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Outline of Conditions in Occupied Hongkong

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ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

Electricity was regenerated by the Japanese in KOWLOON on 26 December 1941 and in HONGKONG on 3 January 1942, and the public supply was resumed on 1 and 15 January 1942 respectively. Both the HONGKONG ELECTRIC Co. and CHINA LIGHT & POWER Co. stations were then being operated by the Japanese Army, but on 20 February 1942 they came under the control of the Governor's Office. In January 1943, however, management was entrusted to private enterprise although control was still exercised by the Japanese administration.

Coal supply difficulties rendered it necessary in October 1943 to impose restrictions on the consumption of electricity. Private consumers were placed on a quota basis, and cinema houses were ordered to close for 4 days each month. The restrictions were increased in April 1944, when regulations were issued further reducing consumption quotas and banning the use of neon signs, cooling plants, etc. The number of street lights was also reduced. In May 1944, further curtailment of the supply for lighting purposes was introduced, while the supply of power, except to places approved by the Governor's Office, was stopped. In June 1944, lighting was restricted to between 2000 and 2400 hrs, while the use of electricity for lifts and water pumps was prohibited. The hours of supply were cut to 2000-2300 hrs in July. About this period, the Japanese imported lamp-bulbs of low candlepower (e.g. 5, 10 and 25 C.P.) from FORMOSA and SHANGHAI to meet the new conditions. On 20 August 1944 the supply was entirely suspended, and although some attempt to restore a partial service was made in the weeks following, on 2 October 1944 it was officially announced that there would be no further general supply of electricity.

As a result of the suspension of supply, dockyards and certain government-sponsored industries resorted to generating their own electricity. Latest available information, however, indicates that these places are being supplied again from the HONGKONG and KOWLOON stations, but on a reduced scale.

In June 1944, it was reported that a mixture of coal, charcoal and firewood was being used for fuel in order to conserve coal stocks, but this lowered the voltage. In August 1944, the electric works were experimenting on the use of a fuel substitute (corn husk was mentioned in one report), and in January 1945 these experiments were said to have met with some success, although there were no signs of a general resumption of the supply.

Many reports have been received since November 1943 that the Japanese were dismantling the machinery at the various stations and sub-stations and shipping it out of HONGKONG. Of 8 generators reported at the HONGKONG ELECTRIC main station at NORTH POINT, 7 had been removed by December 1944, and the remaining one was reported to have been shipped away in late January 1945. Six of 7 generators at the CHINA LIGHT main station in KOWLOON were said to have been removed by the end of 1944, although according to other sources 4 turbines still remained, i.e. No. 1 (3,500 K.W.), No. 2 (5,000 K.W.), No. 5 (2,500 K.W.) and No. 6 (2,500 K.W.).

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ELECTRICITY SUPPLY (Contd)

No. 7 turbine was stated to have been destroyed during the hostilities, and only Nos. 3 and 4 turbines (each 2,500 K.W.) were said to have been removed in August 1944.

A report received in June 1944 stated that the HONGKONG output was 1,000 K.W. and the KOWLOON output 850 K.W. Voltage on both the Island and the Mainland was 220, and the frequency was 60 cycles/sec. There were at this time 25,000 consumers in HONGKONG and 15,000 in KOWLOON, consumption per month being 1,500,000 units and 1,000,000 units respectively.

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GAS SUPPLY

After the cessation of hostilities in HONGKONG, the gas supply on the Island was resumed on 30 December 1941 and in KOWLOON on 10 January 1942.

Curtailment of supply was rather more gradual than in the case of other public services. However, economy in the use of gas was preached constantly in late 1943, consumption limits were fixed and after November of that year no new applications for the service were accepted. On 1 April 1944, quotas to industrial and commercial users were further reduced to 80 percent and 50/60 percent respectively of the consumption during January 1944, while the use of gas for heating, lighting and gold smelting was prohibited. The supply was restricted to between 0600 and 2200 hrs. In June 1944, the time was further reduced to between 0600 and 1800 hrs, and on 20 August 1944 the supply was apparently suspended entirely.

In October 1944, press reports stated that workers at the Gas Works were employed in making coal briquettes.

So far as is known, the Gas Works in HONGKONG and KOWLOON are undamaged.

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WATER SUPPLY

As far back as November 1943, it was publicly hinted by the Head of the Waterworks Department that restrictions on the use of water might have to be put into force in order to conserve electric power, which was required for the purpose of pumping. No action was taken, however, until November 1944, by which time the coal shortage in HONGKONG had become acute, and the public electricity supply had already been suspended. A notice issued by the Waterworks Department and appearing in the local press on 5 November 1944 announced the cessation of the supply to the Upper Levels (above CAINE Road and including the Peak districts POKFULUM, SHOUSON HILL, STANLEY and LYEMUN areas. The supply to the Lower Levels, it was announced, would only be available once every 3 days. A Waterworks official stressed that these restrictions were necessitated solely by the need to economize in the use of electric power and were not due to any shortage of water. As a result, a large number of inhabitants are depending on wells, streams or nullahs for water. No curtailment to the supply in KOWLOON has been reported.

As far as is known, reservoirs and pumping stations have not suffered any damage. Reports on the heavy air raids of January 1945 made no mention of damage to water facilities, but allowance should be made for possible damage to pipe-lines, etc., especially in the WANCHAI reclaimed area where considerable havoc was caused.

A large number of water meters are believed to have been damaged or become defective due to lack of attention. Since December 1943, consumers with defective meters have had to pay for water according to the consumption registered during the first month of their taking the service after the Japanese occupation. A press report dated 3 December 1944 stated that revised charges were:- MY5 for the first 1,000 gallons; MY0.50 for every subsequent 100 gallons.

The number of meters in use in 1943 was reported to be 17,000, which was said to be only 55 percent of the number in use before the Pacific War.

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TRAMWAY SERVICE

The HONGKONG tramway, which was extensively damaged at certain points during hostilities, was partially restored on 27 January 1942, and a full service along the entire route was resumed on 20 March 1942.

Up to December 1943, 6 routes were maintained, viz:- (1) SHAUKIWAN-KENNEDY TOWN (2) SHAUKIWAN-WHITTY STREET (3) SHAUKIWAN-HAPPY VALLEY-WHITTY STREET (4) CAUSEWAY BAY-WESTERN MARKET (5) HAPPY VALLEY-KENNEDY TOWN (6) HAPPY VALLEY-WHITTY STREET. Between 40 and 50 tram cars were in service at the time, against 112 available at the termination of hostilities. It was reported in early 1943 that some cars had been shipped away. The number of passengers averaged about 100,000 daily. In March 1944, the service was maintained between 0600 and 2330 hrs, but the electricity shortage necessitated a reduction of service, and in April 1944 it was reported that only one car was running every hour on each of the routes. In May 1944, a further drastic curtailment was effected, the number of routes being cut down to one (QUARRY BAY - WHITTY STREET) and the hours of service limited to 0700-1000 hrs and 1600-2030 hrs. The service for the general public was entirely suspended in June 1944, and although for a time after this a few cars were still being operated in the mornings and evenings for the convenience of dockyard workers and Japanese schoolchildren, even these were believed to have been taken off subsequently.

A report received in September 1944 stated that the tram cars were being dismantled and shipped to Japan, and that 2 electric generators belonging to the HONGKONG TRAMWAY Co. had also been removed.

The track was said to be in a bad state of repair, while the overhead wiring was also reported to be extensively damaged and could not be replaced. No recent information is available as to whether the line is still intact, or the number of cars actually remaining in HONGKONG, but it is known that the Japanese have stripped vehicles of metal parts.

The TRAMWAY Co. workshop in RUSSELL Street is now used for the manufacture of arms and ammunition.

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