

TANGLING WITH THE JAPANESE

Translation by Michael Canning

First Imprisonment

It is the 12th of December 1941. It has been freezing for several days and I have had a barrel-shaped stove installed in my big room which will take the edge off the cold during the winter, although the temperature will never go above 12 degrees centigrade. It is of truly local manufacture, built out of dye barrels from Germany. It is coated with clay, and has a little window at the bottom and a 10 cm circular opening at the top. A stovepipe made out of tin cans is fixed over that hole.

Visits from nearby Christian groups began on the 15th of November. Already the thirty or so surviving

stalls and one reaches them down a few steps off the main thoroughfare which is raised up at this point. These shops open late in the morning and close early in the evening - let us not forget that there is a war on - with the help of big wooden shutters which cover the displays.

The Catholic mission buildings are situated in the north of the town and are built against the town wall, which dates from the middle ages, not far from the North gate. They spread over a large area and comprise four or five courtyards surrounding the cathedral church, which was built by Dutch Franciscans.

Immediately on the east side of the church there is a big kitchen garden where my servant grows spinach and beans, as well as some carrots and leeks for wintertime. There is also a deep well whose water is barely

drinkable. It has to be boiled first, and even then it tastes of saltpetre... Also in the kitchen garden there are some little mud huts in which my predecessor had stored - or rather hidden - some tens of kilogrammes of unroasted coffee sealed in oiled goatskin pouches. I discovered them the following summer. What a godsend they were at a time when you didn't even have what it took to make a cup of tea. That discovery would allow me to give a surprise hand-out to all my colleagues!

Beyond the kitchen garden there is a yard surrounded by walls and by the buildings of a girls' school. I almost never venture there as it is occupied by an unmanageably lively billy-goat for whom one or two wives need to be bought... We shall have to go to extreme lengths to find such nursing mothers, which are very rare in the area, to help Monsignor Tch'eng who, according to his doctor, needs to drink a lot of milk to help with his diabetes.

But let us return to the secondary entrance to this complex. The door is set in the western perimeter wall, down a cul-de-sac. A discreet Chinese doorway means that it usually goes unnoticed by passers-by. My presbytery - a cavern, or more exactly a house in the shape of a cavern - stands on the south side of this entrance. It is flanked by a covered gallery supported by wooden pillars; and it has a flat roof, where clothes or grain are dried, which is reached via an outside staircase running up the side of the perimeter wall. This is the oldest of the mission buildings. The inside is arched, and is cool in summer and relatively warm in winter. The floor is of cement slabs, and the walls are whitewashed. My bedroom is to the right, and straight ahead there is a vast study or office. Another little Chinese doorway opens into the presbytery courtyard.

Christians from the town communities have responded to the call of their parish priest. They have submitted joyfully to the rules and customs which require them to come and fulfill their Easter duties and refresh their religious knowledge during the winter months and not at Easter as is the practice in Europe. After sunrise they attended mass with a sermon. After returning home for a quick meal they returned in groups of between six and ten to go over their catechism and to make confession.

The town of Hungtung is nine tenths empty. Just a few shops have reopened their doors in the main street which runs between the North and South gates. There is a barber, a dentist who is more of an artisan than a craftsman, a photographer who is just about capable of supplying photos for identity papers, two pharmacist-cum-herbalists who sell Chinese remedies in mysterious little packets, a seller of Chinese sweetmeats and a hardware store whose stocks are limited to thermos flasks and oil lamps with bluish glass bases. Three or four sellers of fabrics share between them the best



山西省在中国的位置示意

If you walk north towards the high town walls on which from time to time you can see a Japanese sentry, you pass into the main courtyard which served as the bishop's palace before Monsignor Tch'eng and his priests fled from the town and took refuge 20 km away in the mountains, in the village of Hanloyen. This courtyard is in typical Chinese style: the main building on the north side contains the reception rooms, while the buildings on the east and west sides are used as living quarters. There is a covered gallery which permits you to move from one building to another when it is raining without risking a drenching!

On the afternoon of 12th December 1941 I hear the dreaded sound of boots in the cul-de-sac leading to the mission: only the Japanese wear boots...The doorbell rings. Yulo, my servant, goes to open the door. There are two Japanese police, escorting twenty or so seminarists and seven or eight priests whom they bring into the palace courtyard. I am requested to join them there and to bring a minimum of belongings, which I hasten to fetch from the presbytery. While the police put seals on all the doors, we are told to settle ourselves as best we can in the north and west buildings flanking the main courtyard. We do not yet know it, but this is to be our prison for four months...Luckily, Yulo is allowed to stay in his own little courtyard near the kitchen garden. It is he who will see to our food and who will make some discreet contacts with the outside world for us. To house the seminarists the teaching building to the south of the church is reopened. Everything has to be cleaned, and there is no provision made for heating or food, since I am the only remaining inhabitant and guardian of the complex. Now we have all of a sudden thirty people to house and feed!

We are under very tight surveillance: communication between us and the seminarists is forbidden, and military police guard the two gateways giving access to the street and to the cul-de-sac. Fortunately we are allowed to talk to one another. Each of us has chosen a corner to open up his little bundle, and wide benches retrieved from here and there will serve as beds.

We lose no time in checking the position with our bishop. Why have we been arrested? How long are we going to be detained? All the diocesan authorities are here: the bishop [at the time, canonically speaking the prefect apostolic]; his vicar general; the procurator of the mission; and Monsignor Tch'eng's counsellors. We need to see to the essentials and promulgate any new arrangements so that the life of the prefecture apostolic can continue in the outside world. We have to name an interim replacement for the prefect, who is not going to be able to function. The bishop charges me as his secretary to draw up a nomination designating Father Han as vicar general of the prefecture. He is

the parish priest at Tupi and we shall try to get his nomination to him via my cook.

Paper is scarce, very scarce. In any case we have to be circumspect and leave as little evidence as possible of what we are doing. With this in mind I draw up this appointment in Latin, at the foot of a page in a school exercise book, and in my capacity as secretary counter-sign it below Monsignor Tch'eng's own signature. The whole thing is a little strip of paper about 20 cm long. I entrust this tiny ribbon to Yulo who gets it to Father Han by hand of a Christian neighbour.

After dealing with that which has to be dealt with, we find ourselves killing time by making Chinese chess sets out of grey paper. I shall even, in the days that follow, manage to fashion a pack of playing cards using visiting cards found at the bottom of a drawer.

Alas Monsignor Tch'eng, Father Kao the vicar general, and Father Li the procurator are soon to be removed from us and taken 30 km from Hungtung to the Japanese prison at Linfen. It is supposed to be a model prison, with a central corridor and cells on each side. The doorways to the cells are very low and can only be passed through on hands and knees. Food is passed through a little window twice a day.

The cells measure 1.5m by 1.8m and are bare apart from a stinking slop bucket. You are four to a cell, and sleep on the ground in the dust and with the vermin. For want of room, the last man in will often have to sleep sitting on the bucket. There is no basin in these terrible cells and to wash minimally a prisoner has to take water from his lukewarm ration when it is ladled out to him at the end of his meal.

However, the little windows are excellent for both observation and communication between the detainees. From time to time there is movement between the cells, and the Chinese are good at relaying messages in their own language, which the Japanese understand poorly.

I am to learn by this means, at the end of March, of the death of Monsignor Tch'eng. A released prisoner brought the news to a Christian and the word-of-mouth Christian-to-Christian telephone reached my cook. Beloved Monsignor Tch'eng had not been able to withstand his terrible treatment in prison for long: diabetes, heart problems and the infestation of horrible vermin in his cell quickly finished him off... We learnt also that he was to be put in a plain deal box and buried to the north of Linfen.

After lengthy confabulation with my colleagues, I decided to go to the Japanese police to ask for the body in order to give it a decent burial. But how was I to tackle this painful subject without arousing the suspicions of the Japanese authorities since we ourselves

were not supposed to have any contact with the outside world? I pondered as I followed my soldier escort down the main street. An idea came to me: I would say that I had been followed by a Christian who had surreptitiously whispered the news to me. That was as far as my thinking had got by the time I reached the police officer's door. He was flanked by his interpreter, a Korean, and by two duty NCO's. I came straight out with what I had just learned: that Monsignor Tch'eng had died in Linfen prison and I was asking to be allowed to give him a decent burial. The commandant seemed initially to be surprised and not to believe me...an enquiry would be made and I would be informed....

Having been escorted back to the mission I report to my comrades and we wait. The next day we learn to our surprise that a Chinese colleague, Martin Yang, who is a professor at Suanhua grand seminary, has been told of the death and has independently applied to exhume the body and transport it to the Hungtung catholic cemetery. Perplexed, we wait, then a written message arrives from the police station: 'You are requested to report to the railway station at 1500 hours to take delivery of the body of the spy Pierre Tch'eng'. We are given permission to leave the mission and ask a Christian to help us get to the station. At the appointed hour we see a goods train arrive and there on a flat car, exposed to wind and weather, lies the poor little plain deal coffin which we load onto a cart. Once back in the mission we break the seals on the church door so that we can place his mortal remains there.

Father Yang has joined us and we all get together to organize the ceremony. I propose a simple burial with only male Christians present: the women are still very fearful in the presence of the Japanese and it would be better to keep them out of it. Everyone else agrees with my proposal. However, they express a wish that the body of our bishop might be transferred to a coffin more worthy of his person and his office. It will be difficult but we shall try. In the night I go in secret with another priest to check that the body is really that of Monsignor Tch'eng. I open the box with pincers and, with the aid of a torch, I recognize the bishop's gentle, peaceful face. Around his neck, tied with a red cord, are the medallions he always used to wear. I place a stole on his chest then I close the pitiful coffin once more.

The following day the funeral ceremony takes place in the cathedral, which has been thoroughly dusted for the occasion. The Christians, men only, are numerous. We emerge from the mass and walk in solemn procession to the Christian village of Suen Chia Yuan, which is half an hour away to the south of the town, on the hill beyond the river. The police commandant and his men escort us, and I have the job of providing a distraction for them at the agreed moment. In

effect, when we reach the little church by the cemetery I invite the Japanese to follow me to the presbytery so that I can serve tea to them. Meanwhile the priests celebrate the absolution then set off as if to take the body to the cemetery. But as they pass the orphanage they carry the bier into the courtyard where they finally prepare the body and place it in a magnificent black lacquered wooden coffin given by one of the village notables. Fortunately the cemetery is out of the sight of the Japanese and I manage to distract them by chatting to them. Half an hour later the priests come and tell me quietly that everything has gone according to plan. I learn also that the kind Christians who did the final preparation of the body had found that it had been partly consumed by the lice which had infested his clothing. They had thus dressed him in priestly garments before placing him in the new coffin.

Among the Christians who had assembled for the burial I had spotted Father Han, the man named by Monsignor as vicar general at the start of our imprisonment. Our eyes met but I could show him no other sign of fellow-feeling in front of the Japanese guards. Later he was to succeed Father Kao as prefect apostolic, and then be appointed bishop of Hungtung. He would be consecrated bishop in 1950 by the papal nuncio Monsignor Riberi.

By this time three months had gone by and we were still largely cut off from the outside world. As the only foreigner in a group of Chinese I was permitted to go to the Japanese police station when the need arose. I had thus been able to negotiate, on Christmas eve, the return of the seminarists to their families. In addition to giving me the satisfaction of a first victory this greatly alleviated our feeding problem.

For fun – and to shame the Japanese – I had stopped shaving, and my reddish beard didn't greatly please them. They tried several times to get me to go to the barber with my police escort, but I had declined on the grounds of having vowed not to shave again for as long as we remained prisoners... Our days were spent praying, chatting, and playing cards or chess. Of course there was no listening to the radio in the circumstances. The odd rumour from the outside world reached us via my cook.

After the troubling interlude of the death of Monsignor Tch'eng our captivity resumed. In vain did I visit the Japanese commandant; I could learn nothing of the reasons for our imprisonment. Finally at the beginning of April 1942, we were told that we were all going to go before a war tribunal! The Japanese were accusing Monsignor Tch'eng of organizing a resistance network; he was the leader; the priests were his lieutenants and the Christians were his foot soldiers...These assertions were not entirely groundless, as Monsignor Tch'eng

had encouraged more than one Christian to get to free China and join a resistance group set up by Father Lebbe. But these were one-off events and we, the priests, knew little of such patriotic activities; the Christian laity knew even less...

The Japanese police were unable to present any proof of these subversive activities, and the tribunal confined itself to condemning us to ten days in prison. Since that period had already been exceeded, they let us go against a simple promise that we would serve faithfully the Empire of the Rising Sun – we so promised without any scruples!!

A time of respite

Four months in detention are soon forgotten when there is work to do. But the diocese has lost its leader. Monsignor Tch'eng went to his final resting place in a worthy fashion, with a crowd of Christian men and women as witnesses, and the Japanese knew nothing of it.. His successor is Monsignor Kao, the former vicar general, who was set free at the same time as we were. We must apply ourselves to the task without further delay. That is the order of the day. Each of us goes back to his job and his house.

I return to my presbytery-cavern in town: all the seals affixed to the mission buildings have been removed. I start visiting the Christian groups again; they hasten to make me welcome although spring is not the best of times to visit as these farming families are all busy in the fields and the days are very long. Nonetheless the festivals of Easter, the Ascension and Whitsuntide all furnish occasions for fervent pastoral encounters. I have returned to my bicycle and do these pastoral rounds on it accompanied by my faithful co-worker T'ang Wa, who can be trusted to do all that needs to be done. All the same I judge it prudent to base myself in the town even if the Christian population there is very small. It is clear that the Japanese pay close attention to my comings and goings and keep an eye on my excursions from the town. The fact is that there is no real frontier between occupied China and free China, and it is sorely tempting to head for the latter and there gain greater freedom of action. But I am a pastor and must remain with my flock.

Sometimes a Japanese officer comes to see me. He is very deferential and well educated, which is a contrast with the behaviour of his police compatriots. He likes to talk in English and I suspect that he may be a Christian. One day he invites me to go with him to a tea-house run by Japanese. I hesitate for some time before accepting, fearful that the geisha girls might have other... ambitions. But I do not want to offend him and in the end I do accept his invitation. All goes well, both the tea and the exchange of compliments, all wrapped

up in well-known refined oriental politenesses.

Thus the year rolls on, filled with visits to the Christians for whom I am responsible in the villages which surround the town. I meet one thousand two hundred and eighteen of them, according to their details as recorded in my pastoral book.

Passing through the town gates which were guarded by Japanese sentries is not without its comic side: one has to dismount from one's bicycle, push it forward, remove one's hat, nod to the sentry and wait for a while. Then, if all is well, one remounts one's bicycle and disappears into the countryside... Occasionally I am the beneficiary of some special check: the inspection of my baggage or a body search.

Now, from time to time I have money to carry out for my co-workers. This is provincial money, which is forbidden in town but is used in the villages and country areas not occupied by the Japanese. I had to find a way of getting the money through, and this was to attach it tightly to the inside of my upper arm: when they search you, the official begins by running his hands down the length of the outside of your arms, then he makes you raise your arms while he pats the rest of your body. I was lucky and was never caught out, even when the guards went so far as to make me remove the hand grips from my bicycle to check that I was hiding nothing in the handlebars!!

The winter of 1942-3 is long and hard. The Japanese police continue to visit me from time to time. The sound of their boots gets on my nerves but I try not to show it. I am sure they are keeping a close eye on me. One day in March 1943 an officer comes and announces to me that foreigners are to be assembled at Taiyuan, the provincial capital. I try to find out more; he tells me that it is supposed to last... a few days and that it would be better to take a suitcase. I deduce that this will not be just for the week-end! There is no time to lose: we are to leave the day after tomorrow.

I hasten to Monsignor Kao to seek his permission to disappear into the countryside and make my way to free China. Monsignor is perplexed and does not want to disappoint me, but he fears reprisals against the Christians if I disappear like that. He does authorize me to try to escape along the way, but that will prove to be impossible as I shall be escorted by two policemen at all times. These take me to Taiyuan and deposit me at a Japanese hotel. Japanese hotels are truly paper houses and you can hear everything that is going on on all sides. I didn't understand what my neighbours were saying but there was a good reason for that: the speaking and singing were coming from a group of Dutch Franciscan colleagues who were glad to have met up with one another and were giving little thought to the fate that awaited them. We got to know one another

much better during the two day train journey which took us to Weihsien camp in Shantung province.

On the way there our train stops for an hour to take on board a contingent of American and British folk who were to find themselves interned with us. I have the happy surprise of finding in the group six other Belgian colleagues from my missionary society, who are likewise made to board by the police. They are Fathers De Jaegher and Unden, who are working in Ankuo diocese; Keymolen and Wenders, who are professors at Suanhua grand seminary; Gilson, who is the Peking procurator; and finally my very good friend Father Palmers who, as I write, is the last survivor of that group of six. [He died three years later while parish priest at Taipei on the island of Taiwan.]

Weihsien Camp

Two thousand internees share what this camp has to offer. It was formerly a Presbyterian mission set in the heart of Shantung province. The founder of Time

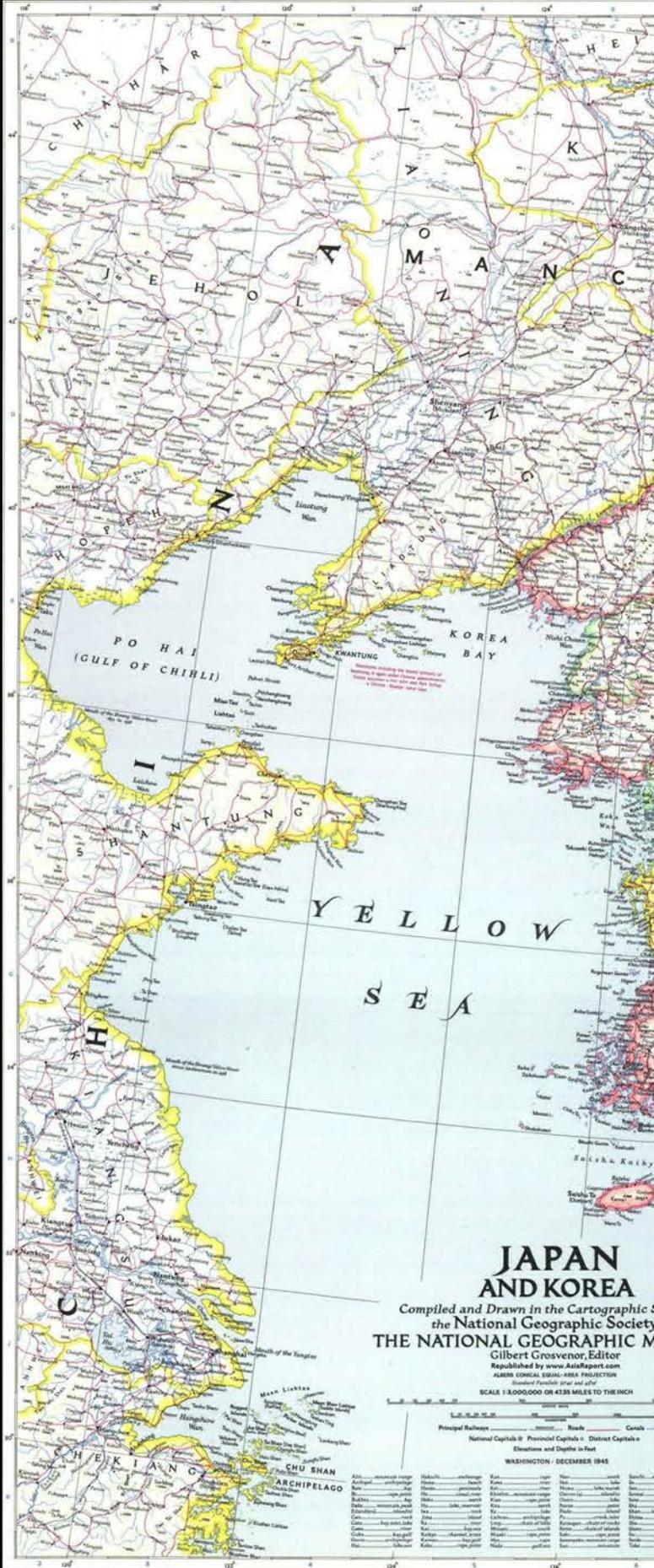
magazine, Henry Luce, was born there into a family of protestant pastors. Our Japanese gaolers have kept the best buildings for themselves and leave us with the student accommodation and with a number of buildings which had been used for teaching.

The terrain surrounding the camp was gently undulating, not to the point where you were prevented from seeing what was going on beyond the perimeter walls, though in order to see over those walls you had to go up the single tower which dominated the center of the camp. Going up was, naturally, forbidden.

The little student rooms were built on to one another side by side, twelve to fifteen to a block, and formed a succession of rows which were separated by little narrow gardens that were overgrown when we arrived. Groups of blocks could be divided into three or four zones or quarters, each having a kitchen equipped with a simple outside boiler which provided, two or three times a day, hot water for those who wished to make a cup of tea.

Our little room stood a somewhat apart. At a pinch you could get four people into its 12 square metres, and that was what we had to do. Four colleagues, for-





purposes. To house everything else a collection of odds and ends of wood somehow turned into a rudimentary set of shelves. In times like those you had to make the best of it! Improvisation and ingenuity reigned.

Luckily we had none among us who had been convicted of ordinary crimes. We were all deemed to be political prisoners, gathered up and put away because our governments were at war with Japan. Everyone had been living in North China: Peking, Tientsin, Tsingtao or Mongolia. Thirty or so of us Belgians found ourselves in the midst of a host of British and American internees, along with a few Dutch and others. We had become enemies of Japan on the day our own government, exiled in London, decided to open hostilities with Japan to protect the uranium reserves in the Congo which were so coveted by the Americans.

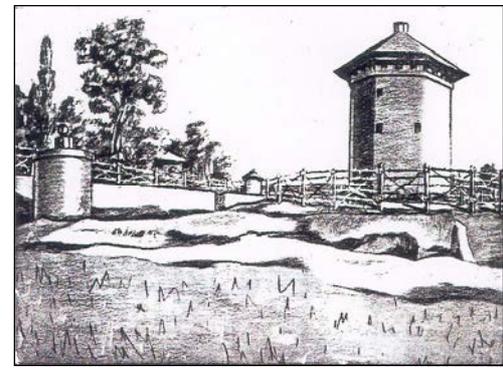
Actually, in March 1943 there were more than a hundred Belgians in the camp. The majority were missionaries working in Mongolia; Scheut Fathers; and Canonesses of Saint Augustine. They left us a few months later, were transferred to Peking and interned there in two convents.

So we ended up as ten or so priests and four nuns available to serve our fellow-prisoners. Initially, life in camp involved a lot of feeling one's way. How should things be organized? Who was going to teach, cook, mend, build, fix up? Everything had to be sorted out. For example, in No. 1 kitchen where I had volunteered to work our only equipment was six huge cast-iron cauldrons each heated by its own stove. We had to improvise lids using planks and carve great spatulas out of good wood in order to stir the grub as it was cooking...

Very quickly the senior people from Tientsin, Tsingtao and Peking proposed to our guards that we should be left to organize life inside the camp, while they kept an eye on us and stopped us from running away... For our forty guards this proposal had to be a good one. They accepted it and concentrated their energies on guarding the gates and controlling the Chinese who came into the camp to provide various services. They also had to mount a night watch on the seven or eight watchtowers which stood on the perimeter of the camp. Later their task was to become even easier as ditches were dug at the foot of the perimeter wall, to which were added strands of electrified barbed wire.

Life slowly settled down. It was not yet a model community, but all bent themselves to the task of giving it a good foundation. Elections were held to establish com-

tunately, all from the same missionary society, the Society of Mission Auxiliaries. We share our riches and our poverty... Raymond de Jaegher, who had managed to bring in two wooden chests, let me have them for a bed, while my three comrades had salvaged some iron frames that resembled bed bases. Simple deal pedestal tables served as bedside tables... indeed tables for all



mittees to deal with various aspects of camp activity: committees for discipline, housing, food, schooling, leisure activities, religious activities, work, and health.

At first each committee comprised three or four people. Later, when camp life settled down to its cruising speed, we were to limit each committee to

single elected person. Every six months we replaced or reelected them. The first discipline committee was chaired by the American Lawless who was impressive and good-humoured. His wife was Swiss and she died in camp. Lawless had been chief of police in the British concession in Tientsin and he took on his task in the camp with competence and authority. Later, when there was an exchange of prisoners, he would be repatriated and replaced by an Englishman called MacLaren, who had a family and had been the Tientsin director of a British shipping company.

As for education, we turned to the teachers. Some of them had arrived in camp with their pupils. It proved to be not too difficult to set up two teaching groups, one each for British and American teaching programmes. There were some two hundred children and adolescents running about the camp and it was pretty urgent to arrange plenty for them to do!

Clandestine Scouts

Well now, one Sunday in springtime Father Palmers and I were sitting on a seat by the central alley. The protestant service had just finished and we were chatting with some others from the kitchen and the bakery. Cockburn and MacChesney Clark, both old British teachers, were, like us, regretting the lack of educational activity for the young. All four of us were former scouts and it seemed to us to be a good idea to use scouting methods to bring into being something educational despite the limitations of our imprisonment. We decided to think about it and to ask the opinions of others. Ideas were exchanged, and the contacts developed quickly.

We shouldn't try to recruit everyone. Let us begin at the beginning! First we needed to establish a nucleus of scouting life, a patrol seven or eight strong. Junior Chan, a 14 year-old Chinese Canadian catholic, could make a good patrol leader; Zandy, a Eurasian; the de Zutter brothers, who were Belgians aged 12 and 14; and finally three or four British lads. There was a good mixture of catholics and protestants, with one orthodox element for good measure. It was decided that Cockburn should be in charge; the rest of us would be assistants.

We have to invent everything and cannot mention scouting as such. The motto is to be **All for one and one for all**. The badges - a fleur-de-lys on a clover leaf - are to be embroidered by mothers and sisters. The necktie is a white handkerchief dyed in blue ink. Everything

Premier Ministre exilé à Londres (1940 - 1944)

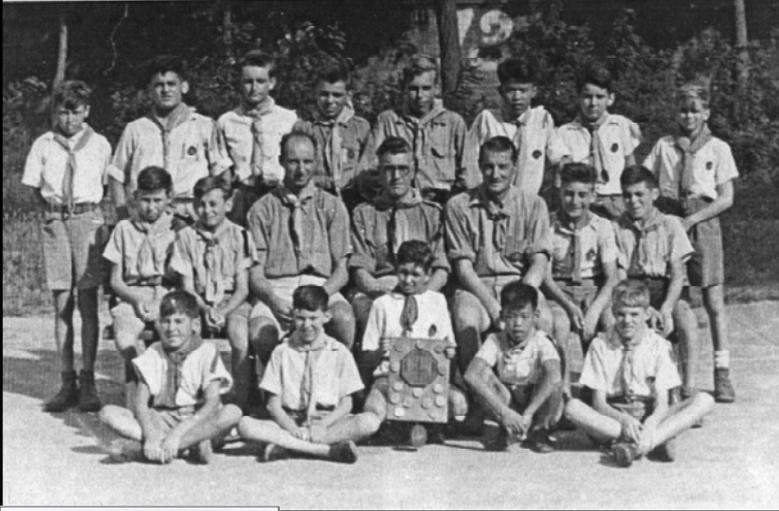
(extrait)

P H Spaak demande l'avis du *Foreign Office*, ainsi que des ambassadeurs de Belgique aux États-Unis (van der Straeten-Ponthoz et Theunis) et en Chine (Guillaume) afin de déterminer si la simple rupture des relations diplomatiques avec le Japon peut être considérée comme "une mesure suffisante ou si vous estimez qu'au point de vue de l'opinion publique et du gouvernement américains, il serait désirable que nous déclarions état de guerre". Le ministre explique que l'absence de déclaration de guerre par la Belgique se justifie par l'impossibilité pratique dans lequel le pays se trouve à commettre des actes d'hostilité envers le Japon. Mais il ne souhaite pas que les États-Unis interprètent cette décision « comme un manque d'esprit de solidarité de notre part ». D. Souhaitant éviter les atermoiements dont le gouvernement belge avait fait preuve avant de déclarer indirectement la guerre à l'Italie, G. Theunis câble immédiatement à Londres afin "que la Belgique prenne immédiatement position aux côtés de l'Amérique au moment où celle-ci venait de subir le grave échec de Pearl Harbour ». G. Theunis comprend immédiatement le redressement de l'image de la Belgique auprès de l'opinion publique américaine qui pourrait résulter d'une déclaration de guerre immédiate belgo-japonaise. L'ambassadeur van der Straeten Ponthoz est du même avis, tandis que le baron Guillaume se montre opposé à une déclaration de guerre.

Le 18 décembre, P. H. Spaak informe de ses consultations le conseil des ministres. Il signale que la position des autorités britanniques à ce sujet est évidemment favorable à un geste pareil du gouvernement belge ; toutefois, ils ne font pas pression sur nous ». Spaak estime que notre position à l'égard du Japon devrait être revue et qu'il conviendrait que la Belgique déclare la guerre à ce pays ». Il rappelle, afin d'appuyer son argumentation. La violation par le Japon, qui a par ailleurs « rompu le statu quo dans le Pacifique », du Traité de Washington du 6 février 1922, dont la Belgique est l'une des signataires. Par ailleurs, la Chine a déjà déclaré la guerre au Japon. Le ministre Gutt appuie vivement » le point de vue développé par Spaak. Convaincu par les arguments de Theunis, Spaak et Gutt, les ministres Pierlot et De Vleeschauwer s'inclinent. Le gouvernement belge informe les Alliés, au moyen d'une déclaration laconique, le 19 décembre, que "l'état de guerre existe entre la Belgique et le Japon de même existe avec l'Allemagne et l'Italie. Cela n'empêche pas C. Gutt de fulminer à l'encontre de l'atermoiement de dix jours dont a fait preuve le Gouvernement. Pour sa part, P. H. Spaak tient à rassurer H. Pierlot sur les implications de ce geste auquel il ne faut pas accorder une importance excessive, étant donné que, dans la pratique, cette déclaration de guerre ne se traduit pas par grand-chose. Un acte de solidarité avec les Pays-Bas, dont la colonie indonésienne est menacée par les Japonais, ce qui n'est pas indifférent dans le cadre du rapprochement Benelux en cours. Le ministre néerlandais des Affaires étrangères, E. N. Van Kleffens, se montre en effet satisfait d'apprendre "cette heureuse nouvelle", le 20 décembre, par l'intermédiaire de L. Nemry.

A l'occasion de son discours devant la Chambre des Représentants, le 6 décembre 1944, P. H. Spaak, constant avec lui-même, se montrera particulièrement ferme quant à la position de la Belgique à regard du Japon, destinée à soutenir l'effort de guerre américain jusqu'à la victoire finale: J'attache à cet engagement une importance exceptionnelle.





else falls into place thanks to scouting skills, and all goes well. When we were liberated we even manage to get ourselves photographed by friends from outside the camp.

Work in the Camp

Everyone had to work in camp. The jobs were organized with a view to the well-being of the two thousand internees, all of them civilians and political prisoners. There were old people and very young children. From the outset a rudimentary hospital was set up to provide basic medical care to those in need. Fortunately it emerged that there were five or six doctors and several nurses among our number. When we got eggs from the Japanese, the whole lot went to the hospital for distribution to the children. The rest of us were just allowed the shells, which went through the mincer and were then consumed as a source of calcium... Actually, our teeth suffered badly from malnutrition, and there was only one dentist for the whole camp. Poor Doctor Prentice spent many hours on the treadle which drove the drill; he filled cavities with dental cement after disinfecting them. That was about all he could do for us...

All available skills were harnessed: carpenter, bricklayer, tinsmith, baker, cook, teacher, seamstress, soap-maker[!], instrumentalist, etc As for me, I offered my services to the kitchen as junior kitchen-hand No. 6. It was a good way of ensuring that you got at least some food! Dare I admit that I hardly lost any weight in camp and that I ended my career in the kitchen as head cook for six hundred souls?! I was proud of my young and active team of six who never complained about the hard graft. My right hand man was one Zimmerman, a Jewish American, who was a far better cook than I was. He had a Russian wife who was a source of good ideas. For example, we were renowned for our *Tabasco sauce* which was a mixture of raw minced turnip, pili-pili and red peppers which you could sometimes get from the

canteen. With these ingredients we would make a sort of sauce that took the skin off your throat but which had the merit of giving some taste to dishes which otherwise had none.

We used to put up our menus when it was our turn to cook - every third day: it was our way of lifting the spirits of the internees. But one day we realized that a Japanese guard would come and conscientiously copy down our menus for sending to... the Geneva Convention! That put an end to our gastro-literary efforts!!

The young people had to work too. Their studies came first. We had organized for them two teaching regimes, American and British. So they went to school every day in the makeshift classrooms. But they were also required to pump water for two hours a day. That was the wearisome task for many of the rest of us too, as there were four water towers in the camp from which water had to be distributed to the kitchens and the showers. Otherwise you got your own water in jugs. The latrines were inevitably very primitive, and had a system of pedals such as used to be found in French railway stations. They were well kept. Oddly enough they were often the responsibility of the *Fathers*, of us missionaries, although we were few in number! But I have to say that our willingness to undertake this task was not entirely disinterested. The latrines were one of the few places you could meet Chinese, who came to empty them, and we developed good relationship with them with an eye to planning



escapes.

To complete the account of the types of work I chose to do or found myself obliged to do during those thirty months I would tell you that I was also a noodle-maker, a woodcutter and, last but not least, a butcher. That was the work I most liked, though you had to be very careful not to get infected fingers. Much of the meat was very poor, but we tried to rescue enough to make so-called hamburgers or stews, though they were mainly of potato. And choosing the job of butcher was

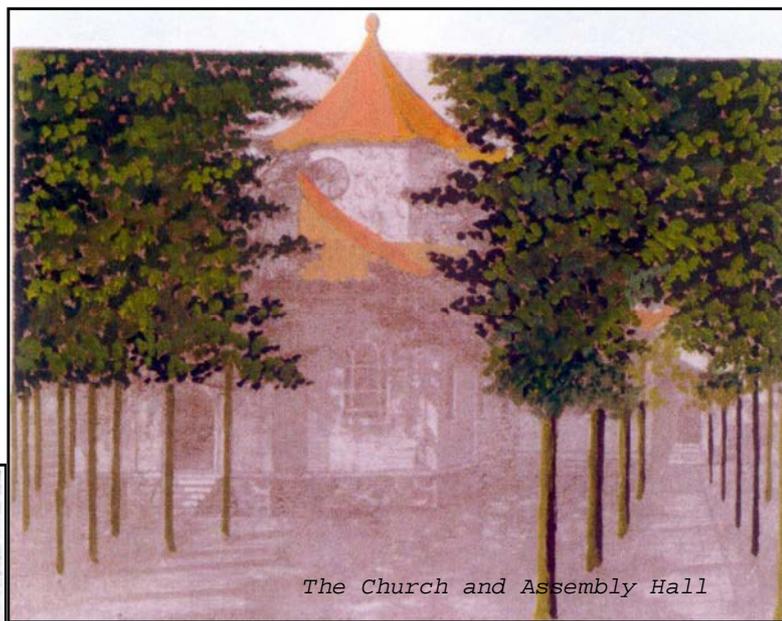


also calculated, since there too you could meet Chinese people as they came to deliver their merchandise. Occasionally, and fleetingly, you found yourself alone with one of them and that gave you a chance to exchange news.

That was how I learned of the Japanese military collapse... I hastened to pass on the amazing news to the other prisoners. I remember that some English friends whom I had told of the rumour invited me to take a thimble of alcohol to celebrate the glad tidings. But 'Beware lest you be wrong' they said to me 'for if you are you will have to buy us a whole bottle'. In the event I had no cause to regret my optimism.

Leisure Activities

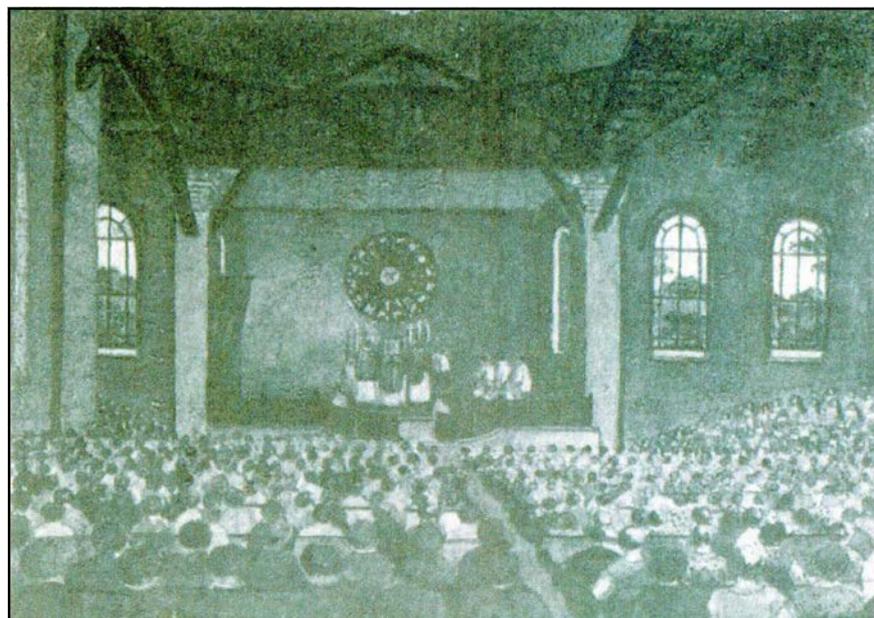
It is essential to organize leisure activities in a camp if one is to sustain people's good humour and patience. We would regularly organize baseball matches for American or British teams. The *Fathers'* team had a certain notoriety. We were not short of supporters, who were mostly young Catholics. Of course we were all pretty young at that time. And music is both soothing and comforting. Thus from time to time there were choral or instrumental concerts. To celebrate Christmas and Easter we even had mixed choirs whose members were committed and which practised hard: these gave much prominence to our Catholic liturgies.



The theatre also had its enthusiasts. Even I was sought out one day by an English producer. With many preliminaries I was asked if I would be prepared to take part in *Androcles and the Lion*, a play by Bernard Shaw. He needed Roman soldiers and he thought that I would fit the bill, being not too skinny! Why not, after all, if that could help to raise the spirits of our community? The tinsmiths busied themselves devising made-to-measure helmet and armour for me out of tin cans that were flattened then pieced together...The play was such a success that we had to stage a revival and put on two performances when the Americans came and liberated the camp. It was our way of saying thank you.

Escaping ... from Boredom

But the winters were long and tedious. What do you do in the evenings when you are bored, when you are deprived of liberty? Clearly there was no radio, still less television. That is why a few of us set up a sort of youth club which met three times a week after the evening meal. You could learn to play card games, to hold forth, and even to dance. It was an excellent safety-valve to help young people to avoid descending to more suspect leisure pursuits. Not many people knew



that that Father Palmers and I were behind the establishing of a series of evening classes, which were very popular, though they did not appeal to everyone. During the final winter it proved essential to fill every evening...

Escape plans are always a major topic of discussion in a camp. But it was very difficult to escape from our camp. Beyond the perimeter walls and the watchtowers there were deep trenches which had been dug following an early escape attempt; there were also electrified fences which rendered any escape hazardous, especially at night. However, we had established that the electric current was turned off during the daytime. That was a factor that contributed to the successful escape of two of our number, Tipton and Hummel, who managed to take to the fields just before curfew, one fine evening in the summer of 1944.

But that is another story that I shall tell you some other time, as Rudyard Kipling said.

Cesspool Kelly

Old Mr. Kelly was a protestant missionary who had married a Chinese girl late in life; and who had arrived in camp with four young children. He stood out with his dress and his habits for he had gone completely Chinese: clothing, food, speech and way of life.

His children ran about, dressed like Chinese children, accompanied by Dad who couldn't always keep up with them. One day little Johnny accompanied by his sister Mary ventured close to an open cesspool. [We had no sewers in the camp and the latrines were connected to trenches which were regularly emptied by Chinese coolies.] The predictable happened. Out of curiosity our Johnny went too close and of course fell in. Luckily his sister Mary was on watch. She gave the alarm to passers-by who were able to fish out Johnny before he died of suffocation. As a result of this misadventure he acquired the unusual nickname of *Cesspool Kelly*.

The White Elephant Shop

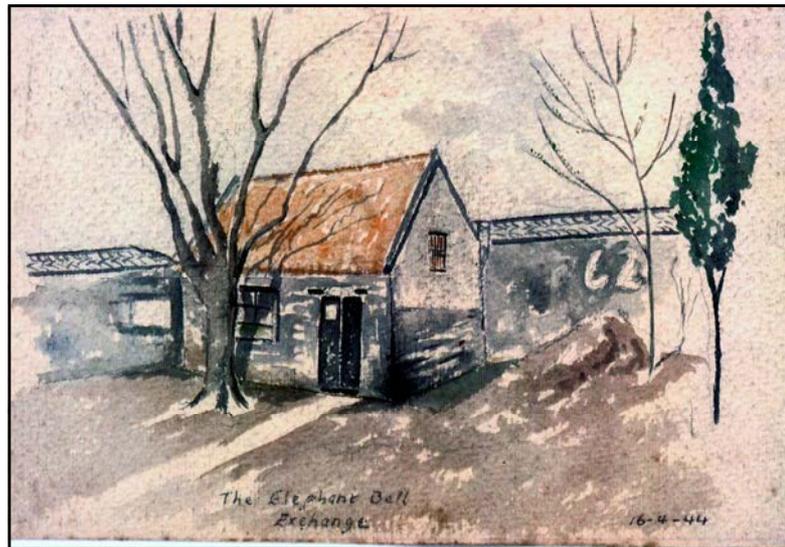
The needs of everyday camp life made you ingenious and resourceful. Some internees had managed to bring into camp in their baggage more than they needed. Others, in contrast lacked everything. I remember a silver tea service which was sold for a few kilos of sugar to the king of the black market, a certain Goyas, who arrived late in camp but who was preceded by his reputation as a notorious fraudster. Goyas had the tea service melted down into ingots that could be used for currency exchange.

To facilitate exchanges of goods between prisoners the camp committee had the idea of opening a shop

where clothes and other items, ticketed with a price, could be exchanged. For example, you could buy some winter garment so long as you brought along another object of the same value, or paid for it with the Japanese yuans which were meted out sparingly to us and referred to as *comfort money*. This was in the form of a loan which had to be repaid to our governments at the end of the war!

The White Elephant shop ran for about a year, until there was practically nothing left to turn into cash or to exchange.

Cigarettes were another source of currency, at least for the non-smokers. We were entitled to a pack of a hundred cigarettes once a month from the canteen. That was not nearly enough for the serious smok-



ers, but it was handy for those who could use them for barter. The children from Chefoo school – a protestant school which had arrived in camp complete with staff – used them to augment their bread ration, which was never enough to satisfy their hungry young stomachs.

Alyousha's Fall

He was a young Greek, interned with his family. His sisters, although orthodox, came regularly to our Sunday mass. He was a touch lazy and did not always trouble to fulfil his obligatory work quota. It was necessary to maintain camp discipline and every flagrant breach of the rules was dealt with by our disciplinary committee.

Alyousha's punishment was to go and collect wood for the kitchen fires. He was as agile as a squirrel, and climbed the trees in the central alley to pull down all the dead wood as an addition to what he had already collected, in order to complete his punishment task. Emboldened by being so at ease, he climbed higher and higher. Holding on to a branch above him, he used all his weight to jump on a dead branch that he was trying to bring down. Fate would have it that just

this once it was the branch he was holding on to that gave way. This all took place near the kitchen and I heard the dull heavy thud of something falling to the ground. We rushed out to see what had happened. Alas, too late. Alyousha lay dead by the branch that he had just brought down...

The Black Market...

In the early days of our internment, the Japanese did little to stop us communicating with the outside world. Apart from the perimeter wall and the barbed wire beyond there were only the watchtowers – or perimeter towers – which occurred on the wall wherever there was a corner. There was however an exception: the camp was not an exact rectangle, and there were blind spots including one section of wall which was hard to see from a watchtower.

The Trappist monks' accommodation was near to this stretch of wall and Father Scanlon had made it the HQ of the black market, with the wall itself serving as the ... counter. The Chinese outside the wall had been quick to take advantage of this feature of the wall to come - by day - and prowl around, offering to sell things, mainly sugar and eggs. At first the orders were delivered over the wall by Chinese who climbed over the barbed wire, but the day came when the wire was electrified and one of the traders was electrocuted and left hanging dead on the barbed wire. The black market was a pretty risky business...

Nevertheless Father Scanlan continued unfazed with his little egg trade and was thus a great help to those families with children. He had found another dis-

creet way to take delivery of his egg orders: a length of guttering which served to carry away rainwater. When the weather was dry the eggs arrived one by one along this guttering, despatched discreetly by a Chinese posted on the other side of the wall.

However, Father Scanlan was being closely watched. Already a guard had once come upon him pacing the wall at nightfall, breviary in hand. He had been challenged: - 'What are you doing here?' - 'As you can see, I am reading my breviary.' - 'Impossible, it is far too dark' retorts the guard. - 'Yes, but I know it by heart' replies Father Scanlan.

Alas, what he was up to was stumbled on one day when he was sitting on a stool with his Trappist robes covering the stool below which the eggs were gently rolling out. Up comes a guard. No chance of warning off the Chinese who continues to send along the eggs. One unfortunate egg, more fragile than the others, comes and cracks open against the others. The sound alerts the guard who uncovers the ploy.

Father Scanlon was taken to the cells which were close by the building where the guards lived. The Father, as a good Trappist, was untroubled by solitary confinement and would sing the different hours of the breviary at the top of his voice. This drove the Japanese mad, and after trying him in another cell they decided to send him back to us. That was the end of the black market...

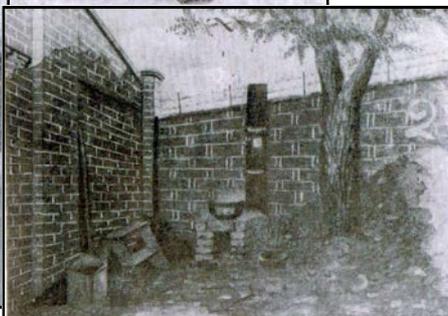
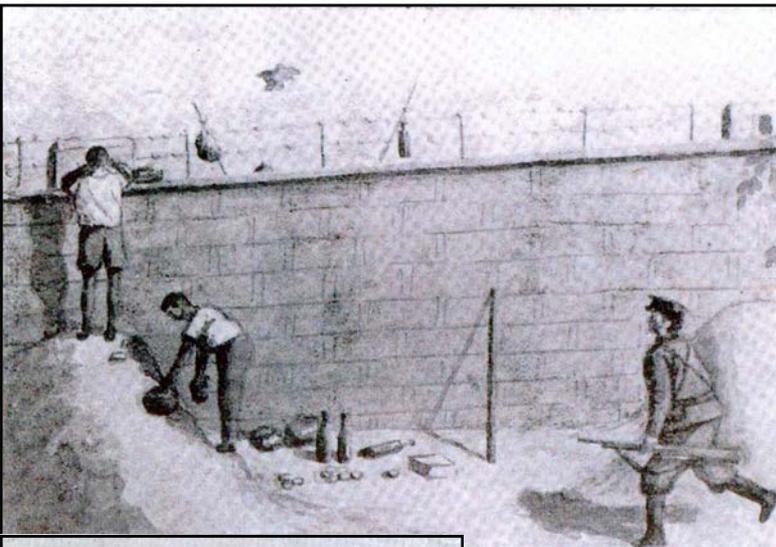
Bed-bugs

When we first arrived in camp the accommodation was clean and the furniture – benches and little tables – seemed new. Those who had brought nothing to sleep on in their baggage had retrieved wooden beds from what had been the school.

Overcrowding and limited washing facilities meant that people and their accommodation could not maintain the highest standards of hygiene. Showers were available to groups of ten at a time and at certain times only. So, after a year of concentration camp existence one began to see discreet first signs of major spring-cleaning.

It was mildly amusing to follow the progress of the problem. At first, the internees would confine themselves to bringing out tables and benches on the pretext that it was a week-end clean-up, and there was the lovely May sunshine... But it was not long before people began to bring out blankets and bed bases and proceeded openly to use boiling water to purge their belongings.

Later we were faced with rats and mice. Competitions were organized and these harassed the young folk. N. Cliff and D. Vinden



became the champion exterminators with a tally of seventy-one.

The Italians arrive

At the beginning of the first winter the Japanese cleared us out of the north end of the camp, to the left of the gate. This part of the camp was then isolated from where we were by walling up two gateways and leaving just one open. For whom were they going to such lengths? Who were we going to be forbidden to meet?

The answer came one evening when about a hundred Italians arrived from Shanghai. They were all senior managers in Italian firms which had continued to prosper in China as long as Mussolini was in power. But after he fell the Japanese, wishing to grab the Italian wealth to be found in the Shanghai concession [banks, shipping companies and assorted factories], found it opportune to imprison these senior staff and their families in our camp while forbidding them any contact with us.

We weren't going to let this segregation happen. We were all prisoners and were not disposed to favour the burgeoning of divisions in the camp. So, the very first night, we went over the wall to greet the newcomers and to offer our assistance. Among them there were many old people who were confused and distraught. Our youth and our spirit of enterprise went a long way to settling them in. Before long the walled-up gateways were reopened and the Italian prisoners were made welcome by all.

I remember only too well one sleepless night due to Signora Tavella's coffee. She had wanted to show her gratitude by opening a precious tin of Maxwell House coffee that she had brought in her baggage. We had not tasted coffee since our arrival in camp and were unprepared for its effect. The Tavellas were very influential in their community. After the war we received an official letter from the Italian government thanking us for services rendered to their nationals by the Belgian Fathers of Weihsien camp.

V. E. Day

Thanks to the Chinese coolies who continued to bring in food – and to empty the cesspools – we received from time to time news that we circulated in the form of rumours in order to head off Japanese suspicions. In this way some internees had learned of the Allied victory in Europe and they burned with impatience, wanting to pass on the good news. Two young prisoners dared to break the curfew and decided to go at midnight and ring the bell which was normally used to signal the beginning and end of the daily roll-call.

Action stations for the Japanese! What was hap-

pening? Were we being attacked?...Nothing of the kind:



just the bold exuberant desire to communicate on the part of two adolescents. They weren't caught but as a reprisal the whole camp found itself once again having twice-daily roll-calls!

Roll-call Victim

I liked him a lot, Brian, that tall sixteen year-old lad, the eldest of four children who had arrived in camp with their mother as part of the Chefoo School group. His father, Mr. Thompson, was in Chungking in charge of a protestant mission and had been separated from his family since Pearl Harbour. Although he was a protestant he had come to me, a catholic missionary, to ask for French lessons. We met twice a week, and thus I got to know him better.

As I said, following the V. E. Day incident the Japanese had doubled the number of roll-calls to one in the morning and another at night. The weather was hot. The young folk, to save their shoes, were going bare-foot. It was a general roll-call, which meant that all the prisoners had to assemble in three groups each of

about five hundred, be subjected to a precise head-count and, if no-one was missing, wait for the bell to ring before returning to their rooms. Waiting was long and tedious. Sometimes the young folk would pass the time by playing some game.

That day Brian was lined up with his school pals three or four rows behind us. An electric cable ran from the hospital across the open space and hung unluckily low over the groups which had assembled for the roll-call. Someone near to Brian had jumped up, touched the cable, and had an electric shock. 'Wow,' said he to Brian. Brian had to try this for himself but, being taller, he seized the cable with his hands and was instantly struck dead. As he fell he pulled down the cable, thereby threatening the lives of other children. Some grown-ups rushed over and released Brian's grip on the cable with a wooden garden chair. For hours the doctors tried artificial respiration. In vain, alas. He was buried in the camp and his class teacher addressed his classmates saying that Brian had answered the great call...

An Opportunist Postal Worker

My colleague Raymond de Jaegher was a daring and enterprising missionary who spoke and wrote Chinese perfectly. He set much store by keeping his contacts and found trick after trick to get his mail out of the camp without the Japanese finding out. We were entitled to send one 25-word letter a month out of the camp via the Red Cross. And nothing but personal messages. Most of these letters were intercepted and only reached the recipients after the Japanese capitulation.

De Jaegher preferred *System D*. He had observed that the postman came to the camp once a week by bicycle. He was searched on arrival, as was his letter bag then, accompanied by the guard, he went into the office to deliver the mail, leaving his bike outside. The bike had a cloth pouch attached to the crossbar. De Jaegher unobtrusively slipped into this pouch a packet of letters addressed to the outside world, along with a dollar bill. Then, from a distance, he watched for the postman to leave. The postman collected his bike and found the clandestine package. He looked around and spotted de Jaegher who used his hands to signal thank you, Chinese fashion.

And so, for more than a year he succeeded in dispatching his mail regularly to the outside world, thanks to this ingenious method.

The Seven Warrior Angels who Came from the Skies [17 August 1945]

It is 10 o'clock in the morning. To pass away the time a few people are walking about on the assembly

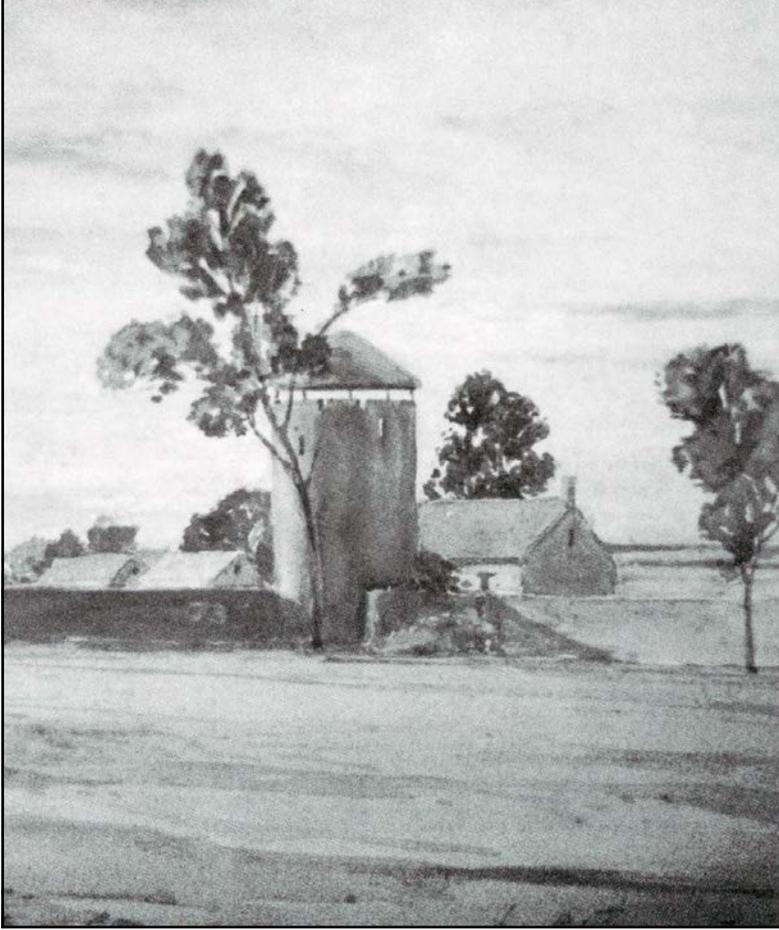
ground which we generously call the sports field. It is the only place in the camp where it is possible to play baseball without running the risk of breaking a window or hurting a passer-by. It is also the place chosen by our gaolers to assemble the internees to reassure themselves that no prisoner has escaped. The weather is marvellously sunny but the temperature is tolerable.

And what was I doing on the sports field where there was no shade at this time of day? I seem to remember that I had noticed the sound of a plane engine, strange and unusual because it sounded different from the engines of the Japanese planes that we were used to



hearing. Curiosity had drawn me to the sports field, which was more open and was on one boundary of the camp.

Some in the group on the field with their heads in the air have spotted a red, white and blue roundel painted on the side of the fuselage of the plane which is now flying over us. Speculation is rife: 'Might it be a French plane?' 'What's it doing in these parts?' Later we were to learn that American planes have the same



colours as French ones. 'Has it lost its way?' 'Is it doing a reconnaissance?' I should explain that from the air our camp looks like a Chinese village but the Allies were to recognize us because of the coloured shirts that a number of us were wearing. Once the camp has apparently been recognised the plane begins to circle then, above some nearby fields not far from the perimeter wall it releases ten or so parcels dangling from red yellow and green parachutes. What a lovely sight! A few minutes later a second drop releases a further dozen bundles. On the third run we see things that look like sacks of potatoes appear, then these suddenly acquire arms and legs and above them we see big white parachutes opening. There are seven of them. What should we do?

Out of the Camp

Despite the expressionless faces of our gaolers a rumour had been going round the camp that the Japs had been having some setbacks. We knew nothing of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki which had brought Japan to sign a document of unconditional surrender on the 15th of August 1945. I had tried to find out more from some Chinese who had delivered a cart-load of vegetables to us. Taking advantage of one opportune moment I had gleaned in confidence that the Japanese were abandoning the nearby town. I had spread this long hoped-for news throughout the camp. But only on that marvellous morning of the 17th of June did this great hope seem to become a reality...

Now, while one of our comrades, strong and bold, had hitched himself up onto the boundary wall to see just where the parachutes had fallen, the rest of us had, as one, rushed towards the gate to the outside which was guarded by two sentries. There were twenty or thirty of us hurtling down the slope towards it. Were those Japanese who were on duty going to react? After a few seconds of uncertainty we were out in the countryside running towards those that we supposed, and hoped, were our liberators.

In the midst of tall heads of maize, standing on the tomb of a Chinese notable, an American major was giving orders. He seemed to us to be the liberating angel in person. What a welcome. We looked around for his companions. 'There are seven of us,' he said, 'and we have twenty bundles to gather up as well as the parachutes. To work, now!' It took barely an hour to assemble the team and the materiel. One member of the commando, a 17 year-old Chinese, a volunteer interpreter, making his first jump, had broken his foot on landing.

We returned to the camp in triumph bearing them all on our shoulders. We were wild with joy. However, the major calmed us down and advised us to let him go ahead with his men, each armed with a Bren gun and with revolvers in their belts. They could reasonably fear a violent reaction from our guards. Nothing of the sort, happily.

The Japanese commandant had assembled all the guards and was impassively waiting for the parachutists to arrive. He knew full well that the war was over... Two interpreters, British Eurasians who had been interned with us, were present. The exchange between the Americans and Japanese passed off smoothly. Orders from *on high* confined our former gaolers to their accommodation while entrusting to them the guarding of the camp at nighttime. We learned that a guerilla force of communists were heading for the camp hoping to take us hostage.

A Well-Organised Rescue Operation!

Despite our hungry curiosity to know everything, our rescuers were too busy that day to tell us about the operation that had been devised to rescue us. But the following day we got to know the details: they were all volunteers for the mission, and had been brought together just twenty-four hours beforehand in order to get acquainted with one another and to clarify individual tasks. When told of the risks they were likely to run, none of them had backed out.

The team consisted of a major in his thirties, the leader of the mission; a captain; two other officers -

one for liaison and one a radio specialist; an orderly; a Nisei [an American of Japanese origin]; and a young Chinese who would act as interpreter if needed. They had come from Kungming, an American base in Yunnan province in South China, and had flown for six hours to reach Shantung province and begin the search for our camp.

After dropping them the plane had continued northwards to a base which had recently been liberated and which was not so far to fly. In the following days other packs arrived from the sky containing clothes, food and shoes. One of

spattered with peach Melba or toothpaste!

It was miraculous in every sense of the term, for no-one was hurt – even more miraculous as many Chinese had joined the curious onlookers. Two or three of these *surprise parcels* crashed inside the camp near the hospital and one or two dumbfounded patients were to see tins of apricots and apples bowling towards them at high speed!

Readjustment...

Among other things our liberators felt they needed to reorientate our minds. They feared that Japanese propaganda might have played havoc with our enfeebled brains which in any case knew nothing of the tragic events of the conflict. Thus we were required to attend sessions in which we were told about the sequence of events in the Pacific war and its litany of atrocities, ending with the final apocalyptic bombing of Japan which had resulted in the capitulation of the Empire of the Rising Sun. And we knew nothing about the atomic bomb!

Loud-speakers had been set up all around the

these drops included an unusual delivery and this bears recounting here.

A flying fortress released over the camp a multitude of brown paper

butterflies on which was written something to this effect: 'Prisoners of War! The American government has decided to take care of you! Here is the menu for your next meal: Tomato soup; Tinned ham and Princess beans; Peach Melba for dessert.' Since these wondrous things did not seem to follow from the sky, this seemed to us to be inappropriate. Or was it just black humour?

Whatever it was, at the request of the authorities we put down white strips as markers around some of the nearby fields to show where the drops should be made. We had little experience of such matters, but then neither had the pilots of the flying fortresses who were better trained in dropping bombs than food! We then waited lined up like good boys along the marker strips! You could hear the roar of these huge planes long before they arrived. At the right moment the holds opened and out of these gaping bellies came metal canisters filled with tinned food, hanging in bunches from the parachutes. Were these canisters too heavy, or were the straps not fixed properly? In any case, some of them came away from the parachutes, hurtled down, and hit the ground close to us just like real bombs. As they landed the bottoms burst and we were



レンゴクグンホリヨへ

ALLIED PRISONERS

The JAPANESE Government has surrendered. You will be evacuated by ALLIED NATIONS forces as soon as possible.

Until that time your present supplies will be augmented by air-drop of U.S. food, clothing and medicines. The first drop of these items will arrive within one (1) or two (2) hours.

Clothing will be dropped in standard packs for units of 50 or 500 men. Bundle markings, contents and allowances per man are as follows:

BUNDLE MARKINGS				BUNDLE MARKINGS			
50 MAN PACK	500 MAN PACK	CONTENTS	ALLOWANCES PER MAN	50 MAN PACK	500 MAN PACK	CONTENTS	ALLOWANCES PER MAN
A	3	Drawers	2	B	10	Laces, shoe	1
A	1-2	Undershirt	2	A	11	Kit, sewing	1
B	22	Socks (pr)	2	C	31	Soap, toilet	1
A	4-5	Shirt	1	C	4-5	Razor	1
A	7-9	Trousers	1	C	4-5	Blades, razor	10
C	25-30	Jacket, field	1	C	10	Brush, tooth	1
A	10	Belt, web, waist	1	B	31	Paste, tooth	1
A	11	Capt. H.B.T.	1	C	10	Comb	1
B	12-21	Shoes (pr)	1	B	32	Shaving cream	1
A	1-2	Handkerchiefs	3	C	12-21	Powder (insecticide)	1
C	32-34	Towel	1				

There will be instructions with the food and medicine for their use and distribution.

CAUTION

DO NOT OVERTREAT OR OVERMEDICATE FOLLOW DIRECTIONS

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FEEDING 100 MEN

To feed 100 men for the first three (3) days, the following blocks (individual bundles dropped) will be assembled:

3 Blocks No. 1 (Each Contains)	1 Block No. 5 (Each Contains)	1 Block No. 3 (Each Contains)
2 Cases, Soup, Can	1 Case Soup, Dehd	1 Case Candy
1 Cases Fruit Juice	1 Case Veg. Purée	1 Case Gum
1 Case Accessory Pack	1 Case Bouillon	1 Case Cigarettes
	1 Case Hosp Supplies	1 Case Matches
	1 Case Vitamin Tablets	
3 Blocks No. 2 (Each Contains)	1 Block No. 7 (Each Contains)	1 Block No. 10 (Each Contains)
3 Cases "C" Rations	1 Case Nescafe	3 Cases Fruit
1 Case Hosp Supplies	1 Case Sugar	2 Cases Juice
2 Cases Fruit	1 Case Milk	
	1 Case Cocoa	

camp and these put out music all day long. Every morning at 7 a.m. we were awakened by the strains of

**Oh what a beautiful morning,
Oh what a beautiful day.
I've got a wonderful feeling,
Everything's going my way...**

It was not long before we had had enough of being dragged out of our sleep so very bright and early. The more so as one fine morning an absent-minded liberator put the record on at 6 a.m!

The captain charged with our reeducation was somewhat lacking in humour. During one evening's entertainment with a group of young folk who were used to putting on campfire sketches we gently depicted him as a donkey: he took the point...

During this period, the intelligence staff continued its work. Each ex-prisoner had to be interviewed by the G2 staff. You had to answer a whole series of questions before being passed fit for repatriation. No-one escaped from this interrogation. Some of us were worked over more thoroughly than the others because of their antisocial behaviour or because their attitude to our guards was too friendly...

Such slowness and shilly-shallying seemed to us hardly necessary and was delaying our getting back to work from which we had already been missing for a good thirty months. The young especially were chafing at the bit. Two of them, who couldn't take any more of it, had stealthily left camp and were following the railway line to get to Tsingtao on foot, a distance of some 100 km. They were caught three kilometres down the line and brought back to camp, sheepish and discomfited.

Finally, towards the end of September, a first contingent was evacuated by lorry to Tsingtao. As for us, we had to mark time until the 17th of October 1945, when we left camp in a lorry which took us to the airfield. There a Douglas DC 47, fitted with sideways-on metal seats, took us to Peking, fifty at a time. This was the only way to empty the camp: the railway and the roads were blocked or cut by the communist army. A civil war was beginning...

Further reading :

A SUCCESSFUL GETAWAY

All those who were in Weihsien prison camp know that Tipton and Hummel had made an evasion during the month of June 1944, but what they don't know, is

how it was prepared and how, finally, it succeeded. I will try to give them that complementary information.

For a few young and dynamic prisoners who didn't have family responsibilities, evading camp was a constant dream. I was one of them. It was also a means to lessen the monotony of the camp days.

Well, to do so, there were a few conditions to respect. Firstly, absolute secrecy was a major clause. Father de Jaegher, who was one of those young and dynamic elements, and with whom I shared the same room, had the same desire of evasion. We however never spoke about it.

Every one of us, without the knowing of the others, was trying to put up a contact with a Chinese from the outside. That was the second condition to accomplish: to find a serious arrangement with a Chinese from the exterior who sometimes came into camp. This service would have to be well paid for, and that would be done by Larry Tipton, often seen with Father de Jaegher and who had a few gold bars, a necessity for the transaction.

Tipton and R. de Jaegher were often seen in the mornings, walking to and fro on the sports field pretending to improve their Chinese language while, in fact, they were exercising their muscles for the long walks they would have to make, once outside. That was during the winter period of 1943-44.

Meanwhile, R. de Jaegher kept on trying to establish a contact with the cesspool coolies that came daily to empty the prisoners' latrines. As for myself, I was lucky enough to meet and make friends with a Chinese carter bringing the vegetables into camp. I talked about it to R. de Jaegher, and we decided that I could maybe try something about it. As my Chinese friend seemed trustworthy and quite serious, we promised him a good reward by the means of Larry Tipton's gold bars. That was during the months of March-April, 1944.

One day, my Chinese contact brought me a written message: "our plan is well established, and on the chosen day, we would be met and provided with donkeys or mules on a road boarded by trees, situated beyond the valley at the North-East end of the camp. We were to have a little flag with the mention: "welcome to our foreign friends". We hoped to travel by night so as to reach a safe enough point by the following day.

We had now to select the date. We had observed the moon and decided to choose a night when the moon would rise after midnight, which would ease our moving about. Don't forget that in those days, there was no street lighting. That got us in the whereabouts of the 10th of June.

In the meantime, Father de Jaegher had had difficulties with our immediate ecclesiastic superior in camp,

Father Rutherford. He had been informed of our project by another Father, (N.W.), and had pronounced an ecclesiastic sanction in the terms of: "suspensus a divinis" if ever he left the camp. He had to, he said, because it was vital to avoid the eventual reprisals by our Japanese captors towards the Christian prisoners in camp.

Tipton was very disappointed. He absolutely wanted to leave the camp with a missionary. You must know, that in those days, local churches easily welcomed the travelling missionaries.

Father de Jaegher told me of this interdiction, and it was agreed between us that I would take his place. Alas, whilst sitting on my bed, and while, in great secrecy, I was confectioning my back sac, my colleague, Father N.W. saw me doing so and quickly concluded that I was going to take Father de Jaeger's place in the escapade. He told so to Father Rutherford who called for me and pronounced the same banning as he had to R. de Jaegher.

A hasty meeting was held, and we decided that Tipton would ask Hummel to take our place. He immediately accepted which allowed us to keep the schedule previously established for the getaway.

Now, we had to choose the place and the exact time such as to involve the smallest amount of people and however succeed in our task. As for the place of the breakthrough, we quickly found complicity at the end of an alley (in the vicinity of n°10) where we hid a ladder, absolutely necessary to go over the boundary wall high of more or less 2.40 meters. In those days, on the other side of the wall, there was just a fence with 6 to 7 barbed wires of which the uppermost was electrified. We believed that the current was put on that wire only after 10 P.M., which was curfew time, and also the moment when a Japanese guard switched off all the lights in our compound for the night. We weren't sure about that and told the escapees to wear rubber-soled shoes and rather put their feet on the big porcelain isolators while climbing over the fence.

We had also to make sure that there were no Japanese guards around. On the chosen night, our group of 6 or 7 friends were all in place and watching in the different alleys in order to get the ladder in place, against the wall. The time was then, 9.30 P.M. and in less than 5 minutes, Tipton and Hummel were beyond the wall and over the fence.

We were, however, very anxious to avoid any mishaps, and had previously arranged with them for a recuperation procedure if ever they missed the "contact" at the scheduled location. That is why, between 6 and 7 in the morning, the following day, I had to be waiting for them near the boundary limits not very far away from our bloc n°56 at a place, behind the wall that was

invisible from the watch towers. I hid myself just behind the morgue ready with a thick strong rope. If ever I heard the cry of the owl, I had to thrust the rope over the wall to help them back into the compound.

You can easily understand that on that particular night, we didn't sleep very much and that I sighed with relief after 7 o'clock in the morning when I got out of my hiding place just behind the morgue.

Now, we had to give the best possible chances to our two escapees in order to let them get away as far as possible from the camp. As we know, the Japs made a roll call every morning at 8 o'clock. At that precise moment we all had to stand in a row in front of our respective blocks and in the order of our badge-numbers. Tipton lived with us, on the first floor. Actually, it was Mc. Laren who was responsible for us towards the Japanese Commandant. I secretly informed Mc Laren of our projects and arranged with him that as warden of our bloc, I would give the alert as late as possible. At the roll call, I would simply say that Tipton was already working in the kitchen. It is only around 10 o'clock that morning, that I mentioned Tipton's absence to Mc Laren. He then asked me, in the presence of the camp's Commandant, to go and make sure that he was not in the toilets or anywhere else. The same thing happened for the missing of Hummel. While I was going all over camp to search for Tipton, the rumour spread fast, and at about 11, I came back empty-handed, and informed the irritated Commandant. He was very sure of himself and absolutely certain to recapture the escapees. As a precautionary measure, he put all the escapees' room-mates under room arrest. Even, days after that, and from time to time, they had us rounded up in the middle of the night and guarded by armed Japs.

As for the escapees, they rapidly managed to reach the Chinese guerrilla forces and shared their lives with them for 14 months. They managed to smuggle a radio, in small parts, as well as medicines for the hospital and supplements of flour.

It is only the day after the parachutes came with the Americans that we saw, one morning, our two escapees all tanned by the sun and in excellent health.

CHEER-UP

With the coming of the first winter in camp, we experienced the monotony of the long, endless evenings. The Sun was more generous than in Europe though, but it went down early and the long cold evenings began without radio and without TV. Television didn't even exist in those remote days!

For all those who had nothing special to do, the only distractions available were; reading of books, walking around, or visiting friends and neighbours. As for book

reading, we had a small library with various books brought into camp by the different groups of prisoners that came from Peking or Tientsin or elsewhere. There wasn't a fantastic choice, but, I must however tell you that I read a great deal of books all about life in China and also about Chinese history.

Besides reading, the few possible occupations, were visiting friends and neighbours, singing and theatre activities.

About visiting: we had to find enough space to greet our friends in the little rooms where the only suitable seat was the bed next to the one you were already sitting on. There was always somebody around to listen to whatever confidence that you might be telling. That was why those visits were very rare, rather brief and had, for major purposes, the request of a favour.

As time went on and people got to know each other better, and becoming friendlier, it was customary to have birthday parties. The Mothers did marvels in the baking of cookies without eggs or butter!

We had concerts.

Those concerts, in the "sing-song" style were performed two or three times every winter and gave a little joy and beauty in our otherwise boring existence. Those concerts and recitals, of course, had to be meticulously prepared and we used and abused our local artists' talents. Percy Glee (?) was one of those precious artists. He was an excellent pianist and sung with the wonderful voice of a tenor. He was also able to conduct a choir. Thanks to that, we became more familiar with English folk music, folk songs, as well as with Negro spirituals. The song that was highest in rank on the hit parade during those days was: "God Bless America", it was a song that warmed up our spirits and pride and gave us the energy to go on. Everybody learned the words.

We had plays.

Theatre had no lack of artists and more than once did the little groups of our younger folks prepare their performances with great care and meticulousness.

They recited poems or performed in short plays. Some even adventured themselves in giving a full recital.

But the must, was by no contest, the performance of the Bernard Shaw's classic, "Androcles and the Lion". I must tell you about that, for I was closely involved in the adventure. The promoter and director of the play, lived in the same bloc as mine, but on the first floor. His name was Arthur P. and shared a room with Larry Tipton. He was a fine and distinguished Englishman, not very tall, with a soft voice and intelligent conversation. We were neighbours, and as "warden" of Bloc n° 56 I

often had the opportunity of talking to him without ever really being his friend for as much. That is why he hesitatingly asked me - maybe due to my sacerdotal condition - that he allowed himself to take the risk to invite me to take a part in his project, as well as Father Palmers, to play the role of a Roman soldier!! I re-assured him of our complete collaboration. That is the reason why I still have an accurate memory of my Roman soldier outfit. It had been carefully assembled at the repair-shop by the means of many tin cans that had been flattened and assembled together to finally take the shape of a helmet and a breastplate that fit us perfectly. To give more reality to the looks of our legs and arms that were of course all white, we painted them with potassium permanganate that got us all bronzed up. For only a few days though.

Nero appeared in all his majesty with his laurel crown and draped in a white cloth surrounded closely by his courtesans chosen amongst the prettiest women of the camp, dressed in green and rose gowns confectioned by the means of old curtains. Two gladiators armed with nets were trying to hold Androcles as their prisoner.

The show was a great success and we even had to do an "encore" to be able to satisfy all those who wanted to see it. A few weeks later, when the American parachutists came into camp we even had the honour to perform the play once again for them.

Have I ever been afraid in camp ?

As an answer to Mary Previte's question, I believe that once or twice, I feared reprisals from the Japanese guards, and for that, yes, I was afraid that something nasty could happen to me. I specially remember this little adventure that finally had a favourable outcome though it could have sent me directly to jail for several days if ever I got caught red handed.

You all know of the food shortage problems and how much we suffered from the lack of primary food necessities such as, oil, eggs and sugar. Sugar was in great demand by the children's parents who tried getting small provisions through the black market. We, adults, were quite accustomed to the shortage of sugar.

That is the reason why my friend C.B. made an inquiry to find out where exactly the Japanese stored the bags of sugar. In precisely which house in the compound it was kept, and when he finally had this valuable information, he decided to act immediately.

To act quickly, he needed an accomplice to watch our side of the compound wall while he was on the other side, in the Japanese quarters, rigorously reserved to the Japanese and them alone. Another problem to resolve, was the hiding of the precious sugar before

transferring it into little bags for the few families who had asked for it.

Just outside our quarters, (bloc n°56) there was, in a small garden, a dry well which must have been dug in the past years for keeping vegetables during the winters. That was an ideal place for our sugar. Safe and discreet.

So, on one autumn evening when darkness fell around us, my friend made a rendezvous with me near the wall, just behind the Japanese accommodations. I was watching while he was on the other side. I walked to and fro, trying to make believe I was just a passer by. After what seemed to be a long time, I saw a head emerging just above the wall, and all of a sudden I had in my arms, a whole bag of sugar of 10 kilos. It was quickly hidden in an old jacket and off we went to bloc n°56 to hide, the old jacket with the sugar in the well. We didn't meet anybody on the way.

The following days, C.B. made a few nightly visits to our little garden, taking in tiny bags, small amounts of the precious sugar to those who needed it.

I would like to add a comment about "scrounging" in camp. You can only imagine how we felt, as civilians, rounded-up, imprisoned behind walls and guarded by armed Japanese soldiers. To pinch away something from them was not an act of stealing, it was just a correct return of what they had taken from us.

MAIN SWITCH

During the second winter in camp, we the 12 fathers who remained in camp, were living in block 56.



We used to celebrate mass in the early morning, but that was before the council of 1965 authorizing us to celebrate together in one mass. So at that time we needed around one hour and a half to do so, before going to our daily occupations. Consequently we needed light around 6,30 a.m. The main switch for electricity was located in a cabin situated 50 yards behind our block. While watching the going off the Japa-



nese guard we had noted that one of them came early in the morning to give light to our quarters at 7 a.m.

Being in need of light before that time, Father Palmers and T decided to go to the cabin which door usually was left half open and to put the switch on in order to give light to the whole camp.

For a few weeks, that worked all right, one day father Palmers did the work, the next day it was my turn. Everything went smoothly till that early morning when T saw father Palmers puffing coming back to our block in a hurry, telling that the Japs were after him. In fact, a little later they came to our block requesting

to get the culprit. Father Palmers was taken to the houseguard in the entrance of the camp. The guards started to yell at him and wanted to torture him. Father Palmers remained stoïque. They put chopsticks between his fingers, and while pressing the whole hand, were rageously moving the chopsticks between his fingers.

After that they took him to the Jail where he had to stay one or two days. Since that day, we never got light before seven a.m., sharp. There was no more volunteer to try another attempt.

THE ITALIANS ARE COMING,

For a few weeks already, sometime near the end of the year 1943, we learned of the imminent arrival of a

new group of prisoners without exactly knowing their precise identity.

The Japanese had to make space for them, and to do so, they had already emptied all the rooms (bloc-43) situated alongside the North wall, not very far away from the guardroom near the entrance as well as near a more important bloc, n°44 and kitchen number III. The whole zone thus delimited was already secured by interior brick walls and the only thing left to do, was the making of two doors to lock the access, a job quickly done by the Japanese.

We found out, soon enough, that the scheduled arrivals into our compound, would be a group of a hundred Italians from Shanghai.

We must remember that in those days, the Italians had surrendered in Europe and that they were no more part of the Axis. Moreover, their economic interests in Shanghai were enormous (the real-estate business, navigation companies, banks etc.) and by interning the Italian company directors and owners, the Japanese could take over all those interests for themselves in the name of their Emperor, Hiro-Hito.

The great dilemma for us, was ; what behaviour would we choose to have regarding our new neighbours and we must also admit to say : our "enemies".

We were already behind the walls for 9 months now, and it was important, we thought, to make no difference between ourselves because they were prisoners, just as we were.

Therefore, it was not long until we made our decision to welcome them and help them to settle down into their new quarters. As soon as evening came, that day, Father Palmers and I jumped over the wall (which wasn't as high as the camp's boundary walls) and made our first contacts with the eldest of them. That is how we met with the Travella. He was an important banker in Shanghai and his wife was of American birth, the Gervasi family of whom the wife was of Belgian origin, the Rocco, with their three or four children and a few other families as well.

All those people had been accustomed to easy life with Chinese domestic personnel, and seemed to be completely helpless about their present situation. We tried to help them the best we could with all the experience we had as "elderly" prison-

ers and built for the Travella family, the same evening, a little brick stove just outside their prison cell so they could begin cooking their ample provisions of canned food they brought with them in their luggage. The first item to benefit of the brick stove, on the second evening, was a tin of Maxwell grinded coffee. They insisted in making us taste the good coffee they had brought over with them. As we hadn't drank coffee since the beginning of our imprisonment in Weihsien, we had become very vulnerable to caffeine and that is why we didn't sleep at all that night after returning to our lodgings in block-56.

A few weeks passed, and permission was finally granted by the Japanese Commandant to open the two doors communicating with the rest of the compound. The Italian prisoners were so grateful of what we had done for them, that, after the war had ended, we received a letter from the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, thanking us for what we had done. .

Louvain-La-Neuve, January, 6th 2003

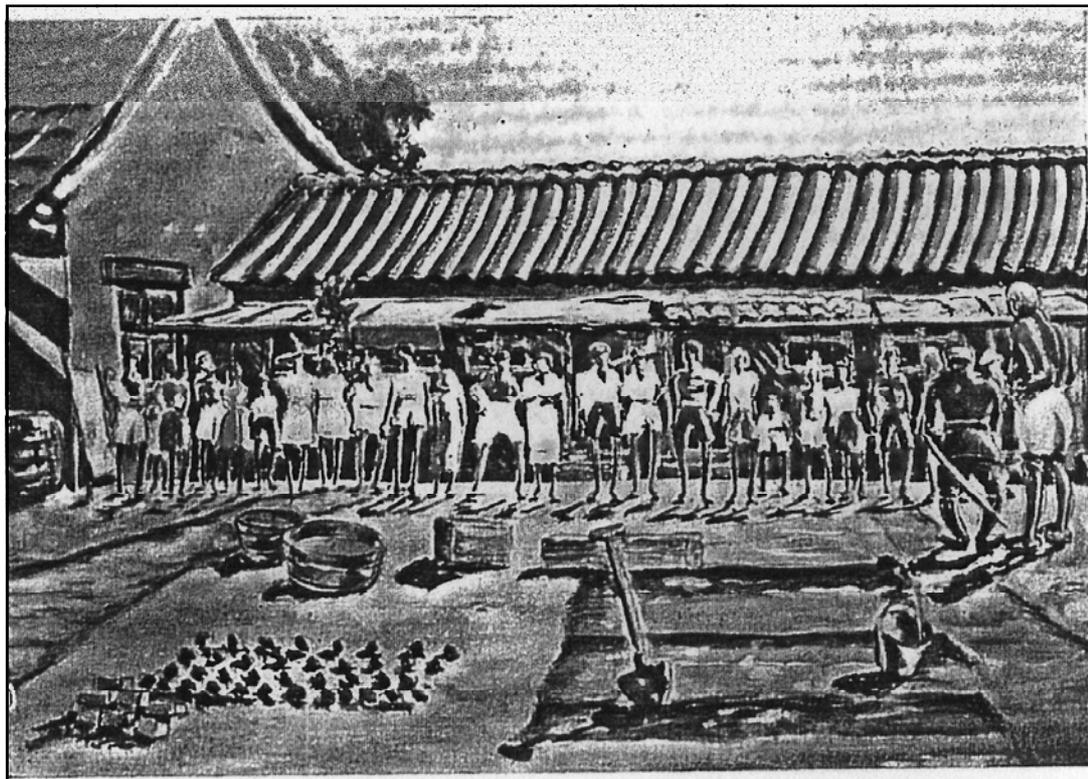
Father Hanquet.

Secret Brigade:

Recently, Mary Previte helped us to remember how we were liberated by a team of seven "angels" composed of 5 Americans, 1 Nisei and a young Chinese who served as an interpreter and who parachute-jumped for the first time on this particular mission.

As already told by many of you, and in spite of the armed guard standing at the entrance of the camp, we forced the gate and rushed into the fields out of the camp in order to cheer and congratulate our rescuers.

Major Staiger was in charge of the team. He had al-



ready put his harness and parachute aside and was standing on top of a mound when we first saw him. This mound was a tomb. For centuries, the Chinese used to bury their ancestors in the fields and they built a mound to mark the place of the burial. The highest mound was assigned to the oldest ancestor.

Major Staiger accepted our cheers but very soon, wisely said: "Please gather next to this tomb, all the parachutes with their loads and also, bring here the men who had jumped with their white silk parachutes. About more or less an hour later, everything was ready and we hoisted the seven men on our shoulders as, of course, we wanted to honour them as our heroes. When we approached the walls of the camp, Staiger gave us the order to let them down so that they could encounter the captain of the camp and the guards who were watching us coming.

This was a wise measure, since the guards were all armed and our rescuers did not know at that moment what the Japanese's reaction would be in regard to this particular situation.

As I re-entered the camp on my own I met two friends who were standing alongside the wall ready to defend us in case of a violent Japanese reaction. They were Roy Chu and Wade. Both had an axe in their hands, and they had put their red armbands to be recognised. Only then, did I discover that a group of bachelors in the camp had organized a secret brigade to protect us from the Japanese, in case they would start their plan to exterminate us all.

Fortunately this did not happen. Everything went smoothly when the rescue team met the guards. Both groups received instructions not to fight and we would sleep in peace during the next two months that we had to stay in camp, allowing intelligence officers to screen the past history of every one of us and to finally be able to evacuate my group to Peking by a plane, a C-46, on October 17th, 1945.

First Letter Home after Liberation

Translated by Albert de Zutter

For months, or even years, we have had to keep our thoughts, our reactions and our feelings to ourselves. As for me, I have been deprived of those familial contacts that united us so pleasantly before the wars in various countries completely broke the bonds that embraced us and sent me to this concentration camp for two-and-a-half years. Only a few messages from the Red Cross and several letters from Albert's brother-in-law were able to reach me. For me that meant I had to give up thinking in terms of family – "a letter will come tomorrow"; "in six days I must write to Albert"; "this or that niece is making her first communion, or that sister is getting married," etc. I was carried off to a camp

where I knew no one except for the other "auxiliaries" interned with me, and after two years and more I do not regret the experience even though it has distanced me from you. (Translator's note: Father Hanquet was a member of the Societe Auxiliaires des Missions, the Society of Missionary Auxiliaries, or SAM.)

Much later I would like to tell you many details about our life during these 30 months, and I think that I will do it best by answering your questions. In any case, I would be able to talk for hours or write books about the lives we led here. But, on the whole, the sum of good memories, good strokes of luck and remarkable adventures overshadows the bad experiences. To help you become acquainted with them I have asked a woman connected with the mines at Kailan, who was returning (to Belgium) with her children to see her mother, to pay you a visit. Madame Brouet, that's her name, has a sister living in Chaudfontaine. She is not religious and does not hide the fact that she is returning to Belgium to seek a divorce so she can marry an English engineer with whom she has been living in the camp. But that does not affect the fact that she knows much about camp life and that is what will interest you.

So, before leaving this place, I would like to let you know some of the impressions that have come to mind as I sat saying my breviary on this bench from which I am writing you (excuse the corrections). We lived in such a mixture of languages – English, Chinese, French – that I sometimes forget my grammar, even though I taught it for seven or eight hours a day for two years to young Belgians, Britons, Americans and others!

I am seated against the south wall of the camp, formerly topped with electric wire which we carefully destroyed when the Americans arrived (that felt too much like prison). Behind that wall was a double row of barbed wire, some chevaux de frise (spikes) and a trench of three meters completed the penitentiary installations. All these have started to disappear thanks to the dexterity of the Chinese who make off with all wooden things and make money from whatever. Facing me is the hospital, the good hospital of the Presbyterian mission, supported and directed by our nurses and doctors, and which contributed to the maintenance of health among the internees, and the avoidance of epidemics. I never had to be a patient in it; I only made monthly visits to the dentist and occasionally to the doctor. The hospital is a big building in the form of a cross, with a wing for men and women with 15 beds each, an operating room, a pharmacy, etc. The two upper floors were occupied by priests up until two years ago when they were concentrated in their monasteries at Peking, and later by a missionary school from Chefoo which had been transferred here, including the entire staff and all the pupils.

Between the hospital and my bench is a tennis court. I spent many pleasant hours there with young and old to maintain bodily condition and morale. In the summer there were so many players that one had to be adroit to claim the court for more than three hours a week. But speak of the rise and fall of Byzantium – I believe we have not played any real matches since the Americans arrived. We used to have some great tournaments as we had some very good players of which one of the best – from America – was part of the U.S. Davis Cup team at Deauville just before the war.

On my right, between the hospital and the east wall of the camp, there is not a lot of space nor much vegetation, but nevertheless we held many a grand Scout function there and often operated a very profitable “Black Market,” most of all during the first months before the prison-like installations were so redoubtable and well coordinated. As the song lyrics said in the renowned musical revue in which 50 missionary priests went on-stage in shirts and white pants to entertain the public, everything passed over the wall: eggs, honey, sugar, soap, peanut oil and even, at times, pork quarters. In those good old days in our first months here, priests were the main specialists in these matters, due to a mixture of audacity and absence of commercial aspirations. To divide the goods and facilitate accountability in case of loss, each room, involved stored one or two items – some kept tobacco, eggs, sugar, we had the oil and jars of jam and sometimes alcohol as well.

At times the Japanese organized raids. It was amusing to see merchandise in garbage pails or basins covered with towels as though one was going to the showers, being handed out of rear windows and other expedients. The penalty for getting caught was several days of solitary confinement among several of us, a fate that I escaped.

That wall, did we not study it trying to discover its weaknesses? In April last year, it became an obsession, and the monotony of a life of imprisonment led me to the decision to take flight as soon as possible. Alone at first, then with an Englishman and an American and Father Albert de Jaegher, we made various contacts among the Chinese who occasionally entered the camp, and finally all was arranged for the end of May. But, alas, we had a priest, Father Rutherford, appointed by the Apostolic Delegate to have jurisdiction over the other priests for the duration of our imprisonment. At the last minute he got wind of the affair and threatened us with suspension. He said if we carried out our plan there would be reprisals against the Catholic people in the camp. We priests had to heed his warning, but the other two involved in the plan jumped the wall one evening and joined a guerilla band in the area.

They stayed in contact with us and sent us news, medicines, etc., and three days after the arrival of the American parachutists they came back to the camp triumphantly, enraging the Japanese who were still guarding the camp (under American supervision). Later on if I have the time I will tell you the story in detail.

On the other side of the hospital, to the west, I see our house – six rooms at ground level and six rooms above them plus a veranda. When I say rooms I am talking about a space of 3 meters by 2.5 meters. Twenty-five of us lived in that house, the priests on the ground floor and several men above us. As each house or building was required to have someone in charge, I was given the duty of staying in contact with the authorities on issues of administration, the canteen, of banking and of roll call twice a day conducted by the Japanese. South of the house we had cultivated a patch of land to grow tomatoes, corn and carrots, and especially flowers around the edges. Because last year was not very fruitful, except for the flowers, and maintaining and watering the garden required a huge amount of work, this year I left the plot to some neighbors who were seriously focused on

growing tomatoes, and they didn't do too badly. As for me, I was more absorbed in teaching classes, so I was satisfied with the arrangement.

And I could go on for hours talking to you about these little details which made up our life here, but that would take too long. What is interesting to note today is the difference between the past and the present. We are still in the camp even though on August 17 six young Americans parachuted down at the risk of their lives to occupy the camp and prepare our liberation. (Later on, ask me to write you about that memorable day!) Transportation difficulties have kept us here. Only one group of 580 left for Tsingtao two weeks ago, and they will be repatriated by ships that are arriving these days. Last night it was announced that the second group would leave on Monday and my group on Wednesday. With the departure of those groups to Peking and Tientsin, involving the 900 remaining internees, the camp will be empty and will be turned over to three Presbyterian missionaries who will stay on.

Two loudspeakers broadcast music four or five hours a day, we have English and American magazines and pictorials available to us, and starting three days ago we have motion pictures every evening. This evening we will have a program consisting of news and films about the war. News also arrives regularly, so we no longer feel isolated. We can leave the camp during daylight hours and go to the town 30 minutes from here.

For the last eight days I have gone out to walk in the countryside, swim in the river, chat with the Chinese peasants and above all to get some air. I am feeling

much better now, the food is much better, we have received magnificent bundles from the Americans, arriving in B-29s from Okinawa (various meats, cigarettes, chocolate, impressively packaged biscuits). My departure date is in sight and I feel sure that this camp experience is truly ending and that my return to my mission is near.

Friday, October 12:

China is still China, and all the well-laid plans have been demolished in the space of a few hours! Instead of being in a hotel in Tsingtao, as I expected, I am seated on the same bench from where I wrote last week. What happened? Nothing unusual for those of us who have lived in China for some time. The railroad was destroyed in 17 places the night of Sunday to Monday by the Communists, who form a majority in the province. For 15 days they had ceased their attacks following face-to-face secret contacts, and left the rail-line intact (without having made an agreement, they had implicitly given us a chance to evacuate). But our authorities were too engrossed in preparing the return to Tsingtao and neglected to take account of the guerillas. That cost them dearly, because now the only way to evacuate us is to fly us directly to Peking and Tientsin by airplane. We might have been able to go by train from here to Tsinan and north from there, but the railroad is cut in many places on that route as well. In the end, the American colonel in charge announced just before the motion picture that on Sunday or thereabouts they would start transporting us by air, and that the Peking contingent (we) would be the first to go. Let's hope that at that time the airfield, which is five kilometres from here, will not have been destroyed by the guerrillas.

While we wait we pass the time as best we can. On the 10th, a Chinese holiday, I inspected Chinese troops. As I was by chance the only foreigner present, and I knew several high-ranking officers who came to the camp, I found myself being led away in American uniform (received by air drop from Okinawa) at the side of the general of Tjintao who commands 30,000 men in the region, and who had 2,000 of them passing in review that day. I had to laugh momentarily, but I think I did just as well as an American colonel or captain.

Yesterday some of us spent three hours visiting the small arsenals in town. They make a copy of the Skoda sub-machine guns, rifles to which a bayonet can be attached, grenades, mortars and shells, and it was very interesting to see what they could do with very limited equipment. Two years ago these Chinese troops were stationed in the mountains where they made these same arms, but they had to surrender to the Japanese on finding themselves cornered between the Commu-

nists and the Japanese. Since then they were confined to the area and are now awaiting the arrival of the Nationalist troops to rejoin them. That is one of the aspects of the military situation in China.

According to news we have received, the first group of evacuees from this camp, among whom was (Father) Albert Palmers, have left Tsingtao for Europe or America via Shanghai, where Albert will disembark to return to Nanking. An Australian war correspondent who flew in by airplane for a day told us that there was a confrontation in the House of Commons regarding our camp because we were the last to be evacuated. It was interesting to listen to him as he witnessed the occupation of Japan, but the Americans were afraid that he would talk too much, and after a one-day stay they vigorously advised him to return to Tsingtao! That's a pity, because he was very interesting and he wanted to study at greater depth the issue of China which, he said, is one of the most important.

October 19, 1945

I am finishing this letter in Peking where we arrived by airplane on Tuesday after a trip of two hours. All went very well. Our baggage arrived soon after, and for now we are to be fed by the American army for the next 30 days. As we have also received some clothing and some money, we want for nothing. I am living with the Franciscans among whom I have quite a few friends, but I often go to see Paul Gilson where there are Auxiliaires. I think that I will return to the missions in about two weeks. The railways are not yet very regular and the region is not very calm, but I think I will be able to get there just the same.

My dear mother, on arriving here I received a letter from Albert (Translator's note: Father Hanquet's twin brother) and one from Therese (his sister) from the end of October 1944, which gave me enormous pleasure as these letters gave me details of the sorrowful events of which I had received only the bare minimum of news. You know how we had been of one mind and heart in our life's focus, in our sorrows and in our joys. Let us be even more so now that I am to resume my missionary calling. I long to receive news of you regularly, and I am eager to re-establish contact with everyone.

I will go momentarily to the American Red Cross to try to have them get this letter to Delvaux who is still in Chungking. He will have the means to reach you, as the mail across Russia yields nothing.

I kiss you, dear mother, as well as all my brothers and sisters, brothers and sisters in law, nephews and nieces, all of whom I bless with all my heart.

E. Hanquet