

Research on the Donation Movement of Zigong during the Comprehensive Anti-Japanese War

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Abstract

During the period of the Anti-Japanese War, various forms of folk donation activities emerged throughout the country. The “salt city” Zigong occupies an extremely important position in the Sichuan region ' s donation movement by its crowning contribution amount. Few studies on the donation movement in Zigong was conducted in academic circles. Therefore, this paper aims to sort out its courses, and analyze its success factors.

Keywords

Donation movement; Anti-Japanese war; Zigong.

1. Introduction

Zigong, located in the southern Sichuan Basin, benefited from its unique underground brine resources, had well salt mining records as early as the Eastern Han Dynasty. The production of well salt for two thousand years made Zigong famous as the “salt city”. Relying on its highly developed salt industry, Zigong has become an early industrialized city domestically. It has also brought up the group of "Zigong Salt Merchants". They seized the opportunity in the development of well salt industry, accumulated huge wealth [1]. Therefore, Zigong was acknowledged as a fertile land.

After the Lugouqiao Incident, the comprehensive anti-Japanese war officially started. As the war gradually shifting from “military war” to “economic war”, The financial status of Kuomintang Government has deteriorated as a result of long-term engagement with the Japanese army. With the establishment of the united front of the whole nation, various forms of folk donation movements have emerged. For example, Wuhan region's “July 7” donation movement in 1937, Guangzhou region's “August 13” donation movement in 1938, and Sichuan region's donation movement launched by Feng Yuxiang in 1943. Feng Yuxiang came to Zigong in his second fundraising tour to Sichuan and hosted the local donation campaign. Driven by the rising patriotic enthusiasm, people showed extreme passion in contributing property. The donation movement in Zigong raised a total amount of about 130 million yuan [2], which was uppermost within Sichuan Province, achieved remarkable success.

2. Historical Background of Zigong Donation Movement

On July 7, 1937, after the Japanese launched the long-conceived the “Lugouqiao Incident”, the Chinese army retreated on the battlefield continuously because of the disparity in military power with the Japanese army. On August 13, 1937, the Battle of Shanghai broke out. In this battle, although the stubborn resistance of the Chinese army retarded the attack of the Japanese army and smashed the Japan's delusion of capturing China within 3 months, but the truth that a large number of lands was getting occupied gradually could not be reversed. In the Battle of Shanghai alone, China lost about 1280000 square kilometers of territory, approximately 3.5 times of the mainland of Japan [3]. After the fall of Nanjing on December 13, 1937, Kuomintang

Government was forced to relocate to Chongqing, relying on the southwest region to continue the war.

The war never competed only on the military power, but also the economic power. Long-term war brought down the unhealthy financial status of Kuomintang Government. Military expenditure accounts for the majority of the financial expenditure of Kuomintang Government. In 1945, the national fiscal deficit reached 87.7 % and military expenditure accounted for 87.3 % [4]. Without considering inflation, tariff, salt and uniform taxes received only 41 million in 1937, 43 million in 1939. However, this amount in 1936 (1 year before the Lugouqiao Incident) was 1 billion and 14 million, which notably outnumbered the later years [5]. Visibly, Kuomintang Government was trapped into a genuine financial crisis. Solving financial problems became a priority of Kuomintang Government.

3. Analysis of the Logic Behind the Success of Zigong Donation Movement

3.1. Mobilization By Kuomintang Government

In April 1938, Kuomintang Government passed the Programs for National Building to Anti-Japanese, established the Kuomintang 's policy of founding the country in the Anti-Japanese War. The programs noticed that "Mobilize the national people...let those with money contribute money, those with power contribute power", encouraging people to donate actively. To respond the government's call, Feng Yuxiang, with the support of his Christian friends, founded the "Chengdu Branch of Chinese Christian Savings and National Salvation Movement" in September 1942, beginning to organize the work of the donation movement immediately [6]. In November 1943, the first donation movement in Sichuan carried out by Feng obtained unexpectedly positive results. Consequently, he plans to visit more areas in Sichuan in March of the next year, expecting to achieve improved results [7]. In June 1944, Feng came to Zigong and established Zigong Branch of Donation Movement, while Liu Renan, the mayor of Zigong, served as the chairman of the branch. With Feng's prestige and Liu's support, the donation movement set off a climax in Zigong. Both the policy launched by Kuomintang Government and the individual contribution accomplished by Feng Yuxiang had laid a solid foundation for the success of Zigong donation movement in propaganda side.

3.2. Economic Advantages of Zigong

Zigong doesn't enjoy a superior geographical location. Located in the southern Sichuan Basin, neither a transportation hub nor a river coast. But with its abundant brine resources, it has become a centuries-old salt producing area dating back to the Eastern Han Dynasty. The salt production in Zigong was extremely high. From 1937 to 1945, its average annual salt production was about 24.45 tons. In 1945, the salt production in Zigong accounted for 60 % of the total salt production in Sichuan. Zigong salt tax was also an influential part of Sichuan tax revenue. In the late Guangxu period of the Qing Dynasty, the annual salt tax levied in Zigong accounted for about 40% of the total salt tax in Sichuan. In 1937, this percentage was upsurged to 58% [8]. The highly developed salt industry has also spawned wealthy salt merchants in Zigong. They accumulated huge wealth through the operation of salt fields and also made outstanding contributions to the donation movement. Yu Shuhuai, a salt merchant, donated 10 million yuan, while another salt merchant Wang Deqian donated 12 million yuan, breaking the highest record of personal donations national wide [9]. The momentous results accomplished by Zigong was inseparable from its economic strength accumulated by its profoundly developed salt industry.

3.3. Rising Patriotic Enthusiasm

Due to its important strategic significance, from October 1939 to August 1941, Zigong salt fields suffered 474 Japanese air strikes. The salt fields endured massive damage: 522 people were

killed, 1260 people injured, 4649 houses were destroyed and more than 50 salt wells were ruined [10]. However, the military actions of the Japanese army did not develop into a deterrent, in the opposite, those actions intensified the patriotic enthusiasm intensely within the Zigong people. Before Feng Yuxiang came to Zigong, the local newspapers such as Zigong News had previously reported the arrival of Feng, and continuously reported the donation movement's progress [11]. As a result, when Feng arrived, he received positive response from the citizens when he made speeches to masses in order to stimulate the passion of the people. In his personal letter to Liu Renan, he mentioned that "the climax of donation is a day higher than a day". It is obvious to see that the patriotic enthusiasm of the people was prodigious. Not only the salt merchants mentioned above, the ordinary people also played an influential part in donation movement. Archives recorded that "Gongjing (district of Zigong) salt workers voluntarily donated more than 3 million yuan and Ziliujing (district of Zigong) salt workers voluntarily donated more than 7 million yuan"; "Yucai primary school donated more than 105000yuan one day" [12]. It could be acknowledged that the social influence Zigong donation movement caused had an indivisible relation to the civilian patriotic enthusiasm.

4. Conclusion

Zigong donation movement collected funds of about 130 million yuan. From the final result, it is undoubtedly a decisive part of Feng Yuxiang's two donation campaigns to Sichuan. Firstly, the amount of funds raised in Zigong donation movement was the highest in Sichuan, which economically support Kuomintang Government to relieve its giant pressure from the difficult financial situation. Secondly, to a certain extent, the success of the donation movement in Zigong has also inspired the development of the donation movements in other parts of Sichuan, spreading the atmosphere of donating and saving the country. Thirdly, as the rear of the war, Kuomintang Government required Sichuan area an extremely stable society status. In Zigong donation movement, the activity from all sectors of society greatly stimulated the people's confidence in victory in the war. Therefore, it stabilized the society within Sichuan area, it also boosted the morale of the Sichuan army in the frontline.

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