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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR NANKING SAFETY ZONE

5 Ninghai Road

December 17th, 1937

The Imperial Japanese Embassy,

Nanking.

Dear Sirs:

For the kind attention of:

Mr. Kiyoshi Fukui,

Second Secretary to the Japanese Embassy.

In view of the statement of Consul-General Katsuo Okazaki yesterday afternoon that the International Committee had no legal status, some explanations of our position seem to be in order. Vis-à-vis your Japanese authorities we are not claiming any political status whatever. But on December 1st, Mayor Ma of the Nanking Municipality turned over to our Committee nearly all the functions of the City Government for the emergency of transition: police, supervision of essential utilities, fire department, housing regulation, food supply, and sanitation. Consequently, when your Army victoriously arrived in the city on Monday noon, December 13th, we were the only administrative authority carrying on in the city. Of course, that authority did not extend outside of the Safety Zone itself, and involved no rights of sovereignty within the Zone.

Being the only administrative authorities and having had assurances from the Japanese authorities in Shanghai that if the Safety Zone did not contain soldiers or military establishments, your troops would not intentionally attack it, we tried to establish contact with your advance guard immediately. In the afternoon of December 13th, we found a captain with a group of Japanese soldiers resting on Han Chung Lu. We explained to him where the Zone was and marked it on his map. We politely called his attention to the three Red Cross Hospitals and told him about the disarmed soldiers. He was reassuring so we felt that all was understood by your Army.

That night and early the next morning we drew up our letter of December 14th and had it translated into Japanese. Then, as Mr. Fukuda, Attache to the Imperial Japanese Embassy, may tell you, Mr. Rabe, Mr. Smythe, and Rev. Forster went to find a high Japanese officer to whom we could present the letter. We talked to five different officers but they told us to wait for the arrival of the High Commander the next day.

The following morning, December 15th, we were favored by calls by Mr. Tokuyasu Fukuda of the Imperial Japanese Embassy, and by Mr. Sekiguchi with cards from the Captain and Officers of the H.I.J.M.S. Seta at our headquarters. We presented our letter of December 14th, referred to above, to Mr. Fukuda and assured Mr. Sekiguchi that we would be glad to cooperate in starting the electricity works. At noon, we had the pleasure of meeting the Head of the T'eh Pei Kwan Chang at the Bank of Communications and from him received a formal, oral statement in answer to our letter of December 14th. In his reply, among other points, he said that they would station guards at the entrances to the zone; that the civilian police could patrol within the zone provided they were armed only with batons; that the Committee could use the 10,000 tan of rice it had stored and move in the other stores of rice assigned to it by the former City Government; and that it was essential to repair the telephone, electricity and water works as soon as possible. But no answer was given to point 4 in our letter of the 14th excepting to say that people should return to their homes as soon as possible.

On the basis of this reply, we encouraged our police to go ahead with their duties, assured the people they would be well-treated now that we had explained to the Japanese officers, and started to move rice. But since then any

truck that appeared on the streets without a westerner on it has been commandeered; the Red Swastika Society (working under our direction), which started trucks Tuesday morning to pick up dead bodies in the zone, had its trucks either taken or attempts made to take them, and now yesterday 14 of their workers were taken away. Our police were interfered with and yesterday 50 of them stationed at the Ministry of Justice were marched off, "to be killed" according to the Japanese officer in charge, and yesterday afternoon 46 of our "volunteer police" were similarly marched off. (These volunteers had been organized by our Committee on December 13th when it looked as though the work to be done in the Zone was greater than the uniformed police ---who were on day and night duty---could take care of. These "volunteer police" were neither uniformed nor armed in any way. They simply wore our armbands. They were more like Boy Scouts in the West who do odd jobs in helping to keep crowds in order, clean up, and render first aid, etc.) On the 14th our four fire trucks were commandeered by Japanese soldiers and used for transport.

The point we have been trying so hard to get across to your Embassy and to the Japanese Army is that we were left to carry on the City Government services for the civilian population of Nanking until the Japanese authorities could establish a new City Government or other organization to take over these functions in the city. But unfortunately your soldiers have not been willing to let us continue with our maintenance of order and services for the civilian population in the Zone. This resulted in a breaking down of our system for maintaining order and for providing necessary services which we had carried on up till the morning of December 14th. In other words, on the 13th when your

troops entered the city, we had nearly all the civilian population gathered in a zone in which there had been very little destruction by stray shells and no looting by Chinese soldiers even when in full retreat. The stage was all set for you to take over that area peacefully and let the normal life therein continue undisturbed until the rest of the city could be put in order. Then the full normal life of the city could go forward. All 27 Westerners in the city at that time and our Chinese population were totally surprised by the reign of robbery, rapine, and killing initiated by your soldiers on the 14th!

All that we are asking in our protests is that you restore order amongst your troops and get the normal life of the city going as soon as possible. In the latter process we are glad to cooperate in any way we can. But even last night between 8 and 9 p.m. when five Western members of our staff and Committee toured the Zone to observe conditions, we did not find a single Japanese patrol either in the Zone or at its entrances! Yesterday's threats and marching off of our police had driven all our police from the streets. All we saw were groups of 2 and 3 Japanese soldiers wandering about the streets of the Zone and now, as I write, reports are pouring in from all parts of the Zone about the depredations of robbery and rape committed by these wandering, uncontrolled soldiers. This means that nothing has been done about our requests in our letter of yesterday, December 16th, namely, point 2, that stray soldiers be kept out of the Zone by guards at the entrances.

Consequently, as a first step in turning over to your authorities the maintenance of order in the Zone, we suggest:

1. That the Imperial Japanese Army set up a system

of regular military police to patrol the Zone both day and night with full authority to arrest soldiers found looting, entering houses, and committing rape or carrying off women.

2. That the Japanese authorities take over the 450 Chinese police assigned to us by the former Chinese Nanking City Government and organize them to maintain peace and order amongst the civilian population. (This order has never once broken down in the Zone.)

3. In view of the number of fires in the city yesterday and last night, fortunately not in the Zone, we suggest that the Fire Department be re-organized under your authorities and the four trucks be returned by your soldiers to such service.

4. We further respectfully beg to suggest that as soon as possible you kindly bring an expert in Municipal Administration to Nanking to manage the life of the civilian population until a new city government can be formed. (There is nothing left of the former city government excepting the police and firemen in our Zone and three clerks. All others left the city. Your Army has taken the physical structure of the city of Nanking and the poorer sections of its population, but most of the trained, intelligent and active people have all moved further west.)

May we again reassure you that we have no interest in continuing any semi-administrative function left to us by the former Nanking City Government. We earnestly hope that you will kindly take up these functions as quickly as possible. Then we will become simply a relief organization.

If the depredations of the last three days continue, this relief problem is going to be multiplied rapidly. We organized the Zone on the basis that every family that could should make private arrangements for housing and food in order

to reduce the administrative load suddenly placed on our ad hoc organization. But if the present situation continues, in a few days we are going to have large numbers of people facing starvation; their private supplies of food and fuel are running out; money, clothing, and personal articles have been taken from many of them by wandering Japanese soldiers; and little normal business or other activity can be carried on because people are afraid to either open shops or appear on the streets. On the other hand, since the morning of December 14th, our supply trucks have been practically at a standstill. Before your troops entered the city we concentrated on getting supplies into the Zone and expected to carry out distribution later because the people had been urged to bring a week's supply of food with them. But in order to keep some of our camps from going without food over a day, Western members of our staff and committee have had to haul bags of rice to those places in their private cars after dark!

Besides the starvation facing the people if these services cannot be extended quickly, there is the stirring up of the people. Some families have had their houses entered, robbed and their women raped as much as five times in one night. Is it any wonder that the next morning they move out and try to find a safer place? And yesterday afternoon while three officers of your Army Supply Department were asking us to help get the telephone service started, a small number of telephone workers wearing our insignia were turned out of their houses in the Zone and are now scattered to unknown places in the Zone. If this process of terrorism continues, it will be next to impossible to locate workers to get the essential services started. It is hard to see how starvation may be prevented amongst many of the 200,000

The Imperial Japanese Embassy, Dec. 17th

7.

Chinese civilians if order is not restored at once amongst  
the Japanese soldiers in the city.

Assuring you that we will be glad to cooperate in any  
way we can in caring for the civilian population of this city,  
I am

Most respectfully yours,



John H. D. Rabe, Chairman.

Enclosures:

Explanation in Chinese.  
Regulations in Chinese.

P.S. Cases of disorders in the Zone committed by Japanese  
soldiers since yesterday noon will be filed later.