

# The Nanjing Incident: An Examination of the Civilian Population

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## 1. Introduction

This paper will attempt to set the parameters for any future debate about one aspect of the Nanjing (Nanking) Incident by establishing the number of Chinese civilians in the city when it fell on December 13, 1937.<sup>1</sup> Once the total number has been established, a second paper will set out the author's estimates of the total civilian death toll in and around Nanjing. This paper focuses on the primary documentary sources.<sup>2</sup> Where the civilian population is concerned, official documents and the recent discovery and subsequent publication of John Rabe's diary<sup>3</sup> now make it possible to give a confident estimate for when the city fell and for the first crucial weeks of the Japanese occupation.

The conclusion drawn from the various primary sources is that the civilian population of Nanjing was 200,000 in the weeks leading up to the fall of the city; that it remained 200,000 for the first 4 weeks of the occupation; and that it increased to 250,000 by January 10, 1938. This paper will also argue that the closest estimate of the population that can be made is 224,500 as of December 24, 1937 to January 5, 1938.

Section 2 examines the civilian population on the basis of the primary documentary sources and compares the findings with Rabe's diary. Section 3 emphasizes the importance of Smythe's sampling survey. Section 4 briefly looks at the Japanese registration of the population of Nanjing. Finally, section 5 introduces both the various estimates of the population of the city made by Western journalists before the city fell and the estimates made in the letters and diary entries of various members of the International Committee.

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<sup>1</sup> Contemporary materials written in English use the older romanization "Nanking" when referring to Nanjing. This paper will use Nanking when citing such materials and when referring to organizations that existed at the time, such as the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone. Otherwise, the *pinyin* romanization Nanjing will be used.

<sup>2</sup> One of the ironies about the Nanjing Incident is that many of the primary documentary sources were written in English. This is because the only municipal authority left in the city when it fell was the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone which used English to communicate both with the Japanese authorities in Nanjing and with other organizations such as officials in the various foreign embassies in Nanjing. (The International Committee was established to help and protect those Chinese who lacked the resources to flee the city. Members of the Committee elected to remain behind with them.)

<sup>3</sup> John Rabe (ed., Erwin Wickert, transl. John E. Woods), *The Good German of Nanking: The Diaries of John Rabe* (Victoria: Little, Brown and Company, 1998). Also see David Askew, "The Rabe Diary and the Nanking Incident," unpublished manuscript.

## 2. The Civilian Population

Two main documentary sources can be used to estimate the population of Nanjing from December 1937 to February 1938—the official documents given in Timperley and Hsü (see below) and the official and other documents in Rabe's diary, along with his diary entries. Other sources include Smythe's sampling survey, the Japanese registration of the population of Nanjing, and the letters, diaries, and the one autobiography of the members of the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone. Although this paper will argue that the result of the Japanese registration of most Chinese in Nanjing, together with a sampling survey carried out by Smythe, are of crucial importance in determining the size of the civilian population, an examination of the primary documentary sources is necessary to draw a more complete picture of the situation during the early weeks of the Japanese occupation.

### 2.1 Timperley and Hsü<sup>4</sup>

Both Timperley, an advisor (*guwen* 顧問) to the Chinese Nationalist Government's central propaganda department<sup>5</sup> and the author of the first detailed account of the atrocities committed by the Japanese in Nanjing, and Hsü, "Sometime Adviser to the [Chinese] Ministry of Foreign Affairs,"<sup>6</sup> provide a large number of primary documentary sources (such as the letters from the International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone to the Imperial Japanese Embassy) that show that (1) the civilian population of Nanjing was 200,000-250,000, (2) the entire population was located in the Safety Zone during the first weeks of the Japanese occupation, and (3) the population increased over the first month of occupation. Moreover, Timperley shows that (4) contemporary Western observers' estimates of the death toll in and around Nanjing ranged from 10,000 to 40,000, of which 10,000 to 12,000 were civilians.

As demonstrated by Table 1, "The Population of Nanjing: December 17, 1937–March 13, 1938," both Timperley and Hsü provide a large number of official documents that consistently estimate the population to be 200,000 during the first few weeks of the Japanese occupation, and then, once the Japanese registration of the population finished in early January 1938, significantly revise the estimate upwards to 250,000.

The estimates in these official documents are given further confirmation by other sources. These include Rabe's diary, Smythe's sampling survey (the only survey conducted in Nanjing immediately after the fall of the city), the registration of much of the population of Nanjing by the Japanese military (registration was necessary to obtain identification cards), and two reports, one to the United States Embassy and one to the

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<sup>4</sup> See H. J. Timperley, *What War Means: The Japanese Terror in China. A Documentary Record* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938); and Hsü Shuhsi, ed., *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1939). The Timperley book was published in (at least) London, New York, Calcutta, and (in Chinese) Shanghai. The author has used the London edition here: note that the pagination is different from that of the New York edition, which was published as *The Japanese Terror in China*.

<sup>5</sup> See Suzuki Akira 鈴木明, *Shin "Nankin dai gyakusatsu" no maboroshi* 新「南京大虐殺」のまぼろし (Tokyo: Asuka shinsha, 1999), pp. 291-92. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ai Lin Lee who kindly bought me a copy of this work. According to the *London Times*, November 29, 1954, p. 11, Timperley "acted as an adviser to the Chinese Ministry of Information." Also cited in Suzuki, pp. 294-95.

<sup>6</sup> See title page, Hsü, ed., *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*.

German Embassy. All primary sources, with the exception of a single letter from John Rabe dated January 14, 1938 (T19, H41), in which the population was estimated to be between 250,000 and 300,000, are in complete agreement about the size of the population.

**Table 1. The Population of Nanjing: December 17, 1937-January 13, 1938<sup>7</sup>**

	Document No.	Date	Population
Official Documents of the International Committee	T6 H9	Dec. 17, 1937	200,000
	T7 H10	Dec. 18	200,000
	T9 H20	Dec. 21	200,000
	T14 H26	Dec. 27	200,000
	T19 H41	Jan. 14, 1938	250,000 - 300,000
T = Timperley (1938)	T22 H43	Jan. 17	250,000
H = Hsü (1939)	H46	Jan. 18	250,000
	T24 H47	Jan. 19	250,000
	H49	Jan. 22	250,000
	T26 H54	Jan. 28	250,000
	H68	Feb. 10	250,000
Statistics	Smythe	Dec. 12, 1937 to March 13, 1938	221,150
Reports	US Embassy Report (Epsy)	Jan. 13	200,000 - 250,000
	German Embassy Report (Rabe)	Jan. 13	200,000
Evidence (Tokyo Trials)	Dr. C. Y. Hsu	July 26, 1946	200,000 - 300,000
	M. S. Bates	July 29, 1946	221,000

### 2.1.1 The Size of the Population

The population of Nanjing plummeted in the period leading up to the Japanese attack on and occupation of the city. Members of the International Committee agreed that only 200,000 of an original population of 1 million remained when the city fell.

<sup>7</sup> From Itakura Yoshiaki 板倉由明, *Hontō wa kō datta Nankin jiken* ほんとうはこうだった南京事件 (The truth about the Nanking Incident) (Tokyo: Nihon tosho kankōkai, 1999), p. 56 (Table 4). The author has added a few documents that Itakura (or the work he in turn used for this table) has missed and the results of the Japanese registration of the population of Nanjing. For the documents cited here as Timperley, see H. J. Timperley, *What War Means*, Appendix D, "Correspondence between Safety Zone Committee and Japanese Authorities etc." Document no. 6 (pp. 217-24) is given here as T6. For the Documents cited as Hsü, see Hsü Shuhsi, ed., *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*; document no. 20 (pp. 48-49) is given here as H20. For the sampling survey, see section 4 of this paper in addition to L. S. C. Smythe, *War Damage in the Nanking Area: December 1937 to March 1938. Urban and Rural Surveys*, by Dr. Lewis Strong Casey Smythe and Assistants, on behalf of the Nanking International Relief Committee, Compiled June 1938 (Shanghai: Mercury Press, 1938). For the Japanese registration of the entire population of Nanjing, see section 5 of this paper. Finally, for the two embassy reports and the evidence given at the Tokyo Trial, see section 6.3 of this paper in addition to R. John Pritchard and Sonia Magbanua Zaide, eds., *The Tokyo War Crimes Trial* (New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1987).

Thus, according to Fitch, the Safety Zone was “a place where the remaining two hundred thousand of Nanking’s population of one million could take refuge.”<sup>8</sup> Rabe also noted that 800,000 of the original population of 1 million had fled.<sup>9</sup> The 200,000 that remained behind were, in Rabe’s words, “the poorest of the poor,” and lacked the means to flee.<sup>10</sup>

The documents reprinted in Timperley and Hsü agree that the population was 200,000 in December 1937. Space will not allow all documents to be cited here, but the author has attempted to cite all of the more important ones.

The first mention of the size of the population in an official document is in a letter dated December 17 addressed to the “Imperial Japanese Embassy, Nanking.” The Chairman of the International Committee, John Rabe, wrote: “It is hard to see how starvation may be prevented amongst many of the 200,000 Chinese civilians if order is not restored at once amongst the Japanese soldiers in the city.”<sup>11</sup> Note that Rabe’s concern here was that the civilian population of Nanjing might *starve* to death. As noted above, it was only the “poorest of the poor” who remained behind in Nanjing, and these people had very few resources. Securing adequate supplies of food was to remain one of the central concerns of the International Committee.

The next day, Rabe wrote another letter to the Imperial Japanese Embassy, and again mentioned “200,000 civilians” and “200,000 Chinese civilians.”<sup>12</sup> On December 21, 1937, the foreign community of Nanjing wrote to the Imperial Japanese Embassy, saying “[w]e come to petition in the name of humanity that the following steps be taken for the welfare of the 200,000 civilians in Nanking.”<sup>13</sup>

On December 27, the Chairman (Rabe) of the International Committee wrote to the Japanese military pleading for extra food to feed “the 200,000 civilians.”<sup>14</sup> All

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<sup>8</sup> Timperley, *What War Means*, p. 23. Although Timperley does not (for obvious reasons, perhaps) provide the names of those who supplied him with various materials, it is relatively easy to determine who each is. This individual, for instance, is an American, George Fitch, who later reprinted this account in his autobiography. See George A. Fitch, *My Eighty Years in China* (revised edition) (Taiwan: Privately printed, 1974), p. 100.

<sup>9</sup> See Rabe, *The Good German of Nanking*, p. 52. Smythe also wrote:

Nanking had before the war a population of just 1,000,000, which was considerably reduced by repeated bombings and latterly by approaching attack and the removal of all Chinese government organs. At the time the city fell (December 12-13), its population was between 200,000 and 250,000.

Smythe, *War Damage in the Nanking Area*, p. 4. Elsewhere Smythe states again that Nanjing “formerly” had a population of “a million,” but this had shrunk “to approximately 250,000 in March [1938].” *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>10</sup> Rabe, *The Good German of Nanking*, p. 51.

<sup>11</sup> This sentence in italics in the original. Timperley, *What War Means*, pp. 217-23 (T6), at p. 223. Also in Hsü, ed., *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*, pp. 12-18 (H9), at pp. 17-18. Hsü gives “amongst” as “among.” Finally, reprinted in Rabe, *The Good German of Nanking*, pp. 268-71, at p. 271.

<sup>12</sup> Timperley, *What War Means*, pp. 224-30 (T7), at pp. 224, 226; Hsü, ed., *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*, pp. 18-23 (H10), at pp. 18, 20; Rabe, *The Good German of Nanking*, pp. 273-75, at pp. 273, 274.

<sup>13</sup> “Letter to Japanese Embassy,” from “The Foreign Community of Nanking,” in Timperley, *What War Means*, pp. 235-36 (T9), at p. 235; and Hsü, ed., *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*, pp. 48-49 (H20), at p. 48.

<sup>14</sup> “Letter to Japanese Embassy,” in Timperley, *What War Means*, pp. 242-43 (T14), at p. 243, and Hsü, ed., *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*, pp. 56-58 (H26), at p. 57.

documents from December thus consistently estimate that there were “200,000 civilians in Nanking.”

The single figure that stands out in Table 1 is the 250,000 to 300,000 given by John Rabe on January 14. The document in which this figure is cited was a letter addressed to the Japanese Embassy pleading for an increased supply of food and fuel. Rabe writes as follows.

We understand that you registered 160,000 people without including children under 10 years of age, and in some sections without including older women. Therefore there are probably 250,000 to 300,000 civilians in the city. To feed this population on normal rations of rice would require 2,000 *tan* [piculs] of rice per day (or 1,600 bags per day).<sup>15</sup>

One question is how Rabe derived the figure 250,000 to 300,000 from the Japanese registration of 160,000. A hint can be found in Smythe’s work, *War Damage in the Nanking Area*. Referring to the Japanese registration of the population, Smythe states:

On the basis of incomplete registrations carried out by the military authorities between the end of December and the end of January, members of the International Committee estimated the population of Nanking at that time to approach 250,000, a figure decidedly above their deliberately cautious guesses of earlier weeks. Semi-official Chinese conjectures ran closer to 300,000.<sup>16</sup>

It seems that members of the International Committee believed that the Japanese registration figures showed that the population might “approach 250,000,” and that Rabe also used the Chinese “conjectures” in giving his estimate.

Rabe was pleading with the Japanese military for increased supplies of food. Since many people in the Safety Zone had no supplies of food at all,<sup>17</sup> it was only natural that he wanted to demonstrate the existence of as large a population as possible. Indeed, on the very day (January 14) that Rabe wrote to the Japanese authorities asking for extra food for the 250,000 to 300,000 Chinese in Nanking, he also wrote to Siemens management and stated that the International “Committee has thus far succeeded in feeding the city’s 200,000 residents packed into our Zone,” and he wrote an Embassy Report in which the population was given as 200,000.<sup>18</sup> Since members would have wanted to demonstrate as large a population as possible in earlier weeks too, Smythe’s claim that earlier estimates had been based on “deliberately cautious guesses” needs to be treated with some skepticism: he perhaps had a very good idea that ex-soldiers accounted

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<sup>15</sup> H. J. Timperley, *What War Means*, pp. 252-55, at p. 254; Hsü, ed., *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*, pp. 82-85, at p. 84.

<sup>16</sup> Smythe, *War Damage in the Nanking Area*, footnote to Table 1.

<sup>17</sup> As late as March 1938, Smythe notes that 17% of the population had been fed during the previous week by “food kitchens” for “free, or at a nominal charge.” See Smythe, *War Damage in the Nanking Area*, p. 10, and Table 8, “Sources of Cereals During Preceding Week,” Appendices. The International Committee had earlier fed up to 50,000 people a day. It can be safely assumed that even those who had access to other supplies of food may have relied on the food kitchens to supplement their diets.

<sup>18</sup> Rabe, *The Good German of Nanking*, p. 130.

for much of the increase and did not want to draw the attention of the Japanese military to that fact.

This paper will demonstrate that the “semi-official” estimate of a population of 300,000 was wrong if the data on age-group distribution contained in Smythe is accepted. The International Committee seems to have recognized this. As can be seen from Table 1, all subsequent estimates of the population consistently give 250,000.<sup>19</sup>

Rabe was mistaken to suggest that “there are probably 250,000 to 300,000 civilians in the city,” because there could not have been as many as 140,000 children under the age of 10 and older women not registered in January 1938. Estimates of how large this unregistered group really was will change slightly depending on how old “older women” were and what percentage of this age group counted as “some.” The author’s estimate is that the total size of the population might increase by a third if these individuals are included (see section 2.3).

### 2.1.2 The Location of the Population

Not only are the official documents reprinted in Timperley and Hsü consistent with regard to the size of the population, they also show that it was located within the Safety Zone. This point is important, because it might be argued that the 200,000 or 250,000 civilians the documents refer to were limited to the population in the Safety Zone under the care of the International Committee, and that “the city” which is frequently mentioned is not Nanjing, but rather the Safety Zone itself.<sup>20</sup>

However, a close reading of the documents demonstrates that the area outside the Safety Zone was deserted during the early weeks of the occupation. One crucial piece of information is contained in a memorandum dated January 22 (after people had in fact started to return to their homes outside the Zone). Here it is clearly stated that “The International Committee for the Nanking Safety Zone is now operating as a relief committee for the welfare of the 250,000 Chinese civilians living in the city. *Most of these people (at least 90 per cent) are still living within the Zone*” (emphasis added).<sup>21</sup> An earlier letter to the Imperial Japanese Embassy from the International Committee (dated December 17, 1937) also clearly stated that “on the 13th when your [Imperial Japanese army] troops entered the city, we had nearly all the civilian population gathered in” the Safety Zone.<sup>22</sup>

The official documents on the location of the population are reinforced by other documentation provided in Timperley. In a letter written on January 10, 1938 by a member of Nanjing’s foreign community, it is stated that “[s]ome 250,000 are here [in

<sup>19</sup> Also see the estimates given by Rabe in his diary (Table 2), where he revises his estimate to 250,000.

<sup>20</sup> Even a scholar as conscientious as Hata Ikuhiko 秦郁彦 makes this mistake, saying that “Rabe...estimated the population in the zone at 200,000–250,000 but did not touch on the population of the city as a whole.” See Hata, “The Nanking Atrocities. Fact and Fable,” *Japan Echo* 25.4 (August 1998), also available at <http://www.japanecho.co.jp>, last accessed September 23, 1999.

<sup>21</sup> “Memorandum on Relief Situation,” in Hsü, ed., *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*, pp. 95–100 (H49), at pp. 95–96.

<sup>22</sup> Timperley, *What War Means*, pp. 217–23 (T6), at p. 220; Hsü, ed., *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*, pp. 12–18 (H9), at pp. 14–15; Rabe, *The Good German of Nanking*, pp. 268–71, at p. 269.

Nanjing], *almost all in the Safety Zone*” (emphasis added).<sup>23</sup> Timperley agreed, saying that while the Safety Zone was populated, “the rest of Nanking was practically deserted until the end of January.”<sup>24</sup> Another foreign resident cited in Timperley stated that after the Safety Zone was established, “people moved into it from all over the city. Practically the whole population of Nanking moved within this area.”<sup>25</sup> The claim that all civilians were contained in the Safety Zone is reinforced by Rabe’s diary (see section 2.2) and contemporary accounts of the Japanese who first entered the city and described it as being completely deserted, except for the Safety Zone, which was described as overflowing.<sup>26</sup>

This is also confirmed by other sources. First, the International Committee itself “estimated that about 250,000 people entered the Zone” and added that “[o]nly a relatively small number, probably not more than ten thousand in all, remained outside.”<sup>27</sup> Where exactly the 10,000 “outside” the Zone were located, and who they were, remains an issue that requires examination, but it seems clear that the Committee believed that there was virtually no one remaining in the city outside the Zone. On December 14, 1937, Robert O. Wilson noted that the “entire remaining population” of Nanjing that had not fled before the city fell (150,000 to 200,000 individuals) had “crowded into the zone.”<sup>28</sup> In a letter dated January 9, M. Searle Bates wrote “[h]ardly anyone dares live outside the Zone” and later “[l]ife hardly exists outside the walls, & little outside the Zone.”<sup>29</sup>

Finally, this information in the primary sources is reinforced by contemporary newspaper accounts of the period leading up to the fall of the city. On December 8, F. Tillman Durdin noted that the Chinese Commander-in-Chief, General Tang Shengzhi “decreed that all noncombatants must concentrate in the internationally supervised safety zone” and that “movement of noncombatants elsewhere in the city will be banned.”<sup>30</sup> As the defending army prepared to “fight to the last man” in defense of the city, all citizens were thus moved into the Safety Zone and off the streets.<sup>31</sup> As early as December 6,

<sup>23</sup> Cited in Timperley, *What War Means*, p. 62. The author was M. S. Bates.

<sup>24</sup> Timperley, *What War Means*, p. 173.

<sup>25</sup> Timperley, *What War Means*, p. 68. This account is dated January 16, 1938. It also gives an estimate of the population as “perhaps 150,000 or more” (p. 70).

<sup>26</sup> See Higashinakano Osamichi 東中野修道, “*Nankin gyakusatsu*” no tettei kenshō 「南京虐殺」の徹底検証 (A thorough investigation of the “Nanjing Massacre”) (Tokyo: Tendensha, 1998).

<sup>27</sup> See the “Nanking International Relief Committee Report of Activities, November 22, 1937 – April 15, 1938,” from the Miner Searle Bates papers (Record Group No. 10, Box 102), reprinted in Martha Lund Smalley ed., *American Missionary Eyewitnesses to the Nanking Massacre, 1937–1938* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale Divinity School Library Occasional Publication No. 9, 1997), p. 11.

<sup>28</sup> See “The Family Letters of Dr. Robert Wilson,” in Timothy Brook, ed., *Documents on the Rape of Nanking* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), p. 210.

<sup>29</sup> Document no. 4, in Smalley ed., *American Missionary Eyewitnesses to the Nanking Massacre, 1937–1938*.

<sup>30</sup> See Durdin, “Chinese Make Stand: Noncombatants Segregated,” in *New York Times*, December 8, 1937, pp. 1, 5, at p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> The phrase “fight to the last man” is seen in much of the literature. See, for instance, Durdin, “Defense Commander Prepares to ‘Fight to the Last Man’ by Preventing Troops’ Flight,” *New York Times*, December 11, 1937, p. 3.

1937, it was reported that all the streets of Nanjing were “patrolled by small bands of troops wearing yellow armbands, signifying the enforcement of martial law.”<sup>32</sup> It can be assumed that the combination of the order to move into the Safety Zone, the preparations for street fighting elsewhere in the city, and the rumors that the city was to be burnt to the ground as part of the Chinese scorched earth policy would have been powerful enough to move the population into the Zone.<sup>33</sup>

It is not possible to argue that the 200,000 civilians referred to in earlier documents and the 250,000 referred to in later documents indicate only a portion of the total Chinese population of Nanjing. The International Committee clearly believed that there was no other large population residing within Nanjing’s walls, except, of course, for the Japanese army.

### 2.1.3 The Increase in the Size of the Population

As shown in Table 1, the official documents note an increase in the size of the population of Nanjing in mid-January. Again, the primary concern of the International Committee remained the issue of how to feed the population. On January 19, Rabe (acting as Chairman) wrote to “Messrs. Allison, Prideaux-Brune and Rosen.”<sup>34</sup> After noting that there were “250,000 civilians in this city,” Rabe states that a “supply of rice to the extent of 2,000 *tan* (or 1,600 bags) of rice *per day*, or approximately the same weight of flour” is required to feed “250,000 people at the normal daily consumption of one *tan* per 100 adults per day,” and that this would total “2,500 *tan* per day” (Rabe continues to say that “small children in the population would not need so much per day”).<sup>35</sup> The interest in establishing the true size of the population (and even exaggerating it) is obvious.

This increase in population requires an explanation. If even 100,000 Chinese were massacred in Nanjing during the first month of the occupation (and this is a low figure compared to those given by authors such as Iris Chang), then, at 3333 people killed per day, a sharp *decrease* should have been noted.

The increase in population noted in official documents as occurring between December 27 (T14, H26) and January 14 (T19 and H41) can be explained by the Japanese registration of the population. On December 22, the “Nanking Commander of Military Police of the Japanese Army” issued a proclamation that all Chinese living in Nanjing were to be registered from December 24.<sup>36</sup> Some ex-soldiers at least were

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<sup>32</sup> Hallett Abend, “Japanese 25 Miles from Nanking Goal,” *New York Times*, December 6, 1937, p. 10.

<sup>33</sup> These rumors were widely reported. See, for instance, Rabe’s diary, where he notes on December 7, 1937 that “[a]s a result of a rumor that houses near the gates inside the walls are to be burned down as well [as houses in the suburbs outside the wall], panic has broken out among the poor living near the South Gate.” Rabe, *The Good German of Nanking*, pp. 53-54. F. Tillman Durdun also noted that “[r]umors of plans to burn down Nanking, though they are daily officially denied, are causing terror among many sections of the populace.” See “Chinese Make Stand,” *New York Times*, December 8, 1937, pp. 1, 5, at p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> Of the USA, British, and German Embassies respectively. See Timperley, *What War Means*, pp. 259-263 (T24), and Hsü, ed., *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*, pp. 90-93 (H47).

<sup>35</sup> Timperley, *What War Means*, pp. 259, 262; Hsü, ed., *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*, pp. 90, 93. Note that Rabe’s estimate for the amount of food required is exactly the same as when he estimated the population to be 250,000 to 300,000.

<sup>36</sup> “Proclamation” in Hsü, ed., *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*, p. 53 (H23).



granted identification papers. Since they came out of hiding, they must be at least one of the sources of the increase.<sup>37</sup>

Rabe suggested that the increase in the population could be explained by people emerging from "ruined parts of the city."<sup>38</sup> This seems to contradict his other estimates of the city's population, as it is obvious that he believed that the area outside the Safety Zone was no longer inhabited. However, if Rabe meant soldiers who had been hiding in the ruins of the city, then the supposition makes sense. Indeed, since the Japanese had finished registering the population by January 14, when Rabe first noted an increase, and since at least some ex-soldiers were granted identification papers, part of the increase can be accounted for by ex-soldiers coming out of hiding. People had also started to return to the city from the countryside as early as about a week after the city fell.<sup>39</sup>

It is possible, of course, that some civilians ignored the orders to move into the Safety Zone, and preferred to stay in their homes. However, it seems highly unlikely that there could have been tens of thousands of such people. The Chinese army, after all, had been preparing to fight to the last man, and there were rumors that it had decided to burn the entire city down. Moreover, the area outside the Zone was a battlefield, whereas the Japanese did not attack the area encompassed by the Safety Zone.<sup>40</sup> Finally, if people had been hiding outside the Zone, it seems likely that they would eventually have been discovered by the Japanese who thoroughly searched the city. However, all official reports of captured ex-soldiers were submitted by units searching the Safety Zone.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> It is also possible that the registration (during which many ex-soldiers were identified and executed) helped put an end to the underground activities of the Chinese army in Nanjing and thus explains the comment in a letter to the Japanese Embassy (dated 26 December) from the International Committee: "we are glad to report that cases [of disorder by Japanese soldiers] are declining and *conditions are much improved*" (*italics added*), and then "[t]hanking you .. for the improved situation in the Zone." See "Letter to Japanese Embassy," in Hsü, ed., *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*, pp. 53-54 (H24), at pp. 53, 54. This point is forcefully made by the revisionist scholar Higashinakano Osamichi, "*Nankin gyakusatsu*" no tettei kenshō, pp. 233-35.

<sup>38</sup> Rabe, *The Good German of Nanking*, p. 135. Also see the *Yomiuri shinbun* 読賣新聞, January 10, 1938, cited in Higashinakano, "*Nankin gyakusatsu*" no tettei kenshō, p. 235.

<sup>39</sup> See Higashinakano, "*Nankin gyakusatsu*" no tettei kenshō, pp. 292-93, which cites Matsui's diary entry of December 21, 1937.

<sup>40</sup> Thus the International Committee wrote to the "Japanese Commander of Nanking" on December 14 saying: "[w]e come to thank you for the fine way your artillery spared the Safety Zone." See Timperley, *What War Means*, pp. 206-08 (T1), at p. 1; Hsü, ed., *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*, pp. 1-3 (H1), at p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> The Seventh Regiment of Infantry (Ninth Division), which was entrusted with "mopping-up" (*sōtō*) operations within the Safety Zone, officially reported capturing and executing 6,670 individuals from December 13 to December 24, and also discovered an enormous amount of weapons, including 4 tanks and 55,122 hand-grenades (Higashinakano, "*Nankin gyakusatsu*" no tettei kenshō, pp. 184-88). A later operation carried out by the Sixteenth Division officially reported 2,000 executions from December 22 to January 5. Hata Ikuhiko, *Nankin jiken: "Gyakusatsu no kōzō"* 南京事件: 「虐殺」の構造 (The Nanjing Incident: Structure of the "massacre") (Tokyo: Chūō kōronsha, 1986), pp. 165-68. The problem with using these reports as a source is that it was common practice in the Japanese army to exaggerate or inflate figures. As Hata (*Nankin jiken*, p. 210) notes, they were often double or triple the actual numbers.

It is known that soldiers from the Chinese army fled into the Zone and hid there.<sup>42</sup> As noted above, the Japanese registration enabled them to emerge. Many of the 16,000 or so new recruits taken on by Chinese divisions immediately before the city fell may in fact have been civilians who lived in Nanjing or the surrounding suburbs.<sup>43</sup> Those who survived the battle for the city would have returned to their families. Since individuals suspected by the Japanese of being ex-soldiers who had someone to vouch for them were (at least sometimes) released, the author suspects that many of those conscripted only days before the city fell survived.

### 3. The Diary of John Rabe

The documentary estimates of the civilian population contained in Timperley and Hsü, together with descriptions of the location of the population, can be compared to the information provided in Rabe's diary. This diary was recently discovered and has provided a treasure-trove of information. It serves to reinforce further the argument that the size of the civilian population was between 200,000 and 250,000 and that all civilians were moved into the Safety Zone. Rabe, too, notes an increase in population in mid-January.

The diary contains some interesting information about the civilian population. First and foremost, on November 28, Rabe cites the chief of police, Wang Kopang, who had "*repeatedly* declared that 200,000 Chinese are still living *in the city*" (emphasis added).<sup>44</sup> This demonstrates that the Chinese Nationalist Government also believed that the population was 200,000. Second, Rabe includes statements by other Westerners in Nanjing and official reports made to the German Embassy that all agree on the size of the population. Third, he makes it clear that the International Committee, which was responsible for feeding the civilian population, was anxious to determine exactly what the population was.

Finally, Rabe's Diary provides crucial confirmation regarding the location of the population. First, on December 1, Rabe mentions that the International Committee had discussed whether or not to "order the remaining populace of Nanking into the neutral zone."<sup>45</sup> It appears from the text that this order was in fact given. Moreover, the decision of the mayor of Nanking to delegate to the Committee "nearly all the functions of the City Government" only makes sense if all the civilians were in, or were quickly moving into, the Safety Zone.<sup>46</sup> The Committee's decision to order the civilian population into the Safety Zone was reinforced on December 8, 1937 when General Tang issued a similar order to all citizens.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> For the flight of soldiers into the Safety Zone, see, for instance, Robert Wilson's letter to his family (December 14, 1937), where he noted that "[a]t the last moment thousands of Chinese soldiers threw away their uniforms and equipment and donned looted civilian clothes and crowded into the zone." Timothy Brook, ed., *Documents on the Rape of Nanking*, p. 210.

<sup>43</sup> The Chinese 36th, 51st, 58th, and 87th Divisions took on 2,000 new recruits each, the 88th Division took on 3,000, and the Military Training Corp took on 5,000 on arriving in Nanjing. See D. Askew, "The Nanjing Incident and the Chinese Army," unpublished manuscript.

<sup>44</sup> Rabe, *The Good German of Nanking*, p. 39.

<sup>45</sup> Rabe, *The Good German of Nanking*, p. 45.

<sup>46</sup> Timperley, *What War Means*, p. 217.

<sup>47</sup> On this point, see Higashinakano, "Nankin gyakusatsu" no tettei kenshō, pp. 54, 56-57, 387, and Durdin, "Chinese Make Stand: Noncombatants Segregated," *New York Times*, p. 1.

**Table 2. Nanjing's Population as Recorded in Rabe's Diary: November 23, 1937 to February 12, 1938<sup>48</sup>**

Source	Date	Population
Wolf Schenke	November 23	200,000
Telegram to Hitler	November 25	Over 200,000
Diary	November 25	Over 200,000
Telegram to Siemens Shanghai Office	November 25	Over 200,000
Chief of Police, Wang Kopang	November 28	200,000
Diary	December 10	200,000
Letter to Japanese Embassy	December 17	200,000
Letter to Japanese Embassy	December 18	200,000
Diary	December 25	200,000
Diary	December 26	200,000
Chancellor Scharffenberg	January 13	200,000
Letter to Siemens Management	January 14	200,000
Diary	January 17	250,000
Eduard Sperling	January 22 (?)	200,000
Diary	February 12	250,000

Second, in a memorandum to the German Embassy (dated January 13) cited in Rabe, Chancellor P. Scharffenberg explicitly states:

the suburbs were burned down almost in their entirety by the Chinese [as part of a scorched earth policy] and the center of the city has largely been burned down by the Japanese. No one lives there now. The rest of the population—circa 200,000—is confined to the Safety Zone. (...) [T]he streets outside the Zone are deserted.<sup>49</sup>

If the civilian population had indeed been moved to the Safety Zone, this would explain the arson outside the Zone, where there was no one to protect property. It would also mean that much of Nanking had become a ghost town.

The official documents contained in Timperley and Hsü, together with Rabe's diary, ought to put to rest any further debate about the size of Nanjing's civilian population. It is clear that the figure of 200,000 (and later 250,000) was used for both the Safety Zone and the entire city; that Western observers in Nanjing believed that the area outside the Zone but within the city walls was deserted; and that the Chinese government believed that the civilian population of Nanjing was 200,000 as of November 28, 1937.<sup>50</sup>

#### 4. Smythe

Another important source is Smythe who was in charge of a survey run under the auspices of the International Committee both within Nanjing (the City Survey) and

<sup>48</sup> The letters of December 17 and 18 are also contained in Timperley and Hsü.

<sup>49</sup> Memorandum of Chancellor P. Scharffenberg, German Embassy, Nanking Office, "Situation in Nanking as of 13 January 1938," in Rabe, *The Good German of Nanking*, pp. 131-32, at p. 131.

<sup>50</sup> For a further discussion of the Rabe diary, see D. Askew, "The Rabe Diary and the Nanking Incident."

outside it (the Agricultural Survey).<sup>51</sup> The results were published as *War Damage in the Nanking Area*, the only scholarly examination of the events in and around Nanjing carried out through a thorough survey.<sup>52</sup> In the City Survey, investigators surveyed every 50<sup>th</sup> inhabited house in Nanjing. These were defined by "house number," so there were cases, such as apartments, in which many more than one family resided at a single address.<sup>53</sup> This survey "covered the whole of the city inside the walls and the areas just outside some of the gates as well."<sup>54</sup> It was conducted from March 9, 1938 to April 2, 1938, with some supplementary work from April 19-23.<sup>55</sup> According to Smythe, "investigators were well received because of the favorable reputation of the Committee."<sup>56</sup>

Smythe's City Survey investigated 906 families within the walls of Nanjing in addition to "the areas just outside some of the gates."<sup>57</sup> There were 4,252 members in the families studied. Since only 1 in 50 families were investigated, Smythe estimated that the population of Nanjing was 212,600, with the important proviso that some areas were "not accessible to investigators" and so this "number was probably 80 to 90 per cent of the total residents [of Nanjing]."<sup>58</sup> This seems to suggest that Smythe thought that the total population was 236,000 to 266,000. However, as noted above, he also clearly states that "[a]t the time the city fell (Dec. 12-13), its population was between 200,000 and 250,000."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> The Agricultural Survey was conducted over 2,438 square miles in 4.5 *xian* (counties) around Nanjing. See Smythe, *War Damage in the Nanking Area*, p. 17. The results of this survey will not be examined here. For a contemporary review of Smythe, see B. W. P., "Damage in the Nanking Area," *Pacific Affairs* 12.2 (1939), pp. 220-22.

<sup>52</sup> Smythe was well qualified to conduct such a survey. He received his PhD in sociology from the University of Chicago and had run at least two similar surveys in 1931 and 1932.

<sup>53</sup> See Smythe, *War Damage in the Nanking Area*, "Introduction: Organization and Method," pp. 1-3.

<sup>54</sup> Smythe, *War Damage in the Nanking Area*, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> A second survey was conducted roughly a year later. See Dr. M. S. Bates, *The Nanking Population: Employment, Earnings and Expenditures* (Shanghai: The Mercury Press, 1939). According to this second survey, the population of Nanjing had increased by roughly 100,000 in the year following the fall of the city to 358,050 (p. 7).

<sup>56</sup> Smythe, *War Damage in the Nanking Area*, p. 1.

<sup>57</sup> Smythe, *War Damage in the Nanking Area*, p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> Smythe, *War Damage in the Nanking Area*, p. 4, and Table 1 "Families Studied and Estimated Population," Appendices. Note that Smythe included some areas outside the city in his City Survey.

<sup>59</sup> Smythe, *War Damage in the Nanking Area*, p. 4.

**Table 3. Families Studied and Estimated Population (by Section of City)<sup>60</sup>**

Section	Number of Families Studied	Total Family Members of Families Studied	Average Size of Family	Estimated Total Number of Families	Estimated Total Number of Family Members
<b>A Inside Wall</b>	906	4,252	4.7	45,300	212,600
1. Safety Zone	298	1,358	4.6	14,900	67,900
2. Refugee Camps	114	550	4.8	5,700	27,500
3. Cheng Hsi	115	544	4.7	5,750	27,200
4. Cheng Tung	55	232	4.2	2,750	11,600
5. Cheng Pei	51	243	4.8	2,550	12,150
6. Men Hsi	126	631	5.0	6,300	31,500
7. Men Tung	103	451	4.4	5,150	22,600
8. Garden	44	243	5.5	2,200	12,150
<b>B. Outside Wall</b>	43	171	4.0	2,150	8,550
9. Hsiakwan	13	46	3.5	650	2,300
10. Chunghwamen	16	79	4.9	800	3,950
11. Shuihsimen	14	46	3.3	700	2,300
<b>All Sections</b>	<b>949</b>	<b>4,423</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>47,450</b>	<b>221,150</b>

Note that even at this late date, a large proportion of the Chinese population was concentrated within the Safety Zone and that the population outside the wall was relatively small.<sup>61</sup> This can perhaps be explained in part by the Chinese scorched earth policy and the resulting devastation to the suburbs of Nanjing. Smythe explicitly states that "areas outside the walls" were still dangerous, but he does not say why. Japanese sources claim that elements of the defeated Chinese army became bandits, which may explain why it was thought that areas under Japanese occupation where there were large numbers of Japanese soldiers (such as within the walls of Nanjing) were safer.<sup>62</sup>

This sampling survey was the only one of its kind run by an observer in Nanjing so soon after the city fell. Although the results contradict the claims of the Japanese Great Massacre Faction (and have thus not been widely used), there is no reason to believe that Smythe or his twenty or so Chinese assistants would have either deliberately distorted the data or overlooked large populations within the city. As the only contemporary survey conducted in Nanjing—and that of a professional academic—the results need to be treated with respect.

The 212,600 given for the size of the population by Smythe is sometimes seen as the most accurate estimate of the population of Nanjing that exists. The author, however, will argue that data provided in Smythe combined with the results of the Japanese registration of most of the population allows for an even closer estimate.

<sup>60</sup> From "Table 1, Families Studied and Estimated Population. By Section of City," in Smythe, *War Damage in the Nanking Area*, Appendices.

<sup>61</sup> The Refugee Camps mentioned here were also located within the Safety Zone.

<sup>62</sup> In his foreword to Smythe's survey, Bates admits that "there has latterly grown up in the rural areas a serious banditry which currently rivals and sometimes surpasses the robbery and violence by Japanese soldiers." See Bates, "Foreword," in Smythe, *War Damage in the Nanking Area*, p. ii.

## 5. The Japanese Registration of the Population

The Japanese Army did not formally count the *entire* Chinese population of Nanjing. However, on December 22, 1937, the Japanese issued a proclamation stating that *all* Chinese had to register themselves, upon which identification papers, or “passports” (also known as “good citizens papers”), were to be issued.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, it was proclaimed that “[t]hose who have no passports...are not allowed to reside within the Nanking city wall.”<sup>64</sup> Rabe’s diary also mentions this. On December 25, he wrote that “[t]he Japanese have decreed that *every* refugee must be registered. This has to be completed within the next ten days. No easy matter, what with 200,000 people” (italics added).<sup>65</sup> Note that Rabe obviously means the entire citizen population when he uses the word “refugee.” In a letter dated December 26, Robert O. Wilson stated that the Japanese “are now engaged in registering in the most inefficient manner possible *all* the residents of the city, *all* of whom are now cooped up in the Safety Zone” (italics added).<sup>66</sup> Registration began on December 24 and ended on January 5, 1938.<sup>67</sup>

However, the Japanese did not insist on the registration of children under the age of 10 or of older women in at least some cases. Therefore, the number of “passports” or registration cards issued only provides a basis for estimating the population rather than giving an exact figure. The Japanese registered 160,000 people.<sup>68</sup> Needless to say, the actual population of Nanjing was larger than 160,000. Although (as noted above) the International Committee used this figure to make a rough guess as to what the true size of the population was (250,000), it is possible to use the information provided in Smythe’s survey to provide a more accurate guess.

Smythe provides a breakdown of the population of Nanjing by age and gender. According to this, as of March 1938, the 0 to 4 year-old group accounted for 8.4% of the population, the 5 to 9 year-olds 12.5%, and the 10 to 14 year-olds 11.7%. Children under the age of 10, therefore, would have accounted for at least 20.9% of the population, and, if 10 year-olds are also included, roughly 23.3% ( $1/5$  of  $12 = 2.4$ ).

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<sup>63</sup> Timperley noted that the Japanese “registration was made of all residents in the city.” See Timperley, *What War Means*, p. 52.

<sup>64</sup> Japanese Army Proclamation, cited in Timperley, *What War Means*, p. 240 (T12). Also see Hsü, ed., *Documents of the Nanking Safety Zone*, p. 53 (H23).

<sup>65</sup> Rabe, *The Good German of Nanking*, p. 96.

<sup>66</sup> “Letter of Robert O. Wilson to his family,” in Smalley, ed., *American Missionary Eyewitnesses to the Nanking Massacre, 1937–1938*, pp. 30–31, at p. 31.

<sup>67</sup> See Unemoto Masaki 敵本正己, *Shinsō Nankin jiken—Raabe no nikki o kenshō shite* 真相南京事件：ラーベの日記を検証して (The true Nanjing Incident: An examination of the Rabe diary) (Tokyo: Kenpakusha, 1998), pp. 120, 121, 137. Also see Higashinakano, “Nankin gyakusatsu” no tettei kenshō, p. 233. Finally, see *Yomiuri shinbun* (January 10, 1938), cited in Higashinakano, “Nankin gyakusatsu” no tettei kenshō, p. 235, which states that registration began in late 1937 and finished by January 7, 1938. As will be discussed later, it was after the Japanese registration had finished that Western observers estimated that the population of Nanjing increased.

<sup>68</sup> As noted above (section 2.1.1), on January 14, 1938, Rabe wrote that “[w]e understand that you registered 160,000 people without including children under 10 years of age, and in some sections without including older women.” See T19 in Timperley, *What War Means*, p. 254. The date (January 14) seems to be Chang’s source for claiming “that by January 14 the authorities succeeded in registering at least 160,000 people.” See Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), p. 136.

**Table 4. Age and Gender of Population Studied (in %)<sup>69</sup>**

Age Group	Percent in Each Age Group			
	Male	Female	Male and Female	Gender Ratio
0-4	8.1	8.7	8.4	96.8
5-9	12.5	12.5	12.5	103.3
10-14	12.3	11.1	11.7	114.0
15-19	8.6	8.2	8.4	108.4
20-24	6.6	6.5	6.6	105.7
25-29	6.1	6.4	6.2	100.0
30-34	5.6	6.4	6.0	89.3
35-39	6.1	6.0	6.1	105.3
40-44	7.8	7.2	7.5	112.1
45-49	8.4	5.3	6.9	163.5
50-54	5.8	5.8	5.8	104.8
55-59	3.9	4.2	4.0	95.6
60 and over	8.2	11.7	9.9	75.2
<b>Totals</b>	100	100	100	103.4
0-14	33	32	32	105
15-49	49	46	48	111
50 and over	18	22	20	85
<b>Totals</b>	100	100	100	103

It is not as easy to calculate the number of females. Those in the age group 60 and over accounted for 11.7% of the total number of females (not the population). Since the gender balance was roughly equal (at 103 males for every 100 females in March 1938), roughly 5.85% (one half of 11.7%) of the total population were women above the age of 60.<sup>70</sup>

If it is assumed that 6% of the entire population were females above the age of 60, and if it is also assumed that "older women" meant *all* older women above 60 years of age, then the "children" and (all) "older women" would have been, at most, 29.3% of the population. If "older women" meant *all* women above 55 years old, then this increases to less than 32%. Since the 160,000 registered were the remaining 70% of the population, then (roughly) the total population would have been close to 226,000, more or less

<sup>69</sup> From Table 2, "Age and Sex Distribution of Population Studied, shown in percentages," in Smythe, *War Damage in the Nanking Area*, Appendices.

<sup>70</sup> There is another way to calculate this figure. Since males and females above the age of 60 constituted 9.9% of the total population, and assuming that between 50% and 60% of all persons above the age of 60 were female, females above the age of 60 made up (slightly less than) between 5% and 6% of the entire population.

precisely what other primary sources suggest. At 32%, the population increases to (roughly) 235,300.<sup>71</sup>

Note that this assumes that the Japanese did not register *any* of the women in these age brackets. To the degree that they were registered, this estimate of the size of the population will decrease—to 217,000 if half of the women 60 and above registered, 223,500 if half of the women 55 and above registered, or 232,000 if half of the women 50 and above registered.

This calculation can be double checked. Using Smythe's data on the gender ratio of the population, and assuming a population of 221,500, it is possible to calculate the number of males and females in each of the age groups. If all males and females between the ages of 11 and 59, together with all males 60 and over (there are 20,733 11- to 14-year-olds), are added together, a total of 157,508 is produced (if half of those females 60 and over were registered, 163,766; if half of them 55 and over were registered, 161,501).

**Table 5. Distribution of population (by age and gender)**

Distribution of population, 1938 (assumed population: 221150)					
Age groups	%	Numbers	Sex ratio	Males	Females
0-4	8.4	18,577	96.8	9,137	9,439
5-9	12.5	27,644	103.3	14,046	13,598
10-14	11.7	25,875	114.0	13,784	12,091
15-19	8.4	18,577	108.4	9,663	8,914
20-24	6.6	14,596	105.7	7,500	7,096
25-29	6.2	13,711	100.0	6,856	6,856
30-34	6.0	13,269	89.3	6,259	7,010
35-39	6.1	13,490	105.3	6,919	6,571
40-44	7.5	16,586	112.1	8,766	7,820
45-49	6.9	15,259	163.5	9,468	5,791
50-54	5.8	12,827	104.8	6,564	6,263
55-59	4.0	8,846	95.6	4,324	4,522
60 and over	9.9	21,894	75.2	9,397	12,496
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>221,150</b>	<b>103.4</b>	<b>112,683</b>	<b>108,467</b>

Although Smythe's data were collected some weeks after the Japanese registration, and he missed part of the population living in "dangerous" areas (mainly outside the gates of the city), since the breakdown of the population of the city by age and gender would not have changed dramatically during this time, and since those living in dangerous areas would have been mainly males (and therefore, if taken into account, would serve only to decrease the estimates given above), his data can be accepted for the purposes of calculation.<sup>72</sup>

The data provided in Smythe's survey allows for the following conclusion to be drawn. If children under the age of 10, together with those "older women" not registered,

<sup>71</sup> Note that even if *all* women aged fifty and over are included, the number not registered is still less than 35%, which produces a population of about 246,000.

<sup>72</sup> Although the Japanese killed thousands (at least) of males in Nanjing leading up to and during the registration, large-scale executions had finished by the time the registration finished.



are included, the total population would increase, but only to some 217,000 to 235,000, and not to 250,000 to 300,000. The author believes that the Japanese registration provides (1) a solid basis for accepting the figure 200,000 to 250,000 given by all primary sources as a valid estimate of the size of the population of Nanjing, and (2) grounds for arguing that the closest possible estimate of the population is 224,500.<sup>73</sup> It is impossible to agree with the figures cited by authors such as Chang (600,000-700,000) as the population of Nanjing.<sup>74</sup> It is inconceivable that the Japanese occupation army could have somehow overlooked up to half a million people in Nanjing, or that the city contained half a million children under the age of 10.

After the Japanese registration had finished the reported population of Nanjing increased. Chinese soldiers were given identification papers and so were able to emerge from hiding. Indeed, one interesting episode to emerge from Rabe's diary is that, on December 26, after the 600 people living in Rabe's garden were registered and given identification papers, "20 more new people. smuggled themselves in here" and were also given papers.<sup>75</sup> These were almost certainly ex-soldiers. Rabe seems to have deliberately protected these individuals in addition to the three officers living in his house. Such soldiers were able to move around the city freely after receiving their papers.

Both Smythe's survey and the Japanese registration of the population thus confirm that the civilian population of Nanjing was between 200,000 and 250,000, with the important proviso that, to the degree that there was an increase, Chinese soldiers coming out of hiding must explain at least part of it.

## **6. Western Journalists, Other Members of the International Committee, and Embassy Reports**

Although the estimates made in the primary sources are given further credence by Smythe's survey and the Japanese registration of the population, the other contemporary sources also need to be examined. They can be divided into three groups: the accounts of the Western journalists in Nanjing; the various letters and diaries of the members of the International Committee; and embassy reports. Although not all are official documents, they provide a valuable complementary source that can be compared with the story that emerges from official documents.

### **6.1 The Journalists**

Most Western journalists believed that the civilian population of Nanjing was considerably smaller than 200,000, setting it at 150,000. One German journalist, Lily Abegg, wrote that it was 150,000 in late November.<sup>76</sup> After the fall of the city, the *New*

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<sup>73</sup> The author has split the difference between 217,000 (half of women aged 60 and over not registered) and 232,000 (half of women above 50 not registered). This estimate is perhaps too high, but will be used here for the purposes of argument.

<sup>74</sup> Iris Chang (citing Sun Zhaiwei 孫宅巍), *The Rape of Nanking*, p. 100.

<sup>75</sup> Rabe, *The Good German of Nanking*, p. 97.

<sup>76</sup> Lily Abegg, "Wie wir aus Nanking fluchteten: Die letzten Tage in der Hauptstadt Chinas," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, Dezember 19, 1937. It should be emphasised that she left Nanking on November 29, and as early as this thought that the population had already dropped to 150,000.

*York Times* stated that the Safety Zone “shelters 150,000.”<sup>77</sup> Arthur Menken wrote that “[m]ore than 100,000 Chinese sought refuge in the zone.”<sup>78</sup> Hallett Abend used exactly the same phrase: “More than 100,000 Chinese sought refuge in the zone.”<sup>79</sup> In an article dated December 18, F. Tillman Durdin speaks of “upward of 100,000 non-combatants” in the Safety Zone and “residents, numbering upward of 50,000, who sought no sanctuary in the zone.”<sup>80</sup> This suggests that, in early to mid-December, Western journalists believed that the entire civilian population of Nanking was about 150,000, with 100,000 within the Zone and a further 50,000 outside it. As noted above, at least one member of the international community in Nanjing also believed that the civilian population was “perhaps 150,000 or more,”<sup>81</sup> and Wilson thought that the population was between 150,000 and 200,000.

The discrepancy between Western media reports and all documentary sources can perhaps be explained by an interview between George Fitch and the *Los Angeles Times*. According to Fitch, the International Committee had originally planned to house only 100,000 refugees in the Safety Zone, but a late rush into the Zone increased the numbers to 250,000.<sup>82</sup>

## 6.2 Other Members of the International Committee

Another source consists of the diaries and letters of other members of the International Committee, in addition to George Fitch’s autobiography. A collection of reports by, letters from, and diary entries of many of the members of the International Committee, *American Missionary Eyewitnesses to the Nanking Massacre, 1937–1938*, has recently been published and provides confirmation of much of what is found in the official documents.<sup>83</sup>

According to a letter dated January 9, 1938, there were “200,000 people” in Nanjing.<sup>84</sup> In a circular letter penned by Smythe (dated March 8, 1938), “250,000 Chinese civilians” had been “caught here in the city.”<sup>85</sup> The “Nanking International Relief Committee Report of Activities, November 22, 1937–April 15, 1938” noted “that about 250,000 people entered the Zone” with a further 10,000 outside.<sup>86</sup> As noted in section 2.1.2, the documentation provided by Timperley also agrees about the size of the

<sup>77</sup> “March of Victory into Nanking Set,” *New York Times*, December 16, 1937, p. 15.

<sup>78</sup> Menken, “Witness Tells Nanking Horror as Chinese Flee,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 17, 1937, p. 4.

<sup>79</sup> Abend, “Japan in 3 Drives on Chinese Lines: Nanking Strewn with Dead,” *New York Times*, December 17, 1937, pp. 1, 5, at p. 5.

<sup>80</sup> Durdin, “Foreigners’ Role in Nanking Praised,” p. 38.

<sup>81</sup> Timperley, *What War Means*, p. 70.

<sup>82</sup> See *Los Angeles Times*, March 18, 1938; cited in Itakura, *Hontō wa kō datta Nankin jiken*, p. 70.

<sup>83</sup> Smalley, ed., *American Missionary Eyewitnesses to the Nanking Massacre, 1937–1938*. Another source of documents is the Robert Wilson letters. See Timothy Brook, ed., *Documents on the Rape of Nanking*.

<sup>84</sup> “Letter of James McCallum to his family,” in Smalley, ed., *American Missionary Eyewitnesses to the Nanking Massacre, 1937–1938*, p. 43.

<sup>85</sup> Document no. 6, in Smalley, ed., *American Missionary Eyewitnesses to the Nanking Massacre, 1937–1938*.

<sup>86</sup> Reprinted in Smalley, ed., *American Missionary Eyewitnesses to the Nanking Massacre, 1937–1938*, p. 11.

population. Thus, for instance, one “foreign resident who has spent almost the whole of his life” in China wrote on Christmas eve, 1937, that “we have only enough rice and flour for the 200,000 refugees for another three weeks.”<sup>87</sup> In a letter dated December 14, 1937, Wilson stated that the “entire” population of Nanjing, “some 150 or 200 thousand individuals,” had “crowded into the zone.”<sup>88</sup> Finally, George Fitch’s autobiography also gives the population of Nanjing as 200,000.<sup>89</sup>

### 6.3 Embassy Reports

A final source are the two reports sent to the American Ambassador (in Hankou) by Epsy and to the German Embassy by Rabe.<sup>90</sup> Epsy reported that “before the fall of Nanking the Chinese armies and civilians had been steadily getting out of and away from Nanking. In the neighbourhood of four-fifths of the population had fled and the main body of Chinese troops had been withdrawn.”<sup>91</sup> On January 14, Rabe also reported that the population of non-combatants in Nanjing was 200,000.<sup>92</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

This paper has examined the primary sources in an attempt to establish the number of Chinese civilians in Nanjing when the city fell. The main sources all demonstrate that the population of Nanjing was 200,000 to 250,000, with two important provisos. First, there seems to have been a significant *increase* in the size of the population from late December to mid-January. Second, much of this increase must have been due to ex-soldiers who survived the fall of the city and emerged from hiding.

The author has used the data available in Smythe’s survey and the Japanese registration of the population to argue that the total population between December 24, 1937 and January 5, 1938 was 224,500. This is the closest estimate that can be made from the various primary sources available, and demonstrating this is one of the most important conclusions of this paper.

The author has deliberately focussed on the primary documentary materials that exist on Nanjing. These materials also provide much information on civilian casualties, a topic that will be dealt with in a later paper.

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<sup>87</sup> Timperley, *What War Means*, pp. 20, 22. Timperley here is again citing George Fitch.

<sup>88</sup> Timothy Brook, ed., *Documents on the Rape of Nanking*, p. 210.

<sup>89</sup> Fitch, *My Eighty Years in China*, p. 100.

<sup>90</sup> See report from James Epsy, cited (in part) in Pritchard and Zaide, eds., *The Tokyo War Crimes Trial*, vol. 2, pp. 4,561, *passim*.

<sup>91</sup> Cited in Pritchard and Zaide, eds., *The Tokyo War Crimes Trial*, vol. 2, p. 4,568. Needless to say, four-fifths of a population of 1 million is 800,000, leaving 200,000 behind.

<sup>92</sup> “Report from the German Foreign Office in China to the German Foreign Office in Berlin,” cited in Pritchard and Zaide, eds., *The Tokyo War Crimes Trial*, vol. 2, pp. 4,592-94, at pp. 4,593, 4,594. Note that on this day Rabe wrote to the Japanese arguing that the population was 250,000 to 300,000.