DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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FOREIGN SERVICE

Submitted by: H. B. Howard, Clerk to Commercial Attache.

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MOTION PICTURE NOTES

Ask $20,000 For Educational Films

(Recent news items appearing in the China Press.)

"The Ministry of Education will be petitioned to appropriate a sum of $20,000 for the making of educational films, according to a decision reached at the 5th annual meeting of the China Educational Film Association.

The meeting, attended by more than 100 educational and motion picture leaders here, was presided over by Mr. Pan Kung-chan, Director of the local Bureau of Education and Social Welfare, who gave the opening address.

He pointed out that moving pictures, broadly speaking, can educate the audience and increase their store of knowledge, and expressed the hope that hereafter the association will exert more efforts along this line.

A number of resolutions were adopted at the meeting, including the formation of an educational film service agency, the addition of a course in film education in the curricula of all normal schools under the control of the Bureau of Social Welfare, and the enforcement of film education in middle schools, primary schools and all mass education schools."

Nanking Board of Censors Puts Ban on "Theodora Goes Wild"

(Recent news item appearing in the China Press.)

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"The Nanking Board of Censors, much to the surprise of the local Columbia distributor, has banned "Theodora Goes Wild," because, as he said, they suspect a servant with a Japanese name, Toki, as being a Chinese - and as a servant occupies a menial position. The script which accompanied the film to Nanking definitely stated his name as "Toki." The Columbia distributor promised to cut all portions of the film in which Toki appeared, yet the censor remained adamant.

"Theodora Goes Wild" first was sent to Nanking nearly three months ago and when no word of its official release had been received over a period of weeks, Columbia officials were informed that the film was being held because of the doubt as to the character's

identity. In spite of all attempts to have the film edited in accordance with the censors' wishes, these requests were disallowed and notification of the ultimate ban was received in Shanghai on March 31.

It is understood, that differing from Settlement procedure, there is no appeal against the verdict of the Government censors."

Censors' Action On New Movies Puzzles Public.
(Excerpt from recent editorial appearing in the Shanghai Evening Post)

"Valet Named "Toki" Frowned On By Gov't Film-Slashers. The fundamental regulation of the Chinese censors states that no Chinese person, or any one portraying a Chinese person, shall be cast in a position degrading to the Chinese race. The rule is a good one, and on its merits stands unopposed. It could well be used in some other countries whose nationals have appeared in films in increditably degrading, vulgar, and villainous characterizations. But since when has honest labor, in decent surroundings, creditably portrayed and cast with due regard to the avoidance of absurdities, been ruled as degrading to any nationality?

"Chinese" Valet? A case in hand for example: "Theodora Goes Wild" (Columbia) was submitted for censorship in the early part of December, 1936. The film is pure comedy, clean and without anything that would offend even the most critical sensibilities. But, because the producer, in a very small part, put a decently clothed, respectful valet in a scene, and whose features were undoubtedly Oriental, whose part required nothing but ordinary everyday service to an employer — the film was held up by the Nanking censors "as an example" to foreign producers to stop using Chinese in menial positions!

For one reason or another, not directly connected with the film either way, final decision was delayed until Saturday, March 27, 1937, more than three months after submission! In the meantime, the text of the dialogue showed the valet's name as "Toki". The question arises—is this a Chinese name? Is the character as represented, dressed in respectable foreign clothes, actually intended to represent a Chinese? The name suggests other than Chinese nationality, but the censors rule that, regardless of the script, or the name, the character is Chinese, or at least portrays a Chinese in a menial service.

No Menial Service. And is it a menial service? Oriental personal servants in America are a luxury! And an expensive one in most cases, their salaries exceeding in many cases, that given to responsible Chinese government officials. Most of them are not China-born, but American-born citizens. Like thousandsof nationals of other countries, they prefer personal service positions because of the refinement and case of surroundings, and the good income. The attitude that, because a man or woman is a personal servant, a laborer, a cook or laundry worker necessarily places that individual in a degrading position, is, to say the least, questionable. America is a democratic nation, an American-born Chinese has the full free franchise, the right to free speech, choice of employment, etc., given to every one of whatever race, creed or color, born under the American flag.

But, facts are facts. "Theodora Goes Wild" does not imply the characterization given to the valet. No proof of such is at hand. Visual evidence is not convincing, written evidence of the script contradicts the opinion of the censors, and on this basis, at least the producer should be given the benefit of the doubt— at least to allow the deletion of a minor fact of the film, and the film allowed release. Otherwise, censorship will well deserve to be called "oppression."

Another Government Studio Invading Market.
(Recent excerpt from "The Chinese Show World")

"Private Chinese motion picture studios in Shanghai and other cities are facing the onslaught of yet another government-operated studio, which is officially known as the Motion Picture Section of the Political Training Department of the Military Affairs Commission. Another formidable government-operated studio is the Central Studio of the Central Kuomintang, which up to date has produced two full-length features, the latest of which is the "Secret Code,"

Until recently, the Motion Picture Section of the Political Training Department of the Military Affairs Commission had been devoted to the production of the films patterned after the "March of Time" series. Establishing its headquarters in Hankow, the studio has now started preparations for the production of a full-length feature to be entitled "Iron Blood."

In producing the feature, which will be a war picture, the Military Affairs Commission will place at the disposal of the director large land and air forces.

Already completed by the Hankow studio are several short features including the pictorial record of General Chiang Kai-shek's capture in Sian and his subsequent release.

"Secret Code" Tells Story Of Kuomintang Rise To Dominance
(Translation from Chinese press.)

"The life of undercover revolutionary workers who took part in laying the groundwork for the Northern Expedition of 1926 and 1927 is unfolded in the gripping, action-packed Central Motion Picture Studio production, "The Secret Code."

Produced after more than five months of intensive work, the picture is the first full-length feature made by the Kuomintang sponsored studio, which has its headquarters in Nanking. During its showing in the capital, the picture was hailed by crities as one of the most important cinema productions yet made in this country.

Story Dramatized: While the story of the revolutionary picture is dramatized, the events which formed the theme were real. Names and places, for obvious reasons, were changed.

Chief distinction of "The Secret Code" is its superior photography and clear dialogue. These two points, which are seldom found in Chinese-made films, are achieved with the modern equipment of the Central Studio.

The story of the picture revolves around four secret agents, who were sent by the Kuomintang to the Northwest to organize revolutionary activities after the Northern Expeditionary Forces had captured Wuchang in 1926. The men were given a secret code for important messages.

Advised To See Governor: Arriving at the capital of the Northwestern province, the four went to see a veteran Kuomintang leader, who advised them to see the governor of the province before undertaking the work party organization.

The governor, the agents soon found, was an opportunist, holding concurrent jobs in the Northern Army and in the Northern Expeditionary Force. Disturbed by the arrival of the four young agents, he banned any attempts to organize a Kuomintang unit.

Meantime, one of the agents, Li Cheng-jung, fell in love with pretty Miss Wu Kueh-chen, who was sympathetic with the revolutionary doctrines. At her house the undercover workers often met therafter.

During the intervening time, the governor had been carefully watching the four men, censoring all their letters and telegrams. One day, an explosion destroyed the governor's munitions factory. He suspected that the four Kuomintang men were the men responsible for the sabotage.

Arrested And Tortured: Three of the agents were arrested and tortured. The governor demanded the secret code, which had been carried away by one of the agents who escaped. Suspecting that Miss Wu was hiding the man, the governor also ordered the arrest of the girl and her family.

While in prison, Miss Wu met her sweetheart and promised to marry him. The man, badly injured by the continuous torture, asked the girl to forget him. Later he was buried alive by the governor.

The finale was furnished when the fugitive agent obtained aid from nearby revolutionary troops, who captured the city and marched into the town with banners of the Kuomintang emblem flying."

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H. B. Howard,
Clerk to Commercial Attache.

Approved by:

A. Viola Smith,
Trade Commissioner,
Temporarily in Charge.

HBH:tpw.