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Subject: Ban on Cantonese Dialogue in Chinese Pictures Postponed.

Submitted by: H. B. Howard, Assistant Trade Commissioner.

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According to information obtained from Chinese sources and verified by recent accounts in the vernacular press, a compromise has been finally reached regarding the use of Cantonese dialogue in the production of Chinese films. In accordance with Nanking's established policy of pushing the use of "Kuo Yu" or national language (Mandarin) the further use of dialects other than "Kuo Yu" was to be prohibited as of July 1, 1937.

This ban, of course, if carried out would have serious effects on the Hong Kong film industry, and according to the Hong Kong film producers, would not only drive many of the Kwangtung movie goers to imported productions, but would violate the established principle of protecting home industry, and cause them to lose the lucrative South Seas markets and in other ways indirectly cause financial difficulties in the motion picture industry as a whole. Consequently a delegation from Hong Kong was sent to Nanking to protest against the enforcement of this ban and to negotiate its possible postponement.

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As a result of these protests and negotiations a compromise is believed to have been reached between the Hong Kong producers and the authorities in Nanking. Indications are that it has been decided to delay the ban for three years, but that the production of such pictures be placed under strict control. Furthermore, all studios producing pictures with Cantonese dialogue must be registered with the central authorities and apply for certificates. When a scenario is written it must be forwarded to Nanking for approval before production begins and when completed sent to Nanking for

...ship before being released. Other plans discussed before this decision was reached were: (1) Pictures in Cantonese dialogue should be produced jointly by the Shanghai and Cantonese studios, sharing the profits and losses; (2) A quota on the number of Cantonese pictures should be fixed in proportion to the number of "Kuo Yu" pictures; (3) A time limit should be given, upon the expiration of which no more pictures with Cantonese dialogue should be produced.

The details concerning this postponement were printed in the Chinese newspaper, "Chun Wan Yat Pao" as published in Canton, July 9, 1937. The text of this account is here given. This office, however, assumes no responsibility for possible errors in translation:

"CENTRAL PROPAGANDA BUREAU NOT GRANTING FURTHER CONCESSIONS
TO THE PLAN FOR THREE YEARS POSTPONEMENT OF THE BAN ON
USE OF CANTONESE DIALOGUE IN CHINESE FILMS. NO
BOARD OF CENSORS TO BE ESTABLISHED IN CANTON.

"As a result of the petition made by the representatives of the Hong Kong South China Film Producers Association and the Canton Exhibitors' Union, the Central Propaganda Bureau has granted a 3-year postponement on the ban of Cantonese films under eight specified conditions. As both the producers and exhibitors are satisfied with these concessions, a further petition jointly made by other commercial bodies and themselves for modifications of the conditions was refused and notification given to the effect that none of the eight conditions should be modified and also that no board of censors would be established in Canton.

"The eight conditions laid down by the Central Propaganda Bureau (Publicity Department of the Central Executive Committee) are as follows:

"1. The ban on Cantonese pictures will be postponed until June 30, 1940.

2. During these 3 years, for the purpose of advancing and unifying the National Language, the Cantonese producers must both produce and exhibit short-subjects in the National Language with the Cantonese features in the following proportions:

1st year	10%	should be short-subjects of National language							
2d	"	20%	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
3d	"	30%	"	"	"	"	"	"	"

3. In order that the Cantonese film producers may be able to make pictures in the National Language after the 3 years period, the producers should also make pictures of feature length in the National language during these three years in the following manner:

At least 1 National language feature in the 1st year,
" " 2 " " features " " 2d "
" " 3 " " " " 3d "

4. The censorship of Cantonese pictures is strictly subject to the Central Plays, Stories and Cinema-films Censorship regulations.
5. From the 1st of August this year, pictures without Nanking Censorship Certificates cannot be shown in both Kwangtung and Kwangsi Provinces. (South China provinces predominantly Cantonese dialect).
6. The Central Board of Censors should co-operate with the producers by giving them every facility in handling the censorship of their films.
7. Instructions have been given to Kwangtung and Kwangsi Provinces requesting their co-operation in the enforcement of these conditions.
8. Communications have also been conveyed to the Executive Yuan, Domestic Affairs Yuan and the Ministry of Education, requesting their efforts for the full development of the National language in the Cantonese speaking area (including Hong Kong and the South Sea Islands.) "

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