

POSITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL RELIEF COMMITTEE (NANKING) IN REGARD  
TO RICE AND FLOUR ASSIGNED TO IT BY THE FORMER MAYOR OF THE  
CITY, BUT HELD BY THE JAPANESE MILITARY AUTHORITIES  
FROM DECEMBER 13, 1937.

I. The International Committee's Trusteeship.

The Committee was assigned a quantity of rice and flour, as well as certain other supplies of less importance, as a grant from the Chinese authorities toward its humanitarian work. Difficulties of transportation and unexpected shortness of time prevented the Committee from securing delivery in full to its own storehouses. The Japanese authorities have never challenged the Committee's ownership of the food and supplies fully delivered, though their transfer from the Chinese authorities rests upon exactly the same basis as the rice and flour not fully delivered (10,933 bags of rice, 10,000 bags of flour; total in money value at the time of the grant, approximately \$144,000). Moreover, the Japanese authorities did not, until our conversation with Consul-General Hanawa on March 17, deny our right to the rice and flour in question.

It seems, therefore, that the rice and flour have been wrongfully withheld from the Committee, and have been employed for other uses which are not our direct concern. This amounts to confiscation of an important item in the Committee's resources, and the Committee would fail in its duty toward refugees, as well as in its responsibility to donors of all groups, if it let the matter drop without honorable efforts to press its equitable claim.

II. Relief Needs in and near Nanking.

There is no necessity for reference to the general impoverishment of this city and the surrounding countryside, or to the tens of thousands of people at our doors who are clinging to the margins of life. Without considering the general problem of the poorer classes, we are especially impressed with the needs of numerous widows and orphans, of many thousands separated from their families or former homes, and of important middle-class groups who have now exhausted all reserves and have small hope for income.

The present grain supplies held by the Committee will be exhausted by July, even in following a much-reduced program of relief. Such hopes as the Committee has for further monetary resources ought rightly to be set against the probability of general food shortage in the coming season. Planting is seriously short in some localities, and even if nature should unexpectedly maintain the good yield of the past two years, the actual production will be much below normal. Good order, free transportation, normal conditions of credit and marketing: all are lacking in the countryside.

Meanwhile, apart from the continuing city needs already mentioned, and apart from the general needs for animals, implements, and credit in the rural districts, there are two important requirements for grain and seed among the villagers. Many areas are already short of food, and yet it is four to five months until the rice harvest. The intermediate harvest of wheat will be seriously deficient, and is expected to provide scarce a month and a half with grain. Additional cereals are a desperate need for the farmers, and in many cases



will bring the additional gain of protecting the new harvest from too early cutting by hungry men. Again, amid general shortage and pressure for food, it is difficult to provide necessary seed, especially soybeans in June and wheat in the autumn. Direct supply of seed, and protection of seed stocks through provision of other food, are obvious needs.

The total requirements for relief are far greater than the utmost theoretically expected from all public and private agencies combined. Public relief has been loudly advertised, but in fact has been pitifully irregular and inadequate. The International Committee feels, therefore, that its resources and experience should continue to be employed upon the relief problem. Cooperation with other agencies has been practically possible from the beginning, despite the hostility and interference from the Japanese authorities; and the outlook is good for increased coordination with the civil government.

### III. The Immediate Issue.

Negotiations with the Japanese authorities throughout the past five months have been carried on in a friendly manner, but without any concrete result whatsoever. At one time we were instructed that "cooperation" was the magic word; and the Committee offered to give up its own name in the matter of the rice and flour, letting them be distributed by the Self-Government Committee upon a mutually satisfactory plan somewhat after the fashion of the controversial beans. At another time we were told that if we were willing to drop our claim, it was possible that they Japanese army would give to the Self-Government Committee the rice and flour or their equivalent, to be used in a "new start" upon a plan mutually arranged. But when a plan was submitted, no action was forthcoming. The Committee therefore has reluctantly come to the conclusion that further petitions on its part are useless.

At the end of May, the conclusion of six months of work, the Committee will arrange for auditing of its books and for the publication of a statement of its receipts and expenditures. That will be the occasion for full and explanatory reporting to the many organizations which have contributed to the relief work in Nanking, such as: the Nanking International Relief Association (Shanghai), the channel for gifts from many foreign and local groups; Chinese official organs; British Mansion House Fund; American Red Cross; National Christian Council; various Rotary Clubs and similar bodies. We will need to report and to explain the serious blow to philanthropic work resulting from the confiscation of large gifts of food supplies. Why must private givers in all parts of the world, and the poor refugees of this region, be burdened additionally through military diversion of these gifts?

The Committee has long persisted in an attitude of patience, but now feels that the facts must be made known to those who have a right to learn the full course of the Committee's efforts. Is it possible that before the inevitable publicity, informal but specific suggestions can be made in Tokyo and in Shanghai to this effect: that the Japanese authorities have much to gain by dealing with this matte



in a fair and generous spirit, and much to lose when the report goes far and wide that confiscation of relief supplies represents their method of dealing with the refugee problem, and their attitude toward a legitimate enterprise receiving large foreign contributions for humanitarian service?

The Committee long ago offered to enter into cooperative plans that would give the name and credit to the local government, thus saving the face of the military; provided only that the Committee should have means of being sure that the relief actually met the needs of the people. Moreover, the Committee is prepared to consider any just substitution for part or all of the rice and flour that can in practice meet the food requirements of the people; for example, soybeans for seed; wheat for food or seed; money with freedom to buy and transport foodstuffs.

May 13, 1938.