle India. I returned more than 10 years ago. The frontiers of the countries are far away from each other. I had no news from you. My anxiety went on increasing. By enquiring from Bhikshu Fachang I learn that you are all well. My eyes become bright and it seems I see your face. You cannot describe the joy I feel at the news.

I heard from an ambassador who recently came back from India that the great teacher Śīlabhadra is no more in this world. On getting this news I was overwhelmed with sorrow that knew no bound.

Among the Sūtras and Śāstras that I, Yuan Chwang had brought with me, I have already translated the Yogāchāra-bhūmi-śāstra and other works in all 30 volumes. The Kośa and the Nyāyānusāra-śāstra are not yet fully translated. They will certainly be completed this year.

At present the Devaputra (i.e., the Emperor) of the great Tang dynasty through his personal holiness and by his numerous felicities guides the country and brings peace to the people. With the affection of a Chakravarti king and like Dharamaraja, he helps the propagation of the law to far away places. In regard to the Sūtras and Śāstras translated, we have obtained the favour of a preface from his divine pen. In regard to them the officers have received the order for circulating the texts in all the kingdoms. Even the neighbouring countries will receive all of them when the order is executed.

I should humbly like to let you know that while crossing the Indus I had lost a load of sacred texts. I now send you a list of those texts annexed to this letter. I request you to send them to me if you get the chance. I am sending some small articles as present. Please accept them. The road is long and it is not possible to send much. Do not disdain it.

With the salutations of Yuan Chwang.

III

Yuan Chwang's reply to Prajñādeva.

The Bhikshu Yuan Chwang of the great Tang country respectfully writes to the Master of Law, the teacher of Tripiṭaka, Prajñādeva of the Mahābodhivihāra.

A long time has elapsed. There was no news from you and so I was greatly anxious. There was no means of calming the anxiety. When Bhikshu Dharmavardhana (fa-chang) came with your letter, I came to learn that you are all well. This gave me great joy. I have received the pair of fine white cloths and the bundle of Stotras (sent by you). It is a great honour to me which I did not merit. I feel much ashamed.

I, Yuan Chwang, am ignorant. I am also growing old and failing in strength. I remember your merits and respect you for your kindness. These thoughts fire me more. When I was in India I met you in the Assembly at Kānyakubja and discussed the Śāstras together before the kings and their numerous followers in order to settle the doctrinal issues. My only intention was to follow the logic and not to show any partiality. It is due to this that we were opposed to each other. When the meeting ended, our mutual opposition also ended. Now the messenger has brought your letter and your apology. Why do you keep it in mind? You are deeply learned, your style is lucid, your determination is strong, and your character is high.

The messenger is now going back. I am sending you a small thing as an expression of my gratefulness for your present. This cannot represent my deep respect for you. I hope you understand me. During my return while crossing the Indus I lost a load of the holy texts. I am sending you a list of them with this letter. I request you to send them to me.

With respects of Bhikshu Yuan Chwang.

Letters of Yuan Chwang & his Indian friends.

4. The Universal Postal Union

THE INCEPTION OF THE UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION

LONG BEFORE the United Nations or the League of Nations were thought of, two international organisations had already done a considerable amount of spade work in propagating the 'one world' idea. These were the Red Cross Society, born in 1870, and the General Postal Union, formed in 1874, which was expanded and rechristened, a decade later, as the Universal Post Union.

At that time Imperialism was the dominant keynote of all European foreign policies and leading continental countries were eagerly struggling to wrest leadership in one sphere or the another.

The new imperialism was not so much territorial as commercial. Germany was forging ahead in her quest for a share of world markets for finished goods and raw materials, and Great Britain was equally interested in keeping her markets intact. Both felt that unhindered communication was essential for a free flow of commercial traffic.

THE NEED FOR A FREE FLOW OF CORRESPONDENCE

There were many obstacles to free communication, as each country had its own postage tariff and regulations and had entered into any number of bilateral conventions with other countries. The weights and measures in every country varied, and so did the charges and the progression of rates. As a result, postal articles, which had to pass through several independent territorial units, were subject to a multiplicity of charges, difficult to compute, either by the sender or by the receiver. It was evident that these difficulties would have to be removed before correspondence could flow without hindrance between the different nations. That some sort of concerted action by the various countries was needed was beyond dispute.

THE CONFERENCE IN PARIS

The first step towards this were the discussions among some European nations, initiated in 1862 by the American Postmaster-General. A conference was called in Paris, for the next year, with the object of finding ways and means of effecting an improvement of postal communication between the principal commercial nations of the world. Except for the realisation that the task was of tremendous magnitude, and that a special machinery was needed to handle all the complex problems involved, no headway was made for some time. Another ten years had to elapse before a system could be evolved to implement the pious resolutions passed at the Paris Conference.

THE CONGRESS IN BERNE

It is evident that, in this sphere, it was left to an indefatigable German, Heinrich Von Stephan, to take the lead in inviting a Postal Congress at Berne.

The Postal Congress which met in 1874, and decided, *inter alia,* to accept as a basis for all international exchange of correspondence, the principle of reciprocal compensation, which assumes that generally the volume of outward traffic from one country to another is balanced by the reciprocal traffic from the latter to the former. This was nothing new, as it had been tried between France and Spain a couple of centuries earlier, the advantage of dispensing with unnecessary accounting on both sides being obvious. The Berne Congress also established a uniform postage tariff

dependent on progressive weightage. Free movement through the territories of the participating countries was assured, as every member of the Union had to give to incoming mails the same transit advantages as it enjoyed for its own.

The Treaty, which was signed with the Union members, and came into force on the 1st July 1875, evolved a code of regulations governing the exchange of mails of every nation with every other nation.

INDIA JOINS THE UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION

The combined opposition of Rowland Hill, the then British Secretary for Posts, and of the British Treasury and the Admiralty, hampered all efforts at lowering the rate of overseas post. But in 1875, at long last, the British Post Office joined the newly formed General Postal Union. Although membership of the General Postal Union was restricted to sovereign independent countries, India applied for membership in 1875, on the basis of the vast network of her postal system. This naturally raised the question of the postage rates between India and Great Britain. At a special conference, which was called to consider India's request, India was admitted as a member, the membership to date from July 1876. Meanwhile, Britain took advantage of this meeting to obtain the special benefit of an additional charge as transit rate, thus increasing the postage by the overland route to 8 d. and by the sea route to 6 d. This preferential tariff between Britain and her possessions was to continue for a decade more before the mother country was to bow to world convention and level down the postage to comparable and equitable rates.

BRITAIN'S RECALCITRANCE AND CONCORD

To understand Britain's attitude one must look at the background of the discussions which preceded India's admission to the Universal Postal Union. At the special conference called for considering India's case, Britain requested the Postal Union to allow a rate of 4d. per ½ ounce as a uniform postage rate up to Brindisi. She found that this protection involved a sacrifice of revenue estimated at about £22,500 a year, owing to the reduction in the rate of postage to the United Kingdom. Since this meant a heavy loss to the exchequer, Britain wanted India to join the Union only on the condition that Indian mail would be expressly excluded from the provision of the treaty, leaving the question of an *ad hoc* transit rate to

be settled by special agreement. It was under this agreement that a special transit rate had been allowed by the Union for traffic between India and Great Britain. Though this agreement was concluded and signed on the 26th January 1876, the date of entry for India into the Universal Postal Union was fixed as 1st July 1876. British India, then comprising the areas now occupied by the states of India, Pakistan, Burma and the Aden protectorate, was the first country in Asia to join the Universal Postal Union and the only country without sovereign status to be admitted to that august body.

CONVENTION OF PARIS

A new International Postal Treaty termed the 'Convention of Paris' was signed on the 1st June 1878, whereby the Postal Union, formed three years earlier, was continued for an indefinite period, with provisions for an international congress to meet at least every five years, and for the next congress to be held at Lisbon in 1884. The name of the General Postal Union was changed to the Universal Postal Union. This International Postal Organisation is now a very important body, with a record membership of 94 countries, the largest that any international organisation enjoys, and, today, its members include all independent nations, non-self-governing territories, and the United Nations Trust Territories.

INDIA, A FIRST CLASS MEMBER OF UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION

India became a full fledged member of the Universal Postal Union in 1876, and its name was placed in the list of first-class members. There were six classes which were created specially for apportioning the expenses of the Union. This classification was based on both the population and the volume of international mail traffic of the countries. Even today, although Burma, Pakistan and Aden have been separated, India still retains her original class of membership.

The fifth International Postal Congress, which was held at Washington D.C., in 1897, decided upon a number of material changes in treaty provisions, some of them going to the root of the Union's system. The success of the main convention, which dealt with only letter mails, was so phenomenal that the postal administrations felt encouraged to have a similar convention for parcel post. With this object in view, a temporary agreement, was concluded with the transport companies of the European

continent in November 1880. This agreement, which was subsequently developed into a full fledged Parcel Post Agreement, was signed by India in 1897, during the Washington Congress of the Universal Postal Union. India thus continued to be represented at all the quinquennial congresses, even though her attitude was influenced by the general considerations of commonwealth relations, till the 1939 Congress at Buenos Aires, which met under the shadow of the impending Second World War. Another important change occurred at the 1947 Congress, when the name of British India was changed to India, and India was nominated, with 18 other member countries, for a term of five years to a newly created Executive and Liaison Commission, which was to maintain continuity of the work of the Union in the intervals between the Congresses.

At the 1950 meeting at Montraux, India advocated the replacement of Chiang Kai Shek China by a nominee of the People's Republic of China, on the basis of actual control of the postal system in China. Strangely enough, this was accepted. And this was the only International Organisation where this change was agreed to during that year.

India was again elected to this Commission for a further term of five years, at which time the number of members was raised to 20 and the distribution of seats was made on an equitable geographical basis.

The proceedings of the Universal Postal Union Congress of 1952, is, perhaps, the best illustration of how far India's voice now carries in the deliberations of that body. In that year the Universal Postal Union accepted 75 per cent. of the proposals of the Indian Delegation, led by Harbans Lal jerath, the then Director-General. A far cry, indeed, from the Congress of 1875 when India's Postal Chief, Monteath, could not even secure for India immediate membership of the Union!

TECHNICAL TRANSIT COMMISSION

The question of appointing a separate technical transit Commission was mooted in 1939 and the entire congress had to select 17 countries to go into this complicated question. India stood for election and got elected along with Great Britain and South Africa from among the Commonwealth countries. However, the Second World War broke out soon after the new Technical Transit Commission had met, and the original Committee was renominated at the Paris Congress of 1947, the first to be held after the Second World War.

AIR TRANSPORT AND INDIA'S PROPOSALS

Another development in the field of postal communication has been the air mail service. The development of the air mail service necessitated the institution of the Aero-Postal Congress, the first of which met at the Hague in 1947. India participated in its deliberations. With the vast global expansion of air services, and the increased emphasis on air-transport, the rate of payment for conveyance of mails needed to be rationalised and put on a uniform basis. Separate provisions relating to air mails had been enacted for the first time in the London Universal Postal Congress of 1929, although they had formed part of the General Convention. The problem of rates of conveyance has been frequently discussed since the 1947 Congress held at Paris. It was also the subject of special meetings with the International Air Transport Association at which India was represented, at the Universal Postal Union, and International Air Transport Association, Contact Committee. India took a very active part in shaping the air mail conveyance tariff, which assumed great importance at the Brussels Congress, where the principle of a single uniform rate, first mooted by India at the Cheltenham meeting of the Contact Committee in 1950, was adopted, by a majority vote, in spite of opposition of a solid bloc of big powers.

INDIA'S ROLE IN THE UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION

India has always been an active participant in all the Congresses of the Union, which are held once in every five years to amend, revise, alter or introduce new regulations according to the requirements of the international postal service. The Union keeps in view the developments in the field of postal communication, while making amendments or introducing any new changes.

The Universal Postal Union commands the respect of every postal administration and is the guiding force for the better working of the international postal service. Although it is a huge organisation, with far flung ramifications, the expenses of this body are lower than of any other international organisation—a notable feature which was referred to in one of the sessions of the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

The organisation is perhaps one of the very few which has no political complexion and which is not dominated by any power bloc. India, with her independence of outlook in international affairs, is a member with no

axe to grind except that of furthering the cause of peace and international goodwill in consonance with her international postal service, universal traditions and general outlook on human life.

5. The 'All-Up Scheme'

THE END OF THE Second World War found the Indian Post Office, like the rest of the country, passing through a very trying period. The war effort had left its mark on the organisation. The post-war labour unrest culminated in an All-India Postmen's Strike in 1946. The only postal circle that remained unaffected was the Sind and Baluchistan Circle. In the remaining circles, the postal system was to some extent paralysed. This was brought to an end by negotiations with the labour unions, in which important Congress leaders played an effective role. The following year brought its own problems, inherent in the political and demographic partition of the Indian sub-continent. The exchange of posts and telegraphs staffs, opting for one or the other of the countries, and the transfer of records caused a considerable amount of dislocation at central and circle headquarters. On both sides of the border, the postal organisation, in common

with other departments of the Government, had been depleted of experienced staff.

KIDWAI'S BRAIN WAVE

Even with such handicaps, the Indian postal organisation could, with pardonable pride, lay claim to two outstanding post-independence achievements. The first one was Rafi Ahmed Kidwai's 'All-Up Scheme', under which all first class mail was transported by air overnight. This meant a shortening of transit time in many cases by as much as four-fifths. The second achievement, for which his successor in office was responsible, though not as spectacular, had equal significance. It aimed at bringing the Post Office to almost everyone's door. The expansion of rural postal system to the farthest corner of the country by eliminating all the no-dak villages, raising the number of post offices in India since the partition from 22,116 till to-day to 45,907 is an unparalleled achievement in the history of Post Office.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ACHIEVEMENT

In retrospect, these appear as only a part of an orderly pageant of Post Office progress. But to those who have lived through those times, they were not without special significance.

India had just finished licking her partition wounds, when trouble came in the shape of a direct threat to her territorial integrity. Tribal hordes from Pakistan had been let loose on Kashmir. The cost of living, which had only shown a mild upward trend during the war, suddenly swung up, throwing out of gear the entire economy of the country. Our relations with the outside world had not yet crystallised into any diplomatic equilibrium. General short supplies, rising prices and inflation were creating difficult problems.

Added to this was the great food debacle, when India's shortage of food-grains threatened even the solidarity of the new nation. Things looked black, indeed, and everyone looked with bewildered eyes at the efforts of Nehru and his Cabinet to keep the ship of state on an even keel.

As things were, he would have to be a bold man, indeed, who would leave the sanctuary of the 'status quo' and launch into schemes, which were far ahead of the times; but Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, the then Minister for Communications, was nothing if not bold. A man of few words, he was

relentless in pursuing an objective once he had made up his mind to do so; and in the case of the 'All-Up Night Air Mail Scheme' and the Post Office expansion, he had taken an irrevocable decision.

THE CONFUTATION OF THE CONFOUNDERS

When the 'All-Up Scheme' was first proposed few took kindly to the idea and tried to confound the public. Quite a number even opposed it, as a feather brained plan which would upset the orderly working of the department. But Kidwai was not to be denied. With his usual singleness of purpose, he saw to it that the scheme went through, and it was eventually put into operation in 1949. But the detractors were not idle. A whispering campaign was set afoot amongst the employees that the scheme would result in all round retrenchment in the Railway Mail Service ranks. Deliberate attempts were even made by a few misguided employees to hold up sorting of the air mail, so that the scheme could be discredited in the eyes of the public. But with all these difficulties, and even in the face of a surcharge for the air lift, the scheme was an unqualified success almost from its inception.

THE ADVENTUROUS MR. PICQUET

India was not new to air mail communication. In fact, it had been the first country in the world to fly air mails, when on the 21st February 1911, the adventurous Mr. Picquet carried 6,500 letters, as mail, with him during a demonstration flight from Allahabad to Naini Junction across the river Jumna. After this pioneer effort India was also the first country to introduce the air mail post card in 1931.

THE FIRST REGULAR AIR MAIL SERVICE IN INDIA

The first regular air mail service in India, which was started in 1920, operated between Bombay and Karachi, linking up the latter with the regular outward and inward English mails. The Imperial Airways were the first in the field to open up a regular air line service between India and the United Kingdom. The first flight took place on the 7th April 1929. The Imperial Airways were followed a year later by other foreign air lines, the K.L.M. of the Netherlands, and Air France, whose Eastern Service routes traversed the Indian sub-continent. An Indian air company established a feeder air mail connection between Delhi and Karachi. This line was

later operated by the Trans-Continental Airways, who extended their operations first to Calcutta and then on to Singapore, and introduced, later on in the year, a Karachi-Bombay-Madras service.

EMPIRE AIR-MAIL SCHEME

This was, however, just a beginning. The year 1938 saw the introduction of the Empire Air Mail Scheme under which the main air service between London and Malaya touched India at two airports—Karachi and Calcutta. The service was operated four time a week from, and to, India. Both sea and land planes were used in this service. The land planes picked up mails at Karachi, Jodhpur, Delhi, Kanpur, Allahabad and Calcutta, while the sea planes touched Karachi, Rajasmnad in Rajasthan, Gwalior, Allahabad and Calcutta. The scheme provided an increased frequency of air services to Australia and South Africa and, for the air lift of first-class mail consisting of letters and post cards, between all Empire countries, including those in the American continent. Iran and Egypt, over which the air service passed, were also included in the scheme. The postage for all commonwealth countries was fixed by India at 2½ annas per half ounce of letters and ½ anna for post cards. This external 'All-Up Scheme' was to be in force for 15 years, and was expected to promote expansion in the activities of the two Indian air operating companies—Tata Sons and the Indian National Airways who were carrying feeder traffic. With the outbreak of war in 1939, it became necessary to divert and limit the services to essential requirements and the scheme was suspended for the duration of the war.

HOW THE FEEDER SERVICES SHOWED

These internal feeder services had shown the way forward to the inland 'All-Up Scheme', which linked its far flung termini—Delhi, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta. Exactly a year after Gandhiji's martyrdom, India's night air mail was inaugurated at Nagpur on the 30th January 1949. This was confined only to surcharge air mails. It was run by the Indian Overseas Airlines. This service had to be suspended for a few months during the monsoon. Later on, in October, 1950, it was restored by extending the air lift to all first-class unsurcharged mails. As a first step the air surcharge on all internal first-class mail was abolished and air lift was given wherever such transmission was available and could be used to advantage.

The Himalayan Aviation Company ran this service.

THE USEFULNESS OF THE SCHEME

What difference the scheme made to mail carriage can only be realised if we look at the postal route map of India. The total route mileage over which mails are carried in India is 180,731. The main route length is 20 per cent of the total and is covered by the 36,688 miles over which the railways carry the mails. But the carriage and distribution of mail to outlying areas was effected along 46,222 miles by mail motor buses, and by runners who manned 92,000 odd miles of runner lines. The mail motor, and the mail runner, formed an important part of the distributory process and as such were necessary adjuncts to the process of mail conveyance in a country of so vast a geographical spread as ours. But the trans-continental and long distance carriage was entirely along the railway route, involving considerable transit time, which, though a great improvement on the pre-railway era, was out of place in a new world where air travel was fast tending to attain supersonic speed. It is evident that much of this time could be saved if all first-class mail could be carried by air to important centres and then relayed by all the other routes to subsidiary destinations. The 'All-Up Scheme' was launched with this end in view, so that it could cover large tracts by utilising both night and day services to and from four key points.

THE TECHNICAL BASIS OF THE SCHEME

These key points or termini for the 'All-Up Scheme' were not chosen haphazardly. A statistical analysis, made by the Department, revealed that a quarter of the total number of letters and post cards delivered in India every day were for Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Delhi, Lucknow, Nagpur, Allahabad, Patna, Ahmedabad, and Kanpur. Over 80 per cent of these were for delivery in the cities of Bombay, Calcutta, Madras and Delhi. Fortunately, these cities were conveniently situated in the four corners of India and also served as the principal centres from which the day air services radiated. The over-night air mail service was definitely the plank on which the 'All-Up Scheme' rested and no better termini than these four could have been found.

In the early days when aircraft aerodromes were not equipped for navigational aids for night flying and night landing, halts were necessary

from sundown to sunrise for trans-continental carriage. These halts nullified the advantage accruing from air transmission. For instance, the mails from Trivandrum to Srinagar had to face two night halts at Madras and Delhi. With night flying established in these four cities, continuous circulation of first-class mails across the length and breadth of India—from Srinagar to Trivandrum, and from Rajkot to Gauhati, was ensured. As a result of this linking up of the day and night services, many other important cities and towns in India have been brought into the ambit of the 'All-Up Scheme'.

The working of the system itself provided a problem which was solved by operating two cross-country services with a central point of interchange, for which Nagpur was the most convenient spot. The night services, which left the termini about midnight from each centre, arrived at the other end early in the morning. Large scale trans-shipment of mails, from one night plane to the others at Nagpur Airport, helped to run the service with the minimum number of planes. The enormous saving which was effected in transit time can be gauged from a comparison of the 169 hours, taken by the surface route from Srinagar to Trivandrum, and the 139 hours from Rajkot to Gauhati, to the 20 and 24 hours, respectively under the 'All-Up Scheme', enabling the Department to carry by air five million pounds of first-class mail.

MONEY ORDERS, INSURED LETTERS AND PARCELS CAN ALSO GO BY AIR

In 1949-50, the second year of operation saw the non-scheduled service being roped in. This meant that 25·4 per cent of all first class mail carried received the benefit of air transport at some stage or the other. The air lift was also used in cases where the service route was interrupted, as in the case of the Assam earthquake in 1950. Later on, money orders, and insured letters, were included in the 'All-Up Scheme', and the facility was further extended to registered newspapers and parcels on prepayment of reduced air surcharge.

RELIEF TO RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE

Another feature was the relief which the 'All-Up Scheme' afforded to the heavily congested Railway Mail Service sections on whom fell the burden of handling the major portion of the 2,000 million postal articles in a year, as against the pre-war annual figure of 1,200 million. The diver-

sion of an appreciable portion of first-class mail to the air route actually helped to give much needed respite to the heavily worked Railway Mail Service sections.

Integration of Postal Services

PROBLEMS OF INTEGRATION

THE FINANCIAL and political integration of the Indian States made it necessary and inevitable that the Government of India should pursue the policy of integration of the postal system of the Indian States with the larger postal system. This policy had been first enunciated in 1870. The then Director-General of the Post Office, Mr. Monteath, had advised the Government to come to some decision about the establishment of harmonious and equitable interacting agreements between the rulers of those States and the Government of India. It must be remembered that in 1870, the relations of Imperial Post with the Indian States were far from cordial. The States had varying degrees of independence and some of the larger States were autonomous and enjoyed full political privileges and prerogatives. The postal conditions varied from State to State. There were States which maintained distinct and independent postal organisations, with local postage stamps of their own, while others possessed postal organisations, with local postage stamps of their own, while others possessed postal organisations but no local postage stamps. In some places the delivery of mails from British Indian territory was effected by the State distributing agency, while, at other places, it was subject to the control of the Imperial Post.

Though there were certain regulations under which the post offices in the States worked, in some cases both the States and Imperial agencies worked side by side. None of the States issued any instructions about the

use of postal facilities by the public and, in the absence of information, all correspondence was more often than not subject to arbitrary charges. With such diverse regulations which varied from State to State, the advantages that would accrue, either by the suppression of these individual postal departments, or by the establishment of some sort of control over their activities and transactions, were obvious to both the Government of India and the rulers of many of the States.

THE DIGNITY OF HIGHNESSES

The rulers were keen on maintaining their dignity and on safeguarding their prestige, and would not forego the privileges they enjoyed of having independent postal services of their own. They were, therefore, reluctant to allow any encroachment by the Imperial Post on their preserves. On the other hand, the Imperial Government was not prepared to force the issue by invoking the principle of paramountcy with regard to postal traffic, lest it should offend the sentiments of the rulers. Mr. Monteath did not pursue the matter and it was dropped.

In 1873, it cropped up again in the time of Sir Frederic Hogg, when he had to deal with a proposal that His Highness the Maharaja Holkar of Indore should arrange to carry closed packets free, or at nominal rates, along the British Indian postal line route passing through his territory. Sir Frederic Hogg was against this on the ground that no concessions should be made to one Indian State which the Government of India could not extend to the others. In spite of long negotiations, carried on by the Diwan and the Vakeel of Indore, nothing came of it and the proposal fell through.

By 1789 it was obvious that, in the interest of uniformity, something had to be done and Sir Frederic Hogg made an impassioned plea in the Annual Report of the Department for 1789-90.

After describing in detail the unsatisfactory nature of the postal services in the Indian States, he goes on to say:

> 'Restriction of correspondence must be the natural consequence of this diversity of system, or absence of system; and the only real remedy lies in the gradual extinction of all local post organisations and their supersession by the Imperial Post. Such a measure must entail great expense for several years, but uniformity of postage rates, rules and conditions would result, and the cost involved would doubtless ultimately be more than covered by increased revenue.'

CONVENTION WITH PATIALA SHOWED THE WAY

In 1880, while the relations between the Imperial Post Office and the Native States showed a slight improvement, the unsatisfactory nature of the system of postal exchange with Indian States, and more particularly with Patiala, became evident. The Imperial Post Office, therefore, took advantage of the improved relations and proposed an extension of its services to Patiala State in 1882. This proposal was turned down by the Regency Council, and the Government of India decided to allow the existence of the internal postal system to remain unchanged. The Government of India, however, persisted in its efforts and proposed the reorganisation of the defective system of posts while offering all possible assistance if the Regency Council accepted the Government of India's advice. This suggestion was accepted by the Council, and negotiations for reorganisation of State's postal services were started in 1883, culminating in a Convention which was ratified by the Regency Council in 1884. The most important feature of this Convention was that it provided for a mutual exchange of postal articles, between the Imperial Post Office and the State post offices. This Convention was the fore-runner of others that were entered into in the next two years.

GWALIOR, JIND, NABHA, CHAMBA AND FARIDKOT JOIN

The Government was averse to pressing any agreement which involved the assumption by the Imperial Post Office of the management of postal business in the States, but the system of conventions offered a ready solution for mutual exchange of correspondence. Steps were taken to conclude agreements with other States, and conventions were entered into in quick succession, with Gwalior, Jind, Nabha in 1885 and Chamba and Faridkot in 1886. Six Conventions were concluded with the States.

BASIS OF AGREEMENTS

The basis for the agreements were as follows:

'(1) There shall be a mutual exchange of correspondence, parcels and money orders between the Imperial Post Office and the Post Offices of the native States, this exchange including registered, insured, and value-payable articles and being governed by the rules of the Indian Postal Guide as periodically published.

(2) Certain selected post offices in British India, and in the native States, shall be the sole media of exchange for insured and value-payable articles and money orders and shall be entrusted with the duty of preparing the accounts arising from the exchange.

(3) Indian postage stamps and postal stationery, over-printed with the name of the native State, shall be supplied by the Government of India on indent at cost price and shall be used for the purpose of preparing inland correspondence posted in the States.

(4) The Government of India shall bear the cost of conveying mails over British territory and the native State shall bear the cost of conveying mails within the limits of the State.

(5) The Imperial Post Office shall establish no new post offices in Native State territory without the permission of the Durbar, excepting at Railway Stations or within British Cantonments, the Durbar undertaking the establishment of any post offices or letter boxes required in State territory by the Imperial Post.

(6) On foreign correspondence posted in the State, postage shall be prepaid only by means of Imperial postage stamps not bearing the overprint, postage stamps with such overprint not being recognised for the purpose.

(7) Monthly accounts shall be kept of the amounts due to the Imperial Post Office by the Native State and *vice versa* upon the money order exchange.'

After the conclusion of these Conventions, it was found that important lacunae was left in the drafting, as no clause had been included providing for their termination. It was, therefore, decided to arrest any further growth of the Convention system. It committed the Government of India unilaterally. Although it was suggested by the Director-General to the Political Department to terminate these Conventions, it was argued that they could not be annulled unless both the parties agreed to such a proposal.

FURTHER EFFORTS AT INTEGRATION AND MYSORE'S EXAMPLE

All future attempts were, therefore, directed towards making the States surrender their postal systems and, whenever necessary, special allowances

were made and concessions granted to States in order to secure control of their postal services.

The first to agree to the new policy of the Department, laid down in 1886, was the important State of Mysore. The Maharaja of Mysore was a very enlightened ruler and had laid the foundations of a liberal government in his State. He realised the numerous advantages of an amalgamation of the local with the Imperial Post, even though his own 'Anche System' for carrying daks was both elaborate and efficient. The measures of unification, in which Mysore rendered very valuable assistance, was carried out at the beginning of 1889 and this resulted in a great development of the postal business of the State. In return the Mysore Government was accorded the privilege of the free carriage of the Mysore's official correspondence within the territory of the State.

The encouraging results which accrued from the unification of postal system in Mysore had made it amply clear that the postal unity of the Imperial Post with the States' post was in the interests of India. But the rights and feelings of various States had to be respected before any action could be taken for the amalgamation of their local posts with the Imperial Post. Fortunately, the population of the States looked on the Imperial Post with favour and trust and this was the decisive factor in the unification of the postal systems.

POLICY OF 'POSTAL UNITY' OF 1892

In 1892, the policy of 'Postal Unity' was declared by the Government of India. As a further step in the execution of this policy, the amalgamation of the Imperial Post Office and that of Kashmir State was carried out in 1894 with the complete consent and co-operation of the State authorities. The Postal management of native States of Nandgaon and Bamra in the Central Provinces, and Puducottak in the Madras Presidency, was also transferred to the Imperial Post Office in the same year. This had a very healthy effect on the attitude of other States, which had been sitting on the fence till then.

THE RECALCITRANCE OF THE NIZAM

Although most other States gradually fell in line with the Government of India's policy of carrying out unification of the postal system, the Nizam of Hyderabad (Deccan) proved to be difficult. Not only did the Nizam

consistently refuse to accede to the principle of 'Postal Unity', but even tried to make his postal administration independent of the Imperial Post in respect of foreign mails. Although an arrangement for the exchange of correspondence had been concluded with the Hyderabad State in 1882, a proposal was submitted in 1883 by the Hyderabad Government that certain Imperial Post Offices should be abolished as they impaired the revenue of the State Postal Department. It was suspected by the Government of India that this step was taken by the Hyderabad Government to ensure that no Imperial Post functioned in his territory. The Nizam's request was, therefore, turned down. A further attempt to secure an amalgamation of the Hyderabad Post was made in 1906, but without success. The Government of India had to take a very serious view of this situation and had to handle it firmly. In the Government Order on the subject it was categorically affirmed that 'whenever it was found desirable, in the interests of the Empire, to establish an Imperial postal line or post office within the native State, the Government of India must insist on the establishment of such a line or office. No discretion on the part of the State would be allowed'. But, in spite of everything, the Nizam continued to stick to his attitude till the Police Action in Hyderabad, which India's National Government was forced to take against the Nizam's recalcitrance. The postal system of Hyderabad has now been incorporated into that of the Indian Union.

THE POSITION IN 1908

In 1908, when the Posts and Telegraphs took stock of the position, it was found that out of the 652 native States in India, no less than 635, including Mysore, Baroda, Indore, Kashmir, Cutch, Kalapur, Bikaner and the Kathiawar States, had cast in their lot with the Indian Post Office. A little later Indore and Bhopal accepted a postal merger. Only 15 States remained out; the outstanding ones being Hyderabad. Gwalior, Jaipur and Travancore.

SIR B. N. MITRA'S MEMORANDUM

Before the attainment of Independence by India, the question of the integration of the Postal system of various States, with that of the Indian Post Office, came up to the fore on several occasions, either because the Rulers of various States tried to get back the departments which, in their opinion, were capable of rendering large profits to the States; or because they

were dissatisfied with the Indian Postal organisation, or because they wanted more concessions in the shape of free service stamps or free carriage of mails. This problem of postal relationship with the native States had received some attention at the hands of the Butler Committee. These grievances were further studied by Sir B. N. Mitra, who submitted a detailed memorandum to the Political Department in 1926 on the subject of Postal finances. The subject was again studied by the Davidson Committee in 1932, when the question of setting up a Federal Government in India was examined in detail. The reports of all these Committees give detailed information regarding the fiscal relations of the Indian Postal organisation with postal administrations in native States.

SIR V. T. KRISHNAMACHARI'S COMMITTEE

In the post-independence period, the Indian States Finances Enquiry Committee, under the Chairmanship of Sir V. T. Krishnamachari, was set up for reporting on the financial relationship of the Government of India with the States. This Committee in para (19) of their report laid down the principle that the Posts, Telegraphs and Telephones should be a Central charge and that the revenues and the administrations of the Department should be taken over from the States by the Central Government.

FEDERAL FINANCIAL INTEGRATION

The federal financial integration, which came into effect from the 1st April 1950, was a logical corollary to the accession of the princely States to the Union of India, and integrated *inter alia* the State Post Offices in the Union System.

As a first step before putting policies into effect, the Post Offices of those States, which merged with the provinces (now Part A States), or those which came under the Centre, were directly amalgamated with the Indian Posts and Telegraphs. The postal system of Chamba was taken over on the 1st August 1949 and that of Patiala, Nabha and Jind from the 1st April 1949. The State postal systems of the Travancore-Cochin Union continued on an agency basis under the Government till the 1st April 1951, when they were finally taken over by the Indian Posts and Telegraphs Department.

As a result of the unification of all States' postal systems many problems of detail confronted the Indian Posts and Telegraphs Department. The

taking over of the staff, fixing them in corresponding posts in the Indian Posts and Telegraphs Department and fixing their seniority in related cadres *vis-a-vis* officials of the Indian Post Office, presented a gigantic problem. Even more important was the question of bringing the postal administrations in various States in line with the Indian Post Office. For instance, the Nizam's Post Office was very backward in many respects and it cannot be said that even at present this system is on a part with the rest of India. But the process of reorganisation is progressing rapidly and, in a year or so, it is presumed, that Hyderabad will also have as modern a postal system as the rest of India.

India now has a unitary postal system, and the credit goes not to one man but to many, from Sir Frederick Hogg and Sir Arthur Fanshaw, India's postal chiefs of the seventies and eighties, to the iron man of India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, whose greatest contribution to history was the complete political and financial integration of the former princely States into the Union of India.

7. The Dead Letter Office

THE NEED FOR THE DEAD LETTER OFFICE

THE POST OFFICE in India performs a large number of functions. But its main activity is still to collect, convey and deliver letters and other postal articles, and to do this expeditiously. With the present day volume of traffic, of a little over 2,672 million articles, handled by the Post Office organisation, there are bound to be a few postal articles which do not reach the addresse, because they are erroneously or insufficiently addressed, or because the addressee has left without indicating his next destination, or the address has been written in an illegible or indecipherable handwriting. Such letters, which cannot be handled in the normal manner, find their way into the Dead Letter Offices. Endeavours are then made to trace the addressee, failing which the letter is redirected to the original sender. In the early days one or two Dead Letter Offices were considered sufficient to cope with all the undeliverable or unclaimed letters, which amounted to less than a third of a million. To-day, seven Dead Letter Offices, strategically distributed within the important Circles, deal with a little over than thirteen million

articles. They are manned by officials, each of whom is conversant with English, the regional language of the State and two or three additional languages.

It is not clear when the Dead Letter Office in its present form came into existence, although we can possibly trace it back to the year 1837 when the detailed postal regulations were first introduced in India, under Act XVII of that year. Sections 25 to 27 of the Act provided for the disposal of undelivered and unclaimed letters. If these could not be delivered to the addressee, the Post Office retained them for three months, so that further efforts could be made and then sent them to the General Post Office in the Presidency towns. At intervals of about three months, lists of such undelivered articles were published in the official gazette. Eighteen months later, if still unclaimed, they were opened and any valuables contained in them were deposited with the Treasury, so that any rightful claimants could establish their title to them. After allowing a year to elapse all unclaimed letters were destroyed.

LOCATE THE ADDRESSEE OR FIND THE SENDER

In India, the task of delivery correspondence has been beset with considerable difficulties. The letters are addressed in over a dozen scripts; houses are not properly numbered; the addresses are illegible and quite a portion of the addressee population is constantly on the move. Under these circumstances, it would not be surprising if the painstaking sorter and postman should sometimes fail to deliver letters entrusted to him for delivery.

The work of dealing with undelivered letters in the Dead Letter Office has two distinct phases. It endeavours to find out the addressees (the staff have directories, lists and other available sources at hand for the purpose), and in cases where it fails to decipher the address, or locate the addressee, the Dead Letter Office endeavours to find out the senders with a view to returning to them their communications.

In the earlier stages of the growth of the Dead Letter Office, there were many hazards in the way of efficient delivery of mail. For instance, in the old days the postman had to deal with an address like this:

> 'With good blessings to the fortunate Babu Kailas Chandra Dey, May the dear boy live long. The letter to go to the Baidiabati post office. The above-named person will get it on reaching Baidiabati, Khoragachi, Goynapara, (Bearing.)

'If the Almighty pleases, let this envelope, having arrived at the city of Calcutta in the neighbourhood of Kulutola, at the counting house of Sirajudin and Alladad Khan, merchants, be offered to and read by the happy light of my eyes of virtuous manners and beloved of the heart, Mian Sheikh Inayat Ali, may his life be long! Written on the tenth of the blessed *Ramzan* in the year 1266 of the Hejira of our Prophet, and despatched as bearing. Having without loss of time paid the postage and received the letter you will read it. Having abstained from food and drink, considering it forbidden to you, you will convey yourself to Jaunpur and you will know this to be a strict injunction.'

'To the sacred feet of the most worshipful, the most respected brother, Guru Pershad Singh!'

One of the reasons that led to the introduction of the postage prepayment system in 1854 was the fond hope that remitters would be more careful in writing out addresses correctly. Prepayment of postage was not made compulsory at the time as it would have meant hardship in a large number of cases.

THE TRICK BEHIND THE 'BEARING' LETTER

In the early days the largest number of letters that kept the Dead Letter Office busy were the 'bearing' or unpaid letters. It was well known to every one that the addressee of an unpaid letter could refuse to receive it, and the sender was capable of securing himself against discovery and payment by not writing his own address. It was, therefore, quite a common practice to endorse on the outside of an unpaid letter the message which it was intended to convey. The letter on delivery was invariably refused by the addressee, and it was practically impossible to recover the postage from the sender who had methodically omitted to give a clue to his own name or whereabouts. No doubt the facility of sending unpaid letters was sometimes used for the purpose of conveying intelligence without payment of postage. But in the vast majority of cases the letters were sent without prepayment, because the sender considered the penalty charge as a sort of registration fee for ensuring the safe delivery of letters. In those days it was thought that an unpaid letter was more certain of reaching its destination than a prepaid one.

THE OLD WAY OF DISPOSING OF THE DEAD LETTER

In 1870, an additional Dead Letter Office was opened at Karachi and endeavours were made to reorganise the Dead Letter Office at Calcutta, where not much effort was being made at the time to trace the senders, or the addressees, and where most of the letters were destroyed by the postal officials. The *raison d 'etre* for the Dead Letter Office was that most postal officials used to rid themselves of communications which they could not deliver by sending them in various directions to other Post Offices without sufficient grounds for such redirection; and, in this way, large numbers of undeliverable letters kept on floating from one office to another until, at last, they reached the Dead Letter Department. Here they were disposed of in the routine manner without any special effort being made to trace the addressee or the sender. A proposal was, therefore, introduced by which the letters that could not be delivered were sent for disposal direct to the Dead Letter Office of the Postal Circle from which they had originated, that being the locality where the language and characters were most likely to be understood.

PITY THE DEAD LETTER OFFICE

The onerous work of the Dead Letter Office was further complicated by the unfortunate habit among Indians of that time of writing the most complicated addresses, which included not only names, but a string of honorific titles, compliments, routes, presidencies, provinces, districts, villages, etc. all compressed into the diminutive space available on the outside of a minutely folded paper. It must be remembered that in those days the present day large-sized stamped envelopes had not been issued and the covers used were a little larger than one's fingers! The Postal Administration felt it had to do something about this; and, in 1873, in spite of protests from the Finance Department regarding the loss in net receipts due to the cost of the stationery, it was decided to issue an embossed envelope of the same type but slightly smaller than we see in common use to-day. The following reference to this in the Annual Report of the operations of the Post Office in India for the year 1873-74 makes interesting reading:

> 'One of the gravest evils with which the Indian Post Office has to contend consists in the deep rooted native habit of using for purpose of the post the flimsiest of paper and of folding it

so minutely as to leave no room for the direction: these directions, which generally contain much superfluous matter, are often spread over the whole space available on both sides of the cover, and the confusion is enhanced by the post marks which, for want of space, have to be impressed on the address itself. It was hoped that the enlargement in 1869 of the unit of letter weight from one quarter to one half of a tola would work good, but the measure was not followed by any marked improvement in the description of paper or size of envelope used by the native public. As a remedy, therefore, envelopes, embossed with half-anna and with one-anna stamps, were offered for sale at the value of the stamps they bore, no charge being made for the paper. This change commenced from July 1873 and at once became very popular. The demand for embossed envelopes far exceeded the most sanguine estimate, so much so that, in four months, the Superintendent of Stamps at Calcutta exhausted a supply which would otherwise have lasted over a quarter of a century. Since then Messrs De La Rue and Company have been busy in making envelopes for India, and though for many months they have been turning out this class of stationery at the rate of 57 reams a day, the required quantities have not yet been stored in the several local stamp depots. It is encouraging to find that the demand for these envelopes springs largely from the principal upcountry centres of native commerce, a fact which tends to shew that the envelopes are being used by the class for whose benefit this concession was introduced.'

THE LARGE EMBOSSED ENVELOPE MAKES THINGS EASIER

The combined effect of the use of the large size embossed envelopes, the increase in the number of Dead Letter Offices, and the improvement in the methods and techniques of employees in dealing with such undelivered mail, resulted in a declining percentage of the total number of paid articles unsuccessfully dealt with in the Dead Letter Office, as compared to the volume of all mail handled by the post offices. The figures for the decade are given in the table below:

I	II	III	IV
Year	Number of articles which should not be delivered to addressee or sender	Total number of postal articles	Percentage of II to III
72-73 . . .	900,250	83,127,098	1·08
73-74 . . .	1,035,449	98,531,628	1·05
74-75 . . .	922,001	T104,353,076	0·38
75-76 . . .	781,487	107,576,943	0·73
76-77 . . .	691,261	110,051,340	0·63
77-78 . . .	667,170	115,089,336	0·58
78-79 . . .	635,901	118,599,609	0·54
79-80 . . .	658.068	128,567,058	0·51
80-81 . . .	673,108	143,538,105	0·47
81-82 . . .	621,451	153,093,671	0·40

For the more efficient disposal of the Dead letters a new Dead Letter Office was opened at Nagpur, in 1872, and this was followed by another one at Lucknow, in 1873, and another two at Mount Abu in Rajasthan and at Rangoon in Burma in 1875. Today there are eight Offices located at Lucknow, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Nagpur, Patna, Amrisar and Hyderabad.

The most important part of the work of the Dead Letter Office is the disposal of articles for delivery to addressees. The staff of these offices, therefore, always bears in mind that every article belongs, in the first place, to the addressee. When every possible way to trace the addressee has been tried and proved unsuccessful, the article is returned to the sender if it bears his address on the outside or gives any clue to it in the enclosure.

QUALIFICATIONS OF STAFF IN DEAD LETTER OFFICE

The staff employed in a Dead Letter Office is bound by secrecy under the Post Office Act not to divulge any information obtained from letters or any other articles opened and read or examined. The staff is expected to be trustworthy and to possess knowledge of English and the regional Indian languages.

DEAD LETTER OFFICE AS A CHECKING OFFICE

The Dead Letter Office appropriated another function in the course of its evolution. It now provides the machinery for testing the efficiency of every Postmaster and the working of every Post Office within the Circle served by the Dead Letter Office. From time to time, any irregularities noticed by the Dead Letter Office are pointed out to the offices or officers concerned and a check kept on whether the instructions issued are followed or not.

DEAD LETTER OFFICE AS A MINIATURE MUSEUM

The Dead Letter Office is in part just like a miniature museum or library. Various types of samples of merchandise, jewellery, cloth, rubber goods, stationery articles and other things tend to find their way to the DLO through the medium of undelivered letters. Efforts are always made to redirect these articles, either to the addressees or to the senders. But there always remain a considerable amount of unclaimed property, worth thousands of rupees, which is ultimately disposed of by auction.

Unclaimed newspapers, magazines, and various other books, of which hundreds are accumulated during the course of the year, at various Dead Letter Offices, are supplied to different hospitals for the use and entertainment of the patients.

8. The Post Office as a Banker

Banking Facilities

APART FROM THE primary functions of the Post Office which have already been dealt with, this organisation performs a number of other agency functions on behalf of the Government, the most important of which are the provision of banking facilities for small savers.

HOARDING *versus* BANKING

In the 19th century, there were few banks in India, and those were mostly located in the big cities. The banking habit amongst Indians was conspicuous by its absence, and most people followed the age-old custom of hoarding their savings in the form of gold and silver. This medium was liable to deteriorate in value due to the fluctuating economic conditions. The fluctuations of the international markets also caused difficulties. Law and order was not yet well-established and risks to personal life and property were frequent. And yet there was no medium other than gold or silver in which unutilised income could be safely kept. The British Government of the time also required money for the economic development of the country, as well as for military and administrative needs. It was these two factors that made the Government think of the savings banks as the most convenient method of harnessing the small savings to its requirements of funds.

THE POST OFFICE AS A BANKER

EARLY GOVERNMENT SAVINGS BANKS

The beginnings of the Post Office savings bank can be found in the Government savings banks opened in India at the three presidency towns of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, in 1833, 1834 and 1835 respectively. But, for nearly half a century, the Post Office was never in the picture so far as savings were concerned. The growth of the savings banks was entirely dependent on the need felt by the Comptroller-General for expansion and fuller control. Between 1863 and 1865, the savings bank management was transferred to the Presidency Banks who framed their own rules. In 1870, District Savings Banks were instituted in all parts of India except the three presidences of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta. The Saving Banks were then managed entirely by the Comptroller-General, and were opened as a rule in places where there were District Treasuries. In 1873, the Government Savings Bank Act was also passed. In December 1879, the maximum limit for deposits was raised from Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 5,000. This step was necessary as, in its absence, a large number of deposits would have found their way into other banks.

THE INCEPTION OF POST OFFICE SAVING BANKS

During these years a considerable amount of thought had been given to the feasibility of utilising the Post Office organisation for the establishment of a network of saving banks. Sets of rules were prepared in 1880 for the guidance of the public and the instruction of the Department. A proposal was thereafter mooted for the institution of Post Office savings banks in India similar to those in England. Though the then Comptroller-General was opposed to the idea, it was later decided that the operations of the banks should reach into the interior of the districts and that savings banks should be opened under the management of the Post Office.

The year 1882 was another landmark in the history of the Indian Post Office, when Post Office savings banks were opened in every part of the country except the three presidency cities of Bombay, Madras and Calcutta. In Bombay the Presidency Bank held all privileges, which it was unwilling to forego; in Madras the introduction of Post Office savings banks was limited to small places, and in Bengal the Post Office established no savings banks either in Calcutta or in the neighbouring town of Howrah.

Before the Post Office took the savings banks under its wing, the

number of savings banks in the country was 180, but, as a consequence of the Post Office savings bank scheme, the number of savings banks in the country shot up from 180 to 4,243. The end of the first year's working showed that nearly 40,000 depositors had deposits of Rs. 28 lakhs. The District savings banks were, curiously enough, allowed to function alongside the Post Office savings banks. But during the first year, it became clear that the District savings banks were redundant and their continued existence in stations where Post Office savings banks existed was unnecessary.

The Post Office savings bank system was introduced in Bombay for the first time on the 1st May 1883.

NEW RULES

From year to year the number of savings bank accounts increased and, in 1886, some changes were introduced. New rules were compiled which included fixing the minimum deposit at annas four and restricting withdrawals to once a week.

Another important development was the fixation of the bank-client relation between the Post Office and the depositor. Prior to April 1886, any person, whether he was a savings bank depositor or not, could use the Post Office as an agency for the purchase and sale of Government securities. But, from the beginning of that year, this privilege was withdrawn from the general public and restricted to *bona fide* depositors.

THE EFFECT OF WARS AND WAR SCARES

Apart from economic conditions, psychological factors play a great part in the flow of funds in and out of the bank. Wars and war scares are two such factors.

In 1885, for instance, the number of withdrawals was abnormally high because of the feeling of insecurity that prevailed for a short time when the atmosphere was heavy with war clouds and a war with Russia was in the offing. Similarly, during the two Great Wars, there was an unprecedented rush of withdrawals on the Post Office savings banks. Savings banks deposits, which were 23 crores in the beginning of 1914, came down to about 15 crores in August-September of the same year. Also, balances held by the Post Office savings banks dropped, from Rs. 81·86 crores in 1938-39, to Rs. 59.51 crores in 1940-41, as a result of World War II. Famine too has been known to effect a considerable fall in the balance.

1885 ONWARDS

From 1885 onward the story of the savings bank is one of concentrated effort and conspicuous success. The continued expansion of the network and business conducted showed the confidence which public reposed in its working. Due to the facilities that the Post Office could offer to a large number of very ordinary people, the number of post offices, with savings bank facilities, increased rapidly. In the rules of the savings bank certain changes were made in the early part of 1905, enabling depositors to hold their deposits wholly or in part, at call, or subject to six months notice of withdrawal. The rate of interest on deposits at call was reduced from 3⅛ per cent to 3 per cent, while the rate of interest requiring six months notice of withdrawal was fixed at 3¼ per cent per annum.

BURMA

In 1937 Burma was declared a separate protectorate and, as a consequence of this the Burmese Government took over the administration of the post offices in its territory. This resulted in an apparent fall in the total savings bank deposits, but the *per capita* savings actually showed an upward trend and, with the expansion of savings bank facilities this gap was soon filled up.

INCIDENCE OF FRAUDS

In the thirties the incidence of frauds, some involving large amounts, had been on the increase. Though various steps were taken from time to time to check this, not much improvement was effected till 1938-39, when the Government decided that Savings Banks should be maintained only in those places where there was a real need for them and where reliable agents from amongst responsible men in the locality were available for working in these banks. The agents usually entrusted with the work were school masters or village headmen.

RISE OF CREDITS BETWEEN 1945-47

In 1945-46, there was a phenomenal rise of nearly 35 crores in savings banks accounts, which, incidentally, represents 40 per cent increase over the peak figure before the war. This was due both to war time prosperity of a section of the population in the lower income groups, and the raising

of the ceiling for annual and total desposits in an account.

In 1946-47, there was a further increase of Rs. 27 crores. This was probably due to higher wages earned by working overtime, and the difficulty of utilising the purchasing power because of the prevailing shortages of commodities.

PARTITION AND A FALL IN ACCOUNTS

With the partition of India in 1947, there was a substantial fall in the number of savings bank accounts, as a proportionate number of them fell within the Pakistan territory. The balances soon reached pre-partition figures, as a result of the extension of the savings bank facilities to the rural population.

BETTER FACILITIES FOR SAVING

A departmental committee was appointed by the Government in 1950 to enquire into the position of better savings facilities and to increase efficiency in the working of the Post Office savings banks. On the recommendations of this Committee, the maximum limit for deposits was raised to Rs. 15,000 on ordinary accounts and Rs. 20,000 on joint accounts. The rate of interest was also raised for the benefit of the ordinary people which at present stands at 1½ per cent on balances up to a maximum of Rs. 10,000.

RECORD CREDITS

Increased economic stability of the middle and poor classes has resulted in an all round increase in the number of deposits and the balance which in 1952 stood at the record figures of 45 lakhs and Rs. 200 crores respectively.

POST OFFICE AS LINK BETWEEN PUBLIC AND TREASURY

The depositors in Post Office savings banks continued to enjoy the privilege granted to them in 1886, utilising the agency of their Post Office savings bank accounts for the sale and purchase of Government securities. An additional facility extended to depositors was the collection of interest in their security holdings. The interest was collected by the Accountant-General and credited to the respective savings bank accounts. Though the Post Office savings banks are managed by the Indian Posts and Telegraphs Department, the accounts are maintained by the office of the

Accountant-General, Posts and Telegraphs, which forms a part of the Ministry of Finance. The Post Office thus acts as the intermediary between the public and the treasury, and fulfills a very necessary function—that of carrying banking facilities to every door.

DEFENCE BONDS

During the war a modified form of the savings bank, called the Defence Savings Bank, was introduced with effect from the 1st January 1941. The purpose of this was to divert savings into defence bonds at a higher rate of interest, which was fixed at 2½ per cent. These were in the nature of long-term deposits, as no withdrawals could be made until one year after the termination of war. In 1946-47, there were about 5.5 million accounts in these banks with total deposits of about Rs. 11 crores. After the end of the war the need for this facility no longer existed and Government decided that no interest was to be allowed after 1st April 1947. And after 1st July 1947, no new accounts could be opened and no fresh deposits accepted in the then existing accounts.

POST OFFICE CASH CERTIFICATES

Another important method of encouraging small savings was by means of postal certificates which served as short term investments.

The first time we hear of this method of investing savings is in 1917, during the First World War when the Five-Year Post Office cash certificates were introduced in India. This scheme was successful in its early days, as in the very first year the sales totalled Rs. 10 crores. The total amount invested in these short-term certificates later declined till it reached its minimum in 1921-22. A slight improvement was shown in the next financial year, but it was quite evident that the rate of interest had to be increased if a further flow of money into the cash certificates was to be stimulated. The rate of interest was increased to 6 per cent. This resulted in a quick recovery and brought up the figure of investment from less than Rs. 50 lakhs to Rs. 7 crores. From 1930 onwards, the rate of interest was again gradually brought down, till it was reduced to 2½ per cent in 1936. With the passing of years, the Five-Year postal certificates fell into public disfavour and their issue was discontinued in 1947 as investment in these dwindled from Rs. 15. 11 crores in 1936-37 to Rs. 2.92 crores in 1947.

THE EFFECT OF WAR ON CASH CERTIFICATES

As in the case of savings, political uncertainty was an important factor in the volume of total investment in this form. Before the outbreak of the Second World War, the atmosphere was surcharged with political suspense with the result that the number of encashments of certificates, which amounted to well over Rs. 23.6 crores, was the highest in 1937-38.

In 1940, when war was at its costliest and money was needed for the defence of the country, the Indian Government decided to introduce Defence Savings Certificates to attract small investors and these were offered at a rate which was more favourable than the cash certificates.

MINIMUM TIME LIMIT FOR ENCASHMENT

The Defence Certificates were made out for the actual issue price, and their yearly maturity value, at the end of each complete year, was indicated on back of the certificate. Since there was no minimum period for encashability of these certificates, many persons, who bought these certificates when they had money, presented them for encashment within a short time, even though no interest had been earned on them. This only resulted in creating additional work without any tangible benefit to Government. It, therefore, became necessary to prescribe a minimum time limit before which these certificates could not be encashed.

This change was brought about on 1st October 1943, when National Savings Certificates replaced the Defence Savings Certificates. All denominations, which were issued for a total period of 12 years, had to be held for a minimum period of three years before they could be encashed. The exception was the Rs. 5 certificates which could be encashed after 18 months from the date of issue. In 1944, a National Savings Ordinance was passed and a revision of rules effected. After the war, in 1946-47, there was a slight fall in the investment in the National Savings Certificates. This was probably the result of the insecurity created by communal disturbances which broke out throughout the country, and also because of the unsettled conditions that prevailed due to impending political changes.

ARRANGEMENTS WITH PAKISTAN FOR CERTIFICATES

We have noted that the serious disturbances, which followed the partition of the country, affected the Postal Department and its net-work of

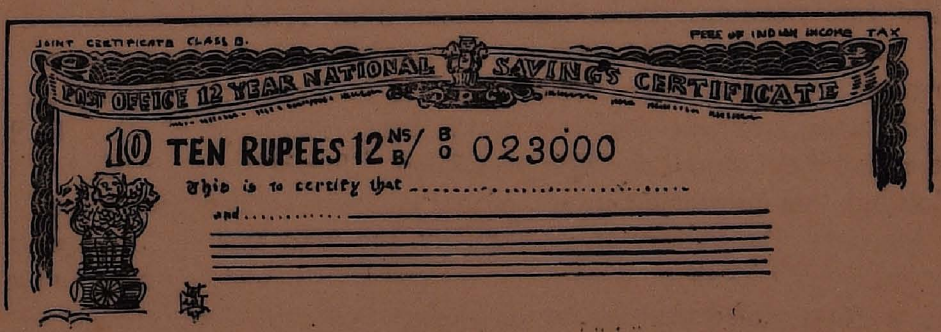
establishments. Following closely in the wake of these disturbances, there was heavy mass migration from Pakistan to India of persons who, in their anxiety to escape death and disaster, had come empty handed to India. They had lost practically everything, including their savings pass books and their cash certificates. Even those who had brought their certificates had no means for their ready encashment. Special facilities were therefore arranged, on a reciprocal basis with Pakistan, under which claims for certificates and savings banks were to be made with local Post Offices, with supporting evidence. In the case of certificates, encashments were allowed to a limit of Rs. 500 on identification to the satisfaction of the paying postmaster, while, in the case of savings banks, claims were allowed on a similar basis up to a maximum of Rs. 1,000.

NEW SERIES

Two new series, that is to say, Seven-Year and Five-Year National Savings Certificates, were issued from the 1st June 1948, and this gave a fillip to the sale of these to the public.

To enhance the popularity of National Savings Certificates further, a National Savings Commissioner was appointed and various small savings schemes introduced. In 1943, authorised agents were allowed to sell these certificates on a commission of 2½ per cent. This practice was, however, discontinued in 1948 and, instead, a modified scheme was initiated in 1949 when the rate of commission for the agents was brought down to 1¼ per cent.

It is ten years since the National Savings Certificates were first issued, and in this decade the total balances on account of these certificates has reached the figure of Rs. 160 crores! This shows the popularity of the scheme and its success in drawing small investments into the treasury.



9. Postal Life Insurance

A POSTMASTER DIED LEAVING A DESTITUTE FAMILY

IN THE EARLY seventies of the last century, a Postmaster died in Bengal under rather tragic circumstances. He left his family destitute. The pitiable plight of these dependents came to the notice of the postal authorities, who were moved, on humanitarian grounds, to give assistance to the bereaved family. This could be done in isolated cases, but not in all, as financial conditions precluded it. In those days, there was only one recently formed Indian Insurance Company, and the British insurance companies, operating in India, were unwilling to insure the lives of 'natives' other than those in high positions. The plight of the family of a small official who died was unenviable. The Government of the day felt it incumbent on them to look after the interests of such officials and their families, and the only way it could do this was by its undertaking to insure the postal officials.

POST OFFICE LAUNCHES A LIFE INSURANCE FUND

As a result the Post Office in India launched an enterprise, in 1883, for the benefit of its own employees, and, four years later, the benefits of the Postal Life Insurance Fund were extended to Telegraph employees. In 1898, the Government decided that all employees in civil government employment, including those employed in the Public Works Department and in the Military Accounts Offices, could take advantage of the facilities offered by the Postal Life Insurance Fund. Furthermore, instead of confining it to the whole life insurance, an endowment insurance scheme was introduced in the same year. Gradually, the fund extended its operations to other categories of quasi-government employees, such as those employed in local staff government institutions, universities, aided educational institu-

tions, etc. In 1949, the Members of the Defence Services were allowed to insure themselves with the fund. Today the Postal Life Insurance Fund caters to the needs of a large number of Central and State Government servants including Defence Services personnel.

Originally, the fund issued whole life policies and annuities. Life policies were issued with premium payable upto the age of 50 or 55 or till death. But in 1947, the fund discontinued the issue of Whole Life policies with premia payable till death, and two new tables were introduced under which the payment of premia ceased either at 60 or 70 years of age, as desired by the insurant. In the beginning, the minimum and maximum limits of insurance were fixed at Rs. 50 and Rs. 4,000 respectively. The maximum limit was raised to Rs. 10,000 in 1920, to Rs. 20,000 in 1932 and Rs. 30,000 in 1952. The maximum limit for Defence personnel remains the same as in the beginning when it was fixed at Rs. 20,000. The minimum limit of insurance, raised to Rs. 100 in 1922, still continues.

THE FUND IN BURMA

In 1937 when Burma separated from India the fund stopped the issue of new policies to employees of the Burma Government. But the old policies were allowed to remain in force and the holders were given all facilities to continue their policies. By the procedure adopted, the Director of Posts, Burma, arranged to deduct the premium from the salary of the insured employee and all such premia were credited to the Indian fund. He was also empowered to settle all claims of persons residing in Burma. The Government of India was to pay annas eight per policy towards the working expenses of keeping these accounts.

AFTER PARTITION

With the partition of the country, in 1947, the fund itself was divided between the two countries. Pakistan assumed responsibility for policies of persons who opted for service in that country or were to be residents of that dominion. The Government of India undertook the responsibility for the rest of the policies.

INTEREST ON POLICIES

As in the case of Post Office savings bank, cash certificates, etc., the balances of the fund have always been the part of the unfunded debt of the

Government of India and have been merged with the General Balances. Till 1940 the Government of India paid interest on the fund's balances, at the rate of 3½ per cent per annum. But in that year this guarantee was withdrawn and the fund was to be paid interest at rates to be determined from time to time. All policies issued prior to 1st April 1940, however, were entitled to get interest at 3½ per cent per annum. The revision of the rate of interest necessitated revised premium rates. A distinction was maintained between the policies issued prior to 1st August 1940, and those issued on or after this date, by keeping them separate. The fund accumulating from policies issued to the Defence Services personnel, is also maintained separately.

BENEFITS

From its inception the fund took no undue risks. It insured only first class lives and did not accept any life which could not be insured at normal rates. But once a policy was issued, it covered all risks to life including that of war, accident, suicide, etc. without any extra charge. The practice continues till today.

The premia on the policies are payable monthly and, in the majority of the cases, are deducted from the salaries of the insured. Payments in cash at the post office are acceptable.

ADMINISTRATION

The administration of the fund has been vested, throughout, in the Director-General, Posts and Telegraphs. He administers it through the heads of various circles, who are empowered to accept the proposals register the assignments, grant loans and settle all claims. A uniform procedure to be followed by the heads of circles has been laid down by the Director-General. Exceptional cases are, however, referred to the Director-General.

Until April 1951, the Accountant-General, Posts and Telegraphs, was responsible for the issue of policies, maintenance of accounts and audit of the fund. The actual duties were discharged by the Deputy Accountant-General, Posts and Telegraphs, Calcutta. In 1949, a Deputy Accountant-General was appointed exclusively for the purpose of Postal Life Insurance Fund. However, on the recommendations of the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India in 1951, the responsibility of maintenance of the accounts,

and the issue of Postal Life Insurance policies, was transferred to a newly appointed Director of Postal Life Insurance stationed at Calcutta and working under the control of the Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs. The resident Audit Officer of the office of the Deputy Accountant-General, Posts and Telegraphs, Calcutta was entrusted with the task of carrying out concurrent audit of the fund. The Controller of Insurance was appointed the Consulting Actuary for the fund whose advice was to be sought on all actuarial matters. The premium tables, conversion tables, etc., are all compiled by him. He also effects the valuation of the assets and liabilities of the fund once in every five years, and also makes his recommendations for the distribution of surplus. This actuarial valuation has been done quinquennially since 1897, the last valuation being on the 14th August 1947. At each valuation, surpluses are disclosed and bonuses computed and paid to the policy holders.

The accounts of the fund have always been maintained on commercial lines. The entire cost of the central office at Calcutta, including the cost of audit is met from the fund. The Postal Life Department charges a flat rate of one rupee per policy in force and two rupees for every new policy issued during the year. This rate was fixed in 1922 on the basis of actual working cost. Out of this sum, Rs. 5,000 are paid annually to the office of the Controller of Insurance for actuarial advice and for the quinquennial valuation.

The agency commission, and the cost of agency organisation, are completely avoided by not employing agents for canvassing purposes. This is one of the reasons why the fund has been able to offer low rates of premia and pay high bonuses.

REORGANISATION PLANS

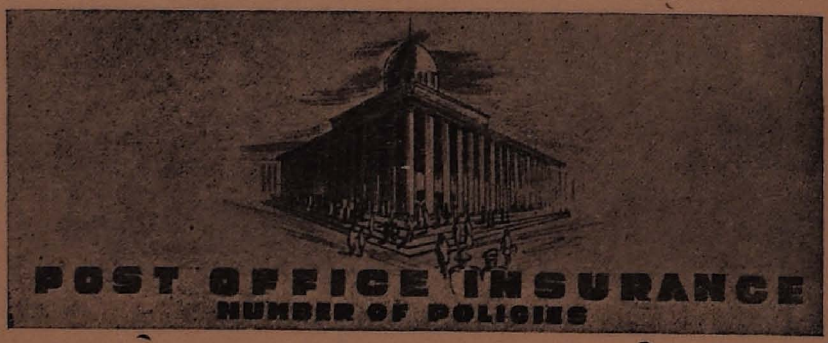
From time to time attempts have been made to plan a reorganisation of the fund. In 1938, Mr. Ghulam Mohammed, the then Finance Officer for Communications, submitted proposals for the reorganisation of Postal Life Insurance on the model of private insurance companies. He suggested the setting up of a central office, under a manager, working under the overall supervision and control of a Board of Management. The Central Office was to be vested with all powers of acceptance of proposals, registration of assignments, maintenance of accounts and the settlement of claims. He also suggested the investment of Postal Life Insurance balances in

Government securities. But this scheme was not implemented. Again in 1952, the Director, Postal Life Insurance proposed a reorganisation on lines somewhat similar to the ones suggested by Mr. Ghulam Mohammed. Some reforms were undoubtedly effected in the office of the Director, Postal Life Insurance but the main scheme of centralisation was not carried out. The accent now is on the decentralisation of the accounts and allied work which is at present being conducted in the central office at Calcutta.

UPS AND DOWNS

Though the Postal Life Insurance business has shown steady growth, it has had its ups and downs. The number of policies issued in a year fluctuated between 1,600 to 2,400 from 1905 to 1919. Business, however, started picking up steadily till the issue reached the figure of 9,710 in 1931. By this time, the economic depression had set in and the new and lower scales of pay had been fixed for all post 1931 entrants into Government service. The number of insurance policies issued dividends steadily. The policies were numerically at their nadir in 1943; when the figure stood at 1,589. It has shown considerable improvement since then and, in 1953, no less than 9,993 policies were issued.

In 1904, the total value of the insurance policies in force was a little over Rs. 31 lakhs. It rose gradually to Rs. 1·04 crores in 1914. A year later, the figure had jumped to three and half times that of the previous year and then stood at Rs. 3·5 crores. It never looked back till 1943 when it started slowly losing ground. The year 1949 showed a drop of nearly Rs. 4 crores from 1943. From 1949, it has shown a strong upward trend and the total insurance in force shows an increase of nine crores in these four years and at the end of 1953-54 it had reached nearly Rs. 27 crores.



10. Money Orders

THE CONFIDENCE OF THE PEOPLE IN THE POST OFFICE

BANKING FACILITIES are still in their infancy in our country, and the vast majority of the population do not have the banking habit. It is a country of joint families and small incomes. Millions of rupees have to be sent in the shape of small sums. The money order system provides the average Indian a sure and cheap means of effecting transfer of money. It is consequently intricately woven with the life of almost everyone in India and more particularly those in the lowest income groups. Probably in no other country of the world is the poor man so dependent on the post office for the transmission of small sums of money as in India, the reasons evidently being the facility with which the payment is made, and the absolute confidence which most of the Indians place in the Post Office.

POST OFFICE TAKES UP THE MONEY ORDER BUSINESS

Before 1880, the money transactions were carried out through the agency of the government treasuries, which were located only in district headquarters. Thus no facilities were available to the vast majority of the population, residing in the rural areas. In 1878-79 there were only 321 treasuries which transacted this business, and for villagers to trudge to the Treasury offices, miles away from their homes, was difficult, added to which

was the problem of identifying the recipients of the money orders. It was felt that all these difficulties could be obviated and the transmission of money facilitated, if the extensive agency at the command of the Post Office, with its accessability to the public through its 5,090 offices, could be utilised. And the factor that favoured this idea was that the office hours of the Post Office were fixed to fit in with the convenience of the public, and the closed days, or holidays, in the Post Offices were comparatively few. The result was the throwing open of post offices to money order business in all parts of India. The management of the Indian money order business, both inland and foreign, was transferred from the treasury department to the Post Office on 1st January 1880. A radical change of system as regards the inland money order accompanied this transfer. Under the old system, the trouble, risk and expenses of obtaining an order and sending it to the payee devolved on the remitter. Under the new system the remitter had only to write out a money order form and hand over the amount of remittance and commission to the Post Office, and the Post Office undertook to pay the money to the payee named, obtain his acknowledgement and give it to the remitter as proof of payment.

Meanwhile, the rules had also been amended to suit the new system. During the days when treasuries were responsible for the transmission of money orders, a money order was valid for a year from the date of remittance. Under the new rules, it ceased to be valid after one calender month from the date of issue, but could be revalidated for another two months. The introduction of this system placed a new and heavy pecuniary responsibility on the Postal Department. It was a matter of gratification that the staff rose to the occasion and endeavoured to make it successful as shown by the popularity of this changeover. The number of money orders rose from a monthly average of 20,605 in 1878-79 to 98,617 in March, 1880.

EXPERIMENT IN REMITTING LAND REVENUE THROUGH POST OFFICE

In 1884, four years after the Post Office had taken over the money order business, an experiment was conducted in North Western Provinces at the instance of Rai Bahadur Salig Ram, the first Indian appointed Postmaster-General. In the Benaras division, the agency of the Post Office was utilised for enabling zamindars in the interior districts to remit small sums of land revenue to Government treasuries at headquarter stations. This scheme had the advantage of saving the landlords long and tedious journey

by road. The experiment proved successful and was extended to other postal circles.

MONEY ORDERS DELIVERED AT HOME

From the 1st October 1884, a new system dealing with money orders was introduced. Under this revised system, clerical work was reduced, procedure simplified and additional advantages provided to the public. One important feature of the change was the payment of money order by postmen at the residence of the payee instead of merely at the post office. Not only was this measure well suited to Indian habits, but it tended to lessen the accumulation of cash at post offices and considerably accelerated both the payment of the order and the closure of the account. This system also served as a preventive for frauds, the incidence of which was greatly reduced. Several important offices were empowered to transact money orders without the intervention of their head offices, thus expediting the transmission of money orders and reducing the work in the Head Offices.

MONEY ORDERS BY TELEGRAM

In 1884, the public was given the opportunity of employing the telegraph system for the quick transmission of inland money orders. This measure was extended in March 1885, to include money orders sent to foreign countries. Since the rates of telegraphic money orders were high, it was considered necessary to reduce the rates, and the reduction was carried out three years later.

TENANTS COULD PAY RENT BY MONEY ORDER

To render the Post Office money order system still more useful to the poor people of this country, a special form of money order was provided by which tenants could remit small sums due on account of rent to landowners. Headings were provided in these forms for entries showing the names of the village and estate, and the particular period for which the payment was being made. The object of rendering this detailed information was to ensure that the payment for one period was not used to clear the arrears of rent, the recovery of which had become barred by limitation. This rent money order had a distinct advantage in so far as the land-owner was safe from the improper demands that were frequently made by the revenue officials and, on the other hand, the tenant was protected from injustice

arising out of any illegal action which the landlord might be tempted to take.

GRAPH OF POPULARITY

The sudden increase in the money order business after the Post Office took it over from the treasury, and its steady growth and popularity are best illustrated by the figures in the table below:

	No. of Money Orders	Value in rupees	Commission in rupees
Monthly average 1878-79 .	20,605	743,729	8,823
January 1880 . . .	60,799	1,901,978	23,978
February	78,812	2,362,367	28,279
March	98,617	3,193,034	37,810
Monthly average :—			
1880-81	133,681	3,809,048	44,665
1881-82	179,816	4,777,669	56,589
1882-83 . . .	213,826	5,390,349	64,247
1883-84	252,908	6,093,682	73,744
1884-85	279,188	6,840,714	83,852
1885-86	346,923	6,840,713	83,986

THUMB IMPRESSIONS

In 1896-97, an experiment was made in Calcutta and the neighbouring districts of Khulna and 24 Parganas, of taking thumb impressions of illiterate

payees on money orders instead of other marks. This experiment proved eminently successful and was extended to other parts of the country and is still in vogue even today.

VALUE OF MONEY ORDERS RAISED

For many years after the initiation of the money order scheme, it was found that a large proportion of the business consisted of remittances by native soldiers, constables and labourers, who had left their hearths and homes to earn a livelihood away from their villages. These remittances, which serve both as a general index of employment and money earnings, were small and ranged mostly from Rs. 5 to Rs. 10. With the war-time boom during the First World War, money was sent home by those at the front, as well as by those who had come to the cities where industry and other pursuits offered great scope for employment. The average value of money order rose to Rs. 18 in 1817-18 at the peak of the war effort. In 1922-23, the average remittance by money orders was Rs. 24½. This was about the highest, later figures, with the beginning of the Second Great War, fluctuating between Rs. 19-8-0 and Rs. 24-8-0. By 1944, however, the figures started an upward trend and, in 1947-48, it had reached Rs. 32-8-0. There was a further rise after this, the figure for an average remittance by money order settling at between Rs. 37 and Rs. 38. The money order traffic itself has shown a steady increase. Starting in 1880-81 from 16 lakhs, the figure gradually rose to 125 lakhs money orders of a value of 2,562 lakhs in 1900. In 1952, the remittances had reached very nearly Rs. 2,000 lakhs for 538 lakhs of money orders.

FOREIGN MONEY ORDERS

Foreign money orders came under the management of the Post Office on the 1st January 1880. Prior to this, in 1879-80, the weekly average of money orders issued in India was only 276 of an average value of £ 1,346. In the first year, after the Post Office had taken over the duties, the weekly average was 365 money orders of a value of £ 1,733. The service was confined to the United Kingdom, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Netherlands and Switzerland. Ceylon was included in October 1880, and service to the United States of America came into force with effect from 1st July 1882. The number of money orders issued in India in 1881-82 was 23336, rising in 1882-83 to 26,999.

A noticeable feature of the money order traffic between Indian and Ceylon was the rapidity with which it was increasingly used. In the first six months of its commencement, the orders for Ceylon paid in India averaged 71 in number and Rs. 3,708 in money per week. In 1882-83 the figures had pushed up to 663 of a total value of Rs. 33,382. As against this, the orders issued in India were 853 of an aggregate money value of Rs. 37,334. These figures compare with Mauritius, which sent Rs. 11,951, while the incoming traffic from the Straits Settlements came to Rs. 43,126 as against Rs. 2,627 remitted to that region.

The Foreign sterling orders showed a gradual upward movement which can be seen from the table below:

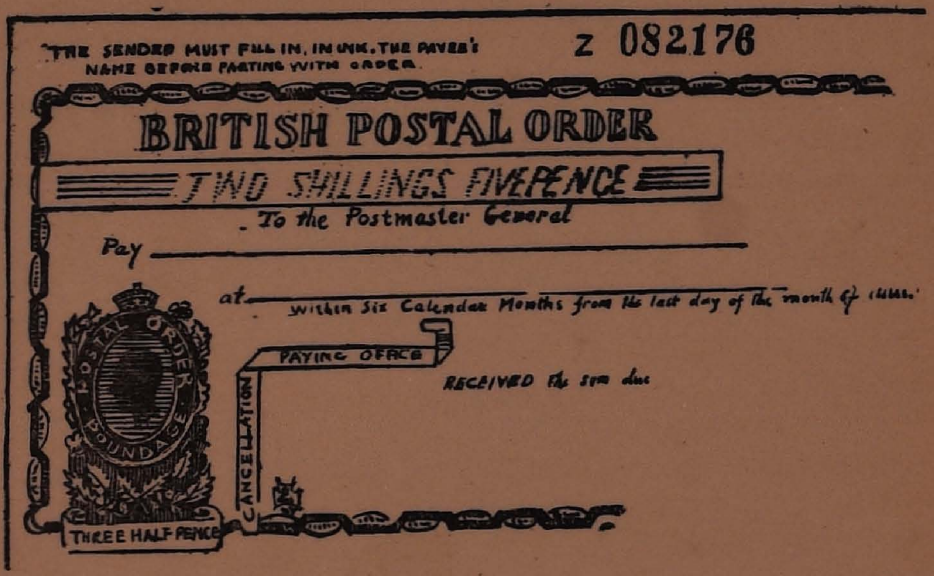
Year	Orders issued in India		Orders paid in India	
		£		£
1880-81 . . .	...	..	...	..
1890-91 . . .	52,295	196,730	22,649	185,579
1900-01 . . .	78,882	247,511	59,556	321,322
1910-11 . . .	127,067	432,188	82,134	850,757
1920-21 . . .	396,736	8,772,452	54,575	15,371
1930-31 . . .	152,302	541,492	93,538	739,774

The abnormally swollen figure in 1920-21, of an outward flow of £8¾ million sterling, was due to an unsually favourable note of exchange which doubled itself even in the course of a year. In 1919-20, the remittances in sterling amounted to £4,975,882 for 350,458 money orders.

Similar rises could be observed in the Foreign Rupee money order traffic and the traffic between British India and the Indian States, the latter figures holding till the final integration of all states into the Union of India.

The Foreign money order traffic in general, has shown a steady appreciation in the last 50 years. More than half a million money orders were

issued in 1902 and paid an aggregate monetary value of Rs. 24 million. The figures steadily appreciated to 921,000 money orders of a value of Rs. 44·2 million in 1912; one million money orders valued at Rs. 65·6 million in 1922; 1·19 million money orders valued at Rs. 42·1 million in 1932; 2·36 million money orders valued at 7·3 million rupees in 1942; and 2·39 million money orders of a total rupee value of 158·8 million,—a quadruple rise in numbers in the last half century, and a six-fold rise in money transmitted.



11. Postal Orders

ON THE 1st April 1935, the Indian Postal Order was introduced to the public. This new facility was expected to supplement the money order system and to cater to the needs of persons who wanted to remit small amounts of money.

INDIAN POSTAL ORDERS AFTER BRITISH MODEL

The postal orders were not new to India, which had taken its cue from Great Britain where the question of introducing them was being actively considered. The Indian postal 'Notes', as they were then called, were issued on the 1st January 1883, in three denominations: eight annas, one rupee and two rupees and eight annas. Britain also issued postal orders

simultaneously with India, for fixed amounts up to 20 sh. And, from 1884, intermediate amounts could be sent, by affixing additional postal stamps on the face of the order. These caught on, so that the annual sale in 1885 came to over 25 million postal orders. After an initial spurt, the sale of these postal notes declined considerably; so that, three years after their first issue, the Indian Post Office in its annual report observed "they ('Postal Notes') are not popular and do not meet the real want of the people of India." Their sale was, therefore, discontinued in November 1886. In the last year of their existence, the offtake had actually declined 12·25 per cent. compared to the previous financial year.

BRITISH POSTAL ORDERS ALSO SOLD IN INDIA

Meanwhile, with a large number of British army and civilian personnel stationed in India, facilities for small remittances to and from Great Britain had to be provided. On 1st October 1884, British Postal Orders were obtained from London and offered for sale to the public in India. In the first few years, the British Postal Notes were not popular in India and in 1880-90, only 22,643 Postal Notes of the value of £15,380 were sold in this country. This was disappointing, and, at one stage, the question of discontinuance of this facility was being seriously considered and even the stocks of notes had actually been sent back to London. But the tide turned, sales began to pick up, and during the next year, 1891, there was a rise of 80 per cent in value of the orders sold, probably due to the slight fall in exchange. From then onwards, sales showed a steady rise till the figures crossed the one lakh mark in 1902-03 when 128,054 British Postal Orders were sold in India. A year later, 26 new denominations were issued, ranging from six pence to a guinea. By 1908-09, over three lakhs of postal orders were being sold annually. In the quinquennial period 1905-06 to 1910-11, there was a fantastic increase of 700 per cent in the number and 539 per cent in the value of the British Postal Orders sold in India. The corresponding increase in the British Postal Orders cashed in India was 1,726 per cent in postal orders and 1,830 per cent in their value.

During the First World War, the sales declined from 453,943 in 1913-14 to 140,864 in 1918-19. After a sudden jump to 381,068 in 1920-21, resulting from demobilisation, the figure declined next year to 129,501. In 1922-23, the British Postal Orders were issued in 41 denominations. From this year onward, increased sales were in evidence and they reached three

lakhs in 1926-27. The sales hovered round this figure for over a decade till 1938-39. There was a set-back in 1939-40, after the declaration of hostilities which ushered in the Second World War. In 1940-41, the sales reached their nadir with the disposal of 64,900 orders. No commission was being charged on the postal orders sold to the Armed Forces and this resulted in a great fillip to their sales. In 1944-45, the number of British Postal Orders sold was 631,630 and their value £493,800. In 1946-47, with the exodus of British troops from India, on to the demobilisation centres in Great Britain, the total number of British Postal Orders sold rose still further to 725,590, of a value of £585,680. Thereafter, they showed a downward trend, except from the year 1950-51, when over 450 thousand were sold. On the 16th April 1951, the sale of the British Postal Orders was discontinued in India. The figures had dwindled in 1952-53 to a meagre 1950 valued at £1,645.

The payment in India of British Postal Orders commenced on 1st October 1905. Except in the last few years, they exhibited the same trends as those shown by the British Postal Orders sold in India. In 1952-53, the number of Postal Orders cashed in India was 6,60,074 and their value £641,543.

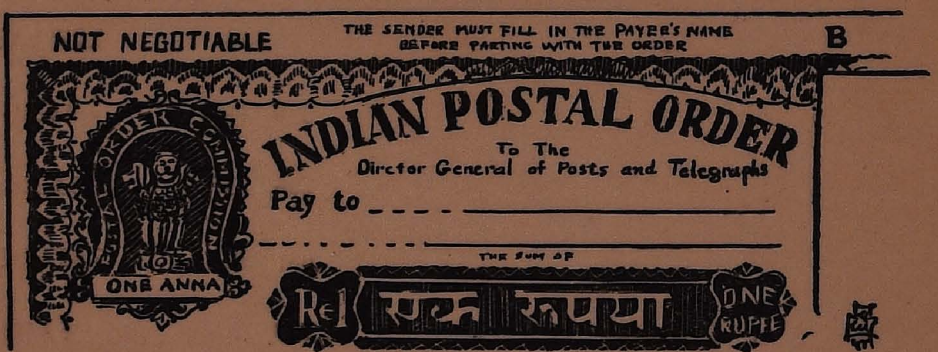
POPULARITY OF INDIAN POSTAL ORDERS

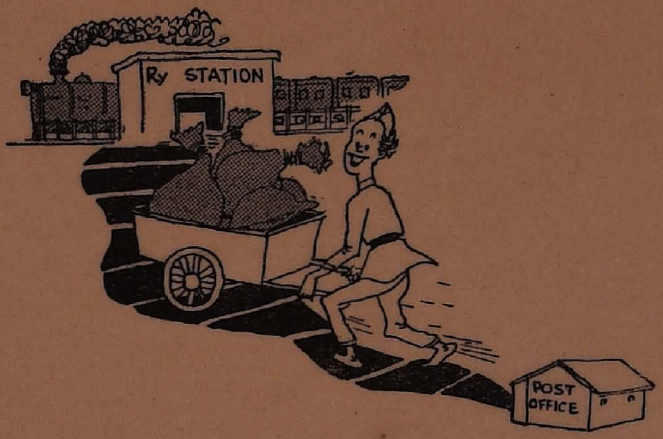
The Indian Postal Orders had a good public reception right from the commencement of their issue. Beginning with a sale in 1935-36 of 382,000 postal orders, worth over Rs. nine lakhs, the figure had risen steeply so as to reach 36,34,390 postal orders of the total value of Rs. 12,538,676. This showed an increase in a period of 17 years of 952 per cent in numbers and 1,358 per cent in value.

In the third year of their introduction, the Indian Postal Orders almost doubled their sales and thereafter showed a gradual increase. On 1st April 1939, the number of denominations for which the Indian Postal Orders were issued increased from 4 to 20. There was no commission charged from the Armed Forces and in 1944-45, there was a sudden jump of about 30 per cent over the previous year's figures. After partition, there was a proportionate drop, but their popularity with the public continued unabated and in five years between 1948-49 and 1952-53, the sales of postal orders had trebled. The corresponding increase in value was 2½ times. The steady growth can be seen from the table below;

Year	No. of Indian Postal Orders sold	Value in Rupees
1935-36	382,000	900,000
1936-37	656,000	1,467,000
1937-38	747,000	1,882,000
1938-39	835,000	2,323,000
1939-40	846,000	2,955,900
1940-41	895,116	3,275,655
1943-44	924,516	4,432,035
1944-45	1,284,123	6,536,081
1945-46	,681,230	9,997,693
1946-47	1,223,978	5,562,506
1-4-47 to 14-8-47	425,801	1,590,000
15-8-47 to 31-3-48	749,360	2,647,000
1948-49	1,300,510	5,172,678
1949-50	1,469,435	5,854,046
1950-51	2,164,867	7,318,666

1951-52	2,935,930	1,318,025
1952-53	3,634,390	12,538,676
1953-54	3,875,070	16,218,744





12. Value-payable System

LONG-DISTANCE PURCHASES MADE POSSIBLE

THE VALUE-PAYABLE Post is another important facility that the Indian Post Office offers to the public. Introduced in 1877-78, the idea was based on a system which had found favour in Germany and other countries of the European continent. Under this system, the sender of a postal article, like a parcel or a registered book packet, could declare in advance the value of its contents for realisation from the addressee and its subsequent payment to him, less the postal commission. Two considerations determined the action of the Postal Administration in introducing this. The first consideration was that people need not travel the great distances from the villages to towns to purchase certain goods, as transport facilities were not easily available. Secondly the shop keepers need not restrict their business only to people in the country wherever the buyer happened to be. The Mail Order Business which was based on the Value-Payable Order facility could, therefore, be encouraged to the advantage of the public. tradesmen and to postal revenue.

SLOW BEGINNING BUT RAPID GROWTH

The German Post Office offered an enviable example. It carried value-payable parcels of the value of a little over £2·5 million in 1874, while the Austrian Post Office collected for the senders of such parcels the

value of an order of £3·5 million sterling. In India, the facility was patronised rather meagrely in the beginning, but its popularity grew steadily and it became one of the flourishing activities of the Department. It satisfied a genuine need. The tradesman in the town could send goods to the remote corners of the district and the purchaser of the goods could pay for them on delivery. The tradesman's market thus extended to the whole of India and so did the purchaser's.

On 1st August 1880, the rate of commission for value-payable articles was reduced to the money order scale and, in 1882, the value-payable scheme was extended to the registered letters. Both of these contributed largely to its popularity.

FURTHER FACILITIES—SPECIALLY UNREGISTERED BOOK PACKETS

A further facility was made available to the public on 1st October, 1885, by which the value-payable system was extended to include unregistered book packets, both paid and unpaid. Prior to that date the cost of the registration fee, together with the postage, did not encourage its use for the transmission of books and packets. The relaxation of this rule, regarding compulsory prepayment of all charges, was immediately followed by the transmission of more than 50,000 unregistered value-payable book packets during the following six months.

RAILWAY RECEIPTS BY VALUE-PAYABLE POST

The extension of the value-payable post to cover payments for goods consigned to railways, was another landmark in its history. No doubt, the method of transmitting railway receipt notes as value-payable letters had been followed in the past. But this had never been put on a businesslike footing. Attempts were, therefore, made to popularise its adoption. The main objection to this measure was the comparative ease with which delivery of the goods could be obtained on indemnity bonds, the production of railway receipts being dispensed with altogether. On occasions, the consignees once they received their goods, evaded payment by refusing to take delivery of the railway receipt notes, sent through the post as value-payable registered letters. If the value-payable system was to be geared to this type of business, it was necessary that the production of railway receipt should be made obligatory on the part of the consignee for obtaining delivery of the goods.

After a lengthy and protracted correspondence, some railways conceded this point. Rules were accordingly issued in January 1886, providing for the transmission, by value-payable post, of railway receipt notes for consignments of parcels. Although for sometime, the business carried out under these rules did not show any marked progress, it became increasingly evident that the public showed a marked preference for securing cash payment through the use of the value-payable post system.

INCREASED USE OF VALUE-PAYABLE POST

During 1887-88, a decade after its introduction, the use of the value-payable post showed a marked increase. The number of articles stepped up by 30·12 per cent and the value declared for realisation by 29·34 per cent.

In the same year, another change was introduced under which the sender of a railway consignment addressed the goods to himself, and merely endorsed the railway receipt to the party for whom the consignment was intended. He then made over the receipt to the Post Office for transmission to destination by value-payable post. The object of this change was to obviate the risk to the railways of incurring financial responsibility for goods inadvertently delivered in anticipation of the production of the railway receipt. This risk was minimised by the new method; the goods were consigned to the sender and not to the real recipient, and the sender could rely on his money being realised by the Post Office before the railway Company delivered the goods to the party for whom they were intended.

ABUSES OF THE VALUE-PAYABLE POST SYSTEM

Sometimes the value-payable system lent itself to abuse, particularly in connection with unregistered packets which were posted in large numbers to persons who had not ordered them. This abuse not only caused annoyance and loss to the addressees, but tended to discredit the whole system. Special measures had to be taken in 1889-90 to check these mal-practices The pre-payment by the sender of the money order commission on unregistered packets was made compulsory. This was not refundable if the packet was refused by the addressee. All value-payable articles handed over to the Post Office had to be accompanied by a certificate to the effect that they were being sent in execution of a *bona fide* order. This latter safeguard was incorporated in the value-payable system at the suggestion of the

Committee of Trade Associations, Calcutta, who were specially consulted on account of great importance of the value-payable system to that city.

EXTENSION OF VALUE-PAYABLE POST TO CEYLON

The value-payable post was extended, as an experimental measure, to Ceylon on 1st January 1890, on the condition that postage must be prepaid in all cases. A special value limit of Rs. 50 was also imposed.

A scheme was initiated by the British Post Office for the establishment of an exchange of packets and parcels under the value-payable system between the United Kingdom and the British possessions abroad, but the Government of India in 1908 declined to participate in the scheme.

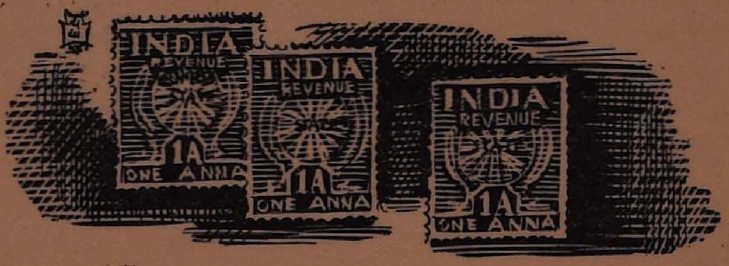
TURNOVER SINCE 1907-08

During 1907-08 nearly 1½ million pounds sterling was paid to tradesmen in Calcutta, nearly ¾ of a million in Bombay and just under ½ a million at Madras.

In 1907-08, just a little over six million value-payable articles were handled by the Post Office. The number gradually appreciated, reaching 13 million in 1929-30. The great depression of the late 'twenties brought about a decline in the use of the value-payable post service and, at the beginning of the Second World War, the figure had reached to 7·5 million. It touched bottom in 1943-45, to pick up again. It has now steadied itself round the 10 million mark. The table below gives the figures for the decade following 1943-44:—

Year	Total number of V. P. articles
1943-44	6,864,000
1944-45	8,081,000
1945-46	8,849,000
1946-47	9,309,000

1-4-47—15-8-47	3,605,000
16-8-47—31-3-48	5,107,000
1948-49	9,477,000
1949-50	10,208,500
1950-51	10,729,000
1951-52	10,635,000
1952-53	10,075,000
1953-54	9,04,000



13 Non-Departmental Activities

POST OFFICE REACHES EVERY NOOK AND CORNER

ONE OF THE reasons why some of the Government organisations, when faced with difficulties of reaching the largest possible number of people, have thought of utilising the agency of the Post Office for this purpose, is that the Posts and Telegraphs Department is the only All-India organisation which, with its large network of departmental and extra-departmental offices and agencies, reaches every nook and corner of India.

SALE OF QUININE PACKETS

In the last quarter of the 19th century, malaria was considered to be one of India's worst enemies. In those days, the lack of proper medical facilities in out-of-the-way places, made it difficult to combat this disease unless an agency could be found to distribute quinine, the then only known remedy which could prevent malaria from immobilising large

masses of India's working population in the villages. Even as long ago as 1892, the Indian Posts and Telegraphs Department, which had nearly 10,000 offices spread throughout India, was the most appropriate agency for the distribution of this valuable drug. From that year, the sale of quinine packets at a pice each was entrusted to the Indian Post Office. In 1908-1909 the amount of quinine sold through the Post Office was 7,549 lbs. Prior to the second World War a very considerable amount of quinine reached people in out-of-the-way places in this way.

During the Second World War, however, the shortage of quinine and the discovery of new substitutes for the drug reduced the amount of the quantities sold through the postal agency.

The place of quinine was, however, taken by mepacrine, which was sold in post offices in those states where the local governments considered it desirable to sell this drug to the public through the Post Office. The progressive decline in the sale of quinine caused by the spread of medical facilities in many parts of the country, can be best seen from the table which gives us the comparative figures for the last six years:

Year	Quantity
1947-48	4400 lb.
1948-49	4300 lb.
1949-50	2900 lb.
1950-51	2700 lb.
1951-52	2100 lb.
1952-53	647 lb.

RADIO LICENCES

Another such agency function, undertaken by the Indian Posts and Telegraphs Department, is the collection of Broadcast Receiver Licence fees, on behalf of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting. These licences were introduced in only certain selected Head Post Offices with effect from the 15th August 1924. The scheme was successful and was gradually extended to all head and sub post offices. Since then, the post offices have carried out the issue and renewal of Broadcast Receiver Licences. The volume of work and its increase can be seen from the fact that in the year 1952-53, the number of Broadcast Receiver Licences issued

was 731,234 including renewals; and, in the following year, 809,537 fresh licences, as well as renewal licences, were issued.

This work is done without any profit motive. The revenue earned in the shape of license fees goes to the Central Revenues after deducting a small amount towards the cost of handing the issue of licenses through the 6,600 post offices in India.

REVENUE STAMPS

The Indian Post Office was called upon, in 1934, to undertake another task, this time on behalf of the Finance Department. On the 1st April 1934, the unified postage and revenue stamps were abolished and separate stamps for postage and revenue purposes were introduced. Burma, unlike the rest of the dominion, declined to have a separate issue, the reason cited being that in the event of separation, Burma would have to go on using the unified stamps. The new revenue stamps were issued in the half anna, one anna, two annas and four annas denominations. These were to be exclusively used in the payment of duty under the Indian Stamp Act and not for any postal or telegraph purposes. The old series of unified stamps could only be used for paying postage and telegraph charges. In Bihar and Orissa the old unified postage stamps, overprinted 'Revenue B. & O.', were sold to the public for use in paying duty under the Indian Stamp Act. Burma continued to use the unified stamps for paying postage, telegraph charges and for stamp duty.

TOBACCO EXCISE LICENCES

Almost a decade after the Department had been entrusted with the work of selling 'revenue stamps', the Finance Department came out with the request that the fee for Tobacco Excise licences should also be collected on their behalf by the Post Office. The Department having agreed, Tobacco Excise Revenue Stamps were issued, through post offices in five denominations: Re. 1, Rs. 2, Rs. 5, Rs. 10 and Rs. 50. These were put on sale with effect from the 1st March 1943. They were sold mostly in the tobacco growing areas, such as the Guntur and Godavari districts of the then Madras Presidency, the Belgaum and Kaira districts of Bombay, the Farukhabad district of Uttar Pradesh, the districts of Muzaffarpur, Darbhanga and Bhagalpur in North Bihar, and the district of Rangpur in Bengal and a few districts in other parts of India.

CENTRAL EXCISE REVENUE STAMPS

During the next financial year, the Finance Department contemplated the levy of an excise tax on a number of goods such as coffee, betel nuts, tea, steel ingots, silver, sugar, vegetable products, tyres, mechanical lighters, matches, kerosene and motor spirit. The Finance Department approached the postal authorities, who were not at first keen on undertaking what was strictly an onerous non-postal task. But, on their being persuaded to agree, Central Excise Revenue Stamps were issued with effect from 1st April 1944, and sold at selected post offices with the proviso that they would be made available at any post office where they were in demand. Tobacco excise revenue stamps were not printed any more, but they were allowed to be sold for Tobacco revenue purposes till the existing stocks were exhausted in the post offices.

TUBERCULOSIS AND HEALTH SEALS

Advantage was taken of the far flung postal organisation in helping to collect voluntary contributions for two national causes. In 1950, on a request from the Ministry of Health, the Department agreed to put on sale, at post office counters, 'T.B. Seals' on behalf of the Tuberculosis Association of India. Next year the Ministry of Health requested the Posts and Telegraphs Department to undertake the sales of 'Health Seals' in aid of the 'Health Minister's Fund'. They were put on sale on the 2nd October 1951, and by May 1952, just over a lakh of rupees worth of seals had been sold by the Post Office.

MILITARY PENSIONS

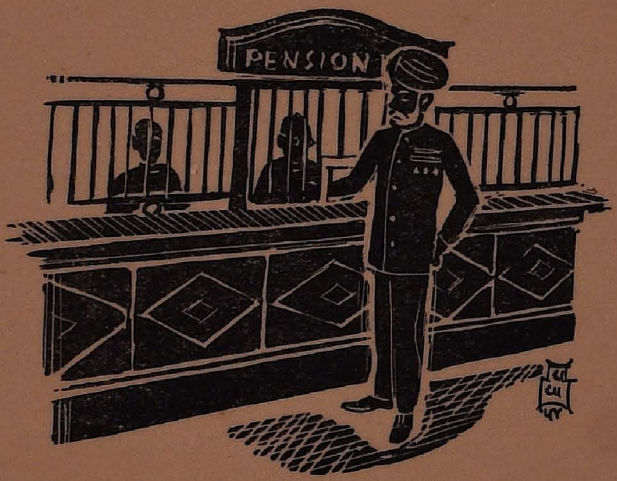
Another important function which the Post Office has undertaken since 1890 is the payment of pensions and other dues to the Indian Military Pensioners in the area served by the Punjab Postal Circle. This system has now been extended to the Delhi Circle.

These payments include pensions, family pensions, special allowances attached to pensions, 'Jangi Inams' for special distinguished War Service, and are paid on the authority of the sanction of the Defence Department and the Controller of Defence Accounts (Pensions), Allahabad.

The Post Office charges a small commission of Rs. 2-12-0 per cent from the Ministry of Defence for this, based on a no-loss-no-profit basis.

The rate was tentatively fixed during the war time and has not yet been finalised.

On an average the military pensions paid through the post offices amount to Rs. 250 lakhs per annum.



14. Post office and the British Expeditionary Forces

UNDER BRITISH RULE

THE POST OFFICE is essentially a peace-time organisation, but, under British rule, it was often conscripted to serve in the emergencies created by colonial wars and other engagements wherever the mercenary armies were sent.

BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE IN ABYSSINIA

The earliest record of the Indian postal staff being employed with a Military Force, is in connection with the Persian Expedition of 1856. The first regular Field Post Office was organised in 1867, to accompany the Expeditionary Force to Abyssinia. A portion of the staff was left at Massawa and the rest advanced with the Army to Zolla where they established a post office. There are some interesting references to the work and problems of the post office in the General Orders of Sir Charles Napier, the C-in-C of the Abyssinian Expedition. One order mentions that 'dawk

ponnys and post mules, which were maintained at intermediate stations for maintenance of postal communications between the Base and the forward troops, were placed under the Officer Commanding Station and not under the Transport Train and were to be used only on passes issued by senior office of the Quartermaster-General's Office.' Another order states that "several instances having occurred of mail bags having been opened during transit, the C-in-C prohibits any one from stopping the 'Postal Sowars' when *en route* from one station to another and from opening the mail bags they carry under any pretence whatever. Special packets and letters for each station should be carefully made and enclosed in linen and paper and distinctly addressed to the Officer-in-Charge of the post office of the station to which they are destined by whom alone they are to be opened. As continued delay occurs in transit of letters, owing to Postal Sowars not being ready to take them on, the C-in-C desires that at each station two Sowars be constantly kept in readiness by day or night and that strict orders be given that they carry on the mails directly they arrive." The paucity of Field Post Office on the lines of communication was made up by appointing military officers as Officer-in-Charge of post offices with an additional allowance ranging from Rs. 60 to Rs. 90 per mensem.

FRONTIER CAMPAIGNS OF THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT

Field Postal Units were employed in India for the first time on border operations in 1871, when the Postmaster General, Bengal, made all postal arrangements for the campaign in the Lushai Hills. In 1877, the Afridi tribesmen at Jowaki on the border near Kohat became fractious and an expedition was sent against them. A Postal Unit was attached to this Force and the mail arrangements were made by the Punjab Postmaster-General who was, from now on, to bear the brunt of making all postal arrangements for extra territorial Military Expeditions, as these were mostly in the North Western Frontier Province, against tribal incursions into India.

These were, however, comparatively minor expeditions. But really organised army postal arrangements, which included the organisation of military transport operations, were first undertaken by the Indian Postal Department in the second and third Afghan Wars of 1878-80. An expeditionary force went to Afghanistan under Lt. General Roberts, later known as Lord Roberts of Kandahar. So efficient were the arrangements that Lord Roberts mentioned the 'very admirable service performed by the Postal

Department in Afghanistan throughout the Campaign.' Lt. Col. W. Moore Lane, the Postmaster-General, was responsible for organising and working the military transport train between Jhelum and Peshawar—a distance of 175 miles along difficult terrain. After a short-lived peace, war broke out again in 1879 with the murder of the newly appointed Ambassador Sir Louis Cavafinari. Postal officials from all over India were summoned and field post offices were attached to each force. An 80 miles horse-cart line was established between Peshawar and Jalalabad with a horse post extension to Kabul. So important were these operations considered, that a new postal circle was created for Northern Afghanistan. Based in the north, the expeditionary forces conducted operations against South Afghanistan, and the new circle had to establish and maintain post offices, as required by the political and military authorities. Lt. Gen. Kenedy, who was in-charge of transport of troops, ammunition and stores for the successful prosecution of the war, placed the entire arrangements under the control of Lt. Colonel Moore Lane and his subordinate postal officers. Emergent provision had to be made for the large increase in goods and passenger services in this area and more particularly between Jhelum, Rawalpindi, Thal and Peshawar. Beyond Peshawar, horse communication was opened to Daka, Jalalabad and thence to Gundamak where the treaty had been signed on 26th May 1879, only to be broken three months later by the murder of the British Ambassadar and his escort. As part of the campaign, a horse post was also established between Thal and Alikheyl. In support of the Campaign in the direction of Baluchistan, a horse mail service was operated between Sukkar and Jacobabad. The conditions under which the postal system had to operate, were, to say the least, extremely difficult and even the horsemen of the Baluchi Guards, who normally carried the mail, could not be spared for the service to Quetta and Kandahar. The magnitude of bullock train operations can well be imagined from the fact that a hundred carts plied daily in the bullock train service from Jhelum to Peshawar. Quite a number of postal officers distinguished themselves, including four Indians, H. M. Mehta, Bipin Behari Mukerjee, Mohd Ayub Khan and D. M. Lalcaca.

MALTA AND CYPRUS

A post office was also attached to the expeditionary forces at Malta and Cyprus, where another Indian Postal official, Dinshaw Jijibhai, distin-

guished himself. The expeditionary force to Malta and Cyprus was accompanied by a fully equipped postal establishment. This was the first time that the All-India postal organisation, created in 1854, had sent a full-fledged postal unit for overseas operations.

EGYPT AND SUDAN

Postal contingents accompanied the Indian Military Forces, which operated in Egypt in 1882-1883, and in Sudan in 1885. The initiative for the despatch of the Field Post Office with the Sudan Force was taken by the Director-General of Post Offices who wrote: 'The necessity of sending a Field Post Office does not depend on the numerical strength of the Force. It is a question of convenience and comforts of native soldiers serving in Egypt and advantages of proper postal arrangements are so great as to be out of all proportion to the cost involved.'

THE HEROIC D. M. LALCACA

Meanwhile, the tribes on the Eastern border were getting restive and a military expedition had to be sent to Upper Burma to quell disturbances. A fully equipped post office was sent to accompany the forces and the sea-post office working between Calcutta and Rangoon was strengthened. One of the two postal officials who received honourable mention, was Mr. D. M. Lalcaca, who had earlier done commendable work in the second and third Afghan Wars.

NORTH-WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE

Ten years later, the post office had again to put itself in the field: firstly in the Waziristan and Chitral Field Forces, and, later, with the Chitral Relief Forces. These operations rendered necessary full-fledged postal arrangements which were put under Messrs Stowell and Salig Ram. Two years later, the post office sent its units with the Malakand and Mohamand field forces in the Tirah Expedition.

EGYPTIAN SUDAN

In 1896 yet another Expeditionary Force was sent to Suakin in Egyptian Sudan. A field postal establishment accompanied it and Field Post Offices were opened at Suakin and Tokar. In the waterless, sandy desert, a camel dak service was established between the Base and the Field Post Office.

That the mail was very much in the minds of the soldiers, is borne out by the numerous entries in the War Diaries regarding the receipt and despatch of mails.

CHINA FIELD FORCE

Quite a number of times the India Post Office had to make postal arrangements for the Army Authorities at extremely short notice. An instance of this was when the Field Post Offices, which accompanied the British Contingent of the China Field Forces, was sent from India in 1901. As usual, the onus of equipping and despatching the units fell on the Postmaster-General, Punjab, and 133 of the total 168 postal officials were from the province of Punjab. There were two Base Post Offices and five Field offices in operation, which were located in the camps at Hong Kong, Shanghai, Chifu, Chaingwantao, Tientsin, Taku, Peking and Shanhaikwan. The arrival of mail in camp was always a welcome event and was announced by a bugle call of '4 Gs' to be sounded by the bugler of the Guard near the Field Post Office and to be repeated by other buglers on duty in camp.

BLOCKADE OF WAZIRISTAN

There was a constant friction between the Waziris and the British Government of India, and, in 1901, the Post Office in India had to make special arrangements to serve the needs of the troops deployed in the blockade against the Mahsud Waziris. Quite a number of Camp and Field Post Offices were opened for the convenience of the field force. There were incidents in which the post office was not spared. During the operations, the mails were looted by the tribesmen in South Waziristan and a runner lost his life in his attempt to save the post.

SOMALILAND

In 1903, a Field Service Postal Establishment was sent to Somaliland, where an expeditionary force had been despatched.

TIBET

In December, 1903, the Indian Postal Department arranged for postal arrangements to be made for the Tibet Mission. Though the Mission returned from Tibet in October 1904, the post offices were maintained at Chumbi, Pharijong and Gyantse. The Field Post Offices continued to be

maintained in China almost up to the beginning of the First Great War.

It will not be out of place here to quote the following tributes to the work of the Indian Field Post Offices from Waddel's book on Lhasa:

> "In the evening we would trudge over with lanterns across the slushy snow to the Field Post Office tent, to enquire whether the post had arrived. For it was one of the few luxuries we enjoyed, that, owing to the admirable arrangements of the Post Office under Mr. TULLOCH, we received letters daily every evening in CHUMBI (and the following morning at PHARI) in two and a half days from CALCUTTA, and weekly in eighteen days from LONDON, notwithstanding the enormous physical difficulties of the track along which the postal runners ran night and day covering the hundred miles from SILLIGURU up the mountains and over the Jelep Pass, often over snowdrifts and along precipices in the dark. Yet, so much was all this taken as a matter of course, that not a few used to complain if the mail arrived ten minutes late."
>
> "Back in camp, we hurried with the news of our visit to catch the outgoing post, which now brought LHASA into close touch with the outer world for relays of mounted infantry galloped with His Majesty's Mails from the sacred city to the telegraph terminus at GYANTSE in three days, whilst special messages were flashed to LONDON within fifty hours from LHASA, but curiously the postal authorities made the odd mistake of spelling the name as 'LAHSSA' in the stamp which imprinted our first missives from the holy city."

EASTERN FRONTIER CAMPAIGNS

In 1911, the Postmaster-General, Eastern Bengal and Assam, was asked to make postal arrangements for the Abor Expedition. On the 15th May, a temporary post office was opened at Saikwaghat to serve the troops who were getting ready for the expedition and a Base Post Office was opened on the 25th September at Kobo, which was linked to Saikwaghat by a daily boat service. A Field Post Office was later opened at Pasighat. A runner line ran between Kobo and Pasighat and another one served the Ledum Column. Beyond these areas, the military authorities undertook

to make their own arrangements. Except for one accident, caused by the capsizing of the Mail Post Boat at the mouth of Dihong river, the army mail arrangements were satisfactorily carried out.

1914-1918

The Assam operation was the last one before India was dragged into the vortex of a World War. Active Service was no novelty to the Indian Post Office, which had taken part in many expeditions in the past, from the Lushai Campaign of 1871 to the Abor Expedition of 1911-12. All of them, however, paled into insignificance compared to the enormous effort which the Indian Post Office had to put up in the War of 1914.

FRANCE

War was declared on the 4th August 1914. Within 17 days of India entering the War, Lt. Col. Pilkington took over as the first Director of Postal Services of the 'A' Force bound for France. The temporary Base Post Office was initially established at Marseilles, but was soon moved to Orleans, the base of the Indian contingent. At the end of October, the Base Post Office was shifted to Rouen, the headquarters of the British Army Post Office. Pilkington, unhappy with Rouen as his base, managed, in the face of all opposition, to move it to Boulogne, bringing, as a result, such efficiency into the working of the Base Post Office that 'the mails could be delivered to the Indian Corps at the front, the day after their despatch from London, to the delight of the Indian Corps and envy of the rest of the army.'

MESOPOTAMIA

Soon after the Indian Expeditionary Force, 'B' left for East Africa accompanied by a postal service unit, which established a Base Post Office at Kilindini. Force 'D' left on the 14th October for Mesopotamia where, after the fall of Basra, the postal service not only served the army, but also opened civil post offices for the convenience of the civilian population. The Indian Expeditionary Forces, 'E' and 'F' were sent to the Egyptian Sector, and Field Post Offices were opened to serve the troops at that front. Originally the Field Post Offices were placed under the control of force E, but later on they were allowed to have a separate organised existence.

PILKINGTON'S EFFORTS

Meanwhile, all was not well on the European front. The India Office could not see eye to eye with the ideas of the Indian Army Postal authorities on active service and deputed Mr. Patrick to go to France and examine the needs of that body. As a result of this and subsequent orders, Col. Pilkington was able to bring more co-ordination and efficiency into his operations. The Indian Post Office suffered considerably by way of casualties. Lt. Bullard of the Indian Postal Service, who was the Divisional Postal Officer with a Forward Division, was killed by a German shell at the front. By October of 1915, however, one Division of the Indian Corps had left France and another was under orders to leave. From now onward, the attention of the Postal Authorities in India was riveted on the Mesopotamian and Turkish Campaigns. The Turks were defeated on the 2nd February on the banks of the canal and the allies later made a gallant landing at Gallipoli. The Indian Infantry Brigade deployed in this operation was accompanied by Field Post Office 34, which established itself at Suvla Bay.

EGYPT

A Base Post Office was opened at Alexandria and a Field Post Office at Mudros in June 1915. An effective expedition against the Senussi in Egypt necessitated the opening of a Field Post Office at Mersa Matruh. But things were coming to a head in the Mesopotamian Sector, made famous by the epic battles of Kut and Amara. By this time the Indian Field Post Offices had firmly entrenched themselves at various strategic points from Fao, at the mouth of Shat-ul-Arab, to Kut on the Tigris, and to Nasariyah on the Euphrates. In 1915, there were 23 Field Post Offices and ten civil post offices in number in full working trim. In August, a Field Post Office was opened at Bushire for the troops deployed in South Iran.

KUT

In 1916, the postal service was retracted from Egypt with the exception of the Field Post Office in Salonica. The Mesopotamian Campaign was in full swing and General Townshend, and his 8,000 men, were bottled up in Kut. Relief was sent repeatedly to force the Turks to raise the siege, out Kut could not hold out indefinitely and, after 143 days of gallant

resistance, the 8,070 British and Indian troops surrendered. Later, reinforcements arrived under Gen. Stanley Maude, who was appointed Commander of the Army. Field Post Offices, were then established on the right and left banks of the river—Tigris for the troops which had begun a fresh advance. By this time, the work of the Field Post Offices became so heavy that they were increased from 26 to 50 with the staff of 500 men and ten officers to man them.

EAST AFRICA

In East Africa, the Germans were driven back by the force under Gen. Smuts. Dar-es-Salaam fell in September and the Germans retreated through the dense country after abandoning the Usambara Railway. During this year, the Field Post Offices had to attend to their legitimate work in connection with army mail, and had also to cater to the needs of the civilian population in the occupied areas in East Africa. In June 1917, a Base Post Office was established at Dar-es-Salaam, and a line of Field Post Offices stretched from the coast to Lake Victoria Nyanza. By December, another Base Post Office had to be opened at Port Amelia in the former Portuguese territory, which the Germans had evacuated a month after their occupation. Meanwhile, things were looking up in Mesopotamia, defeats were being wiped out rapidly; Kut was recovered in February and Baghdad in March. In the course of this victorious march, all the guns and ammunition and supplies lost by Gen. Townshend were re-captured. This broke the morale of the Turks, who were again defeated at Ramadie. During the advance on Kut, postal service kept up with the front line and established a rear base at Aziziyah. The number of the field offices had further increased to 60, where about 600 men dealt with 3,000 bags a week. A civil post office was also opened at Baghdad, in the former Turkish General Post Office. By 17th March, all the country had been captured, bringing the army to the Iranian Frontier. The lengthening lines of communication in these operations made it necessary to establish Field Post Offices in almost all the places *en route* and civil post offices in many.

IRAN

The Turks, however, were not idle. Turkish and German agents had managed to incite tribes in South Iran to carry out forays against the British.

Two forces were deployed, one at Bandar Abbas and the other at Bushire. A number of Field Post Offices were opened from Bandar Abbas to Shiraz, the Base Post Office being located at Bandar Abbas. Meanwhile, a postal unit had to be attached to the Seistan Field Force which had marched to East Iran.

PEAK STRENGTH

The peak of activity of the Indian field postal units was reached in 1913, particularly after the Mesopotamian victories of Lord Allenby and General Marshall. With the occupation of the territory, the needs of the civilian population, by way of postal facilities, had also to be met, and a special post of Deputy Director of Postal Services, Civil, was created to organise the Civil Postal Service. By November 1918, the postal services in the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force had reached their strength of 24 officers, 44 Inspectors of Post Offices and Deputy Postmasters, 826 clerks and Field Postmasters and 876 other ranks. When the war ended and Armistice was signed on the 11th November 1918, all thoughts turned to the vital question of demobilisation.

DEMOBILISATION

The Army Field Postal Organisation, which had gradually been built up over a war period of over four years, had now to be broken up and its personnel returned to civilian life. The Postal Service, attached to the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force, was closed down soon after the end of the Campaign, and the establishment and personnel were transferred to civil post offices which had been established earlier in this region. The two sister services, Posts and Telegraphs, were also amalgamated under a Director of Posts and Telegraphs. Although the war ended in Mesopotamia in early 1919, the operations in Eastern and Southern Iran were continued. At the time the railway had reached Duzdab and the Field Postal Service consisted of one Base Post Office, 13 Field Post Offices and 14 Telegraph Offices.

AFGHAN WAR OF 1919

Nearer home, on the North-Western Frontier of India, the Mahsuds and Waziris had begun to organise raids in 1919 and the Amir of Afghanistan, emboldened by such gratuitous help, declared war against India on

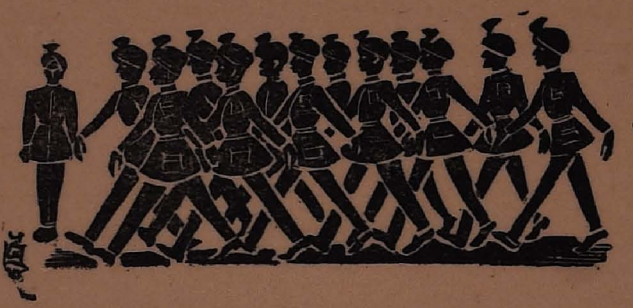
25th April 1919. The Baluchistan and the Wazir Expeditionary Forces were each equipped *inter alia* with field Postal Services, and sent against the tribesmen who continued their activities, even after the ten-day old Afghan War had ended in a settlement.

ARAB REVOLT

In 1920, an Arab rising resulted in two Divisions being sent against them, and the Post Office had again to serve the needs of the army postal requirements. By September 1920, quiet was restored on the Middle Eastern Front.

DEVOTION TO DUTY OF THE POST OFFICE

The First Great War had ended. Some of the deeds of valour and devotion to duty of the Post Office staff, during the four years of the war, go to the credit of that small band of officers and men, who went out on active service to share the hazards, the trials and the tribulations of their brothers in arms.



15. Post office and the Second World War

ARMY POSTAL SERVICE

BEFORE THE SECOND World War, the Army Postal Service as such, did not exist in its present form. Postal units were drafted *ad hoc* from civilian Postal Organisations and were sent to the front. But they were always treated as auxiliaries and while they shared in the troubles and tribulations with the combatants, and even faced death, they never shared their privileges. However, the unfairness and the humiliation of a system of 'relative' ranks was recognised. The lessons of the First World War had been forgotten and though proposals were often made for the formation of a regular Army Postal peacetime establishment, they were invariably turned down on the plea of expenditure!

This outmoded system was finally abolished and the postal units were eventually placed on equal footing with the other combatant military units.

As it took a long time for this new organisation to be formed, the basic need for military training of the personnel, and for the provision of adequate staff and of transport to cope with the mechanisation of the Army, was lost in a welter of minor detail of rules, regulations and procedure.

When war actually broke out in 1939, the Army Postal Organisation was quite naturally caught on the hop. Under the mobilisation plans. Field Post Offices, and other Postal Divisions, were immediately allotted to the Headquarters of Brigades and Divisions earmarked for Field Service. The responsibility for mobilising postal units rested on the shoulders of the military formations themselves, and these, in turn, had to be provided with

personnel, selected, from Posts and Telegraphs volunteers, by the different Postmasters-General at short notice.

But if the time given for mobilisation to the Defence Forces was short, the time given to the Indian Post Office to mobilise its units for overseas services was even shorter.

When the threat of war became imminent in July, 1939, the Eleventh Brigade at Ahmednagar was the first to receive orders to mobilise and be ready to move overseas within four days. The Brigade Headquarters in their turn signalled the Postmaster-General, Bombay, on 26th July to 'despatch personnel of Field P.O. to arrive at Ahmednagar not later than 28th.' As usual the Post Office Organisation rose to the occasion. By 30th July, the Field Post Office No. 19 was complete and it sailed for Egypt on the 3rd August 1939. It disembarked at Tewfik on the 17th August, and was set up at Faiyed Camp almost immediately.

From the point of view of postal history, the Second World War can be said to have been fought in five sectors and in five distinct campaigns. These were, the campaigns in Egypt; in Sudan and Eritrea; in Malaya and Singapore; in Iraq and Persia; in Assam, Bengal, Burma and the Far East; and finally in Italy and Greece.

In each of these campaigns, the Indian Post Office was called upon to play its part. At the outset, there was no separate Director of Army Postal Services to co-ordinate the raising, employment and control of postal units. The mobilisation and technical administration of the postal units was retained under the control of the civilian Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs; and a War Branch was opened, in the Directorate, to carry out these duties. Due to the increasing number of postal problems on which General Headquarters required constant advice, a Postal Section was formed in the Quartermaster-General's Branch, in March 1941, and it was expanded into a Directorate in January 1942. The Posts and Telegraphs Directorate, however, continued to be responsible for the raising of postal units and their technical control. As all the Postal Staff Officers were selected and briefed by the Director-General, Posts and Telegraphs, before their departure overseas, they continued to look to him for guidance and direction in all matters and even to submit their diaries to him. After the rapid expansion of Field Post Offices in 1942, many complaints were made by military units about the speed and efficiency of the Army Postal Services. In December 1942, the Government of India appointed the Military Postal Services Com-

mittee to enquire into the working of the postal and telegraphic arrangements in the Defence Services. As a result of the recommendations of the Committee, the Postal Directorate in the General Headquarters, India, took over exclusive control and responsibility for the Army Postal units.

EGYPT AND MIDDLE-EAST

The Indian Forces in Egypt which commenced as a Brigade soon had to be increased to a Division. The Field Post Office attached to the 4th Indian Division, which had been deployed for the Campaign, was located near the Pyramids outside Cairo. Later, a small Base Post Office was opened in Cairo itself, but, for over a year, both the Base and the Field Post Offices continued to work as agents of the Egyptian Post Office with functions confined merely to the delivery and despatch of the mail received by them. The first time that the Field Post Offices got a taste of real military operations was when they were bombarded from the air by the Italians in the Western Desert, to which they had been moved in August 1940. In the push to Sidi Barrani all the Divisional Field Post Offices were located forward at Mersa Matruh. In the Western Desert, the Field Post Offices shared the see-saw fortunes of the army formations in the epic battles between Rommel and the British Generals. Many forward Field Post Offices were lost during these operations, making it necessary to establish a 'Postal Tracing Unit' to trace the mail received for the personnel who were either dead or missing or had lost their Brigade or their Units. In May 1941, Field Post Office No. 5 took part in the Syrian Campaign which resulted in the capture of Damascus. In addition to the Mobile Field Post Office, stationery Field Offices were established throughout the Middle East Command, at Cairo, Meena Camp, Alexandria, Mersa Matruh, Suez, Genefa, Moascar, and Alkantra in Egypt; at Tobruk and Bengazi in Libya; at Tripoli in Tripolitania; at Gaza, Kafarbillo, Jerusalem and Haifa in Palestine; at Sidon, Beirut and Tripoli in Lebanon; at Aleppo and Balbek in Syria; at Nicosia and Limmasol in Cyprus; at Rhodes and Leros in the Dodecanese; at Wadi Halfa, Khartoum, Port Sudan and Kasala in Sudan; at Agordat, Keren, Asmara and Masawa in Eritrea; and at Aden.

In Sudan, the Field Post Offices were deployed with the forward troops at Gebit, Gederef and Butana Bridge, while the Base Post Office started functioning at Khartoum. With the intensification of operations in January 1941, reinforcements were received from Egypt, and from India, and

arrangements were made to distribute Field Post Offices at Port Sudan, Atbara and other important points on the lines of communications. The battle for Eritrea opened on the 19th January 1941, and the Mobile Field Post Offices accompanied their field formations. The Gallabat front was the scene of individual heroism, when Power, Field Postmaster of No. E-603 Field Post Office, was killed in action, becoming the first army postal casualty of the War. The Indian Post Offices kept pace with the advance of the troops and most of them were located in the forward area near Agordat and Keren. After the capture of Keren, Field Post Offices had to be established at Asmara, Masawa and Adowa. Though the Mobile Field Offices were shifted to Egypt with their formation, a number of Indian Field Post Offices had to be retained in Sudan and Eritrea to serve the Indian and other troops stationed in that area till the end of 1943.

SOUTH EAST ASIA CAMPAIGNS

The entry of Japan necessitated the opening of another front in Malaya and Singapore. The first two Field Post Offices to reach Malaya were hardly able to do any postal work as the Malaya forces in that area were working more or less under peace conditions. Later a full-fledged postal contingent was sent to Malaya in January 1941, and the Base Post Offices were located at Penang and at Singapore, and the Field Post Offices were distributed between the field formations and the stationery military camps. As the build-up of the forces continued, many more Field Post Offices arrived from India. A complete net-work of Field Post Offices was established by splitting the existing ones into many detachments. When the operations started, the front line Field Post Offices at Kotah, Bahru, Kroh, Alor Star and Sungnei Patani retreated with their formation and with great difficulty managed to reach Singapore safely. The Base Post Office at Penang was also evacuated to Singapore in the nick of time. At Singapore the Base Post Office escaped undamaged during the first few bombing raids. Mail continued to be pushed off to the Field Post Offices at their last known locations, but most of it came back and had to be sorted out again with reference to the latest location changes. The Field Post Office at Seramban got a direct hit and all the staff was lost. The staff of another Field Post Office perished when their train was destroyed by air bombing. Quite a number of postal personnel were killed while travelling between the Base Post Office and their living camp at Singapore. Even so, arrangements

for sorting at the Base Post Office, and for forwarding mail to the forward areas, functioned reasonably well at Singapore, though there was a complete breakdown at the front.

BURMA

Though a Field Post Office was sent to Burma as early as 1941, it did not function till the end of that year when more Field Post Offices and a Base Post Office were ordered to this area. The Field Post Office of the 17th Division was located in Tenasserim area near Moulmein. During the first brush with the Japanese No. 40 Field Post Office, attached to the 16th Brigade, had to retreat along with other Brigade units after losing all its transport and most of its equipment. The Base Post Office in Rangoon hardly had time to organise itself before it was evacuated in one of the last ships which left before the fall of Rangoon. All the Field Post Offices managed to cross the Situng River safely, but they had an extremely hard time during the operations near Pegu. Numbers 97 and 100 Field Post Offices suffered heavily during aerial bombardment, but the majority of their personnel reached India safely. During the retreat from Burma all the Field Post Offices suffered terrible hardships and a number of casualties, but they somehow continued to receive and despatch mail whenever it was possible and helped to keep up the morale of the troops.

IRAQ AND PERSIA

Meanwhile, the war was entering another phase in the Middle East. No. 48 Field Post Office accompanied the first troops that landed at Basra on the 18th April 1941, and it was soon joined by many other Field Post Offices as well as the 'C' Base Post Office. As the build up of the Force continued, the Base Post Office was shifted from Margil to Ashar, and Field Post Offices were established at Margil, Shaiba and Zubair. In November 1941, an Advance Base Post Office was opened in Baghdad, a Section Base Post Office at Ahwaz, and a number of improvised Field Post Offices were opened on the lines of communications. Traffic continued to increase in 1942, and the peak of postal activity in this Sector was reached in May 1943, when over 500 Army Postal Service personnel were put in the field under the Persia and Iraq Command. Field Post Offices were established at Karind, Kermanshah, Hamadan, Tehran, Sultanabad, Andimisk, Ahwaz, Abadan and Khuramashahr in Persia; at Margil, Shaiba, Zubair, Musayab,

Habania, Khanaqin, Kirkuk and Mosul in Iraq and at Bahrein. Special arrangements were made to exchange mails with the troops at Shiraz, Isfahan, Qumm and Takistan in Persia; at Amara, Kut, Wadi Mohammadi and Rutba in Iraq; and at Jask, Shakjah, Kuwait and Bandarshapur in the Persian Gulf.

ASSAM, BENGAL, BURMA AND THE FAR EAST

On the Eastern Front, the Japanese advance had continued unchecked right up to the borders of India. In March 1942, formations had to be deployed hurriedly to the area and many of these went straight to the Eastern frontiers of India, while others stood guard in Southern India and in Ceylon, where the Headquarters of the South East Asia Command were located under Lord Mountbatten, who had been appointed the Supreme Commander of all forces in the Sector. The first priority for the allotment of postal units was given to the formations located in Assam and Arakan where a force was being gathered to cover the retreat from Burma and to help to stem the Japanese advance. Base and Field Post Offices were raised all over the country and moved to their new locations in the Eastern Zone in a matter of days. Number 6 Base Post Office started functioning at Manipur Road on the 5th April 1942, and it was supported by a string of Field Post Offices in the Imphal area as well as in North and South Assam. Number 12 Base Post Office was raised at Calcutta and started functioning there in June to support the Field Post Office allotted to the formations in the Calcutta and Comilla area, while No. 10 Base Post Office at Ranchi had to serve the troops concentrated in that area. By the beginning of 1944, Base Post Offices had been established at Gauhati, Ledo and Chittagong, and Field Post Offices were dotted all over Assam and East Bengal. After the Japanese invasion had been successfully repelled, reorganisation took place in support of the major offensive operations which were then being planned against the Japanese. A most regrettable feature of all these operations was that the Indian Postal Officers, despite their fine record, were given no opportunity to direct the postal services in the New South-East Asia Command, even though 90 per cent of the total strength operating there belonged to the Indian Army Postal Service.

CEYLON

In Ceylon, No. 74 Field Post Office started functioning at Colombo

in January 1942. As the garrison was built up, more Field Post Offices arrived and were established either with their formations or at important military stations including Trincomali and Kandy. The Indian Field Post Offices had also to serve remote garrisons in the Cacos and the Maldive Islands.

ITALY AND GREECE

As the Japanese forces were thrown back, the focus once again shifted to Southern Europe. Italy and Greece had, by now, become the centre of new operations and the Field Post Offices of the 4th Division, which had earlier moved to Tunisia from Egypt, continued to be served by the Base Post Office at Cairo. When the 8th Division landed in Italy in September 1943, the same arrangements continued and a small mail office was started at Taranto.

Immediately before the arrival of the 10th Division in Italy a proper Base Post Office, with its own tracing unit, was opened in Bari. As the operations progressed, it moved on to Naples, and stationery Field Post Offices were maintained at Taranto, Bari, Benevento, Ancona, Rome, Florence, Saint Anzelo, Leghorn, Genoa, Bologna and Mestre. The Mobile Field Post Offices of the 4th, the 8th and the 10th Divisions and the 43rd Lorried Brigade had, of course, to move with their formations whether they went into action or in rest areas. The Indian Postal Organisation was gradually reduced as the troops moved out of this area and was completely disbanded in March 1946.

In Greece, No. 17 Field Post Office was established at Athens to serve the 4th Division which had moved from Italy to Greece. The Division was first deployed over the whole country, each of its Brigades being responsible for a fairly large region, and Field Post Offices had to be located at Salonica, Patras and Velos.

By July, 1944 the tide had turned and re-occupation of the enemy occupied territory had begun, with consequent liberation of the Allied personnel who had been taken Prisoners of War. It was appropriate that the Indian Prisoners of War, recovered from the European theatres of conflict, should be properly received and treated. A reception centre was, therefore, opened in July 1944, at Thetford in the United Kingdom. To provide full postal facilities and concessions for these *ex*-prisoners, a Section Base Post Office was also established.

OCCUPATION OF JAPAN

The cessation of hostilities brought its own problems. Occupation forces had to be retained in conquered territories to prevent breakdown of transitional civilian government and to help, keep law and order in those areas. India was fully represented among the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces, which proceeded to Japan in March 1946. An adequate Indian Postal contingent accompanied the force. A Base Post Office was established at Kure near the atom-bombed town of Hiroshima, while Field Post Offices functioned at Hiro, Iwakuni, Okayama, Hamada, Hatsue, Yonago, Tattori and Tokyo on the Honshu Island, and at Kochi, Gomen, Takamatsu and Tokushima on the Shikoku Island. The Indian Occupation Force remained in Japan till November 1947, and Independence Day was celebrated with considerable eclat by the Field Post Offices, in common with the rest of the Defence Forces. All mail emanating from them was stamped with a special design depicting the National flags of India and Pakistan. The last member of the Postal contingent left the shores of Japan for India in November 1947.

At the outbreak of war, the Posts and Telegraphs Department had an impressive list of volunteers for field service containing the names of 23 gazetted officers and 1,069 postal clerks and 2,544 other postal workers. During the first two years many of the volunteers withdrew their names and some were declared medically unfit for field service, and, by the end of 1942, the original lists had been almost exhausted. The Department was unable to meet the demand for personnel consequent on the expansion of the Army Postal Service in India and overseas. To meet this shortage an Army Postal Training School was established at Ambala to recruit and train Postal Clerks for the Field Post Offices.

The history of these events of the Second World War, and the part played by the Army Postal Units, would be incomplete without a reference to the Accountancy and Audit arrangements followed in that period. The Deputy Accountant-General, Posts and Telegraphs, Nagpur, functioned as the Audit Office for all the Field Post Offices; and, in August 1942, an Army Postal Pay and Accounts Office was opened at Nagpur to maintain the personnel accounts of the Army Postal Officers and men. In 1945, the Record Office work, till then performed by the Base Postal Depot, was also entrusted to the Accounts Officers and the Record Office was shifted from Bombay to Kamptee. Later on, a Demobilisation Centre was also

opened at Kamptee to help carry out demobilisation of the Army Postal Service personnel and units.

After a period of service, lasting in some cases over eight years, the bulk of war time Army Postal Service units were disbanded before August 1947. At peak period the units numbered 196 and employed 90 officers and 4,700 men.

Many of the war time innovations in the Army Postal Service *viz.*, the use of light weight letter form, airgraph Expeditionary Force messages, pictorial greeting forms, extensive use of aircraft for conveyance and air drop of all classes of mails, the establishment of Postal Training School, the inland letter card, the 'All-Up Scheme', have been assimilated in the post-war plans of the civilian Postal Department.

The Army Postal Service has undoubtedly come to stay. Its importance for keeping up the morale of the Armed Forces has been proved, so that it is now a part of the permanent establishment of the Armed Forces of India. The Cinderella of the Army has come into her own. We hope, however, that the threat of the atom and hydrogen bombs will lead to the abolition of war and there will be no need to send Indian armies anywhere except as messengers of peace, as in Korea and Indo-China.

16. The Army Postal Service in Peace-Time

PARTITION

BY THE END of September 1947, almost all the Army Post Offices had functioning and most of the postal units from Egypt, Iraq and Japan had started on their way home. Meanwhile in India, the post-partition disturbances had broken down mail communication in the Punjab, where operational military units were constantly on the move. A postal unit, with forty five all ranks, was ordered to Delhi to set up a mail organisation for the Army units employed in the newly formed Delhi and East Punjab Command. A scheme was prepared under which the now famous security postal address 'C/O 56 APO' was introduced, and a Base Sorting Section

was opened at Delhi to establish direct postal links with the headquarters of all Divisions and Brigades.

JAMMU AND KASHMIR

Hardly had the Army Postal Service started functioning at Delhi, when raiders from Pakistan invaded Jammu and Kashmir, and military units had to be sent to drive them away. The Base Sorting Section at Delhi immediately established mail communications with the civil post offices in Jammu and Srinagar, to whom the Forces mail was sent for delivery. In a few days three Field Post Offices were improvised and sent to Jammu. One Field Post Office was established at Jammu, a second one at Naushera and the third in the Srinagar Valley. The Field Post Office at Naushera served Brigadier General Usman's gallant Brigade, and saw fierce hand to hand fighting in January 1948, when the enemy made a futile attempt to rush the Naushera defences. The Field Post Office in the Valley was established first at Baramula, but soon moved to Uri where it passed the winter in company with front line troops. Mail was sent daily in charge of a postal courier to Jammu and Srinagar by chartered air service. During the winter, when no mail could be flown in or out of the Valley, it was sent across the snow-bound Banihal Pass with the help of the Posts and Telegraphs runners. In February 1948, a regular Base Post Office was established at Delhi to support the Field Post Offices in Jammu and Kashmir. At the same time an additional Divisional Postal Unit was sanctioned to provide Field Post Offices in Kashmir. In April, Section Base Post Offices were opened at Pathankot and Jammu to serve the large concentration of Base troops at those stations. As soon as the Banihal Pass was opened, the new Postal Unit reached Srinagar, where a Field Post Office had been established at the end of March. The Field Post Office at Uri was reinforced, a new Field Post Office was opened at Baramula, and another was attached to the Brigade at Handwara. During its dash to Tithwal, the Brigade left its Field Post Office at Handwara as forward mail communications could not be established immediately. Mails were dropped by air on this front from the 4th to the 24th June. The Field Post Office rejoined the Brigade at Chowkibal and later moved to Tangdhar. During the fighting in May-August 1948, the Field Post Office at Uri continued to function normally while enemy shells were falling all around its camp. In July, a Field Post Office moved to Sonamay and sent a representative with the Force that

crashed its way through the Zojila pass and conquered Drass and Kargil. When Gurez was liberated in October, Army Postal representatives were located at Gurez and Kanzalwan and, later, a regular Field Post Office was opened there. Since the cease fire, the postal set up has been reorganised to provide detachment Field Post Offices at all important locations on the Srinagar-Uri; Srinagar-Bandipur-Gurez; Srinagar-Baltal-Drass; Kargil-Leh and Srinagar-Handwara-Tandhar mail lines. The communication net-work crossed many high Passes including the Nastachum, the Zojila, the Rajdhani and the Banihal. All these passes became snow-bound during winter. So air transport was used where possible, air drops being organised. And the famous Posts and Telegraphs high altitude runners took over the mail when all other means had failed.

THE JAMMU FRONT

On the Jammu front a new Field Post Office was opened at Akhnur with a Brigade Head Quarters and reinforcements were sent to the Field Post Office at Naushera. The Field Post Office at Naushera moved with its Brigade to Jhangar and a new one took its place. During the enemy bombardment of Jhangar, the Field Post Office continued to function next door to the Brigade headquarters where Brigadier Usman met a hero's death.

In July 1948, a new Field Post Office was opened at Miran Sahib near Jammu, and in September a separate Field Post Office was allotted to Head Quarter, Jammu Division prior to its moving forward on operations. In the beginning of November, a Field Post Office was opened at Rajouri, Special mail arrangements were made during the operations in November 1948, for the relief of Poonch. Three Brigades from three different directions took part in this operation, and the advance of our troops was so fast that we could not open up communications at the same speed to take up the necessary supplies and mails by road. Letter mails were dropped daily to the troops and the other mails were sent by jeep as far as this kind of motor vehicle could go, and thence transferred to animal transport.

PERINBAM

During December 1948, the enemy had a last fling at our lines of communications in Jammu and brought the Berripatam bridge under heavy fire. Though the bridge had been closed to military traffic by the local authorities,

they permitted L/NK. Perinbam to cross it. He made several attempts to get across throughout the 14th and 15th December 1948, but did not succeed. On the 16th he waited at the Sentry's post on the bridge and, with determination, dashed forward, despite the serious dangers facing him, carrying three days accumulated mail. While he was crossing the bridge, the enemy opened up again, but he succeeded in getting through and carried the mail to Naushera. Next day, he collected the outward mail to Jammu and also the signals, which had been held up, and again, at great personal risk, crossed the bridge under enemy fire. For this deed of valour he was awarded the Vir Chakra.

After the cease fire, the postal services were fully reorganised and Field Post Offices were opened on all the mail lines radiating from Jammu to Akhnur, Naushera, Rajouri and Poonch on one side and to Pathankot, Udhampur, Ramban and Banihal on the other. With the improvements in the communications, mail services became speedy and regular, and the postal couriers had to fight no other enemies except Generals Rain and Mud, who cut off the roads and bridges during the summer as well as the winter. While the other supply services ate off their reserves, during such temporary interruptions, the mail carriers carried on in the best traditions of the Posts and Telegraphs.

WATCH ON THE FRONTIERS

Ever since the failure of Pakistan to obtain a military decision in Jammu and Kashmir, the Pakistan Press has, at regular intervals, whipped up mass hysteria against India, necessitating a constant state of alert on the frontiers. In the middle of 1951, the cry of 'Jehad' in the newspapers was supported by the Pakistan Government, which moved its troops to our borders with obvious aggressive intentions. This threat of invasion was countered by our Government by putting field formations on war footing and by moving forward some of them to watch and defend the frontiers. Field Post Offices, as an integral part of the Army, took their allotted place along with the forward troops during the operations.

KOREA

No Indian Field Post Office accompanied the 60th Indian Field Ambulance when it sailed for Korea in November 1950, on a United Nations mission, and all mail was handled by the Base Post Office at Delhi. A

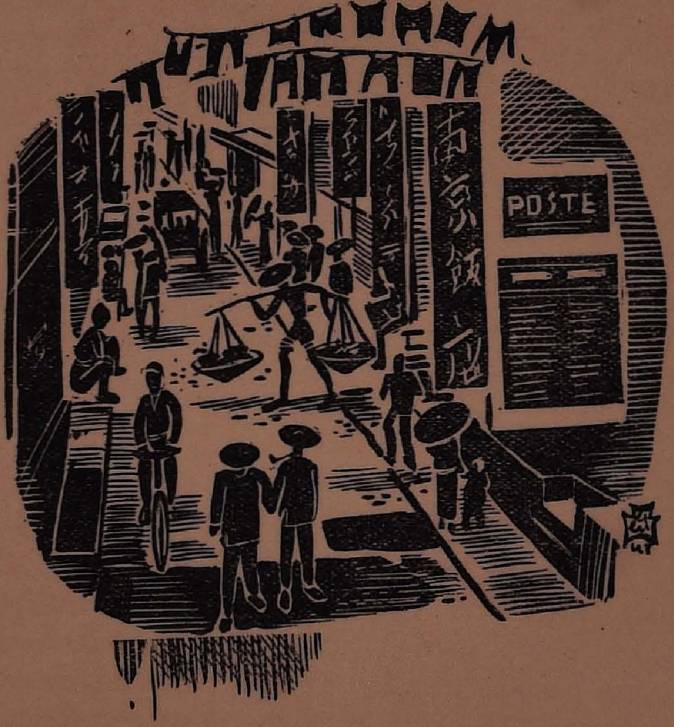
direct air and surface postal link was maintained with the unit through the good offices of the British Army Postal Service, which also provided the necessary counter facilities in Korea. The Delhi Base Post Office sent periodical supplies of Forces postal concessions, sanctioned by the Indian Government. These arrangements continued until September 1953, when the unit was merged into the Indian Custodian Force.

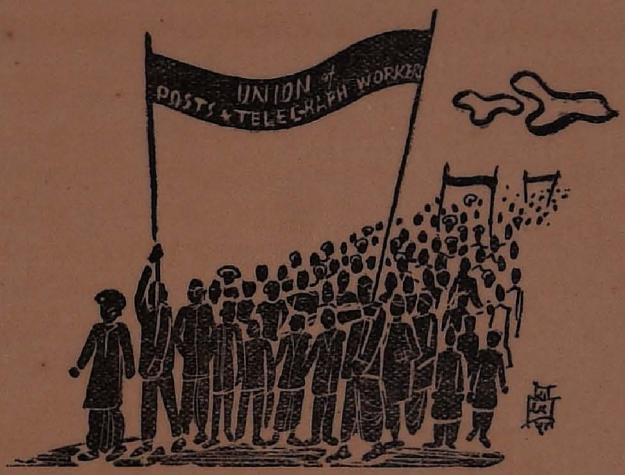
An Army Postal unit accompanied the peace mission to Korea, in 1953, as part of the Indian Custodian Force. The unit started its postal activities as soon as it reached Madras on the 16th August for embarkation. Mail received from the Base Post Office was delivered to the various units at Madras, and mail despatches were made from Singapore and Hongkong on the way to Korea. The unit personnel were flown from Inchon to the Neutral Zone by helicopter and arrived there on the 3rd September. On 5th September, while other military units were still busy in sorting out their packages, the first Indian Field Post Office in Korea, No. 740 Field Post Office, was opened at Hindnagar. The same day the first welcome mail was received from India. Two more Field Post Offices were opened—one at Shantinagar (Panmunjon) and the other at Rajnagar. A fourth Field Post Office was established later on in Tokyo to expedite the clearance of mail to and from India. In honour of the Custodian Force the Indian Posts and Telegraphs issued specially over-printed stamps for use of the Indian Field Post Offices in Korea. As it was known that mail was number one morale raiser for our troops in Korea, no efforts were spared to speed up the mail deliveries. Airmail was sent from India five times a week including all kinds of newspapers and magazines. The Indian postal personnel not only performed their own duties with their usual efficiency and devotion but they also gave a hand, when required, to guard the Prisoners of War. One of the Field Post Offices continued to function in Korea till the 24th February 1954. On the way home Indian troops, who sailed in five different ships, received mail at Hongkong, Singapore and Madras.

INDO-CHINA

An Indian Field Post Office is one of the select international units which has been detailed for duty for the Truce Supervisory Commissions in Indo-China. The head quarters of the Field Post Office is at Saigon and it has branches at Hanoi, Vientiane and Phompeh. The Field Post Office provides postal facilities and concessions to the Indian, Canadian and

Polish members and staff of the Commissions, and to the supporting units.





17. Trade Unionism

THE NEED FOR WORKERS TO ORGANISE THEMSELVES

SOMETIME TOWARDS the end of the First World War, labour which had rawn from villages to the towns, to man the industrial plants started banding together, so that its grievances might be put before the managements. The workers of the Posts and Telegraphs Department also realised the need to get together. Their early unions were in no way the well knit and organised bodies that they are today. Originally, the movement in the Posts and Telegraphs ranks was intended to create small groups which could represent to the Government the grievances of the staff, seek redress for them and safeguard and preserve the rights and interests of the various departmental employees from the various sections. Soon, however, these small groups began to form associations of their own, the Telegraph employees forming the 'Indian Telegraphs Association', and those in the

Post Office, and the Railway Mail Service, banding themselves in the Post Office and Railway Mail Service Association. Postmen, and other workers in the lower cadres, formed the Postmen and Lower-grade Staff Union.

GOVERNMENT RECOGNISES RIGHT OF ASSOCIATION

At that time associations and unions were not recognised by the Government. The question of recognition was first discussed sometimes in the year 1920. Although the Associations, or Trade Unions, formed by employees of the Government, were officially recognised only in 1921, any representations and complaints made by them in previous years had been open to consideration. In 1921, a set of rules under which the Associations were to be recognised, was published. Their recognition was based on the principle of 'the right of association for all useful purposes by the employed as well as by the employers.' These rules were, however, not applicable to those employees of the Government who were subject to military law and the Indian Army Act of 1911. In June 1922, the Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs forwarded to the Government, details of 15 associations of the Posts and Telegraphs Workers to be granted official recognition. Out of these, two were provincial unions and associations, and the rest were Divisional or local unions. These, and later, more unions, were accorded recognition by the Government.

INFLUENCE OF UNIONS ON GOVERNMENT

With the growing importance of the unions, and of the need for maintaining constant liaison, the position was reviewed by the Government in January 1930, and a list was published of all recognised unions and associations established on an All-India basis. This list showed the names of the office bearers and the areas represented etc. A rule was laid down in 1930 that the Department was not to entertain correspondence from any union not recognised by the Government. At this time, there were twelve All-India Unions and Associations (including those in Burma), and the largest union had a membership of 29,400. The unions next to this in size and importance had on their rolls 17,800 and 5,500 members respectively. The most significant fact that spotlighted the increase in the influence of the unions on officialdom was the appointment of Shri Tarapada Mukerjee, the well-known Trade Unionist, to collaborate with Shri Gurunath Bewoor, Post Master General, Bombay, on the Time Test enquiry.

RULES OF RECOGNITION REVISED

Four years later, a separate set of rules was introduced by the Government for the recognition of Associations of Industrial employees of the Department and three of the existing twenty-one unions were granted recognition while four were registered under the Trade Unions Act. The rules introduced in 1934, prescribed certain procedures for declaring strikes etc. The rules of recognition, for associations of non-industrial employees, laid down the principle that Government recognition was to be accorded for the express purpose of enabling the employees of the Department to communicate their grievances or needs to the Department, or to make a representation or appeal to the Government, and that if methods other than these were to be adopted for ventilating their grievances, recognition was liable to be withdrawn by the Government.

STRENGTH OF UNIONS

Today there are twenty-one recognised All-India Unions in the Department. Out of these, the Union with the largest following, has a membership of about 50,000 workers, the strength of the next two being 26,000 and 7,000 respectively. Five out of these twenty-one unions represent only postal employees (including Railway Mail Service workers); five others represent both postal as well as telegraph employees, and the remaining eleven represent the Telegraph employees from both the traffic and engineering branches. The aggregate membership of all these unions is about 102,000 out of a total staff of 219,000. Most of these unions have provincial, district and local branches.

AMENITIES

Many of the Unions publish their own journals in which they can criticise the working of the Department, provided the criticism is constructive. These journals have rendered important service in furthering the cause of the hard pressed Posts and Telegraphs workers.

All reasonable demands made by the unions and associations, which are consistent with the policy laid down by the Department, are sympathetically considered by the Government. The union executives have monthly meetings with the officers of the Department, and such interviews with them as may be necessary for dealing with immediate problems.

The unions, as now constituted, suffer from the grave defect of overlapping membership, tending to create rivalries among themselves. Re-alignment on a rational basis is a solution to this problem. When the new schemes which the Government has been considering for re-alignment materialises, the representatives of the employees associations will, it is understood, be associated with the administration through the medium of staff councils on the pattern of Whitley Councils in the United Kingdom.

18. Staff Welfare

ONE OF THE BIGGEST EMPLOYERS IN INDIA IS THE POST OFFICE

AFTER WHAT has been narrated in the previous sections of this book, it will not come as a surprise for the reader to learn that the Posts and Telegraphs is the biggest official employer in India, second only to the Railways. Over two lakhs of people are employed in one capacity or another in this public utility concern. The nature of the work to be performed is of an exacting nature and duties have to be carried on at all odd hours of the day and night, so that the maximum facilities may be provided to the public. The efficiency of the staff is, therefore, a matter of national concern, and it can only be maintained through well planned organisation of welfare activities and measures of practical benefit to them and their dependents.

STAFF WELFARE SCHEME STARTED IN 1949

While it was the post-war plan of the Posts and Telegraphs which gave definite prominence to the organisation of staff welfare, this organisation actually got under way sometime in the middle of the year 1949, and, since then, has handled welfare and related problems.

CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES

The first step in the direction of staff welfare was taken with the initiation of co-operative societies. Right from the inception of these societies, it was sought to build up welfare activities for the staff, by the organisation of co-operative efforts to the maximum extent possible. This encouraged self-help amongst the staff and, when necessary, departmental assistance could be given. That this policy has yielded results is evidenced by the fact that there are 162 co-operative societies working at various Posts and Telegraphs centres. This number comprises 55 co-operative credit societies and 107 consumer and other co-operative institutions handling distribution of food-stuffs, sale of consumer goods and the running of canteens. The emphasis placed on the organisation of welfare through co-operative societies, and the use of co-operative methods, is shown by the successful effort made in organising a Producer's Co-operative Society at Aligarh to undertake the manufacture of Postal Seals and rubber stamps. This society has carried out work to the extent of Rs. three lakhs. To encourage the co-operative movement, subsidies are granted to various co-operative institutions. These take the shape of nominal rent for accommodation if the co-operative is housed in a departmental building, formation expenses, grants towards purchase of furniture, free electricity and water up to a basic limit, clerical assistance for the period of a year and, in some cases, up to three years, combined with an interest-free recoverable advance of Rs. 1,000 to each society.

Another facet of the co-operative movement is the establishment of the co-operative hostels. The first co-operative hostel was started at the Telegraph Training Centre at Jubbulpur, while the second one was opened for the benefit of more than 200 trainees at the Posts and Telegraphs Training Centre at Saharanpur. The benefits of co-operative enterprise can best be seen from the fact that an appreciable part of the demand of vegetables for the hostel is now being met by the garden which is maintained by the co-operative society.

Three years ago, as an incentive to the co-operative movement, and more particularly to the co-operative credit system, the Indian Posts and Telegraphs Department requested the State Governments to amend their respective co-operative enactments. The Department suggested that the authority given by members to the disbursing officers, to deduct, out of their emoluments, instalments of loans taken by them from co-operative credit

societies, should be made recoverable. It is found that at the moment 13 states of the Indian Union have this provision and it is known that other States are contemplating revision of their laws.

The two main problems that concern the minds of the staff of the Department are high prices, resulting in deterioration in the standards of living, and acute shortage of residential accommodation. To mitigate the hardships caused by the latter, co-operative housing has become an important part of staff welfare in some states, although the shortage of available Government accommodation has been a great hardship. Two societies of the Departmental staff have been formed, one in Madras and the other in Bombay, with a subscribed capital of Rs. 1,72,772 and Rs. 1,02,701 respectively. The former plans to construct 140 houses and has been able to acquire so far 40 plots of land. Government assistance has taken the shape of interest-bearing loans of the total value of rupees ten lakhs. A third society is likely to start functioning in Lucknow soon and many more are likely to follow.

CANTEENS

To help fight high food prices, a drive was launched in 1949 to organise 'canteens' wherever housing accommodation was available. Since its inception the canteen movement has registered a remarkable progress, the number of canteens having gone up to 217 in the short period of five years. These canteens are generally run by registered co-operative societies, but where the staff strength is not large enough, to permit the setting up of a co-operative unit, the canteens are run by staff committees. Most of the principal cities and towns can now boast of canteens and, in the Nagpur Circle Office, a milk bar has also been organised.

The canteens are encouraged by intial grants for the purchase of furniture and other equipment, and accommodation in Departmental buildings is provided at a nominal rent. Within limits, they are also allowed free consumption of electricity and of water. In the case of new constructions, cognisance is taken of the unsuitability of old buildings for accommodating the canteens.

A beginning has been made in providing holiday homes in well-known holiday resorts for the staff. Up to date, there are five such holiday homes in some of the best known holdiay resorts, like Pachmarhi in the Central Circle, Mount Abu in the Rajasthan Circle, Matheran in the

Bombay Circle, Simla in the Punjab Circle and Mussooree in the Uttar Pradesh Circle. While two of these homes are located in Departmental buildings, the rest are housed in specially rented premises.

These four holiday homes form a nucleus of the scheme and steps have been taken to open new homes at various other places.

The staff of the Department, who receives pay up to Rs. 300, are entilted to use these homes on the basis of priority of booking and at a nominal rental of annas eight per day or 10 per cent of the pay whichever is the less. These homes are equipped with furniture, kitchens, utensils, crockery, etc., the occupants, however, making their own culinary arrangements.

RAILWAY MAIL SERVICE HOUSES

Efforts are always being made to provide additional facilities for the Railway Mail Service employees, when their strenuous work specially demands these. Rest Houses, which number 239 at the moment, have been opened at various railway stations. A model Rest House has been opened in Delhi, and plans are under way to construct similar rest houses at other important places, according to the requirements and priority. Particular attention is being paid to the amenities provided, as the efficiency of the Railway Mail Service depends very much on them.

CULTURAL AND RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

A pronounced stress has been laid on the cultural and recreational activities of the staff. The Department spends roughly a quarter of a lakh of rupees in organising All-India Meets at selected stations, to improve the standards of athletics and games. Recently at the National Sports held at New Delhi, an employee of the Department won the first prize for weight lifting. It will not be long before some of the Departmental athletes will attain a sufficiently high standard for competing in National and International events.

Efforts are being made to centralise the activities of smaller clubs in many principal towns and cities by forming federations of clubs and organising common activities in order to foster a spirit of comradeship among the staff of the Department.

There are, at the moment, 401 recreational clubs run by the staff and, since 1953 onwards, Rs. 4,000 are being distributed by way of annual

grants-in-aid or donations to supplement the funds that the various clubs have been able to raise. Grants-in-aid are also given for cultural activities like musical shows and variety instancements. A successful variety show was organised in New Delhi in Jaunary 1952, and the participants were drawn from all parts of country. A Department, was held at Shillong in May 1951. The Madras Circle organised a Posts and Telegraphs Arts and Crafts Exhibition in March 1952. The purpose of organising these shows is to bring out the latent talent of the staff and to encourage terpsichorean, musical and dramatic activities in future.

MEDICAL AID

Ameliorative and relief measures for the benefit of the ailing have been receiving considerable attention. For instance, a special dispensary, known as the 'Kidwai Dispensary', was set up for the benefit of the staff housed in the 'Displaced Officials Camp' at Ambala. This dispensary provided medical aid to about 800 outdoor patients, on an average, every month.

A co-operative clinic, solely financed by subscriptions raised by the workers has been set up in the workers' residential colony attached to the Jubbulpur workshops.

Special care has been taken to provide medical aid to the employees of the Department suffering from tuberculosis. The Department has reserved 39 beds in various sanatoriums. Recently a scheme was mooted by the Department to construct its own Tuberculosis wards on a zonal basis, in nine selected sanatoria, by providing 128 additional beds for the benefit of the tubercular patients among the staff and members of their families. The scheme has been approved by the Government of India.

In co-operation with the B.C.G. Organisation of the Central Ministry of Health, BCG vaccination has been carried out amongst officials and members of their families since 1951.

A scheme for the construction of a ten-bed hospital at Lucknow, and dispensaries in 15 selected towns is under the active consideration by the Department.

POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS WELFARE FUND

The principle of constituting a Welfare Fund has been accepted by the

Government. The fund will finance welfare projects outside the purview of the regular budgetary grants and cover such items as maternity centres, relief of distress in case of floods, famines etc., relief for the convalescents recovering after long illnesses or after major surgical operations. Finance for this purpose is being found from the *per capita* governmental grants of rupee one of the total number of non-gazetted employees of the Department to be supplemented by voluntary contributions from the staff.

NIGHT SCHOOLS

It has always been the policy of the Government to provide facilities for the educational and cultural advance of its employees. In pursuance of this general policy, the Department endeavours to help those interested in pursuing higher studies at school or college and also to provide night school facilities for improving literacy and for imparting knowledge of Hindi to the staff. Since the number of night schools is increasing gradually, it shows a growing desire among the staff for the betterment of their educational level and for learning Hindi.

19. Five-Year Plan

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FIVE-YEAR PLAN

ALTHOUGH A BEGINNING was made a long time ago to extend postal facilities to the rural areas, the scheme can still be considered to be in its infancy, for over 75 per cent of the population of our great land lives in the villages. The need for expansion and improvement of postal services has been the result of the expansion of trade and commerce, the development of agriculture and industry, the spread of education and, partly, from the natural growth of population. Extension of facilities to the villagers is also necessary for a balanced urban and rural economy. Though some headway has been made with the post-war and post-independence schemes, the Department has a long way to go yet.

MINIMUM AIMS

The Five-Year Plan for the development of postal facilities in the rural areas can only be implemented gradually, depending on the availability of men, material and funds. The increase in the cost of labour and per-

sonnel and of certain essential materials has necessitated an even larger strain on the extension programme. The extent to which the development is carried out will be circumscribed by the state of public economy and the relative importance of the Postal Plan in the general frame-work of the General Plan. But the plan itself, however ambitious its magnitude may appear, is the minimum programme of development and service that must be attempted under present conditions.

A POST OFFICE FOR EVERY 2,000 PEOPLE

Considering the size and population of the country, the number of post offices at the time of partition was relatively small. There were 18,121 rural and 3,995 urban post offices. Many were inaccessible, and villagers had to walk for miles in order to transact business with the post office. Delivery of mails was so infrequent that considerable improvement was needed.

The first step taken after Independence by the Postal Department, was to open post offices in villages with a minimum population of 2,000. This project was completed by the end of the year 1952-53. In India, there are 18,768 villages with a population of 2,000 and more. Of these 4,353 had post offices of their own before Independence, and when the post-independence programme was brought to completion, only 383 villages with this population remained without their post office. The reason why these villages were denied a post office was that they were within two miles of an existing post office or that the loss on the maintenance was far too heavy.

Though this original programme has been completed, the Department has in view further extension of postal facilities to the rural areas. The target of providing a post office for every village with a population of 2,000 was completed by April 1953, but in a country with a rural population of over 75 per cent, it is necessary to extend the plan to cover a much larger field.

ADDITIONAL FACILITIES

From the 1st April 1953, a more liberal policy has been followed to provide additional facilities in rural areas. The population of a village is not the sole criterion for opening a new post office; the distance from an existing post office, has also to be taken into account, so that concentration of post offices in certain regions can be avoided.

Under the new plan, the post offices, to be opened, will include, both those which are remunerative, and those for which non-returnable contribution to cover the estimated loss is offered. Post offices will also be provided at all headquarters of Tehsils, Talukas or Thanas, irrespective of the population. The only stipulation in these cases is that there should be no loss on maintenance in excess of Rs. 750 a year, a condition which may be waived in special cases. A departure from the old policy was made when, instead of providing a post office for a village with a population of 2,000, it was decided that a post office should be opened for a group of villages with a combined population of 2,000. The condition attached to this was that no village in the group should be more than two miles from the post office and that, as a result of a new post office being opened, existing facilities like the frequency of delivery and other services should in no way be curtailed.

In giving effect to this programme, priority will be given to all places where polling booths were located during the last general elections, Panchayat villages with railway stations, and villages included in the Community Projects. When a State Government asks for a post office to be opened, it is to be provided if the State Government offers non-returnable contribution to cover the estimated loss in excess of the permissible limit.

The backward areas of Assam, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh, Vindhya Pradesh, Kutch and certain areas in Rajasthan and Chhota Nagpur, where postal facilities hardly exist at present, the limit of the permissible loss has been fixed at Rs. 1,000 per post office per year. The programme when completed, will have added another 10,135 Post Offices at an estimated cost of Rs. 25 lakhs, and the programme will spread over a period of three years.

RURAL MOBILE POST OFFICE

In addition to opening of stationary post offices, the Department also proposes to try, as an experimental measure, the organisation of rural mobile post offices radiating from the stationary post offices. Sturdy motor vehicle & bicycle will the used for the purpose. This is expected to facilitate the introduction of postal services in much wider areas of the country.

Three of the cities, Nagpur, Madras and Delhi, which are connected by the night air mail services, have been provided with mobile post offices

for the convenience of those who have to post their letters after the last clearance. Two more are to be opened in Bombay and Calcutta. A night mobile Post Office Van has already been built on most modern lines at the Government Coach Factory, Madras, and night mobile post offices are to follow the design of this prototype.

MORE POST OFFICE BUILDINGS NEEDED

Another problem, which always has to be faced in big cities is the difficulty of securing sufficient accommodation for housing a regular post office. This is being solved, by opening small offices with functions limited to the booking of moneyorders or parcels and not for transacting any other type of business. The Department has, however, a plan to launch on a large scale building programme spread over a large number of places. The requirements of every new colony that comes up from time to time are carefully studied and new post offices provided wherever necessary.

The total projected construction involves an expenditure of Rs. 2.51 crores, of which Rs. 77.87 lakhs are to go towards the building of Head Post Offices, Stock Depots, Head Record Offices etc. The allocations for other items are Rs. 8.2 lakhs for Mails Offices; Rs. 92.95 lakhs for Sub-Post Offices; Rs. 7.45 lakhs for R.M.S. Rest Houses and Rs. 17.89 lakhs for administrative offices, the balance going towards the construction of Staff quarters.

Mention should also be made here of the efforts made by the Department to provide postal services in the new townships developed for rehabilitating displaced persons from Pakistan.

TRANSMISSION OF MAILS

Speed and economy with which mails are transmitted from one place to another is a very important factor in the work of the post office. Constant endeavours are always made to effect a reduction in the time taken for the transmission of mails. Today, the total mail mileage in the country is 195,152, out of which 14,421 miles constitute the air route, 36,688 the railway route, 46,622 Mail Motor Lines, 92,093 Mail runner lines and 5,328 other lines. An all round increase in the mileage will have to follow the pattern of the expansion in postal facilities. This increase will naturally have to aim at augmenting the existing route mileage of the air mail services. The importance of the air route can

be gauged from the fact that in addition to accelerating the transmission of long distance mails, out of about six million letters and post cards delivered in India, as many as 21 per cent of the letters and 17 per cent of the post cards are transmitted by air. As a result of nationalisation and integration of air lines, the plan envisages further extension of the air mail service to a larger number of cities.

In the case of the Railway Mail Service, there can be no expansion except when the railway itself has expanded its mileage. But the Plan had to take into account, the improvements necessary to the R.M.S. services. It was important, first of all, to take steps to remove the shortage of accommodation in railway mail vans. A detailed programme was drawn up for the construction of mail vans; and the number of vans added, since Independence, is 59. Unfortunately, difficulties in obtaining construction facilities, and paucity of funds, precluded any great amenities being provided to the staff in the Railway Mail Service. But all that is to be gradually changed. The Five-Year Plan proposes to provide all mail vans with flourescent lights, cushioned seats, fans and, wherever possible, air conditioning.

Another important departure from past practice is the Departmental running of motor transport for mails in cities. Hitherto, this work has always been entrusted to contractors. But this system is to be replaced by Departmental management in Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Nagpur and Delhi. The Department has a fleet of nearly 280 vehicles and a staff of about 550 to man this new organisation. A programme has also been drawn up for the replacement of old vehicles by ones of improved design.

The Plan also provides for the increased utilisation of the scheduled services of the road transport organisations run by States. This is expected to reduce the mileage covered by mail runners and facilitate quicker transmission of mails.

TRAINING

Out of the most important steps taken by the Department recently is training to Postal and Railway Mail Service employees. A residential training school located for the requirements of the Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Rajasthan circles has been functioning since 2nd April 1951. Four more training centres on regional basis are intended to be opened shortly. For the interim period, arrangements for training the staff locally, in each circle, are under contemplation, as construction of resi-

dential training centres is likely to take some time. This Scheme, when it fully materialises, will make available better qualified staff and lay the foundation of a more efficient Postal service in the country.

PART III
THE STORY OF INDIAN STAMPS

INDIA POSTAGE STAMP CENTENARY
COMMEMORATIVE STAMPS
1954

1. Stamps as Landmarks of History

OTHER KINGS AND OTHER COUNTIES

POSTAGE STAMPS provide important landmarks in the history of nations. Ever since 1840, when the first postage stamps were printed and issued in Great Britain, different countries in the world have brought out their own postage stamps. In the early days, the pictures of monarchs appeared on the postage stamps. If the king was able to keep his head on his shoulders, it also appeared on the stamp. Once his head, for some reason, were removed from this place of safety, it was immediately deleted from that postage stamp. So that stamps were a barometer of the rise and fall of various Royal figures. Furthermore, postage stamps reflected even more basic historical movements, often indicating the growing importance of democratic forces within a nation. Thus, two years after Garibaldi's march into Naples in 1860, the stamps of "Reunited Italy" were printed with the Savoy Cross, emblem of the people, which took the place of the old Royalist standard, the Bourbon "Trinacria."

In France, stamps started with the Republican issue of 1849, and "Ceres," the Roman goddess of wealth and fertility, appeared on the stamp. She was replaced three years later by Louis Napoleon, President of the French Republic. Later, when Louis Napoleon became "Emperor of the French," in 1853, this return to Imperialism, was heralded by his picture appearing in regal splendour on the stamps. But the French people soon sent him into political oblivion, and in 1870, when France once again became a Republic, the Goddess "Ceres" resumed her rightful place on the cover of French stamps.

It is only after the first Great War that stamps were issued heralding the birth of new nations. The revolutionary changes which brought the Bolshevik Party into power in Russia and gave birth to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was mirrored in the stamp issues of the USSR. Later political upheavals, such as the emergence of Fascism and Nazism, and

their subsequent downfall, all could be traced in the designs of the stamps of the respective countries.

Before Ireland became independent and picture of English kings appeared on the stamps, there used to be a saying among the Irish, every time a stamp was glued to an envelope. "This is one way to lick the king". When independence was partially achieved in 1922, the King George V stamps were overprinted with the words. "Provisional Government" of Ireland, 1922, in Gaelic characters. Later in the same year, the King's head was removed from four new designs which bore the word "Eire" inscribed on the top of the stamps. But it was not until 1948, with the attainment of complete independence, that the Irish stamps carried the name, "Eirean Republic."

Albania, Turkey, and the Middle East, have all made a contribution to contemporary archives by sponsoring new stamp issues recording history as it was being made. In Albania, the death of the old monarchs, the founding of the Republic, and then, after a welter of political intrigue, Albania's re-emergence as a monachy can all be traced through Alabanian stamps. For instance, Achmet Zogu's effigy appears with the inscription, "Republic Shquiptare." The same Achmet Zogu as king appears on a later 1930 design with "Mbretaina Shqiptare." And now the Alabanian stamps have eliminated Zog, because Albania is an independent little People's Republic.

All of these major political upheavals cannot help but delight the soul of a true stamp collector, regardless of how much he may deplore them as an individual. But a stamp collector is always that, and these stamps which record a change become a philatelist's most prized possession. As the world will move towards peace, he will have to be content with stamps which no longer trace the course of war and suffering, but rather chart a plan of progress and happiness for the people. Then the philatelist might look for a defectively printed stamp, for such stamps are very rare and are eagerly collected.

THE TRANSFER OF POWER

If the First Great War created a few new nations, the Second Great War pitchforked many more new national states into existence and changed the *status quo* of others. In Asia, there was a resurgence of the spirit of self-determination which would not be denied. The great Indian Depen-

NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE ISSUE
1947

dency broke its shackles and became free of Great Britain in 1947. This historic event was faithfully recorded in the stamp issues of that year. The Dominion of India Stamps of 1947 are the first series that do not carry any monarch's head, but are symbols of the magnificent history of India.

OLD IMPERIALIST SERIES

From the beginning of British Imperialist rule, when the Queen Victoria stamps were issued in 1854, a portrait of the British monarch had always figured in Indian stamp designs. Even in the Commemorative issues, like the "Inauguration of Delhi" series, the "Silver Jubilee" series or the "Dak" series, the design always had an inset panel with the monarch's head. In 1947 this came to an end.

FIRST INDEPENDENCE STAMPS

The first Independence Stamps, issued in 1947, were three in number. The vertical one, with a 1½ anna denomination, shows the Asoka Lion-capitol which has been adopted as the national emblem; and the horizontal one of the 3½ anna denomination, has the Indian National Flag as the theme; and the 12 anna value has modern aircraft incorporated in the design.

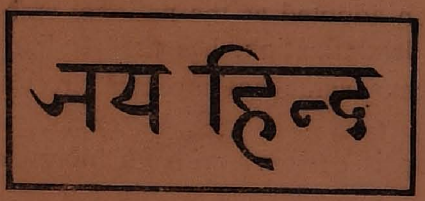
The vertical stamp is designed with an inpression of the Asoka Pillar, and a shaded background, with the words 'Jai Hind' in Devanagri script, dated, "15th August 1947", in small letters in English script. In the two bottom corners of the stamp are small panels, with the value 1½ anna in English on the left and in Devanagri on the right. A horizontal panel shows the word 'India Postage' in smaller white lettering on solid background. The whole stamp has a plain double line border.

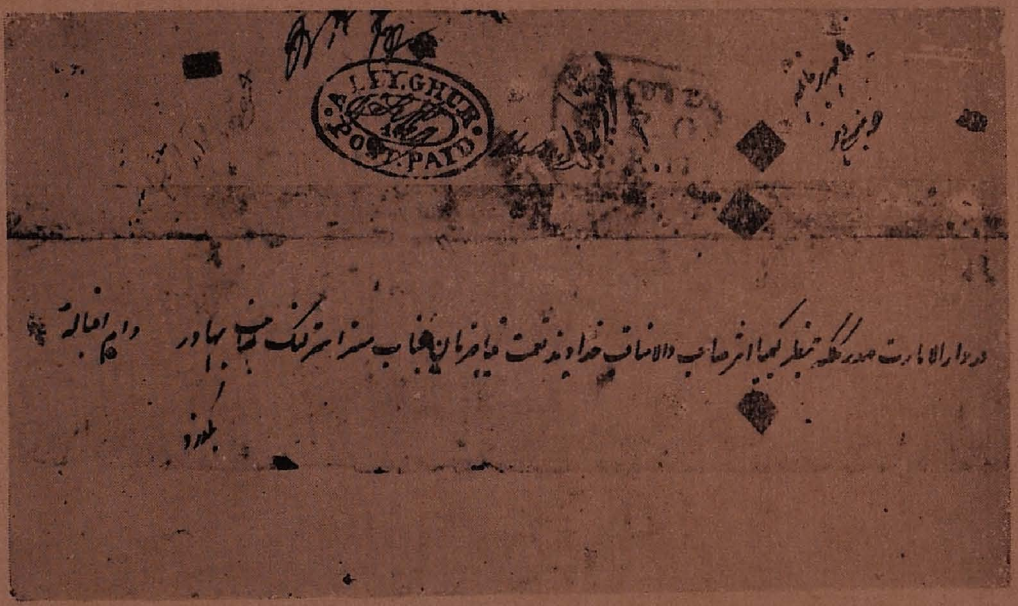
The 3½ anna horizontal has the flag of the Independent Dominion of India flying against a background of light clouds. The words 'Jai Hind' in Devanagri appear in the corner and the date '15th August 1947' in small English lettering finds its place on the left of the flag. The word 'postage' also in small letters in English is placed below the flag. At the base of the stamp is a solid blue with "India" in white. The value is indicated in the left hand bottom corner on the stamp.

The twelve anna denomination has a modern four engined aircraft as the central theme. Like the other two, the word 'Jai Hind' in Devanagari is included, and it appears in white on the top left hand corner while

the date '15th August 1947' appears just below. The horizontally based panel contains the word 'India Postage' in white on a solid background, the bottom left hand corner carries the imparelled value figure of twelve annas. The border is double lined.

The 1½ anna denomination were issued in sheets containing 144 stamps in 12 rows of 12 stamps each; the 3½ anna value in sheets of 96 with 12 rows of eight stamps; while the 12 anna stamp sheets were in 20 rows of 8 stamps each.





A letter carrying ancient postmark.

2. Evolution of Indian stamps

FIRST STAMP ISSUE OF 1854

ON OCTOBER 1, 1954, exactly a hundred years have elapsed since India ued her first adhesive postage stamp. Let us now go back to the first stamp issues of 1854. In that year for the first time the public could, at the prepaid cost of half an anna, send a letter from one end of the country he other. This half anna 'label' on the letter ensured its collection, conveyance and delivery to the addressee. The idea of prepayment by means of some token was not entirely new. Even in 1774 Warren Hastings, the then Governor General of India, had introduced a copper "ticket" or token, which entitled the sender of a letter to hand it over together with th "ticket" for transmission to the addressee. Each copper ticket, which was of a denomination of two annas, was valid for conveying a letter or article for a hundred miles.

THE BRITISH ADHESIVE STAMPS

In 1840, Great Britain issued her first adhesive postage stamp. A similar move to introduce this prepayment device was made in India a little later, but the time was not yet ripe as this question was bound up with the whole question of Post Office reform. A Commission was appointed in 1850 to go into the question of reform and to examine various proposals for the centralisation, unification and the efficient administration of the Post Office in India. The Commission submitted its report a year later, in which,

inter alia, they advocated the use of adhesive paper "postage labels", which would greatly help in effecting prepayment of postage. Such prepayment was considered the basis on which the new centralized system could work.

LORD DALHOUSIE'S MINUTE

The report was placed before the Governor General, Lord Dalhousie, whose considered minute on the subject is a classic in itself. It examined the working of the Post Office, recorded the shortcomings and recommended remedies, but, above all, it laid down for all time what role the Post Office was to play in the life of the country and its people. In his minute of December 30, 1851, Lord Dalhousie affirmed that every Government was within its rights to see that official correspondence, on public business, was to be conveyed at public expense. The heavy charge laid on private correspondence in India made postal services expensive for the ordinary citizen and even made him evade payment. In his strongly worded minute Lord Dalhousie says: "The enormous mass of official correspondence, and a second mass of privileged correspondence, is almost entirely paid by the charges laid on private communication, and thus the cost of conveying the correspondence carried on for the interests of the whole community, is defrayed not by a light tax on the whole community, but practically by a very heavy tax imposed exclusively on one comparatively limited class alone.

"Years have passed since the inequality and injustice of such a system were recognised and remedied in Great Britain by the Imperial Parliament. The experience that has been gained of the operation of the new system of law and uniform postage gives good ground for the hope, that the gradual increase of the Postal revenue which has gone on steadily from year to year will ultimately make good the whole deficiency which was actually produced by the large and sudden reduction of charge.

"The United States of America, France, Spain and Portugal have intelligently carried the same measure into effect and in the United States (on which alone there is sufficient information before me) the change has been followed with a great degree of financial success.

"If it be injustice in England that burden of postal charges, including those for the public correspondence of the state, should rest exclusively on one class, and if the injustice has been recognised in many states of Europe and America, the injustice is not lighter or less oppressive in India.

If it were wise in England to remove every obstacle to free communication between man and man, to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge and to correct, with all prudent speed, a sensible and admitted grievance, wisdom would dictate now the same liberality in legislation here."

UNIFORMITY OF POSTAGE

He strongly advocated "uniformity of postage" and supported the Commissioners in their assertion that "the cost of conveying a letter is not in proportion to the distance" was as true of India as of England. "This uniformity", Lord Dalhousie continues, "is recommended by its simplicity, by its fairness, and by the facilities it gives for the introduction of other improvements into the department. Combined with a low rate of charge, it forms the conspicuous and chief benefit which the monopoly of the carriage of letters enables the Government to confer upon the whole body of its subjects, by almost annihilating distance, and placing it within the power of every individual to communicate freely with all parts of the Empire. It makes the Post Office, what under any other system it can never be, the unrestricted means of diffusing knowledge, extending commerce and promoting in every way the social and intellectual improvement of the people. It is no longer an experiment, having been introduced with eminent success into the United Kingdom, as well as into the United States of America, France, Spain and Russia. It is advocated by every officer of experience connected with the Department in India, and by every individual who has been consulted in the course of this enquiry; and it has already been recommended by three out of the four subordinate Governments". Summarising his recommendations to the Court of Directors, Lord Dalhousie said:

> *"have, therefore, the honour to recommend that immediate sanction be given to the proposal of the Commissioner for the establishment of an uniform rate of half an anna on every letter not exceeding half a tola in weight, whatever distance it may be conveyed."*

"POSTAGES LABELS"

The Commissioners in the Report had recommended, in 1850, the introduction of prepayment by means of "postage labels" affixed to letters and a system of uniform postage. Lord Dalhousie supported the proposal strongly. The time lag beween Dalhousie's recommendations, and the

"Court of Directors" decision proved to be chafing to quite a few in India, notably Sir Bartle Frere, Commissioner of Sind. Frere did not wait. He issued local "labels" valid for the province of Sind, which are known to philatelists as "Scinde Dawks." The theme of the stamp design was the East India Company's modification of the "broad arrow" which they had used since the time of Charles II. There were three kinds of issues, the Vermilion which was the first to be issued, but was discontinued almost as soon, on the score of the stamps being brittle, and, later on, a blue stamp embossed on white paper and also a colourable embossed impression. These local stamps were, however, discontinued when the Queen Victoria All-India stamps were issued.

PRINTING OF STAMPS BY THUILLIER

Once a decision had been taken to introduce "postage labels", exploratory enquiries were made, early in 1853, to elicit information as to whether the machine at the stamp office of the Calcutta Mint could produce the requisite quantity of stamps estimated at 25 million. Col. Forbes, Superintendent of the Machinery at the Mint, produced a design, the "Lion and Palm", but he did not feel confident of effecting timely deliveries of the full estimated quantity of 20 million stamps required. Further enquiries were then made and the only person who volunteered to print the necessary quantity of stamps was Captain Thuillier, Deputy Surveyor-General of India, who held charge of the Lithographic Department. The original "Lion and Palm" design of Col. Forbes was discarded in favour of the Queen's Head copied from the 'Wyon' medal. The design was simple, cut clean without Shading and showed a contrast of white space against solid colouring.

THE CHOICE OF PAPER

Captain Thuillier, once he had agreed to undertake the printing, went all out in his efforts to produce as good a design as he could under the most trying circumstances. He had to fight against many odds and was almost defeated in his attempts by " paper and ink". On 9th March 1854, he submitted a memorandum to Government in which he examined the relative merits of local paper manufactured in Serampore, which was used for deed and promissory note stamps, and paper manufactured in France. The Indian paper had a ring water mark, but was "rough, thick and coarse in

THE FIRST INDIAN LITHOGRAPHS
1854

texture" and was totally unsuited for lithographic printing. Captain Thuillier recommended the French paper on which, he suggested, that the arms of the Hon'ble East India Co., should be inlaid as a water-mark.

THE QUEST FOR THE GOOD INK

If there were difficulties about paper there were more difficulties about the ink to be used. Captain Thuillier had in his possession a small quantity of English vermilion lithographic ink. A few hundred sheets were struck off in this colour on an urgent request from Riddell, Director-General of Posts. The English ink having been exhausted, attempts were made to use ink of "apparently similar quality obtained from the stamp office." But this tended to destroy the impression on the lithographic stone, and the proofs were thick, smeared and showed a lack of uniformity. Blue ink was then tried, but the mineral substance in it was soon found to clog the stone impression. Thuillier went on to try other colours, notably cobalt blue, as well as black ink prepared from lamp black obtained from turpentine wick lamps. Further experiments were carried on with vegetable or indigo blue, and, on the 5th of May, he reported that he was able to proceed with the printing to ensure a sufficiently good supply. On the 4th of May, 1854, it appears—"the first day of real progress" as Thuillier called it, 1,447 sheets were struck off, giving nearly a lakh and a half of stamps. A week later, he was producing 300,000 a day and by August 1854 he had printed 330,660 sheets containing 31,743,360 labels of half anna denomination. The sheets printed in May and July were made up of blocks of 24 stamps in 3 rows of 8 stamps each, repeated 4 times on a sheet. The sheets printed in August 1854 came off a stone made up of single transfer from the copper plate, and these can be distinguished by the conspicuous absence of fine detail in the 'chingnon' on every stamp in the sheet. The different transfers also are not identical. They varied in detail. For instance, on the May transfer the word "amount" appears but is changed to "Amount" in the July and August transfers. After the half anna blue, the other stamps issued were the one anna red, 2 annas emerald, and octagonal four annas. They all carry the Wyon head. The two annas design was prepared by Captain Thuillier, but the pressure of work on his lithographic department left him no alterative, and he had to pass the work on to the Superintendent of Stapms, Mr. Snell, for whom Col. Forbes, of the Mint, cast a satisfactory die. This plate contained 80 stamps in ten rows of eight.

POST MARK

The subsequent history of stamps shows how, after nearly seventy years of Indian stamp printing by foreign firms, we are again making our own stamps.

THE NUMBER OF STAMPS PRINTED IN INDIA—1854-55

From May 1854 to August 1855, when printing of stamps was discontinued in India, 579,878 sheets had been printed, exclusive of the 2 anna denominations, bringing the Thuillier printing of these stamps, during this period, to 47,732,496. These figures do not include the two anna stamp. No exact figures are available, but the first order was for about a million stamps. But it is quite likely that repeat orders were placed and some authorities place the figures at some 7 million of which 3 million were destroyed. Though the stamps first issued were ungummed and unperforated, there have been some half anna, four anna and two anna stamps with interserrated edges of pin-perforated. Curiously, most of them carry the Madras Circle mark.

Thomas De La Rue & Co, London

3. We make our own Stamps

MESSRS. THOMAS DE LA RUE

From 1856 to 1926 the printing of stamps in India was stopped and Messrs. Thomas De La Rue and Co., of London began to supply stamps for the East India Company. The designs were engraved on steel, and stamps were printed on white or blue unwater-marked paper, with white gum on the back. These supplanted the old stamps printed in India which were not, however, withdrawn until 1858. They were followed later by a new design for the 4 anna stamp and a new value of 8 annas.

SOME RARE VALUES

In these early days some rare values of stamps were also issued. In 1860 an 8 pies stamp was put on sale. In 1867, stamps of the value of 6 annas and 8 pies were issued as this amount was the rate per ounce for letters to the U.K. *via* Marseilles. These were discontinued in 1874 when the Marseilles route was abandoned.

Some more changes were made between 1864 and 1876. New issues of the values of half-anna, 8 pies, 9 pies, 1 anna, 4 annas, 6 annas, 8 pies, 8 annas, 12 annas and 1 rupee were put on sale. The paper used for these had the water mark of an elephant's head.

CHANGE IN DESIGN

Upto 1882, Indian Stamps bore the inscription 'East India Postage'. When Queen Victoria assumed the title of Empress of India and the Administration of this country was transferred to the British Crown, it necessitated a change in the designs of the Indian stamps. New dies were prepared and the inscription was changed to 'INDIA POSTAGE'. The value issued were half anna, 9 pies, 1 anna, 1 anna 6 pies, 2 annas, 3 annas, 4 annas, 4 annas 6 pies, 8 annas, 12 annas and 1 rupee. The stamps were printed on white paper water marked with a five pointed star. The new value, 4½ annas, was due to the new rate then prevailing for letters to the U.K.

SURCHARGED STAMPS

When the postage to the U.K. was reduced in 1891, a new stamp for the value of 2 annas 6 pies was prepared. Until the new issue was ready, the 4½ annas stamp was surcharged '2½ annas'. This was the first surcharged stamp to be issued in India.

A new book-post rate of ¼ anna was introduced in 1898. As there was no three pies stamp after the introduction of this facility, the half-anna stamps were surcharged with '¼ anna' and issued to the public in 1899. When the new stamp of 3 pies (carmine) was ready the surcharged stamp was withdrawn.

COLOUR CHANGES

Several changes in the colours of the stamps were made in 1900 owing to the decision of the Postal Union to have uniform colours for stamps representing the rates of international postages. The carmine stamp of 3 pies was changed to grey, the blue green of half-anna to yellow-green, the brown 1 anna to camine, the ultramarine 2 annas to mauve and the green 2½ annas to ultramarine. These were the last in the Queen Victoria series and were followed by King Edward VII series.

In 1906 it was decided to use the half anna and 1 anna postage stamp for both postage and revenue purposes. A design was, therefore prepared for these values with the inscription "India Postage and Revenue". This continued till 1932, when special stamps for revenue purposes were once again introduced and the original inscription was reverted to.

HIGHER VALUES

In 1909, it was decided to abolish the double headed telegraph stamps and to employ postage stamps in payment of telegrams. This was also the first occasion when higher value stamps of Rs. 10/-, 15/-, and 25/- were introduced in India, as the value of telegrams extended to Rs. 50. The colours used were pink and green for Rs. 10, olive brown and blue for Rs. 15 and orange and blue for Rs. 25. A bicoloured stamp was first issued for Re. 1 value in 1893 and similar stamps for the higher values of Rs. 2. 3/-, and 5/-, followed in 1895.

King George V stamps issued in 1911 were completely redesigned. The higher values had two elephants supporting the centre oval containing the King's head.

INDIA AGAIN MAKES STAMPS

The indirect effect of the First World War on the history of Indian Stamps was that attempts were again made to print them indigenously. A trial was first made in Delhi, the Capital, as an experimental measure.

With the establishment of the Security Printing Press at Nasik in 1926, the printing of Indian Stamps was finally changed from London to Nasik. Special paper, with a water-mark of multiple stars and gummed on one side, was imported for this purpose. The first series of stamps printed in Nasik were all of the same designs as the new King George V series.

FIRST AIRMAIL STAMPS

India was the first country in the British Commonwealth to issue a special set of airmail stamps in 1929. These were of the values of 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, and 12 annas. India also holds the record for the first official airmail flight ever undertaken. This was on February 1911, as mentioned earlier, when Mr. Picquet flew with 6,500 letters and postcards from Allahabad to Naini Junction.

FIRST PICTORIALS

Until 1931 the Indian Posts and Telegraphs Department avoided issuing any pictorial stamps. The Department prided itself on what is called the purity and simplicity of the design of the King's head. On the occasion of the inauguration of New Delhi, the new Capital of India, the Department overcame its prejudices and issued its first commemorative stamps. They showed scenes and buildings of New Delhi and consisted of the value of 3 pies, half-anna, 1, 2 and 3 annas and 1 rupee.

The next occassion when commemorative stamps were issued in India was when the Silver Jubilee of King George V was celebrated in 1935. A pictorial set of 7 values (½ anna, 9 pies, 1, 1½, 2½, 3½ and 8 annas) was brought out.

The King George VI stamps, which were first introduced in 1937, had completely altered designs in many of the values. For the first time in the postal history of India stamps containing pictures showing the various aspects of carrying mails in the country were issued.

WARTIME CHANGES

Paper economy, necessitated by the Second World War, made an end of this new departure and stamps reverted once again to their small size and King's head design. But several colour changes were effected and new values of 1¼ annas, and 14 annas for airgraphs were issued.

During the war, India's stamps were put to a strange use which neither the inventors nor the postal authorities could have foreseen. Owing to a temporary scarcity of small coins due to shortage of metal, especially copper, stamps came to fulfil the purposes of currency and were freely exchanged for goods and services by tradesman and the public.

To commemorate the end of the war, a special issue of stamps was decided on and a competition was held of the designs by Indian artists. These Victory Stamps, issued in 1946 consisted of four values, 9 pies, 1½ annas, 3 annas and 12 annas. The design consisted of a sword with the words "VICTORY" and "1945" inscribed on top and a globe below. On the right side the King's effigy and the denomination were printed.

On the 15th August, 1947, power was transferred from the British Crown to the Indian National Congress and stamps of the value of 1½ annas, 3½ annas and 12 annas with the Asoka Capital, the National Flag, and an aircraft in flight, as their themes, were issued in November and December 1947 to commemorate to this historic event. They attracted worldwide attention and were as popular in foreign countries as in India. Stamps of the value of Rs. 43,000 were sold at Philatelic Bureau (Bombay G.P.O.) alone on December 15. The Jai Hind Stamps were also flown, for the first time in India's postal history, to the U.S.A. to meet her philatelic requirements. The Posts and Telegraphs Department also isued an attractive folder in five colours containing the new issues, a fascimile of the world's first airmail letter carried from Allahabad to Naini and a brief history of Indian Postal Services.

The inauguration of the India-U.K. air services by an Indian Air Line on the 8th June, 1948, was the occasion of a special commemorative stamp of the value of 12 annas.

On the 15th August 1948, the first anniversary of Indian Independence, a short set portraying Mahatma Gandhi, the 'Father of the Nation' was issued. The values were 1½ annas, 3½ annas, 12 annas and Rs. 10. The stamps were printed by Courvoisier of Switzerland and, like all their other creations, were works of art. The gum was not suited to the humid Indian climate. As every one knows the month of August coincides with the coming of the rains. A small quantity of these four stamps were overprinted "SERVICE" for the use of the Governor General.

The second anniversary of Independence Day, the 15th August, 1949, saw a new definitive set values from 3 pies to Rs. 15. The designs were based on subjects of archaeological and historical interest.

In October, 1949 India like every other member of the Universal Postal Union commemorated the 75th anniversary of this institution. Four stamps in a uniform design were issued, 9 pies, 2 annas, 3½ annas and 12 annas.

India declared herself a Sovereign Republic on the 26th January, 1950, and a set of 4 stamps, comprising values of 2 annas, 3½ annas, 4 annas and 12 annas was issued to celebrate the event. The designs are symbolic of themes representing Celebrations, Education, Agricultural and Cloth spinning.

On the 15th June, 1950, an error discovered in the 1 anna stamp issued on the 15th August 1949, was rectified by the issue of a new 1 anna stamp.

The centenary of the Geological survey of India in January 1951, was made the occasion of a single commemorative stamp of the value of 2 annas. It represents two Stegodon Ganess, the extinct forerunners of the elephant.

Delhi was the venue of the First Asian Games and on March 4, 1951, two stamps of the value of 2 annas and 12 annas appeared.

The acquisition of machinery for producing stamps by the photogravure process gave the occasion of publicising some of India's Poets and Saints.

Six stamps were put out on the 1st October, 1952. The values were—9 pies, Kabir; 1 anna, Tulsidas; 2 annas, Mira; 4 annas, Surdas; 4½ annas, (the fee for registration of postal articles) Ghalib, and 12 annas Rabindranath Tagore.

Railways had existed for a century in India and on the 16th April, 1953 2 annas stamp was issued, was printed in black, it represented locomotives of 1853 and 1953.

India has always considered the Himalayas to be almost a part of itself and when Everest was conquered in 1953, it was felt that stamps should be issued to celebrate, the more so that one of the conquerors was a domiciled Indian. Two stamps of the values of 2 annas and 14 annas were sold to the public. The design is the same for both values and shows us the peak of Mount Everest, the highest mountain in the world.

The centenary year of the Indian Telegraphs was 1951, but it was only on the 1st November, 1953, that two stamps of 2 annas and 12 annas values were issued to remind us of it. They both represent telegraph poles of 1851 and 1951.

The end of the war in Korea entailed the presence of Indian troops in Korea to superintend the exchange of prisoners etc., and for their convenience Indian Stamps of the values of 3p., 6p., 9p., 1a., 2a., 2½a., 3a., 4a., 6a., 8a., 12 a. and Re. 1/- were overprinted in Nagri Characters "BHARTYA SANRAKHSHA KATTAK KOREA".

Occasion was taken of the centenary of the first Indian Postage Stamp issued by Captain Thuillier in October 1854, to hold an International Postage Stamp Exhibition and to issue a set of four adhesive stamps of the values of 1 anna, 2 annas, 4 annas and 12 annas.

MILLION STAMPS PER YEAR

The consumption of postage stamps of all values in India totals at present nearly 766 million per annum. The face value of these stamps (excluding Service stamps) is about Rs. 12·5 crores. The demand has increased considerably in the past twelve months and is still rising. Every day nearly half a million embossed envelopes and about 2·5 million postcards are also sold to the public in addition to these. The face value of these two items amounts to Rs. 5½ crores per annum.

For printing India's stamps nearly 72 tons of special paper are consumed in a year. This special paper is of high quality and super-calendered. The adhesive used is pure gum arabic which is non-poisonous and tested to be harmless in view of the habit of many people to lick stamps for pasting them. It is also non-hygroscopic, *i.e.*, does not absorb moisture. During the gumming process it is specially treated to prevent curling when under printing with a view to making it suitable to the greatly varying climatic conditions of this sub-continent.

Security Printing Press, Nasik

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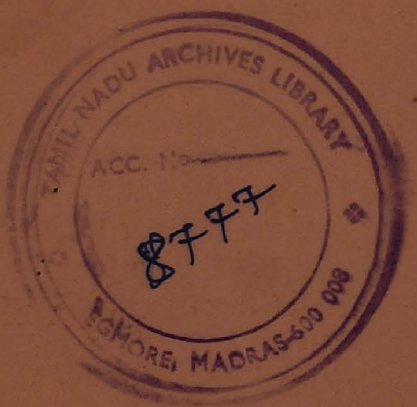

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