



RESEARCH ARTICLE

How deep is your love? Patriotism, money and the people in Canton in the early phase of the Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1938

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Abstract

This article studies how people, especially the business community, in the southern Chinese city of Canton, responded to the government's fund-raising campaigns in the early phase of the War of Resistance against Japan (1937–45). It challenges the conventional views that the whole city of Canton had wholeheartedly united together in the face of their encroaching enemy, and that people from all walks of life displayed a high degree of patriotism with their self-denying participation in the city's war efforts. Despite the common concern about the threat of looming attack on Canton by the Japanese, this commonality, however, did not help cement the populace into a nationalistic whole with great solidarity, as the state and its publicists hoped. This article also reveals the problem with interpreting socio-political events in this turbulent time through the narrow lens of Chinese nationalism.

Patriotic Chinese historians and politicians never question the sincerity of the Chinese people's selfless and fearless sacrifice for salvaging their country from conquest by their enemy.¹ For decades, they have been educating their readers/audiences that a history of the war is, and should be, largely a record of heroic deeds, patriotic self-denying acts and solidarity of the people when confronting the Japanese invasion.² Heroic resistance, however, is only one fraction of a

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¹For example, He Bangtai (ed.), *Guangzhou kang zhan ji shi* (Guangzhou, 1995).

²P.M. Coble, 'Writing about atrocity: wartime accounts and their contemporary uses', *Modern Asian Studies*, 2 (2011). Publications that promote this positive image of Chinese/Cantonese are plentiful, e.g. He Bangtai (ed.), *Guangzhou kang zhan ji shi*, 4–15, 34–69; Guangdongsheng junqu zhengzhibu and

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much more complicated reality. People in Canton responded differently to the war and the government's call for support. Although there were common concerns, such as soaring food prices, air raids, breakdown of public security, unemployment, etc., these commonalities did not help unite the local populace into a stronger and self-denying entity, as the state and its propagandists wished. People continued to be divided on so many issues and things, as ever.

'Buy National Salvation Public Bonds, or you are a slave of a fallen country'³

On 1 September 1937, the Guangdong government started a province-wide fund-raising campaign selling the National Salvation Public Bond (救國公債), as the central government ordered. The target was to raise 20 million yuan, through bond sales, in three months.⁴ At the beginning, there was an aura of optimism among the officials: Zeng Yangpu, head of the Finance Department in Canton, telegraphed Jiang Jieshi (蔣介石) just three days after the bonds were issued, stating that the enthusiastic response from different sectors in Canton 'is so unprecedented that the 20-million-yuan target...will certainly be met'.⁵ Meanwhile, the Canton authorities organized a city-wide publicity campaign to promote the bond: publicity banners were hung in public places;⁶ Radio Canton broadcasted promotional speeches by senior officials and promotional songs.⁷ Some business firms and lineage organizations responded enthusiastically. For instance, Tong Ji Tang, a company specializing in timber, put up an eye-catching announcement in a popular daily about its decision to sell three premises in Canton and to use the gains for buying these bonds;⁸ lineage-villages in Shunte and Xinhui counties had reportedly decided to sell their collectively owned properties in Canton for the same purpose.⁹ Many villages in the Pearl River Delta suspended religious festivals and temple fairs, on the government's advice, and saved the monies for purchasing bonds.¹⁰ In Canton, donors from all walks of life were reportedly responding enthusiastically: prostitutes, peasants, students, journalists, spinsters, housewives, the elderly, children, etc.¹¹ One noticeable case was a Zhao Daguang Drug Store which put up an advertisement in a popular newspaper announcing its purchase of an eyebrow-raising 10,000-yuan-worth of the bonds, and pledged that it would buy 500 yuan

Hainan junqu zhengzhibu (eds.), *Fenghuo nantian* (Guangzhou, 1974), 163–419; Zuo Xuangwen, *Huanan kangchan shigao* (Guangzhou, 2004), ch. 1.

³From a promotional slogan for the bond. *Yuehua bao* (hereafter *YHB*), 16 Sep. 1937.

⁴'Jiuguo gongzhai xiangguan shiliao', *The History of the Ministry of Finance, Republic of China online*, <http://museum.mof.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=3725&ctNode=33&mp>.

⁵'Zeng Yangpu dian Jiang Zhongzheng dangri huitong Wu Tiecheng yaoji Guangzhou gejie daibiao quan wu jiuguo gongzhai bing qiwu ji liangqianwan yuan', Jiang Zhongzheng zongtong wenwu (hereafter *JZZ*), no. 002-090105-00002-366, dated 4 Sep. 1937, Academia Historica Archive, Taiwan (hereafter *AHA*).

⁶*YHB*, 16 Sep. 1937, 1 Nov. 1937, 5 Apr. 1938.

⁷*YHB* 5 Sep. 1937.

⁸*YHB*, 3 Dec. 1937.

⁹*YHB*, 3 Oct. 1937. *Huazi ribao* (hereafter *HZRB*), 21 Oct. 1937, 8 Nov. 1937.

¹⁰*YHB*, 8 Nov. 1937, 3, 5 Apr. 1938, 3, 5, 18 May 1938.

¹¹*YHB*, 1 Nov. 1937, 4, 6, 8 Nov. 1937, 11, 15 Apr. 1938, 11, 20 May 1938.

more each month until final victory.¹² It is not known if this patriotic store-owner survived the war and kept his promise, but in the eyes of the cash-thirst government, it was a highly commendable example of 'bourgeoisie nationalism'.

It must be noted in passing that since the beginning of the war in July 1937, the Guangdong government had issued two public bonds within six months. The National Salvation Public Bond was issued in September 1937 targeted at raising 30 million yuan. On 1 March 1938, the second bond, the National Defence Public Bond (國防公債), was issued, aimed at raising 15 million yuan within three months.¹³ To make the bonds affordable to even 'humble citizens', the government lowered the bonds' smallest unit price from 5 to 1 yuan.¹⁴ Between September 1937 and late October 1938, newspapers in Canton, encouraged by the government, eagerly published stories about how enthusiastically people 'are buying bonds'.¹⁵ Behind this façade of public enthusiasm, however, was a different and not-so-promising picture.

First of all, the public response to the National Salvation Public Bond was hardly encouraging, a fact that was even admitted by a concerned T.V. Soong in his telegraph to the mayor of Canton.¹⁶ In fact, many people purchased these bonds involuntarily and unenthusiastically; they were 'requested to buy', an euphemism of forced contribution, like it or not. For instance, civil servants were reportedly 'donating wages' for purchasing these bonds, but these 'donations' actually came from a 30–50 per cent mandatory cut of their wages for one month.¹⁷ Shop assistants were instructed to buy; their payments were handled by their shopkeeper employers who deducted from their wages a sum determined by a fund-raising committee, ranging between 10 per cent and 30 per cent of their salary. A disappointed Canton Chamber of Commerce (廣州市商會) reprimanded its member-guilds (except one) for being unresponsive to the purchasing scheme 'as instructed and required'.¹⁸ In February 1938, the mayor of Canton, disappointed with the sluggish sale of bonds, announced his plan of requiring every civil servant in Canton to buy a minimum amount of 1 yuan within 24 hours; those who ignored this 'request' would be deemed 'unconscientious...and would be punished by heaven and eliminated by earth'.¹⁹

To flaunt his support for the government's war efforts, Li Hongji, a senior special agent in the Anti-Opium Bureau and a wealthy opium tax-farmer, had

¹²YHB, 1 Nov. 1937.

¹³Guangdongsheng guofan gongzhai quanmo weiyuanhui (ed.), *Guangdongsheng guofan gongzhai tiaoli jimo ji banfa hui bian* (Guangzhou, 1938), 1–2; YHB, 7 Apr. 1938.

¹⁴HZRB, 3 Dec. 1937. In Canton and its vicinity, prostitutes initiated a bond-buying campaign. YHB, 11 Apr. 1937, 6 Nov. 1937, 11 Apr. 1938, 20 May 1938. Peasants in different parts of Guangdong also organized similar campaigns. YHB, 3 Nov. 1937.

¹⁵HZRB, 6 Mar. 1938.

¹⁶Song Ziwen han Jiang Zhongzheng yi junzuo mingyi so fa yin jiuguo gongzhai kaimo zhi jiyue ershiqi ri liang diangao', JZZ, no. 002-080109-00008-005, 'Zai zi gongzhai', 334/291–3, dated 13 Oct. 1937, AHA.

¹⁷YHB, 16 Sep. 1937; 'Xingzhengyuan han Guomin Zhengfu Wenguanchu wei chau song ge jiguan gongwuyuan rengou jiuguo gongzhai tian fa fen shouqu ji huanling zhaipiao banfa', in Guomin Zhengfu (hereafter GMZ), no. 001-012470-00018-004, dated 28 Feb. 1938, AHA.

¹⁸HZRB, 26 Nov. 1937. County towns in Guangdong were also required to buy these bonds. HZRB, 27 Nov. 1937.

¹⁹HZRB, 7 Mar. 1938.

reportedly spent 110,000 yuan on the National Salvation Public Bond.²⁰ It is, however, unlikely that Li did that out of spontaneity or patriotism, rather than ‘at the request’ of the government, whose continuous blessing was essential for his lucrative opium tax-farming business. Those who refused this kind of official ‘invitation’ faced retaliation. For instance, Deng Yanhua, a senior government and Kuomintang (Nationalist Party) (KMT) official, had visited and ‘requested’ the owners of two big Chinese medicine factories to buy bonds; they subsequently purchased 2,000 yuan each. But when Deng made a similar appeal to Chinese medicine doctors (國醫) in Canton, he was ignored. In retaliation, Deng introduced mandatory examination of Chinese herbal-medicine practitioners, much to the dismay of that profession.²¹

Three months after the first bond sale was launched, the chamber, the government and even the military chief (Yu Hanmou) in Canton told journalists from Hong Kong that the response from the business sector was ‘spontaneous and encouraging’.²² Newspaper reports, however, indicated that progress was hardly promising. In early November, some guilds were already expressing concern about the difficulty they were experiencing in raising the designated sum imposed on them by the chamber because many of their members had left Canton owing to Japanese air raids.²³ Moreover, the Canton business community was unhappy with the government’s heavy reliance on local banks and merchant/business associations when distributing forced loans and bonds;²⁴ this time, the chamber was required to purchase 3.3 million yuan of bonds, which was over one fifth of the targeted 15 million yuan to be raised from the entire province. This was no easy task, since members of the chamber disagreed with each other over how the amount should be subdivided and distributed downward to individual member-guilds – the disparity between companies’ size, capital and profit was far too wide to ensure fair distribution of acquisition quotas.²⁵ In December 1937, for instance, some merchants in Canton petitioned the chamber and the government to lessen their quota.²⁶ Stories about businessmen’s grievances about unequal and unfair distribution of subscription quotas on each trade and among member-guilds appeared regularly in a Hong Kong daily, and these vociferous complaints led many businessmen to procrastinate over either buying or settling payments, hoping that the scheme would eventually fall apart.²⁷ During the sale of the second bond in April 1938, some guilds criticized the chamber for not allocating enough big shops or guilds

²⁰YHB, 4 Oct. 1937.

²¹YHB, 3 Nov. 1937.

²²HZRB, 27 Nov. 1937, 9 Dec. 1937 and Dec. 1937 *passim*.

²³The Jade-Selling Stalls Guild pleaded with its members to return to Canton to buy their share of bonds. YHB, 1 Nov. 1937.

²⁴Between 1929 and 1935, six government bonds were issued in Guangdong. Of these bonds, two were ‘absorbed’, at the government’s order, by local banks in Canton; the other four were ‘distributed’ among guilds and business associations in cities. Pan Guoqi, *Jindai Zhongguo difang gongzhai yanjiu: Yi Wan Chuan Min Yue wei zhongxin de kaocha* (Beijing, 2014), 289–93. Shanghai capitalists were subjected to similar pressure. P.M. Coble Jr, *The Shanghai Capitalists and the Nationalist Government 1927–1937* (Cambridge, MA, 1980), ch. 2; L.E. Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 1974), 226–32.

²⁵YHB, 10 Apr. 1938.

²⁶HZRB, 22 Dec. 1937.

²⁷HZRB, 28 Nov. 1937.

as Categories A and B bond-buyers (who were given a larger quota), much to the disadvantage of medium and small business firms.²⁸

This problem of procrastination was so serious that one month after the first bond was issued, the chamber decided to send 'dunning teams' (催債勸募隊) to visit every member-shop and office, to 'persuade' them to fulfil their 'patriotic duty' of buying their designated amount of bonds.²⁹ In Canton, 50 dunning teams were formed, each targeting 100 shops; the chamber's members doubled-up as dunners and planned to visit 5,000 shops, and high-performing dunners would receive pecuniary rewards.³⁰ Instead of being warmly greeted by their 'patriotic members' (an image publicized by the chamber), these teams received a cold welcome from merchants and shopkeepers, so much so that the chamber considered asking for police assistance in dunning.³¹ This idea, though welcomed by the police, was eventually dropped on the advice of the Finance Department in the event that police interference could be seen as being counter-productive to the much-needed social harmony in time of war.³² To impress the authorities with its sincerity in this matter, the chamber imposed a penalty fine on members who failed to purchase their assigned number of bonds by a due date.³³ This, however, did not help much. A few days after the dunning teams were dispatched, a Hong Kong newspaperman reported that their impact was limited; senior officials also admitted disappointedly that the business sector did not respond enthusiastically enough to this campaign of immense national importance.³⁴

Since these dunning teams were manned by 'volunteers' who were mostly full-time businessmen, and dedicated full-time enthusiasts in this unpopular time-consuming work were hard to find, dunning progress was slow. Mid-December 1937 was set as the deadline for the business sector to pay in its assigned 5 million yuan to the treasury, but by early December the chamber had collected from its members only 1.02 million yuan, though the chamber told the press that the outstanding 4 million would be ready in a fortnight.³⁵ By late December, the chamber had clearly failed to meet the target on time and begged the government to postpone the deadline twice, which was effectively an admission of defeat.³⁶ When the dunning operation came to an end in late January 1938, the chamber publicly bragged that a 'satisfactory result' had been achieved,³⁷ but that was clearly a dishonest face-saving distraction, because unfavourable reports were abundant. For example, a reader wrote to a Hong Kong newspaper lamenting that his countrymen

²⁸ *HZRB*, 31 Mar. 1938.

²⁹ *HZRB*, 11, 12, 16 Nov. 1937.

³⁰ *HZRB*, 6, 18 Dec. 1937.

³¹ *HZRB*, 26 Nov. 1937.

³² *HZRB*, 2, 9 Dec. 1937.

³³ *HZRB*, 3 Dec. 1937.

³⁴ *HZRB*, 6, 20, 21, 30 Dec. 1937. The partial failure of this 'dunning tactic' was always described discreetly in newspapers in Canton, unlike the more straightforward reporting by Hong Kong newspapermen. Likewise, when *HZRB* in Hong Kong was publishing reports about the difficulty facing the chamber in mobilizing its members to buy bonds, *YHB* in Canton focused on the amount of money the chamber had collected from those 'who love their country'. *YHB*, 4 Dec. 1937.

³⁵ *YHB*, 4 Dec. 1937.

³⁶ *HZRB*, 12 Jan. 1938.

³⁷ *HZRB*, 2, 3 Mar. 1938.

were shamelessly 'numb' to the mounting national crisis because it took them so long to get anywhere near the assigned sale-quota of these bonds.³⁸ His concern was not ungrounded. In early January 1938, a reporter wrote that at least 7,000 shops/firms in Canton – and some were well-established ones – had not complied with the government's order to buy bonds.³⁹ To rationalize their conspicuous failure, many trade guilds (e.g. coffin-making, rice-selling, fresh-fruits and salted-foods retailing, etc.) petitioned the KMT-controlled Canton Chamber of Commerce Reform Committee (廣州市商會整理委員會) pleading with them to punish those uncooperative firms whose owners refused to register as members with any guild, lest they should be subjected to forced loans or other mandatory levies. Those who had already registered with a guild were unhappy too because they felt that they were being unfairly forced to pay for those who were in the same trade, but who refused to join any guild.⁴⁰ The situation in other county towns was also so disappointing that the provincial government contemplated punishing county governors whose constituencies failed to meet their assigned quotas.⁴¹ When it became known that only 14 out of the targeted 20-million-yuan bonds were sold six months after the bond had been launched, the Canton government introduced other measures such as auctioning lands and properties, but, to its dismay, nobody came forward to bid.⁴² Businessmen in Canton were apparently not as patriotic or self-denying as portrayed in propaganda.

This tug-of-war between a desperate government and a substantial number of reluctant (but not necessarily unpatriotic) businessmen persisted, with the former clearly on the losing side. Newspaper reports about default payments and falling short of the target by the chamber and guilds continued to surface, ironically alongside optimistic official statements bragging about the 'great success' in this 'patriotic bond-selling campaign'.⁴³ Six months after the launch of the National Salvation Public Bond, the Guangdong branch of the National Salvation Public Bond Promotion Committee (救國公債募勸委員會廣東分會) submitted a report to the central government in March 1938, detailing the worrisome picture of defaults. First, of the 13.67-million-yuan bonds quota imposed on all county towns in Guangdong, about 10.4 million yuan was collected. Secondly, of the 5.25-million-yuan bonds that citizens and bankers in Canton were expected to buy, only 0.816 million were sold. Thirdly, of the designated 5-million-yuan quota imposed on the chamber and its member-guilds, only 1.64 million had been forwarded. Fourthly, of the 2-million-yuan quota imposed on shops and piers, barely 0.807 million was traded. Fifthly, of the 1.047-million-yuan quota imposed on county towns in the form of a surtax, only 0.237 million was collected. Sixthly, of the 1.12 million yuan planned to be raised from wage deductions on all KMT officials and civil servants in schools and military units, only 0.82 million was

³⁸ *HZRB*, 26 Dec. 1937.

³⁹ *HZRB*, 5, 12, 20 Jan. 1938.

⁴⁰ *HZRB*, 28 Dec. 1937.

⁴¹ *HZRB*, 24 Mar. 1938.

⁴² *HZRB*, 22 Jan. 1938.

⁴³ *YHB*, 12 Apr. 1938. Lacklustre response to involuntary subscription was not exclusive to Canton, but was also found in many county towns, such as Yangchun (*HZRB*, 26 Feb. 1938) and Swatow (*ibid.*, 30 Dec. 1937).

successfully collected. Lastly, of the 2.05-million-yuan quota imposed on the Bonds Promotion Teams and 'other related offices', only 1.36 million was raised. In sum, of the 30.15-million-yuan target, only 16.17 million was successfully collected and spent on the acquisition of bonds.⁴⁴ As late as April 1938, the disappointed and concerned Fourth-Route Army's commander and the provincial government chairman issued an order demanding all defaulters to settle payment immediately.⁴⁵ There is, however, no evidence that this desperate order had produced much effect on these determined defaulters who never minded being ridiculed as unpatriotic or unconscientious. The campaign, though by no means a total failure, was not a proud success either.

'Every man has a share of responsibility for the fate of his country'⁴⁶

In early February 1938, rumours about the launch of another 10-million-yuan government bond went viral in Canton. This was not good news for the already over-stretched business community and, perhaps because of that, the plan had been kept secret until mid-February.⁴⁷ In late February, an official-managed Exhortation Committee (勸募委員會) was formed to oversee the operation.⁴⁸ On 1 March, the provincial government, despite a lacklustre performance in selling the National Salvation Public Bond earlier, launched the National Defence Public Bond (國防公債), targeted at raising 15 million yuan in three months.⁴⁹ Voluntary contributions were invited and many urbanites and villagers had, again, reportedly 'bought the bonds enthusiastically'.⁵⁰ The acquisitions of individuals, however, contributed only a small part to this colossal 15-million-yuan target because most individual buyers purchased only the smallest denomination of the bond, at 5 yuan each; although not a large sum of money, it was not small either, since 6 kilogrammes of good-quality rice cost 1 yuan then.⁵¹

To raise 15 million yuan in such a short time, relying entirely on public goodwill and individual spontaneity, was a task next to impossible in wartime Canton, when people spent or invested very cautiously.⁵² Top-down enforced contributions

⁴⁴HZRB, 3 Mar. 1938.

⁴⁵YHB, 4 Apr. 1938.

⁴⁶This much-cited couplet, '天下興亡，匹夫有責', was the title of a newspaper advertisement of a medicated ointment manufacturer. HZRB, 27 Nov. 1937.

⁴⁷HZRB, 10, 11 Feb. 1938.

⁴⁸Guangdongsheng guofan gongzhai quanmo weiyuanhui tonggao', in Guangdongsheng guofan gongzhai, *Guangdongsheng guofan gongzhai*; HZRB, 24, 26 Feb. 1938.

⁴⁹According to a confidential document from the National Defence Council, this 15 million was urgently needed for purchasing arms, building air fields and funding militias in Guangdong. 'Junxu jianshe gongzhai tiaoli (1)', GMZ, no. 001-012470-00014-029, dated 4 Mar. 1938, AHA.

⁵⁰Prostitutes, social notables, Cantonese-opera actors and actresses, singsong girls and Overseas Chinese were reportedly buying bonds 'enthusiastically'. YHB 5, 12 Apr. 1938.

⁵¹YHB, 5 Aug. 1938.

⁵²In terms of pecuniary returns, the National Defence Public Bond was not an attractive investment. First, its interest rate was fixed at 4% per annum, which was not attractively high given the risk involved, escalating inflation and rising food prices. Secondly, repayment of principal and interest, which would be done yearly from 1939 until 1970, would not benefit every bond-holder because the beneficiaries were to be decided by drawing lots. Guangdongsheng guofan gongzhai, *Guangdongsheng guofan gongzhai*, 1, 30.

had always been an integral part of the sale of government bonds.⁵³ To assure that the targeted sum could be raised on time, the authorities devised various means to ensure that the public would buy bonds enthusiastically and quickly. For instance, occupational groups and guilds in Canton were charged with the responsibility of selling a designated number of bonds; teachers, officers and staff in military and party units were required to 'donate' half a month of their salary to buy bonds;⁵⁴ tax-farmers were 'requested' to surrender half a month of their profits;⁵⁵ a surcharge was imposed on the city's various taxes so that taxpayers were mobilized, involuntarily, to 'support this campaign';⁵⁶ even foreign businessmen in the shipping sector were required to buy a certain number of bonds.⁵⁷ Workers and staff in every trade and profession in Canton, regardless of the size of factories, shops, offices and whether unionized or not, were all required to buy a fixed number of bonds, according to the level of their monthly wages: those in the lowest-income group (earning under 20 yuan a month) were required to buy a sum equivalent to 10 per cent of their salary, the scale increased by 5 per cent in proportion to higher-level salaries but was capped at 30 per cent for those earning over 100 yuan.⁵⁸ Every county town in Guangdong was assigned a quota, ranging from 3,000 to 700,000 yuan each,⁵⁹ depending on the county's financial strength, and this sum had to be sent to Canton within three months.⁶⁰ County governors and city mayors were ordered to sell designated numbers of bonds and to remit the income to Canton on time, or face the penalty of either a reduction in salary (ranging from 40 per cent to one month's wages) or, in case of serious incompetence, dismissal from office.⁶¹ In some counties, policemen were deployed to 'persuade' people to buy.⁶² Clearly, what was generally described in government-controlled media as 'people are enthusiastically buying up public bonds' is not without exaggeration.

Indisputably, there were people in Canton who bought bonds spontaneously in order to fulfil their 'nationalistic duty'. From spring through summer in 1938, newspapers in Canton and Hong Kong featured stories about patriotic citizens

⁵³When the first government bond was released in Guangdong in 1894, the Seventy-Two Trades Guild in Canton was appointed as 'principal agent' of the entire amount of bonds. The second time that the business community was charged with a similar obligation was in 1921, when Sun Yatsen's government issued a 5-million-yuan bond for fighting against his pro-Peking rivals. Since then, the business community had become the usual and convenient target for purchasing and distributing public bonds in the government's eye. Pan Guoqi, *Jindai Zhongguo difang gongzhai yanjiu*, 259–62, 268–74.

⁵⁴Guangdongsheng guofan gongzhai, *Guangdongsheng guofan gongzhai*, 16.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 17.

⁵⁶YHB, 6 Apr. 1938.

⁵⁷YHB, 7, 8 Apr. 1938.

⁵⁸YHB, 8 Apr. 1938.

⁵⁹HZRB, 8 Mar. 1938.

⁶⁰Guangdongsheng guofan gongzhai, *Guangdongsheng guofan gongzhai*, 11, 12, 16, 17; YHB, 2 Apr. 1938.

⁶¹YHB, 7 Mar. 1938. This was not the first time that top-down measures were employed for raising government bonds in Canton. In 1926, for instance, the Nationalist government in Canton issued 5 million yuan in bonds for financing the Northern Expedition. The finance minister then ordered all civil servants, military officers and teachers to buy designated numbers of bonds. Pan Guoqi, *Jindai Zhongguo difang gongzhai yanjiu*, 271–2.

⁶²For example, Maoming. HZRB, 13 Apr. 1938.

buying bonds enthusiastically: journalists and contributors from a popular daily donated part of their wages or remuneration income to subscribe to this bond;⁶³ a China Electricals Company agreed to purchase 1,500 yuan of bonds, after its management had been visited by a donation-promotion team;⁶⁴ 30 'opium-den ladies' (煙花) announced that they had raised 15 yuan each, either from their own purse or by asking their clients;⁶⁵ prostitutes were reportedly buying bonds 'enthusiastically';⁶⁶ the banking sector was commended for raising a handsome 100,000 yuan;⁶⁷ the Native Tobacco Guild announced that it had funnelled part of its profits to the acquisition of bonds;⁶⁸ many villages in Canton Delta had reportedly cancelled their annual dragon-boat races and other festive celebrations, and spent the unused funds on buying bonds;⁶⁹ most amusing of all was 'a young and good-looking' school mistress in Hong Kong who publicly announced that she would marry any man who would buy 100,000 yuan of these bonds, but it is not known if any wealthy bachelor ever come forward to win her heart.⁷⁰

However, news stories about the many problems with the sale and the collection of committed monies were also abundant. As might be expected, this top-down approach of sale met strong resistance, despite its noble intention. Shop assistants in Canton, for instance, staged a protest against their employers who imposed the compulsory measure of 'helping them' to buy bonds by cutting 10 to 30 per cent of their wages, and also over-charging them. Labour unions and merchant guilds were inevitably dragged into this dispute.⁷¹ After over one month of bickering, the chamber decided to arbitrate, but took the employers' side because it was the government's policy that employers were required to buy bonds on the behalf of shop assistants.⁷² Meanwhile, the Vegetable Wholesale Guild levied fees on its workers as a means to meet the extra cost incurred on them by the compulsory-purchase scheme. The affected workers resisted and invited the government to intervene, but the guild refused arbitration, and the dispute dragged on for months.⁷³ The city's numerous tax-farmers were also reluctant to succumb to involuntary subscription, but they, after being summoned to a meeting with some prominent officials, 'were finally convinced of the noble nature of this bond' and 'fulfilled their patriotic duty'.⁷⁴

As in previous bond-selling campaigns, Canton's business community was once again drafted in by the authorities, involuntarily. This time, they were told to purchase 3.4-million-yuan bonds; this figure was equivalent to the sum that the chamber had failed to deliver a few months earlier during the National Salvation Public

⁶³YHB, 5 Apr. 1938.

⁶⁴YHB, 3 Apr. 1938.

⁶⁵YHB, 11 Apr. 1938.

⁶⁶YHB, 12 Apr. 1938.

⁶⁷YHB, 15 Apr. 1938.

⁶⁸YHB, 16 May 1938.

⁶⁹For example, YHB, 22, 26 May 1938.

⁷⁰YHB, 9 May 1938.

⁷¹YHB, 8 Apr. 1938.

⁷²YHB, 10 May 1938.

⁷³YHB, 6 Apr. 1938, 7 May 1938.

⁷⁴YHB, 11 Apr. 1938.

Bond campaign, when the chamber was told to raise 5 million yuan, but merely 1.6 million was eventually remitted to the government. The chamber decided that those member-guilds who did not buy bonds in 1937, or had subscribed but did not settle payment, were now required to subscribe their originally (i.e. 1937) assigned amount; and those who had already done both would be asked to buy more, but voluntarily.⁷⁵

This matter, however, was not settled easily. In a meeting of the chamber in mid-March, all the attendees raised concern about this formidable task since they knew that the business community had not yet recovered from the trade loss caused by frequent air strikes and the financial exhaustion brought about by involuntary subscription of bonds in 1937. Their concern was shared by a senior official in the government's Finance Department who was sceptical of the community's capability of dealing with another round of mandatory contribution.⁷⁶ To make matters worse, the chamber's members were persistently complaining about their allotted quota. By early May, the chamber had met at least 13 times, listening to appeal cases from guild managers who complained about their unfairly allotted quota and demanded a reduction.⁷⁷ All these factors had effectively hindered the sale of bonds.

Trying to boost the sale of these bonds, the chamber proposed two new ideas. The first one was straightforward: every office-bearer of the chamber, being a 'role model' for the business community, would be required to buy a designated number of bonds; 1,000 yuan for each senior member, and 500 yuan for juniors. This idea, however, never came to fruition because only two senior members indicated that they would be willing to contribute, whereas two other prominent members rejected the plan, and that triggered many key members to follow them and they left the meeting. There was no further discussion on this proposal, however noble its cause.⁷⁸

The second idea was to launch a mass parade in May to promote the bond. All members of the chamber were 'invited' (i.e. required) to participate, together with government officials, social notables and the city's many patriotic associations. It was decided that picket teams would have to be formed and charged with the important duty of stopping merchant/businessman participants from leaving the parade.⁷⁹ To ensure that the parade was a success, the chamber stipulated that members who failed to show up at the march would be fined 5 to 20 yuan, and every member-guild was required to make sure that two-thirds of their office-bearers would take part; no substitutes would be allowed except those who were 'old and weak'. Every member guild was required to make its own publicity materials, arranging for a drama or a chorus group to perform on the occasion of the march.⁸⁰ Publicity flags would be distributed to marchers who were required to dress decently, preferably in a traditional Chinese-style long gown.⁸¹ The march

⁷⁵HZRB, 5, 6 Mar. 1938.

⁷⁶YHB, 30 Apr. 1938.

⁷⁷YHB, 9 May 1938.

⁷⁸YHB, 3 May 1938.

⁷⁹YHB, 30 Apr. 1938.

⁸⁰YHB, 5 May 1938.

⁸¹YHB, 7 May 1938.

was successfully launched, with 1,400 participants, mostly guild members who were charged 10 to 20 yuan each for buying the bond on that day. Although being hailed as a great success in the official media, the parade was not well attended by the general public and businessmen. The 1,400 participants, according to a newspaper report, were mostly leaders of the city's 123 trades and businesses.⁸² Numbers, though by no means embarrassingly small, were still unimpressive given the fact that Canton was home to over 37,000 shops and offices.⁸³ Judging from the photographs taken by reporters, although the marchers are seen to be parading in orderly columns, numbers were sparse and it certainly was not crowded.⁸⁴

Apparently, the parade failed to arouse strong public interest in the bond sale and hence the organizing body, only 10 days after the parade, announced a plan for another campaign in late May. In this second operation, 200 patriots were deployed at public piers to plead with passers-by to fulfil their national duty of purchasing government bonds. Every evening at 8.00pm, social notables were invited to broadcast promotional speeches on Radio Canton.⁸⁵ Together with the chamber, a plan was devised whereby workers in every shop, office and factory in Canton would be 'asked' to subscribe to the bond. Employers, together with labour unions, were obliged to ascertain that a portion of their employees' wages would be retained for buying bonds.⁸⁶ Meanwhile, the chamber once again dispatched dunning teams to 'persuade' the business community to buy bonds. Despite all these efforts, only about 100,000 yuan was raised by the end of May. Out of desperation, two senior members of the chamber proposed two more ways of boosting the sale. First, to set a 'good example to the others', office-bearers of the chamber would buy, according to rank, 100 to 1,000 yuan of government bonds every day. This policy was endorsed in a meeting, but was unable to be implemented due to strong resistance from some 'prominent [chamber] members'. Secondly, it was proposed that the chamber should implore all merchant guilds and business associations in Canton to write to their members individually, to 'enlighten them about the important meaning [of national salvation]' so that they would be 'awakened' and support the campaign.⁸⁷ It is not known if this proposal was ever implemented, but it was clear that the attitude of businessmen towards this 'patriotic campaign' of bond-buying was at best reserved, if not outright indifferent. Some chamber members ascribed the sluggish sale to the unfair distribution of assigned quotas imposed on many member-guilds and shop-owners who, therefore, decided not to buy hastily, but to wait and see how the chamber would respond to the waves of complaints from members.⁸⁸ National urgency was not the top priority of businessmen.

⁸²YHB, 9 May 1938.

⁸³Zeng Tongchun, 'Guangzhoushi er shiwu nian gongshang ye yidong gaikuang', *Guangdongsheng yinhang yuekan* (Guangzhou: Guangdongsheng yinhang jingji yanjiushi), 1 (1937), 26–39. Although the number of shops and offices might have dropped since the beginning of Japanese air raids in August 1937, there were still over 30,000 operating in Canton by mid-1938. YHB, 27 May 1938.

⁸⁴YHB, 9 May 1938, 23 May 1938.

⁸⁵YHB, 20 May 1938.

⁸⁶YHB, 21 May 1938.

⁸⁷YHB, 27 May 1938.

⁸⁸HZRB, 10 Apr. 1938.

The chamber was unhappy with the 'meagre' 100,000 yuan that it had raised from its members, which was way below its assigned quota of 3.4 million. Senior chamber members called for immediate remedial actions, such as dispatching more dunning teams to put more pressure on members to 'fulfil their patriotic duty'.⁸⁹ By early June, the chamber had clearly failed to hit the target because only slightly over 100,000 yuan was forwarded to the government's treasury. There were more discussions on how to boost the sluggish sale, but nothing novel or concrete came forward.⁹⁰ By mid-June, even the campaign's organizing body admitted that there was little hope of raising the targeted 15 million yuan from the province, and it suggested that more effort should be put into attracting the Overseas Chinese communities in different parts of the world.⁹¹

Although newspapers in Canton continued to publish stories of commendable subscriptions by individuals,⁹² discouraging reports continued to flood in. For example, out of the 201 mechanics' shops in Canton, all were members of the powerful Mechanics' Guild, and they refused to buy their assigned quota of bonds as required; they eventually sought assistance from the chamber for arbitration.⁹³ Likewise, 68 guilds in the copper and iron business refused to buy any bonds, and sought assistance from the Social Bureau, seemingly to no avail.⁹⁴ At the 25th meeting of the organizing body of this bond-selling campaign, its members were troubled by the fact that many shops in Canton were asking for a reduction of their assigned quota on the grounds of poor business, trade restructuring, capital shortage, etc.⁹⁵ In an official progress report released in mid-July 1938, the chamber was ranked bottom on the league table in terms of bond-sale performance, with slightly over 100,000 yuan raised and submitted to the government, instead of its assigned 3.4 million. In fact, the overall performance of the campaign, though by no means poor, was far from what the government had originally anticipated: of the targeted amount of 15 million yuan, only 8 million eventually reached the treasury.⁹⁶ This lacklustre result led the authorities to decide that although the campaign was to be ended on the last day of June, its office would remain open so that late or new submissions could keep flowing in.⁹⁷ As late as August 1938, the chamber was still reiterating a previous order demanding that 'all shop assistants in the city' should allow their employers to cut a slice of their wages for the purpose of buying bonds on their behalf.⁹⁸

To many businessmen in Canton, the peril of the nation and the appeal of patriotism was secondary to the question of money. When the central government was

⁸⁹YHB, 24 May 1938.

⁹⁰YHB, 4 Jun. 1938.

⁹¹YHB, 13 Jun. 1938.

⁹²For instance, a military officer put up an advertisement in YHB, declaring his intention of selling his American-built automobile and spending the profits on bonds. In a village south of Canton, an old man reportedly asked his children and grand-children not to host any birthday feast for him, but to spend this money on buying government bonds instead. YHB, 24 Jun. 1938, 3 Aug. 1938.

⁹³YHB, 22 Jun. 1938.

⁹⁴YHB, 7 Jul. 1938.

⁹⁵YHB, 19 Jun. 1938.

⁹⁶YHB, 21 Jul. 1938.

⁹⁷YHB, 13 Jun. 1938.

⁹⁸YHB, 3 Aug. 1938.

planning for another massive national bond in late 1939, members in the Supreme Committee of National Defence, according to a confidential document, unanimously decided that compulsory acquisition imposed on the business sector was necessary because the effectiveness of fund-raising based upon free will had been proven by 'past experience as very weak'.⁹⁹

'Give money! Give money! Give money!'¹⁰⁰

On 13 August 1938, the anniversary of the 'heroic battle of resistance in Shanghai', the Guangdong government launched a week-long donation campaign called '8.13 Give-Money Campaign' (八一三獻金運動). Compared with previous fund-raising campaigns, this one took a different approach that would hopefully help to hit the target more quickly and easily.

First, the campaign organizers inserted the element of competitive provincialism into this event. A main task of this campaign, according to its official publicists, was to demonstrate to China, Japan and the world that 'the great-Guangdong spirit' (大廣東精神), which had been expressed through its historic successes in bringing about a Republican revolution in China, financing the Northern Expedition against warlords, and subduing foreign imperialism in south China, was still very much alive and could help thwart the Japanese invasion.¹⁰¹ Another important task was to 'break the Wuhan's record' of successfully raising 1 million yuan in seven days in a donation campaign held in July 1938.¹⁰² Secondly, this Give-Money Campaign adopted a bottom-up approach that distinguished it from previous top-down subscription campaigns in Canton, hoping that more people would take an active part in it and that they would, after that, become more patriotic and dedicated to the defence of Canton, the last bastion of China's access to its coastline. The previous top-down approach was not ideal because it failed to raise the targeted sum, being unable to mobilize a wider section of the local populace, and failing to inculcate the message of national salvation in the greatest number of people in Canton.

For this event, six locations in Canton, all bustling hubs, were selected, and at each of them an elevated stage was built. These 'donation stages' (獻金臺) were decorated with five-colour electric bulbs, a portrait of Chiang Kai-shek, national flags and publicity pennants; on these stages were seated government officials and social notables.¹⁰³ Each morning at 5.00am that week, 'morning chanting teams' (晨呼隊), manned by the city's various youth associations and patriotic societies, were dispatched to different parts of Canton chanting patriotic slogans, singing patriotic songs and pleading with citizens to 'give money' for defending

⁹⁹'Guominzhengfu liuzhong chuanhui tiyi faxing jingongzhai huanqu guowai cunzi an', GMZ, no. 001-080000-00001-009, dated 13 Dec. 1939, AHA.

¹⁰⁰Headline of ZSRB, 14–21 Aug. 1938.

¹⁰¹A Japanese military attaché wrote that Cantonese considered themselves superior to the northerners in all aspects, took great pride in their identity and culture and despised northern Chinese. Toichi Sasaki, *Nanpō kakumei seiryoku no jissō to sonohihan* (Pekin, 1927), 361–3.

¹⁰²On mass mobilization for the war effort in Wuhan, central China, see Stephen R. MacKinnon, *Wuhan, 1938: War Refugees, and the Making of Modern China* (Berkeley, 2008), ch. 6.

¹⁰³ZSRB, 14, 18 Aug. 1938.

Canton.¹⁰⁴ At the city's busiest spots, youngsters from student unions and women's associations provided passers-by and donors with carnival-like patriotic entertainment, such as the singing of patriotic songs and the performing of anti-Japanese drama, in the hope of arousing people's nationalistic sentiments.

Every day that week, the official *Zhongshan ribao* published at least two pages of reports about this campaign; *Yuehua bao*, a civilian daily, also followed the event closely. Predictably, most reports focused on those patriotic citizens who were reportedly queuing up for their turn to walk up onstage to make their donations. There, they dropped their donations (cash, gold nuggets, silver ingots, jewelry, precious stones, gold dentures, gold or silver-plated tournament trophies, etc.), into a big collection box, and delivered a short speech to the bystanders if they wished. These news stories unflinchingly highlighted the 'participation by all walks of life', especially the low-income groups such as manual workers, coolies, rickshaw pullers, waitresses, hawkers, beggars, shoeshining boys, etc. Also regularly featured in these stories were senior citizens or retirees who were poor but who still donated all their lifetime savings, young children who donated the contents of their piggy banks, shoeshining boys or child beggars who gave away their days' income to the cause. One of these children had particularly caught the reporters' attention. A shoeshining boy, Wu Weiding, who made at least 200 rounds of donation, each time of a few copper coins that he had earned from his back-breaking toil, and donated in total about 70 yuan. He also mobilized four other boys in the same 'business' to make about 40 rounds of donation.¹⁰⁵ Other stories including a maid-servant who was reportedly so touched by the patriotic acts of many low-income donors that she walked onto a stage, told the duty officers that she was penniless, and then removed her gold denture and dropped it into the collection box;¹⁰⁶ also, a blind man was escorted to the stage and dropped 2 yuan into the box.¹⁰⁷ To attend 'donation by appointment' (預約獻金), representatives from organizations such as the Opium Guild, government departments, schools, universities, student and labour unions, business associations, charitable organizations, etc., marched to the collection points to 'present their collective donation with pride and joy'.¹⁰⁸

This fund-raising campaign, however, did not appeal to the people easily, including the business community. It is true that many citizens showed up and donated something at these collection points in order to experience that I-have-done-my-patriotic-duty sense of comfort.¹⁰⁹ But it is doubtful whether the successful raising of 1 million yuan (to break Wuhan's record) was mainly the result of people's spontaneity and free will. First of all, the campaign organizer considered that individuals' voluntary donations, though symbolically important, were only secondary as a source of funds compared with involuntary contributions. Days before the event was launched, the native-bank sector and the chamber had already

¹⁰⁴ZSRB, 14 Aug. 1938.

¹⁰⁵ZSRB, 16 and 17 Aug. 1938.

¹⁰⁶ZSRB, 17 Aug. 1938.

¹⁰⁷ZSRB, 14 Aug. 1938.

¹⁰⁸YHB and ZSRB, 14–19 Aug. 1938 *passim*.

¹⁰⁹In a public radio broadcast, Wu Tiecheng, the provincial governor, stressed that citizens should not consider handing out donations in this event as fulfilment of their 'national duty of saving the country'. ZSRB, 16 Aug. 1938.

been informed and 'requested' to play a leading role; the former was 'requested' to donate an amount equivalent to 5 per cent of a 'bank's provident fund' (銀行公積金), whereas the chamber reportedly 'agreed to donate' half a million yuan.¹¹⁰ All staff in the Kowloon–Canton Railway Company were required to contribute a sum equivalent to one sixth or one third of their wages, depending on their salary level; a designated minimum sum of 60 to 100 yan was levied on all shipping companies, depending on the nature of their business.¹¹¹ Private vehicle owners were also required to pay 10 yuan for a small flag on which was written: 'Give money to save [our] country', which was effectively the official receipt of a 'voluntary donation'; drivers were expected to display it in a conspicuous place on their vehicles, and those who did not possess one were stopped by pickets or fanatics from the city's many patriotic youth leagues, who were roaming the streets hunting down any car without one.¹¹²

Civil servants and staff in military units were all required to donate. Every day that week, representatives from this group of donors showed up to make donations.¹¹³ Were they all reluctant donors acting against their will? This is a question that cannot be answered with exactitude. There were, no doubt, civil servants who sincerely wanted to make donations, such as officers and staff in Canton's municipal government who donated 38,000 yuan, 'spontaneously'.¹¹⁴ However, there were also others who were indifferent, or who even avoided taking part in it. Zhu Xiuxia, an academic and also a KMT member in Canton, criticized those civil servants who were complaining about being asked to make donations, even though they had already been subjected to a salary cut. In Zhu's view, such a modest level of financial sacrifice could not be compared with those who sacrificed their lives fighting on the frontline, especially when many civil servants were accused of indulging in mindless spending on lavish feasts.¹¹⁵ This problem of the indifference of civil servants was also found in the wartime capital Chongqing, as revealed in an investigative report by the Ministry of Finance on the progress of the bond sale – very few government offices had submitted all their designated sums to the Ministry, most offices had remitted only 'a portion', some even none at all. This report also stated that many government departments had deducted only one month of their staff's wages instead of five, as required by an insistent government, for mandatory bond-buying.¹¹⁶

In Canton, three days after the launch of the campaign, the organizing body announced the formation of a 60-men-strong Donation Inspection Team (獻金考察隊), aimed at boosting donations by exerting intimidating pressure on the city's hundreds of official and civilian associations. Team members were recruited from labour unions, merchant guilds, student unions, youth leagues,

¹¹⁰ZSRB, 11 Aug. 1938.

¹¹¹ZSRB, 16 Aug. 1938.

¹¹²ZSRB, 10 Aug. 1938. Many drivers were stopped by Youth League members and their vehicles were not allowed to leave, as a warning to other 'unrepentant' car-owners. ZSRB, 16 Aug. 1938.

¹¹³YHB and ZSRB, 13–21 Aug. 1938 *passim*.

¹¹⁴ZSRB, 17 Aug. 1938.

¹¹⁵ZSRB, 14 Aug. 1938.

¹¹⁶Junshicanyiyuan chen Guominzhengfu youguan benyuan rengou jiuguo gongzhai shumu ji yijiejiao riqi fenbie tian biao', GMZ, no. 001-012470-00018-014, dated 27 Sep. 1938, AHA.

women associations, peasant associations, etc. They were subdivided into 20 smaller teams, each targeting one specific profession or social sector. For four days, these teams scrutinized the city's many organizations, assessing their level of commitment to this donation campaign by examining how much donation-money they had collected. Under-performers were reprimanded; defaulters and those who refused to contribute were punished by having their names published, their business sanctioned and their office-bearers dismissed. These inspection teams did their work diligently because in the first three days of operating, they had already audited over 600 associations in Canton, with over 200,000 members scrutinized. Their auditing report was disheartening though: only 20 per cent of all the audited organizations had 'done their best in giving out donations'; 50 per cent had made contributions, but only in small amounts; 30 per cent had contributed nothing at all, mostly on the grounds that their office-bearers were out of town and hence their organizations were leaderless.¹¹⁷

Throughout this week-long campaign, official newspaper reports reiterated one important message that was keenly brought up by the organizing committee: the rich in Canton were largely unconcerned about this campaign, and even though some of them might have taken part in it, they did not donate enough. In a contributed article entitled 'Shame on those who refused to contribute!', its author lamented that despite the fact that the slogan 'To those who have money, give money' had been chanted repeatedly for months, very few of 'our wealthy compatriots' had actually given anything; while some did, they hardly 'contributed as much as they should'.¹¹⁸ Another journalist lamented that although the rich did come out to donate, because he witnessed that many of them had dropped hundreds and even thousands of yuan into the donation boxes, they could have done much more since he had not seen anyone handing out more than a few thousand.¹¹⁹ Another contributor, who claimed to have observed the campaign closely, wrote firmly that nobody donated more than 1,000, and most donors were from the 'toiling masses'.¹²⁰

Some critics were more blunt. The leader of the 18 July issue of *Zhongshan ribao*, entitled 'Further advice to our compatriots in the business sector', began with the usual praise to those low-income group donors in Canton – beggars, shoeshining boys, the disabled, refugees, rickshaw men, wounded soldiers, hawkers, coolies and menial workers. The sum they contributed, though usually small, was meaningful and commendable, given their meagre income. In contrast, the leader stressed, 'what is imperfect about this campaign... is the absence of enthusiastic participation of wealthy merchants, businessmen, bankers, property owners, landlords, and those well-off refugees who are seeking safety abroad'. To his disgust, many 'wealthy merchants and leading bankers' in Canton had donated neither cash nor precious metals, but merely 'priced shares' (有價股票) or silver-plated

¹¹⁷ZSRB, 17, 18 Aug. 1938.

¹¹⁸ZSRB, 15 Aug. 1938.

¹¹⁹Jian Ren, "'Xianjin yundong' zai Guangzhou", ZSRB, 16 Aug. 1938.

¹²⁰'Xianjin guilai shugan', *YHB*, 19 Aug. 1938.

trophies, which were worth little;¹²¹ and the 'collective donation from seven [local] banks amounted to an unnoticeable sum of 2,700 yuan!'. Many local businessmen in sectors such as shipping, hotels, restaurants and military suppliers, who benefited handsomely from the war, 'appear to be unconvinced, unconcerned and untouched' by what was going on.¹²² In another article entitled 'Fleeing from calamity, and donating money', the author presented a similar view, but sarcastically. They noticed that whenever the air raid sirens were on, usually in the early mornings, many rich families in Canton flocked to Shakee in taxis or rickshaws. Shakee was commonly perceived as a safe haven from Japanese bombardment given its proximity to Shameen's foreign settlement. Once there, they took refuge in restaurants, where they enjoyed a good hot breakfast, or checked in at over-priced concrete-built hotels (business was so good and demand so high that their proprietors not only raised the room prices by over 200 per cent, but also expanded their business by installing folding beds in corridors and in the lobby, and partitioned large guest rooms into smaller cubicles).¹²³ Some headed south to Canton's rural suburbs. All of this, the author argued, cost at least 10,000 yuan a day in total. He also estimated that since August 1937 at least 3.25 million yuan had been moved from Canton to safe havens in Hong Kong and Macao. All these monies, in his view, should have been donated to the war chest instead. Businessmen, he pleaded, should be good role models for the city's workpeople by donating more generously.¹²⁴ In a radio broadcast promoting this campaign, the speaker, a social notable, criticized angrily those 'many dishonest, disloyal, unmoved, and spineless people who are taking advantage of the national crisis and the unsettling situation to make huge fortunes by looting [the needy]'. To him, those wealthy men and women who refused to give large donations in this campaign were all 'mischievous bourgeoisies', 'crooks' and 'hypocrites'. He ended his long speech by quoting, he claimed, Sun Yatsen: 'one-hundred-thousand wealthy men in China is not as [respectable] as even one prostitute in Japan'.¹²⁵

On the last day of the campaign, *Zhongshan ribao* published another leader which was as critical as the last one. It started with a report about a similar campaign in Hong Kong. In a meeting of Hong Kong's Chinese Chamber of Commerce, after attendees had chanted patriotic slogans, nobody came forward to give donations. After a few awkward moments of silence, one member embarrassingly dropped a 100-dollar note into the collection box, but no one followed suit. Only after 'a long long [moment of] waiting', did another member drop a 100-dollar note into the box; as soon as this had been done, the chairman announced the meeting adjourned. The leader then recounted what reporters had seen outside high-end department stores in Hong Kong whose business was booming. Campaign volunteers were stationed outside these shops, trying to solicit

¹²¹According to a *YHB*'s leader (19 Aug. 1938), stocks or shares were not ideal forms of donation because to convert them into cash took time and cost commission fees, and the prices of donated shares were not necessarily good. Gold or silver plated trophies were not valuable and practically useless.

¹²²ZSRB, 18 Aug. 1938.

¹²³ZSRB, 19 Aug. 1938.

¹²⁴ZSRB, 20 Aug. 1938.

¹²⁵Wu Kang, 'Bayisan xianjin yundong di zhen yiyi', ZSRB, 18 Aug. 1938. Registered prostitutes in Canton and other county cities took a commendable part in this campaign. *YHB*, 14 Aug. 1938; ZSRB, 17, 20 Aug. 1938.

donations from those well-dressed customers of these exclusive places, who, without exception, ignored them and departed rapidly. The rich in Canton, the leader added, were responding to the call for donations with similar indifference.¹²⁶ In an open letter to citizens of Canton and beyond, a local journalist reiterated the familiar message that only the city's poor and low-income group had responded enthusiastically to the campaign by giving away generously their hard-earned savings, whereas, in contrast, very few 'wealthy gentlemen and prominent businessmen' had acted likewise, and among those few rich men who did contribute, they gave 'just too little'. 'If our country falls', he asked, 'then how could you face your own conscience, your ancestors, your children and grandchildren?'¹²⁷ Meanwhile, *Yuehua bao* published a lengthy two-part leader evaluating this campaign. The leader's title says it all: 'The lower-strata of society are saviours of China!' (救中國者下層社會也).¹²⁸ General disappointment with the rich in Canton cannot be clearer.

Two days before the official closure of this donation campaign, the organizing body, probably noticing the lacklustre result, postponed the end-date indefinitely, claiming euphemistically that this was due to the continuous flowing-in of donations and the 'hard-to-turn-down enthusiasm' of the city's many patriotic associations.¹²⁹

It is unfair to criticize all of the tens of thousands of businessmen in Canton for being indifferent to the national crisis. Records of donors published in Canton's newspapers show that many shopkeepers, guild and firm managers, factory owners, etc., did take part in this 'patriotic event' by donating one day of their income.¹³⁰ The popular *Yuehua bao* published lists of donor names, supplied by the organizing body, who offered 100 yuan or above. On these lists of big donors there is no shortage of shops, commercial firms, factories and guilds. For example, on a donor list in August 1938, 13 out of 120 donors are identifiable commercial establishments, and over half of the remainder were individual businessmen, entrepreneurs, merchants, social notables and government officials.¹³¹ On another list, which recorded those 'donating by appointment' and who had donated 100 yuan or more (most of them in fact gave more than 100 yuan), 42 out of 108 were from the business sector, and the remainder were labour unions, government departments, military units and industrial workers.¹³² An assessment report by the Donation Inspection Team also indicated that those identified as 'under-achievers' were not exclusively from the business sector, but from all sorts of professional groups and civilian associations.¹³³

On the second day of this week-long campaign, the organizing committee announced confidently on the front page of a newspaper that Wuhan's 1-million-yuan record 'will be certainly broken' because 800,000 yuan had already been

¹²⁶ZSRB, 19 Aug. 1938.

¹²⁷YHB, 22 Aug. 1938.

¹²⁸YHB, 20, 21 Aug. 1938.

¹²⁹ZSRB, 19, 20 Aug. 1938.

¹³⁰ZSRB, 14–21 Aug. 1938 *passim*.

¹³¹YHB, 14 Aug. 1938.

¹³²YHB, 18 Aug. 1938.

¹³³ZSRB, 19 Aug. 1938.

raised. On the third day, however, the steam had clearly run out, with only about 150,000 yuan collected. In the rest of that week, approximately 100,000 yuan was raised each day. The total sum 'committed', based on these figures, should have been about 1.3 million yuan,¹³⁴ but the actual amount received, according to reliable figures provided by the organizing committee in late August, was only about 600,000, excluding such donated items as 'precious metals', gold dentures, golden rings, silver hairpins, etc.¹³⁵ From the third day of the campaign onward, it was becoming clear that the heavily publicized 2-million-yuan mark target could not be hit. To save face, the organizing committee, consisting mainly of KMT officials and local activists, pointed its finger at 'those men of means' and attributed to them Canton's failure in hitting the 2-million-yuan target and hence shamefully tarnishing the 'great-Guangdong spirit'. 'Rich men' were conveniently scapegoated and held responsible for missing an impossible target in this public show of fund-raising patriotism.

My country, my money: concluding remarks

The concerns of these journalists and government officials about the lacklustre participation of 'men of means' in Canton remind us of the innate complexity of historical reality. Were 'the poor' in Canton indeed generally more patriotic than 'the rich'? Journalists and officials chose to believe that the lower-income groups were patriotic and selflessly responsive to the Give-Money Campaign. Their reports always highlighted commendable stories about indigents (e.g. beggars, hawkers, rickshawmen) who gave away their day's wages, senior citizens of humble background who donated their life-time savings, 'petite urbanites' who surrendered their meagre possessions (e.g. gold dentures, wrist watches, scrap metals), etc.; whereas 'the rich' were portrayed as hiding in their cozy homes, distancing themselves from it.¹³⁶ The highly favourable characterization and narrative of 'ordinary people' or 'the poor' was intended to boost public morale and confidence in the country's ability to defend itself, as Parks Coble points out in his study of war reportage.¹³⁷ Those stories, however, are clearly biased and full of ambiguities.

First of all, those 'ordinary people' who took to the stage and presented donations might have done so for a variety of reasons, not simply self-denying patriotic sentiment. Some did it for the work units they represented, probably voluntarily, but also possibly under peer pressure; some out of moral obligation (many children, for example, were led by their parents to give away the contents of their piggy banks); 'patriotic prostitutes' from eight high-class brothels in Canton, escorted by senior officers from a semi-official anti-Japan women's association gave donations, to display publicly their commitment to national salvation, and hence command public respect towards them.¹³⁸ Many social notables did it out of patriotism, undoubtedly, but also to show to the public and the authorities that they were 'good

¹³⁴ZSRB, 14–21 Aug. 1938.

¹³⁵ZSRB, 31 Aug. 1938.

¹³⁶Journalists and newspaper columnists in Canton generally ended their essays or reports with the satirical remark: 'Where are the rich?'

¹³⁷Coble, 'Writing about atrocity', 396.

¹³⁸ZSRB, 20 Aug. 1938.

citizens' who had fulfilled their patriotic duty. Some did it for patriotism as much as for self-aggrandizement, as in the case of a 'master traveller' (旅行家), Zhang Shangren, who travelled around the world on foot from 1929 to 1937, and who donated 10 commemorative medals he had received from Overseas Chinese associations in different countries; his story was featured in an official newspaper on two consecutive days, with a photograph of him cheerfully holding his gleaming trophies.¹³⁹ This week-long carnival-like event, with entertainment provided by school brass bands, choirs and drama performances by the city's various youth associations, created a joyful and emotionally charged atmosphere, so much so that denizens and passers-by were touched and donated a few copper coins or a yuan. These 'small donors' acted out and experienced patriotism on these stages, but their participation in the war effort might well have ended there.

Despite their sincerity, these 'small donors' were not necessarily then 'saviours of China', nor did their commitment to defending Canton have to be as deep and selfless as portrayed in propaganda and press. Many important details are missing in their hyperbolic stories, such as how could the reporters possibly know whether elderly donors had given away their 'entire lifetime savings', rather than just a fraction of it? Giving away one day's wage, or personal items such as gold dentures, silver earrings, wrist watches, etc., were certainly expressions of patriotism, but there is no way of ascertaining whether these donors engaged further in other patriotic deeds related to the war effort. Without this information, the view that 'indigents' patriotism' was indisputably stronger than that of 'men of means' is at best impressionistic. There were an abundance of reports about people who did whatever they could to avoid or escape conscription, rather than join the army or militia, as the government was anxiously imploring them to do.¹⁴⁰ Workers were found to be engaging in a wide range of 'activities' that were hardly patriotic, such as illegal gambling, smuggling 'enemy goods' (i.e. Japanese products) into cities, factional fights between rival unions, revengeful boycotts and strikes against merchants or guilds over pay disputes, despite the government's call for restraint and social harmony during wartime. Ordinary people were found selling provisions most willingly to Japanese Marines, who were constantly in search of food to sustain their naval blockage of China's coastline, and making a 'small fortune' from these unpatriotic deals.¹⁴¹ Women were always in the news, not just because of their participation in the war effort, but also for a variety of reasons that had nothing to do with patriotism: high-profile divorce cases involving disgruntled wives and concubines, murder of abusive husbands, elopements, adulterous affairs, addiction to illegal gambling, etc.; patriotism had left no foot-print on their private lives.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ZSRB, 18, 19 Aug. 1938.

¹⁴⁰On the seriousness of the problem, *HZRB*, 5 Nov. 1937, 16 Dec. 1937, 10 Mar. 38, 6 Apr. 38. The problem of avoiding conscription was also seen in other parts of China. Lucien Bianco, *Wretched Rebels* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), ch. 7.

¹⁴¹Newspaper reports about this were abundant, e.g. *HZRB*, 24 Nov. 1937, 17–19 Jan. 1938, 19 Feb. 1938; *YHB*, 14 Apr. 1938, 1, 9, 13 May 1938, 6, 25 Jun. 1938.

¹⁴²Virgil Kit-yiu Ho's "'Permanent waves and weird clothes are not allowed': women in Canton during the early phase of the Sino-Japanese War, 1937–1938", paper presented at the Association of Asian Studies in Asia Conference, Kyoto, Japan, Jun. 2016.

Secondly, contrary to their self-created and self-indulged image as unwavering patriots who supported unreservedly their country in the war against Japan, businessmen were clearly divided among themselves on the extent to which they gave away their personal wealth to the cause of nationalism. The Canton Chamber of Commerce, under the state's close scrutiny, had tried hard to persuade its members to comply with the government's call for involuntary contributions.¹⁴³ But the ensuing great difficulty the chamber encountered in mobilizing its members (and non-members too) showed that many businessmen refused to succumb to excessive demands from the state and were unwilling to sacrifice their wealth in exchange for official or public acclaim. Many of these 'men of means' took an affordable part in fund-raising campaigns, but not to the extent 'expected' by the authorities; making sacrifices for their country was not boundless, even though their country was under foreign invasion. National salvation was undoubtedly important, but self-interest came first.¹⁴⁴

The restraint of these 'men of means' was not necessarily without better reason than their alleged 'selfish mentality' or indifference to their country's fate. Japanese aerial bombardment of Canton, which began in August 1937 and lasted almost unbrokenly until mid-October 1938, took a heavy toll on the local economy.¹⁴⁵ In mid-December 1937, the Chinese Maritime Customs reported that 1,507 shops in Canton were closed for business, with 13,039 shop assistants losing their jobs, because of the air raids.¹⁴⁶ Although these figures bounced back somewhat in spring 1938, the economic situation in Canton and its vicinity was still dire.¹⁴⁷ However, some business sectors fared well. The Japanese naval blockade of China's coastline helped to improve the import-export trade between Hong Kong, Canton and Hankow, since Canton was China's military-supply bloodline from the outside world; restaurants and hotels in the commercial hubs near Shameen's foreign settlement benefited greatly from the waves of refugees, many of them 'men of means', seeking safety there from air raids. This uneven economic reality perhaps helps to explain why Canton's 'men of means' had responded so diversely to the government's appeals for pecuniary support.

Local businessmen responded diversely to the compulsory acquisition of government bonds, instead of being 'outright unpatriotic'. The business community did take a noticeable part in both the bond-buying and Give-Money campaigns; the chamber and its many member-guilds did try to meet the imposed targets as closely

¹⁴³One was for purchasing warplanes from the US. *Guangdong gejie choukuan gouji qingzhu Jiang weiyuanchang shouchen weiyuanhui baogao* (Guangzhou, 1937).

¹⁴⁴Shopkeepers in Canton had been repeatedly asked by the government to send shop assistants to join the city's militia. Shopkeepers' responses were generally unenthusiastic because they disagreed with the government's order to pay shop assistants during their absence for military drilling. The chamber was invited to interfere and negotiate with the government to resolve this. *HZRB*, 4 Mar. 1938, 23 Mar. 193, 6 Apr. 1938; *YHB*, 6 Nov. 1937, 6 Apr. 1938.

¹⁴⁵For more details, see Guangzhoushi difangzhi bianxuan weiyuanhui bangongshi and Guangzhoushi haiguan zhi bianxuan weiyuanhui (eds.), *Jindai Guangzhou kouan jingji shehui gaikuan* (Guangzhou, 1996), 811–17.

¹⁴⁶Yue haiguan gexiang shijian zhuanwen lu', 1–15 Dec. 1937, in Zhang Zhonghua (ed.), *Rijun qinlue Guangdong dangan shiliao xuanbian* (Beijing, 2005), 53.

¹⁴⁷Although a number of new shops were open in the first three months of 1938, many shops closed down in the same period, and the city's unemployment figure remained high. *YHB*, 5 May 1938.

as possible. Dunning teams were also deployed to push reluctant member-guilds or shopkeepers to buy their allotted share of bonds, and generous donations were given individually or collectively by men of means, and their names, hundreds of them, were published in local newspapers as public recognition of their patriotism. It is, therefore, unfair to accuse the entire business community of apathy. However, it is also true that a substantial number of shopkeepers refused to join any guild in order to avoid being drafted by the chamber into these unpopular exercises of compulsory contribution, and that many others who were already members chose to default. This tallies with Marie-Claire Bergere's description of bourgeois nationalism in China in the 1920s, that the 'Chinese bourgeoisie was very conscious of its own interests and that may have imposed some limitations upon its nationalistic fervour, but those limitations were also born of its sense of responsibility and its desire to be reasonable.'¹⁴⁸ Pragmatism, in these cases, came before nationalism. Pragmatism, however, did not overshadow nationalism altogether.

Moreover, although many businessmen avoided compulsory subscription to government bonds, one must not rule out the possibility that many of them might have taken part in the Give-Money Campaign because a number of them, eminent or humble, were seen giving donations in that week-long event. Or, those who seemingly did not show up at the campaign, such as Ho Tingzi (霍庭芝),¹⁴⁹ a prominent businessman and philanthropist since late-Qing, was in fact the biggest donor (of an eyebrow-raising sum of 200,000 yuan) in an earlier (1936–37) fund-raising campaign for purchasing US warplanes,¹⁵⁰ and he was also elected as chief executive of Guangdong Province Chamber of Commerce and charged with the duty of promoting the National Salvation Public Bond to the business community.¹⁵¹ To further complicate the picture, one must also ask whether the act of giving out donations alone was strong enough proof of a donor's sustainable patriotic commitment to the defence of Canton. The co-existence of idealism with pragmatism was not easy, and the predicament of the business community reflected this uneasiness as well as the complexity of nationalism as a historical reality in the context of wartime Canton. Clearly not everyone was a self-denying patriot; 'tactical nationalists' (i.e. those half-hearted patriots who put self-interest well before their country) and detractors were in no shortage too.

One may ask: was the restrained response of Canton's businessmen due to pure financial worry about the possible poor returns of government bonds,¹⁵² rather than their 'limited patriotism'? The history of government bonds in Guangdong can be traced back to late-Qing. Since 1894, when the first government bond in Guangdong was released, at least 13 bonds had been issued by successive governments in the province. Not every one of these bonds was well received. The one issued in 1905, for instance, was seriously under-subscribed. The unpopularity of government bonds was even more apparent during the turbulent 1920s when the

¹⁴⁸M.-C. Bergere, *The Golden Age of the Chinese Bourgeoisie 1911–1937* (Cambridge, 1986), 249.

¹⁴⁹His name was seemingly not on the donors' lists prepared by the organizing body and published in ZSRB and YHB that week.

¹⁵⁰*Guangdong gejie choukuan gouji*, 5; HZRB, 1 Dec. 1937.

¹⁵¹HZRB, 1 Dec. 1937.

¹⁵²Wang Pingzi and Ma Changwei, 'Zhongguo zhengfu di weiyue yanjiu (1912–1936 nian)', *Zhongguo shehui jingjishi yanjiu*, 1 (2015), 86–90.

authorities resorted to high-handed measures by imposing involuntary subscription on different sectors of the society, and the issuers, because of political instability and the frequent transference of political power in Canton, often failed to honour repayment of principals and interest to the bond-holders.¹⁵³ But the view that frequent defaults unavoidably damaged investors' confidence in government bonds and drew people away from them is only partly right because government bonds were sometimes popular in the eyes of investors, particularly those short-term high-interest-yield bonds issued by the Canton government during the mid-1930s.¹⁵⁴ In the early months of the war, Alberto Stefani, an Italian financial advisor to Finance Minister T.V. Soong, advised the latter that if national bonds were to be urgently issued, they would have to be short term and buyers would have to be assured of receiving a reasonable amount of interest from their bonds in return.¹⁵⁵ Government bonds were not unfamiliar to investors who sometimes responded favourably to the government's calls for capitalization. To put our story into context, it is clear that the lacklustre response of the business community towards the Canton government's bonds had little to do with their unfamiliarity with this financial product, but was largely due to weak confidence on the part of businessmen in the future value of these bonds and the political outlook of the Nationalist regime. Patriotism, therefore, was one thing, practicality and profit-making another.

The defiance of a substantial number of businessmen against involuntary (to some extent voluntary too) contributions pointed to the important fact that the party-state of Nationalist China, though aspiring to be paternalistic-authoritarian and even at times fascist in governance, as is commonly portrayed in history textbooks, was not one yet.¹⁵⁶ The Nationalist government, with the support of some party activists and civilian associations, was demanding that Canton's business community should increase its pecuniary contributions so that the government's astronomical military expenditure, standing at 3 million yuan a day, could be met as much as possible. During these months, reiterated demands and pleadings had only been partially answered by a very reluctant chamber of commerce and many 'wealthy gentlemen and prominent merchants' in Canton. The party-state, despite its reputation as an authoritarian regime that eagerly employed 'white

¹⁵³Pan Guoqi, *Jindai Zhongguo difang gongzhai yanjiu*, 262, Table 4.10, 302–3.

¹⁵⁴The separatist regime of Chen Jitong succeeded in repaying on time both principals and interest of most of the short-term bonds issued between 1932 and 1935. The attractiveness of bonds issued in this period was reflected by the actual amounts of funds raised, which were very close to the originally projected sums. Pan Guoqi, *Jindai Zhongguo difang gongzhai yanjiu*, 299, Tables 4–6 on 284, and Table 4.10 on 302–3. The central government in Nanking was concerned about its financial reputation and bonds' credibility, so much so that they enlisted the service of professional accounting firms to help auditing and, at times, restructuring these bonds, in order to keep them in reasonable health. Sun Jianguo, 'Lun jindai zhaixin qushi yu Minguo zhengfu zhaixin weihu', *Zhongguo jingjishi yanjiu*, 3 (2014), 48–53; Ma Changwei and Yao Huiyuan, 'Jindai Zhongguo zhengfu san ci zhaiwu zhenglian de bijiao yanjiu', *Journal of Jiangxi University of Finance and Economics*, 2 (2014), 92–4.

¹⁵⁵Yi Shidanfani guwen han Song Ziwen gongzhai shijia yu zhanshi caiyuan wenti zhi beiwanglu', JZZ, no. 002-080109-00025-010, dated 26 Jul. 1937, AHA.

¹⁵⁶One of these texts writes that the Nanking government had 'utilized high-handed terrorist measures to force national capitalists to buy public bonds [and] to pay ransoms', so much so that these capitalists had run into serious financial trouble. Guojia jiaowei sheke si (ed.), *Zhongguo geming shi* (Beijing, 1996), p. 165.

terror' to intimidate the disgruntled populace into submission,¹⁵⁷ this time did not adopt such extreme measures towards that end, besides employing such irksome tactics as sending teams of young party activists to stop private vehicles on public streets demanding drivers should pay 10 yuan for a 'certificate of patriotism', or fining senior government officials for failing to meet the assigned subscription quota; there were no reports of kidnapping or blackmailing of defiant bourgeoisie. Using violence or physical coercion, perhaps, might have saved the Canton government from its embarrassing failure (not total, to be fair) in these efforts of social mobilization, as its socialist successor would so readily and so successfully prove in the early years of 'the Liberation'.¹⁵⁸

It is in time of war and conflict that human nature and the intrinsic complexity of a society and its people are most conspicuously unveiled. This article helps to broaden our knowledge of how the people in Canton reacted to an approaching war, and reveals the problems with interpreting wartime socio-political events through the narrow lens of Chinese nationalism. Patriotism meant different things to different people, who responded to nationalistic appeals differently. Although patriotism was present in Canton, it was at best one aspect of a much bigger picture of Cantonese society because people's preoccupation with self-preservation and self-interest were also very strong. Those who were patriotic and proactive, indifferent and passive, or a mixture of these, were all there in Canton. The varieties of people's experiences in wartime Canton were too diverse to be easily generalized. A few things, however, were clear amidst this ambiguity: businessmen in Canton, though always the victims of the extortionate borrowing by the government, did not always submit themselves blindly to such unfairness, and the appeal of nationalism to people was not unlimited. Although patriotism was present in Canton, its appeal was not strong enough to help raise people's political consciousness and activism to such a level that they would have been more consistent and persistent in their response to the war efforts. All this, on top of the tactical failure of the defending troops, helped to contribute to the easy and humiliating fall of Canton into the hands of Japanese army on 21 October 1938.

¹⁵⁷In Republican Shanghai and Nanking, the coercive measures employed by the KMT were described by an American consul as 'a veritable reign of terror among the money classes', a form of government 'gangsterism'. Eastman, *The Abortive Revolution*, 226–35; also Coble, *The Shanghai Capitalists*, 44–5.

¹⁵⁸Chen Yongfa, *Zhongguo gongchan geming qishinian*, vol. II (Taibei, 1998), 605–41.