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HIST480 Research Paper

Category 1

## Friends to China

The role and impact of the Friends' Ambulance Unit during the Chinese 'War of Resistance' (1937-1945).

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*'This dissertation is submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BA Honours in History at the University of Canterbury. This dissertation is the result of my own work. Material from the published or unpublished work of other historians used in the dissertation is credited to the author in the footnote references. The dissertation is approximately 9,646 words in length.'*

## Abstract

The Friends' Ambulance Unit, associated with the Society of Friends, was a group that provided an alternative option to military service for conscientious objectors during both World War I and II.<sup>1</sup> They provided transportation and medical aid to those affected by the war, concentrating mainly on the European mainland. In 1941 however, they sent a section to China to help aid and relieve the suffering caused by the 'War of Resistance'. China had been engaged in a bitter conflict with Japan since 1937 causing great suffering for the peoples of China. The China section of the FAU drew people from all over the world, including New Zealand. Members of the Society of Friends, Christchurch brothers Neil and John Johnson responded to a call for assistance and in 1945 they arrived in China. Their letters and other written material found in the Johnson archive located in the Macmillan Brown Library, University of Canterbury, provide an invaluable source to illustrate the important role the FAU played in China during this time. It also demonstrated that because of the scale of the war, however, the FAU's impact was more localized than general. Very little scholarly work has been done on the contribution made by New Zealand to the China section of the Friends' Ambulance Unit during WWII. Only one book relates to this area; Caitriona Cameron's *Go Anywhere do Anything: New Zealanders and the Friends Ambulance Unit 1945-51*.<sup>2</sup> This essay aims to highlight this relatively unknown story. It also adds to the fields of a social history of China, scholarship that examines aid and relief work and New Zealand conscientious objector literature.

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<sup>1</sup> Both Friends Ambulance Unit and Friends' Ambulance Unit are used throughout scholarship. I will use Friends' unless quoting a published work in which the apostrophe is not used.

<sup>2</sup> Caitriona Cameron, *Go Anywhere do Anything: New Zealanders and the Friends Ambulance Unit 1945-1951*, Wellington, Beechtree Press, 1996.

## Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations.....	p. 4
Introduction.....	p. 5
The 'War of Resistance': A story of suffering.....	p. 10
'China Kiwis': The path to China.....	p. 18
The 'China Convoy'.....	p. 24
Conclusion.....	p. 32
Bibliography.....	p. 34
Primary Sources.....	p. 34
Secondary Sources.....	p. 35

## List of Abbreviations

Communist Party of China (CPC)

Conscientious Objector (CO)

Friends' Ambulance Unit (FAU)

## Introduction

Political theorist Michael Walzer claims that humanitarian intervention is justified when it is a response to acts that ‘shock the moral conscience of mankind.’<sup>3</sup> War-time is a period in which events of this nature occur more often, therefore these periods often call for an increase in humanitarian action. This essay will examine why a small group of members of the Society of Friends’ (Quakers) and other pacifists joined the Friends’ Ambulance Unit (FAU) and travelled to China to provide aid during the ‘War of Resistance’. It will also analyze the role and impact this group of men and women had in China during the last four years of their ‘War of Resistance’ and beyond. This topic covers a relatively unknown section of aid and relief history during the Second World War.

Since their beginnings, Quakers have always coupled their refusal to bear arms with the readiness to aid and relieve the suffering caused by war.<sup>4</sup> As a result of their active testimony for peace, in both World War I and World War II many Quakers in New Zealand as well as abroad, opposed conscription and applied for the status of conscientious objector (CO) to excuse themselves from active duty. Public pressure to help the war effort resulted in a need for alternatives to military service.<sup>5</sup> The Friends’ Ambulance Unit was one of these. The FAU established groups of men and women throughout Britain and the European mainland to give relief to those suffering from war. After its establishment in World War I the FAU reformed at the beginning of the Second World War. During this conflict they looked further afield than Europe and sent a team to China to help relieve suffering caused by the invasion of Japan and subsequent war. China had been fighting a vicious war against Japan since 1937 known as the ‘War of Resistance’, largely without foreign assistance. This had resulted in great suffering for millions of civilians.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, Rowman and Littlefield, 1996, cited in Andrew Fiala, *Practical Pacifism*, Algora Publishing, 2007, p. 94. Available from ProQuest ebrary. (accessed 3 September 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Margaret West and Ruth Fawell, *The Story of New Zealand Quakerism 1842-1972*, Auckland, Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, 1973, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Melanie Oppenheimer, *Volunteering: Why we can't survive without it*, Sydney, UNSW Press, 2008, p. 48. Available from: ProQuest ebrary, (accessed 5 April 2016).

<sup>6</sup> His-sheng Ch'i, ‘The Military Dimension,’ in James Chieh Hsiung and Steven I. Levine (ed.), *China's Bitter Victory: The War with Japan 1937-1945*, New York, M. E. Sharpe, 1992, p. 178.

The number of published works on the 'War of Resistance' in English is limited compared to works written on Europe during World War II. Of the works that have been published, the vast majority of them are political or military histories. There is a lack of scholarship in English on the experiences of the Chinese people during the war. This is caused by a combination of ideologies and methodologies nourished by the Cold War as well as an entrenched Eurocentric worldview which has caused a containment of the history of China.<sup>7</sup> Both the governments of China and Japan have had a role in the suppression of a people's history of the war. The breakdown of the Nationalist government and the rise of the Communist party following the war caused a lock down on official documents as well as a lock down of China itself. The denial of major events of the war by both the Chinese government and Japanese government has been detrimental to the growth of this field.<sup>8</sup> It has not been until recently that China has opened up enough to allow research into its complex history. Stephan Mackinnon, Diana Lary and Rana Mitter are the most prominent historians who study China and her people.<sup>9</sup><sup>10</sup> Their works have helped uncover the plights of the Chinese people during the 'War of Resistance'. Conversely, there are still many aspects of this war that are yet to be discovered.

This work comes under the broad scope of research into aid and relief efforts during war-time, in particular, looking at the role of Christian organisations in aid and relief. Although relief work has been carried out by multiple different organizations on a vast scale and at a huge cost, emergency relief during and after WWII has only received limited academic attention.<sup>11</sup> Historian Jessica Reinisch claims that the expansion of relief work scholarship has been hindered by the separated historiographical camps of war studies and Cold War studies, as relief work often straddles both camps.<sup>12</sup> As well as this, medical histories of this period have been uncritical to the efforts made by relief workers and organisations. It is well documented throughout scholarship, however, that the Christian Churches have played a big

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<sup>7</sup> Xudong Zhang, 'Challenging the Eurocentric, Cold War View of China and the making of a Post-Tiananmen Intellectual Field,' *East Asia*, vol. 19, 3, 2001, p.4.

<sup>8</sup> James Flath and Norman Smith, *Beyond Suffering*, UBC Press, 2014, p. 254. Available from: ProQuest ebrary, (accessed 10 April 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Diana Lary and Stephen Mackinnon (ed.), *Scars of War: The Impact of Warfare on Modern China*, Vancouver, UBC Press, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Rana Mitter, *China's War with Japan 1937-1945: The Struggle for Survival*, London, Allen Lane, 2013.

<sup>11</sup> Jessica Reinisch, 'Introduction: Relief in the Aftermath of War,' *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 43, 3, p. 372.

<sup>12</sup> Reinisch, *Journal of Contemporary History*, p. 372.

part in humanitarian activity and aid throughout its history.<sup>13</sup> Although there are Quaker groups located on every continent, scholarship on aid and relief delivered by Quaker driven projects is limited and with a predominately Western focus. There was a small but strong cohort of missionaries from many different denominations, including the Society of Friends, scattered throughout China. It was these missionaries who helped uncover the suffering of the Chinese people during the war and who called on their home nations to provide any sort of aid available to help relieve the people's distress.<sup>14</sup>

By looking at this area of history from a New Zealand perspective, it also adds to the growing scholarship currently that looks at CO movements throughout both World War I and World War II. The general idea of a New Zealand role in the FAU was directly related to the search by Quakers and pacifists alike for a constructive alternative service for COs during the war period. However, there is only one other work, Caitriona Cameron's *Go Anywhere do Anything: New Zealanders and the Friends Ambulance Unit 1945-51*, which details experiences of New Zealand Quakers as part of the Friends' Ambulance Unit in China.<sup>15</sup> This essay will add to the New Zealand CO literature by examining an alternative option used by COs during World War II.

Christchurch brothers Neil and John Johnson, members of the Society of Friends as well as COs, joined the FAU in China during 1945. The Johnson archive located in the Macmillan Brown Library, University of Canterbury contain their writings during their time in China, which forms the main primary material used in this essay. The main source of information in this archive is letters of correspondence between brothers John and Neil Johnson and their family back in Christchurch. These letters give important information to do with the type of work they engaged in, who they had contact with, the successes as well as the barriers they experienced carrying out this type of work. The Johnson archive also contains various NZ FAU Circulars, Quaker Reports of their Meetings in New Zealand, as well as other miscellaneous reports from other organizations, such as the United Nations Relief and

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<sup>13</sup> S. J. Avery Cardinal Dulles, 'Christianity and Humanitarian Action', in K. Cahill (ed.), *Traditions, Values, and Humanitarian Action*, New York, Fordham University Press and The Center for International Health and Cooperation, 2003, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> 'The FAU China Convoy (1941-46),' *Quakers in the World* <http://www.quakersintheworld.org/quakers-in-action/309> (accessed 26 April 2016).

<sup>15</sup> Caitriona Cameron, *Go Anywhere do Anything: New Zealanders and the Friends Ambulance Unit 1945-1951*, Wellington, Beechtree Press, 1996.

Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and letters from other Friends. Newspapers accessed via *papers past* have been examined which adds context to the New Zealand branch of Friends and their attitudes towards war.<sup>16</sup> They also reveal the image New Zealand Quakers were wanting to present to the wider public by displaying the work their members were engaged in during this war-time period.

There are both logistical and perspective issues with these primary sources. The letters held key information about what the brothers were doing but legibility was sometimes an issue due to the small handwriting on poor quality paper. The price of materials, their constant movement, and the limited postal facilities caused only the most important news to be written.<sup>17</sup> As Quakers, Johns and Neil's religion would have affected the way in which they viewed their surrounding war-torn environment and the way in which it was portrayed through their writing. Most of these letters were sent to the Johnson family, however some were sent to Christchurch Friends to update them on their activities and the success of the mission. This influenced the material they chose to omit and keep as they knew their writings would be published. The FAU China convoy had about 300 members during its time in China from various nations around the world.<sup>18</sup> By having only the extensive writings of two New Zealand members it does limit the information available on the actions and impact they had in China at this time. To fill in any gaps, A. Tegla Davies's *The Friends Ambulance Unit*, the only full scale history of the FAU has been examined.<sup>19</sup> Cameron's book *Go Anywhere do Anything* and specific accounts of Canadian involvement in this section of the FAU have also been examined.<sup>20</sup>

Language is also a limitation of the primary sources. Both John and Neil note their lack of knowledge of Chinese. This restricted the type and amount of information these men were able to come across while working. As well as this, my lack of knowledge of Chinese limits my range of primary sources to those that are mainly from a Western perspective. I have tried to minimize the consequences of this perspective through the selection of my areas of focus.

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<sup>16</sup> 'Papers Past', <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz> (accessed 14 July 2016).

<sup>17</sup> 'Summary of China Letters,' *Neil and John Johnson: China Letters*, 1 September 1945, Reference Code: 84487, Macmillian Brown Archives.

<sup>18</sup> 'The FAU China Convoy (1941-46)'.

<sup>19</sup> A. Tegla Davies, *Friends Ambulance Unit*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1947. Available from: <http://www.ourstory.info/library/4-ww2/Friends/fau07.html>, (accessed 12 August 2016).

<sup>20</sup> For further information, see, Cameron, *Go Anywhere Do Anything: New Zealanders and the Friends Ambulance Unit 1945-1951*, Wellington, Beechtree Press, 1996.; Thomas P. Socknat, 'The Canadian Contribution to the China Convoy,' *Quaker History*, vol. 69, 2, 1980, pp. 69-90.



By looking at this area of history from a New Zealand perspective it uncovers a story of both New Zealand involvement in the Second World war that very few people know.

Of the three areas that will be explored, the first will look into the impact the 'War of Resistance' had on the civilian population of China. This chapter helps assess the suffering experienced by the Chinese population. It highlights the enormous impact the war had on millions of Chinese from all levels of society and the overwhelming need of humanitarian aid and relief during this period. It also alludes to some of the issues aid workers had in delivering aid, which will be explored in a later chapter.

The second focuses on the New Zealand context to determine why John and Neil Johnson decided to volunteer to travel to a war torn country with the FAU on the other side of the world. As mentioned above, the New Zealand role in the FAU resulted in the active search by COs to an alternative way to contribute to the war effort that would not be in conflict with their beliefs. Newspaper articles will be used to show the dialogue between COs and their supporters and the New Zealand public.

The final section will look at the type of work the FAU engaged in while in China, highlighting some of the limitations that lessened the impact of their work. Medical aid and transportation were the two main forms of work the FAU engaged in while in China. Delivering aid in a country still engaged in war created many problems. The constant threat of conflict caused major disruptions, particularly in the transportation of goods. The member's foreigner status both helped and hindered their ability to deliver aid in China. However, it was the material poverty of the nation that was the biggest factor that limited the FAU, as well as many other aid agencies, ability to provide relief.

## The 'War of Resistance': A story of suffering

The immunity of civilians or non-combatants from deadly violence in war is at the centrepiece of the *jus in bello* section of just war theory. As philosopher Igor Primoratz notes, the immunity of civilians is also a 'central tenet in consequentialist accounts of the morality of war.'<sup>21</sup> The Japanese invasion of China in 1937 and the subsequent war saw an incalculable number of civilians killed or forced to endure extreme suffering.<sup>22</sup> In the first year of the war, Japan had managed to almost land lock Nationalist China which forced the government to retreat inland. This caused major disruptions to industry, imports and exports and the economy. The ease of the Japanese advance highlighted a lack of government and military strategy caused by the Nationalist government's focus on their internal enemy, Communism. Many historians agree that China was effectively fighting without assistance for the first four years of the war.<sup>23</sup> Diana Lary and Stephan MacKinnon argue that the story of modern war related death and suffering in China has remained hidden from public histories.<sup>24</sup> The cost of China's war effort on her people was heavy. Millions of civilians died as a result of bombing by Japanese planes, massacres carried out by Japanese troops as well as scorched-earth tactics carried out mainly by the Chinese army.<sup>25</sup> Billions of dollars' worth of damage to property and land caused massive problems for food production and housing. Tens of millions of civilians were uprooted from their homes and forced to move across the country which caused high levels of social and psychological upheaval for the Chinese people. Land destruction, peasant population movement, increased population and crop failure all resulted in millions of deaths from starvation. Arthur Young explains that both soldiers and civilians lived generally at a subsistence level throughout this period.<sup>26</sup> Although the FAU helped both the civilian and military personnel, they mainly focused on civilian communities. By looking at the impact the 'War of Resistance' had on the civilian community it will gauge why the Friends' Ambulance Unit decided to send a contingent to China, rather than other areas of conflict during the Second World War.

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<sup>21</sup> Igor Primoratz, *Civilian Immunity in War*, Clarendon Press, 2007, p. 21. Available from: ProQuest Ebury (accessed 20 May 2016).

<sup>22</sup> Mitter, *China's War with Japan 1937-1945*, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> David Gordon, 'The China-Japan War, 1931-1945', *The Journal of Military History*, vol. 70, 1, 2006, p. 147. Available from: Project Muse (accessed 20 March 2016).

<sup>24</sup> Lary and Mackinnon (ed.), *Scars of War*, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Lary and Mackinnon (ed.), p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Arthur Young, *China and the Helping Hand 1937-1945*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 420.

Japanese forces were confronted with little resistance during the first stages of the war. Most of the military resources China had were engaged in a civil war between the Nationalist government, and the Chinese Communist Party (CPC). The official strategy of the Nationalist government was to secure control over China by defeating their internal enemies first before waging war against Japan.<sup>27</sup> In the first half of 1937 the Nationalist government and the CPC began negotiating an end to the civil war and the formation of a 'United Front' against the encroaching Japanese threat.<sup>28</sup> From 1937 to 1939 the Japanese army and navy overran the most important and heavily populated regions of China, they controlled the majority of Chinese ports and following the fall of Wuhan and Canton in 1938, most of the major railway lines as well.<sup>29</sup> This forced the Nationalist government to abandon its original policy of military confrontation and replace it with a strategy of prolonged resistance.<sup>30</sup> The Chinese were forced to move what little industry they had left, as well as their capital inland. His-sheng Ch'i argues that after 1939, China basically waged a 'War of Resistance' from the least developed area of their country.<sup>31</sup>

Shortly after the war the Nationalist government formed the Wartime Losses Investigative Commission to compile data on wartime property losses.<sup>32</sup> Because of the enormous administrative difficulty involved only preliminary findings were reported. In 1946 it was estimated that losses of property amounted to 472,348 billion Chinese dollar. A more recent figure released by Chinese Communists place the value of wartime property losses in excess of U.S. 100 billion dollars.<sup>33</sup> Most of this destruction can be attributed to two causes; aerial bombing and the scorched-earth policy. The use of aerial bombing by the Japanese caused the destruction of many cities and towns in China. Chinese people had never experienced this type of weapon before which brought about untold terror to these populations. Diana Lary explains that the bombing of the city of Xuzhou created an atmosphere of 'chronic anxiety.'<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> 'Sino-Japanese War', <http://www.history.co.uk/study-topics/history-of-ww2/sino-japanese-war>, 2015. (accessed 14 April 2016).

<sup>28</sup> J. A. G. Roberts, *Modern China: An Illustrated History*, Stroud, Sutton, 1998, pp. 189-90.

<sup>29</sup> Edward L. Dreyer, *China at War, 1901-1949*, London, Longman, 1995, p. 206.

<sup>30</sup> Roberts, *Modern China*, p. 191.

<sup>31</sup> Ch'i, *China's Bitter Victory*, p.179.

<sup>32</sup> Ch'i, p.179.

<sup>33</sup> Ch'i, p.179.

<sup>34</sup> Diana Lary 'A Ravaged Place: The Devastation of the Xuzhou Region, 1938,' in Diana Lary and Stephen Mackinnon (ed.), *Scars of War: The Impact of Warfare on Modern China*, Vancouver, UBC Press, 2001, p. 101.

The bombardment of Chongqing has been regarded by historians as one of the ‘most tumultuous episodes in the history of the Second World War.’<sup>35</sup> Following its announcement as the new capital after the fall of Nanjing, Chongqing was seen as a key military target for Japanese forces. On 18 February 1938, the Japanese began a 5 year bombing campaign against the city. It has been estimated that there were around 9,000 bombing sorties dropping 20,000 bombs; 30,000 people were killed or injured as a direct result of the bombings and 20,000 buildings were destroyed.<sup>36</sup> Great fires always followed the bombings. During the Great Bombardment of 3 and 4 May 1939 the Japanese dropped a number of firebombs, which resulted in 90 percent of houses being destroyed.<sup>37</sup>

Towns and cities were not only in danger from the air: ‘Scorched earth’ tactics were also employed by both the Japanese and Chinese military during this time. These often self-inflicted acts of aggression were used as way to deprive the enemy of the use of key things like transportation, property and agriculture after the military retreated. Most famously, the town of Taierzhuang was completely destroyed during several weeks of fighting with the local population being reduced from 20,000 to 7.<sup>38</sup> John Keegan attributes this strategy of ‘withdraw[ing] when confronted with determination and count[ing] upon wearing down an enemy to defeat’ to the Confucian tradition and the culture of the Chinese.<sup>39</sup> These tactics not only caused destruction of property and loss of life, but collapsed local commerce to and resulted in failure of crops. The decision by made by the leader of the Nationalist government, Chaing Kai-Shek to blow the dykes of the Yellow River to slow Japanese advance is the most extreme use of the scorched-earth policy. The destruction caused by this tactic significantly outweighed the strategic value of such an action. Although the short term benefit was that it caused the Japanese to retire to the east and allowed time for the Chinese to regroup, it did not hold up the Japanese for long.<sup>40</sup> The flooding caused massive damage to crops, towns and cities in three provinces before it made its way to the sea south of the Shandong Peninsula. It was reported that the flood submerged 1.38 million acres of Henan’s

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<sup>35</sup> Flath and Smith, *Beyond Suffering*, p. 59.

<sup>36</sup> Flath and Smith, p. 59.

<sup>37</sup> Flath and Smith, p. 71.

<sup>38</sup> Lary, *Scars of War*, p. 103.

<sup>39</sup> John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* New York, Vintage, 1993, cited in R. Keith Schoppa, *In a Sea of Bitterness: Refugees During the Sino-Japanese War*, Harvard University Press, 2011, p. 239. Available from ProQuest ebrary (accessed 12 April 2016); Scorched earth policies have a long history in military tactics and have been used by many cultures. The Chinese likely would have adopted this tactic from Mongol practices.

<sup>40</sup> Dreyer, *China at War*, p. 228.

arable land.<sup>41</sup> As well as the property damage, an estimated 893,000 lost their lives as a result of this action.<sup>42</sup> Surprisingly enough this tactic is not mentioned in any of the available military histories produced by the Chinese government, thus denying that it was a strategic move.

There were numerous atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers against Chinese civilians during the war. One of the most famous was the Nanjing Massacre, or the Rape of Nanjing in 1937.<sup>43</sup> Nanjing was the capital of the Republic of China. The Nationalist government saw Nanjing as a symbol of the kind of environmental and technological modernity that they wanted to replicate throughout the rest of China.<sup>44</sup> Unlike Shanghai, Nanjing was not a major port and had no military advantages for its capture. However, the capture of Nanjing was a symbolic show of Japanese power and their victory over Chinese nationalism.<sup>45</sup> On 13 December 1937, Japanese forces overcame the last pockets of Chinese resistance and stormed into Nanjing.<sup>46</sup> Once captured, the Japanese troops began a six week spree of destruction and devastation. Many people agree that the Nanjing Massacre ranks with the worst atrocities of the Second World War.<sup>47</sup> An American living in Nanjing at the time recalled:

We thought order would soon be restored, and peace would come, and people would be able to get into normal life again. But the surprise came to us all. Robbery, looting, torture, murder, rape, burning - everything that can be imagined was carried out from the beginning without any limit. Modern times have nothing to surpass it.<sup>48</sup>

These massacres were not only horrific because of the numbers killed, but also for the psychological terror they produced in the minds of the Chinese. A western resident recalled: 'There has been nothing or no one safe. Soldiers have taken anything they wanted, destroyed what they did not want, raped women and girls openly and publicly by the scores and

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<sup>41</sup> John R. Watt, *China Studies: Saving Lives in Wartime China: How Medical Reformers Built Modern Healthcare Systems Amid War and Epidemics, 1928-1945*, Brill, 2013, p. 11. Available from ProQuest ebrary (accessed 23 May 2016); I am using the spelling 'Henan', other texts cited use 'Honan'.

<sup>42</sup> Lary, *Scars of War*, p. 112.

<sup>43</sup> I will be using the spelling Nanjing, as opposed to the Romanised spelling, Nanking.

<sup>44</sup> Mitter, *China's War with Japan 1937-1945*, p. 121.

<sup>45</sup> Mitter, p. 122.

<sup>46</sup> Yang Daqing 'Atrocities in Nanjing: Searching for Explanations' in Diana Lary and Stephen Mackinnon (ed.), *Scars of War: The Impact of Warfare on Modern China*, Vancouver, UBC Press, 2001, p. 76.

<sup>47</sup> Daqing, *Scars of War*, p. 76.

<sup>48</sup> Dick Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, New York, Viking Press, 1982, p. 74.

hundreds'.<sup>49</sup> It has been estimated that over 20,000 women and girls were raped during this period, some being subjected to gruesome mutilation.<sup>50</sup> After the Nanjing Massacre in December, many civilians were convinced that they too would be killed simply because they were Chinese, and that Japan was engaged in a race war against China.<sup>51</sup>

International Safety Zones were created by foreign missionaries, doctors and teachers who chose to stay in Nanjing and help the Chinese people rather than abandoning the city.<sup>52</sup> Zhang Lianhong claims that these westerners were viewed by many as the only 'true "saviours"' of the refugees who were left behind by the government.<sup>53</sup> These Safety Zones would be deemed neutral and the Chinese who sheltered there would be safe. Food, shelter and sanitation were the immediate issues facing those in the Safety Zone as numbers of refugees moving into the Zone ballooned beyond expectation.<sup>54</sup> The German, John Rabe who was instrumental in forming the Safety Zone wrote, 'thirty people were sleeping in my study, three people were in the coal room in the basement, eight women and children were sleeping in the servants' bathroom.'<sup>55</sup> Foreigners had a big part to play in the sheltering of Chinese civilians at this time. Historian Dick Wilson argues that without the presence of 'neutral observers' the destruction and carnage would have been far worse.<sup>56</sup> Christian missionaries in other cities, like Xuzhou, also provided a safe haven for Chinese civilians when the Japanese troops advanced. They were careful not to admit young men of military age into their compounds as Japanese troops would then have a reason to perceive them as military targets.<sup>57</sup> The Japanese used the assumption that any male of military age who wore civilian clothing was a soldier who had shed his uniform, therefore justified the indiscriminate killing of male Chinese.<sup>58</sup>

The speed in which the Japanese army was advancing, along with the subsequent massacres and bombardment occurring at a rapid pace meant refugee flight grew exponentially in China

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<sup>49</sup> Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, p. 74.

<sup>50</sup> Marvin Williamsen, 'The Military Dimension, 1937-1941', in James Chieh Hsiung and Steven I. Levine (ed.), *China's Bitter Victory: The War with Japan 1937-1945*, New York, M. E. Sharpe, 1992, p. 144.

<sup>51</sup> Lary, *Scars of War*, p. 101.

<sup>52</sup> Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, p. 71.

<sup>53</sup> Zhang Lianhong, 'The Nanjing Massacre: The Socio-Psychological Effects', *East Asia*, Fall 2000, p. 42.

<sup>54</sup> Mitter, *China's War with Japan 1937-1945*, p. 126.

<sup>55</sup> Lianhong, *East Asia*, p. 39.

<sup>56</sup> Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, p. 74.

<sup>57</sup> Lary, *Scars of War*, p. 102.

<sup>58</sup> Lary, p. 105.

during the war. It is estimated that the war created ninety-five million refugees, however the lack of reliable figures causes a problem for historians.<sup>59</sup> Mass refugee movement came in five distinct waves. The first came after the Japanese occupation of the Beijing and Tianjin area and the brutality of the Japanese troops. The second wave occurred during the battle for Shanghai. Most refugees fled west while others pushed into foreign-run International Settlement areas. The third big wave occurred after the massacre at Nanjing: millions fled the city joined by others escaping a similar situation in Xuzhou. The fourth wave occurred when the dykes of the Yellow River were blown causing unprecedented numbers to become homeless; many of those fleeing ended up in Wuhan.<sup>60</sup> The final wave occurred after the famine that swept over Henan in 1942, creating over 9 million refugees.<sup>61</sup> This mass movement of people effected the refugees economically, socially and psychologically. For Chinese, a very significant part of their personal identity was associated with where they were born.<sup>62</sup> By fleeing one's home old ties of family and geography were destroyed. Personal connections and networks that had been built up over lifetimes ensured stability and safety to Chinese.<sup>63</sup> The war caused millions of people to leave their safety behind and enter unfamiliar territory without family bonds to assist them. Refugee movement also extended cities resources beyond breaking point. By the middle of 1938 Wuhan's population had grown from 1 million to 1.5 million. By 1940 Chongqing's population had doubled.<sup>64</sup> Artist and author Feng Zikai, himself a refugee, noted that 'refugees [were] like an invading army,' and were considered 'undesirables'.<sup>65</sup> Local Relief Councils did not have enough money to look after the number of refugees coming into the cities. This caused many to begin public appeals for donations, however, as a result of the negative attitudes Chinese people held towards charity, little was raised.<sup>66</sup> The Central Government as well, could do little to alleviate the suffering of refugees. The *Southeast Daily* reported: 'The central government, responding to the province, has already sent funds for relief, but it's a pity that the funds are completely inadequate and quite useless.'<sup>67</sup> This left dire conditions for millions of refugees.

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<sup>59</sup> Sunil S. Amrith, *Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia*, Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 100. Available from: E.B.L. (accessed April 20 2016).

<sup>60</sup> Stephen R. MacKinnon and Robert Capa, *Wuhan, 1938*, University of California Press, 2008, p. 49. Available from ProQuest ebrary, (accessed 10 April 2016).

<sup>61</sup> Amrith, *Migration and Diaspora in Modern Asia*, pp. 99-100.

<sup>62</sup> Schoppa, *In a Sea of Bitterness*, p. 9.

<sup>63</sup> Schoppa, p. 10.

<sup>64</sup> Mackinnon and Capa, *Wuhan*, p. 50.

<sup>65</sup> Schoppa, *In a Sea of Bitterness*, p. 36.

<sup>66</sup> Schoppa, p. 37.

<sup>67</sup> Schoppa, p. 41.

With the destruction of large areas of arable land and massive movement of populations of peasants, famine was an inevitable consequence of the 'War of Resistance'. It had been noted as early as 1932 that a sizeable number of the Chinese population were attempting to sustain life on less than the minimum required for survival. R. H. Tawney wrote that 'there are China districts in which the position of the rural population is that of a man standing permanently up to his neck in water, so that even a ripple is sufficient to drown him.'<sup>68</sup> The 'War of Resistance' had caused more than a ripple. In the years 1942 and 1943, Henan suffered a famine that killed between 1.5 to 2 million people.<sup>69</sup> Many people looked toward their local government to help ease the crisis. However, they were incapable of supplying enough to cover all needs of their people.<sup>70</sup> Mark Baker attributes a large portion of blame for the famine on the Nationalist government. Baker states that the government's grain requisitioning to feed their military in 1942 and its ineffectiveness in responding to the drought of the same year was crucial in causing the mass starvation.<sup>71</sup> Wherever troops were, famine followed. Living in Henan, George Andrew wrote to the United China Relief Office in Chungking detailing the humanitarian crisis in Henan: 'the camps have no food stores... The wheat crop failed in the 1942 growing season and then corn, followed by kaoliang and millet... thousands of people have really nothing to eat.'<sup>72</sup> Fear of Japanese troops caused many peasants to abandon their crops, and those that were harvested ran the risk of being seized by Japanese troops to feed themselves and their animals.<sup>73</sup> American journalist Theodore White noted that it was not the fighting that produced the most deaths, but famine: 'In a famine where no one kills but nature... nature itself is the enemy - and only government can save from nature.'<sup>74</sup>

The Chinese people suffered incalculable horrors during the 'War of Resistance'. The atrocities committed by Japanese troops caused terror and psychological harm to a great

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<sup>68</sup> Japer Becker, *Hungry Ghosts: China's Secret Famine*, London, J. Murray, 1996, p. 16.

<sup>69</sup> Micah S Muscolino, *The Ecology of War in China*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2015, p.2.

<sup>70</sup> Erleen Christensen, *In War and Famine: Missionaries in China's Honan Province in the 1940s*, MQUP, 2005, p. 99. Available from: ProQuest Ebrary (accessed 20 April 2016).

<sup>71</sup> Mark Baker, 'Spaces of Starvation: State and Province in the Henan Famine, 1942-43', *Agrarian Studies Spring Series*, June 2016, p. 5. Available from: <http://agrariansstudies.macmillan.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Spaces%20of%20Starvation%20-%20BAKER.pdf> (accessed 20 June 2016).

<sup>72</sup> Christensen, *In War and Famine*, p. 98.

<sup>73</sup> Lary, *Scars of War*, p. 109.

<sup>74</sup> Becker, *Hungry Ghosts*, p. 19.



percentage of the civilian population. Relentless bombings and massacres caused millions of people to sever generations old family ties and flee across the country to escape harm. Nevertheless, it was China's own internal divisions that played a significant part in the suffering of its people during this time. The Nationalist government's focus on destroying Communism at the beginning of the war allowed Japan to take control of key transportation and ports that were necessary in fighting a war of attrition. As a result of ineffective and miscalculated policies led by the Nationalist government, millions of people lost their lives and countless more suffered horrendous hardships. Governmental aid was often inadequate and too late to relieve the suffering of its civilian population. It was often foreigners who often offered aid when it was needed, sheltering fleeing civilians from Japanese troops as well as setting up initiatives to help feed and house refugees. In the end, Nationalist China won but not without mammoth losses that would prove catastrophic to their regime in the years following the war. China's enormous capacity to endure surprised both themselves and their enemy.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Ch'i, *China's Bitter Victory*, p. 178.

## 'China Kiwis': The path to China

The general idea of a New Zealand role in the FAU was directly related to the search by Quakers and pacifists alike for a constructive alternative service for COs during the war period. There always remained the desire among these men, especially Quakers, to perform humanitarian service. Avery Cardinal Dulles explains since the beginning, the Christian Church has played a large role in humanitarian aid and relief.<sup>76</sup> Since then, many movements have continued to bring about relief to those in need through both spontaneous and organised relief efforts. The Christian movement Society of Friends (Quakers) actions throughout both WWI and WWII exemplified this Christian willingness to aid others and provide relief to victims of war. As a result of their Testimony to Peace, members of the Quaker movement refused to bear arms.<sup>77</sup> This caused the majority of its members, including both John and Neil Johnson, to apply for the status of CO during the war in their respective countries. In New Zealand this came with a backlash from the community and government as COs were seen to be 'shirking' their responsibilities.

When war broke out in Europe and Asia during the 1930s, many men in New Zealand were against participating in it as the horrors of the first world war were still fresh in their minds. In 1940 conscription was introduced. What followed was a period of pacifist reaction in which almost 5,000 men applied to appeal boards for exemption on conscientious grounds.<sup>78</sup> This phenomenon was seen throughout Britain, Canada, Australia and many of the other war affected nations. New Zealand derived their process for dealing with these requests from the First World War. By the Military Service Act of August 1916, only a man who had been a member of a religious body to which the bearing of arms was contrary to divine revelation, as well as he himself conscientiously holding such beliefs and was prepared to do non-combatant work in or beyond New Zealand, could be recognised as a religious objector and be exempted from military service.<sup>79</sup> Out of the nearly 5,000 appeals only 600 appeals were granted, forcing the majority to either comply with the law or be sentenced to detention.

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<sup>76</sup> Cardinal Dulles, *Traditions, Values, and Humanitarian Action*, p. 5.

<sup>77</sup> Martin Ceadel, 'The Quaker Peace Testimony and its Contribution to the British Peace Movement: An Overview', *Quaker Studies*, vol.7, 5, 2002, p. 9.

<sup>78</sup> Mark Derby, 'Conscription, conscientious objection and pacifism - Conscientious objection', *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/conscription-conscientious-objection-and-pacifism/page-2>, 2013, (accessed 17 June 2016).

<sup>79</sup> Nancy M. Taylor, *The Home Front*, vol. 1, Wellington, Historical Publications Branch, 1986, p. 244.

There were major repercussions for those who decided not to comply with conscription. Around 800 men were arrested without the right of appeal and sent to a 'scheme of concentration camps designed to be less comfortable than the army, but less punitive than gaol'.<sup>80</sup> Quakers along with Christadelphians and Seventh Day Adventists were the only creeds that qualified under the strict guidelines, however not all members convinced the appeal boards. This angered many members of the community, as one person wrote in the *Auckland Star* in August 1944: 'There should not be one member of the Society of Friends in a COs' camp. If there is one, "someone had blundered" Quakers do not believe in war.'<sup>81</sup>

Since its formation in the 1650s Quakers, or the Society of Friends, have held a strong stance against war.<sup>82</sup> Its founder George Fox, witnessing the violent conflict of the English Civil War, developed the belief that God was not compatible with warfare.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, after being imprisoned multiple times for his beliefs, Fox wrote a pamphlet addressed to King Charles II affirming Quaker pacifist beliefs and condemning the actions of other violent groups.<sup>84</sup>

All bloody principles and practices, we, as to our own particulars, do utterly deny, with all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretence whatsoever. And this is our testimony to the whole world.<sup>85</sup>

This statement is better known as the original Peace Testimony and details the first official document of Quaker opposition to war. Quakerism is distinct from other religious groups due to its organisation, beliefs and practices. Historian Pink Dandelion outlines the four key theological ideas of Quakers as 'the centrality of direct inward encounter with God and revelation', a corporate direct guidance way of managing church business, the spiritual equality of everyone and the preference for pacifism and a commitment to other forms of

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<sup>80</sup> Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 'In dissent', <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/war/second-world-war-at-home/in-dissent>, 2012, (accessed 8 July 2016).

<sup>81</sup> 'Military Defaulters,' *Auckland Star*, 25 August 1944. Available from: *Papers Past*, (accessed 7 July 2016).

<sup>82</sup> Hugh Barbour and J. Williams Frost, *The Quakers*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1988, p. 4.

<sup>83</sup> K. R. Adams, 'The Growth and Development of the Society of Friends in New Zealand 1840-1920', Master of Arts thesis, University of Canterbury, 1986, p. 157.

<sup>84</sup> 'A Brief History of the Peace Testimony from Early Quakers to Contemporary Friends' [http://www.northernyearlymeeting.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/A\\_Brief\\_History\\_of\\_the\\_Peace\\_Testimony.pdf](http://www.northernyearlymeeting.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/A_Brief_History_of_the_Peace_Testimony.pdf), 2008, (accessed 10 June 2016).

<sup>85</sup> This is a small section of a much larger text.

'A Declaration from the harmless and innocent people of God, called Quakers', [www.quaker.org/minnfm/peace/A%20Declaration%20to%20Charles%20II%201660.htm](http://www.quaker.org/minnfm/peace/A%20Declaration%20to%20Charles%20II%201660.htm), (accessed 10 July 2016).

social witness.<sup>86</sup> These are the common threads that bind all Quakers throughout the world. New Zealand Quakers were no different. New Zealand Quakers reaffirmed their pacifist stance at the beginning of the second world war and continuously throughout, arguing that ;believing in Christ's way of love, we are convinced war cannot be God's way to better the world, and we reaffirm our testimony against all outward wars and strife'.<sup>87</sup>

Public opinion in New Zealand was very much against pacifists. Even those who's appeals were granted were met with hostility. There was immense pressure put on those men who refused to serve through the use of propaganda, by businesses and by peers.<sup>88</sup> Various employers would not allow conscientious objectors within their ranks. The Emergency Fire Service and St John Ambulance Brigade were among those who did not want to be a refuge for 'conchies' during this period.<sup>89</sup> The head of a large Wellington firm went as far to say that: 'If I find anyone who even looks like a CO among our employees he will get his walking shoes'.<sup>90</sup> Pacifists were subjected to constant police attention which caused great anxiety. Media also played a part in the condemnation of pacifists. As the public opinion against COs grew, so did the debates about their role in the community. A number of Friends were compelled to explain the Quaker's position in hopes that the hostilities against them would weaken.

The Society of Friends is officially opposed to all military service but has always undertaken war victims' relief. This is strictly non-military in character, is not partisan, and is part of an endeavour to relieve social distress at all times... Quakers believe that only by unrestricted love, service and justice can we build solid foundations for peace.<sup>91</sup>

Messages similar to the one above were published in the leading newspapers in the major centres of New Zealand.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>86</sup>Pink Dandelion, *Quakers: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, OUP Oxford, 2008, p. 2. Available from: ProQuest ebrary (accessed 30 June 2016).

<sup>87</sup> 'Attitude to War,' *Auckland Star*, 21 May 1942. Available from: *Papers Past*, (accessed 7 July 2016).

<sup>88</sup> Oppenheimer, *Volunteering: Why we can't survive without it*, p. 48.

<sup>89</sup> Taylor, *The Home Front*, p. 257.

<sup>90</sup> Taylor, p. 258.

<sup>91</sup> 'Quakers and War,' *New Zealand Herald*, 14 June 1941. Available from: *Papers Past*, (accessed 7 July 2016).

<sup>92</sup> The New Zealand Herald, Auckland Star, The Press.

The negative public opinion against pacifists caused many of those who were awarded the CO pardon to prove they were helping the war effort in a non-combatant manner. This was not a problem for Quakers as they had a long history of giving relief and aid to those in need. Since 1660 Quakers have coupled their refusal to bear arms with the willingness to relieve the suffering and provide relief to victims of war.<sup>93</sup> Quakers put great emphasis on the individual interactions they have with people through their work.<sup>94</sup> They believe in the human capacity for goodness and, according to Ilana Feldman, are guided by an ‘interest in the condition of all men... (which) motivated Friends towards the efforts at social, political, and economic reform for which they are perhaps best known by the world at large’.<sup>95</sup> Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century there many instances where Quakers exemplified this willingness to provide relief.<sup>96</sup> Often they were the only group who stayed after conflicts had finished, helping to rebuild and assist development.<sup>97</sup> The establishment of the American Friends Service Committee and the many British Programs in World War I signified the institutionalization of pacifism and service, as Friends sought to protect COs and engage in constructive social action.<sup>98</sup>

One of the most praised programs established during the first world war was the Friends’ Ambulance Unit. At the outbreak of the first world war a number of Friends wanted to contribute to the war effort in a way that would not come into conflict with their views. They considered ambulance services may be inadequate during this time so they formed what is now known as the Friends’ Ambulance Unit.<sup>99</sup> This did not come without its difficulties, as in the beginning neither the British Red Cross nor the British military wanted to associate themselves with a pacifist group, however as the war progressed the reality of the conflict forced them to change their minds.<sup>100</sup> The FAU conducted their work both in Britain and on the European mainland. They went where the most need was, helping both military and civilian suffering alike. In 1919 the FAU was disbanded after 5 years of work providing

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<sup>93</sup> West and Fawell, *The Story of New Zealand Quakerism 1842-1972*, p. 63.

<sup>94</sup> Ilana Feldman, ‘The Quaker way: Ethical labor and Humanitarian relief’ *American Ethnologist*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2007, pp. 692-3.

<sup>95</sup> Feldman, *American Ethnologist*, p. 694.

<sup>96</sup> ‘Relief Given to Victims of Conflict’ *Quakers in the World*, <http://www.quakersintheworld.org/quakers-in-action/265>, (accessed 28 April 2016).

<sup>97</sup> ‘Relief Given to Victims of Conflict’.

<sup>98</sup> Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers*, p. 9.

<sup>99</sup> ‘Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) in WWI’, *Quakers in the World*, <http://www.quakersintheworld.org/quakers-in-action/252>, (accessed 28 April 2016).

<sup>100</sup> ‘Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) in WWI’.

emergency relief, setting up hospitals, providing transport of goods and people, and helping with repatriation.<sup>101</sup> This concept was to be revived during the second world war. During the interwar years doctors and aid workers pushed for aid not to be used as a political weapon as it had been in the case of the Allied blockade of 1919-1921 that caused massed starvation in Vienna and Berlin.<sup>102</sup> It was now recognised that relief was no longer a responsibility exclusively left for the humanitarian minority. The preparation of groups as well as the cooperation between them was necessary for success the event of other emergencies.<sup>103</sup> After their experiences during World War I, Friends had become aware of the need for trained persons to carry out relief work effectively. They began recruiting worldwide and training many of their members before deploying them into conflict zones.<sup>104</sup>

As in WWI, the FAU conducted work in Britain as well as mainland Europe. Due to the global nature of the second world war, they also saw a massive need for relief and aid in other places. The suffering of China was well known across the world after the beginning of their 'War of Resistance'. The FAU identified China as a nation that would benefit significantly from medical and general humanitarian aid. The first group of men and women were sent to China in 1941. Due to the enormity of the conflict, it was not long until there were calls for more Quaker and pacifist volunteers from allied nations throughout the world to help the effort. In November 1944 the New Zealand Friends Newsletter suggested that there was a chance for New Zealanders to work with the Friends' Ambulance Unit in China.<sup>105</sup> Soon after there was an enquiry from London for six pacifists from New Zealand to volunteer to reinforce the Unit already in China. This was unique as few New Zealand conscientious objects were permitted to leave New Zealand during the war.<sup>106</sup> As second generation Quakers, John and Neil Johnson stood fast in their pacifist beliefs when the war began.<sup>107</sup> They both registered and were among the few who gained CO status during this war-time period. Swept up by the tide of societal pressure towards COs, as well as their own personal conviction and desire to help those who were suffering because of the war, the men looked at alternatives to military service. Through this work they believed they could

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<sup>101</sup> 'Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) in WWI'.

<sup>102</sup> Ben Shephard, 'Becoming Planning Minded': The Theory and Practice of Relief 1940-1945', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 43, no. 3, 2008, p. 407.

<sup>103</sup> West and Fawell, *The Story of New Zealand Quakerism 1842-1972*, p. 83.

<sup>104</sup> West and Fawell, p. 82.

<sup>105</sup> West and Fawell, p. 83.

<sup>106</sup> Cameron, *Go Anywhere Do Anything*, p. 11.

<sup>107</sup> James Brodie and Audrey Brodie (ed.), *Seeking a New Land: Quakers in New Zealand: A volume of biographical sketches*, Wellington, Beechtree Press, 1993, p. 153.

demonstrate the value of pacifism. Both John and Neil Johnson applied for the position in the FAU, and at the beginning of 1945 the brothers, along with five others, were sent to China.

John and Neil Johnson belong to a long tradition of humanitarian relief carried out by Quakers. Due to their pacifist stance Quakers have long coupled their refusal to participate in war with providing relief work to those affected by the conflicts. This is seen as one of the few common features all Quakers uphold, no matter where they are from. In 1940 New Zealand introduced conscription which resulted in members of the Religious Society of Friends, along with other New Zealanders, applying for the status of CO to avoid conscription. Due to the strict nature of the appeal boards, less than one eighth of those who applied were allowed to be exempt. This caused an uproar and many people refused to obey the decision. Approximately 800 men were put in concentration camps and forced to remain there until after the war had finished. Those who were exempt from military service were not exempt from hostilities towards them. Newspaper articles were used as a way to appeal and contest the negative public opinion towards this group. The pressure to help with the war effort was applied to those not serving in the military through the use of propaganda, and by businesses and peers. Driven by this pressure, as well as their own convictions about war, John and Neil Johnson applied to serve in the FAU in China.

## The 'China Convoy'

The work of the Friends' Ambulance Unit in China began in the summer of 1941. Originally, the project stemmed from a plan to relocate members who had become marooned in Sweden after the Finnish collapse.<sup>108</sup> In the end it became the biggest and most individual of all the Unit's projects. By the time John and Neil Johnson arrived in China in 1945, The Friends' Ambulance Unit's China division was in its final stage. The FAU had been providing transportation, humanitarian aid, and medical assistance to the people of China for the previous four years and would continue to do so until the Communist Party of China (CPC) forced them to leave in 1951. The operation had not been without its difficulties. A. Tegla Davies claims that at no other place did a section of the FAU find it so difficult to 'find its feet' as in China.<sup>109</sup> However, 'once the corner was turned, there was no section which attained so much character and coherence, so much sympathy and integration with the life of the country in which it served'.<sup>110</sup> Dr R. K. S. Lim, head of the Chinese Red Cross, an organization with which the FAU worked closely during their time in China, noted that the fault lay 'fundamentally ... in the ignorance, and in the material... poverty of the nation'.<sup>111</sup> This material poverty would have a huge impact on the work the FAU undertook during this time. Working in a war zone in a foreign country posed many logistical as well as ethical problems for members. An address from the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) explains the enormous difficulties faced by all parties who were attempting to help relieve suffering: 'China remains a problem. It needs a big heart. There are factions on every side - not only the Nationalist-Communist struggle, also there is a military situation.'<sup>112</sup> Fighting would cause major disruptions to transport and supplies for many years. Another factor that would play a large part in the impact they had was their foreigner status, which would both help and hinder their activities throughout the Unit's project.

The FAU were not the first group of Quakers to travel to China nor were they the only western religious group working in China during this period. During the nineteenth century

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<sup>108</sup> A. Tegla Davies, 'The China Convoy I: The Burma Adventure,' *Friends Ambulance Unit*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1947, para. 2. Available from: <http://www.ourstory.info/library/4-ww2/Friends/fau07.html>, (accessed 12 August 2016).

<sup>109</sup> A. Tegla Davies, *Friends Ambulance Unit*, para. 1.

<sup>110</sup> A. Tegla Davies, para. 1.

<sup>111</sup> Williamsen, *China's Bitter Victory*, p. 148.

<sup>112</sup> 'Report of address by Commander Jackson' *John Johnson Papers*, Correspondence & papers 0003, Acc No. MB1234, Macmillian Brown Archives.



Quakers, like all Protestant churches, were affected by the Evangelical Revival. In 1868, the Friends' Foreign Mission Association was established with mission work to China beginning not long after.<sup>113</sup> Various treaties that had ended the second Opium War in 1860 allowed the Society of Friends and other missionary groups to travel extensively throughout the Chinese Empire, which had been something that had been severely restricted in previous years.<sup>114</sup> Western church groups flooded into China and missions were established throughout. Since then, China has reaped the benefits of foreign missionary and philanthropic activities. When war erupted in 1937 missionaries were essential to raising awareness of the conditions in China at the beginning of the war.<sup>115</sup> They called for funding for humanitarian activities as well as help in the form of aid from their own governments.<sup>116</sup> Missionaries also played an essential part during the conflict, providing places of refuge for civilians and aid workers alike.<sup>117</sup> The FAU used many established missions, both their own and others, in China as places of refuge and rest. Both John and Neil wrote about spending time with missionaries receiving both housing and food, as John wrote: 'The FAU know all the good missions.'<sup>118</sup> As Rewi Alley notes in many of his writings, westerners were not always welcomed by the Chinese population.<sup>119</sup> Therefore, the missions provided a comforting place, often containing some of the western comforts not found elsewhere for those members new to China.<sup>120</sup> As the war raged on the costs of funding missions and philanthropic activities rose exponentially, historian Arthur Young makes the claim that the pressure of fixed exchange rates played a substantial role in nearly two-thirds of missionaries in Free China withdrawing by spring of 1944.<sup>121</sup> Although public opinion on westerners had begun to change by then, it was still a huge blow to humanitarian activities. After 1944 there was an even greater need for aid workers in China.

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<sup>113</sup> Charles Tyzack, *Friends to China: The Davidson Brothers and the Friend's Mission to China 1886 to 1939*, York, Sessions, 1988, p. 7.

<sup>114</sup> Tyzack, *Friends to China*, p. 7.

<sup>115</sup> 'The FAU China Convoy (1941-46)'.

<sup>116</sup> Young, *China and the Helping Hand 1937-1945*, p. 260.

<sup>117</sup> 'The FAU China Convoy (1941-46)'.

<sup>118</sup> 'John Johnson Shaungshipu, Sept 22' *Neil and John Johnson: China Letters*, 22 September 1945, Reference Code: 84487, Macmillian Brown Archives.

<sup>119</sup> 'Unheeded Voices,' *Rewi Alley Early Materials and Misc.*, MB 45/19.2, Macmillian Brown Archives.

<sup>120</sup> 'Convoy Life in Wartime China,' <http://fauchinaconvoy.xyz/the-china-convoy/wartime-china> (accessed 12 August 2016).

<sup>121</sup> Young, *China and the Helping Hand 1937-1945*, p. 293.

Unlike the earlier missionary movements, Unit members agreed that it was their responsibility to practice Christian compassion and tolerance rather than preach such virtues.<sup>122</sup> Upon arrival, the FAU were officially attached to the Chinese armies of Chiang Kai-Shek, operating under the Chinese Red Cross.<sup>123</sup> This caused an ethical dilemma for many Quaker members as it was their beliefs against participating in any capacity in the military that had brought them to China. The association with the military caused many members to feel the need to justify what they were doing. John Johnson, the Foreign Correspondent to the Society of Friends at the time, wrote to *The Press* in 1942 to clarify the work that was being done by the FAU:

They render voluntary service, in a civilian capacity, for the relief of distress. They get no military pay, only maintenance from funds collected through the society. They have their own O.C., but work at times in liaison with an army, following up warfare generally where there is most need of relief and succour.<sup>124</sup>

Undoubtedly, the need for relief soon overtook the need to hold fast to their convictions of pacifism and all it entailed. The common sight of stretcher bearers and ambulance units on the Western Front did not mirror the East, where seriously wounded soldiers were commonly abandoned on the battlefields during the early years of the war.<sup>125</sup> Historian Marvin Williamsen explains that in the majority of military units there were no medical departments and even if there were, there was no tradition of medical ethics in China that compelled medical professionals inside or outside military organizations to risk personal injury to help soldiers.<sup>126</sup> With substantial levels of death and destruction within both the military and civilian populations throughout China, the FAU and other aid agencies had a seemingly impossible task.

The first team sent to China by the FAU in 1941 were charged with providing medical assistance. A series of medical teams conducted a wide variety of surgical work from dealing

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<sup>122</sup> Thomas P. Socknat, 'The Canadian Contribution to the China Convoy,' *Quaker History*, vol. 69, 2, 1980, p. 18.

<sup>123</sup> John Ormerod Greenwood, *Friends and Relief: A Study of Two Centuries of Quaker Activity in the Relief of Suffering Caused by War or Natural Calamity*, York, W. Sessions, 1975, p. 294.

<sup>124</sup> 'Position of Quakers in Burma,' *The Press*, 9 May 1942. Available from: *Papers Past*, (accessed 7 July 2016).

<sup>125</sup> Leo Van Bergen 'Medicine and Medical Services,' [http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/medicine\\_and\\_medical\\_service](http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/medicine_and_medical_service), (accessed 20 August 2016).

<sup>126</sup> Williamsen, *China's Bitter Victory*, p. 148.

with battlefield casualties to cases of gangrene.<sup>127</sup> Western medical concepts of both scientific anatomy and the germ theory of disease had barely penetrated Chinese society by this time.<sup>128</sup> Coupled with an influx of refugees into towns and city resulting in poor and cramped living conditions, it was not long before disease spread quickly throughout the civilian populations. This caused many members of the FAU to switch their focus to public health initiatives. These initiatives included inoculation programs against small pox, kala alzar, typhoid and malaria.<sup>129</sup> Historian Keith Schoppa claims an instance of bacteriological warfare as Japanese bombers dropped plague-infected fleas onto many cities resulting in an outbreak of bubonic plague.<sup>130</sup> These diseases affected not only the Chinese civilians, but members of the FAU, with John contracting malaria.<sup>131</sup> The biggest issue facing the men and women of the FAU who were tasked with providing medical care was the lack of resources at their disposal. As stated above, the unstable currency caused added difficulty to the already challenging job, as Neil explained; 'It's quite a job and inflation doesn't help any - values changing all the time.'<sup>132</sup> Without a stable source of income, medical equipment and drugs were hard to source. Neil expressed these hardships through his writing; 'We are now set up for lab equipment and surgical instruments which was the main hold up at first. Drugs are still very scarce but we're getting along.'<sup>133</sup>

Other forms of relief and education were implemented by the FAU during their time in China. Working in Chengchow, Neil had a high level of contact with the refugees who were directly affected by the flood caused by blowing the Yellow River dykes.<sup>134</sup> Identifying the refugee population as at most at risk, Neil as well as other FAU members began to make plans to help house, feed and transport them. This work was not done without help however. Working with the local Chinese authorities was essential to the success of the operation. With little knowledge of the language, the majority of FAU members struggled to communicate

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<sup>127</sup> 'From Neil Johnson - At Chengchow, Hohan. 1945,' *Neil and John Johnson: China Letters*, 12 December 1945, Reference Code: 84487, Macmillian Brown Archives.

<sup>128</sup> Williamsen, *China's Bitter Victory*, p. 148.

<sup>129</sup> 'Medical Work,' <http://fauchinaconvoy.xyz/the-china-convoy/medical-services>, (accessed 12 August 2016).

<sup>130</sup> Keith Schoppa, *In a Sea of Bitterness: Refugees During the Sino-Japanese War*, Harvard University Press, 2011, p. 51. Available from ProQuest ebrary (accessed 12 August 2016).

<sup>131</sup> 'Summary of China Letters,' 1 September 1945.

<sup>132</sup> 'F.A.U. China Convoy: News of Neil and John Johnson,' *Neil and John Johnson: China Letters*, 27 July 1945, Reference Code: 84487, Macmillian Brown Archives.

<sup>133</sup> 'Winter Arrives in Chengchow - Dec 22- Jan 27,' *Neil and John Johnson: China Letters*, 6 January 1946, Reference Code: 84487, Macmillian Brown Archives.

<sup>134</sup> 'Winter Arrives in Chengchow - Dec 22- Jan 27,' 22 December 1945.

with the local population, limiting what they were able to achieve. John commented that ‘the language is certainly fearsome and I’m only just on the edge of it’.<sup>135</sup> The training of Chinese civilian and military medical staff in hygiene, pharmacology and nursing became an important part of their job.<sup>136</sup> This allowed the FAU to be able to communicate to the civilian population through these people. More importantly, it increased the number of people able to deliver medical aid which was crucial. ‘Here there are plenty of people wanting things... employees to accommodate, jobs to be found, so I am kept busy,’ wrote Neil after the possibility of rehabilitating another hospital was expressed.<sup>137</sup>

Although language did play an important role in how the aid was implemented, there were more pressing concerns that came with working in a warzone. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Henry Dunant advocated for the recognition and protection by international law of volunteers providing medical services to the military.<sup>138</sup> Historian L. van Bergen furthered this idea by stating that medical aid and humanitarian work during wartime should remain neutral so it can be free from external politics.<sup>139</sup> As a result of members of the FAU’s ‘foreigner status’, this was largely upheld by both the Chinese and Japanese militaries. As seen in the Rape of Nanjing, it was the Westerners who were able to create the Safety Zones that sheltered fleeing Chinese. Wilson claims that the ‘neutral observers’ played a substantial part in the protection of the civilian population, forcing the Japanese military to scale back the extent of their brutalities.<sup>140</sup> It was possibly Japanese fears of drawing both Britain and the USA into the war that kept the Westerners safe. The FAU worked in both occupied and unoccupied parts of China. While setting up a new hospital in Chengchow, Neil was escorted around the town by Japanese officers who were, in his words, ‘very pleasant.’<sup>141</sup> This was not unusual, the FAU received commendation from both American and Chinese leaders for reaching ‘places where heavier medical units are not prepared to go.’<sup>142</sup> Cameron notes that their status as foreigners also reduced the chance of conflicts with Chinese officials at checking stations

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<sup>135</sup> ‘F.A.U. China Convoy: News of Neil and John Johnson,’ 27 July 1945.

<sup>136</sup> ‘The FAU China Convoy (1941-46)’.

<sup>137</sup> ‘Winter Arrives in Chengchow - Dec 22- Jan 27’.

<sup>138</sup> Marius Goniewicz, ‘Effect of Military Conflicts on the Formation of Emergency Medical Service Systems Worldwide’, *Academic Emergency Medicine*, vol. 20, 5, 2013, p. 507.

<sup>138</sup> Goniewicz, *Academic Emergency Medicine*, p. 507.

<sup>139</sup> L. van Bergen, ‘The Dutch Red Cross and the ambulance for the Eastern Front Volunteers’, *Genwina*, vol. 26, 2, 2003, p. 77. Available from PubMed (accessed 2 April 2016).

<sup>140</sup> Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, p. 74.

<sup>141</sup> ‘From Neil Johnson - At Chengchow, Hohan. 1945,’ 4 November 1945.

<sup>142</sup> ‘Service in China,’ *Auckland Star*, 13 June 1945. Available from: *Papers Past*, (accessed 7 July 2016).

in towns and cities, noting Chinese military officials as being particularly brutal if conflict did occur.<sup>143</sup> This type of encounter was especially prevalent while conducting transportation work.

The first task given to many of the FAU was the transportation of medical supplies up the only overland supply route, the 'Burma Road.' By 1938 nearly all of China's international trade routes, ports, and interior railway lines had been lost to Japan as a result of the severe losses they had experienced in the early stages of the war.<sup>144</sup> This blockade had a crippling effect on Free China, severely restricting the quantity of materials coming in. Without international resources and aid, China could not even contemplate fighting a war with Japan. In 1938 the Chinese government looked to other routes that could allow goods to reach them and began work on the expansion and upgrade of the Yunnan-Burma Highway, coined the 'Burma Road'. 150,000 labourers were mobilized to complete the construction that took 7 months.<sup>145</sup> In March 1939 the Burma Road opened to traffic. It measured 960km and was described as an 'engineering marvel'.<sup>146</sup> This road served as China's only lifeline during the war. The Unit, during the five years of war, was the only voluntary concern in China that was transporting medical supplies to meet civilian needs.<sup>147</sup> John Johnson was one of the many men who made countless trips along this stretch of road, carrying with him medical supplies as well as non-relief supplies including metals, fuel, building materials, machinery, food and when possible, refugees and the sick and wounded.<sup>148</sup> The drive was long and difficult. In John's letters, he details the endless list of problems experienced while transporting materials back and forth. The extreme poverty of money, materials and conditions forced drivers to get creative with what little they had. John detailed the poor conditions and the extreme lengths gone to, to get the materials to their destination:

[The] fuel tank leaked - fuel is vegetable oil and stinks to the high heaven...

When the stuff burns the exhaust practically kills you... Then a tyre went flat

and they had no pump. The voltage control got burnt next and cut out the

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<sup>143</sup> Cameron, *Go Anywhere Do Anything*, p. 66.

<sup>144</sup> Edward L. Dreyer, *China at War, 1901-1949*, London, Longman, 1995, p. 206.

<sup>145</sup> Long-hsuen Hsu and Ming-kai Chang, *History of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)*, Taipei, Chung Wu Pub. Co, 1972, p. 92.

<sup>146</sup> Dreyer, p. 258.

<sup>147</sup> A. Tegla Davies, 'The China Convoy III: An International Team at Work,' *Friends Ambulance Unit, London*, Allen & Unwin, 1947, para.6. Available from: <http://www.ourstory.info/library/4-ww2/Friends/fau07.html>, (accessed 12 August 2016).

<sup>148</sup> 'Transport Work,' <http://fauchinaconvoy.xyz/the-china-convoy/transportation>, (accessed 12 August 2016).

generators; then she stalled, shed bolts and front springs, broke the shaft... In one place we had a four hour low gear grind out of a valley and the day very hot, 90 to 100 degrees.<sup>149</sup>

The conditions of the road and the lack of proper fuel resulted in the trucks travelling at 15km/hour for long periods of time. Breakdowns were frequent and caused quite a spectacle as many Chinese had not witnessed the “big noses” doing any physical labour.<sup>150</sup> This work was gruelling, as John explained: 'I seem to be mentally and physically tired and have just about had it'.<sup>151</sup> However, they always had a sense of optimism that carried them through, as Neil wrote: 'I'm sure we can do some good in this wonderful land'.<sup>152</sup> The trucks ran almost all year round, carrying around 1-2 tonnes of cargo per trip which allowed Nationalist China to continue fighting.<sup>153</sup> The poverty of the national also resulted in constant looting of supplies by bandits along these routes. Sometimes these engagements turned violent, however no FAU member was ever killed during a hold-up.<sup>154</sup>

Although these small incidents caused problems for transportation convoys, the emergence of a serious conflict in Burma worsened the situation. Throughout the war Japan pressured the British Government to close the Burma Road as they believed that the road was being used to supply Nationalist China with military equipment.<sup>155</sup> After France surrendered to Germany in June 1940, Britain did not want to contemplate opening up a new front in Asia, so in July of the same year they accepted Japan's requests and closed the Burma road.<sup>156</sup> This closure, although only lasting three months, exposed how heavily dependent China was on the Burma Road for the transportation of goods. Without it, China was completely isolated. In 1942 Japan began its campaign against Burma that would permanently close the route.<sup>157</sup> For the next three years trucks were unable to transport materials along the Burma Road so other methods were employed. Allied forces supplied nationalist China via the air. They lifted materials from India over 'the hump' into the eastern end of the Himalaya where trucks, the

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<sup>149</sup> 'Summary of China Letters,' 28 August 1945.

<sup>150</sup> 'Transport Work'.

<sup>151</sup> 'Correspondence - John Johnson to Family 1940s,' *John Johnson papers*, Correspondence & papers 0001, Acc No. MB1234, Macmillian Brown Archives.

<sup>152</sup> 'From Neil Johnson - Chungking to Chengchow,' *Neil and John Johnson: China Letters*, 22 October 1945, Reference Code: 84487, Macmillian Brown Archives.

<sup>153</sup> 'Transport Work'.

<sup>154</sup> Cameron, *Go Anywhere Do Anything*, p. 65.

<sup>155</sup> Hsu and Chang, *History of the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)*, p. 34.

<sup>156</sup> Hsu and Chang, p. 34.

<sup>157</sup> Dreyer, *China at War 1901-1949*, p. 302.

majority FAU, then transported the goods throughout China.<sup>158</sup> In 1945, under British command, Indian, British, Chinese and American forces recaptured northern Burma, thus reopening the passage to the great relief of many.<sup>159</sup> It is estimated that the FAU were responsible for the transportation of over 80% of medical supplies in unoccupied China.<sup>160</sup>

It is clear in the writings of both Neil and John that they held a great respect for the people of China, as well as the country itself. They were both confident about China recovering from the destruction and devastation it had endured during the 'War of Resistance', as Neil wrote 'peace opens up a lot of possibilities here'.<sup>161</sup> The Chinese highly valued the work the FAU did during the war to help their people. At a Pacific Conference held late in the war, a distinguished Chinese speaker made it clear that China wanted to have control over what foreign organizations they wanted to help with the reconstruction, naming the FAU an organization which China warmly welcomed.<sup>162</sup> However, their efforts came to a halt when the Nationalist government was overthrown and the CPC took over after a bloody civil war, post WWII.<sup>163</sup> In 1951 remaining members of the FAU, as well as the vast majority of foreigners living and working in China, were expelled.<sup>164</sup> This caused an abrupt end to the FAU's activities in rehabilitating, reconstructing and providing relief post war as other campaigns on the European mainland had done, which continued for many years post-conflict.<sup>165</sup> Although they were not able to continue on their efforts like other campaigns, the Chinese FAU were able to provide a consistent, although restricted, lifeline to Nationalist China during the 'War of Resistance'. Money and the realities of war played a major part in their ability to deliver aid to the civilian and military populations. However, their status as foreigners allowed them to be somewhat protected from the violence, giving them a great advantage when providing relief. Through the cooperation with local government and other western aid groups the FAU played a key role in the relieving of suffering of many Chinese.

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<sup>158</sup> Pu-yu Hu, *A Brief History of Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945)*, Taiwan, Chung Wu Pub. Co., 1974, p. 47.

<sup>159</sup> Dreyer, *China at War 1901-1949*, p. 302.

<sup>160</sup> 'The FAU China Convoy (1941-46)'.

<sup>161</sup> 'Summary of China Letters'.

<sup>162</sup> Davies, *Friends Ambulance Unit*, para.6.

<sup>163</sup> Dreyer, *China at War 1901-1949*, p. 1.

<sup>164</sup> 'Quakers in China,' <http://www.quakersintheworld.org/quakers-in-action/308>, (accessed 10 August 2016).

<sup>165</sup> 'Friends Relief Service in WWII,' <http://www.quakersintheworld.org/quakers-in-action/301>, (accessed 10 August 2016).

## Conclusion

The FAU played an important role in China during the 'War of Resistance'. By upholding their core value their testimony to peace, New Zealand Society of Friends members were given the rare opportunity to travel to a war-torn environment and deliver aid to its suffering population. Conscientious objectors were heavily criticised by all levels of New Zealand society as they were seen as shirking their responsibilities. Therefore, through this type of work Friends' and other pacifists were able to contribute to the war effort in their own capacity. This involved risking their lives to help relieve suffering in a foreign country. Foreigners had the privileged position during this conflict to be able to deliver aid and relief to Chinese civilians. Historian Dick Wilson argues that without the presence of these 'neutral observers,' the carnage caused by Japanese troops could have been far worse.<sup>166</sup> This allowed the FAU to work in both unoccupied and occupied territory throughout their time in China. The Nationalist government in China was in no position to help their civilians during this war. Often when they did provide aid, it was too late and inadequate. As a result of the FAU's transportation work alone, men and women working in FAU run hospitals, missionary hospitals, and general hospitals were able to provide their patients with the equipment and drugs that were needed to save thousands of lives. Their medical work, in particular the public inoculation and vaccine projects, reduced the suffering endured by civilians during this time. As a result, an incalculable number of lives were saved.

Although their role was important, their impact was more localised than general. The scale of the conflict was just too overwhelming for the FAU, and other aid agencies working in China, to make any significant progress. The speed in which the Japanese took control of China's key transportation facilities and ports meant that Nationalist China was land locked and fighting a war from the least developed of their country from the outset of the war. It was the FAU that provided 'Free China' with a lifeline to the outside world from 1941 onwards via the Burma Road. The rapid Japanese advance also generated huge numbers of casualties that inundated and overwhelmed treatment facilities. The poverty of China was the biggest barrier in the deliverance of aid and relief, and was the biggest cause of feelings of frustration and helplessness within the members.<sup>167</sup> China itself had too few trained medical specialists,

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<sup>166</sup> Wilson, *When Tigers Fight*, p. 74.

<sup>167</sup> Cameron, *Go Anywhere Do Anything*, p. 79.



too little medicine and equipment, inadequate motor transport and physical facilities. The FAU worked tirelessly to provide as much aid as possible, although difficult to quantify, the FAU had an important impact in China during this time.

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