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## THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### *Introduction*

This chapter describes the setting in which the stories of the informants' lives took place. The historical context for this study is North China during the Second World War. It was at this time that the China Inland Mission Schools (Chefoo), a British school for children of Western missionaries and other expatriates, came under Japanese-occupation, and was eventually relocated to a civilian assembly center. (1) These actions of occupation and internment were the external threats to the school's continuity. The war and its outcome meant the end of the British colonial lifestyle in which this school had been established and had existed for sixty-two years. Subtle yet even more damaging threats came from within the internment camp as the once secluded school was suddenly thrust into close contact with people of various backgrounds and beliefs. The purpose of this study will be to analyze how teachers and students responded to these challenges in order to convey and maintain the ethos of their school and culture.

Through the use of primary and secondary sources, a panorama of the events that affected their youth is presented. At that time, many of the informants were unaware of the circumstances directing the decisions made about them and for them. By using primary documents such as personal letters and State Department or Mission Board reports, the major themes of *separation* and *schooling* will be constructed and expanded into the universal theme of *social control*. A comparison can be made between informant perceptions of events and how those events were interpreted and publicly documented by the cultural gatekeepers or power holders. Thus the intent of this chapter is to provide the reader with background knowledge of the situation under study and how it coincided with world events.

### ***The Historically Documented Context of the Informants' Stories***

#### **The China Inland Mission (CIM)**

"... the Japanese military occupation of Chefoo without resistance early this morning has been announced" (Letter by Stark, Feb. 3, 1938). [\(2\)](#)

This one line, tacked on the end of a Mission headquarters letter, commences the story of the occupation and eventual internment of the China Inland Mission Schools in Chefoo, China during World War Two. The following is a historical review of the events leading to the internment of the Chefoo School body and their ultimate liberation.

The China Inland Mission was founded in 1865 by Hudson Taylor as a nondenominational, evangelical, faith mission that was different from previous mission organizations serving China. The CIM leadership was based in China rather than in England, the missionaries were encouraged to dress and conform to the standard of living of the Chinese rather than Victorian England, and they were to depend on God alone to provide all their material needs. Members of any Protestant denomination were accepted into the CIM provided they believed in the:

" Divine inspiration and authority of the scriptures, the Trinity, the fail of man and his consequent moral depravity and need of regeneration, the atonement, justification by faith, the resurrection of the body, the eternal life of the saved, and the eternal punishment of the lost.

The missionaries had no guarantee of salary and could not solicit or borrow funds directly or indirectly. Each missionary was,

" expected to recognize that his dependence for the supply of all his need is on God, Who called him and for Whom he labours, and not on the human organization ... their faith must be in God, their expectation from Him.

The funds might fail, or the Mission might cease to exist; but if they put their trust in Him, He will never fail nor disappoint them. [\(3\)](#)

Women were considered as vital to the mission as men, received the same training, and were sent out into the field in the same way. Women were reminded that marriage was "no excuse for settling down to home life at the expense of work," and that "where there are children ... special care needs to be taken that family claims do not interfere unduly with the service of either parent." The purpose of the Mission, through its missionaries, was to "diffuse as quickly as possible a knowledge of the Gospel throughout the Empire." Within twenty years the CIM had 225 missionaries, despite ill-health, uprisings and persecutions. It was in this atmosphere of sacrifice and service to God that the children of CIM missionaries were brought up. [\(4\)](#)

### **The China Inland Mission Schools**

In 1881 the China Inland Mission Schools at Chefoo, China were established by Hudson Taylor. The schools were colloquially referred to as "Chefoo." As more missionaries came to serve in inland China, Taylor saw the need for a school for, "the children of missionaries and other foreign residents in China, [which] we trust that through it the trial and expense of sending children home from China may in many cases be saved." Chefoo was regarded as an improvement over sending children back to the homelands for education, thus separating them from parents for seven to ten years. Instead, Chefoo offered a Western education with a separation of only one to three years, depending upon where the parents were stationed. [\(5\)](#)

In one year the school grew from two students to twelve, and five years later had one hundred students attending its three schools. The Prep School was co-educational for children from ages six to ten and the segregated Boys' and Girls' Schools were for children ages eleven to sixteen. All three were based on the English public school model of Forms rather than grades and ended at the Sixth Form. Upon successful completion of the Sixth Form, the students usually returned to their parents' homeland for further education or employment.

### **Chefoo 1931 - 1940**

The mid-1930's saw improvements to the school. In 1934 two new buildings were erected to combine the Boys' and Girls' Schools for "co-tuition" (co-educational) classes, and the Prep School was relocated within the compound. From then on the distinction of Boys' and Girls' Schools just referred to their separate dormitories. The quality of education also improved as more of the teaching staff, though still recruited as missionaries first, were qualified teachers. The number of students attending Chefoo had also steadily increased to its peak of 338 students in 1940. About "half the students were children of

UM; another quarter were children of other missions; and the last quarter were children of people living in China in business or other occupations."

The higher enrollment allowed for a division of the Forms into A and B levels to better adapt to the students' level of proficiency in various subjects. These subjects were "arranged as to afford an opportunity, to all who reached the upper Forms, of sitting for the Oxford Local Junior Examination and School Certificate." The increase in student numbers allowed the student houses to compete in a variety of sports from football, (soccer), boating, and cricket, to field hockey, netball and tennis. Generally, the Sino-Japanese War which began in 1937, did not seem to have an effect on the functioning of the Chefoo Schools. However, it would begin to affect individual students who were unable to travel to see their parents living in regions under conflict. [\(6\)](#)

Up until Pearl Harbor, many Westerners living in China did not overly concern themselves with the war between China and Japan. There had been a Japanese presence in Shantung Province for almost fifty years so Western society and life in China continued as usual. Specifically at Chefoo, routines did not vary much, even with the occupation of the province. "We from the West were, of course neutrals and not involved. School life and travel went on much as usual." [\(7\)](#)

However, there were some changes. The Sino-Japanese war, and the conflicts between the Kuomintang Nationalist Party (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) prevented many of the students from returning to their homes during the winter and spring holidays because the on-going conflicts made traveling hazardous. The only other disruption was to the hockey field where a huge Union Jack was laid out so that the school compound would not be bombed by mistake. [\(8\)](#)

### CIM January, 1940 - July, 1940

At the national level, the war was affecting how the CIM headquarters in Shanghai operated. Surprisingly, it was the European war that had the greater initial impact. With Britain's entrance into the European war, the British consul requested men to register regarding their qualification for military service. The CIM council followed the policy set during the First World War that any missionary called up for service would be under the jurisdiction of the government and no longer the responsibility of the CIM. If a missionary wished to volunteer for military service, he had to consult the Directorate of the Mission who would reiterate the British Ambassador's statement that "British subjects in the East would most fully serve their country by remaining at their present posts." [\(9\)](#)

Another direct effect of the European war on the Mission was in regards to furloughs for missionaries. The war conditions in Europe made it "inadvisable for the missionaries to contemplate furlough in the United Kingdom." The Mission would, however, grant a six months' holiday at the coast of Chefoo, or perhaps allow for furloughs to be taken in Australia or North America. At that time, 1940 England was not the best place to go. With news of rationing, the Battle of Britain, torpedoing of ships, and the German army hovering across the Channel, it was understandable that British expatriates felt secure in China. It also explains why the British Ambassador recommended that British subjects remain in China, as they would only add to the burden if they returned to England. So, although the CIM schools were in Japanese-occupied China, the children seemed safer there than in the homeland.

However, this safety did not necessarily mean that the children or the parents were happy. The July, 1940, council meeting also dealt with the issue of parents stationed in the distant regions who wished to visit their children more often than allowed by the present policy of every three years. This issue had apparently been raised before with considerable feeling. It seems that the financial outlay of Mission funds for traveling was the main consideration at this time as "location in inland China necessitated heavy traveling expenses to and from Chefoo . . . involving considerable outlay of Mission funds." [\(10\)](#)

After considerable deliberation it was decided that, due to the abnormal conditions in China, the three year visiting rule would stand, but as "a temporary expedient . . . parents desiring to visit their children at Chefoo after two year's absence from them may make application through their superintendent." It would seem that such a process would probably take almost another year to be approved so that the parents would not see their child much sooner than the three years anyway. [\(11\)](#)

### **CIM October. 1940 - December, 1941**

Before the next council meeting in October 1940, the situation in the Far East changed as Japan renewed its expansion. Near the end of September 1940, Japan entered Indochina and pressured Britain to close the Burma Road and pull their troops out of the international settlements in Shanghai and Northern China. The United States retaliated by imposing various embargos on Japan. By the end of September the three Axis powers of Germany, Italy and Japan signed the Tripartite Pact which promised that each would declare war on any third party which declared war against one of them. These actions prompted the U.S. Government to advise evacuation of all American civilians from China.

The CIM council now had a new set of issues to contemplate. During the morning session of the October 25, 1940 CIM council meeting, the decision was made that "members should remain at their post, continuing in the work which

the Lord had entrusted to them." If missionaries of U.S. citizenship desired to follow the advice of their government and evacuate China, they had the permission of the Mission with the understanding that "the worker concerned would look to the Lord for the necessary financial expenses involved." (12)

The afternoon session continued with the topic of evacuation as it pertained to the Chefoo Schools. Mr. Bruce, the Headmaster of the Schools, shared with the committee a draft letter to be sent to the parents. The letter explained that after consulting Sir Arthur Blackburn, the British Ambassador's private secretary, it was decided that the Schools should remain open. British parents were encouraged to keep their children at school. American parents could withdraw their children after consultation with the principal.

An issue was then raised as to whether the children of other nationalities who remained at the School would be treated the same as the British children by the British authorities if a more critical situation arose. The issue was resolved by the October 28 council meeting through a telephone conversation with Sir Blackburn who stated that the children and staff "would be regarded as a unit," regardless of nationality. An interview was then set up to meet with the American Consulate to review the position of the Chefoo Schools.

The outcome of the meeting with the American Consulate representative, Mr. Engdahl, was reported at the afternoon council meeting of October 28, 1940. Mr. Engdahl was in full agreement with the British authorities' willingness to treat the Chefoo Schools as a unit and to keep the schools open. However, "Mr. Engdahl's opinion and advice differed in certain respects from those of the British Ambassador's private secretary." These differences, however, were not specified in the minutes. Apparently they were not significant enough to necessitate a change in plans for the Schools.

Upon agreement that all the students would be treated as a unit, Mr. Bruce was advised to draft two letters explaining the school's stance regarding evacuation. The letter for the CIM Mission parents stated that "the Mission should pay the passage home. [But,] we are taking it for granted that there will not be many able to avail themselves of this offer, and we expect that the majority of our Mission children will remain with us."

The letter to the non-Mission parents differed in stating that, by withdrawing their children, "we should be relieved of that much responsibility." But if the children were to remain, the school could not "give any guarantee that we shall be unmolested, so that the responsibility for your child's continuance here must rest with you." At the council meeting of May 29, 1941, the same issues of furloughs, parents visiting Chefoo and whether the students of Chefoo would be recognized as a unit by the British Government were reviewed and

remained unchanged. The only major change in plans was for the Schools to begin stocking extra provisions and a three month reserve of cash. (13)

For Protestant mission groups overall in China, things had changed. For example, 1926 was the year when the most American Protestant missionaries worked in China with the number reaching 8,325. By 1940 that number had declined to 2,500. Yet, there was still the belief that "British soldiers would one day come and kick out the Japanese! ... People still talked about the Boxer Rebellion ... of how British and Allied forces .. advanced to the rescue. ... The Royal Navy coming to our rescue seemed far from impossible." Compared to the war on the European continent, Japan and the Far East seemed calm. (14)

### Chefoo 1941 - 1942

The bombing of Pearl Harbor (December 8, 1941 in China) brought an abrupt change in the treatment of Westerners by the Japanese. They were now considered "enemy aliens." Word of the bombing came to Chefoo from two schoolboys returning from a weekend spent at a home in town where they had heard it on the radio. By the afternoon the Japanese had come to the school compound.

They were very polite and after removing our radios and having a good look round they took Pa Bruce [the Head Master] off with them and left us with guards in charge of the compound and a wooden notice saying that the great-nation were [sic] now in charge of the place. (15)

Though the start of the war came during the school's winter break, most of the students were present, not having been able to travel home for the past three years. The staff began mandatory rationing of food and dismissed a number of servants as their access to funds from headquarters in Shanghai was now cut off. A new school term commenced in January with everyone wearing armbands to signify their nationality. By February, Mr. Bruce was allowed to return as headmaster. (16)

As the year progressed, restrictions on the school increased. "Japanese official visitors became more and more frequent, inspecting the place, sending parties to measure the premises, room by room. Drilling parties came on the grounds, indulging in realistic battle practice." (17)

" The Japanese Army now coveted our compound as a military base and soon they began a gradual takeover. The school hospital and various staff residences were commandeered. A block of stables was built across our tennis courts and gardens.

... Our cricket field was taken over for Japanese Army baseball matches. (18)

A report from the Foreign Missions Conference of North America sent to Washington through the International Red Cross describes Chefoo "Schools much as usual. Mild rationing. Wardrobes difficult. Free funds sufficient for three months. Seventy-one adults and two hundred and twelve children, mostly in school, are located in Chifoo [sic]."[\(19\)](#)

### Evacuation of Chefoo

At CIM headquarters, now relocated at Chungking in Free China, a letter was sent to the parents updating them on the possibility of the children being evacuated to South Africa. The Japanese government would be responsible for all expenses as far as Lourenco Marques in Portuguese East Africa. From there the school would try to settle in South Africa.

Whether Africa or elsewhere, a forced evacuation seemed imminent. School officials had been advised by the Japanese Consul through the American Consul that,

"for their own sakes the American children should be evacuated ... Mr. Bruce countered by pointing out that parents were scattered all over China and that he could not consent without consulting them. It was pointed out to him how difficult it would be to carry on without the first two buildings [the Co-tuition and the Prep].[\(20\)](#)

A letter from Chefoo to the parents in June of 1942 details how the School carried on. The letter recaps the term's events, particularly in the area of sports and Foundation Day activities. It repeatedly stresses the normality of student life at Chefoo even in "days when so many things are out of joint, ... Chefoo continues peaceful.... [Yet] we Westerners are no longer the spout [sic] children of the world."[\(21\)](#)

Eventually the Japanese Army required the whole school compound for military use. At first the school was going to be moved to a run-down hotel on the beach which had an inadequate water supply. Fortunately the Swiss Consul persuaded the Japanese to make the place of internment Temple Hill Presbyterian Mission Compound, which was west of Chefoo School. The school was given a few days notice to pack up and clear out. There were those who "found it hard to believe that God would expel us from our God-given heritage. One missionary refused to pack a suitcase, confident to the end that God would intervene."

But on November 5, 1942 the Chefoo student body and staff processed to Temple Hill singing a school chorus that began: "God is still on the throne, and He will remember his own." On the same day that Chefoo headed for internment, Switzerland sent word to Washington that "the Japanese authorities have

assembled all citizens of countries at war with Japan in certain groups of houses. This was done at Hankow, Tsingtao and Chefoo. " (22)

By December letters were reaching CIM headquarters in Chungking from Chefoo at Temple Hill to be dispersed throughout the interior to the parents. One such letter tells of the impending move to Temple Hill and how housing would be arranged in the compound.

" Each of the four houses will hold sixty-four people on average. ... The Lanning house is occupied by people from the San ... a total of forty-five. The Young house will have the majority of the Boys School and necessary staff, fifty-eight in all. The Berst [Burst] house will hold the Prep School ... apparently sixty-six ... The Erwin [Irwin] house, some five minutes walk from the others, is occupied by the Girls School ... making seventy-one in all" (23)

The description of housing in the Sinton letter is confirmed by the American Consul's report of a year later. The first official report, however, was filed by Mr. Egger, a representative of the Swiss Consulate in July of 1943. The report briefly, but positively, talks about the distribution of comfort money, the excellent health of the children and the sufficiency of their diet. Mr. Bruce also gave Mr. Egger a cable to send on to the parents. Concerning the education it says, "Scout and Guide activities employ leisure time of most children. Teaching limited as all domestic work done by adults and scholars... Foundation Day celebrated. Religious activities unhindered." (24)

A thorough report by the American Consul, Samuel Sokobin, fills in other details about the organization of Temple Hill. One hundred nineteen business and missionary families were also interned at Temple Hill. Apparently some of these missionaries were Catholic priests who were later moved to Peking. The camp was first under the control of the Japanese military who were then replaced in March of 1943 by the Japanese consular police. This change brought about stricter enforcement of camp regulations, but camp problems were dealt with more effectively and efficiently. From the day of arrival until January 27, 1943, food was purchased with the internees' own funds. In January, the Japanese provided each internee with comfort money, or relief funds. The CIM group "declined to accept the money on any basis, in as much as it is the policy of the China Inland Mission and the members thereof not to obligate themselves financially." (25)

Officially only one letter per month could be mailed via Mr. Egger, the Swiss Consul. Unofficially, letters in Chinese were surreptitiously sent out through the Chinese until the operation was found out in May of 1943. Two letters made it to Headquarters in Chungking and were later printed in *China's Millions*, the monthly CIM publication. One letter begins, "No longer can we say,

as has been said in other communications, that Chefoo is normal, but I think we can say that it is not, even now, subnormal." [\(26\)](#)

Schooling continued, though on a restricted basis, as adults and youth were needed to do the bulk of the work. After having servants all their lives, many of the Chefoo students were getting a practical education in life skills

### Formation of Weihsien Internment Camp

While the Chefoo group was interned in Temple Hill, the remaining Westerners in North China were increasingly restricted to their houses or settlement areas until large scale internment could be accomplished. Washington received word of the impending internment through a telegram reading: "Japanese Consulates in North China to inform all enemy nationals in North China that they are to be sent for concentration to Weihsien, Shantung. This is to take place about the middle of March." A later telegram confirmed the impending internment but added that "those assembled at Chefoo will remain there." Chefoo in this case referred to Temple Hill, which was located in Chefoo. [\(27\)](#)

Of the larger internment camps in China, Weihsien was one of the most adequate. Prior to becoming an internment camp, it had been a large American Presbyterian Mission school, seminary and hospital two miles east of Weihsien city. In 1943 Weihsien, with compound space of 200 yards by 150, became the internment camp for 1,700 people from the regions of Peking, Tientsin, Tsingtao and Chefoo. After the transfer of the Catholics, and "the repatriation of a majority of the Americans and Canadians at Weihsien, there remained about 1,400 internees.... There were 202 United States, 1,093 British, 42 Belgians, 28 Dutch, and 58 other nationals there, of whom 358 were children." [\(28\)](#)

The first group of internees to arrive in Weihsien on March 20, 1943 were from Tsingtao. To their dismay they found that,

" no kitchens were operating and nothing was organized. We had to start things going, especially in the kitchen. In fact, the Japanese admitted they were not quite ready for us, and sanitary conditions, we soon learned, gave all too much emphasis to their admission. Morning roll call ensued; otherwise the guards left us much to ourselves. [\(29\)](#)

By the end of March, 1943, the last group arrived at Weihsien. Over 1,400 people were confined to an area the size of five large city blocks. Families, comprising the majority of the internee population, were housed in former student rooms which were 12'6" x 8' 11". Each room, suitable for two persons, now had to hold three or four people. Single men and women lived in groups of ten to fifteen in the classrooms, offices and the hospital which were converted

into dormitories. The internees also had use of a church, a tennis court, a small playing field and a basketball court. When the Chefoo group arrived in September, 1943, families were housed in the single rooms, the rest were placed in the dormitories. (30)

The Japanese garrison at Weihsien camp consisted of a Commandant, his staff of five, and then thirty to forty Japanese Consular Police. There was little contact between the Japanese and the internees, who were given practical autonomy in the direction of their affairs. The internees were commanded to form a permanent committee with nine chairmen. The nine committees were for discipline, education, employment, engineering and repairs, finance, food supplies, general affairs, medical affairs, and quarters. The "average internee saw little of the Japanese Camp Commandant or his staff, who left the running of the camp almost entirely in the hands of the Committee, to whom he issued orders and from whom he received requests and complaints." (31)

### **Education at Weihsien**

Of special interest is the formation of schools in Weihsien prior to the arrival of the Chefoo group. All of the information is derived from Sokobin's November 11, 1943 report. The head of the Education Committee had previously been with the Tientsin Grammar School. The committee organized the children into groups. At the pre-school and kindergarten age there were approximately ninety students who were then divided into age appropriate groupings from three to six years old.

On the elementary level, two schools evolved. The American School derived its staff from the Peking American School and the British School was made up of teachers from the Tientsin Grammar School. The two schools went from grades one through eight, or the comparable Forms on the British side. They had one hundred students and sixteen teachers between the two schools. At the high school level, there were approximately fifteen teachers and seventy-five students in the British and American schools.

Adult education also thrived. "Amongst the Catholic Fathers, the educationalists from the Peking universities and the language students, we had some of the finest intellects in North China, and lectures and talks were given on every imaginable subject." Ninety teachers taught more than 700 students in twenty-five subjects which included art, botany, ornithology, physics, chemistry, Chinese, French, German, Spanish, Russian, Japanese, Latin, Greek, philosophy, psychology, theology, commercial subjects, vocal and theoretical music, and higher mathematics. (32)

## Chefoo Transfer Repatriation and Internment

The monotonous days of Chefoo's internment at Temple Hill were coming to an end, although the internees did not realize it. "Things are just the same as ever. The present great idea is 'walking miles.' A mile is from the front gate to the San gate 14 times. Some of the children have done about 63 miles!! They have a chart on which to record their score." By the end of the summer rumors began again about sending the Chefoo group to South Africa. This time, however, it would only include the staff, and children under fourteen. The older children would return to their homelands or be transferred to a neutral area. These rumors also proved to be false and "it was a shock, finally, to be told that we were to be transferred to Weihsien." [\(33\)](#)

The news about repatriation, however, was partially true. On August 28, 1943, fifty-four North Americans left the Chefoo group to join hundreds of others at Weihsien waiting to be repatriated to the U.S.A. or Canada as part of a prisoner exchange. The remaining Chefoo group left for Weihsien on September 8, 1943, after being interned at Temple Hill for ten months. The trip by boat to Tsingtao and then by train to Weihsien was hectic, crowded, and involved some loss of possessions. But two and a half days later the Chefoo group arrived at Weihsien to an unexpected welcome from the internees.

A few days later those being repatriated left Weihsien to begin the journey home. "That was a most depressing day.... The departure of the Fathers and the Americans marked the end of the era of easy living in the 'Courtyard of the Happy Way.' Labour hours for the remaining internees had to be increased." On August 16, 440 of the priests and nuns had been transferred from Weihsien to Peking. This caused a substantial loss of adult workers in the camp which could not be adequately compensated for by the Chefoo contingent. [\(34\)](#)

As the Chefoo group settled into Weihsien routines, Mission headquarters in Chungking was still trying to work out a way of transferring the school to South Africa. The council reviewed previously presented ideas for repatriation or for setting up a junior school in South Africa. These schemes were abandoned due to numerous government delays. When word came in September of the fifty-plus Chefoo students and CIM staff being repatriated, this also created problems.

The problem was that not all the parents "had sympathetic relatives to whom children might, for a time, be entrusted, when they arrived in the homelands." Therefore, the Mission set up hostels in their Mission home centers and continued to be responsible for the children's education. "Even with these provisions, some parents were not altogether happy about the future of their children.... this matter of separation would constitute a factor to which due weight would be given when parents desire to proceed home on furlough." [\(35\)](#)

## Chefoo in Weihsien

Thoughts of furloughs though, were still almost two years from becoming reality. For the Chefusians, however, Weihsien was a God-send.

"The School entered a camp already in working order, and it was a measure of relief to the staff to feel that some of the responsibilities of Temple Hill would now be shared by the various departments of the camp's administration.... Cooking, which had been an increasing burden at Temple Hill, no longer fell upon the womenfolk. (36)

The repatriation also necessitated the reorganization of the camp schools. There were still four schools, the nursery, the kindergarten, the Weihsien School and the Chefoo School. The Weihsien School was a conglomerate of the former American and British Schools. Since the Weihsien School used different textbooks, Chefoo maintained its own school and did not take in any Weihsien students. Some of the Chefoo staff though, did teach in the Weihsien School. The Chefoo faculty had a staff meeting where, "after computing the least number for the running of the School, it was decided. . . . Those free from other official camp duties were able to organize classes so that at least half a day's schooling was done.... in dormitories." (37)

The staff also decided to continue preparing the students for the Oxford Examinations as "an incentive to steady work with a definite objective.... The effect on the whole school was noticeable.... The reintroduction of half-term marks was a further spur to industry, and a means of checking the progress of individuals." The Chefoo staff had prepared for the continuation of schooling during internment by having students bring a complete set of textbooks for their year which were then passed down during the next three years to younger students. So the Chefoo School was able to function in cramped conditions and despite a "desperate shortage of paper. Work would be done in pencil, erased, and the sheet of paper used again." (38)

Once the Chefoo contingent had settled in, Weihsien life took on a structured routine. "Roll Call - 7:30 a.m., Breakfast - 8:00, Tiffin [lunch] - 12:30, Supper - 6:00, Lights out - 10:00 p.m." Meals consisted of bread and tea, sometimes millet, for breakfast, stew for lunch, and soup for supper. This was supplemented with eggs from the black market, vegetables from small gardens and milk for the infants from cows kept near the camp. The most glaring deficiencies were in "calcium, vitamin B, vitamin C and calories.... To attempt to partly meet the calcium needs of small children and adolescents, we are grinding up egg shells and feeding this, [but] the supply of egg shells is itself wholly inadequate." (39)

In between meal times everyone did their assigned tasks to keep the camp functioning. In the evenings there were recreational activities, adult classes,

lectures, debates, plays, religious meetings, and concerts. "The aim of the camp was to have one entertainment a week.... These, whilst being a strain in a way were quite a relaxation from work." Those with comfort money could make limited purchases at the canteen, and all could swap goods at the internee organized "Camel Bell Exchange." Beneath this placid exterior there existed a black market, passing of secret messages to the outside world, and the plotting of an escape from Weihsien. [\(40\)](#)

### **Seasons of trials**

Although news from two escaped internees [see Appendix B] gave hope to the internees, the summer of 1944 and into the following winter were bleak times in Weihsien.

" The physical and mental strains of internment life were taking their toll on internees, particularly those over forty. There were mental breakdowns, workers collapsing on shift with fainting and low blood pressure. Typhoid, malaria, and dysentery were prevalent. There was consequently increasing absenteeism at work in the labour gangs and kitchen shifts. The heat that summer was unbearable. [\(41\)](#)

The summer also meant a renewed all-out war on the rats, flies and bed bugs. Competitions for rat and fly catching were organized for the children in order to try to cut down on the menace. "The scourge of vermin was prevalent everywhere. Most of the children slept on the floor, and their bedding became indescribable with dirt, soot, and bed bugs. A perpetual ... battle went on which got even the most stout-hearted desperate and despondent." Amidst the battle with the insects, eleven Chefoo students sat and passed their Oxford Locals School Certificate exams. [\(42\)](#)

A devastating blow occurred to the Chefoo group that summer with the accidental death of one of their students, Brian Thompson, age 16. While waiting for the evening roll call of August 16, 1944, some of the Chefoo boys began hitting two uncovered electrical wires that drooped down about 7 feet from the ground where they were lined up. Occasionally an electrical current would pass through the wires. After hitting the wire, one boy called out that the current was on. Other boys reached up to see if it was true.

" [One of them,] Brian, placed the palm of his right hand on the other of the two wires.... Thompson's hand immediately closed on the wire and with a groan he fell, striking the back of his head on the ground but still clutching the wire.... His feet were bare, the ground on which he had been standing was also bare earth and still damp from recent rains; the current was 220 volts A.C..... Death occurred almost immediately and while Thompson was still in contact with the electrical current. [\(43\)](#)

Another significant death in the camp was that of Eric Liddell, the 1924 Olympic gold medalist. Eric was a missionary for the London Missionary Society in Tientsin prior to internment. He had sent his wife and children back to Canada before the start of the war, but he remained in China. At Weihsien Eric,

"immediately took leadership in developing athletic activities for the numerous children in the camp.... For the young, children and teenagers, Eric was a friend they could trust implicitly. They sought him out for the problems of growing up, for their spiritual doubts, for all the intricacies of athletics and sports, and just because they knew he cared for them. . . . Eric died on February 21, 1945 at the age of 43 of a stroke brought about by a brain tumor. (44)

Liddell's death only added to the despair and gloom at the close of the winter of 1945. "We had all found the winter very trying. Cold and sometimes hunger began to affect the spirit of the camp generally. With the reduced rations came some discontent and people refused to work which made it difficult." (45) The shortage of food was relieved at the end of January with the arrival of fifteen hundred American Red Cross parcels. It was two weeks, however, before the food was distributed as some Americans, including missionaries, contended that since the parcels were sent by and intended for Americans, then they should be the only ones to receive them.

The Japanese settled the dispute by giving one box to each person. The extra boxes were to be sent to other camps. The parcels had a dramatic effect in the camp. Physical hunger and exhaustion were relieved slightly and the general morale was lifted. "One of the few times I had a little weep in camp was when we opened our parcels in our little room and I saw the faces of my three children as they took out tins of milk, butter, jam, sugar, cheese, meat, etc. We had not seen such things for a long time." This food lasted till the spring. (46)

As the supplies from the Red Cross parcels diminished, the signs of spring helped renew spirits. In March a group of fourteen Chefoo students sat their Oxford Matric Exams and all fourteen passed. (47) Yet the coming of a new season also meant the prospect of another year of internment. The Japanese propaganda newspaper, *The Peking Chronicle*, continued to report Japan's victories and America's losses. The internees did notice, however, that the battles were occurring closer and closer to Japan. Other news was obtained from two discontented Japanese guards befriended by De Jaegher, an interned R.C. priest. They told him of plans being made to move the camp further north to Mukden so as to "hold on to as many of these captives of war as possible, as long as possible, for bargaining purposes." (48)

Encouraging news from the outside came secretly in May via the cesspool coolies. Germany had capitulated! Mixed with the joy of knowing that the war

was coming to an end, there were also feelings of uncertainty. What would the Japanese do with the internees? And, just how would the war end for them? Rumors were rife that in the event of defeat, the Japanese had orders never to surrender but to kill all the prisoners and then themselves. But the end of their internment came sooner, and far more spectacularly than any of the internees could have imagined. (49)

### Liberation Day

"About half-past nine on the morning of August 17 we suddenly heard the sound of a plane, and there up in the sky was the roaring bulk of a B-24. Gradually it circled lower and lower, evidently to see if it would draw enemy fire, and then amid the frantic cheers of fifteen hundred internees fell the small humanitarian force. The sight of those parachutes slowly coming down into the fields just outside our camp sent a mad impulse into everybody. One and all, we rushed out of that horrible old gate that had glared at us for so long. No one could stop us as we rushed out to where the parachutes of men and provisions were dropping. I cannot describe the thrill of such a sight. It seemed almost as if it had been worth the three years in camp just to see those red, blue, yellow, and white parachutes. (50)

The day of liberation had come by total surprise out of the sky, only two days after Japan had accepted unconditional surrender. The seven man team that parachuted was code named the "Duck team" on the "Duck mission." Their B-24 plane was trying to locate the camp when, at "500 feet, a compound was located in which hundreds of people were collected, waving up at the plane. It could therefore be presumed that this was the objective sought." The humanitarian purpose of the mission was to contact the Japanese authorities and take care of the health and welfare of the internees until more substantial aid could be forthcoming. (51)

The parachutists were carried on shoulders into the camp as heroes while the Salvation Army and camp band played. One of the soldiers, Jim Moore, was a former Chefoo boy, and had specifically volunteered for this mission through the Office of Strategic Services because he wanted to liberate Weihsien. The guards had offered no resistance, apparently as surprised by the events as the internees, and stunned at the mass exodus of the internees through the front gate. Major Stanley Staiger, leader of the Duck mission, met with the camp committee and the camp Commandant, Mr. Izu. It was agreed that the Japanese would continue to guard the camp from bands of Chinese guerillas. The Duck team and the Committee of Nine were responsible for administering the camp's internal affairs. (52)

For the next month, supply parcels were parachuted in about every three days. Along with food and clothing, magazines, records, and newspapers were supplied to help re-educate the internees to the advances of the Western world during the war years. At the end of August, the "Duck Team" was relieved of duty by an SOS team of seven officers and twelve enlisted men under the direction of Lieutenant Colonel H. Weinberg. Their job was to take over administrative control and to prepare the internees for evacuation to their homelands. Before departing for home, however, the last group of Chefoo students, twelve, sat their Oxford Matric Exams. Out of the twelve, nine passed.

[\(53\)](#)

After delays due to fighting between Chinese Communist and guerrilla groups, weather, and lack of transportation, the internees could finally leave Weihsien. The Chefoo group left Weihsien for Tsingtao on September 25, 1945. They stayed in the Edgewater Mansions, a luxury hotel, for over a week and were reacquainted with endless amounts of food and running water. On October 7, the students and staff left in smaller groups for Hong Kong, and then on to their final destinations of Australia, the United States, Britain, Canada, and South Africa. A few remained in China to be reunited with their parents who were still in the interior. [\(54\)](#)

With the historical context just presented as the background, Chapter Two will weave in the stories of two women who were Chefoo school children during this time period. The women's oral histories reveal their feelings as eyewitnesses of what it was like to experience parental separation, Japanese occupation, schooling during internment, liberation from internment and finally reuniting and adjusting to life with their families.

The next chapter provides an opportunity for the women to express what they believe to be the long-term effects of their unique schooling experience. Before moving on to Chapter Two, however, the issue of the dichotomy of personal history and official history will be noted. An examination of the validity of the historical evidence of this chapter is presented in Appendix C, Methodology.

### ***Issues of Personal Reality and Official History***

This chapter has presented the documented historical account of the Chefoo School's internment during World War Two. Chapter Two contains the oral accounts of the same events as seen through the eyes of two women who were students at the time. It is often assumed that the documented accounts and testimonies recorded close to the time of the event are "truer" or "more official" renderings of what happened. Even the women informants of this study

deferred to the written accounts as being more reliable and truthful than their own stories. Is a written record "more true" than a personal memory?

While the documented history does provide a chronological accounting of events that informants fifty years later may have forgotten or confused, it gives only one perspective of those events. Often that one "official" point of view was androcentric, thus excluding women's interpretations of events and experiences. Every source, whether primary documents or oral histories, is equally valid as each one presents only partial or selective realities. It is the researcher who must determine the worth of the interviews relative to each other and the written record. The oral histories must be verified the same as other sources based on instinctive response, validity, reliability, and verifiability.

[\(55\)](#)

The advantage of oral histories is that the subjects themselves are available for cross-examination and provide a three-dimensional effect of collaboration between the researcher, the documented sources and the subject herself. The informants offer rich, vivid language, with characteristically distinctive and exact phrasings which is often lacking in historical documents. A narrator presents a story of what she or he thinks is a significant part of his/her life. But the researcher must be wary of collecting and interpreting rehearsed anecdotes of the past which are more story than history. Telling one's story is a process of configuring actual events into a symbolic representation of personal meaning. [\(56\)](#)

Factors influencing meaning-making narratives are the audiences, self-justification and catharsis. The immediate and anticipated audience may influence how and what is told by the narrator. What the narrator reveals is often dependent on how the narrator perceives the interviewer's background and the rapport established between them. [\(57\)](#) Chapter Three will detail how specific informant and researcher issues of documented and personal reality were resolved.

## **Summary**

This study was based substantially on the primary sources of eyewitness accounts and documents. The historical synthesis of archival and published documents along with each informant's story provided a foundation for a more descriptive picture of how each person remembered and interpreted the significance of these events in their lives. Each source, whether oral or written, must be verified as much as possible for validity and reliability. Both written and oral sources present a person's or group's interpretation of historical events. The researcher must determine how these perspectives can be fitted together to present a comprehensive view of the historical event for analysis.

The triangulation of the historical documents, the oral histories presented in the next chapter and peer corroboration strengthen the validity of the study. External and construct validity are enhanced by having the informants and the researcher derive the categories together. Knowing the shared history of the informants enables the researcher to ask further questions about the universal theme of social control in an educational context, and how this theme was identified and interpreted by the informants in shaping their lives.

1 Civilian assembly centers (CAC) are referred to as internment and concentration camps by the informants and by other internees. Only the Japanese called them CAC. The term "internment" will be used in this paper. [↑](#) [click on the Arrow]

2 James Stark, letter from CIM Headquarters, Shanghai, China, to Homeland Councils, February 3, 1938, OM Collection 215, box 2, folder 26, (only box and folder will be cited), Archives of the Billy Graham Center (BGC), Wheaton, IL. [↑](#)

3 "Manual of Instructions and Information for Probationers and Members of the China Inland Mission, 1938," Box 2, folder 16, BGC, 3. [↑](#)

4 Ibid., 14; Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christian Missions in China* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1929; reissued, 1967), 386; David Michell, *In God's Way* (Toronto: OMF Books, 1988). [↑](#)

5 Marshall Broomhall, *Jubilee Story of the China Inland Mission* (Philadelphia, PA: China Inland Mission, 1915), 226, quoting Hudson Taylor; Stanley Houghton, Edith B. Harman, & Margaret Pyle, *Chefoo* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1931). [↑](#)

6 Gordon Martin, *Schoolmaster Errant* (Wiltshire, England: Anthony Rowe, 1992), 38; Houghton, Harmon, & Pyle, 12. [↑](#)

7 Martin, (1992), 49. [↑](#)

8 Miss E. Rice, "Our Chefoo Schools in War Time," *China's Millions*, (January, 1938), 12-13; Dr. F. H. Judd, "A History of the China Inland Mission School at Chefoo, China," *The Chefoo Magazine*, (bi-annually, 1951-1954); David Bentley-Taylor, "Extracts from Chefoo Diaries, 1939-1940," *The Chefoo Magazine*, (Winter, 1991-1992). [↑](#)

9 "CIM Council Meeting in Shanghai, Jan. 20, 1940," Box 2, folder 49, BGC, 8. [↑](#)

10 "CIM Council Meeting in Shanghai, July 11, 1940," Box 2, folder 49, BGC, 8. [↑](#)

11 Ibid. [↑](#)

12 James L. Stokesbury, *A Short History of World War 11* (New York: William Morrow, 1980), 164; "CIM Council at Shanghai, October 25, 1940", Box 2, folder 49, BGC, 5. [↑](#)

13 "CIM Council Meeting at Shanghai, Oct. 28, 1940", Box 2, folder 49 BGC, 8-11; "CIM Council Meeting at Shanghai, May 29, 1941", Box 2, folder 50, BGC. [↑](#)

- 14 James W. G. Bruce, "Birds in the Fowler's Net." *The Chefoo Magazine* 1994/95, 49; Bruce Stephen Greenawalt, "Missionary Intelligence from China: American Protestant Reports 1930-1950," (Ph. D. diss., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1974), 198. [↑](#)
- 15 Extract of a personal letter from unnamed Chefoo staff member to Winifred Urech, who then sent it to John R. Sinton, director of emergency CIM headquarters in Chungking, Free China. Original letter written Jan. 24, 1942, extract sent in Feb. 1942. Cardboard box, Overseas Missionary Fellowship (OMF) CSA Archives, Toronto. [↑](#)
- 16 Kathryn Kuhn, letter from Chefoo to parents, John and Isobel Kuhn and reprinted in parents' prayer letter, "U. S. Council Correspondence, Kuhn, John and Isobel, 1941" Box 4, folder 37, BGC; Judd, (1952); Martin, (1992). [↑](#)
- 17 Roy and Gertrude Seaman, Dear friends letter, "Chefoo-Weihsien-Toronto", recounting internment experiences, Jan. 1946, Cardboard box, OMF, CSA Archives, Toronto, 1. [↑](#)
- 18 Bruce, 52. [↑](#)
- 19 "Report on Recent Developments in the Situation of Americans in the Orient," May 1, 1942, RG 389, box 2141, "Camp Reports Croatia to France," National Archives, (NA), Washington, D. C.. [↑](#)
- 20 John R. Sinton, letter, CIM Headquarters, Chungking, to CIM Missionaries, May 11, 1942, box Chefoo History, folder 9, OMF, CSA Archives, Toronto, 1. [↑](#)
- 21 Letter from Chefoo Staff to Parents, June 20, 1942, box Chefoo History, folder 9, OMF, CSA Archives, Toronto, 1. [↑](#)
- 22 Bruce, 53; Seaman, "Chefoo-Weihsien-Toronto", 2; T.J. Harrison letter to Secretary of State, "American interests, Far East," Bern, Nov. 5, 1942, RG 389, box 2141, Camp Reports Croatia to France, NA. [↑](#)
- 23 John R. Sinton, letter, CIM Headquarters, Chungking, to Chefoo Parents, Dec. 14, 1942, box Chefoo History, folder 10, OMF, CSA Archives, Toronto, 1. [↑](#)
- 24 v. Egger, "Report of Visit to Chefoo Assembly Center," July 8, 1942, RG 389, box 2139, "Camp Reports Africa to China," NA, 1. [↑](#)
- 25 Samuel Sokobin, "Internment of Americans and Allied Nationals at Chefoo, China, in Temple Hill Compounds," Nov. 9, 1943, RG 389, box 2139, "Camp Reports Africa to China, NA, 17. [↑](#)
- 26 Gordon Martin, "With the Children on Temple Hill," *China's Millions* 50, 1943, 68-69. [↑](#)
- 27 Vincent, Letter from American Embassy, Chungking to Secretary of State, March 11, 1943, RG 389, box 1240, "Camp Reports China," National Archives; T. J. Harrison, "American Interests - China," Letter from Bern, to Secretary of State, March 26, 1943, RG 389 "Camp Reports China," NA. [↑](#)
- 28 David Michell, *A Boy's War* (Singapore: OMF Books, 1988); Van Waterford, [↑](#) Prisoners of the Japanese in World War II (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1994); John Cotton, *Prisoners of War Bulletin*, 2, July, 1944, Washington, D.C.: American National Red Cross, 2
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30 v. Egger, "Report of American Interests - China," Transmission Camp Report No. 2, Weihsien Camp, March 9, 1944, RG 389, box 2140, "China," NA; Cotton, 9. [▲](#)

31 Langdon Gilkey, *Shantung Compound* (San Francisco: Harper, 1966); Sokobin, "Internment of Americans and Allied Nationals at Chefoo, China, in Temple Hill Compounds," Nov. 11, 1943, RG 389, box 2139, "Camp Reports Africa to China, NA; Laurance Tipton, *Chinese Escapade* (London: MacMillan, 1949), 77. [▲](#)

32 Tipton, 77; Sokobin, "Internment of Americans and Allied Nationals at Chefoo, China, in Temple Hill Compounds," Nov. 11, 1943, RG 389, box 2139, "Camp Reports Africa to China, NA, 21. [▲](#)

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36 Judd, (1953), 9. [▲](#)

37 Martin, (1992), 53, Judd, (1953), 10. [▲](#)

38 Judd, (1954), 3; Martin, (1992), 51; Seaman, "Chefoo-Weihsien-Toronto", 5. [▲](#)

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40 Mrs. C.N. Lack, ca. 1946, "Record of Internment of Boys and Girls of CIM Chefoo School," Letter, Cardboard box, unprocessed files, OMF CSA Archives, Toronto, 5; Tipton, 84. [▲](#)

41 Cliff, 98. [▲](#)

42 Michell, *A Boy's War*, 84; Judd, (1953), 9; Oxford School Certificate Results, Microfilm #32, Contributor, Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations, Ewert House, Summertown, Oxford. July 1944 results on July 1946 data. [▲](#)

43 "Report on the Accident Which Resulted in the Death of Francis Brian Thompson August 16, 1944," Private collection of Norman Cliff, 3. [▲](#)

44 Joyce and Marcy Ditmanson, letter sent to David Michell, Feb. 19, 1992, Private collection of David Michell. (Marcy was Eric's roommate in Weihsien, and Joyce had Eric as a teacher there. Their joint letter includes excerpts from their camp diaries). [▲](#)

45 Lack, "Record of Internment", 6. [▲](#)

46 Gilkey, 113; Cliff, 109; Lack, "Record of Internment", 6. [▲](#)

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