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JAPAN: WINTER 1944-1945

During the last six months, the Japanese economy has deteriorated more rapidly than at any time since the start of the Pacific War. For the average Japanese the winter just past was one of constant strain. The weather was said to be the coldest in 25 years; severe earthquakes occurred in Hokkaido and in central Japan; and Allied air raids steadily mounted in scale. War plant dispersal, evacuation, and the destruction of housing facilities in air raids has caused severe dislocation not only in the cities but also in the rural areas receiving the flow of refugees.

Every phase of Japanese life has been constricted by the war. The Government has demanded increased sacrifices of all kinds from the citizenry including a 7-day work week. The first tendency toward dangerous currency inflation since the start of the war followed a recent steep rise in war expenditure. The people, caught between inflated costs, high taxes, and compulsory savings, are finding it hard to make ends meet in spite of increased salaries.

Despite claims that Japan's existing labor supply is sufficient, the Government has continued to take measures to enlarge it. On 10 March 1945 males between 12 and 60 and single females between 12 and 40 were made subject to call for home defense as well as for war production. Previously these groups could only be called up for work in certain essential industries. Much emphasis has been placed on monthly production quotas in war plants, and in November Tokyo promoted the "special-attack spirit" as a propaganda device designed to inspire civilians as well as the military to make greater sacrifices for the war. As a result many factories have organized special units whose members pledge to extend their working hours and outdo the monthly quotas.

Unmarried women are widely employed in food and munitions production, shipyards, offices, aircraft plants, and the transportation industry. School and university schedules are closely geared to make the fullest use of the student group as a source of labor for farming, mining, and munitions factories. School children, for example, are said to be growing potatoes and rice as well as carrying on the work formerly done by janitors. They are told not to play with toys, but to study and work.

Evacuation has reduced Tokyo City's 1944 population of over 7 million to less than 4 million. Compulsory mass evacuation measures, with special emphasis on children and nonessential adults, were intensified after the heavy March air raids demonstrated the inadequacy of shelters and defense precautions. Measures taken to restrain essential workers from fleeing the city indicate a high degree of confusion and terror. Many people have been forced to live in cellars or shacks constructed from debris. Family life has been severely disrupted.

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The procurement of such essentials as food, fuel, and clothing has been a great problem for the people of Japan. Despite fairly successful attempts to achieve self-sufficiency within the Inner Zone, Japan still depends on imports for twenty percent of her food supply. Now that supplies from the southern regions have been cut off, Japan will become increasingly dependent on stocks accumulated over the last two or three years to maintain the present level of consumption. Japanese farmers are being heavily pressed to increase the production of their fields despite a critical lack of fertilizer needed to enrich the poor farming soil. But on the whole they are better off than city-dwellers. Besides having less to fear from air raids, the farmers alone in all Japan go to bed at night with full stomachs. In the cities the grounds of many schools and temples are being transformed into vegetable gardens. The lawns of at least one zoo are growing food, and its cages have been adapted for the raising of rabbits, goats, and hogs.

Fish is scarce because of insufficient equipment and labor, and meat and dairy products, always minor items in the Japanese diet, have disappeared almost completely. Scientists are continually experimenting with new foods. Dolphin meat has been found to be the most tasty of all the sea mammals, while the skin can be used for shoes and the brain oil for lubrication purposes. Seals and sharks have been found to be very nutritious. A Japanese commentator who said, "I cannot say that our food is ideal," may have been thinking of the new ersatz sugar, the synthetic beer, or the table butter made from silkworms.

Although there have been no serious epidemics, public health in Japan has declined as a result of malnutrition, inordinate working hours, and poor housing, heating, and clothing. Tuberculosis, for example, has been increasing especially among factory workers. Large-scale evacuation of cities has aggravated the health situation. People are crowded into small villages where unhygienic conditions prevail and no adequate heating facilities exist. Throughout Japan there is a serious scarcity of fuel, woolens, overcoats, and shoes, and a lack of doctors, dentists, and druggists.

The Government's conservation program has affected practically every aspect of city life. Restaurants have been closed down by the hundreds and have been replaced to some extent by community kitchens operated by women volunteers. Newspapers have been limited to two pages except on special days when four are permitted, and large numbers of periodicals have been discontinued. Tokyo's rail service has been greatly curtailed with tickets issued only to military and government personnel on urgent business. Streetcars haul vegetables and fish in addition to passengers, and seats have been removed to accommodate more people. There are repeated drives for metals of all kinds, and children are urged to collect such items as fallen leaves for fertilizer and orange peels which are said to be useful in the preparation of a certain drug. The textile shortage has increasingly forced women to substitute trousers for the *kimono* and wide *obie*.

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Such entertainment as is available in Japan appears to offer little real relaxation. Newspapers contain little but war news slanted to incite the Japanese citizen to work harder, and the available movies deal almost exclusively with war topics. With a reduced number of movies and night-clubs as a result of air raids and Government edicts, the Japanese are turning more and more to the radio for entertainment, but even here they complain about the excessive "sermons and preaching." The populace is constantly told that the war may last ten or twenty years and that "100,000,000 Japanese must be killed before Japan can be defeated." One of the most popular forms of relaxation for the average Japanese, the public bath, is restricted and overcrowded due to manpower and fuel shortages. Although the number of national saloons has increased, Tokyo citizens have to stand in lines of 200 to 300 to buy an expensive drink of sake or other liquor.

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