

REPORTS

ON THE

REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

AND ON THE

OPERATIONS OF THE LAND RECORDS AND
SETTLEMENT DEPARTMENTS

IN

BERAR

DURING THE YEAR

1916-17



Agpur

PRINTED AT THE GOVERNMENT PRESS

1918

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Central Provinces Administration

REVENUE AND SCARCITY DEPARTMENT

Nagpur, the 6th March 1918.

READ—

Report of the Commissioner, Berar, on the Revenue Administration of Berar, and the Report of the Commissioner of Settlements and Director of Land Records on the Departments of Land Records and Settlements in Berar, for the year ending the 31st July 1917.

RESOLUTION.

Excessive rain at the end of October 1916 further reduced the outturn of a kharif crop already damaged by too much moisture. Though the area of cotton, under the influence of continued high prices, expanded by 300,000 acres, or by nearly as much as it had fallen in the previous season, the outturn, owing to the unfavourable monsoon, was about 30 per cent less. Juari, the staple food and fodder crop, was even poorer. The character of the season, as well as the stimulation given by district officers, led to an increase of 45,000 acres in wheat; this crop in the end gave an average outturn, though sowing conditions were not altogether favourable.

2. A rich and prosperous tract like Berar can endure without real hardship a much less favourable season, and, assisted by good prices, cultivators were but little affected by the comparatively adverse circumstances of the year. Labour, as usual, was in strong demand and wages ruled high. As Mr. Standen points out, the incentive to continuous work is lacking, and the shortage of the labour supply for agricultural and other purposes promises to present a serious problem in the near future. Plague and cholera were exceptionally widespread, and the former, though the people now fully understand the benefit of early evacuation of infected areas, was responsible for a large number of deaths. Friction between Izardars and their tenants still continues in the Yeotmal District, and is likely to continue until the bill designed to protect the tenants, which will shortly be submitted to the Government of India, passes into law. In some villages Hindus and Muhammadans were at variance, but such cases were isolated and unimportant. In Yeotmal a district durbar was held for the first time, and many matters of local interest were discussed.

3. In spite of a comparatively poor season, there was little difficulty in collecting the land revenue. The arrears, of which 94 per cent appertain to the Amraoti District, were reduced by half shortly after the end of the agricultural year. This district was not in any way worse off than others of the Division, and the arrears are said to have been due to a fear, which had not the slightest basis on fact, that evidence of prosperity would result in a demand for heavy subscriptions towards the War Loan. Though Deputy Commissioners have been careful not to resort to the use of Section 117 of the Land Revenue Code in cases of real inability to pay the demand, the Chief Commissioner observes that in consequence of his remarks last year this provision has been used more freely, penalties amounting to Rs. 1,349 being imposed.

4. Except in the Melghat and in the Jagir and Izara villages of Yeotmal, where action is not being taken for the present, the record of rights had been completed before the beginning of the year. During the year it was published in the four taluqs that remained. In some of the larger taluqs assistance will have to be given to the Tahsildars for a short period of the year in order to enable the record to be kept up to date, but the cost will be trifling in comparison to the benefits which accrue. As entries can only be certified on the spot by Tahsildars or their Naibs, a certain number are likely to remain uncertified at the end of the year. The number of such entries, however, admits of reduction, and with more experience of the amount of work done and the staff required there will be little excuse for arrears. An officer was put on special duty.

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to report on the maintenance of the record of rights, and the Chief Commissioner is pleased to observe that an improvement has, on the whole, been noticed. The Land Records Manual was published during the year and will result in increased efficiency in this direction.

5. The organisation of effort in connection with floating of the War Loan threw an extra burden on the Land Revenue Staff shortly before the end of the year under review. It is not therefore surprising to find that, in spite of a decrease in the number of cases for disposal, the pending file has risen; it is, however, satisfactory to note a decline in average duration. Delay is often caused by inefficiency among the subordinate staff, and the increase of two Revenue Inspectors per district as a leave reserve, which was sanctioned in October last, should further accelerate the disposal of cases. The Chief Commissioner called special attention last year to the duration of land acquisition cases and the inconvenience caused thereby. He is glad to find some improvement in this respect, but there is still scope for further improvement and all officers engaged in this work should see that the procedure in these cases is prompt and systematic. Sir Benjamin Robertson has now accepted the view that decrees against land should not be transferred to the Collector for execution, and the Government of India is being moved in the matter; it will still be possible to use Section 72 of the Civil Procedure Code in any case in which the Collector considers it advisable to intervene. Such cases, however, will be few, as Berar is now so developed that the necessity can no longer be said to exist of drawing a distinction between land and other property in so far as sale in the execution of a civil court decree is concerned. Indeed, the view has been put forward that the cumbrousness of the procedure which has hitherto governed the execution of decrees against land has tended to enhance the rate of interest on loans secured thereon. The execution of these decrees by civil courts will not throw an appreciable burden on the latter, while under the system hitherto in force the dislocation of work, due to interference with the Tahsildars' touring arrangements, was always considerable. The change proposed should, therefore, tend towards reduction in the duration of other cases.

6. In March 1917 the Government of India sanctioned the enhancement of the education cess under Section 159 of the Berar Land Revenue Code, and in December of the same year a proposal to amend that section, so as to enable Rural Boards to add further to the amount of the cesses in force, was submitted by the Local Administration to the Government of India and has just been sanctioned. The paucity of funds earmarked for education has in the past not infrequently led Rural Boards to divert to education money which should have been applied to other objects of public utility, and Sir Benjamin Robertson anticipates that the increase of the education cess will indirectly benefit the people in other respects by releasing for expenditure on other useful objects funds now appropriated for education.

7. From the report of the Director of Land Records it appears that the conduct of the Land Records Staff and the outturn of work have been satisfactory. The Chief Commissioner is pleased to observe that Deputy Commissioners and Sub-Divisional Officers, despite their multifarious duties, have paid more attention to the check of village papers. It is hardly necessary to emphasise that an incorrect record is nearly as bad as no record at all, and Sir Benjamin Robertson trusts that continued neglect by any officer will not pass unnoticed by the Commissioner.

8. The Chief Commissioner desires to offer his thanks to Mr. Standen and the officers favourably mentioned in the reports for another year of successful administration. The War, which has increased the volume of work, has at the same time depleted the staff, and Sir Benjamin Robertson records his appreciation of the efforts of those who remain to carry on the administration successfully and smoothly.

ORDER.—Ordered that a copy of this Resolution and its annexures be submitted to the Government of India in the Department of Revenue and Agriculture; that copies be forwarded to the Commissioner of Berar, Deputy Commissioners in Berar, and the Commissioner of Settlements and the Director of Land Records for information and guidance; and that it be published in the Supplement to the *Central Provinces Gazette*.

J. F. DYER,
Third Secretary to the Chief Commissioner,
Central Provinces.

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