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The New Life Movement at War: Wartime Mobilisation and State Control in Chongqing and Chengdu, 1938–1942*

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Abstract

The New Life Movement is remembered in Chinese history primarily as the movement which Chiang Kai-shek launched in Jiangxi province in 1934 to change Chinese people's habits. This paper makes a different case: it argues that the New Life Movement and its organisations were central into the Nationalist Government's wartime mobilisation, and that the involvement of the civil servants through the NLM prevented the disintegration of society and administrative institutions under the impact of the war. This paper focuses on Chongqing and Chengdu between 1938 and 1942 and draws on archival materials and official reports to assess the scope of the Nationalists' wartime mobilisation. It analyses the involvement of the NLM organisations in the fundraising effort, in the mobilisation of women civil servants, and in the organisation of relief work in the first phase of the war and challenge the long-held view that the Nationalists' wartime mobilisation was insubstantial.

Keywords

Nationalist Government; war against Japan (1937-1945); New Life Movement; civil servants; wartime effort and mobilisation

Today the enemy planes made a surprise attack. Following the air raid alarm at 12.05 this team as usual set out to provide service. After the urgent air raid alarm at 12.50 we urged people to take refuge [in] the air raid shelters¹ ... At three in the afternoon enemy planes rushed into the city skies. The noise of bombs was more frequent and much closer and

¹) The author would like to thank the British Academy—Individual Research Visits to Partner Academies Programme—and the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange Postdoctoral Fellowship for funding this research, the anonymous reviewers for this piece and the Leverhulme Trust for funding the workshop where the paper was originally presented.

¹) Literally 'cave' (*dong*) as in air shelter (*fangkongdong*).

the ground was shaking violently ... order inside the air raid shelter suddenly turned into chaos ... I immediately had members of the Service Team urging [people] to calm down and regaining order ... [and after the raid to] go out and check ... deaths and wounded ... The survey showed that ... [i]n the office of the Guards Company six people ... were killed by bombs, so we asked the Comfort and Relief Section at the Co-operation Office (*lianban chu*) to send personnel to shroud the corpses and put [them] in the coffins.²

Liu Zhaoxiang vividly records the consequences of the 16 June 1940 air attack on Chongqing as it happened, and it is an extraordinary illustration of the work performed by the Air Raid Service Teams (*kongxi fuwu dui* 空襲服務隊) to which he belonged. The teams were set up by the General Association for the Promotion of the New Life Movement (*Xin shenghuo yundong cujin zonghui* 新生活運動促進總會) in May 1939 and were responsible for aiding civilians to evacuate to air raid shelters and maintain order right after the air raid warning went off.³ Their organisation followed shortly after the 3 May Japanese air raid which devastated Chongqing's city centre.⁴ Liu's report is a record of the material destruction and loss of lives caused by the systematic bombing of the wartime capital, Chongqing, but it is also testimony to the state response to the war and, more specifically, to the mobilisation of civilians for relief purposes.

This article analyses the Nationalist Government's mobilisation of civilians through the New Life Movement (*Xin shenghuo yundong* 新生活運動) in Chongqing and Chengdu between 1938 and 1942, during the war against Japan. The New Life Movement (NLM) is remembered in Chinese history primarily as the movement which Chiang Kai-shek launched in Jiangxi province in 1934 to change Chinese people's habits. This paper makes a different case: it argues that the NLM and its organisations were central to the Nationalist Government's wartime mobilisation; and that the involvement of civil servants through the NLM wartime campaigns prevented the disintegration of society and administrative institutions under the impact of the war in the first phase of the conflict. Civil servants, together with teachers and merchants, are identified here as members of the urban middle class who became the primary target of the Nationalists' wartime mobilisation through the organisations connected to the NLM. In this

² Liu Zhaoxiang, 'Report to the Relief Committee on June 16th 1940 at 9pm', 16 June 1940, Second Historical Archives of China, Nanjing, PRC (hereafter cited as SHA), 116/107.

³ 'The NLM General Association reports on the general situation of the wartime work, 1942', in Zhongguo di'er lishi dang'an guan (ed.) *Zhonghua Minguo Shi Dang'an Ziliao Hui-bian*, (Collected Documents on China's Republican History; hereafter ZMSDZH) (Nanjing: Jiangsu Renmin Chubanshe, 1998), Series 5, Part 2, Politics, Vol. 5, p. 293.

⁴ That year the city underwent 34 air raids which killed 5,247, injured 4,196 and destroyed 4,757 buildings. Zhou Yong (ed.) *Chongqing Tongshi* (Chongqing General History), (Chongqing: Chongqing Chubanshe, 2002), Vol. 3, pp. 905–907.

context, civil servants were singled out to provide financial support and serve as a medium between the government and the population. On the one hand, they could be mobilised directly by the local and central government; on the other hand, their contribution, participation and connections with the wider society could be monitored promptly.

The article draws attention to the systematic use of civilian mobilisation to stabilise Chinese society and explores the ways in which through the NLM the Nationalist Government organised resistance against Japan and used war mobilisation to foster the connections between government agencies and Chinese society. The main focus was the extraction of financial resources to support the war effort, but by involving the NLM organisations and targeting civil servants, the Nationalists tightened their control over resources and the administrative structure in order to prevent the disintegration of society under the pressure of wartime emergencies.

Introduction

During the past two decades historians have provided a radical rethinking of the wartime period with regard to the Nationalists' contribution to the war and the impact of war on Chinese society.⁵ Historians have analysed the role of rural mobilisation or of popular culture in wartime mobilisation,⁶ but the scope of the Nationalists' wartime mobilisation and its links with the state and administrative structure is still unclear.

This article brings together internal documents, communications between different agencies in the Nationalist Government and reports compiled by the NLM organisations. The information they provide and the data they disclose need to be treated with caution; however, the variety of the sources provides a

⁵ See Hans J. van de Ven, *War and Nationalism in China, 1925–1945* (London: Routledge, 2003); Diana Lary and Stephen Mackinnon (eds) *Scars of War: The Impact of Warfare on Modern China* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003); Stephen Mackinnon, *Wuhan, 1938: War, Refugees, and the Making of Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); Danke Li, *Echoes of Chongqing: Women in Wartime China* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010); and Rana Mitter and Aaron Moore (eds) *China in World War II, 1937–1945: Experience, Memory, and Legacy*, Special Issue of *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (2011).

⁶ See Chalmers A. Johnson, *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power: The Emergence of Revolutionary China 1937–1945* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962); Feng Chongyi and David S.G. Goodman (eds) *North China at War: The Social Ecology of Revolution, 1937–1945* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000); and Chang-tai Hung, *War and Popular Culture: Resistance in Modern China, 1937–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

consistent and compelling picture of the Nationalists' organisation of the war effort in Chongqing and Chengdu between 1938 and 1942 and cannot be ignored. The sources show that the NLM structure performed a central function in the organisation of wartime mobilisation and relief effort, and that the Nationalists' intervention in wartime mobilisation was wider and more effective than previous scholarship has recognised.

Chongqing, to where Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Government was evacuated in 1938, was the wartime capital, and as such a symbol of China's resistance. The newly bestowed status made this city, together with Chengdu, a prime military target of Japanese air strikes. Under the combined pressure of air strikes and economic hardships, the Nationalists took action to organise relief to the population and secure support for the war effort. A crucial element in this process was the involvement of local society in campaigns that pivoted around the collection of goods and financial contributions.⁷

China is a special case when compared with other states that engaged in wartime mobilisation; whereas European countries could rely on established networks of voluntary and state agencies the basis for which had been laid out during World War I, China during the war against Japan was still very much a state, and a nation, in the making. Civilian organisations which engaged in war preparation did exist before the war erupted in 1937, but the landscape was fragmented because of the polarisation of political opinions and support between the Guomintang and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Thus the organisation of the war effort and the mobilisation of civilians had wider political implications in Nationalist China: the central government tried to implement state and institution building while trying to gain support from larger sectors of the population. This dualism is reflected in the mobilisation techniques and messages the Nationalists used during this period which aimed to merge the more general support for the war effort with political support for the Guomintang. The campaigns launched by the Nationalists were at the same time practical and political, and the boundary between wartime mobilisation and propaganda messages, as we shall see, was blurred.⁸

⁷ During the wartime period Sichuan province bore a staggering financial burden. The province shouldered 50 per cent of the financial expenses of the Nationalist Government, and also mobilised 2,500,000 civilian workers (*mingong*) to make urgent repairs on roads; Sichuan sheng dang'anguan (ed.) *Chuanhun: Sichuan Kangzhan Dang'anguan Shiliao Xuanbian* (The Sichuan Spirit: Selected Archival Sources from the War of Resistance in Sichuan) (Chengdu: Xinan Jiaotong Daxue, 2005), Preface, p. 3.

⁸ On the Nationalists' state-building effort during the war, see Morris L. Bian, 'Building state structure: Guomintang institutional rationalization during the Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1945', *Modern China*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (2005); on the Nationalists' notion of citizenship in

The paper is divided into three parts: the first part provides the backdrop to the NLM organisation of wartime mobilisation and analyses the immediate reaction of the Nationalist Government. It traces the campaigns launched for supporting economisation and frugality, for collecting money and comfort goods for soldiers, and the overall fund-raising effort. This section also shows how these campaigns integrated political propaganda with wartime mobilisation by linking the wartime effort campaigns to the survival of the nation, which had broader political aims. The second part discusses the unique role of civil servants in the overall wartime mobilisation at local and central levels of government. The case study of the New Life Women's Working Teams in the Chongqing Municipal Government, followed by examples drawn from central administrative institutions, shows that the Nationalist Government set off a process of institutionalisation of wartime mobilisation in the administrative structure as a means of achieving political and social stabilisation. Essentially, the government embedded the wartime effort in everyday individual behaviour and civil servants became the main agents who participated in the collection of goods and money, as well as in longer-term relief projects. The final part explores different aspects of the relief effort through which the government asserted its capacity of protecting the populace. This work was mostly carried out by women. When at war, societies are by definition unstable, and by protecting the population the Nationalist Government pursued social and political stabilisation: the protection of civilians, during and after air raids, and the relief work with refugees and their families, as well as alleviating the plight of civilians, were aimed at reinforcing the Nationalists' political authority.

The New Life Movement at War: Mobilisation and National Salvation

Chiang Kai-shek launched the New Life Movement in February 1934 in Jiangxi province to revitalise Chinese society and shield the populace from the encroachment of the CCP's radical vision of state and society. This mobilisation campaign is remembered in Chinese history primarily as a movement to change Chinese people's habits, namely by persuading them—through either control or sanctions—that they should lead healthy and orderly lives. The evolution of the movement in Jiangxi province, however, shows a more complex picture: not only was the transformation of individual behaviour anchored to the goal of national reconstruction, which was central to the state-building project pursued by the Nationalists during the Nanjing decade (1927–1937), but the relationship

the first phase of the war, see Rana Mitter, 'Classifying citizens in Nationalist China during World War II, 1937–1941', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (2011).

between the state and its citizens was also redefined through the organisation of mobilisation campaigns and the formation of semi-governmental organisations whose activities blended together individual and national identity, and provided models for citizenship in Nationalist China.⁹

The wartime work of the Associations for the Promotion of the New Life Movement (*Xin shenghuo yundong cujinhui* 新生活運動促進會, hereafter NLM Associations) is vital for understanding civilian participation in the war effort in China as the powerful mix of war effort and mobilisation provided urban dwellers with a space for participation, which could potentially bolster their identification with the nation and by extension with the Nationalist Government. There were several reasons for the Nationalists to link the NLM to wartime mobilisation. The infrastructure of the NLM Associations was laid out before the war and it was a state-guided network which operated at political and propaganda level: since 1934 the NLM had routinely featured in Chiang Kai-shek's speeches, Guomindang political propaganda and school curricula, and in the eyes of the public it was clearly associated with the Nationalists. Moreover, the structure of the NLM Associations was arranged in such a way that it replicated the administrative structure and, more importantly, could reach the county level.¹⁰ Also, the movement had been part of the preparation for war in Jiangxi and quite naturally, when the war erupted, it continued to be so.¹¹ Finally, since its inception the NLM was used to strengthen the government's links with the foreign community by openly targeting the Christian community in China and foreign missionaries.¹² This network would be important for securing international relief funding and the support of the Christian community during the wartime period: by the end of 1942, as war was raging, the General Association for the Promotion of the New Life Movement (hereafter NLM General Association) and the National Christian Council of China (*Zhonghua quanguo jidujiao xiejin hui* 中華全國基督教協進會) established China's Wartime Service Commission (*Zhongguo zhanshi fuwu weiyuanhui* 中國戰時服務委員會), which carried out war-related services, but focused particularly on assistance to

⁹ The ideology underpinning the New Life Movement merged anti-communism, Christian principles and Confucian ethos. For an in-depth discussion of the ideological origins and development of the NLM in Jiangxi province see Federica Ferlanti, 'The New Life Movement in Jiangxi province, 1934–1938', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 5 (2010), pp. 962–981.

¹⁰ Ferlanti, *New Life Movement*, p. 969.

¹¹ Ferlanti, *New Life Movement*, pp. 994–999.

¹² An example of a contemporary description circulating in English is C.W.H. Young, *New Life for Kiangsi* (Shanghai: China Publishing Company, 1935): the foreword to the book is by Song Meiling and Appendix I contains the official translation of the 'Outline'.

soldiers.¹³ For all these reasons, when it came to the wartime mobilisation effort in the eyes of the Nationalists the NLM could deliver at both organisational and political levels, and as such, the NLM became a platform for showing the government's commitment to the war effort.

When the central government moved to Chongqing, the NLM General Association which co-ordinated the movement in the areas under Nationalist control moved to the wartime capital.¹⁴ The NLM General Association since 1936 had been presided over by Huang Renlin, a close friend of Song Meiling and a devout Christian. The NLM General Association, and the NLM Associations which depended on it, recruited their committee members from the party, government, military and education circles, co-ordinated by the highest ranking official present at their specific administrative level; as such these Associations were an extension of the Guomindang and the Nationalists. The NLM General Association included a division, the Women's Advisory Committee (*funü zhidao weiyuanhui* 婦女指導委員會), which focused specifically on women's mobilisation at the national level.¹⁵ By 1938 there were three main active NLM bodies operating in Sichuan province on top of the NLM General Association: the Sichuan Province Association for the Promotion of the NLM located in Chengdu (*Sichuan sheng xin shenghuo yundong cujinhui* 四川省新生活運動促進會, hereafter Sichuan NLM Association), the Chengdu Association for the Promotion of the NLM (*Chengdu shi xin shenghuo yundong cujinhui* 成都市新生活運動促進會, hereafter Chengdu NLM Association) and the Chongqing Association for the Promotion of the NLM (*Chongqing shi xin shenghuo yundong cujinhui* 重慶市新生活運動促進會, hereafter Chongqing NLM Association).¹⁶

Following the start of the war, the NLM General Association's work centred around the war effort. These activities were carried out through the NLM Associations at provincial, city and county levels across China, and both Chengdu and Chongqing became hubs for wartime mobilisation. The process saw the merging of existing organisations with new active groups whose *raison d'être* was providing support for the war effort. Local governments reworked their priorities and the existing and newly established organisations teamed up for implementing war economisation, and collecting money and comfort items for

¹³ Xiao Jizong (ed.) '*Xin Shenghuo Yundong Shiliao*' (Historical materials on the New Life Movement), in Zhongguo Guomindang zhongyang weiyuanhui dangshi shiliao bianzuan weiyuanhui (ed.) *Geming Wenxian* (Documents of the Revolution) (Taipei: Zhongyang wenwu gongyi she, 1975), Vol. 68, p. 209.

¹⁴ Xiao, *Xin Shenghuo Yundong Shiliao*, p. 208.

¹⁵ Ferlanti, *New Life Movement*, pp. 966, 969, 991.

¹⁶ Xiao, *Xin Shenghuo Yundong Shiliao*, pp. 211–213.

the soldiers. The Sichuan NLM Association was instrumental in setting up the Sichuan All Circles' Wartime Economisation Campaign Committee (*Sichuan shenghui gejie zhanshi jieyue weiyuanhui* 四川省會各界戰時節約運動委員會) in August 1938 in Chengdu; this committed itself to the reduction of waste by moderating the consumption of gasoline (*jiezhi qiyou* 節制汽油), banning excessive banquet costs (*qudi xifei* 取締席費) and urging women not to perm their hair (*quanzhi tangfa* 勸止燙髮).¹⁷ With a country at war the availability of food supplies would determine the ability of the nation to last longer and the set of rules proposed by the NLM, such as the restrictions on banquets and dietary regimes that appeared laughable at the early stage of the Movement in 1934, were, at this point in time, consistent with the needs of society. However, the economising campaigns achieved mixed results. Halfway through its implementation, these campaigns faced 'obstruction' (*zuli* 阻力) at the subordinate levels of the NLM Associations.¹⁸ The ban on banquet costs in restaurants proved very difficult to implement:

[As for] banquets costs, because unscrupulous merchants break up the whole into parts they say that one economy banquet cost eight yuan, but they add extra dishes which makes the table more expensive than ordinary.¹⁹

According to the same report, results were very encouraging on the front of fuel consumption. The inspecting teams would list the results of their inspections in tables; in order to discourage people from consuming, the tables were made public and this system proved to be an excellent deterrent.²⁰ Another campaign aimed at frugality specifically targeted women, such as the so-called ban on perms in Chengdu.²¹ Although their practical results might be limited, the message could be pervasive. By censoring behaviour, the government projected what it considered to be the correct behaviour and exercised a sort of moral suasion. Basically, by defining what was morally unacceptable and by equating having a perm or a lavish banquet with a betrayal of the war effort, the wartime campaigns linked individual behaviour to the survival of the nation.

¹⁷ '1938 general report of Sichuan Province Association for the promotion of the NLM' (hereafter cited as 'Sichuan province report 1938'), Archives of the Historical Commission of the Guomindang, Taipei, Taiwan, 1939, hereafter cited as DSH, 483/24, 3–4.

¹⁸ *Sichuan province report 1938*, DSH 483/24, 5.

¹⁹ *Sichuan province report 1938*, DSH 483/24, 5.

²⁰ *Sichuan province report 1938*, DSH 483/24, 5.

²¹ In Chongqing police were actually checking on hairdressers and the local NLM Association claims that the frequency of perms decreased, 'Survey of 1938 work of Chongqing Association for the Promotion of the NLM', hereafter cited as 'Chongqing city report 1938', DSH 483/24, 139.

European countries would experience similar themes for mobilisation during World War II, but before then it was World War I that opened up the space for state propaganda and civilian mobilisation, which crucially was implemented through different degrees of coercion and persuasion.²² For instance, the collection of gold was already in practice in Italy during World War I. As Fava notes, Italian schoolchildren participated in the collections of ‘gold for the fatherland’. Years later, the fascist government resorted to the organisation of a one-day campaign (18 December 1935) for collecting wedding rings and precious metals in support of the Italian war against Abyssinia, a country which Italy had invaded in October 1935.²³ Labanca points out that although coercion played an important part in eliciting the donations of wedding rings in 1935 in fascist Italy, the extensive propaganda in support of the country’s colonial policy also played a role in generating participation.²⁴

Yet the scale of general mobilisation which took place at the beginning of, and during, the war against Japan was unprecedented as China was the first country to experience war mobilisation on such a scale. Money collection was at the forefront of the war effort and the government through the NLM co-ordinated many fund-raising events. Donations were usually collected during public events, the so-called economising and contributions contests (*jiēyue xiānjīn bǐsài* 節約獻金競賽) that were employed to mobilise the whole population and organised to coincide with major gatherings and anniversaries. Chongqing NLM Association at the end of October 1938 organised a fund-raising concert for buying medicines for the refugees and the net sum of 2,714.40 yuan was raised, mainly among high-profile government members and offices.²⁵ To mark the Fifth Anniversary of the NLM in February 1939, the NLM General Association launched a half-month-long fund-raising event in Chongqing. In this specific case the collection also included cash from the selling of government bonds, various stocks, and gold (and precious metals) donated by the population (see Table 1).²⁶

²² See John Horne on the French and British governments’ use of propaganda and mobilisation to gain civilian support in the last phase of World War I, ‘Remobilizing for “total war”: France and Britain, 1917–1918’; and Andrea Fava on war education and teachers’ mobilisation in Italy, ‘War, “national education” and the Italian primary school, 1915–1918’; both papers in John Horne (ed.) *State, Society and Mobilization in Europe during the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

²³ Fava, *National education*, p. 62; Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare: Storia dell’Espansione Coloniale Italiana* (Across the Sea: The History of Italian Colonial Expansion) (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002), pp. 193–194.

²⁴ Labanca, *Oltremare*, pp. 193–194.

²⁵ ‘On the charity concert for the refugees from the war zones’ (1 November 1938), SHA, 5/59.

²⁶ ‘Report on the financial management of the All Circles’ economizing and contributions

Table 1. Fund-raising Campaign during the Fifth Anniversary of the New Life Movement, 1939

<i>Cash funds (yuan)</i>	<i>Domestic national salvation government bonds (yuan)</i>	<i>Various stocks (yuan)</i>
2,465,105.62	5,829.33	9,045.00

Source: 'Report on the financial management,' Hoover Institution Archives (HIA), Series New Life, Document 23, 12–14.

Table 2. Contributors of over 10,000 Yuan for the 1939 Fund-raising Campaign

Banking sectors	942,905.08
Women's circles	594,186.14
Special business	200,786.50
Salt industry	115,030.00
River shipping	50,000.00
Chongqing Chamber of Commerce	50,000.00
Hardware industry	31,475.00
Construction industry	12,000.00
Qianchuan Factory Unit Association	11,846.00
Financial business	11,820.00
Pharmaceutical business	11,715.00
Coal industry	11,569.68
Cigarette industry	11,561.90
Chengdu Charity Bazaars' Donation Promotion Association	30,000.00
Enemy Rear Areas' Advisory Group of the Three People's Principles Youth Corps	15,401.01
Nankai Middle School	18,075.11
Donations from readers of the newspaper <i>Current News</i>	13,084.17
Mr Huan Xizi	30,000.00
Chairman Chiang [Kai-shek]	10,630.00
Minister Sun Zhesheng	10,000.00
Tianchu MSG factory	10,000.00
Minister Kong and wife	10,000.00

Source: *Report on the financial management*, HIA, 23, 1–12.

Contributions, large and small, came from all walks of life: business associations, the Shanxi native-place association in Chengdu (*Shanxi lü rong tongxiang-*

contests on the Fifth Anniversary of the NLM (1); 1 May 1939, Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University, Archives of the Historical Commission of the Kuomintang (hereafter cited as HIA), New Life, Document 23, 12–14.

Table 3. Chengdu Winter Clothes' Collection Campaign, October 1938

<i>Money expected (yuan)</i>	<i>Money cashed (yuan)</i>	<i>Items expected</i>	<i>Items collected</i>
Households 20,000.00		100,000 new cotton-padded clothes	51,373 new cotton-padded clothes
Public servants 10,000.00		150,000 second-hand cotton-padded clothes	453 second hand cotton-padded clothes
Schools 30,000.00			4,000 pairs black socks
Banking circles 20,000.00			257 pairs cotton socks
Merchants 60,000.00			202 pairs shoes
Movie and drama circles 10,000.00			Miscellanea of soldiers' equipment
Special trade 15,000.00			
Gentry 20,000.00			
Total 185,000.00	66,934.06		

Source: *Sichuan province report 1938*, DSH, 483/24, 29–31.

hui 山西旅蓉同鄉會), Christians in Chongqing and eight different branches of the Three People's Principles Youth Corps (*Sanminzhuyi qingnian tuan* 三民主義青年團), just to name a few. But more importantly, the NLM fund-raising campaign would bring together banking, industrial and business circles, and they played an essential role in financing the war effort (see Table 2).²⁷

But how spontaneous were these donations? And also, were banking, industrial and business circles merely ingratiating themselves with the government through conspicuous donations or were they forced to contribute to the war effort? The list of donors proves that contributions came from many sources with often very small amounts to donate and from across all sectors of Chinese society; clearly, important figures, civil servants and businessmen would find it difficult to extricate themselves from this duty and the degree of spontaneity is indeed

²⁷ *Report on the financial management*, HIA, 23, 1–12.

difficult to assess. It is interesting to note that the cigarette industry, rather ironically given the NLM anti-smoking stance, was among the biggest donors to the government during the celebrations for the NLM, and contributions to the war effort could have been a way to further their business interests (see Table 2). This said, we must bear in mind that the fund-raising campaigns did not always match expectations and holding back was an option: when the Chengdu Association for the Winter Clothes' Collection Campaign (*Chengdu shi zhengmu hanyi yundong zhi hui* 成都市徵募寒衣運動之會) launched a campaign to fund the purchase of winter clothes in October 1938, the organising committee allotted the shares of contributions and indicated where they would come from. However, it was incapable of raising the amount expected (see Table 3).²⁸ Although some contributions were set beforehand, public response was not guaranteed.

Fund-raising and the collection of goods were not limited to single events but were a permanent feature of the NLM structure and mobilisation. The Sichuan NLM Association together with the Chengdu section of the *Lizhishe* (Society to Establish the Will 勵志社) set up the Chengdu Office of the Military Commission's Service Corps in the Combat Areas (*Junshi weibui zhandi fuwutuan Chengdu banshichu* 軍事委會戰地服務團成都辦事處) which by the end of 1938 had collected comfort items and money.²⁹ The activities in Chengdu were not by any means unique. Chongqing city was home to a branch of the Chengdu office (*Chongqing qu fenqu* 重慶區分處); 20 counties depended on this office, and the Chongqing branch engaged immediately with the collection of goods and money.³⁰ Over a one-year period from January to December 1938 it collected comfort provisions for the soldiers, such as quilts, winter padded vests, underwear trousers, pairs of shoes and socks, and various other items, mostly camouflage and medicines (see Table 4). In this case also, the institutions worked towards putting in place a transparent system for collecting funding. The details of the donations were published in Chongqing newspapers, collected in volumes and then submitted to the authorities for reference.³¹

Part of this money came from membership of the Friends of Wounded Soldiers (*Shangbing zhi youshe* 傷兵之友社) and was also raised, as we shall see in the following section, by civil servants. This society was set up within the NLM General Association on the Sixth Anniversary of the NLM (February 1940) with the specific goals of collecting money and providing support to wounded

²⁸) *Sichuan province report 1938*, DSH, 483/24, 29–31.

²⁹) *Sichuan province report 1938*, DSH 483/24, 2–3.

³⁰) *Chongqing city report 1938*, DSH, 483/24, 132.

³¹) *Chongqing city report 1938*, DSH, 483/24, 134–136.

Table 4. War Effort by the Military Commission's Service Corps in the Combat Areas, 1938

<i>Year 1938</i>	<i>Chengdu Office of the Military Commission's Service Corps in the Combat Areas</i>	<i>Chongqing branch</i>
Cash (yuan)	38,139.35	11,012.71
Charity bazaars	49,758.12	
Winter padded vests	54,804	15,975
Bed quilts with cotton wadding	3,941	230
Underwear trousers		2,341
Pairs of shoes and socks	(shoes) 16,661	9,811
Packets of medicines	89,023	
Various (mostly camouflage and medicines)		17,769

Sources: *Chongqing city report 1938*, DSH, 483/24, 134–136; *Sichuan province report 1938*, DSH, 483/24, 2–3, 7.

soldiers.³² By 1942 the 'Friends' were present nationwide in 516 organisations, and had 928,354 individual members, bringing in total membership fees of 7,224,263.09 yuan.³³

The mobilisation campaigns launched since 1938 to support the war effort focused on the collection of money and goods to support soldiers and aid refugees. Their organisation was made possible either through the direct involvement of the NLM organisations at different levels or through the creation of bodies which operated under the patronage of the NLM. These mobilisations encompassed the whole population and had very practical purposes. However, they were also a medium for the Nationalist Government to bind people closer to the state by linking these campaigns and individual support to the Nationalists' effort to save the nation, and expand state control over wartime mobilisation.

War Effort and Governance: The Role of Women Civil Servants

During the wartime period civil servants became a point of reference for the community and the government, and their mobilisation contributed towards the bringing of stability to wartime society. They represented a segment of the urban middle class which became a vital pool from which to extract financial

³²) 'General report on the activities of the General Association of the Friends of Wounded Soldiers within the NLM General Association, December 1946', in ZMSDZH, Series 5, Part 2, Politics, Vol. 5, p. 316.

³³) *The NLM General Association reports*, p. 292.

resources to support the war effort, as well as being involved in the provision of relief through various agencies linked to NLM Associations. Their involvement was an integral part of an overall attempt by the Nationalists to create closer connections with Chinese society in order to set in motion wartime mobilisation and consolidate the Nationalists' power base.

Civil servants took part in the war effort by organising fund-raising and assisting the population. Women were crucial to this effort in terms of both fund-raising and relief work, but more importantly were vital for the government outreach and mobilisation of the population. Civil servants would join the war effort and mobilisation through the organisation of the New Life Women's Working Teams (*Xin shenghuo funü gongzuo dui* 新生活婦女工作隊), which depended on the NLM General Association's Women's Advisory Committee (*Xin shenghuo yundong cujin zonghui funü zhidao weiyuanhui* 新生活運動促進總會婦女指導委員會), and were present at the central levels of the administration and Guomindang.³⁴ Their teams shadowed the local municipal office and ministries, and they were deployed in fund-raising activities in addition to being channels for communicating with different administrative organs and the population. These characteristics and the urban environment in which they operated made women civil servants in Chongqing and Chengdu, where the central political and administrative bodies had been relocated, receptive targets for mobilisation. Further studies on this subject across free China would be extremely useful to understand the extent to which women civil servants' and women's participation was extensive.³⁵ For instance, we are aware that in Jiangxi and Guangdong provinces women were mobilised through the network of NLM Associations and related organisations during the wartime period.³⁶ These examples show that the mobilisation work in Chongqing and Chengdu was not an isolated case.

Ever since Chiang Kai-shek took power Song Meiling (Madame Chiang) was actively involved in politics and became the symbol of the NLM and wartime mobilisation. Equally, the wives of public figures and women civil servants were

³⁴) Ferlanti, *New Life Movement*, pp. 998–999. In this earlier article I adopted a slightly different translation for this committee, but it is the same body.

³⁵) On the Women's Advisory Committee/Council, the network of educated women, wartime relief and political activism, see Helen Schneider, 'Mobilising women: the Women's Advisory Council, resistance, and reconstruction during China's war with Japan', *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, in this volume; and Harriet T. Zurndorfer, 'Wartime refugee relief in Chinese cities and women's political activism, 1937–1941', in Billy K.L. So and Madeleine Zelin (eds) *Cultural Narratives of Urban Space in Republican Chinese Cities* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

³⁶) Ferlanti, *New Life Movement*, pp. 996–999.

expected to be at the forefront of mobilisation. The New Life Women's Working Team³⁷ of the Chongqing Municipal Government (*Xin shenghuo funü gongzuo dui shi zhengfu dui* 新生活婦女工作隊市政府隊), for example, was established on 10 January 1939 and was directed by Cai Ruimin, wife of the then mayor He Guoguang. In 1940 the responsibility would fall to Huang Zhuoqun, wife of the new mayor of Chongqing, Wu Guozhen. Under the new direction the most important change would be the organisation of teams at the bureau levels (*ju* 局) with the setting up of units (*fendui* 分隊).³⁸ The introduction of a further level is proof of the need of the municipal government to ensure strict participation within the local government, possibly because by 1940 the war's progression required an even more extensive mobilisation network within the state administration. Practically it meant that meetings, fund-raising and propaganda work for the war effort would all be organised at these further levels. For instance, the founding meeting for the unit of the NLW Team of the Financial Bureau (*Xin shenghuo funü gongzuo dui shi zhengfu caizheng ju fendui* 新生活婦女工作隊市政府隊財政局分隊) took place amid the celebrations for the Sixth Anniversary of the NLM.³⁹ These changes were introduced just before the celebrations, when major contribution campaigns would be launched and, as we shall see, the team members contributed personally to the war effort and collected contributions inside and outside the teams. The bureaux themselves met the expenses for setting and running the units. For instance, the unit of the NLW team of the Financial Bureau during its first meeting asked the bureau for a monthly subsidy of 40 yuan.⁴⁰

As Table 2 shows, the so-called women's circles had raised an extraordinary amount of money during the NLM Fifth Anniversary fund-raising campaign of 1939. Keeping aside these major events, it is important to bear in mind that civil servants, and in this case women, were constantly being asked to contribute in different ways to the war effort and NLM anniversaries were utilised by the government to revitalise support for the war. Between 1939 and 1940 the NLW Team of the Chongqing Municipal Government took part in the following activities: fund-raising (women's economising contribution, fund-raising for winter clothes and the military shoes fund-raising campaign), clothes-making, recruitment for the Friends of Wounded Soldiers, propaganda work and women's handicraft

³⁷ Hereafter abbreviated as NLW Team.

³⁸ 'Report of the NLW Team of the Chongqing Municipal Government', 9 May 1940, Chongqing Municipal Archives, Chongqing, PRC (hereafter cited as CMA), 53/4/156-1.

³⁹ 'Minutes on the set up and first meeting of the unit of the NLW Team in the Financial Bureau', 19 February 1940, CMA, 53/4/156-1.

⁴⁰ *Minutes of the NLW Teams in the Financial Bureau*, 19 February 1940, CMA, 53/4/156-1.

group.⁴¹ These teams were also active in circulating war propaganda: reports by the unit of the NLW Team of the Public Works Bureau (*gongwu ju fendui* 工務局分隊) tell us that on Women's Day they went out and hung up the 36 slogans they had written, as well as two sets of wall papers, in the Seven Star Ridges (*Qixinggang*) area.⁴² The work implemented by these groups was extremely difficult because many family members of civil servants had been evacuated elsewhere.⁴³ And so were civil servants: the preservation of channels of communication and information flow was a concern to the NLW Teams. By October 1940, the Women's Advisory Committee was urging fellow civil servants who had been evacuated to areas in the countryside to get back with updates on their work, no matter how modest, and urged them to maintain attendance at the fortnightly colloquia taking place in Chongqing.⁴⁴ Reports by the NLW Teams held at the Chongqing Municipal Archives tell of each small monthly contribution. Huang Zhuoqun, in one report sent to the Women's Advisory Committee, estimated that through different campaigns the NLW Teams had raised 8,277 yuan.⁴⁵ Although these Teams' contribution may be regarded as a drop in the ocean, their collective effort provides an insight into the scope and outcome of their mobilisation (see Table 5).

These women's involvement was shared beyond the local Chongqing Municipal Government and was taking place at different levels of the central administration. The NLW teams were actively involved in the management of refugees' relief. Archival materials attest to a constant flow of correspondence between the Relief Committee on the one side, and the Women's Advisory Committee and the NLW teams on the other side. The Relief Committee (*Zhenjihui* 賑濟會) was created in June 1929, but it was completely reorganised between February and April 1938 to cater for the needs of war relief. The Committee was subordinated to the Administrative Yuan.⁴⁶

⁴¹ 'Report of the NLW Team of the Chongqing Municipal Government', 9 May 1940, CMA, 53/4/156-1.

⁴² 'Report of the Unit of the NLW Team of the Public Works Bureau', 21 March 1940, CMA, 53/4/156-1.

⁴³ 'Report of the NLW Team of the Chongqing Municipal Government', 28 March 1940, CMA, 53/4/156-1.

⁴⁴ 'Concise report on the work of the NLW Team, fourth issue', 15 October 1940, HIA, Series New Life, Document 20.1, 1.

⁴⁵ *Report of the NLW Team of the Chongqing Municipal Government*, 28 March 1940.

⁴⁶ Han Wenchang and Shao Ling (eds) *Minguo Shiqi Zhongyang Guojia Jiguan Zuzhi Gaishu* (Overview of the Central State Organs' Organisation during the Republican Period) (Beijing: Zhongguo Dang'an Chubanshe, 1994), p. 446.

Table 5. Personnel of the NLW Teams and Units in the Chongqing Municipal Government and Their Activities 1939–1940

<i>Members of the NLW teams and bureaux units (α)</i>							
<i>Municipal Government</i>	<i>Secretariat</i>	<i>Bureau of Social Affairs</i>	<i>Police Bureau</i>	<i>Financial Bureau</i>	<i>Bureau of Public Works (β)</i>	<i>Hygiene Bureau</i>	<i>Total</i>
7	7	6	15	5	9	10	59
<i>Fund-raising (γ)</i>							
Military shoes (yuan)							
1,408.00	56.00	38.00	76.00	48.00	60.00	40.00	1,726
Friends of Wounded Soldiers (yuan)							
265.00	60.00	32.00	106.00	114.00	151,50.00	107.00	835.50
Friends of Wounded Soldiers (new members)							
82	24	23	40	40	37	40	286
<i>Purchase of government bonds (δ)</i>							
	<i>Municipal Government</i>	<i>Bureau of Public Works</i>	<i>Financial Bureau</i>	<i>Bureau of Social Affairs</i>	<i>Hygiene Bureau</i>	<i>Total</i>	
Nominal value (yuan)	10,190.00	350.00	11,560.00	100.00	200.00	22,400.00	
Net receipts amount (yuan)	9,578.60	329.00	10,866.00	94.00	188.00	21,056.00	
Bonds issued	29	6	20	10	20	85	

Sources:

- (α) 'List of personnel in the NLW Team of the Chongqing Municipal Government', 19 February 1940, Chongqing Municipal Archives (CMA), 53/4/156-1.
- (β) Note that the total number of personnel was 20 between men and women. 'Report of the unit of the NLW Team', 21 March 1940, CMA, 53/4/156-1.
- (γ) 'Report of the NLW Team of the Chongqing Municipal Government', 9 May 1940, CMA, 53/4/156-1.
- (δ) 'Table for the wartime collection of the NLW Team of the Chongqing Municipal Government and subordinated units', c. 1940–1941, CMA, 53/4/156-2; the original table lacks a date, but the bonds should have been subscribed between September 1940 and March 1941.

The NLW Team of the Ministry of Education, Branch No. Two (*Xin shenghuo funü gongzuo dui jiaoyu bu dui di'er zhidui* 新生活運動婦女工作隊教育部隊) in Chongqing was created in 1939. In May 1941 this team wrote to the Relief Committee and asked for funding to subsidise the setting up and operating costs of a small handicraft factory. Three general reasons made the setting up of small

factories a worthwhile investment for the government. First, it took the pressure off housing and supporting refugees; second, it provided training which, it was hoped, would then allow individuals to re-enter the productive cycle; and third, although subsidised, these factories were meant to be productive and support the war effort. Professional training offered by the women's working teams was therefore very much connected to the basic needs of taking in displaced people and making sure that they would be able to support themselves by working. In the case of the NLW Team of the Ministry of Education, Branch No. Two's factory started off on a small scale, but it needed extra funding. The passage below shows how their activity continued despite the evacuation from Chongqing, and their centrality in the organisation and provision of relief to refugees:

This unit was established in Chongqing in spring 1939. That same year together with the National Drama College we were evacuated to Jiang'an and immediately organised a women's literacy class. The class was composed of 60 students of which 30 graduated. We selected ten among the graduates and organised a small handicraft factory (*xiao gongyichang* 小工藝廠). The head of the team unit was also the director of the factory. Only a sewing department was set up [and it] specialised in the production of small handicraft articles and children's dresses for the purpose of increasing the rear areas' production. In the winter of 1940 the small handicraft factory developed well [and] there is in fact the need ... to expand ... The head of the Education Team ... has planned to add and set up two departments of spinning and weaving. Because of the lack of funds, the Education Team is requesting the Relief Committee to provide funding for starting and subsidising routine expenses ...⁴⁷

As the able-bodied men were at war, the overwhelmingly female population needed to be self-reliant and also support family members. Small handicraft factories became a solution for training personnel and joined the war effort by selling the articles produced. What is more significant here, however, is that the NLM network of women civil servants played a central role in providing the infrastructure to address such cases and liaise directly with the Relief Committee; furthermore, it constituted a routine network through which the Relief Committee itself operated. One such example is the intervention in handling the case of Mr Zhang's family. Mr Zhang Fa was a cadet at the Central Military School in Chongqing whose main concerns were to secure support for his parents (both 46 years old) and two younger sisters (19 and 6 years old), and to serve his country. Mr Zhang pointed out that in Hangzhou his parents had had a small cloth store and his sister had worked in a textile factory. This information

⁴⁷ 'On sending the comparative table for revenue and expenditure of the ordinary subsidy from April to July', 2 September 1941, SHA, 116/1268.

was provided in a report to the Relief Committee in which he pleaded for his family to be employed at Jiangjin No. One Relief Factory (*Jiangjin zhenjiu di yi gongchang* 江津振救第一工廠):

Ever since the war broke out [and] my home town (Hangzhou) fell into enemy hands, all the family has led a vagrant life. After coming to Chongqing, in October 1939 I gained admittance by examination to the Central Military School, course 17th [in the] Military Communications Department. In my family both my parents who are extremely old and surpassed forties and two younger sisters live bitterly in the rural village of Songhai near Jiangjin [southwest of Chongqing]. I was expected to provide for [our] living after my graduation, however, unexpectedly, in November last year I have been assigned to the post of lieutenant squad leader of the Third Army Communications Regiment (*Lujun tongxinbing di san tuan ren zhongwei banzhang* 陸軍通信兵第三團任中尉班長). [It] is difficult not only to support the whole family living, but also my clothes and food. My parents have sent me three letters urging me to return to Chongqing and change profession to support the whole family living.⁴⁸

Zhang Fa was torn between his country and his family. He wanted to serve his country as, at the height of the war, he believed it needed the skills in which he had been trained—though the display of patriotism in the report was perhaps instrumental to secure assistance—but he could not disregard his family obligations and leave them behind. Although the Relief Committee was the recipient of Zhang Fa's request, this body could not practically solve the issue. The Committee ordered the NLW Team of the Ministry of War (*Junzheng bu* 軍政部) to process the employment of Zhang's three family members in another factory which belonged to them and specifically employed family dependants of military personnel, and to liaise with the Healthcare Institute (*Baojianyuan* 保健院) of the Ministry of Social Affairs (*Shehui bu* 社會部) to take in the youngest sister.⁴⁹ This request illustrates the sad state of many refugees and the distress of young soldiers caught between two kinds of responsibilities; it also highlights the fact that the factories managed by the NLW Teams represented the Zhang family's only hope of survival after they had had to leave everything behind in Hangzhou and start anew in Sichuan province.

Wartime Emergencies: The Organisation of Relief Work

It is extremely difficult to render the scale of state intervention when it comes to relief operations. Relief work was carried out in the aftermath of emergencies,

⁴⁸ 'Reporting on the native place having fallen into enemy hands', 12 March 1942, SHA, 116/1268.

⁴⁹ 'Zhang Fa petitioning about family members' life being poverty stricken', 20 March 1942, SHA, 116/1268.

such as the air raids, but a relevant part of it consisted in putting in place the structures that would answer long-term needs. Given the conditions in which the NLM General Association and, generally speaking, the service and voluntary corps operated, the support they provided is even more significant. Women were at the forefront of relief work and a consistent part of the work carried out by the NLM Associations consisted in assisting civilians to cope with the hardship of the war by, for instance, operating air raid prevention service teams, training first-aid personnel, and providing refugees with shelters, education and employment.

In Chongqing the emergency was aggravated by the incessant bombing of the city between 1939 and 1940, which had led to the setting up of the Air Raid Service Teams co-ordinated by the NLM General Association. By 1940, the factories in the Chongqing area became the target of Japanese air strikes, and that year the city was bombed 80 times: 4,149 people were killed, 5,411 people were injured and 6,962 buildings were destroyed. The months of May and June 1940 were extremely harsh for the populace as the city was bombed for more than 20 days.⁵⁰ This is not to say that the system was faultless. In the case of Chongqing, the frailty of the air defence system was evident in the unfolding of the tragedy at Jiaochangkou tunnel. This tragic event exposes the shortage of air shelters vis-à-vis the number of those who needed refuge. When on 5 June 1941 the city was attacked, Chongqing residents crowded into Jiaochangkou tunnel and suffocated in an attempt to save their lives during the bombing. PRC historians estimate the deaths close to 10,000 and refer to the incident as the ‘great tunnel suffocation massacre’ (*Dasui zhixi can’an* 大隧窒息惨案), while placing the blame on ‘Guomindang officials’ corruption, default of duty, and irresponsibility’ (*Guomindang guanyuan de fubai, wanhu zhishou yu bu fu zeren* 国民党官员的腐败、玩忽职守与不负责任).⁵¹ Recent research on the Chongqing air raid shelter system shows that both the alerting system and the provision of shelters had improved greatly, although the performance could tragically fall short, such as in the event of Jiaochangkou tunnel.⁵² Yet the shortage of shelters is one side of the story of Chongqing air defence, the other side being what could be described as a civilian army of nearly 20,000 people which in 1940 participated in the Air Raid Service Teams and risked their lives to protect civilians.⁵³ Their work was fundamental in Chongqing as they dealt with the tasks of getting people to safety, maintaining order among civilians, monitoring air raid shelters and

⁵⁰ Zhou, *Chongqing*, p. 907.

⁵¹ Zhou, *Chongqing*, p. 907.

⁵² Edna Tow, ‘The great bombing of Chongqing and the Anti-Japanese War, 1937–1945’, in Mark Peattie et al. (eds) *The Battle for China* (Stanford; Stanford University Press, 2011), pp. 268–275; according to Tow, official reports account for 992 deaths, p. 275.

⁵³ Zhou, *Chongqing*, p. 911.

dealing with the wounded and dead.⁵⁴ The NLM General Association also managed the setting up of free food distribution in emergency situations. During a big fire which broke out in Chongqing and lasted for two days—19–20 August 1940—very likely as a result of the air strikes, tea and porridge stations (*chazhou zhan* 茶粥站) appeared in main city streets and provided food to 41,785 people.⁵⁵

The NLM Associations were also involved in civilian training and, more broadly, adults' and children's education; both aspects were considered important for stemming wartime emergencies and stabilising society. In Chengdu, as a response to what they considered an imminent bombing of the city, the Wartime First-aid Team (*zhanshi jiuhudui* 戰時救護隊) of the Sichuan NLM Association organised the training of first-aid teams through women's first-aid classes (*funü jiuhu ban* 婦女救護班). It invited women who graduated from the training classes to take tests and recruited six women for the team. Another four requested to take part to the work and became reserve members; they would meet every day at Zhongshan Park waiting for calls.⁵⁶ Also, the Women's Working Committee (*funü gongzuo weiyuanhui* 婦女工作委員會) of the Sichuan NLM Association was central in carrying out education programmes for the local population. This was no superfluous concern. Over a third of Chengdu's population was illiterate (*bu shizi* 不識字), which meant being cut off from written news on the war and government policies. The Women's Working Committee obtained permission from the Chengdu Wartime People's Continuing Education Promoting Committee (*Chengdu shi zhanshi minzhong buxi jiaoyu tuixing weiyuanhui* 成都市戰時民眾補習教育推行委員會) to organise evening classes in their own building. The first two evening classes started in January 1938 and were attended by 100 adult students.⁵⁷ The Chongqing NLM Association provided moral (*jingshen* 精神) and academic training to 720 vagrant children who were then organised in two brigades of the Children's Labour Service Corps (*ertong laodong fuwutuan* 兒童勞動服務團). It also promoted seven People's Schools (*minzhong xuexiao* 民眾學校) for the summer vacation in well-situated locations in the city; these offered 40 daily lectures for three hours a day on the following topics: writing, wartime and hygiene general knowledge, New Life essentials, arithmetic, music, calligraphy, simple military training, and general knowledge on air defence and defence against chemical weapons. A total of 1,260 students graduated from the schools.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ *Report to the Relief Committee*, 16 June 1940.

⁵⁵ *The NLM General Association reports*, p. 293.

⁵⁶ *Sichuan province report 1938*, DSH 483/24, 7–8.

⁵⁷ *Sichuan province report 1938*, DSH 483/24, 8–9.

⁵⁸ *Chongqing city report 1938*, DSH 483/24, 139–140, 142–143.

Chongqing was at the receiving end of refugees' migration. Civilians arrived at the safe haven of Chongqing from worn-torn areas and for this purpose the Chongqing NLM Association funded the Chongqing War Zone Refugees Administrative Institute (*Chongqing zhanqu nanmin guanlisuo* 重慶戰區難民管理所). This Institute began to operate in August 1938 and by December had provided accommodation for over 1,600 people, of whom over 1,100 found a job either by themselves or through the Institute's mediation. A temporary refugees' hospice was set up at the Hechuan White Pagoda Temple (*Hechuan baidasi* 合川白塔寺) and up to December 1938 took in 400 refugees from the war zones; in addition to offering food and clothing, it also provided education.⁵⁹

Among the refugees there would also be factory workers whose relocation was crucial for the continuation of industrial production. Relocation schemes were conducted through the structure of the Women's Advisory Committee, which coordinated and conducted the evacuation operations of female factory workers and their family members from Hankou (Wuhan) to Baoji (in Shaanxi) and Chongqing with the assistance of the Relief Committee:

As this Association previously in Han[kou] received the order of evacuating female workers and transporting them to the rear areas to be engaged in production work, [it was] established to take [them] in [by] 23 August 1938. Over 500 workers and 508 family members were taken in [housed], among these 128 family members were sent to Baoji and 380 to Chongqing. According to the decisions taken ... at the joint meeting, Your Committee would provide a support of three yuan per month per person to all the family members. However ... because the war is spreading and prices are soaring along the routes of Wuhan, Baoji, Chongqing and other places, boarding expenses [are] on average four yuan per month.⁶⁰

The document indicates that in the matter of refugees the Women's Advisory Committee was receiving funding directly from the Relief Committee; finding itself unable to budget the evacuation as had been previously agreed, it turned to the Relief Committee to cover the extra costs of the operation.⁶¹

Alongside the tasks of organising wartime mobilisation campaigns, the NLM Associations were deeply involved in the implementation of programmes which catered for and provided relief to the local population and refugees arriving from further afield. While doing so the NLM Associations created a long-lasting structure and network through which emergencies could be met and expanded the scope of state intervention, at the same time stabilising wartime society.

⁵⁹) *Chongqing city report 1938*, DSH 483/24, 143–144.

⁶⁰) 'On the instruction of assisting the evacuation of female workers' family dependants', 8 February 1939, SHA, 116/1268.

⁶¹) 'Checking this Committee's reply on the list of evacuated female workers' family dependants', 27 April 1939, SHA, 116/1268.

Conclusion

In July 1937 China was at war. Until 1937 the Communists had effectively advocated the cause of resisting Japan and, while the Nationalists could reclaim 'resistance' in their propaganda, now that war was happening the notion of resistance had to be translated into practical action and coordinated at the administrative level. As the war unfolded and emergencies built up, the Nationalist Government used the NLM structure to support the war effort and carry out relief work; and the NLM General Association became central to the organisation of the war effort and mobilisation. The NLM and its Associations were the Nationalist Government's offspring and, while they served the practical purpose of organising wartime mobilisation, they also sought to secure political support for the Nationalists.

This paper has shown that by 1938 and 1942 the NLM General Association was overseeing a considerable number of organisations which mobilised the population through different events and campaigns to support China's war. The range of activities carried out in Chongqing and Chengdu provides an important insight into the government's effort of gathering financial backing and protecting its citizens; but it also shows that the Nationalists were mobilising the population, and that a key to this was the involvement of civil servants. Their mobilisation suggests that the state was reliant on them, and their participation highlights the link between governance and wartime mobilisation. The complex network of NLM organisations in the administrative structure helped stabilise the Nationalist state during the first years of the war, and the involvement of civil servants tempered the centrifugal drifting of the administrative institutions.

The organisation of public fund-raising events and the provision of relief were fundamental for reinforcing the idea that the Nationalists could protect their citizens and facilitate the identification of the citizens with the Nationalist state. It does not necessarily mean, however, that the organisation of wartime mobilisation in the areas under Nationalist control was limited to political propaganda, and, as such, an empty shell irreconcilable with the very notion of participation. The people who were taking part in the mobilisation organised by the Nationalists should be viewed as individuals, and further research is needed in order to gain a more accurate picture of what 'participation' meant in those circumstances and the relevance, for instance, of shared beliefs, sense of duty, psychological pressure and, indeed, lack of choice as triggers for individual 'participation'.

A long-held assumption is that the Nationalists did not mobilise the population during the wartime period, and that even if they tried, they were ineffective. This article has shown that the scope of wartime mobilisation in Chongqing and Chengdu was extensive and that the NLM was part of a wider quest for solutions

at a time of extreme and taxing circumstances: an indication, perhaps, that we should rethink the relationship between the Nationalists' response to war, state capacity and civilian mobilisation in wartime China.

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