

CONVERSATION OF CONSUL TANAKA WITH M. S. B., March 31, 1938

Mr. Tanaka called me to the Japanese Consulate-General at about four o'clock in the afternoon. Mr. Forster was also called, but he could not be found at that time, and Mr. Tanaka asked me to convey to him the information given to me. The following statements give Mr. Tanaka's utterances as closely as memory permits. Where necessary, my own queries or remarks are introduced by "Q". Mr. Tanaka was giving the long-delayed answer to our applications for permits to visit Shanghai and return, preferably by rail.

The military authorities in Shanghai have replied through Colonel Hirota that permission is granted for travel to Shanghai by the N.K.K. steamer leaving Nanking April 3. But the military ask the Consulate-General to see that we should be very careful about our conduct in Shanghai. Some foreigners formerly went to Shanghai, but their conduct was not satisfactory. If our conduct should not be satisfactory, it might be difficult for us to return to Nanking.

Q. In what way was their conduct unsatisfactory?

They talked about military matters. Also they said some things injurious to the Japanese Army, really propoganda against Japan.

Q. I want to understand what is "propaganda", though my visit is for personal and proper business. I am sure that the foreigners mentioned (Fitch, Ritchie, "perhaps others", with particular reference to the train) were not undertaking a campaign to injure Japan. In America and England we are accustomed to free statement of facts and opinions, barring deliberate attempts to injure persons or governments in wrongful ways, particularly by false statements. If my family and friends want to talk about Nanking, and ask whether this or that happened here, or what happened in my house or in the University where I work, does the Army forbid me to answer such questions?

You should be very careful. There were some cases in Nanking. I think you know about that. But now conditions are improved and order is all right, and such cases should not be talked about.

Q. The situation should be fully understood, because it may affect others later on, and because it may be necessary to consult the officers of my government. Does this arrangement mean that a foreigner can go to Shanghai only under a threat by the military that they may prevent him from returning?

Not a threat, but you are advised to be very careful.

Q. I want to be clear about the procedure. Do we receive passes to Shanghai and return, subject to cancellation by the military in Shanghai if they are not satisfied with our conduct? Or do we receive passes to Shanghai only, and must apply to the Japanese authorities there for permits to return?

The latter, but arrangements are made for the return permit if the conduct is satisfactory. The chief trouble is talking to newspaper men or saying things that might be published in newspapers that the military would consider injurious to the Army. Please give your address in Shanghai and the number of days you want to stay, and ask Mr. Forster to do the same.

(Manner and tone entirely friendly on both sides)