

Shanghai, China, July 17, 1937.

MOTION PICTURE NOTES.

H. B. Howard, Assistant Trade Commissioner.

(Voluntary)

The following items are re-edited newspaper accounts of recent happenings in the Shanghai show world.

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International Settlement Censor Board Hit By Chinese Groups.  
(China Press, July 15, 1937.)

"United Front is called for: A manifesto vigorously protesting against the International Settlement authorities' right to censor Chinese plays, songs, and motion pictures, has just been proclaimed by the League of Shanghai Cultural Groups.

"In it, the League accuses the International Settlement authorities of following 'a colonial policy of persecuting all Chinese cultural activities that promote progressive ideas and national consciousness.' and simultaneously taking a 'laissez-faire policy towards Japanese Imperialism.'

"The manifesto runs as follows:

'The ruthlessness with which the Shanghai Municipal Council deals with the new cultural movement in China has reached the extreme in recent years. Unwilling to provoke a serious conflict, the Chinese cultural groups in Shanghai have time and again submitted to injustice with supreme patience, in the hope that the situation would take a turn for the better and the International Settlement authorities would gradually realize their own mistakes and injustice.'

"Patience Exhausted: Unfortunately, the patience of many years has not only failed to effect their awakening, but has fed the flame of their oppression. Events of the last few years point clearly to the fact that the Council has consistently followed a colonial policy of persecuting all Chinese cultural activities that promote progressive ideas and national consciousness. On the other hand, they have taken a laissez-faire attitude towards the cultural imperialism of the Japanese. Hence, a motion picture showing a map of Manchuria and Jehol is not permitted to be shown publicly before that particular part

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is deleted. A play containing in its dialogue a line reading: 'The Northeast is ours,' is put under ban. Even lantern slides bearing the slogan 'Don't buy smuggled goods!' are not allowed to be projected in cinema theaters. However, such a film as The New Earth, a Japanese-German collaboration calculated to make the Japanese people believe that Manchuria is their rightful colony, was shown publicly and openly in the International Settlement under the special protection of its detectives and police force! In these facts we see clear proofs of the Settlement authorities oppression of the Chinese and their protection of the aggressors.

"We have reached the limit of our patience only to find the oppression growing all the more fierce and tyrannical. Lately, the International Settlement authorities have wilfully found fault with Chinese plays, songs and motion pictures, and are even more severe than before in their censorship proceedings. Unless we unite ourselves in resistance and do away with their right of arbitrary censorship, then in the near future there will be no Chinese culture in the International Settlement except that which either drugs the Chinese people or speaks in the name of Japanese imperialism!

"Organize For Abolition: With a view to fighting for the freedom of the Chinese cultural world as a whole and saving it from destruction, we have now united the various cultural groups in Shanghai (16 separate associations) and have organized them as one unified body to push through our aim of abolishing the Shanghai Municipal Council's right of censorship.

"The Council's Board of Film Censors, it is to be noted, exercises its power in the absence of written regulations and is, therefore, fully free to be entirely unreasonable and absolutely unjust. Our present movement being a struggle for our cultural existence and liberty, we demand that the Central Government immediately opens serious negotiations with the International Settlement authorities for the abolition of the Council's Board of Film Censors, which is an illegal organ that infringes upon China's sovereign rights. We will support our Government in this with all our strength at command, and will expand the present movement to include all other public bodies in a joint struggle with the Council until we attain our goal. In the meantime, we shall also address ourselves to cultural circles all over the world, to expose the facts of the Council's oppression of the Chinese cultural movement and its connivance with Japanese imperialism. We shall fight to the bitter end for the fulfilment of our aim with the greatest determination and at any cost.

"We call on the Chinese people as a whole and all their sympathizers abroad to stand with us in our present struggle. With an unbending spirit to meet all difficulties, we believe the final victory will be ours!"

Film About Shanghai Survives Censors  
(China Press, June 19, 1937.)

"Impasse Overcome After Full Censor Board Sees Feature:  
A Shanghai chapter of the 'March of Time' current events reel, photographed here several months ago by a camera crew sent from the United States for the purpose, will be shown in the International Settlement and the French Concession.

"No ban was placed on the picture, as previously reported, and the full board of police censors yesterday afternoon gave their approval of the film after a special showing held in the projection room of the Shanghai Film Board of Exchange in the Capital Building.

"Difficulty between the censors and officials of the Peacock Motion Picture Corporation, distributors of RKO products and the 'March of Time,' developed at a screening of the film yesterday morning.

"Object to Japanese Scene: At the morning screening, an objection was raised to a Japanese warship shown anchored in the Whangpoo. Battleships of other nations represented in Shanghai also are shown and no objection was taken to them. One or two lines of dialogue, which the two censors claimed was anti-Japanese propaganda were also objected to.

"The film distribution department of the Peacock concern informed the censors that the company had cut the film in accordance with demands made by the same censors a month previous, and that it could not make further cuts without runing the film.

"The censors are said to have insisted that the cuts be made and marked those desired on a mimeographed sheet which had been supplied by the distributors. The sheet contained some of the dialogue in the picture but not all of it. Mr. Keske told THE CHINA PRESS last night that he explained that all the dialogue was not on the sheet whereupon Mr. Riegert is alleged to have demanded that in the future a correct dialogue sheet for all newsreels be supplied to him.

"Distributor Says Impossible: The film distributor explained that this was impossible. Such sheets are not furnished with newsreels, he said, and owing to the speed with which commentators talk, he added that it would be next to impossible to have accurate stenographic reports of the dialogue made here.

"It was at this point that the argument became heated. Both parties concerned refused to give ground and when time was called out for tiffin, they had reached a definite deadlock. The picture was neither passed nor banned. Briefly, the two censors refused to permit the picture to be shown unless the cuts were made while the distributor contended that since the picture had been passed by Government Censor Board at Nanking and that cuts had been made at the request of Japanese diplomatic officials, no further cuts were necessary.

"No Bona Fide Critics Wanted: With neither Logan nor Reigert having the final say in the matter, a second screening before a full board of censors was called for at 3.15 p.m. Major Bourne, Lieutenant Blanchet, and Sub-Inspectors Reigert and Logan were all present. Others who entered the projection room were Mr. Percy Chu, leading Shanghai financier and head of the Grand-Cathay Theater combine, Mr. Leon Britton, manager of Peacock, Mr. Kerske, and a representative of THE CHINA PRESS.

"After the screening, the censors discovered the presence of the newspaperman and informed him that his being there was highly irregular. The distributors were warned that in the future no newspapermen or even bona fide critics will be allowed to be present at a theater or any other projection room when a picture is being viewed by censors.

"Little time was wasted by the full board in dispensing with the matter. The picture was passed and will appear at the Nanking Theater next Sunday as scheduled. There was some argument at the afternoon screening yesterday but nothing further was cut. The question of dialogue sheets for newsreels was raised by Messrs. Britton and Kerske but received no definite reply from the French censors on the subject. The latter thought that such a requirement might be made but they were not sure.

"Frenchtown Would Be Hit: THE CHINA PRESS was informed that if such a requirement is made, newsreels will no longer be shown in the theaters of the French Concession.

"Newspapermen and others who have seen the film which was the cause of the argument yesterday are of the opinion that it is of considerable interest to Shanghai residents. It sets out to praise Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek for his successful efforts in bringing about a unified China, and the commentator finishes his monologue with the statement that 'China needs Chiang Kai-shek.'

"The commentator explains at the beginning of the film that Shanghai has become a world news center and to illustrate the point shows Associated Press Correspondent Morris Harris, hard at work in his office in the Cable Building. It then shows Generalissimo

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Chiang reviewing the troops at Nanking on his birthday celebration a few months ago. Reference is also made to his creation of an army of 250,000 trained men. In this connection, the monologist refers to this army as a 'war machine.' At the session yesterday morning, Censors Logan and Reigert wanted this phrase deleted.

"The industrial side of Shanghai is also taken up and tribute is paid to present China. As the picture was cut by Mr. Britton no derogatory reference are made to other nationals."

China On The Films  
(North China Daily News, June 23, 1937)

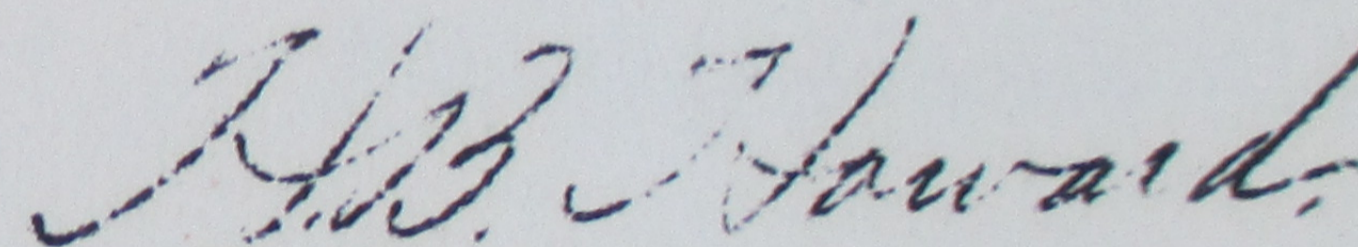
"Newsreel Commands Approval: The excellently taken news-reel photographs of modern China - with Shanghai well in the picture - now being shown at the Nanking Theater deserve a note of commendation. It is new for audience here to see China figuring in the news-reels in terms of personalities. General Chiang Kai-shek's presence at a national demonstration and at a military review is well depicted and the applause of the house as the opportunity is given thus to salute the leader of China's reconstruction strikes a new note in Shanghai's entertainment philosophy. Shanghai has no cause to grumble for its modernity receives appropriate illustration and mention. The exigencies of compression which must be applied to a news-reel of the special kind under review obviously leave room for supplementary comment. The chronological factor for example cannot be exactly indicated and there must be a danger that in a hurried survey of several not necessarily-associated events the connecting link is sometimes overlooked. Yet, on balance, the general effect of the new explanatory reel is satisfactory. It certainly holds the attention of the audience and, judging by the experiences of the present specimen, commands approval."

Government To Extend Ban On Picture Taking.

According to information released by the Central News Agency, semi-official organ of the Central Government, a new set of regulations on the taking of pictures in China applying particularly to travellers has been formulated by the Ministry of Interior and is now awaiting the approval of the Executive Yuan. The press account is as follows:

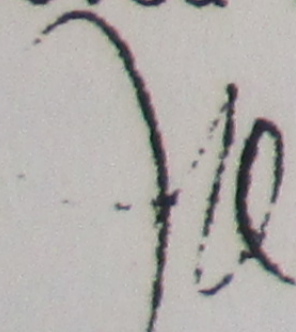
"Restrictions upon the taking of photographs by travellers in Chinese territory, whether journeying by land, air or water, are to be tightened. At the present time travellers in commercial airplanes are prohibited from taking pictures of the territory over which they pass, while in fortified zones and other specified

military areas visitors are forbidden even to carry cameras. When the new regulations go into effect it is expected that these restrictions will be extended considerably and that local police authorities will be authorized to ban the use of cameras at their discretion."



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