

Shree Paradkar certainly can't leave the reader with any doubt as to her opinion of Winston Churchill – I was expecting to read that he was also responsible for global warming!

With space limitations all her accusations can't be addressed so I'll confine myself to her main one – that Churchill was responsible for the death of 3 million people in the Bengal famine of 1943 i.e. "When the locals began starving, he steadfastly refused to send them food."

Firstly it has to be accepted that in the midst of a total war raging the winning of the war had to be the priority. However The War Cabinet papers of 8 October 1943 include orders Churchill sent to Lord Wavell, the newly appointed Viceroy of India, "The hard pressures of world-war have for the first time for many years brought conditions of scarcity, verging in some localities into actual famine, upon India. Every effort must be made, even by the diversion of shipping urgently needed for war purposes, to deal with local shortages."

Our P.M. Mackenzie King did indeed offer wheat from Eastern Canada, and on 4 November 1943 Churchill replied: "Wheat from Canada would take at least two months to reach India whereas it could be carried from Australia in 3 to 4 weeks." And Australia came through and provided 350,000 tons of wheat.

Ms. Paradkar quotes from "Churchill's Secret War" by Madhusree Mukerjee. This was reviewed in the magazine "Finest Hour" by Arthur Herman, an American and the author of Gandhi & Churchill, nominated for the 2009 Pulitzer Prize - this can be downloaded – www.winstonchurchill.org – Learn – Finest Hour, Issue #149, page 50. Mr. Herman states "Far from seeking to starve India, Churchill and his cabinet sought every way to alleviate the suffering without undermining the war effort."

Ms. Paradkar states that Churchill said no to the 100,000 tons of rice that America offered – actually the Churchill and Roosevelt Correspondence, Volume 3 quotes Churchill writing to Roosevelt "I am seriously concerned about the food situation in India...Last year we had a grievous famine in Bengal through which at least 700,000 people died...I am impelled to ask you to consider a special allocation of ships to carry wheat to India from Australia...We have the wheat but we lack the ships." Roosevelt responded on 1 June 1944, that India had his "utmost sympathy" but they were "unable on military grounds to consent to the diversion of shipping."

To quote Churchill in another context, and referring to Ms. Paradkar's contention, "I should think it was hardly possible to state the opposite of the truth with more precision."

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