Starvation Still Threatens. It is generally recognized by informed persons that the shortages of food in many parts of the world are still extremely serious. Some mass starvation began in parts of Romania and was halted only by emergency food from US. Pelagia is increasing in the US Zone in Germany. Strikes in the Ruhr underscored the growing range of hunger in the British Zone. Any cessation of US shipments or further delay in providing the funds for post-UNRRA relief would soon result in famines. The danger line is so near because many millions are living on too little food.

Recurrent Famines. Sir John Orr, Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization, has repeatedly stressed there is no need for the world to face recurrent famines and shortages of basic foods. The Preparatory Commission of the FAO on World Food Proposals worked out suggested ways by which the threat of famines could be overcome at fair prices to both consumers and producers and with no undue burden on any one country. The report of that Commission (analyzed in our Release #49) was approved by the Executive Committee of the FAO early in March. Member Governments will be expected to express their views on the steps recommended when they meet at a FAO Conference in Geneva the week of August 25.

Proposed World Food Council. Among the many decisions to be made at that meeting possibly the most important is the proposal for a FAO Council—to be known as a World Food Council. The functions of this Council are of sufficient significance to be described in more detail than in our Release #49. This Council would replace the present Executive Committee of the FAO. The members of this Council would be representatives of Governments rather than elected individuals—the present basis of membership on the Executive Committee. This will give much greater authority to its decisions.

One of the problems facing this Council, as pointed out in Food For Freedom's testimony at the hearings on the Charter for the International Trade Organization, is its relationship to the ITO, more specifically to the proposed Commodity Council of the ITO. The World Food Council would, through the information from world sources at its disposal, be in a position to influence the decisions of governments in relation to international trade agreements made at the ITO Commodity Committee level. The Commodity Council of the ITO would be the agency responsible for seeing that such agreements conform to the code of rules outlined in the proposed Charter of the ITO. Presumably the World Food Council will take over some of the duties of the temporary International Emergency Food Council which recommends allocations of foods in short supply. The IEFC replaced the Combined Food Board last May and is to continue until December 31, 1947 unless the emergency period of food shortages ends before that date. It is possible, however, that the Commodity Council of the ITO, more directly concerned with trade and marketing, may be selected as the residuary legatee of the IEFC. In any case, the work of the World Food Council would have to be closely coordinated with that of the ITO.

Neither the World Food Council nor any other international body, as stated in our
previous analysis, would have the power to direct, limit or control the agricultural policies of any nation. The World Food Council would have a persuasive influence on the food programs of governments as regards production, export arrangements and better nutrition for their own citizens. Voluntary compliance by independent governments may be difficult to sustain unless there is lively public interest. That has yet to be aroused.

Attempt to Reach Wheat Agreement About 40 countries have been represented by delegations at an International Wheat Conference in London which resumes its meetings today after a two-week's recess. In 1942 the five major wheat exporting or producing countries initiated a Wheat Agreement. An International Wheat Council including the consumer or importing countries has now been established. This is the first of the proposed Commodity Councils (referred to above).

The main objective of this conference is to work out an equitable system whereby the wheat needs of importing countries can be assured for a certain period (5 years) during which time exporting countries will not need to fear a burdensome surplus. The proposed price range of wheat for export is $1.15 to $1.80 per bushel. The agreement would include building up reserve stocks to prevent potential famines and permission for disposal of surplus wheat to needy countries at special rates below bottom price.

Most regrettably, the Argentine, though sitting in at the Conference, has refused to subscribe to any agreement. Although all the other countries endorse the purposes of the conference, there has been reluctance to come to a decision about the length of the period, the exact price range, and the quotas which importing countries will undertake to purchase. Possibly it will be necessary to postpone attempts to reach agreement until the world cereal situation becomes more normal. Serious rice shortages in the Far East greatly increase the demand for wheat.

Effort to Expand World Trade Many countries will not be able to solve their food problems until they can reestablish international trade and thus acquire sufficient credits to continue their necessary food imports. Europe imported prewar ten percent of its food. Its agricultural production will not reach prewar levels for five to ten years and its population is increasing. By far the most concerted effort ever undertaken by international action to develop world trade is being made now at Geneva at the second meeting of the Preparatory Commission of the International Conference on Trade and Employment which started on April 10. A dual program of working out of reciprocal trade agreements between 17 nations and the terms of a trade charter will be concurrently pursued. Internationally minded Americans should be ready to urge Congress to approve whatever constructive measures emerge from this conference.

USSR BILLS AUSTRIA FOR FOOD SEIZED ON OCCUPATION

A special UN Committee reported last January that among the UNRRA countries of Europe Austria was the most urgently in need of further food relief. Last week the US offered to wipe out Austrian indebtedness for approximately $115 million for food and other civilian relief supplies from US and Army stocks. The British similarly expressed willingness to forego payment for $30 to $40 million worth of civilian relief supplies.

In contrast, the USSR demanded last week that the impoverished Austrian Government pay $60 million for food stuffs and other essentials found in Austrian warehouses on occupation and distributed by the Russians soon after that to prevent starvation by Austrians. The USSR claims these supplies became Russian property as "rightful spoils of war"! Almost no food or other supplies were imported by Russia for civilian relief in Austria. If the USSR is successful in enforcing this highly questionable claim, it would be tantamount to reducing by that amount whatever the US grants to Austria for post UNRRA aid and would become in fact an indirect contribution of the US to Russia. We have heard no protests about this USSR move from those Americans who are so vigorously denouncing our proposed aid to Greece.