

CONJECTURAL NOTES AND A FEW FACTS ON NANKING ECONOMICS -- Mar. 1, 1938.

There is no production save market gardening and a little work on household articles. I doubt if there are 10,000 civilians gainfully employed out of the 300,000 population, if we count out the hordes of competitive peddlers. No private Chinese store other than roadside stalls or the tiniest of local shops. A score or two of Japanese stores, of which thirteen are now designated to sell freely to Chinese. No bank. No regular exchange shop that I have observed. Self-Government Committee is running a sizable food store for wholesale and retail of staples and some fresh food.

Rice supplies are believed to be limited to a few weeks' needs, though actual knowledge is scarce outside the Army. Demand is unreliable, as military and naval requirements cannot be calculated. Desperate efforts of the Self-Government Committee to get quantities of rice from Shanghai are indicators of the outlook. Vegetables will probably carry the population in its present purchasing power. Poultry and eggs are lower, also meats; but prices have lost part of their meaning when so few are able to consider such luxuries. Beans, oils, and peanuts are appearing in small quantities from north of the river, but transportation is still very limited. Risks of trade are so great that there is an unreasonable margin between basic prices and retail charges.

Crop outlook for the immediate region is wretched. Village headmen estimate that in the triangle Lungtan, Tangshan, Nanking, there remain 300 buffaloes out of the normal 3,000; and that human labor under favorable conditions would permit only one-third of the rice crop ordinarily secured by the use of animals. Along and near the main roads practically all buildings and tools have been burned or looted. The University of Nanking is having great difficulty in feeding and maintaining seven laborers on its five farms outside Taipingmen, which need fifty at this time of year besides several Buffaloes. Soldiers rove through the community every day, taking anything useful or edible; so it is not thought possible to risk animals or stores of food, even if they could be had. Of those considerable farms and their stores, a few of the smaller buildings and one lot of beans remain, the latter brought into the city for safekeeping. Certain farmers refused to answer questions about seed, declaring that food for tomorrow was the real question. Neighbors of the University farms were asked to aid in pulling out cotton stalks from last year's cropping; they replied that they would gladly do it for only a little food, but for no amount of money whatsoever, as money was of no use to them.

In the past week 500 rics has have been licensed, and are doing a small business. The normal figure was 10,000, I believe. There is a plan to revive a skeleton service of motor-buses, though some say that only 25 machines have any hope of reconstruction. The Self-Government Committee also desires to start a regular trucking service to and from Shanghai for commercial parcels, which suggests that the railway is not really open. Indeed, except for two trains this past week to return refugee residents of Shanghai, the only trains have been military. The Committee hopes to run small steamers to Yangchow soon. An occasional N. K. K. boat brings goods for Japanese interests only, so far as we know.

Japanese goods most widely sold are cigarettes, matches, sugar and candies, candles. There is scarcity of kerosene and gasoline.

These notes assumed general knowledge of burning and looting, the latter almost universal.

M. S. B.