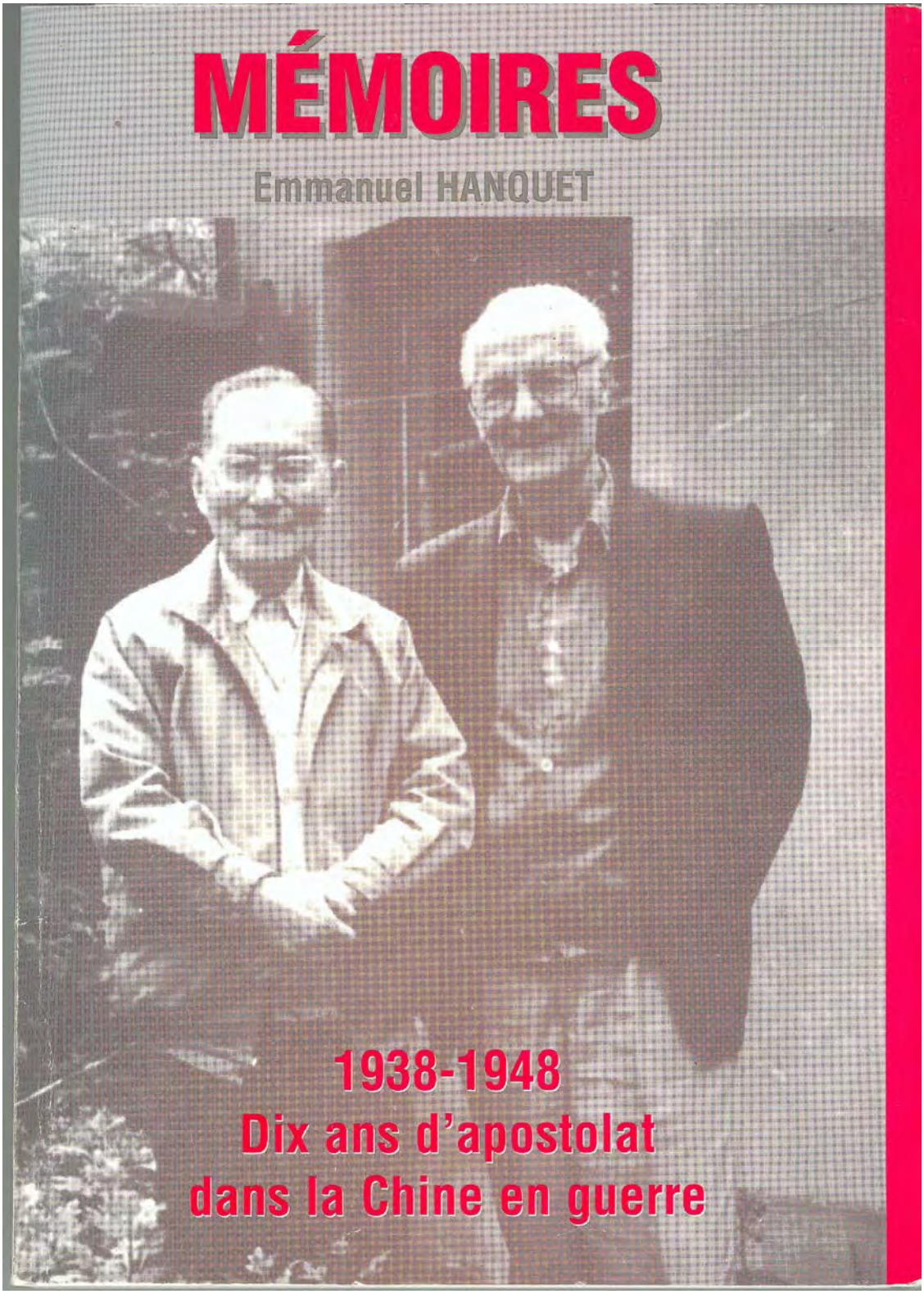

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Je souhaite à tous mes proches, membres de ma famille et amis de longue date, de trouver dans ces pages quelques matières à réflexion et à croissance.

Emmanuel Hanquet

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PRÉLIMINAIRE.

UN BREF SURVOL DE L'HISTOIRE DE CHINE, DE 1911 À 1945

Dynasties chinoises... Impératrice Tse-Xi, Le dernier empereur- dont le film a été projeté il y a peu sur nos écrans - ont ravivé la curiosité et l'intérêt pour cet immense pays d'un milliard cent millions d'habitants.

Comment y voir clair ?

Tâchons de résumer la situation telle qu'elle se présente lorsque j'arrive à Pékin en janvier 1939.

L'empire chinois s'est écroulé en 1911. Le dernier em-

pereur est encore un enfant. Il deviendra empereur fantoche dans les provinces du Nord-Est de la Chine, appelée par les Japonais le Mandchukuo (Mandchourie) lorsque ces derniers s'en emparent en 1931.

Dans une république proclamée en 1911 et qui se cherche, apparaît un penseur, dont beaucoup se réclameront. Il sera appelé le Père de la République : c'est Sun Yat-Sen. Son beau-frère, Tchang Kai-Shek, s'efforcera pendant quinze ans de former des troupes et des cadres pour unifier le pays en proie aux luttes intestines dans beaucoup de provinces. Les chefs locaux, surnommés les seigneurs de la guerre, seront progressivement ralliés au gouvernement national, mais non sans peine.

Dans la province du Kiangsi, au centre de la Chine, les communistes chinois, dès 1926, établissent leur autorité sur quinze bases rurales du Chingkangchan. Ils officialisent leur occupation en novembre 1931.

Le gouvernement national les forcera à abandonner ces bases et commencera alors pour eux ce qui fut appelé la longue marche, en octobre 1934.

Partis près de cent mille, emmenant avec eux femmes et enfants, ils ne seront plus que trente mille en janvier 1935 à Tsounyi, où Mao tentera de regrouper ses forces avant de pénétrer au Sse-Chuen. Mais il leur faudra encore traverser des dizaines de chaînes de montagnes, perdre quantité de vies humaines dans des marais impraticables et, lorsqu'ils atteindront le Shensi et leur future base de Yenan, ils ne seront plus que dix mille environ, tous amaigris et dépenaillés. Parmi eux, les principaux chefs du régime communiste : Mao Tse-Tung, Chu-Teh, Chou En-Lai et Lin-Piao.

Dans le sud du Shensi, à Sian, Tchang Kai-Shek est convié par un de ses généraux, Chang Hsueh-Liang, en vue de sceller l'union sacrée de résistance aux Japonais. En réalité, il est victime d'un complot des Rouges qui visent à obtenir le droit de posséder leur propre armée. Nous sommes en décembre 1936. Tchang est fait prisonnier pendant deux longues semaines. Il doit céder. Les Rouges en profiteront pour renforcer leur autorité sur les provinces du Nord-Ouest de la Chine, grâce à leur 8ème Armée, nouvellement formée.

Le 7 juillet 1937, un combat mineur entre soldats chinois et japonais au sud de Pékin va dégénérer en une guerre meurtrière qui durera huit ans.

À la fin du conflit, les Japonais comptaient encore quatre millions et demi de soldats et deux mille sept cents avions, tandis que le gouvernement chinois ne possédait plus qu'un million sept cent mille hommes et six cents avions.

Toutefois les Japonais, qui avaient occupé toute la Chine des plaines et détenaient tout un réseau de communications dans certaines régions intérieures, furent contraints de capituler le 15 août 1945 après les bombardements atomiques de Hiroshima et Nagazaki.

Pour Tchang Kai-Shek et ses troupes, il s'agissait maintenant d'une lutte de vitesse afin d'occuper Pékin et le Nord de la Chine avant les troupes communistes.

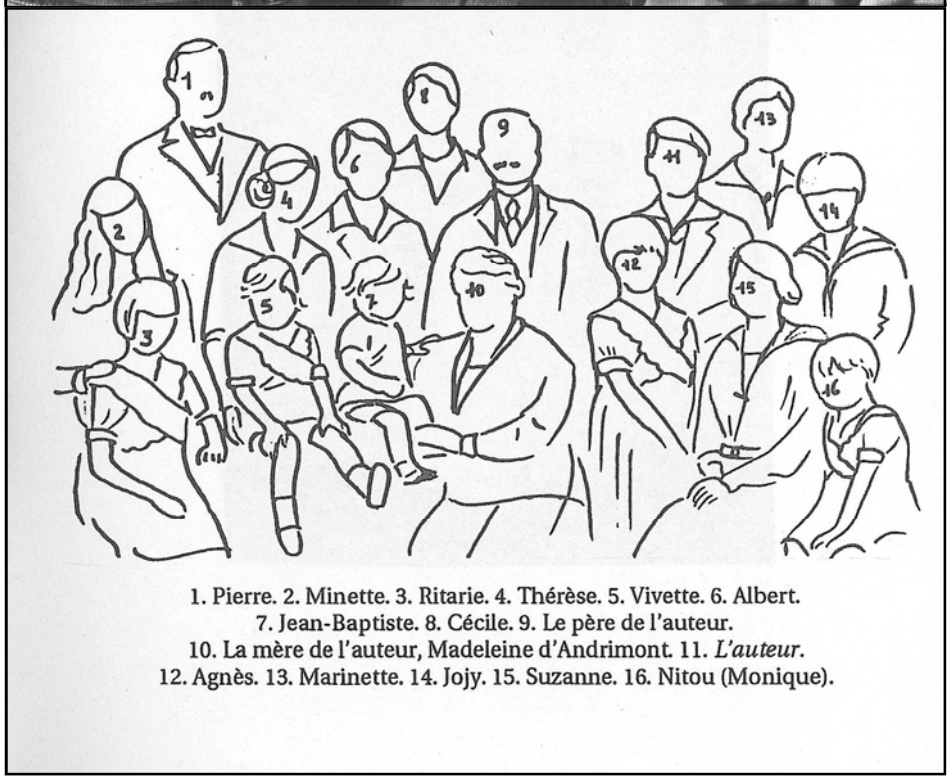
Je serai témoin de cette situation extraordinaire et paradoxale : voir les soldats japonais - après leur capitulation et sous les ordres des Alliés - continuer à surveiller les chemins de fer dans le Nord de la Chine et ce, jusqu'au mois de mai 1946: il fallait empêcher les Rouges de s'en emparer...

MEMOIRES

By Father Emmanuel Hanquet

THE ORIGINS OF A VOCATION

Translated by Albert de Zutter



1. Pierre. 2. Minette. 3. Ritarie. 4. Thérèse. 5. Vivette. 6. Albert.
7. Jean-Baptiste. 8. Cécile. 9. Le père de l'auteur.
10. La mère de l'auteur, Madeleine d'Andrimont. 11. *L'auteur.*
12. Agnès. 13. Marinette. 14. Jojy. 15. Suzanne. 16. Nitou (Monique).

A Liege Family

I was born in Liege, Belgium, on June 15, 1915, along with a twin brother, Albert, a confirmed Liégeois, both in business and in politics. He was treasurer of the Liege city government for 12 years. He was the father of five children and five times a grandfather.

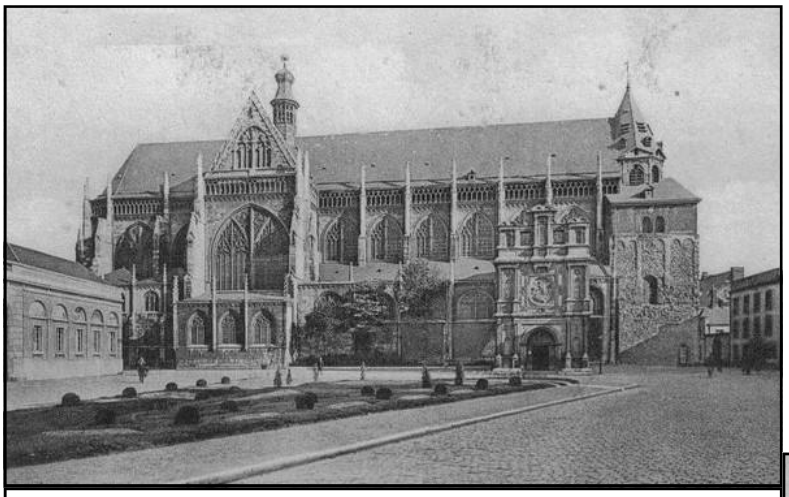
My father was a manufacturer of hunting firearms. Along with his brother, Paul, the family patriarch, he profitably ran the family industry which was founded in 1770 by a great-great grandfather, Martin Hanquet, an iron merchant. They went from making forged nails to making knives and swords, then to flintlock muskets, and finally to modern day hunting firearms. The Liege factories were known for the excellence of their work. Their arms had an international reputation – in Asia as well as in South America or Africa. As a child I often received from my father envelopes filled with stamps from the daily mail. In examining them and in seeking to know their countries of origin I developed a taste for distant countries, and without conscious effort learned a practical geography that encompassed Uruguay, Indonesia, Malaysia, Ceylon, Morocco, the Congo and the French colonies.

My mother came from a family of engineers and followers of the law and. She, however, did all of her studies at home with a female tutor, except for her final year in Paris at the Convent of the Birds, a well-known finishing school for young girls of respected families. Married at age 20, she learned her role of wife and mother in her daily experience and in the course of her 15 maternities. She was blessed with good health, as was my father. Nevertheless, after her twelfth child, she hired a nanny who became a second mother for us. There was a gap of 21 years between my eldest brother, Pierre, who became a judge in Liege, and my youngest brother (also my god-child), Jean-Baptiste, now a retired banker.

When my mother was almost done raising her children she was often sought out as a speaker on what she had learned by experience, and to lead conferences, first in Liege and then across the country. My mother wrote very well and had beautiful handwriting, readable and firm. Her conference presentations were published during the 1930s and filled three volumes, which other mothers benefited from reading. "Si les mamans savaient" ("If Mothers Only Knew") was her first book. Subsequently she published "Simplement vers la joie" (Simply Toward Joy), followed by "Le bonheur au foyer" (Happiness in the Home). I owe much to her, especially my optimism. She listened patiently to everything we wanted to confide in her and seemed always to be available to us. Yet she did reserve a time for her husband, the half-hour between his return from the office around 6:30 p.m., and the start of supper. It was a time devoted to exchanging information and sharing, as we would say today. My father would tell her about his day and my mother would tell him of her activities and anecdotes about the children.

A solid foundation

My father managed his large family – there were 15 children – with authority and discipline. He never raised a hand to us, but a look from him and his pointed mustache was sufficient. Each morning, starting at 6:30, he made the rounds of his children's rooms, opening the doors and chanting, "Get up, get up, the dawn has already risen." He had already shaved and was half dressed. Twenty minutes later he led his troop to our parish church, Saint-Jacques, 200 meters from our house.



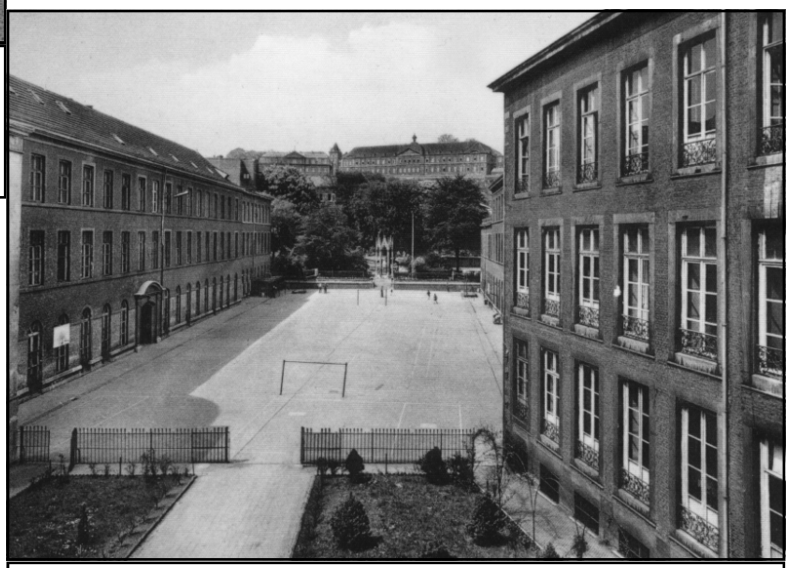
… établi à l'emplacement des anciens cloîtres de l'Abbaye des Bénédictins de Saint-Jacques. Cette église de style gothique, construite en 1538, fut d'abord abbatiale, ensuite une collégiale, puis paroissiale après le concordat de 1801.

Saint-Jacques was a superb church in a flamboyant gothic style, formerly the abbatial church of a Benedictine monastery. It had a colorful vault decorated with human figures that distracted us and caused us to daydream. In the winter, by the pale light of the gas street lights, we would trot to the church to attend the 7 a.m. Mass. At that time church did not lack for faithful at weekday Masses. We would find other families there, friends of ours, but we only stopped to chat after Mass on Sundays or after an evening Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament or a feast of the Virgin Mary. Otherwise we were too pressed for time.

At that time the churches had chairs covered in velour for those individuals and families that had paid a fee for them. My father restricted himself to installing his children on chairs with straw seats at the head of the center aisle. We received communion at the beginning of the Mass, as we had to leave before the end to hasten back home. In the meantime, my mother had prepared big piles of buttered bread which we devoured with relish, complemented with coffee with milk, but no sugar.

The girls left the house first, at 8 a.m., because they had to join the ranks of Sacre-Coeur students, who were met at 8:10 next to Sainte-Veronique Church before climbing the Cointe Hill to the Bois l'Eveque Convent. Eight of my sisters did their studies at Sacre-Coeur. Three of them decided to stay there for life and devote themselves to teaching in Belgium and in the Belgian Congo later to become Zaïre after the independence in 1960.

Only one of my sisters escaped to a conventional life, no doubt because she was so close in age to my twin brother and me and a younger brother (killed by the Germans at the liberation of Belgium in 1944), and was a part with us of a closely united foursome. For the first three years of primary school the four of us went to a school taught by the Daughters of the Cross. My sister, Marie-Madeleine, continued there, studying the classics, after which she became a director of literature (regent litteraire) and assistant dean (assistante sociale). It was she among my sisters who was the most traveled as she was a member of a very modern religious society, although it was founded during the French Revolution, the Daughters of the Heart of Mary. She was called to establish or direct schools in the Congo, Spain, Japan and Chile.



Le Collège Saint-Servais de Liège, autrefois...

As for my brothers and me, from our ninth year on we attended the College Saint-Servais, run by Jesuit Fathers. We were terrified of failing, and so we applied ourselves to avoid that possibility, studying enough to succeed without difficulty. My father was perturbed by the rare occasions when he had to meet with our professors. One time, however, he did decide to intervene. We had just enrolled in an advanced Latin course, and Father O'Kelly, our professor, gave us blue cards every two weeks for our homework – that is to say a barely passing grade or mark. My father didn't like that. He went without telling us to meet with the good Father, who proceeded to tell him the reason for his severity: "These twins copy their homework from one another."

"Wrong," said my father, "they don't copy from one another. They work together." It happened that being

true twins, our intellects developed in the same fashion.

"You will see," said my father. "Just wait for the exams."

In fact, when the examination results arrived, the professor had to admit that they were almost identical, even though he had placed us far from one another. From that day he was convinced and changed his opinion of us.

Ninane

As we were a large family, we didn't travel, but we did like to be in the great outdoors. My parents, from the time they bought their property in Ninane (10 kilometers from Liege) in 1924, were motivated to enlarge that pretty country lodge, adding a second story with a "Mansard roof." *(Translator's note: "Toiture a la Mansarde," a style of hip-roof popularized by the French architect Francois Mansart, having two slopes on each side, the lower slope steeper than the upper)*. That added nine rooms which enabled an already large family to welcome cousins to take advantage of the summer. We would gather there on Holy Saturday, after religious services faithfully attended at Saint-Jacques parish, not far from the residence of the bishop of Liege. The house had only the comforts of a true country property – neither central heating nor running water in the rooms. But we put up with those conditions to come together often in the living room where a wood-burning stove warmed the air. Springtime came on quickly and caused the blossoms and flowers to burst forth, and starting in May, we concentrated on playing tennis at our gathering place on Saturday afternoons. We also engaged in other sports – group swimming, bicycling and football (soccer), and most of all hikes to the passes of the Ardennes, ending up at the neighboring villages of Beaufays, Embourg and Henne, among others.

On All Saints Day, we returned to Liege. We lived in a

n°4 rue de Rouveroy à Liège *© GoogleStreetView*

house at No. 4 Rue de Rouveroy, a house belonging to the Cathedral parish. When the family grew, my father rented the house next door, with a connecting passage on the second floor, thus augmenting the number of bedrooms.

Acolyte

I served as an acolyte in our parish and also belonged to a small choral group that sang on important occasions. I have a memory of having sung the Gregorian chant, *Lumen ad revelationem gentium* at Candlemas on February 2.

There was no lack of convents in our neighborhood, close to the seminary. Parish priests and assistant pastors celebrated early morning Masses there, starting at 6:30 a.m. or 7 a.m. My twin brother and I were often asked to serve Mass for these unscheduled celebrants. Doing that regularly from the time I was 12 made me an early riser.

We had two associate pastors in our parish. The elder, Father Rixhon, supervised the Mass servers. He would have us meet weekly and hold a little liturgical seminar to familiarize us with the practices popularized by the Benedictines and their missal – the last word in prayer books. It contained all the texts for prayer and liturgy through the year. We were happy and proud to receive that missal on the occasion of our first Holy Communion, and we never failed to use it when we went to church. In her youth, my mother had decorated a pretty dresser with four shelves. That was where we stored our missals, close to the coat closet in the entry hall.

Family piety

In addition to daily Mass, we also faithfully engaged in family evening prayer. We did that on our knees in the living room immediately after our evening meal, which

we always referred to as supper.

My father led the recited prayer, which was always the same, and delivered the introductory line, “Let us place ourselves in the presence of God,” after which we would continue. The prayer included an examination of conscience, and a short, silent pause to permit us to analyze our daily actions for sins. That period never lasted very long and I have very little memory of having searched through my days to recall my sins. Religious holidays, like Sundays, were occasions for rejoicing and taking walks. All the family would dress in their Sunday best. Papa liked to emerge with his children and lead them on “le tour des ponts,” literally the tour of the bridges – a promenade that would take the better part of two hours.

It would also happen that on a Monday after Easter or Pentecost the extended family – including aunts and uncles and their children – would plan a picnic in the Ardennes, or one might say a pilgrimage. A trip to

Chevremont, where one could pay homage to the Virgin represented by a small, miraculous statue at the top of a hill was their favorite. Another favorite was the cemetery at the base of the hill where the Hanquet grandparents of Coune a place of prominence in the underground family sepulcher.

In 1931, having left behind the great economic crisis of 1929, my parents celebrated their silver anniversary and decided to take us all on pilgrimage to Lourdes, a grace-filled endeavor in which cousins and friends joined to fill a special railroad car reserved through the offices of my eldest brother. Our pilgrimage coincided with the traditional Belgian exodus in the month of August. It was our first family voyage beyond the Belgian border. Our pilgrimage merited a special audience with Monsignor Gerlier, the bishop of Lourdes who later became the Primate of France and the archbishop of Lyon. The souvenir photo was taken at the foot of the altar in the enclosure reserved for devotion to Mary.

Scouting

When I was a child, the Boy Scout movement appeared in the cities of our province, but not yet in the secondary schools. I owe my awakening to and formation in the values of Scouting at age 13 to Father Attout, a Benedictine of Maredsous, founder of the Lone Scouts. For my first Scout camp I was infected by the Scouting virus. But it would require a year of participation for me to take the Scout troop seriously, because I was so happy with my family situation. But Scout master sounded off and told me that if I did not attend regularly and apply myself at the meetings I would get nowhere and it would not be necessary for me to continue. I think that he aroused my own love for the movement and put me in touch, without my knowing it, with a value that was well anchored in me already – fidelity.

I was won over, and I think I never missed a single meeting after that day. Later I became the leader of the Sangliers Patrol. I thus assumed one of the most pleasing tasks that can be entrusted to a youth of 15 – responsibility for seven boys barely younger than oneself. It amounted to a school of generosity and devotion, of energy and surpassing one’s self, of smiles and joy, of brotherhood and feeling for the other, of adventure and discovery.

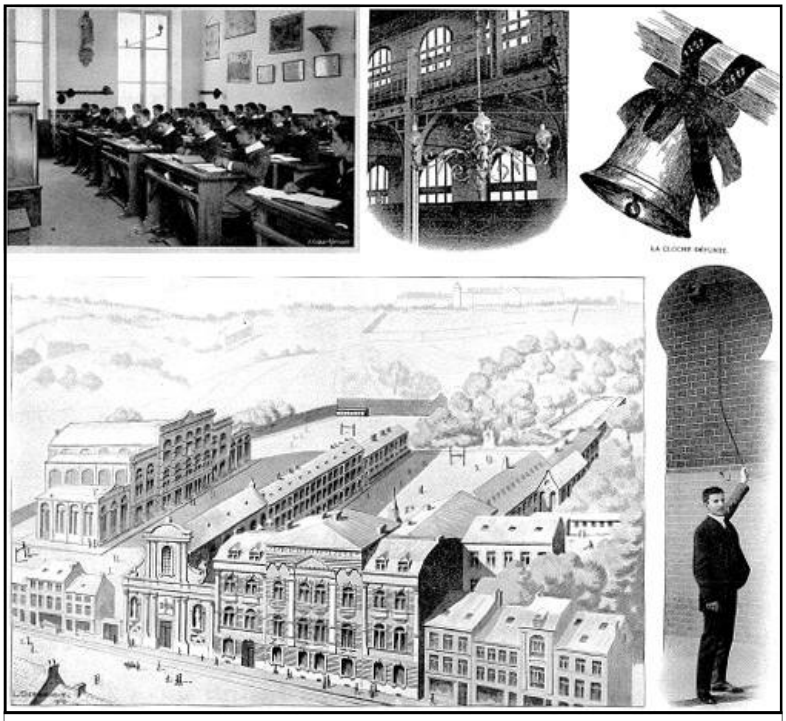
One cannot praise too highly this pedagogic method launched by Lord Baden Powell, one that continues to bear good fruit 80 years later.

Skipping over two years: I am student of law at the University of Liege. The chaplain and of our Scout troop in which I am an apprentice leader, asks me to come and help him. His Scout totem is “Dragon.” He has started a Scout troop at the Liège high school. They are having their first camp-outs, but are having trouble getting started because they lack experienced leadership. Father de la Croix, Dragon, asks me to come and help. There is already a troop leader, Honore Struys, a well-intentions boy of Flemish origin, a little older than me, but he knew nothing of the Scout leadership method. I innocently believed that I was well versed in it as I had just completed a two-week

instruction camp at St. Fontaine in Condroz and was about to receive the Wood Badge, the official leadership certificate.

But I had to become acquainted with the culture of the public school students, a world which I had yet to discover. I must say that at the time, the separation between official education and Catholic education was very clear and my family was known in Liege as stout defenders of independent education.

Dragon encourages me to explore this new scholastic milieu, less bourgeois than my own Jesuit environment at the College Saint-Servais in Liege. He urged me to



Collège Saint Servais à Liège

discover and adapt. "Go and visit the parents of the new recruits," he said. I obeyed, and began those visits, a practice that I continued for a lifetime, but with other motives.

"Teach my son to cut the crap and grow up," one father said in language that was quite direct. I never forgot that assignment. But it took me several months to understand that the appeal of my gentlemanly dress and manner which I displayed a bit too obviously did not go over with these young Scouts who early on dubbed me the "kid glove assistant." They worked to roughen my edges and slowly I won over their hearts and their friendship.

We had regularly invited three young Chinese boys who were studying in Belgium to our campouts: Andre Shih, student at Malonne, and the Liao brothers from another secondary school. These secondary school students talked to us about their country and customs. They taught us to eat with chopsticks and showed us how to write our names on the chopsticks which we fashioned then and there.

The following year as winter approached the troop leader entered the seminary and I was named to replace him. Our project was to prepare for Christmas. The Dragon, aware of his responsibilities as chaplain, keenly wanted to lead his Scouts in a (spiritual) retreat. But where and how? The idea interested us but our means and resources were limited. It might be able to do it if we could find a country house in the vicinity of Liege. I thought of the house owned by my parents who were always welcoming and generous. I ventured to ask their permission to use most of the rooms of the family's country house which, while it was large, was heated only by wood-burning stoves in two of the ground floor rooms. My parents were receptive to the idea and I in turn guaranteed the good behavior and propriety of the Scouts.

So, about 20 of us arrived in Ninane a few days before Christmas. I had somewhat underestimated the amount of work that would be involved. While the Dragon went to the church three to four times a day to instruct the Scouts, I had to make arrangements and prepare the food, all the while trying to keep up with the retreat. This was no small task. I also had to attend to housekeeping. It was time consuming, but the Scouts did cooperate.

The grace of the call

It was during this time of activity and serving of others that the Lord granted me the grace of his call. I well remember the time and place. I was praying at the communion rail in the church. It was there that the question formed in my heart, posed by Jesus: "And you, what if you gave all your time and all your life to my service?" Needless to say, I hastened to banish that startling challenge which was so troubling for my future plans (I was planning to go into the family business). But the question would not be denied. The honorable thing would be to take counsel and respond.

I revealed my dilemma to the chaplain, who counseled me to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to clarify things for me. Weeks passed, and my decision to go to the seminary and become a priest in the service of God and man ripened slowly. Life was good and it would be even better if I lived it entirely on that course.

It remained to choose a seminary and the field of my apostolate. The Scout Dragon, while he served in St. Jacques parish in Liege, was also connected to a new missionary society, *La Societe des Auxiliaires des Missions,* SAM for short. It was founded six years earlier to provide help to the first Chinese bishops. We held our Scout meetings in the attic of the house the Dragon lived in. A number of Chinese students would come to that house to read Chinese newspapers and magazines

kept in a room on the ground floor, next to the priest's desk. Father Attout (Scout Dragon), a great apostle, had his own style – a bit bohemian but very direct and welcoming, which was attractive to young people. I met with him often to prepare meetings and other Scout activities. It was with his help that my choice matured and I decided to apply for admission to the SAM seminary in Louvain. I spoke to no one except him about my choice. He advised me to wait until the end of the year examinations at the university where I was completing my second year in law. Only then did I speak of my decision to my parents and that I officially announced my decision at the conclusion of a memorable Scout camp on the banks of the Helle in the Eupen region.*

At the end of September in 1934 I enrolled in the SAM seminary at Kareelveld, across from the Mont-Cesar abbey outside the ancient walls of Louvain. There was a lot of talk about Father Lebbe. He had launched the idea of the SAM foundation in 1926 at the request of first six Chinese priests to be ordained as bishops. A handful of young men from Verviers responded to Father Lebbe's call and placed themselves under the tutelage of a former Verviers parish priest, Father Andre Boland. It was Father Boland who acquainted us with Father Lebbe, assigning us to read the files he had accumulated on the subject.

The seminary had a particular cachet reflecting the fact that there were only about 20 seminarians and that Father Boland practiced a system of trust. He wanted us to develop our own personalities and make our own decisions, speaking to him about them after the fact. He practiced an open-door policy every evening after prayers and, while having a cup of Chinese tea, guided our nightly conversations. I completed four years of seminary – a short time, yet it was judged sufficient by my superiors as formation for my priesthood and my future life as a missionary. I was ordained to the priesthood on February 6, 1938. I left for China at the end of November that same year.

**Scouting, the environment in which my vocation blossomed, continued to follow me. After my Liege troop and the public school troop, I started another troop at Gembloux during the time of my seminary studies, before living through a similar experience with the youth of the concentration camp in Weihsien (see passage later on regarding the clandestine Scouts. In fact, it was not till 55 years later that I concluded my service to the Scouts, after 35 years of work with the Lonescouts.*

FIRST STEPS AS A MISSIONARY

Translated by Gay Talbot-Stratford

Farewell to my country

China! A missionary. And I was only 23 years old.. It was towards the end of November in 1938, that my parents welcomed forty cousins, who gathered in our house to say goodbye to me, a son of the family, and now a young missionary.

Of course it was to say goodbye . What else could one expect in those troubled times? China was so far away... To strike out 'en route ' to the Celestial Empire when there were no airlines, meant taking a train or a boat. The train took twelve days on the famous Trans Siberian railway, by way of Moscow and Vladivostok. Relations with the USSR were hardly cordial, more-

Liège, in ± 1938

over; we were on the eve of a grave conflict. The only other way was by boat, so this is the route I took. I booked a passage on a transatlantic liner called the Felix Roussel a ship of the Messagerie Maritime line. It would take me from Marseille to Shanghai- if all went well.

I left Belgium on the 28th of November, on my way to Rome, where I had to make contact with mission authorities before I embarked in Marseille. When I arrived in the Holy City, I learned that the boat would be ten days late raising anchor. My father advised me, by phone, to stay in Italy rather than to return to Belgium. Goodbyes were too wrenching... For my part, I did not feel the sorrow of separation until I left Guillemin station in the middle of the night, and hugged and embraced my brothers, sisters, and friends, for the last time. Understandably, it was an emotional time and I had a feeling of panic. My Superior Abbe Boland accompanied me to Namur, to ease my loneliness...

Once in Rome, I rented a room in the Hotel Minerva, on the square of the same name. Opposite the hotel was a graceful obelisk, perched on the back of a young elephant.(The Romans nicknamed it Il Pucino, or the young chick). The hotel is a hundred years old, one of the oldest in Rome. It remains a witness to past traditions, full of charm and faded elegance. There, one met tourists of the old style. (O blessed time!) and also pilgrims, some of whom were grand persons; like the secret Chamberlain to the Pope, with his cape and sword, (Yes indeed!) who renders yearly service to the Vatican, as does my Superior, Abbé Boland.

Family Ties

Here I am , alone in this great city. I have cut my ties with my family. In the glow of departure for the missions, and the conceit of youth, we profess that it is neither necessary or good, to return to one's country. We choose to be Chinese with the Chinese, for the rest of our lives. Surely Father Lebbe showed us how? He , who left for China in 1927 and died there in 1940, without ever seeing Europe again. And yet! Only a few hours after the separation, I dared not think of those I had left, especially my mother. I dreaded to think of the emotion and pain my departure had caused.. I had to look forward. But what about them? What about my mother and father? How would they survive this break in the family circle? Even though my twin brother, who looked like me, was still at home, and remained a faithful son, the fact remained that between my mother and me, we had important exchanges and confidences; the kind that a son shares with his mother, when he is preparing for the priesthood.

My mother's health was deteriorating. A short while before I left, she fell several times in the street without any apparent cause. One of her legs just gave way. Alas! It signalled the onset of paralysis which would increase. During the last years of her life, she was confined to a wheelchair, For a long time, she wrote to me regularly- and I received these letters so gladly! Later when I was cut off from all news during my imprisonment, I buried my sorrow within my heart, to the point, that I did not dare to confide in anyone at all. Even years after her death I still dreaded allowing my emotions to show through.

My father hid his emotions under a light heartedness

which expressed itself in song each morning, as he moved from room to room waking up his tribe..He did not want to appear soft especially in front of his sons. Conventional wisdom required this. He gave my mother the privilege of sharing confidences with her sons; he reserved the right to be a little more tender-hearted with the girls. He seldom wrote letters; although he did warn me about the delay of the Felix Roussel. He was right to advise me to take advantage of the extra time by visiting Southern Italy and Florence.

My mother had slipped a heart shaped piece of marzipan into one of my suitcases. It was a touching reminder of the close relationship between my family and me. Each day I broke off a piece. Although I was on the second floor of the hotel, the Roman ants were able to track down the subtle aroma of sugar and almonds. I tried changing the hiding places for this attractive delicacy, but it was a lost cause. The hotel staff , noticing my manoeuvres, joined in the game. They attempted to neutralise the assaults of the invasive and brazen hymnoptera, by using an insecticide; all in vain. Finally, I discovered the solution to my problem. I attached the tempting packet to the end of a long piece of string, and hung it in the wardrobe.

Italian Sightseeing

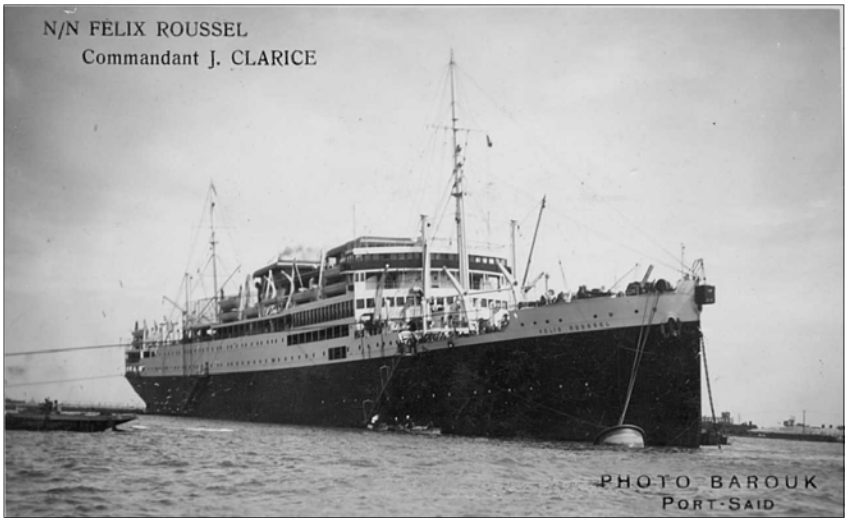
A friend of mine a Benedictine priest, was living in Rome. André de Giradon was studying theology at the college of Saint Bonaventure on the Aventine. My first call was on him. I asked him to draw me up a plan of places to see outside Rome. I trusted him since he was lucky enough to be an expert in such things. He was most enthusiastic as he advised to make my way southwards. Below Naples, I was to turn northwards again, and take a cab along the superb coastline from Amalfi to Sorrento.

Despite the coolness at night, December is a pleasant month to be in Campagna; the light is almost transparent and soft. By this time, I had reached Sorrento.

I was overwhelmed by the rich beauty of the country side, but I still took full advantage of the opportunities that were before me. Just a few hundred yards, across the Gulf of Naples, a dream, almost a mirage, loomed up. It was Capri, the sublime, the wonderful. Capri, beloved of the gods, the Greeks , and the Roman philosophers; and, happily at that time, not well known to the masses.

I climbed up in the steps of the Phoenicians, to the villa of San Michele. Here, at the beginning of the century, Axel Munthe, a Swedish doctor had created a veritable paradise with his own hands with statuary and rare flowers. It was also a stopping place and a sanctuary for thousands of birds...

There was a family boarding house in the highlands, run by nuns. I stayed there for two nights. This gave me the chance to witness a sunrise on the summit of Monte Solaro and to visit what was left of the sumptuous palace of Emperor Tiberius at Anacapri.



On my return to Rome, I spent time with members of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith,(now known as the Dissemination of the Faith). Cardinal Constantini was the Prefect of the Society. He was the retired Apostolic Delegate to China. He received me cordially.As head of the Work of Saint Peter the Apostle, he was responsible for seminaries in mission countries; he questioned me at length and showed great interest in the work I would be doing in China. He gave me his blessing, and a contribution for the Missions.. As I left, he gave me the Italian salute (that is, the stylised embrace of the Latin races). I remained unresponsive, being unused to this type of effusiveness between men! I have to admit that I was suspicious- wrongly so- of strange tendencies in otherwise honest men.

As I was in a hurry to go to Marseille and board the Felix Roussel. I stopped only briefly in Florence and remember a cold unwelcoming hotel. Many years later, I had the joy of discovering all the splendours of Florence, in a more leisurely way. The city is so endearing.

The Voyage

At last I board the ship in the port of Marseille. We are leaving. For me, the novelty of everything was part of the attraction, but a month of life on a steamship is not without its surprises. Apart from the usual stops at Port Said, Djibouti, Colombo, Singapore, and Hong Kong ,there were unexpected stops, like the one at Bizerte in Tunisia, where we were anchored for three days while a screw which was damaged during our departure, was repaired. This enforced stop allowed a group of us to visit Carthage, colonial Tunis, and the White Fathers' Mission.

We travelled second class with priests from the Society for Foreign Missions in Paris. who were returning to Manchuria. My cabin mate was a seasoned missionary with whom I got on well .Alas, his vice was

chain smoking. It upset me each morning. I looked for different ways to deal with this.. Fortunately I was able to install myself in an unoccupied first class cabin with the argument that I required privacy for my pastoral work among the passengers. I think it was from Colombo that life on board became easier.

Singapore appeared well cared for and very 'British,' with beautiful gardens, and wide boulevards lined with palm trees. In Saigon, I visited a young cousin of our friends the Doats. He worked for the bank of Indochina. He welcomed me warmly and taught me secrets of French hospitality as practised in the colonial life of the times. It was he who told me about the ingenuity of the 'boys', who passed tableware and china from one house to another when a household was entertaining.

Hong Kong brought me the first smells of the Orient. In the Chinese part of town, there was the atmosphere of a Flemish country fair , with an Oriental flavour! The smells of frying and oil, garlic and peppers ,were mixed with Oriental spices. Blazes of colour, shop signs, multicoloured flags fluttering everywhere, brushing up against the walls in the narrow streets. There, I made a courtesy call on the Belgian consul, who was from the same part of the country as my father.

China at Last

It was about the middle of January 1939 that we sailed in to Shanghai. My confrere, Robert Willichs, had arrived a few months before, and was serving in the diocese of Haimen. Robert was to be my guide. He was proud of the experiences he had already had and liked to say: "This is the way it should be done!"

He was waiting for me at the house of the Scheut Fathers Mission where both of us would be staying. .During the years that followed, I often had the opportunity to experience the warm hospitality of that house, and was never disappointed .

Both of us were guests at the home of Francine and Hippolyte Meus, M.Meus worked for Ucometal in Shanghai. Charles Meus, also one of my confreres, was Hippolyte's brother. How good it was to be in a family atmosphere after two months of travel ! In our anxiety to adapt to Chinese customs and life, we did not dare admit to this feeling. However, with the passing of years, I can now tell these friends how much I appreciate their hospitality and their brotherly concern for us.

Our first Chinese invitation was to dinner with an important industrialist. He was a married man, a father as well as a grandfather, with a large family. They all lived together in a large house with different courtyards. This man was the brother of Monseigneur Tsu, Bishop of Haimen.

This was my first Chinese banquet so we ate in the Chinese style. To my surprise, only men were present. The excellent lady of the house, Madame Tsu, and her daughters in law, did not appear until dessert was served. Such was the custom of the times.

The next day, Robert put me in touch with the real China, the world of workers and peasants. The Portuguese captain of a tugboat took us to Hoang Pu. We traversed the estuary of the river to the peninsula where there were deposits of alluvium.. At the harbour of the 'Cows Drinking Trough', we had to leave the boat, and cross to the shore, on the backs- of men- so that the soutanes of the foreigners would not become muddied. This was a new experience. For the first time in my life, the wheelbarrow was my means of travel. The wheel was set high so you sat on one side of the vehicle, and the baggage provided the counterbalance, on the other side. This means of transportation allowed the 'coolies' to walk on footpaths and small narrow bridges which crisscrossed the irrigation canals There was a grinding sound from the

wheel: "Do not worry Father," I was told, " That noise is a sign that it is working well."

Haimen was the most important town of the area. There, I spent a few days visiting the mission, gleaning and gathering impressions from my Belgian and Chinese confreres. After that, I had to return to Shanghai by boat. It was two or three days before I reached Tientsin, the largest port in the north.

A Hard Apprenticeship

It was the end of January1939. The boat moved slowly through the rivers which water Tientsin. On the banks, children in fancy clothes can be seen running about: little girls in red dresses, and boys in trousers with padded red shirts

It was dusk. Already the sound of firecrackers was echoing in anticipation of the celebrations for the New Year. The occupying Japanese authorities had given permission for this cacophony of sound .

The de Scheut Fathers were on hand to meet the young missionary. My confrere, Paul Gilson, had alerted them to my imminent arrival; so, in an admirable show of missionary hospitality, they all came down to the landing. After forty five days of travel, it was good to find oneself together with brothers. We exchanged news about Mongolia, Peking and Belgium. But the night was noisy with the sound of Chinese firecrackers, so it was impossible to sleep!

I had to go to Peking without delay, since the courses in Chinese had begun a week before. They were given at a language school run by American Protestant missionaries. I had to make up for lost time .I began to assimilate the language. It was a slow process but I studied for five or six hours each day.

I shopped in the streets and down the narrow lanes of the eastern part of the city on foot, or by rickshaw.

In the provincial house of Shinhua, much of the talk was about Father Lebbe, especially when we were joined by Raymond de Jaegher .The latter was a story teller without parallel; he had such a good memory for names and places.

One day, in the spring of 1940, I took a chance and wrote to Father Lebbe telling him that I would soon be leaving for Shansi, and asking him for advice. He replied on half a piece of paper encouraging me to be patient and to sink deeply into Chinese soil and culture. He quoted me a Chinese proverb:"Pu ch'engkung, chiu ch'engjen .

'Even if you do not succeed, still live or die honourably.'

My Bishop Monseigneur P T'cheng decided that I should not stay in Peking forever, so I arranged to leave the big city after the second trimester, and made my way to Hungtung in Shansi. We were in the middle of the Chinese/ Japanese war. Before I left, I obtained a missionary pass, printed in Japanese, through a Japanese Catholic. For in the north, the Japanese had taken over all means of communication .

It took me three months to make a trip which normally takes three days. The reason might have been that I was not used to travelling in China ,or, that I was not ready to listen to those older and wiser than I. A Chinese proverb discourages travellers from beginning a journey in the first month of the lunar year- approximately in February- because it is cold; nor in July, when it is soaking wet. I should have realised the truth of the saying.

The rain and storms had washed away the railway in several places, forcing me to stay in Ting-Hsien, Shih Kia Chuang,Yutse and Chieh Sio; three days here, and four days there.. It was an excellent school for learning both the virtue of patience, and the living of the missionary life .

In each of the towns along the way, there was a mission house. The understanding was that their hospitality was open to all.

Just before the 15th of August, I arrived at my destination, Huntungau Shansi. The mission house in town was empty. At the direction of Monseigneur Tch'eng, everyone had withdrawn into the mountains, about 30kms away, and .that is where I found them. I was led there by a member of the laity who was a leader of the Christian community. Monseigneur quickly put me at my ease, and introduced me to my Chinese confreres. I was appointed his secretary, and was to continue my studies of Chinese with Father Yang.

Refugees in Han- Lo -Yen

Several days ago I settled(!)into the presbytery in Han -Lo-Men. This was a small Christian village clutching to the edge of steep bluffs. It was not made of stone, but of Chinese loess, a fine dust. To the stranger, it resembled a giant's ladder.

Old Suen,the Christian leader of Suen-Chia-Yuan(a village which belonged to the Suen family).brought me here in his sturdy wagon without springs which made for a bumpy ride. The wheels were made of wood encircled with iron rims. Without any difficulty at all, Old Suen loaded the three steamer trunks and two suitcases on to the wagon. These contained all my worldly possessions, consisting mostly of books and a few clothes. Before I left the big city, Peking, I had bought medicines, and some material which was suitable for making liturgical vestments.

The Church, was clearly visible from across the valley. It was built by Dutch Franciscans towards the end of the last century On the right of the Church, were several wings which were now occupied by the Bishop since the town was overrun by the Japanese. The Bishop had a narrow escape, and took refuge in this

village, twenty kilometres away, where the mission owned property.

The Presbytery in Han -Lo -Men was on a terrace which jutted out half way up the mountain. To the left and right of the heavy entrance door to the compound, were several house; there were other buildings in the compound too. These faced north. I occupied a building on the right of the entrance, while Father Chang and a senior seminarian lived on the left.

My dwelling had two rooms with a single door opening onto the courtyard. A study measuring four by three metres, led into a bedroom, which was three by two metres. The windows were made of thin strips of wood, covered by heavy paper. There was no electricity, no running water, or heat. The floor was made of cement flagstones which I covered with straw mats in the winter. The furniture consisted of a square table which served as a desk, a sideboard, and two roughly made chairs, which were more Franciscan than Chinese, in style. In the adjoining room there was a wooden bed-without springs- and a paraffin lamp on a glass stand. The reservoir which contained the wick was made of pale blue glass. These lamps were sold all over China. They were produced by a multinational company, A.P.C. The company sold square cans of paraffin, which each held four gallons. These cans were then used as water containers, or as a means of measuring grain.

My cases were emptied and placed along the walls. When they were covered with spreads, they became a makeshift sofa for the visitors I hoped to have in the future. On the window sill, I put the books I consulted most often.

To the east, in an adjacent courtyard, there were several small houses. These were single storey buildings. where the domestic staff lived. These included the cook, the groom and other servants. Above, there was another terrace, where the seminarians were housed. Fifty boys attended school there. These were secondary school students, taught by priests and lay Chinese, with a greater or lesser degree of success.

There we were, sixty people, brought together as refugees. We had abandoned the usual city housing to place ourselves under the aegis of the Japanese, and were forced to live in poverty, in the mountains.

Our young seminarians lived in caves. This was quite a common form of housing in Shansi. It was simple to hollow out spaces in the mountain walls of loess. These peaked caves could be as large as ten to fifteen metres, with a door and window. Theses man made caves provided cheap lodging. The peasants often dug them, because the temperature within was pleasant in the summer, and milder in the winter. These shelters were able to withstand the inclemency and ravages of the weather so well, that they became a model of construction, where ever there were high winds. The same shape was used, but an exterior ladder allowed access to a flat roof., where laundry could be hung , grain or fruit spread to be dried, or, the surface became a space for storage.

Adaption to Gentler Ways

Slowly, I adapt to this new way of life. Monseigneur Tch'eng is very good to me. With gentleness he prepares me for my role as his secretary. At great length he explains the customs and the traditions of the Christians in the region. He speaks and writes excellent Latin, which is the language of communication with Rome. If I can not make myself understood in Chinese, I resort to Latin. Monseigneur is un beatable.

Monseigneur is a diabetic and requires small meals frequently. In between times, the cook brings him bowls of hot milk with lightly toasted bread.

Study fills my days .Msgr. Tch'eng has asked Father Yang to continue my education in Chinese, so he comes in everyday for an hour of writing, reading and conversation. After this, I work for two or three hours more, practising writing and memorising vocabulary.

I join the seminarians for a chat, or for some exercise, during their recreation. We play a lot of volleyball. I am becoming a good striker and catcher because I am taller than most of them. They have a good laugh at the mistakes I make when speaking Chinese.

The seminarians have shorn heads for easy care and hygienic reasons, but they greatly admire my groomed hair with a side parting. I feel that I should adopt the Chinese hair style since I wear the same clothes as they do. One afternoon, I asked one of them, who was a barber, to come to my lodging with his hair clippers. It did not take him long to make me look like a prisoner, much to the surprise and obvious approval of the seminarians and my confreres. I was now more like them

Before the midday meal, the priests gathered in the Church for fifteen minutes of prayer and adoration, ending with six Our Fathers and six Hail Marys with arms extended in the form of a Cross. This was a Franciscan tradition which had been adopted in the diocese for generations.

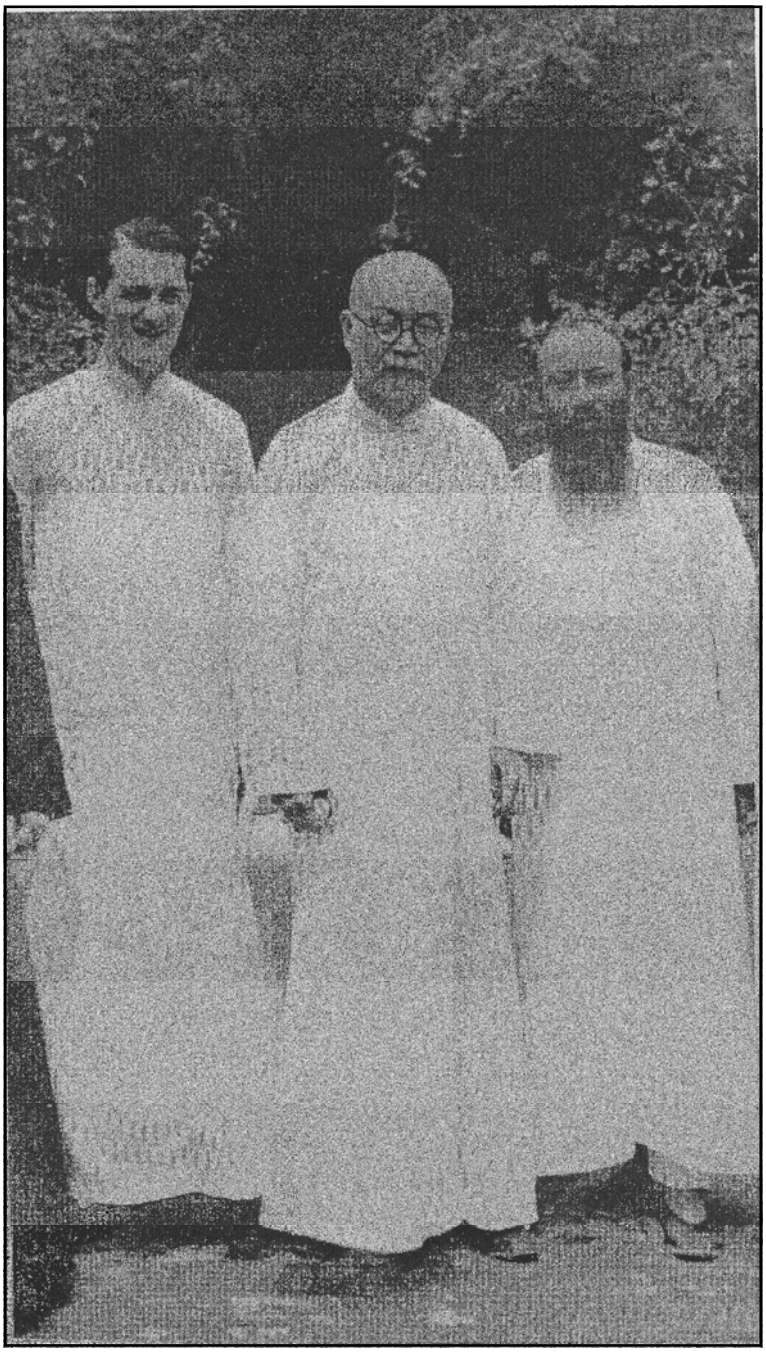
The heat was exhausting in summer .The siesta was a necessity which I accepted with some reluctance. The days were long and quieter, allowing the servants to visit the priests. Each of those assigned to me came to visit me in turn . They liked to take stock of what was on my table or sideboard. They were fascinated by things strange to them like a camera, a pair of sunglasses, a strop for sharpening razors. This led to questions and answers. Then they wanted to know about my family, my past, my studies, and how it had come to pass that I had travelled so far, to this forsaken cor-

ner of the mountains.

I tramped through the hills in the area, although I was warned not to leave the guide's side, because it was dangerous to do so. Once or twice a week, I joined the seminarians for a walk along paths through the mountains which were unknown to me. There were no roads, only trails of hardened earth. There is little rainfall so grass is rare, and vegetation sparse .Here and there, in the middle of tufts of grass, stood a stunted pine tree or a zizyphus tree, with lozenge shaped fruit, the colour of mahogany. This delicacy brought happiness to children during the winter months. The jujubes are very sweet and when sun dried, they are a pleasant addition to the plain diet of the mountain people.

First Steps as an Apostle

During the troubled times of the Japanese occupation, we did not travel unless there was good reason to do so. Although, to maintain the sacramental life of Christians, they needed to have a visit from a priest from time to time. We listened to their requests for a Mass on the feast day of a patron saint, or on a holy day of obligation. Attendance at Mass on those days, even if it was a weekday, was mandatory, and so we had to take their request seriously.



On this subject, allow me to trace the meaning in Chinese characters. The expression 'going to say Mass' became 'Song Mi Sa.' Even before I learned to write Chinese characters, my ear for Latin led me to believe 'Misa' meant the Mass. Song meant to give or to accompany some one. Then I understood .'Song Mi Sa' meant, given the Mass. Here my curiosity forced me to return to the dictionary to learn the true meaning of the sounds. Lo and behold, I discovered 'Mi' meant, to fill, and 'Sa', to distribute. To fulfill the duties of a Christian, or better still, to fill oneself with heavenly graces, after having received them from the priest, and then to share them with others... See the richness of the meaning and meditate on it.

The priest does not celebrate Mass alone in a Christian community. He is always invited to do so. A community of the faithful sends him a messenger inviting him to come. Often the man is accompanied by a mount to get there. In this mountainous country, this is usually a mule or donkey. The animal has to carry Father's luggage, including his bedding, and all that is needed for the altar. It was rare for Christians to have chasubles, chalices, and patens. These had to be brought, as well as the hosts and wine. All this sounds simple to us today, but remember that the hosts were made on a kitchen table, with a special press called the host press and the sacramental wine came from a single village in the centre of the province, where the Italian Capuchins had transplanted grape stocks from Europe.

The problem of candles was not easy to resolve. According to the rubric, they had to be made of beeswax; paraffin ones would not do, and there must be two of them. We had some catechists who had a primitive way of pouring the wax into a mould. The wax was melted gently over low heat, then using a small ladle, the wax was poured over the length over a cotton mesh of the desired length. These were then hung over rope or a horizontal bar to cool slowly. One by one the candles were passed through the pot of wax, becoming larger and larger with each passage, until they were the right size.

The travelling priest had to add catechisms, prayer books, rosaries, and holy pictures, to his baggage. Theses items were much sought after by the Christians and the catechumens. The rosaries were made by Christians, but the books and holy pictures came from the Jesuit Press in Shanghai. This printed matter could be obtained by post provided one was patient, for it was sent in a round about way, passing in and out from free China to occupied China.

Once everything was assembled and packed onto the mount, we set off uphill and down . There were no paved roads, just unmapped paths without signposts . The only one who knew where he was going, was the messenger and guide who had come to fetch the priest. Later on, I became more familiar with the roadways, and I went by bicycle with my catechist.

That afternoon in mid October, I set out with an enthusiastic heart but an anxious spirit, asking myself if I would be able to pass on the message of the Gospel in my sermon during Mass. It was the high point of the Celebration. The Mass was still in Latin, during which the Christians sang the Ordinary,(i.e. the unchanging part of the Mass) at the top of their voices.

Often the place where it was held was a small chapel. The children stood before the altar, the men on the right and the women on the left. The nursing mothers were right at the back of the chapel so that they could nurse their babies if they cried. Often, the sound of the crying babies was drowned out by the chanting of the Christians. There were no benches or kneelers, so the more resourceful members of the congregation brought cushions or a piece of cloth to make kneeling less difficult.

To celebrate the most important feasts, Christians from the area liked to get together bringing musical instruments with them. These were stringed instruments and pipes, and different types of gongs which they played with great enthusiasm and skill to provide rhythm for prayer. The outstanding moment was the Consecration. As soon as the acolyte (i.e. the altar boy), gave the signal of three taps with wooden blocks, the gongs sounded, and the priest on the altar had some difficulty concentrating on the moving words of the Consecration.

After Mass, a reception was held to honour their priestly visitor who was seated on an upright chair in the middle of a hall. One after the other the Christian families filed past in front of him. Often they were led by grandparents. Children attending the Catholic school walked before the catechist, if they did not attend the school, they came with their families. The priest then said a few words of encouragement to each of them, and followed that with a blessing, when the members of the family fell on their knees.

After this, those in charge of the parish came forward to greet the priest. The leader of the community, the secretary and the treasurer were elected annually. These were the people who paid the catechists, who watched over the increase of the faithful and the good order of the Christian community. They visited the catachumens (those preparing for baptism) and the sick. They led prayers during the week. All this was shared with the priest. Together with them, he organised a 'mission.'

This was the name given to a time set aside each year. It varied in length. Christian families would take turns to look after the priest. In the winter, when days were shorter, the priest only needed two meals a day. This gave him the time to receive the individual members of the community. First of all the children, led by the catechist who had reviewed the catechism lessons . The priest questioned the children and explained doctrine to them. In the days that followed, it was the turn of the adolescents who had to show that they knew their catechism. The priest always allowed some time to reply to their questions and to help them solve their problems.

Mass was celebrated at the beginning of the day and the rules of fasting from midnight were still observed by all; that was before the Second Vatican Council relaxed the rules of fasting.

After lunch, the priest visited families so that he had a better understanding of their lives .Many Christians lived in caves, others in single storeyed houses, usually consisting of three rooms: a living room, with a stable or a granary on the right, and a communal bedroom on the left.

The Liber Animarum, or the registry of the Christian community had to be dusted off. Note was taken of births, baptisms, deaths and new members received into the Church etc. It was an arduous task , particularly for a foreigner, to record carefully in Chinese characters ,the name and identity of each one since the registry was part the parish records.

Finally, in the afternoon, the parishioners return to make their annual confession, and before nightfall, night prayers are recited.

But for the priest, the day is not over. He has his second meal of the day, and receives visitors, most of whom are men. They remain standing while listening to the shrewder members of the group who asks questions to which the priest replies as well as he can. Sometimes, it is the mother of a family who dares to lift the curtain of the door, or a nun who wishes to talk to the priest about details relating to the sacristy or a newcomer to be welcomed.

There will be no Fireworks

One by one, the last few days of the thirteenth lunar period were passing by. Winter seemed ready to suspend its deep freezes, and to join in the rejoicing of people. After the harsh weather, the earth which had been dry and cold, was warming gradually and the crevasses which gave the land the look of a leprous face, were disappearing. The new moon would soon rise; for the third time of its appearance, this saddened country was at war!

I reminded myself of other times when the festivities reserved for welcoming the new year were more

agreeable. This was before I became familiar with these mountains, and before calamity passed across our Mission, turning it into a kind of no man's land. Nowhere more than in China, was daily living so hum drum; nowhere was tomorrow so much like today. But suddenly, people came to a crossroad; to a change of ways of living which had to be well and truly celebrated.

For two weeks, each house was transformed: no more poverty, no more misery, no more hard and tiring labour...To achieve this, half the yearly income would be spent. Each person brought out their best clothes, most of them new, and while the husbands wore dark colours, the wife could give free rein to her coquetry! Dresses of embroidered silk in vibrant colours, matching pants and tops, and satin slippers which did not torture her poor little feet. Different hairstyles, earrings and enamelled silver bracelets. In these days when the country is suffering, who will remind us how grand the past was?

There were brick houses with attractive roofs and many porticos; these were family homes with well ordered courtyards. Simple caves were the usual dwellings of the poor and the peasant. Why did you have to give up your red streamers, and your signs of welcome in big black letters and your cut out drawings , your pierced paper patterns which could easily have served as models for my efforts when I was a child, why are these things no longer there?

But to you, the youngest of you who do not know about the sorrows which convulse your country, at least you have worn the red clothes of happiness, and have worn the hats with bells on them which cover the ears so well, and protect you from the strong winds as you set off the firecrackers in celebration of the new year! But no! You do not have pockets full of those festive crackers anymore!

But why this stripping away, this abandonment of the happiest traditions of childhood?

And you, you beautiful young people, who loved to get together during those hours when you were free from care. Boys with boys, and girls with girls. Why is your conversation so serious? Why are your country walks and your strolls in town suddenly diverted into other channels?

Well yes! The war did rob you of everything: your wealth, your national records, your brave brothers and your playful joy. Nevertheless, we have to pass on from one year to another, we should rejoice in this new year with which the 'spirit who inhabits the heavens' bestows on you. This is how those excellent pagans so close to you. in the little village of Ha- Lou have addressed our God in their temple,, And yet, if this great war has robbed you of so much; if your youngsters no longer let off firecrackers, you are left with what is best, what is most lovely, and what is most precious which your efforts over several millennia have produced; that is to say, your spirit, and the family virtues you have. The revolution did come and immediate changes were to be seen. The wave of red brushed away justice- and it was the Maid of Lourdes who protected you- today a hideous monster is tearing up your best lands, but this is only temporary... it has not been able to take away your family traditions!

And that is why, on this New Year's morning- you remember don't you - that the sun warmed us so gently! In your faces, I saw the real joy of celebrating important days. And the same thought led you to sing your gratitude to God-and led you when you went in groups to greet the most senior members of different families and clans in your village. With radiant faces you went in single file along the mountain paths, to bring to neighbours and relatives the message of happiness, as you spoke once again of hope. What great sounds you let forth that day!

Real joy was in the beaming smile you had when, after Mass, your children bowed before you, an act that they had practised secretly. It was in the smile you wore when you exchanged repeated dignified bows on the side of the road, with those who, like you, were pilgrims of the new year.

Unlike the foreign devil who was watching you, there was no port wine and biscuits to sample at each door, but the tchiaotzes were just as good, you can be sure of that!

You young ones were not going to receive an expensive new year gift from your grandfather or your old uncle, but the nuts, the tasty pears and the smallest amount of money; those bills which were so scarce, were enough to make you happy.

And as for you, young girls, now at the age when you blush and run away giggling when a boy approaches you, did it not make you happy enough to sport that hat, that hairstyle, or that jacket in the latest style?

And tell me, all of you people of Tien Pai shang, Kan tso Lin, Tsang Tchia Yuan and other islets of Christianity, why the day after the moon changed you made so many attempts to reach this forgotten corner of the mountains; why you all came together in a group before you offered your good wishes; why you added the fruit of your land and the work of your hands, and finally why, when you could, you brought one of your young, in whom you hoped, and who would ensure that your name continues in the future ,why would you bring him along such unsafe roads?

Why? If not because you wished to give legitimacy to those who organised your Catholicism. To the Apostolic Prefect, who had taken refuge in this little village, and who led a life like your own, to him you offered

your filial obedience in the faith. Why? If not because this act of submission rose out of your confidence, and all your faith in the traditions of the Church. This is such a forceful argument that you place before your pagan brothers.

A final question, Why? Because during these sad dark days, you sensed that the traditional past of your pagan country has become one with that other traditional past, with which Christ has enriched you. This is your gift to His Church.

(It seemed right to leave the tenses as they were written. G.S.)

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

山西省在中国的位置示意

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 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.

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 countersign 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.]

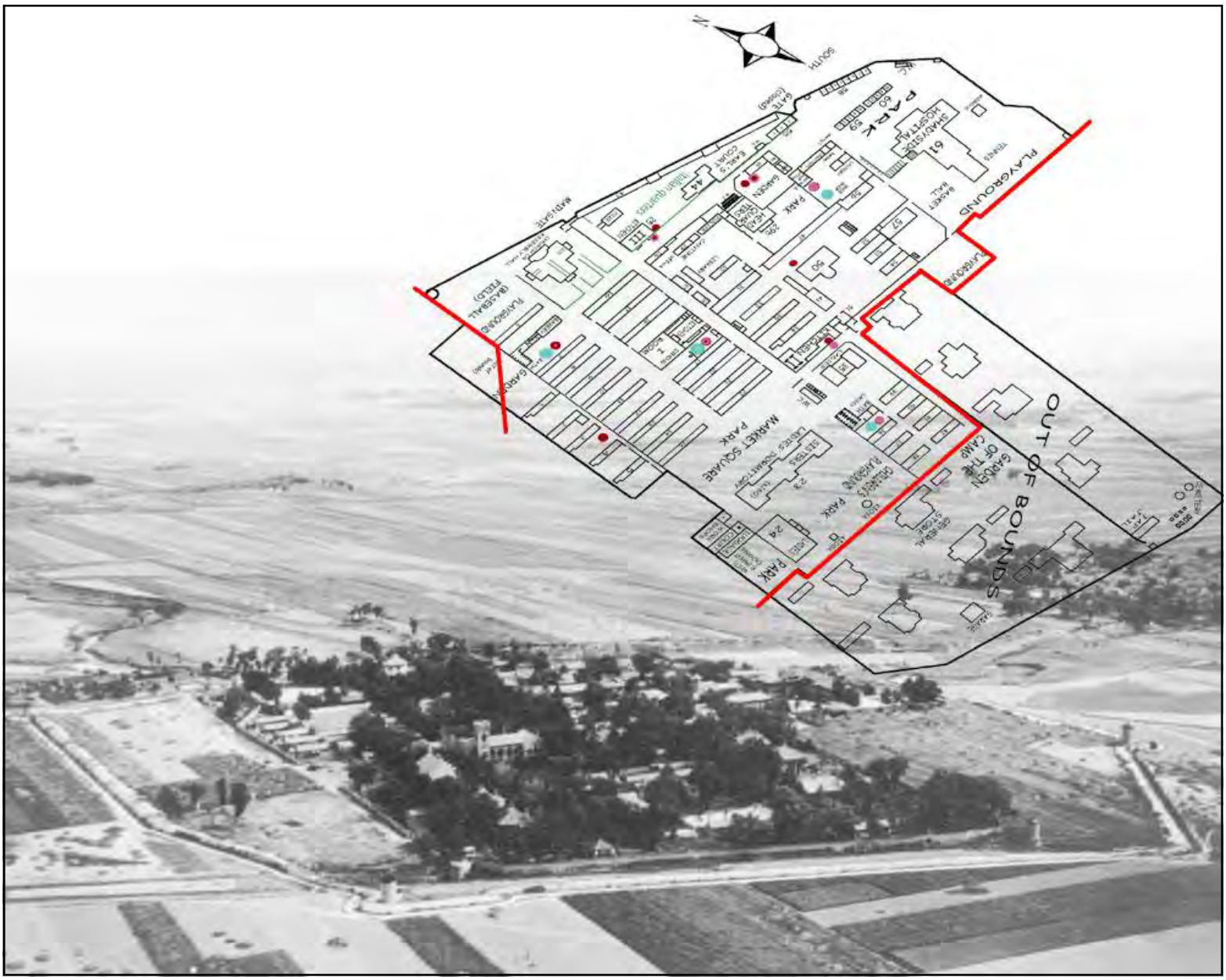
Weihsien Camp

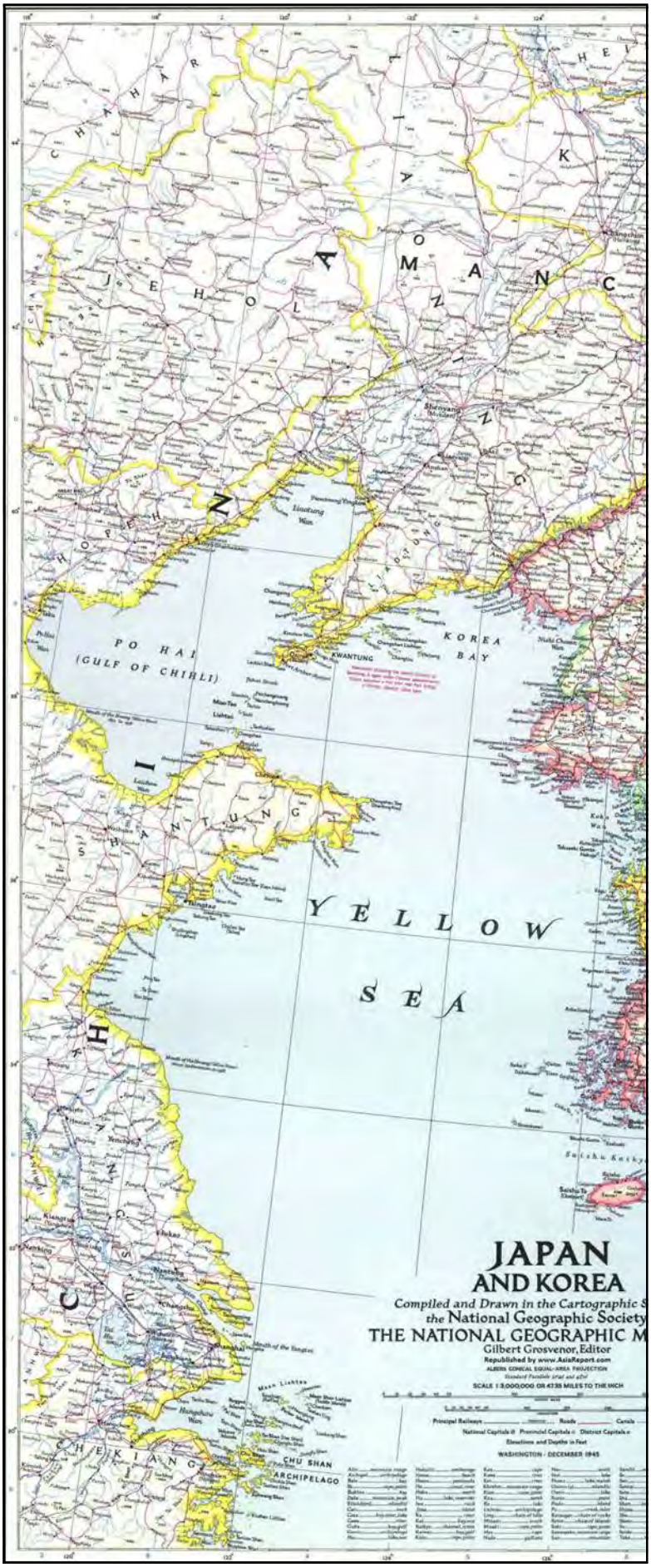
Two thousand internees share what this camp has to offer. It was formerly a Presbyterian mission set in the heart of Shantung province. The founder of Time magazine, Henry Luce, was born there into a family of protestant pastors. Our Japanese gaolers have kept the best buildings for themselves and leave 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-





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 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.

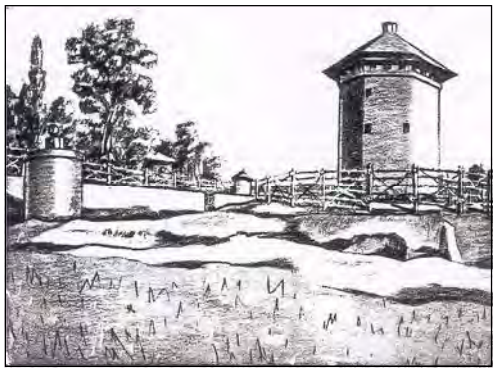
Luckily we had none among us who had been convicted of ordinary crimes. We were all deemed to be political prisoners, gathered up and put away because our governments were at war with Japan. Everyone had been living in North China: Peking, Tientsin, Tsingtao or Mongolia. Thirty or so of us Belgians found 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-



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 a

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!

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 1 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 I. Le gouvernement beige 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 a 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 ii 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 pas symbolique est en effet franchi. Signalons enfin qu'il s'agit également d'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.

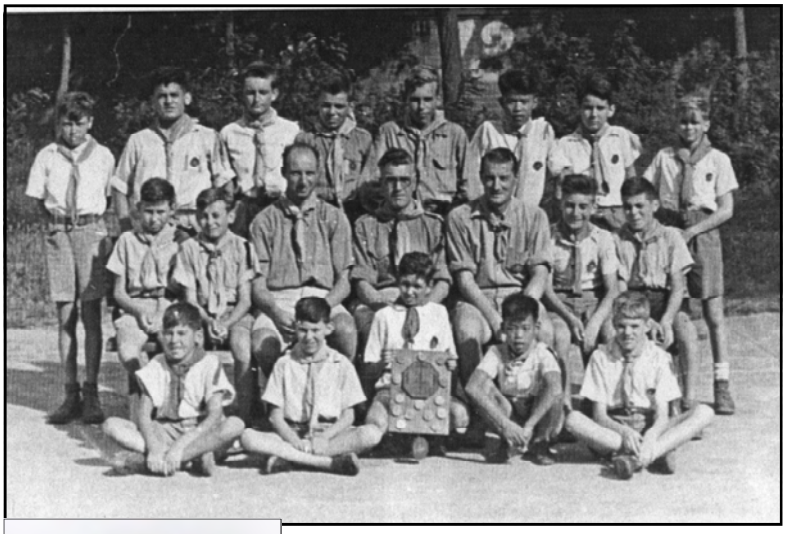
A l'occasion de son discours devant la Chambre des Représentants, le 6 décembre 1944, P. H. Spaak, constant avec lui-même, se montrera particulièrement ferme quant à la position de la Belgique à regard du Japon, destinée à soutenir l'effort de guerre américain jusqu'à la victoire finale: J'attache à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

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



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…

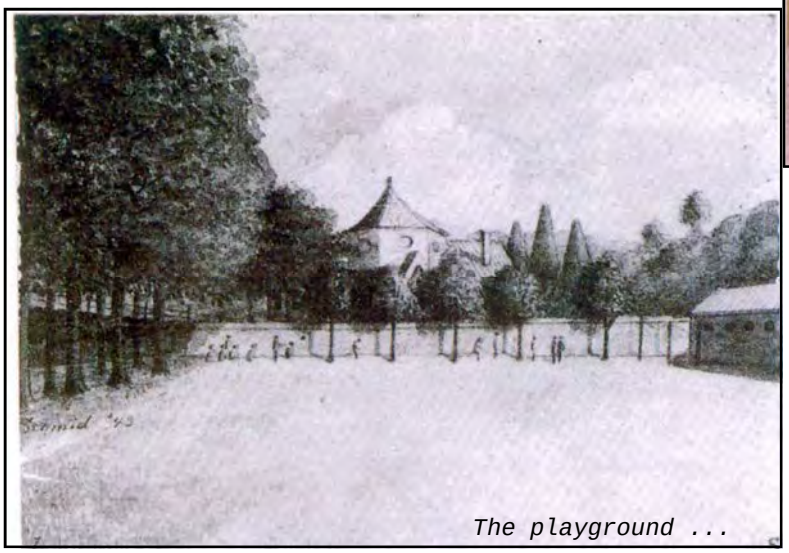
All available skills were harnessed: carpenter, bricklayer, tinsmith, baker, cook, teacher, seamstress, soap-maker[!], instrumentalist, etc As for me, I offered my services to the kitchen as junior kitchen-hand No. 6. It was a good way of ensuring that you got at least some food! Dare I admit that I 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



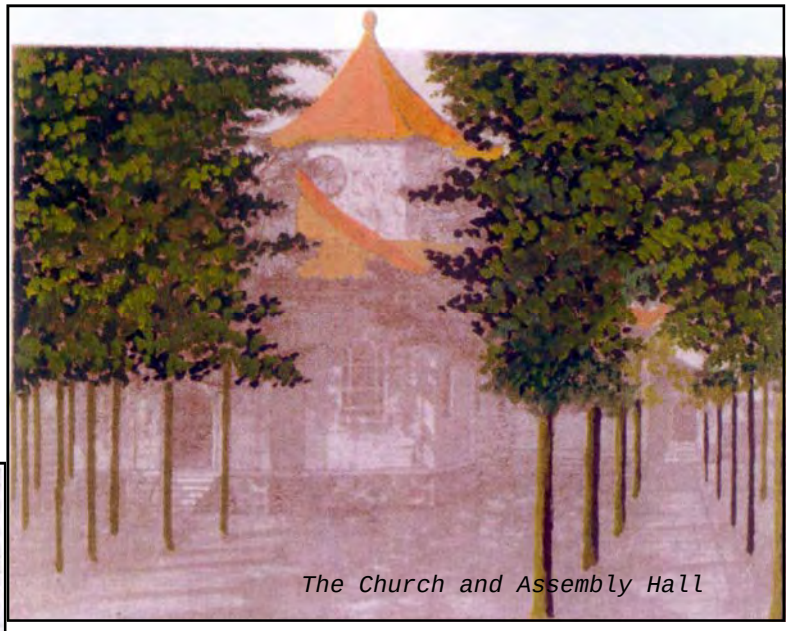
The playground ...

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 were 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.

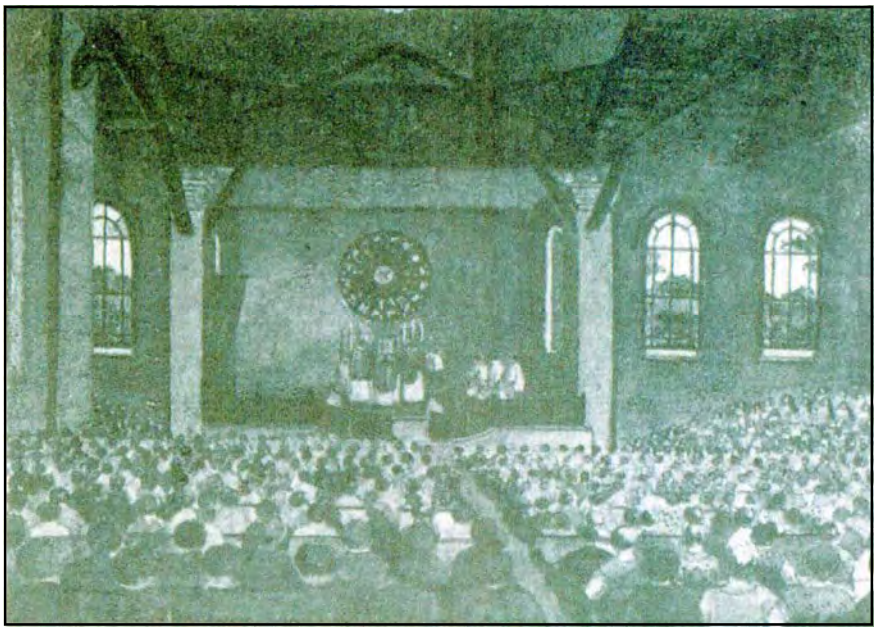


The Church and Assembly Hall

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* .

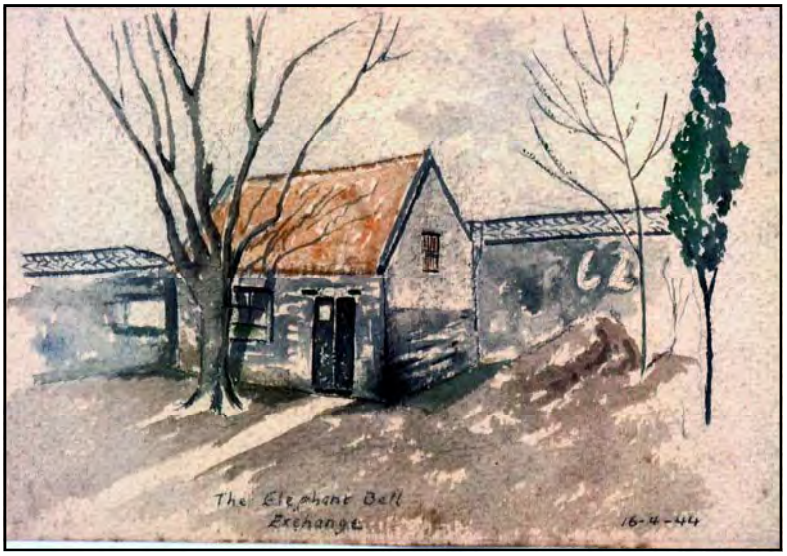
The White Elephant Shop

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

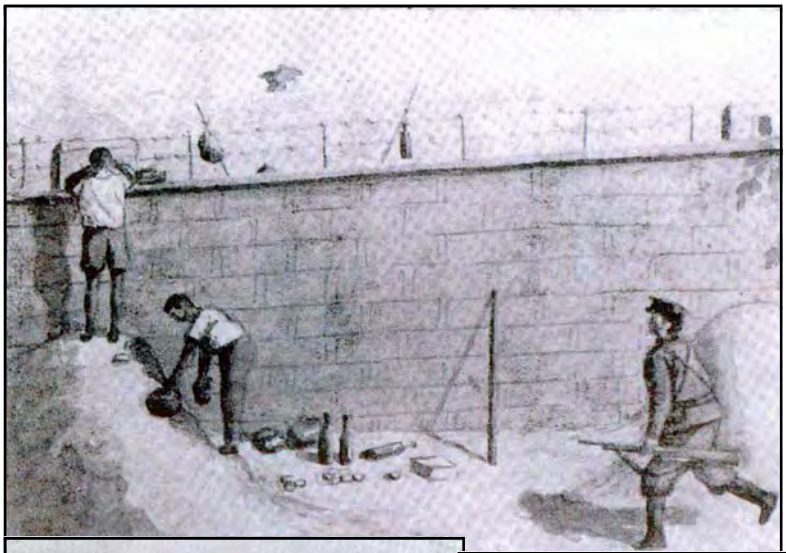
this once it was the branch he was holding on to that gave way. This all took place near the kitchen and I heard the dull heavy thud of something falling to the ground. We rushed out to see what had happened. Alas, too late. Alyousha lay dead by the branch that he had just brought down…

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 discreet 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 harnessed 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 happening? 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 barefoot. 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.

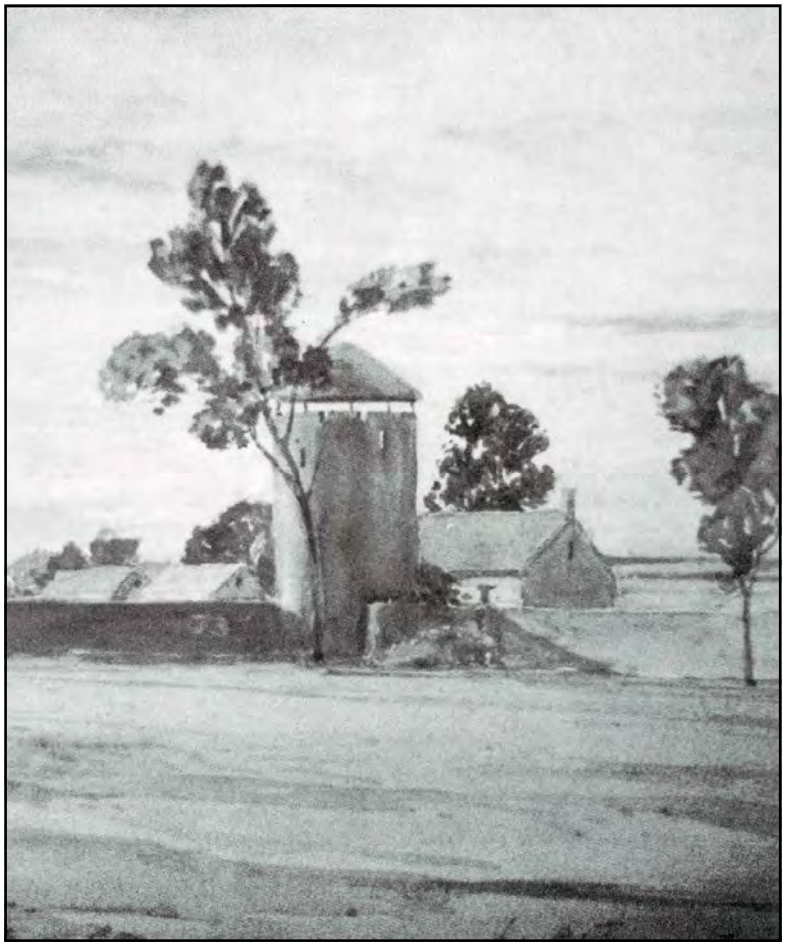
The Seven Warrior Angels who Came from the Skies [17 August 1945]

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 the15th of August 1945. I had tried to find out more from some Chinese who had delivered a cartload 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.

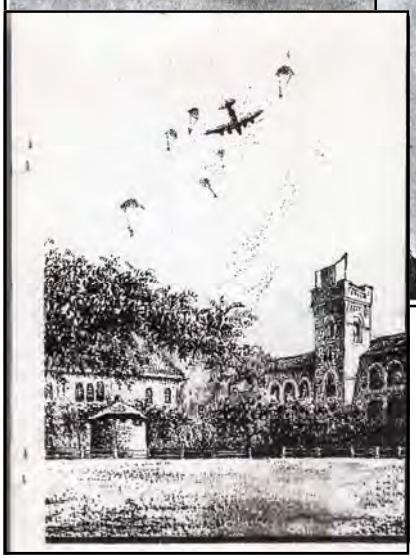
The Japanese commandant had assembled all the guards and was impassively waiting for the parachutists to arrive. He knew full well that the war was over…Two interpreters, British Eurasians who had been interned with us, were present. The exchange between the Americans and Japanese passed off smoothly. 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 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?

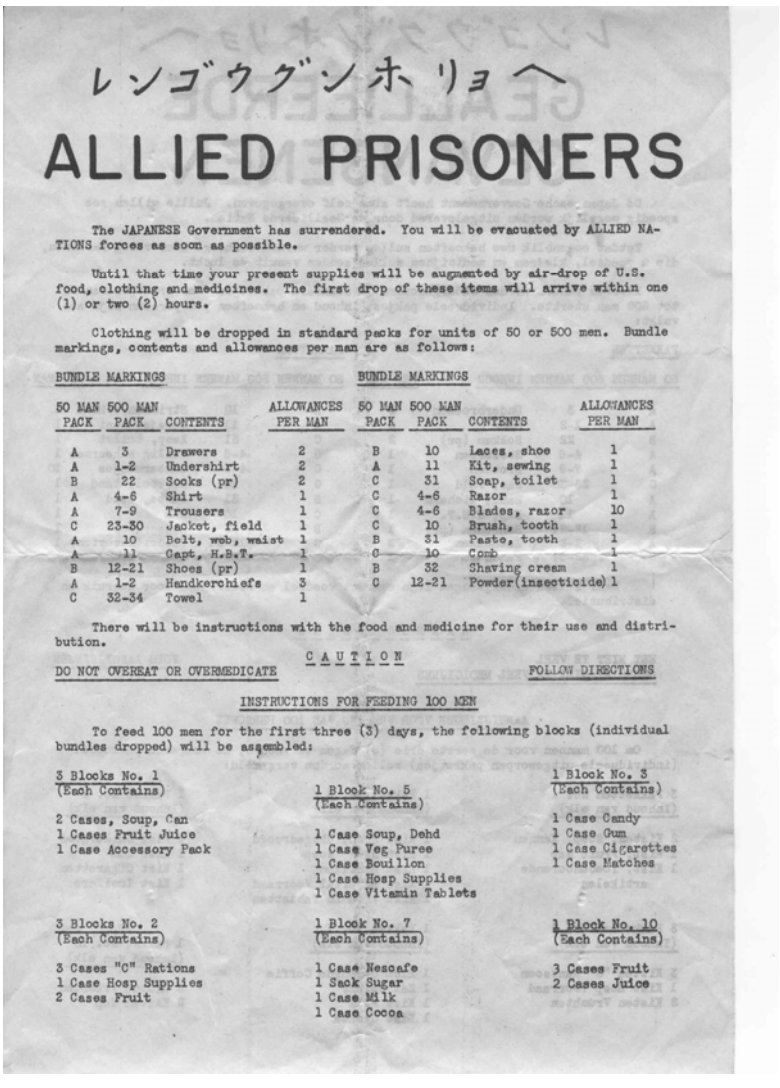
Whatever it was, at the request of the authorities we put down white strips as markers around some of the nearby fields to show where the drops should be made. We had little experience of such matters, but then neither had the pilots of the flying fortresses who were better trained in dropping bombs 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 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



レンゴウグンホリョヘ

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 50 MAN PACK	BUNDLE MARKINGS 500 MAN PACK	CONTENTS	ALLOWANCES PER MAN	BUNDLE MARKINGS 50 MAN PACK	BUNDLE MARKINGS 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	4-6	Shirt	1	C	4-6	Razor	1
A	7-9	Trousers	1	C	4-6	Blades, razor	10
C	23-30	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 OVEREAT 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)
2 Cases, Soup, Can
1 Cases Fruit Juice
1 Case Accessory Pack

1 Block No. 5 (Each Contains)
1 Case Soup, Dehd
1 Case Veg Puree
1 Case Bouillon
1 Case Hosp Supplies
1 Case Vitamin Tablets

1 Block No. 3 (Each Contains)
1 Case Candy
1 Case Gum
1 Case Cigarettes
1 Case Matches

3 Blocks No. 2 (Each Contains)
3 Cases "C" Rations
1 Case Hosp Supplies
2 Cases Fruit

1 Block No. 7 (Each Contains)
1 Case Nescafe
1 Sack Sugar
1 Case Milk
1 Case Cocoa

1 Block No. 10 (Each Contains)
3 Cases Fruit
2 Cases Juice

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' roommates 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.

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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 musts, 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 reassured 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.

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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.

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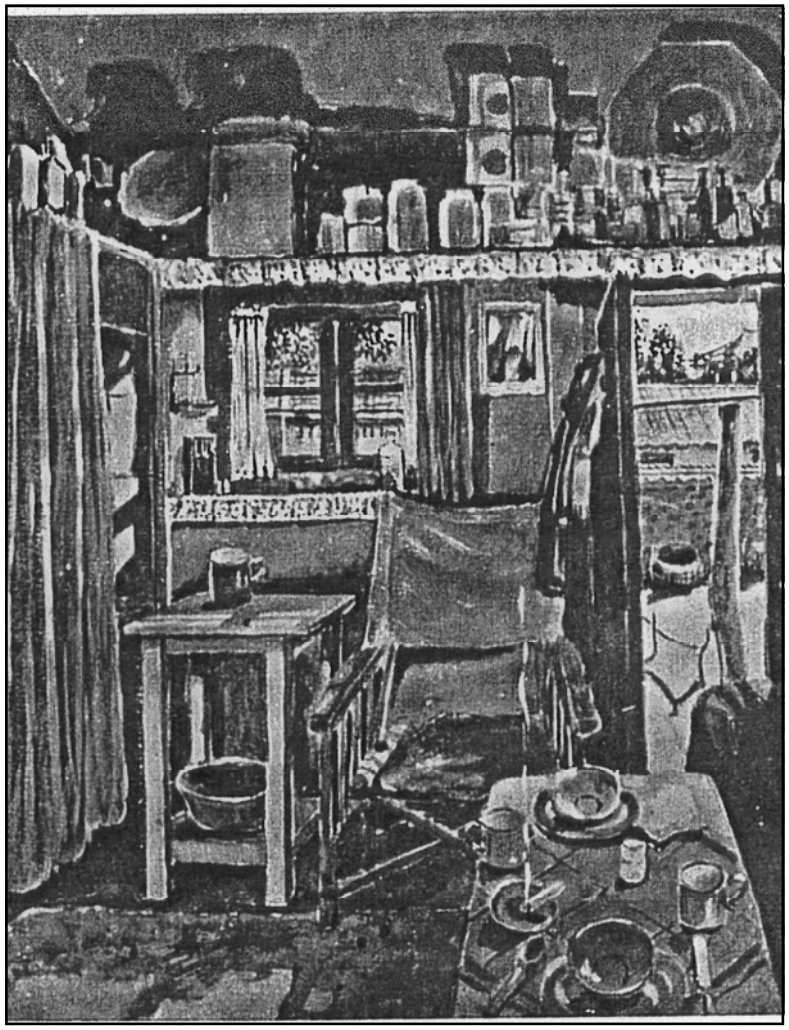
MAIN SWITCH

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.

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THE ITALIANS ARE COMMING,

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 Tavella. 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” prisoners 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.

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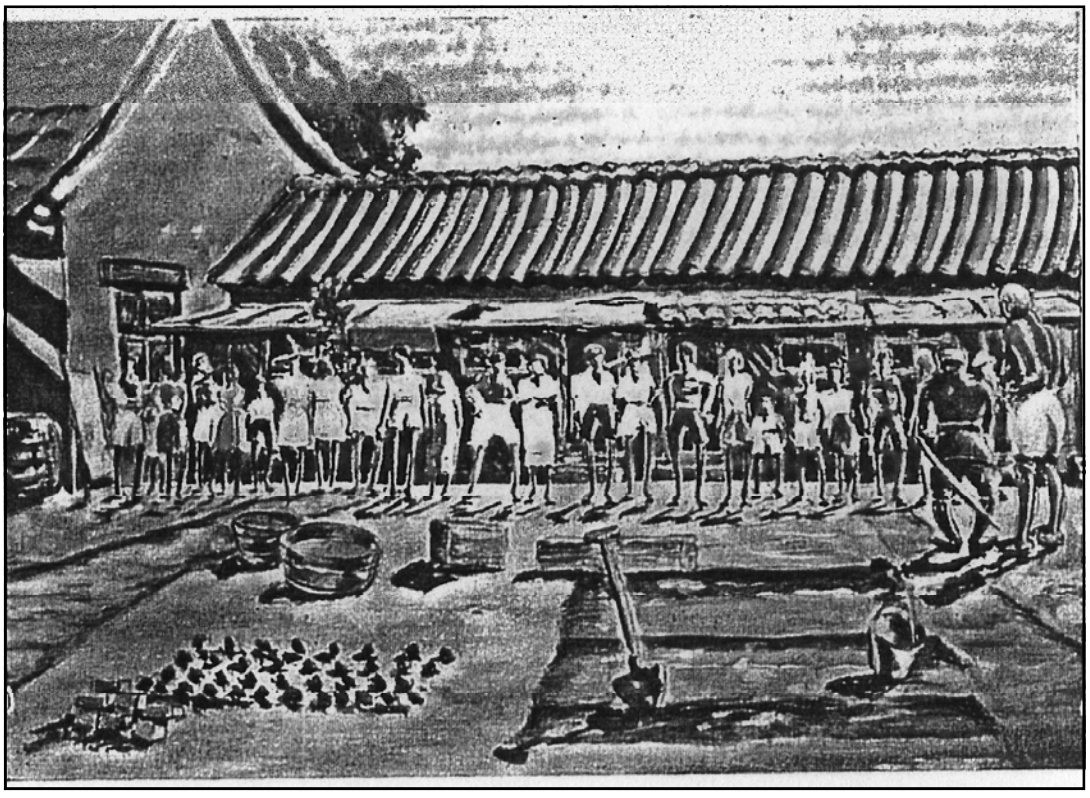
Secret Brigade:

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.

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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 cantine, 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 railline 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 Communists 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

MEMOIRES

By Emmanuel Hanquet

In a Country Embroiled in Civil War

Translated by Albert de Zutter

From Peking to Hungtung, November 4-17, 1945

At that time, taking a train from the Peking station required some travel experience on the part of the ordinary tourist. The volume of travellers meant that there could be no reserved seats, most especially in third class, which is how I travelled. You had to get your ticket the day before, then throw yourself into the melee and elbow your way in to grab a spot. But fortunately I was dressed in a way that gave me a position of prestige which helped on several of my trips. As prisoners of war we had been supplied with American Marine Corps uniforms, down to our underwear. This sheltered me from controls and verifications.

It was, then, in the image of a liberator that I left as a forward scout to return to the apostolic prefecture (nowadays we would say diocese) of Hungtung, three days' journey by train from Peking. For the sake of security I avoided night travel because of the civil war and the possibility of Communist guerrilla attacks. The rail lines were still guarded by Japanese troops, even though the emperor had capitulated four months earlier. That had been a part of the surrender agreement signed by Hirohito.

I left Peking on December 4, having bought my ticket the day before, hoping thus to secure a seat by arriving a quarter of an hour in advance. But when it was time to leave I still had to find my glasses and say my farewells before mounting a bicycle which I intended to leave at the station. I arrived with no more than five minutes to spare. The train was not in bad condition. The third class cars – 1930 models – were clean. (In this model the compartments were made up of benches facing one another, two three-person seats on one side and two single-seats on the other. NDLA. But that morning the train was full to the point of bursting – people were seated everywhere, a dozen instead of eight in each compartment. There were two or three passengers in each toilet, and dozens of others were perched on the roof or hanging from the platforms. Thanks to my American uniform, and by pushing back with my backpack – which I had sewn in the concentration camp with a view to escaping -- I was able to create a foothold for myself in the last row of the exterior platform.

Finally the train shuddered and started up, leaving behind many disappointed would-be passengers who were not able to get aboard. It was cold, but I was consoled by telling myself that I was departing from Peking and on my way to my mission at Hungtung. After an hour's travel and several stops, I succeeded in forcing my way inside the car where I found three Scheut Fathers who were returning to KuiSui, Mongolia, via Shansi. They travelled with me as far as YuTse.

Suddenly a woman passenger complained of feeling ill. She had to be passed from shoulder to shoulder to reach the platform where she could breathe some fresh air. To get off the train, people had to climb from shoulder to shoulder. I thanked heaven that I had not brought anything but a backpack and a briefcase. Even though I was one of three people sitting on a bench for two, I was able to say my breviary prayers and even study a little Chinese.

Towards noon we arrived at the PeiHo River. As the bridge had been damaged, we had to leave the train and walk for 20 minutes to get to another train which had to wait for us. People jumped out the windows and hurried all over the place to reach the other bank first. Alas, the wooden bridge over the river was in poor repair, and ended up being a single plank. We had to perform like acrobats, and as there were close to 2,000 passengers, needless to say there was much jostling and shoving. Nevertheless, I reached the other side of the river fairly quickly, but there was no train there. We waited two hours before a train from the south arrived from Paoting. That one also was packed. People disembarked and entered by all the openings, truly a battle without precedent. The Apostolic Vicar of Chenting was hoisted up by two Scheut Fathers, and he landed on his head in the compartment. As for me, I pulled myself in and ended up in a former sleeping car of which nothing remained but the shell. My backpack served as a cushion, and I was

August 1946 … laborious China ...

squared away to meditate on the scarcity of window panes.

At 16:30 hours we arrived at Paoting, and I took part in a meal with some Chinese merchants, travelling companions who invited me to dine. That was a welcome snack as I had eaten nothing all day except for two "pingtze" (NDLA: I could find no translation – A. de Z.) and some persimmons. When I arrived at the mission at 19:00 hours, there was no supper, but I was bombarded with questions about life in Peking and in the Weihsien camp. Monsignor Chow, the bishop, spent the evening with me, but the unheated room was very cold. War had left its mark there, leaving a legacy of poverty.

On December 5, in the hope of finally finding a seat, I arose very early and hurried my breakfast. When I arrived at the station, the train was almost empty; it would not leave until 9:30 hours. I had decided to make use of my American uniform to travel without cost, and a smiling Japanese soldier who was guarding the railroad, opened a door for me. All the length of the tracks the Japanese provided surveillance and protection against attacks by Communists. There were fortifications a dozen meters high every three kilometers.

When we arrived at Shihmen toward 17:00 hours, I came upon a station severely damaged by American bombing. I departed from there without difficulty to return to my mission where I was welcomed by Lazarist Father Chanet, a repentant public adversary of Father Lebbe. He was in charge of the residence, and would receive the Scheut Fathers after me. The house was very lively as it was occupied in part by Chinese generals who also held secret meetings there. Chinese priests were also in residence, and we had to sleep in the hallways after a much too light supper, which reminded us of Weihsien. We passed the evening with a young Chinese physician, a graduate of the University of Aurora in Shanghai. He was a cousin of T.V. Soong, and director of the small mission hospital.

On December 6 we celebrated the Feast of St. Nicholas with coffee in a third class wagon. Our departure was quite eventful. There were people on the roof, and there were several laborers trying to find a way to get aboard. One of them latched onto a cross-bar between two cars while holding a sack of cotton with his other hand. After a while, seized with a cramp, he had to let go his hold while the train was rolling. Happily, he fell at the side of the train and got up with no apparent harm.

I continued to travel without paying, with people sitting on my knees or standing all around. As the four of us were foreigners, we presented the Chinese who surrounded us with an enigma. A self-assured Chinese man was giving a discourse about our noses. "This one with a hooked nose and a beard – he is no doubt a Russian"; "that one with a turned-up nose, that is most certainly an American"; "that other one with an ordinary nose, that must be a Frenchman." As for me, they spared themselves the trouble of identification. Up until then my uniform had been recognized, but further on people asked themselves on seeing me, "Is that an American or a Russian?"

We were now leaving the plains and entering the mountains of the Shansi Province. The governor, Yen Si Shan, had been given the title of "model governor" because he had been a good administrator of his province; perhaps a little too good. For example, the railroad tracks crossing his entire province were constructed in a narrow gauge, different from the width of the tracks in the other provinces. That prevented the rail cars and locomotives from leaving his province. It was necessary, therefore, to transfer goods and passengers upon arriving at the borders of his province. Yen Si Shan also had his own currency and troops, who had rallied to the central government upon its reentry into Nanking.

During the last six months American airplanes had damaged most of the locomotives, and those which pulled our heavy train did so with difficulty. As we entered the mountains tunnels became more and more numerous, and we were half-choked in traversing them because our doors and windows would no longer close. At each station the people riding on the roofs were warned to lie down on entering the tunnels. Several days earlier, in fact, a half-dozen who had not taken that precaution were decapitated. In one of those hellholes that we passed through the Communists had planted a mine several days before. The result was 30 people killed and many wounded. The explosion flung the carriage up to the arch of the tunnel, crushing the people on the roof.

We made a stop at Yung Tsuan, half-way toYu Tse. The resident Italian priest received us with good will, and we gave 2,000 yuan to his cook so she could find us some meat. But once again we had to camp because the Japanese still occupied a part of the mission.

On December 7, after an early morning Mass we gained entry to the station quite easily, thanks to the helpfulness of the station chief, a Christian. That was fortunate as lines of 100-200 meters formed at each ticket window. It enabled us to get settled without difficulty. Our train had to climb till 14:00 hours, huffing and puffing all the way, before reaching 1,075 meters of altitude, which brought us to the threshold of Shansi. The locomotive was at its limit, and had to stop for half an hour every 10 kilometers. Happily, once arrived at the top, all we had to do was coast to Yu Tse. But shortly before we arrived, I witnessed a scene that

can be described at least as picturesque: the passengers on the roof, not being able to contain themselves any longer, shamelessly hosed down anyone who passed through the doors and windows!

As I had many friends in the diocese of Yu Tse, I decided to spend the Feast of the Immaculate Conception with the Franciscans of the Province of Bologna, who always received me with good will. I was not sorry to sleep late and spend time with Monsignor Pessers, apostolic prefect of Kiang Chow, who had travelled for 10 days to get to Yu Tse and found that he was stuck there. He was taken by my energy and decided to resume his journey soon. My course was already decided: I would be on my way again the next day in an attempt to get to Fenyang by evening where I was to meet the apostolic vicar. I used my time on the way to get information about the state of the railroad tracks from the merchants heading south. I also paid a visit to a sick friend, Mr. Jen, who had accompanied me to Hungtung when I arrived in China in 1939.

On December 9, even though it was a Sunday, I set off toward the south. The station master accompanied me onto the train to reserve a place for me in a rail car. We were packed in like cattle, and it was very cold. We arrived at Ping Yao at 15:00 hours. That was where I had to get off to get to Fengyang, I had been told. But I had been misinformed. That route was occupied by the Reds. I consoled myself in passing the night at the home of Father Tchang, who extended me a warm welcome and asked me a pile of questions about the Society of Mission Auxiliaries. He was so eager to have my colleague Father Wenders come and teach at the seminary in Hungtung that he was willing to get on his knees to beg him to do so.

Some merchants informed me that the railroad was cut off at Fu Kia T'an, leaving me 150 kilometers to cover on foot! Because of the proximity of Communist troops, I reverted to my Chinese clothes to be less noticeable. On December 10 I learned that the Reds had destroyed one or two kilometers of track, and that I would have to wait three days for them to be repaired. I took advantage of that delay to visit several schools and churches and meet with some Christians. I also spent some interesting hours with the old parish priest, who had a positive interest in my work. Unfortunately I was afflicted with a very bad cold contracted in the unheated or badly heated places where I had been staying.

At last I was able to get back on the road on the 12th, and continued to journey free of charge, on the strength of a "let-pass" note written (in Chinese) by Father Raymond de Jaegher upon our departure from Weihsien. All the other travellers were still subject to scrutiny. Toward 10:00 hours I arrived at Kie Hsio, where I needed to get off to continue to Fenyang. I had a short visit with the Chinese parish priest, who lent me an old bicycle, and I left all alone toward Fenyang. After 15 kilometers I stopped at Siao Yi, at the house of the local parish priest to break bread with him. The bicycle was not in very good condition, and the tires needed to be reinflated.

The parish priest urged me not to continue because there would not be many travellers on the road during the afternoon. But I overlooked those fears and again found myself launched toward the unknown. I lost my way and at sundown the chain on my bicycle broke. There was not a soul or anything else in sight, not even the walls of Fenyang. Pushing my bike, I set off at a gallop and finally sighted the walls of the town at nightfall, when the gates had already been closed. I had to negotiate with the Japanese, who still stood guard in the interior of China, and I arrived at the residence at 19:00 hours. The Chinese priests were delighted to see me, and we conversed until late at night with the young priests who were former students of Father Nicholas Wenders at Suanhua. They were very anxious regarding the reopening of the regional seminary at Hungtung. Later on I was received by Monsignor Liou, age 74, who had aged visibly, but was nevertheless in good health.

On December 13 I spent the day with Monsignor Liou discussing the problems of the seminary and of procurement. We then inspected the residence and the little seminary. He honored us with his presence at dinner, which he had not done for a long time for fear of the cold. In the afternoon I went to visit the orphanage and the buildings of the American Protestant mission, which occupied a part of the town. As I had entered freely despite the Japanese guard, to whom I had declared that I was American, there was an inquiry at the diocesan office about whether I was Belgian or American. Monsignor invited me to spend the evening with him where we partook of an excellent rose liqueur.

On the 14th I left Fenyang as I had already made a commitment to meet Monsignor Pessers on the 12th. We were to meet at Chieh Hsio to travel together toward the south. When I arrived at Chieh Hsio I learned that he had left the night before without waiting for me. Well and good.

I therefore left on my own the next day, and had to ride on a flatcar carrying anthracite. We lost a lot of time at Ling Shih in loading a dozen recalcitrant mules. We arrived early in the afternoon at Fou Kia T'an, the terminus of my voyage by rail. Lacking information about the way to go on foot, I merged with the column of travellers going south along the rail-bed, of which little of use remained. The rails had been toppled into the river below where they lay all twisted. Railroad ties and telephone poles were burned, and the banks of the

road bed were cleverly excavated in places to prevent all except foot traffic. Nothing remained of the seven or eight stations that we passed except for a pile of pulverized bricks. Everything had been removed – doors, windows, etc., and there were no more tickets to be punched or signals to observe.

As I walked fairly fast, I found myself isolated after a while, with no one in sight behind me. Only three travelers were ahead of me in the distance, and I tried to catch up with them, but in vain. The wind, the cold and a blister on my foot foiled me. At nightfall I had covered almost 20 kilometers, and I was preparing to tackle five more when I was stopped by a captain of the local militia who urgently recommended that I break off my journey. It was dangerous at night, and he invited me to stay at his house, which I accepted without hesitation because I was exhausted. He took me to a walled village which he occupied with his 200 men, and he gave me the prettiest room in the temple situated on the village heights. We dined together on Shansi noodles, which I enjoyed. He had been a student of the Protestants in Chefoo, and he retained a regard for the church in general. Under the Japanese occupation he had been a sub-prefect and general of the provincial militia.

Shanxi Noodles

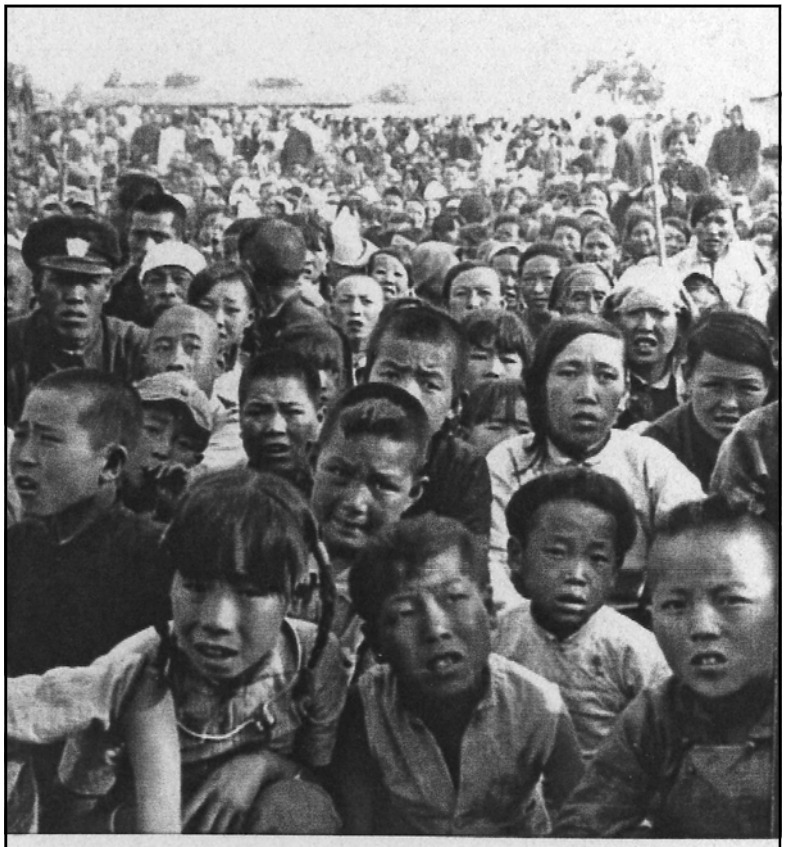
In contrast to Governor Yen Si Shan's troops, his officers were trained and his troops' moral was good. He promised to find me a carriage to travel form Hua Chou to Chao Ch'eng the next day, and made a telephone call to arrange it after supper. Then he had me visit the village defense positions after which I went to sleep on a well-heated khan (a traditional Chinese bed of bricks and cement containing a furnace). The heat was much needed as I only had one cover.

On the 16th, even though it was Sunday, I set out in the early hours of the morning. A soldier accompanied me as far as Hua Chou where – not without trouble – I found the requested carriage. I had just enough time to swallow a bowl of millet and then, forward on a cart pulled by an ox. The pace was exasperatingly slow! But as I still had to make 45 kilometers, I preferred to take it easy during the morning. About a third of the way out, the driver decided to turn back and I had to continue my journey on foot. After a forced march I caught up with a group around Chao Ch'eng. One person agreed to accompany me to the west to cross the river and reach Mamu, where we had a church. The direct route was dangerous, we were told. It was 17:00 hours when we crossed the river and I had eaten nothing since my morning millet, so I bought two pingtze and a bowl of soup at a little restaurant next to the road. We had to hurry because night was falling and we still had 10 kilometers to go. There was no moon in the sky.

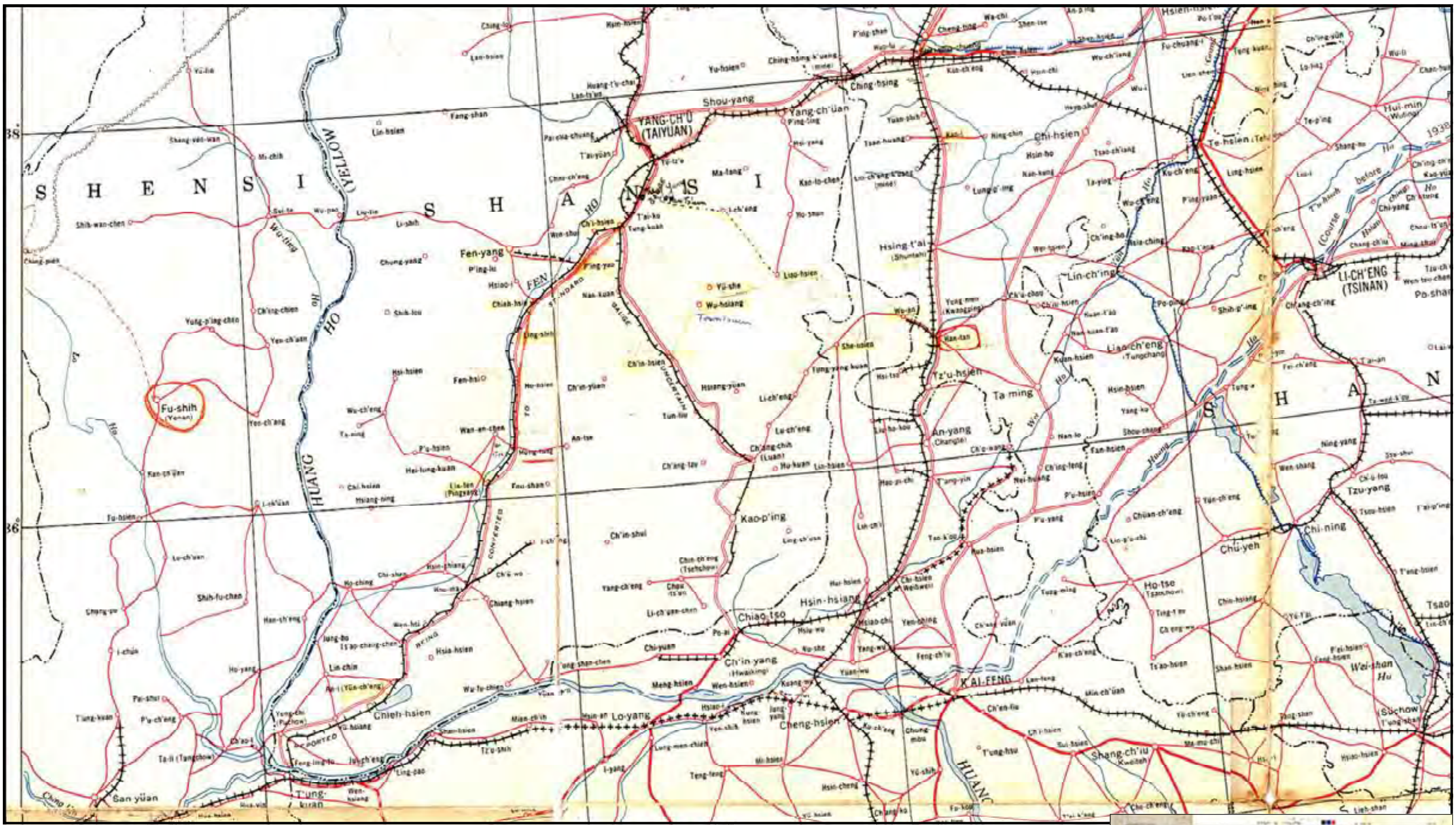
In wanting to avoid the more crowded routes we were set upon by two bandits who wanted to avail themselves of our donkey. I reasoned with them, saying this was a cart that I had rented. But they pretended to be sick and absolutely insisted on detaching the donkey from the cart. As they were getting ready to look into our baggage, we heard two peasants approaching in the distance. That bothered the bandits and I took advantage of their preoccupation to whisper in the ear of my companion that we should flee as fast as possible. But he had gotten frightened, and insisted on stopping at the next village. I managed to persuade

炕 kang – a heatable brick bed

There were few furniture in the house. The whole family slept on a large square bed of gray bricks that was attached to one wall. It was wide and flat and hard. The pillows were long rolls and hard, but small Pear and his family rolled up.



Summer 1946 … waiting for a food distribution ...



http://weihsien-paintings.org/hanquet/mapAsiaUNRA/ColourMapChina.jpg

him to come with me to Mamu by promising him hospitality.

The wind was getting stronger and stronger and it was hellishly cold. Upon our arrival at Mamu, the moon had risen and the village appeared to be half destroyed. There were houses abandoned and stripped of their innards. Burdened with taxes, the peasants chose to abandon everything and flee. The church along with one of our nicest houses was heavily damaged. The high surrounding wall had been destroyed to construct fortifications. All the furnishings, doors and windows had been carried off. Tiles were broken and, in many places, the roofs were damaged, and the same sight would greet me when I arrived in Hungtung the next day.

But waiting outside the gate I had to knock on the door for a quarter of an hour before a caretaker dared to answer. I identified myself. The residents were afraid of the local troops, who were undisciplined looters. They were waiting anxiously for the arrival of central government troops. The caretaker of the church, with a very welcoming manner, prepared a meal for me and even gave me a heated room.

As the sacristy had been sacked, I was not able to celebrate Mass. I therefore left for Hungtung, 10 kilometers from Mamu, on the 17th. As I left I saw that the church, which had been bombarded by the Japanese three years earlier, had already been repaired.

On arriving at the old city of Hungtung, I saw that the old thick walls of the city had been reinforced against the possibility of an attack by the Communists who had occupied the neighboring town of Chao Ch'eng for 15 days, which I had passed through the day before. They had leveled the fortifications of that town. Entry into Hungtung posed no problem, and I found, at the Episcopal residence, Monsignor Pessers and two of his priests, who had arrived the day before. They would leave us at 14:00 hours to continue their voyage to Kiang Chow, the neighboring mission. Seven or eight Chinese priests were also there to welcome me, among them Father Francois Han, the apostolic pro-prefect. The residence had a military air as even the main court was occupied by the officers of a general who had requisitioned a side courtyard. Lines of field telephones were lying on the ground and disheveled soldiers walked about here and there. The three courts of entry were occupied by some 300 soldiers, which made the situation complicated. One had to pass by guard units, show a pass or give a password to the sentinel, etc.

After consulting with Monsignor Han, I again put on my American military uniform, an action which aroused quite a few questions and some surprise. It had the desired effect. The next day I made a courtesy visit to the general, who failed to impress me. He struck me as a brutish bandit chief. There was no discipline among his soldiers, who freely engaged in inappropriate behavior. Two hundred of his men occupied the seminary outside

the town. They turned it into a defense camp with fortifications, trenches and spikes, just like our camp at Weihsien. We would have our work cut out for us to rid ourselves of the evidence of this army rabble.

After having met with the priests and dealt with some urgent matters concerning the seminary and procurement, I summed up our situation. We were living under very poor – even miserable -- circumstances. The priests were entirely dependent on the charity of Christians who themselves were extremely impoverished. The troops of the governor, General Yen Si Shen (the second war zone) were constantly imposing themselves on the civilian population in an arbitrary manner. These troops were hated by the population. They had brought with them their wives and children, had too many officers and half the troops were unarmed. What's more, in the course of my journey, I saw young Chinese recruits placed under the command of Japanese officers.

At the central residence and at the sisters' novitiate we lived as best we could. We ground grain for the army and individuals. That enabled us to derive a few kilos of flour which we exchanged for millet or corn. The menu was the same every day. My arrival had permitted the purchase of some meat, but we did not eat any of it before Christmas and New Year's. Nutrition at the minor seminary and the orphanage posed a serious problem. While the price of grain was lower here than on my journey, a pound of flour still cost 70 fapis. Despite the obstacles, certain priests had made some progress. Saint Pierre College had reopened its doors to 40 students and hoped to stay open with the help of Christians.

The main danger and the principal obstacle to reconstruction was the proximity of Communist troops. To the east of the town they were no more than 10 kilometers away, and they were equally numerous in the mountains, blocking all traffic to and from the central valley of Fen Ho. Even though they were ill-equipped (with grenades, primarily and perhaps five cartridges per rifle), these troops wreaked terrible ravages in the east. Every day we met Christians, coming from the neighboring diocese, who brought alarming news of priests arrested and Christians molested or killed. By means of their fifth column operatives the Communists also sapped the morale of the population and circulated unfounded rumors.

Discussing the situation with Monsignor Han, we concluded that we had to do all we could to escape the stagnation in which our mission vegetated for lack of money, so much the more since we did have access to funds, but they were on deposit in Shanghai in the Franciscan Fathers' account. The subsidy we received from Rome had been blocked for two years because Shanghai money was different from ours. I suggested to the bishop that I go to Tientsin, a major port of north China, where a Franciscan Father was charged with looking after the interests of our mission as well as his own. Monsignor Han also wanted me to visit Peking to persuade the Samiste Fathers Keymolen and Wenders, both of whom were full-fledged professors of the Grand Seminary, to come and teach at Hungtung. I also wanted to seize the opportunity to spend some time in Shanghai to make contact with international aid agencies. I had heard that they had some important projects, and Monsignor gave me a mandate to meet with them. So, on January 5, 1946, I was once again on the train heading north with an overnight stop at Kie Hsio, where I was among 36 travelers to invade a small Chinese inn. The next day I arrived at Taiyuan at 14:30 hours to visit the bishop, Monsignor Capozzi, as well as half a dozen priest friends.

From Hungtung to Peking, January 8-11, 1946

Travel was still slow, so I didn't arrive at Shih Chia Chuang until the evening of Jan. 8, 1946. I made a stopover the night before at Yang Tsuan. The house was still just as crowded as it was when I stopped there the previous month. The bishop of Shunteh, Monsignor Kraus, was there along with his two priests – two very energetic Poles who wanted to go with me to Peking. After the meal that evening, we discussed our plan for the next morning. I proposed that we get to the station early and be prepared to take any available train to Peking.

The next day, Jan. 9, we hurried to the station and found a train with seven or eight cars. We boarded the first car where we managed to find three seats. We were hardly seated when I nevertheless informed Monsignor Kraus that I would prefer to be in the rear of the train. Experience had taught me that if we touched off a mine it would be the car at the head of the train that would take the brunt of the explosion and suffer the most of damage. Also, having explored the entire train, I found three seats in the sixth car, where we finally settled in. The weather was sunny and we had a pleasant conversation. We were travelling in third class, which gave us the opportunity to meet the good people of China. At lunch time we were able to buy egg noodles and soup. Everything went well, and we dozed off.

Toward 4 p.m. the train stopped abruptly, and at the same time we heard two explosions and the crackling of a machine-gun in the east. I pressed my nose to the window to see what was going on, and I saw the lead car of the train perched crosswise across the tracks. Very soon we heard shouts telling us to get off the train and take shelter below the tracks on the west side. There was an interminable delay and word that some

people were wounded. Finally we were advised to make our way to the nearby station and take shelter there. It was not till almost 10 p.m. that we travelers found ourselves regrouped and sheltered in the waiting room. There were people moaning. I went toward the sound and I managed to help some of them with the little pack of first aid items that I always carried with me. Exhausted, we inquired as to where we could lie down for the night. I informed the station master of our condition and told him that I was accompanied by a bishop. The accommodating man led us in the darkness to a small Japanese hut, and suggested we shelter there. We groped our way in, sliding along the Japanese tatamis, worn out, but safe. At dawn, I was the first to awaken, and I discovered Monsignor Kraus stretched out not far from a stranger. It was the wife of the station master, a circumstance which became fodder for good-natured banter that whole day!

There was another long delay. At 2 p.m. we were told that a Japanese armored train would be arriving at Paoting and that it could take us on board. I asked that last night's wounded also be loaded on, and we arrived at Paoting two hours later.

It was not until Friday, January 11, that we were able to complete the last stage of our journey toward Peking, with Monsignor Kraus still with us.

Sojourn in Peking, January 11-17, 1946

At Peking I usually stopped at the chancery of the Diocese of Suanhua where my friend and colleague, Paul Gilson, worked. It was he who welcomed me in February 1939 when I arrived from Belgium. At that time we forged a very solid friendship which lasted until his death.

The chancery was not very large, but at that moment it sheltered my colleagues, Michel Keymolen and Nicolas Wenders, both of whom I hastened to find. They were awaiting news of Shansi, and I had to persuade them to accompany me there despite the risks and perils of the civil war. I had a solid argument to budge them: the Chinese bishops of Shansi (Fenyang and Hungtung) had agreed to reopen in Hungtung the regional seminary that had been at Suanhua.

On Monday, Jan. 14, 1946, I paid a visit to the Apostolic Delegate, Monsignor Zanin, hoping to receive from him subsidies and advice for our mission. Alas, he was so preoccupied with his own problems that I had to hear about them for half an hour. Sensing that I would receive neither advice nor sustenance, I ended my visit as politely as possible and decided to go

to Tientsin the next day. At the Franciscan house in Tientsin I received a warm welcome from Father Ormazabal, an understanding and joyful Spanish Basque. Monsignor Comisso, first secretary to the apostolic delegate, lived there and, as we were old friends, we had many things to tell one another. Nevertheless, my primary goal was to reach Shanghai at all costs. It was there that our subsidies could be found, but to date the treasurer had not been able to transfer them to the north. The only possible means of transport – trains and ships – were taken over by the central government to send as many troops as possible to the north to establish a bridge-head against the Communists who intended to take over Peking. Father Ormazabal had more than one trick up his sleeve. He gave me some hope of gaining passage by air with the cooperation of the Superior of the Franciscan Sisters, Mother Montana. The latter had among her students the daughter of the commandant of the air base, held by the 3rd Amphibious Group. It was thus that on January 17 I was received at the base and, after a long interrogation by intelligence officers, was given a round-trip air ticket to Shanghai. "You can report whatever you want," the commandant told me. Confidence reigned.

Voyage to Shanghai, January 18-25, 1945

At 8:30 a.m. Friday Jan. 18, 1946, I arrived at the airport of the French municipality. We took off at 10 a.m., and after a stop in Tsingtao we landed in Shanghai at 4 p.m. I was welcomed at the Franciscan headquarters by Father Miravigli and I asked him to prepare the money from the subsidy provided by Rome which I was to take to the north. I then went to the Scheut Fathers' residence where I stayed until January 25. I took advantage of my stay to meet with as many former Weihsien friends as possible who were now living in Shanghai. But above all, I had to make contact with the directors of UNRRA.

UNRRA, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, was created in the United States by 48 nations to serve as an agency of emergency aid and rehabilitation in the countries that had suffered from the war. In the period immediately following the Sino-Japanese war, from which China emerged severely impoverished, I chose – with the approval of my bishop – to work for that agency as a means of bringing more effective aid for the relief of China.

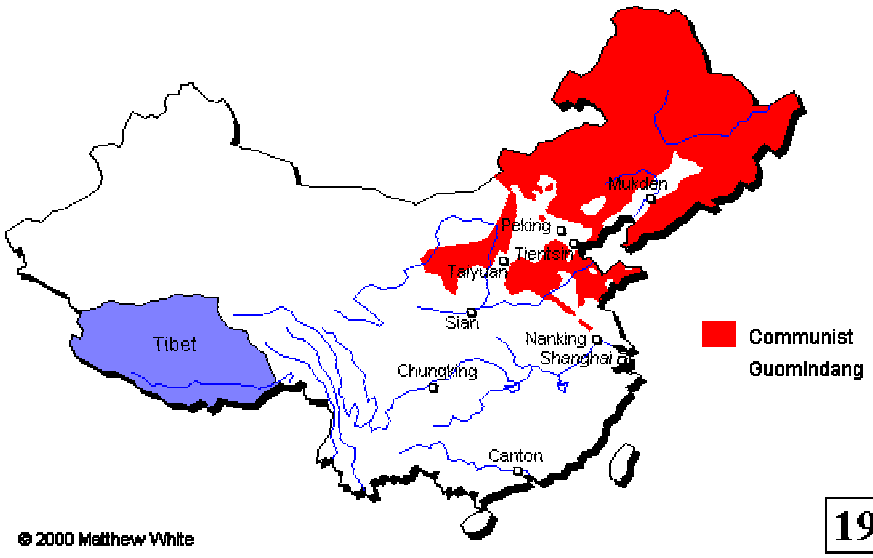
But that was not an easy undertaking. Nevertheless, starting Monday morning, I spent several hours with the agency and the next day I was received by Solano and above all by two young recently demobilized American officers, Colonel Rose and Captain Moore, with whom I arranged a study project in north China for the coming six weeks.

On January 25, despite the fog, I went to the Bund where I had an appointment to get me to the military airport. The plane took off at 9 a.m. As we had hoped, I had been able to fill two suitcases with Chinese banknotes in the southern currency. They amounted to several million francs which would be distributed to six northern dioceses. The Shanghai money was at a premium in the north, and so by this transfer the missions would gain 10 percent when the money was exchanged in Tientsin. The flight was rough, we were shaken violently. We made a stopover in Tsingtao at 11:15 a.m. and reached Tientsin at 2:15 p.m., where I urgently set about remitting the money to the respective treasurers – Father Mommaerts at the Scheut Fathers and Father Ormazabal at the Franciscans.

Journey Across Communist China (Journal and trip notes, February-March, 1946)

We left Taiyuan on Feb. 21, 1946, in the company of representatives of the Nationalists, the Communists and the Americans in search of a cease fire in the southeast region of Shansi. To that end, the governor had arranged a special armored train, which had already been delayed by 24 hours. For better or worse, we found ourselves en route, sumptuously installed in a first class wagon, to butter up either the American colonel or the Communist General Hsui and his staff. On the way we also had long conversations with Doctor Tchang, chief of the office of health for UNRRA, who was making the voyage with me and who would become extremely valuable, proving himself to be a joyous and courageous 45-year-old companion.

Our progress was slow and, even though we had left towards noon, we did not arrive in the general area of



the provincial troops until 4 p.m., at which time we found ourselves no more than 70 kilometers from Tai-yuan. We were very well received by General Tchao, commandant of the 33rd Army, who lodged us in his quarters and who authorized me to participate as an auditor and sometimes as an interpreter in the discussions relative to the cessation of hostilities. In him was found once more a China in all her beauty and diplomatic courtesy. Upon our arrival we had noted some Japanese soldiers in the village. Casually the American colonel asked General Tchao why he still had Japanese troops in his sector. "Oh," the general replied, "we're going to put them in a concentration camp." The next

day as I went out for a little walk I saw, coming out of the neighboring house, a dozen armed Japanese!

During our trip across the territory occupied by the provincial troops we were struck by the number of uncultivated fields. We were told the reason was that the taxes were too heavy and too arbitrary. The consequence was a population – ready prey for communism – fleeing to the mountains, east and west. About 30 to 40 percent of the farm land was thus abandoned. In every station where our train stopped we found numerous peasants waiting to tell us of their grievances with regard to the miserable state of the province in the midst of the civil war. Refugees from the Communist regions (generally the rich who had lost a good number of their goods) came to cry on the colonel's shoulder while the majority of the population asked for restoration of transportation facilities between the various zones and for the freedom to do business.

On February 22, we left Nan T'oan Pei in the company of the military delegations. I took advantage of the occasion to speak with General Tchao regarding the situation of the population in the region he commanded. He gave me the impression he knew very little about it. Little by little we entered into the mountains where the landscape became more and more of a wilderness. I realized that the region was favorable to bandits or to guerillas, as is now the case. At every little village where the train stopped I spoke with the residents, who had truly suffered profoundly from the war. Their faces were emaciated as their diet was still meager: millet twice a day with no vegetables. The children, meanwhile, looked better than the adults. The proportion of houses that were destroyed by the Japanese ranged from 30 to 60 percent, and in some villages 100 percent. All that destruction was not the result of blind bombing but the organized project of selected workers: the arson battalion. One village previously had 200 camels; now there remained only one. Another village had 50 horses or mules; there remained only eight.

We arrived at Lai-Yuan toward 5 p.m., after having gone about 30 kilometers into the mountains. It was a small village where lodging facilities were scarce, so we remained in our first class compartment. I took a little walk to stretch my legs before nightfall, and noted with some amusement that the Japanese guards at the three or four defense posts around the station had been surreptitiously replaced with Chinese guards. Thus they could demonstrate to us that the Japanese had indeed been placed in a concentration camp!

On February 23 I celebrated Mass on the little table in our first class wagon. We then waited some long hours for the officer who had been sent to the Communist headquarters to return with the general in charge. At noon the liaison officer returned without his general, and we were faced with a moment of decision: were we to take our chances by venturing into the Communist lair? For eight years we had heard so many dramatic stories about them that some of us might have had good reason to hesitate about going forward. I had even been given a secret code message to use if I were taken prisoner. Better, an American officer had given me a miniature saw capable of cutting whatever, in case of imprisonment! But we knew that the situation was not as dire as had been described, so we climbed on the mounts furnished by General Tchao. The liaison officer led the way. Having little experience at horseback riding, we had quite a bit of difficulty in following suit. Personally, I had become wary of the equine species ever since a clumsy mule had flung me into a river seven years earlier, and I felt more secure on my own two feet. But practice changed my sentiments, and after 10 days on a mule I had almost become an accomplished equestrian.

For our safety the liaison officer took the lead and, as we spotted the shadowy figures of guerrillas, we advised him to give the password. He ignored us and a little while later we spotted a guerrilla charging down the mountain, revolver in hand and grenade ready to be thrown. By chance he noticed the Communist officer's armband and ordered us to wait while he commu-

nicated the password to the other positions. That done, we continued unhindered, escorted by several soldiers who joined us at the next village. The surrounding countryside abounded with soldiers, but we continued without incident, at the pace of our mounts, arriving that night at the local headquarters. We had come around 15 kilometers and were able to rest peacefully at this small village where we were the honored guests of the Communist military authority. We continued to be considered as such, receiving unexpected welcomes wherever we went.

On that February 24 I arose early to celebrate Mass in the heart of Communist territory. We went on at daylight, as we wanted to travel as long as possible. We started up a long and slow climb to the Ch'ang Liang Ling pass, which we crossed about 11 a.m. Our elevation revealed a superb view over 40 kilometers of valleys bordered by mountains, as well as the T'ai Hang chain of mountains at a distance of more than 100 kilometers, which we would cross in several days. I discovered that going downhill was difficult in my GI footwear, and the Chinese took advantage of that fact to sing the praises of their cloth slippers. After a bowl of good millet soup to warm us up, we continued to descend the entire length of the steeply enclosed valley. Several kilometers down, the valley broadened out, and we made better time. Nevertheless, if we could have avoided the delegations from the villages at every crossroad and their reports of their local situations of supplies, housing and sanitary conditions – nearly identical everywhere – we would have made better time. But that was evidently impossible. Led by a brass band, the population would line up neatly in two ranks, children separated – of whom a certain number, even those under 15 years of age, carried grenades and mines hanging from their necks. We had to honor the tea and the kind words which we received.

Along about 2 p.m., we arrived at Yun Chou, a big village which the Japanese had half-destroyed, and where many widows mourned their assassinated husbands. The population extended us an exceptional welcome, due in large measure to the Mandarin who still lived in the district, at least for the moment. He received us at the entrance of the village, and I had to pass between two rows of applauding villagers for 500 meters. To save time, we announced that we would speak directly to the population, and a meeting on the field was organized. But that gained us nothing as, with the traditional Chinese slow pace, we had to stay till evening to visit the dispensary, do justice to the meal prepared for us, meet the government delegates and, in the end, spend the night there. We had come only 30 kilometers, and we promised ourselves to do better in the coming days.

Early in the morning of February 25 we had breakfast with the assistant-prefect before resuming our journey. On the way, a group of children welcomed us with Chinese music. I was surprised by their cleanliness and their deportment. It turned out they were the official choir of a Christian village. I took the occasion to exchange a few words with their leader and to remind him of the duties of a Christian. The village had been without a priest for six years. Our Communist companion watched us with an air of wonderment, but so what – even if he did make entries in his notebook. They told us repeatedly that they were in favor of freedom of conscience.

Toward noon we arrived at Yushih, a town that the Japanese had destroyed by fire. Over the past year, around 50 houses had been rebuilt, and we stayed the night in one of these large humid structures (whose mortar was not yet dry). While we were crossing the river which bordered on the village, a snow storm had flared up and it would not have been prudent to venture into the mountains, not even on mule-back. As it was a market day, people from neighboring villages were in town. We took advantage of their presence to give a short talk and to ask some questions. With the help of my companions I then spent the remainder of the evening drying my clothes, as my mule had slipped while crossing over an unstable bridge, dumping some of my baggage into the water. Happily, my sleeping bag and my eating utensils remained safe and sound.

The next day, February 26, the weather was nicer and it had stopped snowing. The mountain trail had been repaired, which enabled us to make good time. We covered 40 kilometers with hardly any rest. In a little mountain village where some of the inhabitants no longer had the clothing needed to go outdoors, we were attended by the secretary of a regional center who had arranged for fresh horses for us. We embarked on a pleasant descent toward Shih-Hsia. On our way we came across several thousand soldiers marching westward.

Once again, snow forced us to stop for the night. In addition, I came down with a fever and, if not for the strong alcoholic drink served at supper, I would not have been able to get up and journey on the next day. Nevertheless toward 8 p.m. I had to get out from under the covers to hear the reports of some 30 delegates of the local population on the current situation, and to apprise them of our work.

On February 27, as soon as the weather cleared up, we left for Liao Hsien, where we were the guests of the assistant prefect. There too a meeting had been arranged, and we addressed a crowd of about two-thousand. Afterwards we went to see what remained of a fine Protestant hospital which the Japanese had all

but leveled.

Once again we embarked across the mountains, still escorted by two soldiers. At nightfall we arrived at a small village where this time we were not expected. The welcome there was simpler, but we nevertheless found heated lodging and something to eat.

Fair weather greeted us on February 28. A light mist covered the T'ai Hang chain that we were to cross that day. We climbed slowly, lost in the fog and the clouds once we reached the pass. The climb up – by the main route, so we were told – was quite perilous, and it was impossible to stay mounted. The rocky trail had no doubt been built more than a thousand years ago, and had endured despite the centuries and usage.

After about a dozen kilometers of descent the sun finally appeared, illuminating magnificent gorges. As we rounded a bend, a temple suddenly arose. It was entirely sculpted into the mountain. Two columns, creased into the face of the rock marked the entrance, and a series of small niches covered the top of the temple. We were in the presence of a curious blend of natural architecture and Chinese ingenuity. Beside the temple a charming bridge arched across the swift river current.

We continued our descent till the end of the day, covering at least 40 kilometers, hoping at every turn of the valley to be quit of the mountains. We spent the night in a little town where the Communists had a printing plant which had been active during practically the entire war, halting its presses only during Japanese attacks. Their literary and intellectual production those last few years and since the earlier defeat of China by the Japanese was something remarkable.

On March 1 we arrived at last at WenTs'uen, a large mountain village where the frontier government resided for several years. Certain offices with responsibility for the administration of a part of Shansi province were operating there, and they gave us an excellent welcome. Having been advised of my impending visit, the government had sent a former student at Lyon to receive me. This Mr. Suen Yi accompanied us for the rest of the voyage in Communist territory, looking out for our welfare and proving to be a pleasant companion, albeit a staunch Communist.

The various regional chiefs of the South and East of Shansi, representing 70 sub-prefectures were meeting there at that time, so we were able to meet them and discuss our work with all of them. They invited us to dinner the next day, an invitation I had to accept even though it was to take place in the church, which the regional chiefs had occupied.

For my part, I asked to see the Christians of the village and was given permission to celebrate Mass and preach on Sunday. The Communists even promised me to welcome a new priest with the agreement of the bishop. They had banished the former priest seven years earlier, citing problems with the Japanese as the reason. We stayed at Wen Ts'uen three more days to discuss with the authorities the needs of the village and our work.

We left on the morning of March 3 to return to the town of Shih Hsien, 10 miles away and to a road suitable for driving and the special truck which would take us to the seat of the government at the same time as the chief of state, Mr. Ly Ta. We were received by one of the senators, a very accommodating old man. We were lodged at the sub-prefecture, where the staff proved eager to meet our every need. We walked to the marketplace where I hoped to find a wool blanket for the voyage, but we did not find anything to our taste.

We left the village on March 4, accompanied by school children who had entertained us the night before with Communist songs and dances. We met up with General Ly Ta and his quartermaster general. The road was quite bad. From time to time we had to use the river bed which had been cleared of its largest rocks. Nevertheless we managed to make the first part of the trip without having to get out of the truck except for one time when the incline was too steep.

The sub-prefect at Wu An put on a banquet for us, which delayed us for two hours. The road from there was better, and we arrived at Han Tan toward 5 o'clock. For two days we were the celebrated guests at the seat of the local government responsible for 26 million inhabitants. The official entertainments were topped off by a banquet in our honor, in the presence of the Council president, his two vice presidents, and leaders of the army and of the Communist Party.

On March 5 we spent the entire day discussing the possibilities of fulfilling our mission in these provinces now under the control of the Communists. We wanted to have complete freedom of action, but on the other hand we had to take into account that the Communists had a working organization which could help us substantially. We thus arrived at an agreement on six articles that we decided to sign, as well as several of their requests which we promised to transmit to Chungking along with our comments acknowledging the agreement.

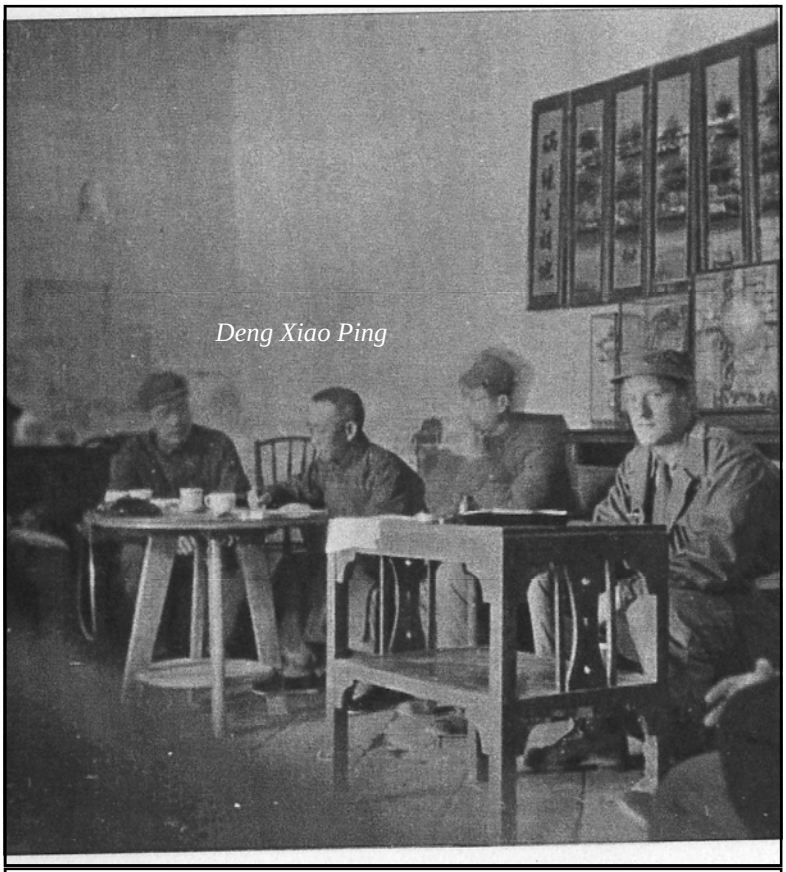
The delegates and members of the government were generally capable. Several of them had studied abroad, and most were university graduates, even though their appearance and simple living demonstrated that they were sincere Communists. We strongly admired the spirit in which they carried on their work with complete indifference toward personal wealth.

That evening we took part in a banquet offered in our honor by the army, followed by a theatrical celebration. It opened with the raising of banners 20 meters long and two feet deep with words of welcome for us. Inevitably we were exposed to a representation of Communist beliefs in response to a speech by the vice president of the Council. The audience was almost entirely in uniform. The first presentation portrayed, in modern dress, a theme of cooperation between soldiers and peasants. The second was a traditional Chinese drama with a patriotic theme.

In the regions that we studied, the consequences of the war were everywhere similar: numerous houses destroyed, especially where the Japanese did not intend to stay; absence of draft animals, mules, cows and camels; latent epidemics (malaria, scabies and syphilis); dire need of material for clothing, dyes, salt and charcoal in some districts.

We met again on Thursday morning, March 6, to study the terms of the agreement and to ratify it. The accord, containing six points, was to be signed with great pomp at the end of a dinner at the home of the council president, Mr. Yang Sui Feng. I recall the scene as if it were yesterday. I had received advance notice that the representative of the military forces, General Liu Po Ch'eng, would be one of the signers and that there would be a third signer whose identity would not be revealed to me in advance. But when I entered the hall, there he was in a corner wearing his blue quilted jacket with a Mao collar, his cap tilted to one ear.

"Bonjour, Monsieur An," he said to me, extending his hand. As I expressed surprise in returning his greeting at his command of French, he answered that he had studied "in your country at the Labor University in Charleroi." I leave it to you to gauge my astonishment, but I did not let it show, and continued the conversation in Chinese.



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"When did you return to China (from Belgium)?" I asked

"In 1924," he answered.

"And what did you do then?"

"Tixia kung tsuo" (underground activities, or preparations for the Chinese revolution), was his response.

The man speaking with me was short, direct and somewhat good-natured. He must have been about 40 years old. This was the important person whose name would be central to the document because he had been delegated by the Communist party of the entire region (officially he was the general representing the military region). His name: ***Deng Xiao Ping***! This was the strongman who would head the People's Republic of China during the decade of the 1980s. The evening ended with wine and toasts and the customary photos.

During our free hours we were questioned by journalists who insisted that we give our opinions on the subjects under discussion. As we were leaving, I was asked for a last word. I took advantage of the occasion to say a few words about our peace-maker role. But we were in a hurry to go on with our journey as our goal was to stop at Shun Teh, 15 miles away, where I was hoping to stay the night at the mission headed by Msgr. Krause, with whom I had traveled the previous month. As it turned out, while crossing a shallow portion of a river, our truck – which stalled every ten minutes because of its bad alcohol fuel – became mired in the sand. It was only after three hours of effort and the help of four oxen that we were freed, but by then it was too late to get to our destination.

Our arrival at Shun Teh was once again delayed on March 7 upon crossing a partially destroyed bridge. We obtained some planks to bridge the gaps in the face of a freezing north wind. Happily we received a warm welcome from our Polish missionary friends at Shun Teh, which was not pleasing to the Communists. Nevertheless, they were won over when I took them to visit the hospital, and especially the orphanage of three hundred children receiving the tender care of the good Sisters of St. Vincent.

We did not have enough fuel for the return voyage, as our truck had burned too much alcohol over the difficult roads. But the orders were to take us to the limits of the Communist territories, so we left in the afternoon – too late, alas, to make the trip in one stage. There we were, obliged to stay the night at an inn at

the side of the road, only to find ourselves, upon awakening, surrounded by snow.

March 8. The truck, after warming up its engine for a full hour while burning grass and alcohol, took us to Kao-I around 10 a.m., but not without problems: the radiator froze because nobody thought to drain it the night before. At Kao-I the truck arrived at its final destination of its difficult voyage. We appealed to the local headman to provide us with a cart. Despite the bad weather, that worthy led us, toward 3 o'clock, into no man's land. There we hired another cart and despite the hour and the snow we decided to take on the 40 kilometers required to reach Shih Chia Chuang, where we would once again entrain for Taiyuan the following day. The mule pulling the cart was wonderful, and trotted at a good pace.

As night fell, we had to negotiate our way past each of six strong-points. It was 11 p.m. before we managed to have the gates of Shih Chia Chuang opened to us. We decided to stop for the night as it was forbidden to circulate on the city streets after lights out. It was our great fortune that the military forces standing guard at the gates offered us lodging. All that remained for us to do was to return to Taiyuan to report on what was accomplished. Perhaps we could follow that by doing the same in Shanghai.

Two months in Communist Territory, August and September, 1946

I know that in casting your eyes on that heading you are going to roll your eyes and exclaim, "What? He has more adventure stories to tell? After running around North China for six months wouldn't he have tried to stay out of trouble for a while?" The answer is, yes, I did try, but I was not free to do what I wanted. I was sent on a special mission in Communist territory, and completely involuntarily (you be the judge of that) I became involved in some new difficulties. Those difficulties, while not directly involving our mission, did nevertheless cast some light on Communist modus operandi of the period. They will no doubt help you to appreciate what it was that deeply disgusted me, to say the least. Nevertheless I am greatly consoled by the fact that I have always tried to be objective in my evaluations.

Return to Chin Hsien

We left Taiyuan on August 8, 1946. The 60-kilometer southerly voyage in first class was fairly comfortable. We got off at Tung Yang at a small station where we were not even asked for our tickets (I was no longer traveling free by then). An hour's walk to the east brought us to a village which reflected a bygone dating to the good old days, but had now been abandoned by a good many of its former citizens because of the proximity of two armies – the Communist army and the provincial (Nationalist) army. When the Communist soldiers asked the cook who was preparing our meal which had been the good army and which had been the bad one, he replied that they had been equally bad.

As we had to carry our baggage ourselves, we decided to have a brief nap first. Upon awakening I was surprised to find myself surrounded by guerrillas. What a predicament! I had no way of knowing whether they were Communists or Nationalists as they were not in uniform, as is normal for guerrillas. I resolved my doubts by engaging them in conversation, which revealed that they were Communists. To be perfectly clear, it was probable that only their leader had heard anything – even vaguely – about Karl Marx or Stalin. What these men knew was that in being on the side of Communists their taxes were lower and it was easier for them to own a weapon. So they took advantage of those benefits.

Two hours later we were at Fants'uen, the first Communist town at the foot of the mountains. It had been occupied for a month by the Provincials, who stripped it of everything of value. And so we were the recipients of the people's sad stories. As one member of our group broadcast his opinion that the people were not short of clothing, we were soon presented with several fine specimens of people dressed in tatters.

We had about 250 kilometers to cover to reach our train station at **Chin Hsien**. We therefore did not delay, and evening overtook us in the mountains. As the sun had already set we bathed in the river, but we were soon chased out fairly brusquely by troops making their rounds. They told us that the area was unreliable, which I did not doubt for an instant, but not for the same reasons.

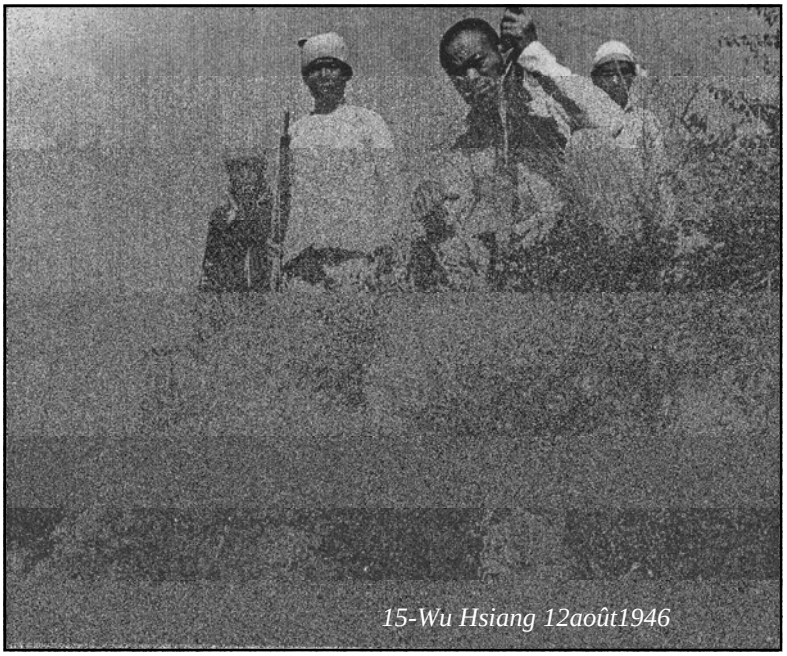
Each morning we got under way as soon as possible after a light repast, and we usually stopped for a more substantial meal around 11 a.m. By then it was too hot to continue, and it was necessary to take a siesta until almost 4 p.m., after which we walked until nightfall. That day, after having just left a village with a mule loaded with the luggage of the four members of our team, when we came to a river whose swift currents lured us to refresh ourselves. The ass seemed to enjoy the experience even more than we did, as he took it upon himself to sit right down in the water, with the result that our bedding and written materials of all kinds were soaked.

The days passed, the road, mountainous in the ex-

treme, was not traversable except with donkeys or mules. There was no hope of using a cart, no matter how small. As for the inns that we came across, they were well-stocked with bed-bugs, fleas and other animal life prone to unwelcome intimacy.

On August 10, at an altitude of 1,600 meters, we encountered our first fog of the summer which soon changed into rain. But the sun returned, so hot that we were soon wishing for the cool mist of the morning. That evening we reached Liao Hsien, a town perched high up in these mountains which were considered the last bastion of the Communists in these four northern provinces. We met with the military commandant and the administrator of the region, sharing with them our mission in these districts of southeast Shansi. They promised their complete cooperation and received us in admirable fashion. These were the most skillful propagandists that I had encountered. They knew, without a doubt, how to promote the value of their stock in trade.

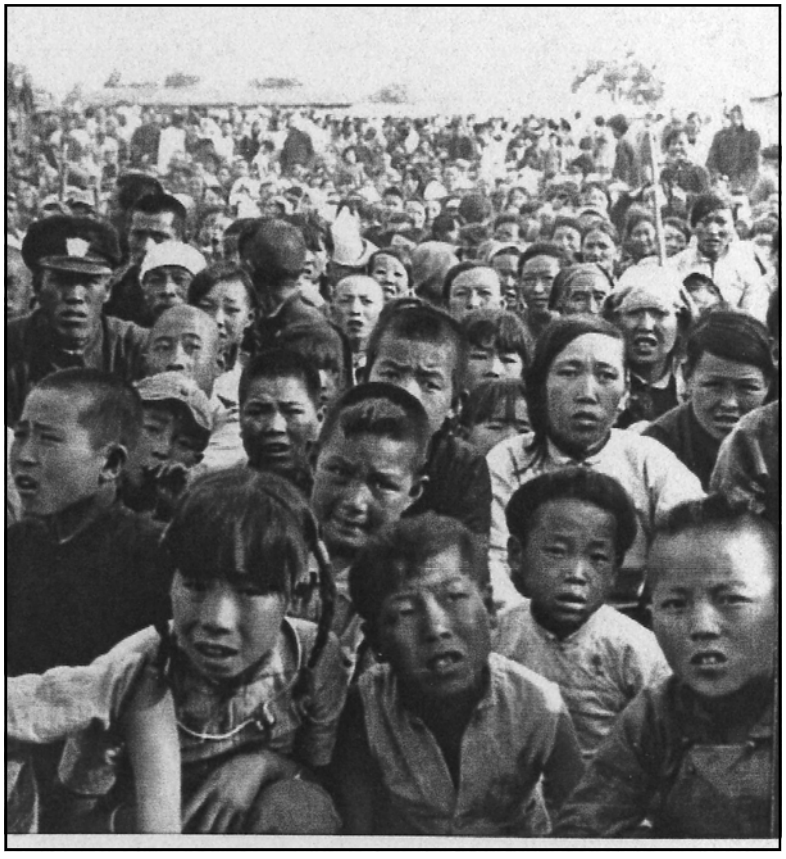
On the 12th we resumed our journey, but due to a misunderstanding, whether intentional or not I don't know, we found ourselves without mounts and without anyone to take care of our baggage. The only document we had was a letter from the district authorities asking the head man of each village to help us. At the end of the day we had only traveled 25 kilometers, which was much too little. We decided to go it alone on foot, provided we were furnished a donkey for the baggage, which we obtained without great difficulty. At every stage we met with the Communist authorities, but we sensed a growing animosity the farther we advanced toward the south. We saw many anti-American inscriptions on village walls, and as the villagers didn't perceive any difference between an American and a European, that could very well have been the reason.



15-Wu Hsiang 12août1946

pace, and unfortunately I lost sight of the rest of the group. Nevertheless I continued all alone at a forced march pace for the 27 kilometers to Wu-Hsiang, where I had been just two months earlier. The Communist association welcomed me and immediately prepared a meal for me. In the meantime, I sent my card on to the head man, informing him that I was expected at Chu Hsien, our warehouse, that I did not have time for a visit, and asking his help in obtaining a pack animal for the baggage.

After an hour's wait, he sent me his deputy and another official who then began discussing my supposed participation in the June battle. I took him on very directly, saying, "This liaison officer that you consider the villain, the cause of all your misfortune, was appointed to accompany me at the insistence of the Communists. Moreover, he had nothing to do with the work of UN-



People's Court at WuHsiang

At Hung Shui, the ranking communist warned my Chinese companion that I was likely to have trouble in Wu-Hsiang. What had happened was that the area I had visited the preceding June had experienced a stinging defeat by the Nationalists, with 60 killed and 180 wounded on the Communist side. At the time I had been in the region I was accompanied by a Communist liaison officer and a Nationalist officer. Now the Communists claimed that the Nationalist officer had brought about the defeat, and wanted to make me responsible for it. There was much talk about it in that sector but I did not attach great importance to it, making the best of the situation.

On August 14, I went out ahead to try to speed up our

RRA. His only task was to facilitate my entry into the region." In addition, I explained that the attack had been a reprisal in response to the Communist destruction of a railroad, blowing up two bridges and two locomotives and taking some 20 Nationalist officers prisoner. As these events had not been reported in their newspapers they did not believe me and sought to keep me from continuing on my way.

A little while later, my group arrived and I filled them in on the discussion. I excused myself to the deputy, saying my work prevented me from staying any longer, and I left on foot. I had hardly gone out the door when the deputy, in the presence of the head of the UNRRA team, gave the order to have me arrested in the name of the people, and said that he would not be responsible if harm came to me because of the people's anger. I walked on another 100 meters while behind me soldiers provoked the villagers and ordered them to pursue me. Children shouted at me to stop, but I ignored them.

People finally came upon me from various directions and I found myself surrounded by about 100 persons. I informed them briefly about the possible consequences of their actions, but they showed no concern, and cast about for a justification for arresting me. They demanded to see my papers and pretended that they were not in order. They then ordered me to retrace my steps. I blurted out that I would only do so if forced under constraint. That angered them, and they spat in my face, hit my back and tried to frighten me by working the bolts of their rifles. As I remained calm, that behavior ceased and I was put in prison from which I emerged an hour later at the behest of my companions who had vehemently protested my arrest.

We were kept in the courtyard of the cooperative for two days, soldiers guarding the gates. The public was allowed to come and view us as they would strange beasts. One after another authorities came to discuss the matter, and they showed themselves to be very demanding. They urged me to issue a communiqué for the newspapers in which I was to disavow and insult the Nationalists. They demanded payment of an indemnity for those killed and wounded, and a trial in the people's court to give the population the opportunity to express their grievances and hear my responses.

Our only course was to carry on a discussion. As moral force was our only weapon and we had no way to communicate with a higher authority – who would certainly have disavowed such tactics – all we could do was play for time. We therefore prepared a statement, and when we read it to a delegation of the people, they recognized the diplomacy of the language and made no further demands along that line. In return I agreed to have a meeting with the people, not as the accused but as a witness -- and as soon as possible. That last condition did not sit well with them as they wanted to make careful preparations.

As a result, we were not able to hold the meeting until the next evening, and it turned out to be the worst such experience of my life. The harshest questions were posed by the supposed delegates of the people, who had prepared them in consultation with the officials. I was interrupted several times in my account of the facts by insults such as "Down with liars! Down with people who display a sheep on a sign in front of a shop but sell dog meat inside. Down with spies in the service of America." Or, alternately, "We've heard enough clever words, what we want to know is how you are going to pay."

All of these invectives were hurled at us in the presence of the officials, who had the effrontery to congratulate me later for the brilliant way I conducted I pulled myself out of my quandary. I had kept my composure and succeeded after three hours of debate in sending the crowd back to their hearths. The tactic that finally disarmed them was raising my fist along with theirs each time they started with "Down with," even though their slogans were only indirectly aimed at me.

The Blessed Mother had protected me, but it was, alas, the least Christian August 15 (feast of Our Lady) I had ever experienced.

Chin Hsien

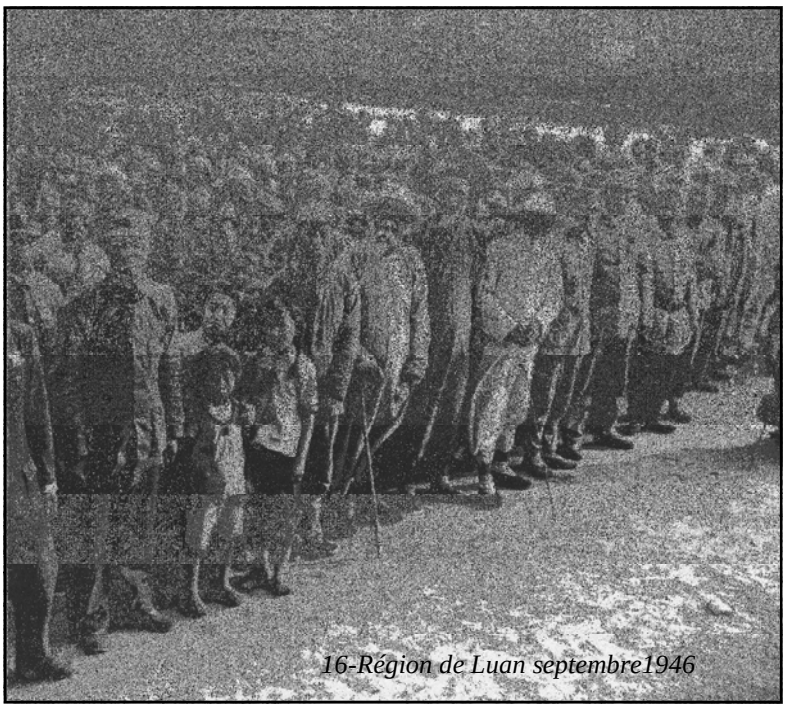
On the 16th we got a pass from the authorities and assurance that we could travel safely to Chin Hsien. Two officers and two enlisted men accompanied us. Thus we arrived as prisoners at Chin Hsien, where Msgr. Kramer, bishop of Luan awaited us impatiently.

Our first business, under duress, was to visit the headman (the mandarin) who quite flatly reiterated the same demands – payment of indemnities for the victims of the battle, reimbursement of the subsidies given to the Nationalist "traitors," and full disclosure of our activities. As the situation was quite tense, we acquiesced to the last point, and requested documents detailing the precise facts supporting the first two demands.

We never again saw the devious headman, nor did we receive any documentation. Following our encounter with the mandarin we did all we could to undermine his status with higher authorities, and I think we succeeded in doing so.

Getting back to Msgr. Kramer, never had I seen a more beautiful smile or heard a more comforting out-

burst as greeted me when he saw me entering his courtyard. During the week that followed the National-



16-Région de Luan septembre1946

ist retreat, Father Veldhuisen and his people suffered the most difficult week of their lives. Their warehouse was the target of systematic pillaging on a grand scale. Day and night (up to 10 times on some nights) groups of armed marauders surged through the doors and windows to seize whatever they wanted. One morning they discovered clothing strewn about – 150 bundles had been ripped open. If the two representatives of UNRRA had not been there, we would have had nothing left of our aid supplies. Because of them, only ten of our packages disappeared. To escape the distressing memories of these events, all we wanted was to be rid of this place and to get our supplies quickly to the distribution center at Luan.

When I revisit these events in my mind, I cannot help but compare them to those that occurred during the French Revolution or the Reign of Terror (Commune de Paris, 1792-1794), an unstable period when the populace, stirred up by their leaders, blindly engaged in massacres, often without understanding why.

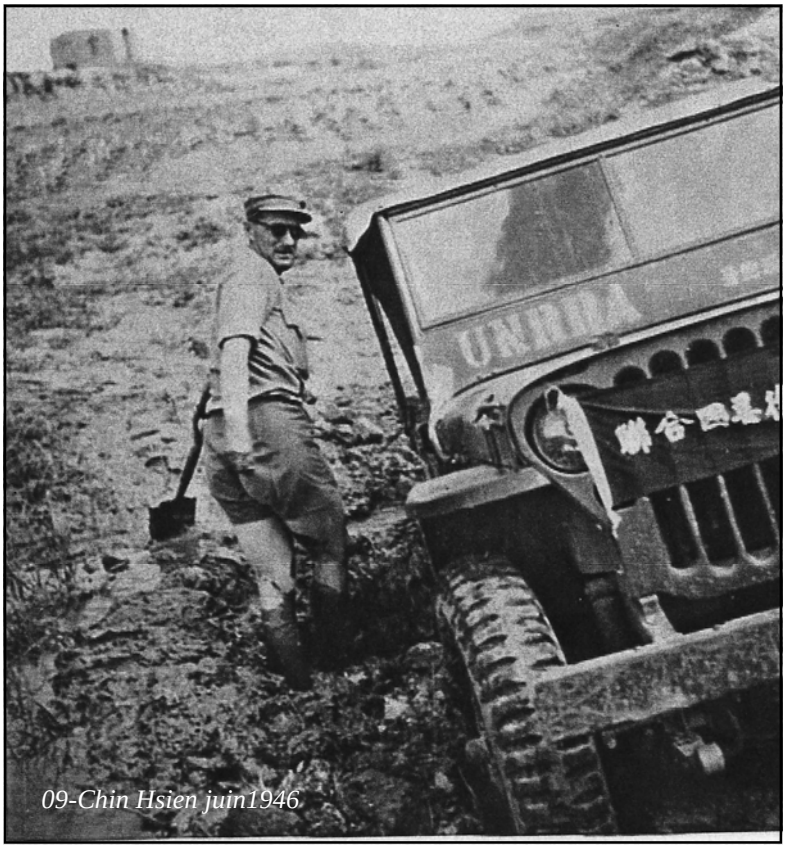
One night, one of our catechists observed our bishop coming home to the shelter of his domicile. He had dared to express his hope for a better future for his people. The next day he was assassinated. Identical dramas had become commonplace in the regions occupied by the Communists. Nevertheless, the Communists were astute enough never to arrest anyone for their convictions or their religious orientation; they always accused them of being "collaborators." That rubric covered all offenses and sufficed to evoke the death penalty without need for any other due process, as long as the people were sufficiently aroused.

Aid Distribution and Conflict with Communists

Due to Msgr. Kramer's vigilance our jeep was not vandalized, but (alas!) the batteries were dead and there wasn't any electricity to be had in the neighborhood. We were therefore forced to hitch up a pair of donkeys to the jeep and thus make our way over hill and dale for 90 kilometers of deplorable roads. The journey required three days, not solely because of condition of the roads but also because bridges over river crossings had been flooded and weakened by the summer rains.

But our misfortunes had not ended. Knowing that we were under the protection of higher echelons, the Communists along the route decided to target a Christian we had hired to help with the transportation of the supplies. Following a detailed and illegal search he was arrested as a collaborator, an oppressor of the people and a fugitive. Despite our protests he was imprisoned for an entire month.

As soon as we arrived at Luan we notified the higher authorities of the facts of the case, and they launched numerous attempts to free him. In the meantime, more charges had accumulated against him, and contradictions surfaced regarding the procedure to transfer him to Luan. The affair ended tragically. The Communists had realized their error, and no doubt were afraid of possible disciplinary measures. The day he was to be freed we were advised of his so-called suicide by means of American matches! After all the problems we had already encountered, this turn of events

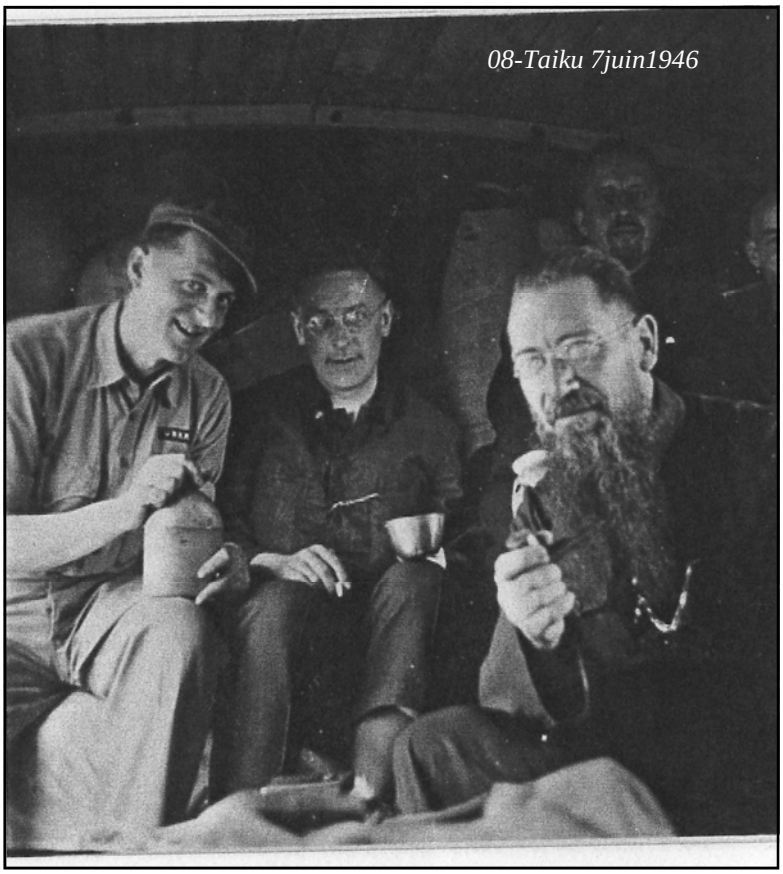


09-Chin Hsien juin1946

was the last straw, and we went to Hantan for the sole purpose of lodging a complaint with the government leaders, who promised an inquiry.

At Luan, our first encounters with the members of CLARA (the Communist aid organization which was supposed to help us and collaborate with us) were quite difficult and unsuccessful. Obviously, we had arrived too early for them; they would have preferred to see us arrive after our supplies had been unloaded and distributed to the villages. Our premature arrival upset their plans, and they were not inclined to help us accomplish our mission. We had to work patiently for three weeks attempting to make progress with them. Finally, thanks to orders they received from the government, they got in line with our efforts.

We had arranged to introduce the bishop of Luan and three priests into the UNRRA team. They would thus be able to contribute to the aid operations and, above all, resume contact with and help their Christians. The Communists had no intention of cooperating in that endeavor and, insidiously, boycotted the work and resumed their campaign of denigrating the Church. Christian leaders were arrested as collaborators. Some were fined, and others were imprisoned. Some were killed. The doors and windows of the churches were torn out to block the return of the priests. Christians were denied entrance to town on Sundays. During our stay in town there was even a large public judgment against our Church. On that day, every last Communist propagandist and student was ordered to gather in the court of the seminary. For three hours or more the bishop and his priests stood facing the seated populace and heard themselves accused of the worst sorts of villainy (tearing the hearts out of patients, plucking the eyes out of infants to make medicines to be sold for a rich price to poor Chinese, violation of farm women, theft from the temples, and other ignominies of the same ilk). The entire affair had been carefully prepared to drive home the point that their presence was unwelcome. The fine that was assessed had been determined in advance; it amounted to 50 million Yuan.

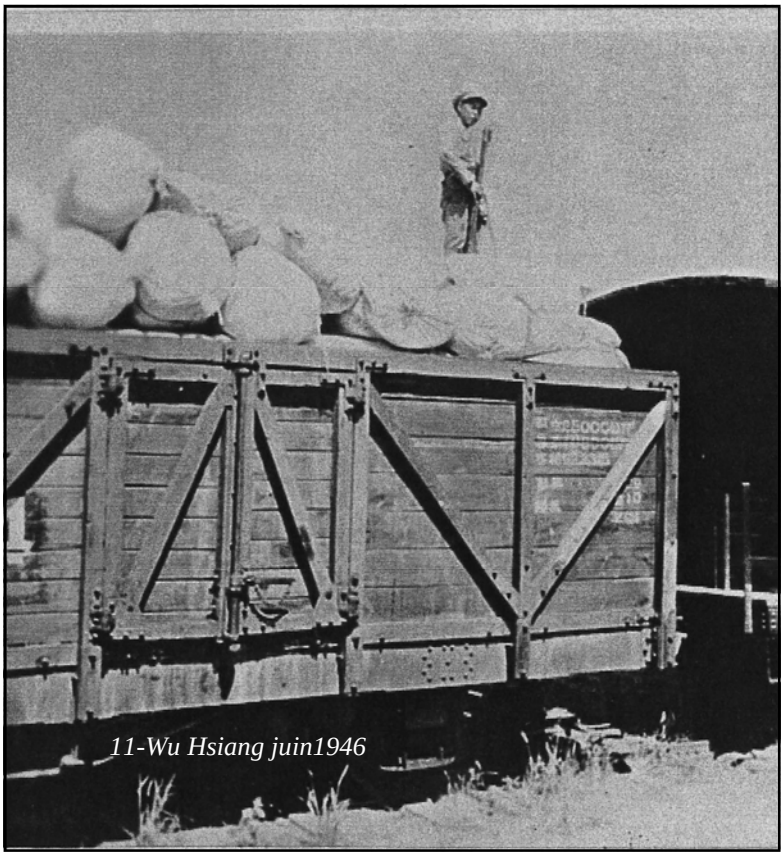


The next morning, the bishop and the priests, deeply discouraged, agreed to give up all their possessions, understanding that it was impossible to keep anything from the mob. But the Communists wanted money, and refused to settle for buildings and land. After much back and forth, I paid a personal visit to the mayor, accompanied by the head of CLARA. I invoked our friendship, because, as the UNRRA inspector, I was ineligible to take part in the negotiations. Out of respect for our friendship, the mayor promised to meet with the representatives of the people and to reduce the fine to 16 million Yuan, with the possibility of payment in kind. That concession had apparently been foreseen, as the Communists knew the parties were too far apart, and were looking for an opportunity or pretext to demonstrate their magnanimity. Finally, the affair was brought to a conclusion with the priests thanking the Communists for having so generously consented to take the goods and furnishings of the Church, their lands and other objects of value, asking in addition pro-

Luan, August 1946 …
… a visit from he C.L.A.R.A. organization ...

tection for the hospital, the convent and the orphanage – all still functioning under the direction of valiant Chinese sisters. Under such conditions, and for the good of the Christians – for whom only a hidden Christian life was possible – it was necessary, against their will, that the bishop and priests return with us to Nationalist territory, as their personal security was also at risk.

And so, with pressure from the Communist government – which was well aware of the difficulties we had suffered and wanted us to forget about them as soon as possible – we left Luan on September 24 with the jeep in good repair. The bulk of our contingent left the night before via donkey carts. But the road was so bad that it took us two days to travel the 200 kilometers to Hantan in the south of Hopeh Province. I had never in my life traveled on such a road, chock full of extremely steep hills and slopes, and one that could only be traversed by jeep. As for the rivers, they were filled with round boulders which gave us problems. Twice we had



11-Wu Hsiang juin1946

to resort to boats to get across.

Despite our desire to avoid delay, we were obligated to remain in Hantan for three days, welcomed as Communist princes by the government which was eager to have us forget our bad experiences, offering apology after apology. We took advantage of the situation to object to their violation of the agreement signed in March, and to demand an amendment to the two clauses that forced us to take responsibility for transport in their territory and to abide by their code. The latter point was the most important, as it was impossible for us to obey, as it stipulated that the judgment of the people was the best means to relieve oppression and establish a true democracy.

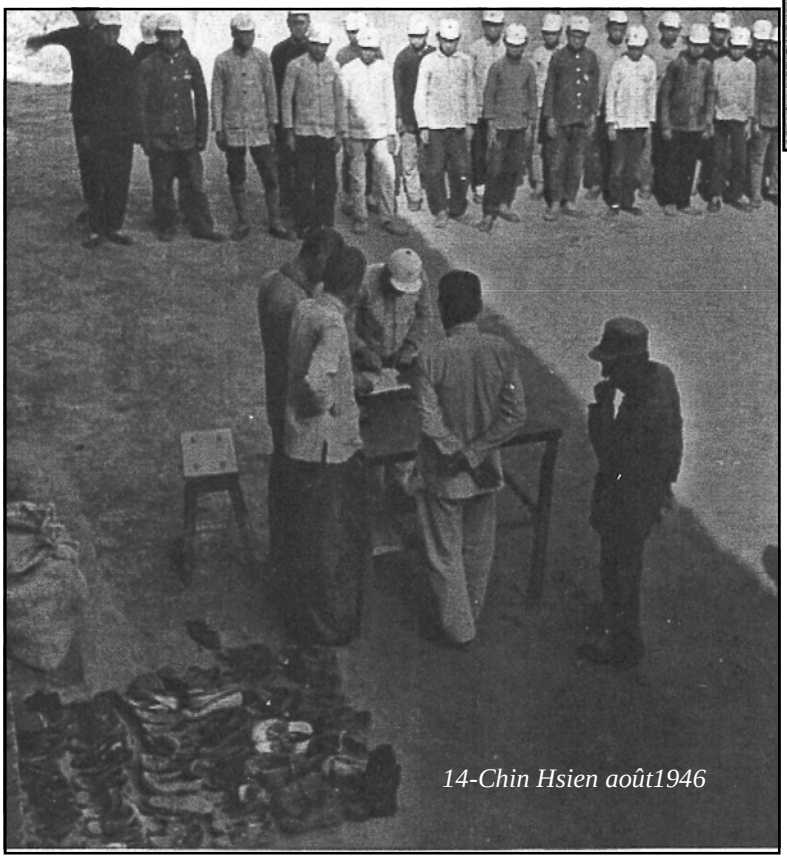
After multiple negotiation sessions in the course of which the Communists accepted all the concessions we required, we left their capitol, which the Nationalists occupied just three days later. The administrative offices had already been removed to neighboring villages for fear of bombardment. They had therefore been eager to have us leave. That afternoon we made 175 kilometers in one stretch, which was “very good going” in China. That evening we were at last in the open air of Nationalist territory at Shih Chuang. What we read in the newspapers there greatly surprised us. Over the last few months the press in the Communist territory said nothing of the advances the Nationalists had made. We knew nothing of the liberation of Sui Yuan, of the attack on Kalgan and of the progress in Honan and Shantung provinces. Nevertheless, the Communist counter-attacks prevented us from continuing our journey for several days, until October 4, to be exact, at which time we loaded our jeep on a flat car pulled by our train to Taiyan, which we reached that same evening.

WITNESS TO THE FIRE OF FAITH (August 19, 1946)

The apostolic vicariate of Luan, in southeast Shansi Province, was writing one of the most beautiful chapters in the story of the perseverance of Chinese Catholics in the face of Communist persecution. Over the past year the mission had been completely occupied by the Reds, who had established their administration, their schools and their systems of propaganda in all the towns and villages. One after another the priests had to flee, some of them after suffering a long imprisonment, others having had to pay fantastic fines for imaginary offenses. In six months the mission was deprived of its Chinese clergy who were hounded and watched wherever they went. They took temporary refuge among the Christians, but it was impossible for them to stay. Despite all manner of attacks designed to stamp out their faith, the Christians continued to demonstrate their pride in being sons of the most powerful king of all.

In one extremely strong Christian community, fervent and well-populated, the authorities attempted to suppress all religious gatherings for prayer or celebration. But the Christians refused to accept the interdiction and, by virtue of the principal of religious liberty in a government of the people, they declared (among other things) that the entire group would protest the molestation of any single Christian among them. The Communists then decided that on certain days they would

sleep in the church to keep the Christians from holding evening prayers. But the Christians met outside the front doors of the church, and sang their hymns at the top of their voices. On the feast of the Blessed Sacrament, without a priest and in spite of the interdict, they refused to give up their annual procession and instead promenaded their sacred images with great pomp and devotion through the village streets. On the feast of the Assumption many of them had their rosaries and prayer books confiscated, or were taken to prison for

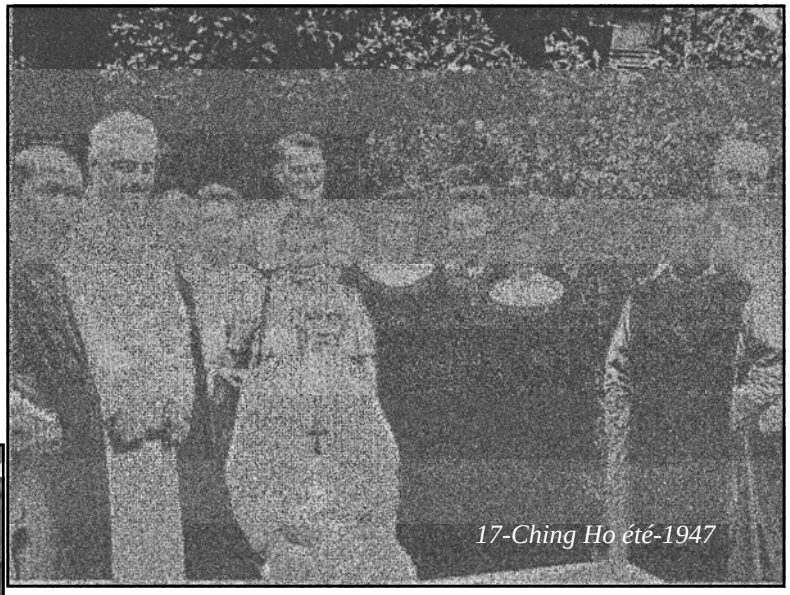


14-Chin Hsien août1946

having prayed too openly.

But the most beautiful event reported to us was the celebration of the Assumption in the cathedral. As a result of our efforts several European missionaries were permitted to return to the central city in Luan with authorization to live there. On the evening of August 14, several thousand Christians from neighboring districts arrived to take part in the celebration. They were required to obtain passports, but difficult as it was, that formality did not diminish their ardor. Nevertheless, there were villagers who had requested passes to attend the celebration who were forbidden from traveling. In other villages or districts the presiding authorities simply eliminated all authorizations. In one community near Luan Christians were told they would be beaten if they went to the city.

At 9 p.m. police came to find out what it was that brought so many people to the Cathedral. They were told that the people came for a variety of reasons, among them to attend the ceremonies. The police then started examining their passes and prolonged their inspection of the premises until 3 a.m., after which they



17-Ching Ho été-1947

retired, taking with them the papers of 50 men and 30 women. Despite those annoyances and red tape, the morning celebration was unforgettable in its simplicity, and the devotion and attendance of the people. Almost a thousand communion hosts were distributed, after which the people dispersed. Those whose papers had been confiscated were locked up for half an hour before being released.

The Mission of Hungtung

When I first came to Hungtung in August 1939, the jurisdiction was an apostolic prefecture, and was not elevated to the status of a diocese until 1951, when the apostolic prefect was ordained a bishop. In 1946, the mission had been occupied by the Communists in the months of March and April, but without suffering great harm. The Chinese priests and my two Belgian colleagues, Father Keymolen and Father Wenders, came through safe and sound, without too much material loss. The Reds took their money, but did not pillage the house. Nevertheless, that temporary occupation did nothing to improve communication.

The Reds destroyed almost 200 kilometers of railroad tracks at a time when the territory was being reoccupied by the Nationalist troops. The Nationalists were more disciplined and organized than the provincial troops of Yen Hsi Shan, who were often disorderly. Monsignor Kramer, a friend of mine, was bishop of Luan, a diocese to the east of Hungtung that was occupied by the Communists. He told me confidentially that he prayed daily that Generalissimo Chiang Kai Chek would not give the order for a cease-fire because he would have a better chance of returning to his diocese if the Nationalists took over.

It was 350 kilometers from Taiyuan, the main city of the province, where I lived, to Hungtung. Before the arrival of the Communists we could make the trip in six hours. But starting in the summer the Communists,

who came from Yennan in Shensi province, their bastion for 10 years, came to Shansi. They occupied the center of the province, wanting to keep open the west to east route. To facilitate these comings and goings they built a bridge over the Fen River, but cut the railroad track from north to south.

That posed a problem for travel from Taiyuan, as one now had to go first to Peking and make a big loop before arriving at Hungtung. Getting there by airplane was possible only with the help of American officers working in the pacification teams led by General George C. Marshall. I had asked one of them to take some correspondence and money to our apostolic prefect there.

My beloved mission had suffered greatly from the Communist occupation that summer of 1947. There were no killings to mourn, but the annoyances and red tape went on ceaselessly. The Communists became more and more anti-Christian.

In the neighboring provinces, in Swantse, Mongolia, for example, a battalion of Communist soldiers attacked the oldest mission there on December 10, 1946. They killed all the Christians who had defended the mission which the Communists razed. The old bishop, Monsignor Desmedt, who had been imprisoned the year before and now was living in Peking, maintained a courageous stand and declared, "We will rebuild."

In Shunteh, in south Hopeh province, where the Polish Lazarist Fathers had developed a magnificent mission the previous 10 years, everything was still going well when I visited there in March 1946. But I have since learned that all the priests and religious were thrown into prison. It is said that the procurator (director) was burned to death. The report of these events was brought to Peking by Father Scuniewicz, the celebrated ophthalmologist, who made the journey by bicycle in small stages.

News from a Nationalist source reported that at Hantan, which I had visited twice the year before, and at Taming in the south of Hopeh, Christians had been declared outlaws, and their homes were ordered to be burned. I think that the Church is in its last days in territory occupied by the Communists. Shouldn't we mount a crusade against them?

Our own Hungtung mission finds itself in the middle of this stew. With some 30 priests the presiding prelate, the Pro-prefect Monsignor Francois Han, is attempting to continue a form of apostolic work. In the city or its environs the basic endeavors continue: the regional major seminary, thanks to the effective efforts of Father Wenders and Father Keymolen; the minor seminary in a temporary building in town; a middle school; a small convent of sisters with a novitiate for future sisters; a dispensary where Father Keymolen performs marvels; also an elementary school outside of town. All of that has held up well in the face of all that has happened. After eight years of war and Japanese occupation we could have hoped for a time of peaceful rebuilding; but alas! Several months of peace in 1946 were followed by bloody battles and seven weeks of Communist occupation.

The major seminary, the middle school and the parochial school, restarted in 1946, made it through the Communist ordeal. Fortunately, the occupation coincided with school vacations, so classes had not yet begun. It required all the forbearance of the staff, and especially of the rector, Father Wenders, to keep the Communists at a distance and get them to respect the bit of privacy that the seminarians required. During the occupation Father Wenders spent the majority of his time living, eating, studying and praying with his seminarians in just one room, thus minimizing the danger of a permanent intrusion.

One seminarian, who had returned to his parents' home in the mountains to the east during the vacation period, was seized by the Communists, accused of being a spy for the (Nationalist) government. He was stripped of his clothing and dragged, naked, on his back by a draft animal. He suffered his torment until his father promised never to send him back to the seminary.

Father Andre Ly, who was at the Episcopal residence when the Communists entered the town, was called out for investigation in the midst of a group of Christians. As he had worked for the Nationalist army during the war – which was a crime in the eyes of the Communists – he was seized with fear and fainted when he heard his name called out. Fortunately his companions had the presence of mind to let it be known that he had been ill for a long time. Thus, after a few days, he was able to escape and reach safety in Linfen.

Father Benoit Ly, a brave pastor of our eastern Christians – fervent mountain dwellers – also caused us grave concern, as we heard rumors and reports one after another of his imprisonment, his torture, his death and finally, his liberation. In fact, he had been with his Christian parishioners the entire time, despite the dangers.

Upon their arrival in town, the Communists – who had spies everywhere – soon learned that the mission had buried what little Nationalist currency it had in the vegetable garden. As the Communists had their own currency for the region, they considered the Nationalist currency illegal for all who lacked special permission to own it. The last fiscal resources of the mission were therefore confiscated. By good fortune I was working in the southeast in Communist territory at the time, trying to restore a group of Dutch Franciscan fathers and their bishop to their mission. Having caught wind of the con-

fiscation, I was able to send the mission some Communist currency that I had procured on the black market in exchange for letters of credit, and that money enabled the mission to sustain itself for several weeks.

During their occupation, the Communists forced 10,000 peasants of the region to work without pay to destroy the walls of the city, the railroad tracks and the bridges along the provincial roads. The seminary had to shelter more than 1,000 of those who were working under forced labor conditions.

In the eastern section of our mission under Communist occupation, the parishes that had been left intact in the past were subjected to total pillaging, occasionally including such things as doors and windows. All this was done under the false pretense of repaying past debts, or on the no less odious pretext that the mission had trafficked with the Japanese. On the latter subject, I recall a recent incident at a mission in Hopeh province where, during the Japanese occupation, the foreign missionaries had helped many soldiers of the Communist guerillas to escape the grasp of the Japanese. That mission had to undergo the process of making "restitution" imposed on all influential groups or individuals, once the Communists felt themselves to be strong enough. During the proceedings the mission was accused of dealing with the enemy, using as evidence that they were able to help the Communists escape due to their good relationship with the Japanese. Those poor missionaries were now in Communist prison.

At the beginning of October Nationalist troops from Linfen advancing north to Huohsien liberated our mission and ended the nightmare. But after that it was the west that had to suffer. The church in Hsihsien, the only church building that survived the Japanese occupation intact, and several others in the western mountains, were occupied by the Communists who, fearing an attack from the southeast by Nationalist forces, chose to take up positions in advance by occupying several mountain villages. The four priests residing in that district hadn't yet been able to contact us. We hoped they were still at liberty. At that juncture Father Mattias Keou returned from his eastern parish at Ma-Chia-Chieh. He was able to escape in time, but lost all his parish assets and personal effects.

The economic well-being of our mission was in a precarious state as prices, which had remained reasonably stable during the better part of the war, had shot skyward during 1946, doing their part to make of China one of the most expensive countries in the world, and I think that Shansi was one of the provinces where the cost of living was most expensive.

While economic transactions were extremely difficult, bank transfers were even more so. I had nevertheless been able to transport to Hungtung half of the annual subsidy from Rome in two big suitcases full of paper money. The mission will therefore pay its most pressing debts and improve their status, which until now had been very poor. Despite the temperature of 10 degrees below zero (centigrade), the stoves had not yet been fired up, and the seminarians had to content themselves with a diet composed mainly of corn. Their health and that of our priests had suffered greatly as a consequence.

Shansi in 1948

To understand what was going on it is necessary to have a general idea of the political and military situation.

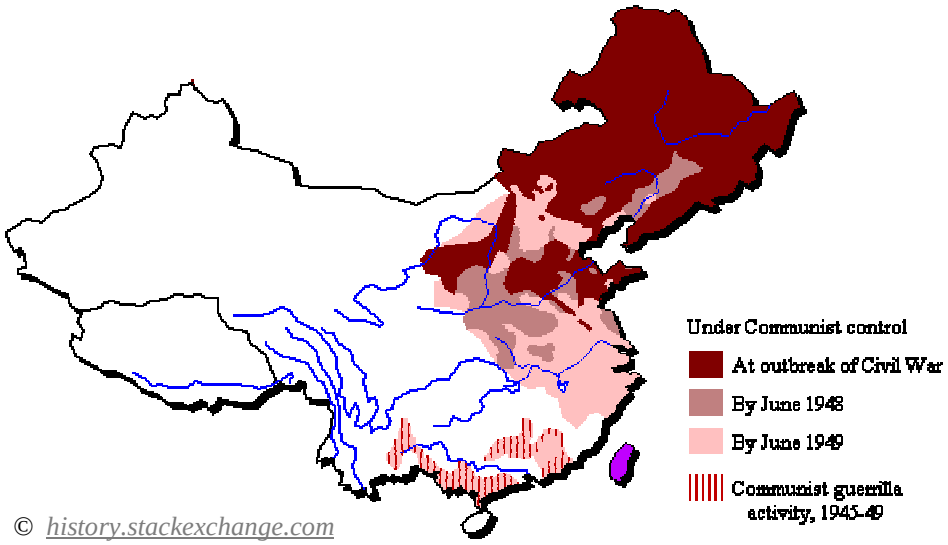
Military speaking, we were in the presence of three armies. In the center, and slightly to the south, occupying a territory of five or six million people, is the provincial army of about 300,000 men in the pay of the last Chinese warlord, Yen Si Shan. An absolute dictator, he rules his people with an iron hand, leading them firmly to their death or to communism. Governor for 30 years, he has under his orders a council of thirteen who have to obey him without question, as he does not allow contradiction. Curiously, however, he is extremely hospitable, and attaches great importance to outside opinions, especially those of foreigners.

Three or four organizations permit him to exercise tight control on every one of his subjects, and political deviation is usually punished by death. Previously, following the Chinese custom, executions were conducted outside the south gate, but now, to make more of an impression, they are staged in the provincial stadium, just next door to our offices, providing us from time to time with macabre spectacles.

The male population aged 18 to 40 must enroll under his military flag but, alas, military training is practically non-existent. Recruits are given a rifle and a few grenades and on they go to the front. The central government provides the soldiers' pay through the governor who distributes it in dribs and drabs with various deductions here and there with the result that the troops receive less than half of what the central army soldiers get. The male population having fled the territory, we are headed forward a famine in the spring. Prices are already double those of the south of the province.

To the south, with a bridgehead leaning toward a juncture with the provincial group, lie the armies of Hu Tsung Nan, one of the better young generals of the Nationalist government. The troops are well trained and evidence a positive morale. They are not numerous enough, however, to do more than to occupy their cur-

rent territory, the Prefecture of Kiang-chow (Monsignor Pessers) and a stretch along the north-south railway across our Prefecture (diocese). Their occupation ends at the very north of our mission, cut off from the provincial army by the Communists.



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The Communists occupy all the mountains to the east and west of the province, along the provincial river, the Fen Ho. As they control the granaries of Shansi, their life is not difficult. But they lack textiles and medicines. Their troops are very militant, audacious and well-led, but totally lacking in moral code. All the young people from age 16 to age 40 must belong to the militia or the civil guards. Officials at all levels, from the smallest village to the inter-provincial government, are proven Communists who strictly obey the orders from Yenan (which in fact come from Moscow). Individual liberty is non-existent, everything is organized, regimented, decided in advance by the "brains" of the party.

The people are obliged to arrive promptly for all general assemblies, where decisions have been made in advance. A semblance of parliamentary procedure is conducted to approve the party's decisions. When the government finally occupies these mountainous regions the only way to liberate the population will be to displace all the officials.

The political situation fairly well reflects the military life. Taxes are extremely heavy. There is no commerce within the province or across provincial borders except for the south under the Nationalist military regime. There are no commercial transactions between the Communist zone and the other (Nationalist). The civil administration everywhere is under the rule of the military and it is often difficult to distinguish between the two. It's fortunate for the south which, thanks to the Nationalists, has seen a reduction of the harmful influence of the provincial government, for its part always officially under the orders of Governor Yen Si Shan.

What does the future have in store for us?

It appears that this year will be even more painful for North China than the years of Japanese occupation. Fighting is in full swing, and in the last two weeks more than 15,000 have been killed in the center of this province alone. The fact that the Church has held on despite such torment is a providential miracle. The Christians of the Communist regions have been subjected to the yoke, forced to observe their Christianity in hiding or to flee. Many have taken refuge in the towns along the north-south route where the nationalist or provincial troops are most numerous. But they swell the ranks of refugees and unemployed.

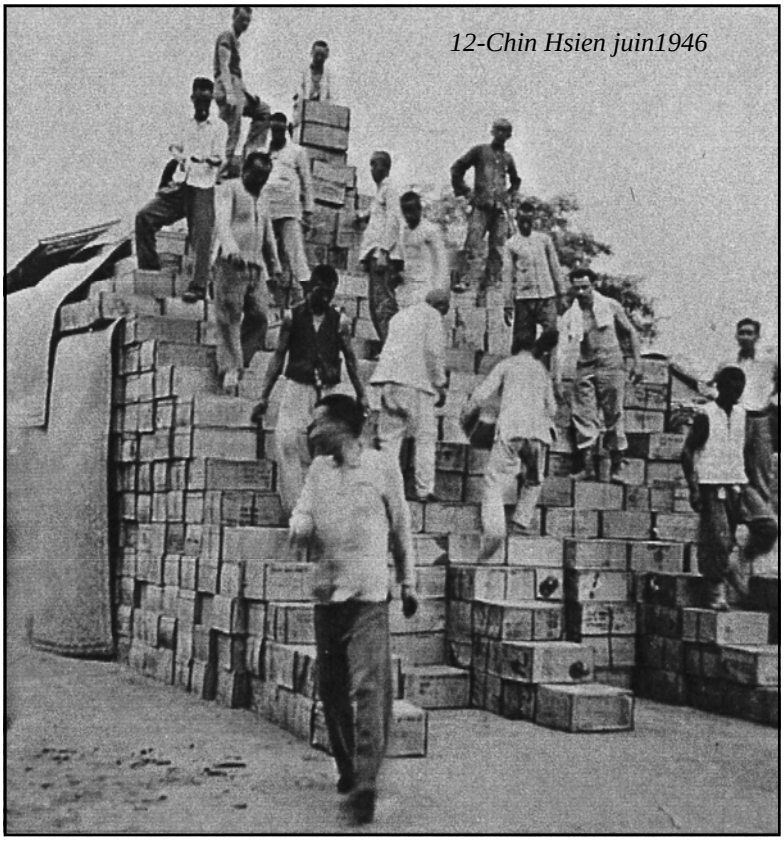
The Moscow meeting in March will deal with the problem, we think, as after all nationalist China has the support of the United States, and if General George C. Marshall has officially decided to withdraw the American troops stationed in the port cities it's above all to have a free hand when he goes to Moscow.

Finally, let me report on two conversations I have had with generals who have influence with the government. Several weeks ago in Peiping (Beijing), a top-notch philosopher presented the internal problem of China as follows: On the one hand Communism full of hatred, on the other hand a scornful Kuomintang. What to do? The response was on point: The solution lay with a third party which would bring love and agreement based firmly in trust and honesty. The other conversation, here in Shansi, was between an eminent provincial head of government and a representative of the Nationalist forces. The latter made an appeal for unity in order to save the Kuomintang Party. The provincial head replied that it was no longer a question of saving the Kuomintang but of saving all who were not followers of Communism, that's what was in play. It is in taking sides with that response that I express the hope that China and the world will understand the problem with equal acuity.

Voyage to Chagar and Suiyuan

As I had been charged with seeing that the distribution of UNRRA goods went smoothly in the northern provinces of China, I had to do my best to make sure our supplies actually reached those who needed them most.

Our stock of flour held great importance, and served



12-Chin Hsien juin1946

in general as a means of exchange to pay poor Chinese for their labor on public projects such as repairing roadways and constructing guard rails, etc. These bags of flour, alas, represented a temptation for those who noticed our stores. Thus it was that I had to look into the disappearance of 60,000 bags of flour in the Tientsin region worth thousands of yuan. The employee who had arranged the sale had feathered his own nest in the transaction, and had already been incarcerated as the sale was supposed to have been done in public and was to have been supervised by our staff.

I left Peking (Beijing) on Nov. 10, 1946, and headed by jeep toward Kalgan in the northwest province of Chagar, accompanied by my Chinese counterpart. Along the way we chatted, which gave me the opportunity to fill him in on some interesting ideas about our missionary work in these parts. We stopped off at the Suanhua mission where I introduced him to several priests with whom he could make contact in the future. I spoke to the religious authorities about explaining to him a little more about their charitable activities in the hope that thus they could be better aided in their work.

Once arrived at Kalgan the next afternoon, we made contact with the civil authorities, all of whom were disposed to help us. As was often the case, the authorities who expected much from us believed themselves obligated to invite us to dine. The new governor, General Fu Tsuo Yi, was very popular. He had just led a lightning campaign in Communist territories where he had retaken 18 counties in less than a month. He was an open and simple man, dressed like all of his soldiers, without any insignia. He helped and supported the work of the Church with goodwill. I had long conversations with him, and he provided us with the necessary means to launch our distribution: an office, a storehouse, a dormitory for our personnel and a residence for the foreign experts.

The local clergy also welcomed me, as did the Scheut Fathers, my good friends, who had a mission there. As they were at the forefront of social progress in Mongolia, of which Kalgan was the port of entry, I asked them to help us organize a distribution of used clothing to several thousand poor peasants in the valley that led to Siwantse, where Bishop Desmedt resided. Winter was coming. The thermometer was already falling below 10 degrees at night. The poor people had no opportunity to buy material for years, so clothing was eagerly anticipated.

The Chinese priests of the Disciples of the Lord came to see me. They hoped for our help and explained their plan to open a secondary school. They were followed by the superior of the Missionary Canonesses of St. Augustine who had just arrived from Peking and wanted to tell me about their plan to open a small hospital. She asked my advice on getting help from UNRRA.

I had to be very prudent in presenting these plans to my Chinese counterparts because for the most part they were not Christians and did not understand that I thought of nothing but helping these missionary endeavors, which were, by the way, well respected.

I left Kalgan the morning of Nov. 15, taking with me a Chinese Christian, former student at the tannery in Liege in 1920. He had a son who was a Marist Brother, and he agreed to accompany me on my trip by jeep to Kuisui in Suiyuan Province. The arrangement worked out as he needed to return to that region and, for my part, I didn't like traveling alone, thus I had a companion. The trip went without incident until toward 3 p.m. We had already come 200 kilometers, which wasn't bad given the condition of the roads and the unstable bridges. We were in an isolated and deserted region and had just cleared the mountains that separated us from Mongolia.

My jeep, which had already seen service in India and Burma, arrived in Shanghai via Chungking. Thirty thousand kilometers of bad roads had rendered its springs in a pitiful state. At 20 kilometers before the little town of Tsining, the clamp that held the spring to the chassis broke off and one of the blades of the spring ended up crosswise, impeding forward progress. We had to find peasants who had the necessary levers to put things together again so we could resume our journey at low speed and with great care. The clamp being broken, it was only the weight of the chassis that held things in place. At last, at 7 p.m., we arrived at a small inn where we spent the night.

The next day, Nov. 16, 1946, I left the jeep in the

hands of my Chinese Christian companion. He was willing to take charge of improvising the repair of the jeep. As there was no garage that could do the job, he had to assemble a mechanic, a blacksmith and two or three soldiers whom he would feed for two days to make sure the task was accomplished.

Meanwhile, I went by train to Kuisui 170 kilometers away where I was the guest of the bishop, Msgr. Morel of the Scheut Fathers. We had already met, and he promised to let me have the services of one of his priests, Father Florizoone, a native of Brussels, who accompanied me to Peking.

There, with the engineers in charge of the Irrigation Commission, we planned a construction project involving four new flood control complexes, each comprising 15 metallic sluice gates. This project would enable the irrigation of 100 million mou (approximately 16.5 million acres), and reduce from 45 to four the number of irrigation canals that are connected to the Yellow River, thus reducing the amount of erosion of the canal banks.

There is much to be done in these regions. The authorities are asking for almost half a billion yuan to repair the roads and public works buildings, and for emergency aid to the populace. The Communists left the area a short time ago, and in stopping by at the Catholic mission of Tsining we discovered the consequences of their presence: on the eve of their departure they set fire to five churches in reprisal for a defeat inflicted on them by Christian soldiers.

It seems that in Mongolia the only way the Church can avoid the misfortune such as it suffered the previous year of occupation is open warfare by Christians upon the bandit Communists.

A priest with whom I travelled to Shansi last December was forced to remain in a Christian region near Fengchen to protect the Christians and the sisters during the Communist occupation. They made his life impossible, and he underwent significant maltreatment. Last summer they kept him awake for five days, preventing him from going to bed under false pretexts. On the fourth day of his ordeal, when he had managed to lie down, a Chinese came to call him out. The good Father was so exasperated that he picked up his old slipper and rapped the man over the head. That man did not return. But two days later the priest was beaten to a pulp.

Later, after a Benediction of the Holy Sacrament, he was called to the confessional. Despite the swelling on his head, he responded to the call. There, to his great surprise, he found a penitent who had not gone to confession for 20 years, but whose heart was touched by the priest's heroic resistance toward the Communists.

Returning to Peking we made a stop at Tsining to visit Msgr. Fan, a fine figure of a Chinese bishop. His diocese was land-rich, which permitted him to render aid to eight neighboring dioceses during the war, a fine example of solidarity. In that corner of Mongolia it was easy to see the progress brought about by missionaries, as the proportion of Christians to non-Christians was much greater. The Christian villages were better maintained, better constructed, some of them even having electricity, furnished by the Church. This mission was at an altitude of 1,400 meters, and the temperature was already at minus 15 when we stopped there. The cost of coal was 140 yuan for half a kilo. It was necessary therefore to dress warmly, preferably with sheepskin.

On the pretext of improving the efficiency of the motor, a self-styled mechanic changed one of the spark plugs on my jeep, to my misfortune, as it turned out, as my fuel consumption rose to such a rate that I would not have been able to reach Kalgan. Fortunately, I was able to re-establish the status quo ante, by having the original spark plug reinserted.

Once underway it was the coupling in front of the spring that played tricks on me. We were eight kilometers from the town of Shang Yi where there was an important mission. This time we arrived on time as we managed to make the necessary repairs ourselves. By cutting the rivets and replacing them with nuts and bolts we made an emergency repair which enabled us to travel the 120 kilometers which still separated us from Kalgan. We had to reduce our speed to 20 kmh, as the road was bad.

We had to stay at Chang Pei for two days as guest of the head man, who was able to furnish us with a little gasoline. It's one of the "joys" of China not to be able to find this fuel, even in a town of 10,000 inhabitants. When we stopped at another town we were offered gasoline for $3 a gallon in American money, but we judged that too expensive. Finally an order arrived from the provincial government to facilitate our return whatever the cost. We were 16 km. from Kalgan. In the time it took to wash my hands we were reunited with my UNRRA colleagues, as I wanted to be back in Peking the next day.

On Nov. 25 we took the train for Peking. The tracks, more than 60 km of which had been destroyed by the Communists, had just been repaired, and it seemed best to take advantage of that fact. The destruction inflicted by the Reds was equally grave to that of the Russians when they evacuated Manchuria. For example, the central electrical plant of Hia Hua Yuan, which furnished the power and light to the towns and most of the coal mines of Chagar, was systematically destroyed. This plant produced 40,000 kilowatts. The Nationalist authorities hoped to restore it to one-fourth of its origi-

nal capacity. What a pity!

We were also surprised to find that the cartons of milk that we had deposited in Kalgan two months ago were for sale everywhere. The Reds, instead of taking the milk to charitable organizations, had sold it to merchants. I even saw a guard house constructed of wood from the milk cases.

I stayed two days at Peking only because I needed to return to Taiyuan to file my reports. At the airport I came upon Cardinal Tien who was going to Tsingtao. We took advantage of our meeting to converse for an hour, and he confirmed his desire to have a Samiste (Father Hanquet's Order of Priests) in his diocese.

Back to Peking

At the end of 1946 it became more and more evident that our province of Shansi and its capital of Taiyuan was about to be completely occupied by the Reds. Under these conditions it was wise to plan to move to Peking to be able to continue our work in the four northern provinces which comprised our field of operations.

Communications between Taiyuan and Peking (two days by train) were getting more and more difficult. Moreover, we could not count solely on our own transportation by air. We were at the end of the line. One of our aircraft had caught fire just as I was about to board it for one last mission in Taiyuan.

During the year 1947 our office occupied quarters rented from the Austrian embassy. I and my director, Harold Lund, rented an upper-class residence north of the Forbidden City, where we found the Chinese-style comforts to be quite agreeable after the hardships of the months in Shansi.

Until November, except for a few brief forays on missions of distribution, I devoted my time to administrative tasks. As the head of distribution for UNRRA in North China, I was given a return ticket to Europe after my two years of work. I would also receive the blessing of returning to Belgium to see my family, which I had left 10 years earlier.

Transportation by ship was hard to get, and I had to accompany a sick colleague. I was obliged to embark on Dec. 8 on the **Sir John Franklin**, a Danish cargo ship which was supposed to deliver us to Italy a month later. In reality the voyage took four months, giving me the opportunity to discover some 10 countries at leisure during the various stages of the trip.

But that's another story!

#

MEMOIRES

By Emmanuel Hanquet

AU REVOIR, LA CHINE

Steve

C'était un garçon taciturne et timide. Sur le bateau-cargo qui faisait route de Shanghai à Gênes, il servait comme troisième officier de pont. Nous prenions nos repas ensemble dans le local qui servait à la fois de salle de restaurant et de lieu de séjour pour les douze passagers et les quelques officiers et chefs mécaniciens de bord.

La recherche d'un quatrième joueur de bridge nous avait poussés à le solliciter. Il était bon aux cartes et s'était mis au bridge avec application. De jour en jour il devenait un partenaire plus acceptable.

18-Shanghai 8décembre1947

J'aimais ce garçon pour sa retenue et ses silences. Il me semblait avoir un passé à me confier et son sourire énigmatique m'incitait à engager le dialogue. Toutefois la règle à bord à cette époque était de ne pas encourager les échanges entre les passagers et l'équipage. Le capitaine y veillait et il se satisfaisait de la seule présence de son épouse à sa table, sans jamais y inviter un passager. Il me restait donc à rencontrer Steve occasionnellement, dans sa cabine ou sur le pont supérieur quand il était de quart et assurait son service.

Sans être bel homme, il avait de l'allure dans sa tenue d'officier de marine et la casquette ajoutait à son prestige. Grand, mince, cheveu court et menton volontaire, il ne fumait pas et montrait du savoir-vivre. L'œil observateur se laissait entrevoir à travers des paupières légèrement fermées et comme un peu gonflées.

Nous étions à bord depuis trois semaines et approchions des côtes du Japon quand il me confia un paquet enveloppé dans du papier brun. Il souhaitait que je le garde chez moi pendant quelques jours. On ne parlait pas de drogue en ce temps-là et je crus qu'il s'agissait de lettres intimes. Je déposai donc le petit colis dans un tiroir de ma cabine, sans plus y penser.

Quelques jours plus tôt, nous avions célébré Noël à bord dans une unanimité extraordinaire malgré le peu de collaboration du capitaine. Nous avions l'intention d'utiliser le lounge (salle de séjour) pour célébrer la messe de minuit. Cela ne plaisait guère au capitaine, un brin anticlérical quoique baptisé et ayant vécu dans un orphelinat catholique au Danemark. Il avait donc fait passer une note à ses hommes leur signalant la possibilité d'assister à une messe de minuit, mais ajoutant que si un membre de l'équipage s'y opposait, celle-ci n'aurait pas lieu...

À ma grande satisfaction, cette remarque peu engageante avait mobilisé tout l'équipage dans le bon sens ! C'est ainsi qu'outre les passagers avec lesquels nous avions répété des Christmas Carols, les hommes au grand complet étaient là pour fêter religieusement la Nativité, officiers et mécaniciens en tête, croyants et incroyants, tous, sauf le capitaine et son épouse. Il fallut attendre la célébration de la fête de Pâques, en rade de Haïfa, pour qu'il revienne à des sentiments plus chrétiens et me requière de célébrer la messe dans le poste de commandement à l'étage supérieur.

À Noël donc, nous étions en rade dans le port de Pusan, en Corée du sud et quelques G. I. étaient montés à bord pour retrouver des copains. Après la messe de minuit, le réveillon s'organisa différemment selon les origines et les sensibilités. Steve jouait au poker dans sa cabine avec des officiers. La chance était de son côté car, à un certain moment, il sortit de sa cabine avec un récipient rempli de dollars qu'il distribuait aux amis en leur souhaitant « Joyeux Noël » ! Sans doute était-il déjà un peu éméché !

Durant les temps de quart, quand la nuit était étoilée et la mer paisible, je me glissais sur le pont supérieur pour écouter Steve me raconter sa vie, tandis que nous naviguions vers Hong-Kong et les Philippines.

Né dans une famille nombreuse, de parents nécessiteux, très tôt il avait été abandonné à lui-même et avait dû se débrouiller tout seul. Malheureusement il débuta mal dans la vie car il se joignit à une bande qui préparait l'attaque d'une banque locale. Le coup échoua et ils furent cueillis par la police. Steve fut envoyé, sous surveillance, dans un groupe qui travaillait en forêt. Ce fut son premier métier : bûcheron... involontaire.

Plus tard, un parrain voulut bien s'occuper de lui et le

suivre dans une école où l'on enseignait la boxe. Il espérait devenir boxeur professionnel. Mais quand il découvrit que la plupart de ces combats étaient fixés, c'est-à-dire que les résultats en étaient déterminés d'avance, il abandonna, dégoûté.

C'est alors qu'il s'engagea dans l'armée américaine. C'était la fin de la guerre ; il eut le temps d'apprendre le métier de soldat avec ses exigences et ses risques. Puis la guerre terminée, une fois démobilisé, ne sachant que faire, il tenta sa chance et s'inscrivit comme junior officer ou officier de pont sur notre bateau, le **Sir John Franklin**. On manquait de personnel à l'époque. Avec des rudiments de navigation appris à la hâte, il réussit à se faire engager.

s/s Sir John Franklin

Un soir, vers la mi-janvier, nous étions à l'ancre dans le port de Manille, j'avais surpris Steve en vive discussion avec deux matelots qui l'avaient menacé d'un couteau. Il voulait les dénoncer au consul américain. Je m'efforçai de le persuader d'attendre le lendemain et d'éviter d'aggraver la situation. Steve refit un tour d'inspection du bateau. Quand il revint, il avait retrouvé son calme. Il se mit à parler. Je le sentais en confiance. C'est alors qu'il me dit : « Je ne me suis jamais senti aussi bien avec d'autres personnes qu'avec vous. J'ai envie d'être bon, gentil et propre quand vous êtes près de moi, même si je ne parle pas. J'ai besoin de vos conseils. Vous êtes la première personne qui me témoigne un réel intérêt et cela me rend heureux. » Il me parla très librement de ses expériences antérieures avec des femmes de rencontre, dans chaque port. « Hier, me dit-il, j'en ai rencontré une, mais — et c'était nouveau pour moi — à cause de notre amitié, je n'ai pas désiré faire l'amour avec elle. »

Un autre soir, il me posa quantité de questions sur le pape, la hiérarchie catholique, les rites, la confession. Il en vint aussi à me parler du colis qu'il m'avait confié. Il s'agissait d'une sombre histoire de pot-de-vin reçu pour avoir fermé les yeux dans le vol de centaines de cartons de cigarettes destinées aux cantines de l'armée américaine stationnée au Japon. Le F. B. I. avait fait une enquête abord tandis que nous faisions escale à Yokohama, mais n'avait rien trouvé de compromettant (et pour cause !). Pourtant le paquet contenait plusieurs milliers de dollars. Cet argent lui brûlait les doigts. Comment s'en débarrasser sans être accusé ? Après un examen de la question, je lui conseillai de jeter le paquet à la mer qui en disposerait à l'avantage du trésor américain, puisqu'il l'avait volé. Et c'est allégrement que nous vîmes disparaître les dollars dans l'Océan Pacifique !

Steve était un buveur invétéré et durant les fêtes du Nouvel An, il avait pu se ravitailler en alcool au Japon. En principe, l'alcool était interdit pendant la navigation, mais aux escales quelques matelots ou officiers en ramenaient en cachette. La consommation à bord donnait lieu alors à d'étranges spectacles ! Ainsi, une nuit, un terrible tapage parvint de la cabine de Steve. Nous n'avions pas encore atteint les Philippines et c'était avant qu'il ne me fasse ses premières confidences. Le télégraphiste du bord vint me trouver en catastrophe : « Il faut absolument intervenir chez Steve, il est en train de tout casser ! » Effectivement, quand j'entrai dans sa cabine, c'était la désolation. Des bouteilles vides jonchaient le sol. D'autres, à moitié pleines, s'étalaient sur le bureau au milieu de verres sales. En silence, je saisis tout le fatras qui avait servi à la beuverie et l'expédiai à la mer par le hublot. Steve était affalé sur sa couchette. En passant devant lui, je laissai tomber : «Tu me dégoûtes ! » et j'allais quitter la cabine quand il me retint vigoureusement par les bras et me serrant contre lui, il supplia :« Père, il ne faut pas m'abandonner ! » « On en reparlera, lui répliquai-je, quand tu seras sobre ! » Et je le laissai.

Pendant deux jours, je ne le revis plus, honteux qu'il était de ce qui était arrivé. Puis nous reprîmes nos conversations sur le pont supérieur et depuis ce jour, il cessa complètement de boire.

Trois mois après, nous étions devenus de véritables amis. Lorsque je quittai le bateau dans le port de Gênes, je lui fis mes adieux en lui remettant, en souvenir, une chaîne d'or et une médaille scapulaire achetées à Manille : «Accepte cela en signe de notre amitié. Je te donne aussi deux conseils : marie-toi, car tu as besoin d'être aimé et de donner ce qui est bon en toi à des enfants qui seront les tiens. Et rengage-toi à l'armée, car il te faut un cadre de vie solide et structuré. »

Des années passèrent. Durant la guerre de Corée, je reçus une lettre toute couverte de boue. Elle était postée du Japon. C'était Steve qui m'écrivait. Il me narrait comment il

avait été sauvé miraculeusement d'un éclat d'obus qui s'était écrasé sur son badge métallique. Il m'annonçait, heureux, qu'il avait suivi mes conseils puisqu'il avait rejoint l'armée et qu'il se marierait bientôt : « Je suis fiancé à Phyllis, c'est une belle et bonne jeune fille américaine que j'épouserai dans quelques mois. »

Huit ans plus tard, de passage aux États-Unis, je rendis visite à Steve. Il était devenu capitaine et papa de trois beaux enfants, un garçon et deux filles. Comme je lui téléphonai de New York, il insista vivement pour que je me rende en Virginie afin de faire connaissance de sa femme et de ses enfants. Ce que je fis six mois plus tard.

Je fus émerveillé. Steve ne buvait plus. Un coca-cola ou une limonade était sa seule boisson à table. C'était un mari et un père modèle, racontant chaque soir une histoire à ses petits. Membre du conseil paroissial de son église, il était propriétaire de sa maison où je passai deux nuits. Il insista pour me présenter au Général, commandant sa base militaire. Ce fut un moment solennel et important pour lui comme pour moi. Il me sembla que ce fut sa manière de me prouver que mes conseils avaient été bien suivis et qu'il était devenu l'homme qui me faisait honneur.

Retour aux sources (1991).

Depuis deux ans, je souffrais d'un voyage en Chine annulé. Les événements de Tien An Men m'avaient empêché de retourner quelques jours à Hungtung au Shansi, là où j'avais exercé mon ministère dans les années 1939-1943, travail repris par mes confrères Keymolen et Wenders de 1946 à 1954.

J'avais reçu quelques nouvelles encourageantes lors de mon dernier voyage en 1981 ou par des courriers occasionnels, mais rien ne valait un déplacement personnel.

Une somme importante rassemblée depuis deux ans en faveur du diocèse attendait un porteur discret et sûr. Sentant le poids des années réduire légèrement mes forces physiques, je me disais qu'il était temps d'organiser ce retour. Si j'attendais encore, ce serait trop tard. Bientôt ma décision fut prise : je ferai un voyage-pèlerinage avec pour objectif la rencontre des hommes.

Pour limiter les frais, je choisis la Tarom, ligne roumaine. Voyage aller-retour pour 37.300 francs, mais avec deux escales, Bucarest et Karachi, et 16 à.17 heures de vol. Avec Sabena et Air France, vous êtes à Pékin en 9 heures d'un vol non-stop, mais cela coûte presque le double...

Le dimanche 28 avril, des amis me conduisent à avenue en début d'après-midi. Avion fort rempli jusqu'à l'escale de Bucarest. En débarquant, j'y rencontre un jeune ami venu retrouver son épouse et la petite fille qu'ils vont adopter. Ensuite voyage sans histoire jusque Karachi, puis Pékin avec un survol grandiose d'un Himalaya ensoleillé, suivi de cinq heures de vol au-dessus du désert : Tibet, Sinkiang, Mongolie extérieure et intérieure. Enfin Pékin vers 18 h, heure locale. Un ami, Guy Trouveroy, conseiller d'ambassade, est à l'aéroport pour m'accueillir. Je logerai chez lui à l'aller et au retour et bénéficierai ainsi d'un confort européen et d'une ambiance familiale : dès le premier soir je suis mis à contribution et je fais du baby-sitting pour les trois jeunes enfants !

Le lendemain dans l'après-midi, je prends le train Pékin-Linfen qui me conduira à destination le let mai à 7 h du matin. Il y a 750 km à parcourir. G. Trouveroy m'a procuré une couchette en classe molle et je voyage avec un couple de Chinois retraités venant de Formose pour retrouver des parents à Linfen. Nous faisons connaissance et j'exerce un peu mon chinois en les écoutant. À Linfen, personne pour m'accueillir ! Qu'importe. Ce sont mes compagnons de voyage qui demanderont à leurs parents de me conduire à l'église. Œcuménisme mis en pratique par ces protestants affirmés. Je les remercie chaleureusement.

L'église de Linfen est située dans une petite allée poussiéreuse et grise à l'arrière d'une avenue macadamisée. Surgie de rien après la guerre, elle compte déjà quatre cent membres avec un hôpital de deux pavillons et une église de trois cents places, construite il y a trois ans. L'autorité civile n'a pas permis d'y ajouter un clocher, mais à force d'insistance, le curé a pu obtenir de placer sur le toit plat de son église une croix de quinze mètres de haut, éclairée aux grandes fêtes.

À peine arrivé, je déjeune avec les trois prêtres chinois présents. Ils viennent de terminer les prières du matin et la messe. Ils me disent que l'évêque, monseigneur Han, 82 ans, m'attend à Hungtung en fin de matinée, ainsi que la plupart des prêtres du diocèse. Le plus jeune, le Père Suen, bientôt trente ans, me propose de l'accompagner sur sa petite moto, ce sera plus rapide que le bus. O.K. Me voilà parti avec lui, mon sac en bandoulière devenu sac-à-dos. Trois quarts d'heure plus tard, nous entrons dans le village et, après une courte côte sur une route macadamisée, il faut emprunter un chemin de terre assez hasardeux pour rejoindre l'église dont je fus le curé il y a... 50 ans. Elle fut promue modeste cathédrale depuis que les Rouges ont rasé l'église principale construite en ville par les Franciscains hollandais.

À peine descendu de moto, je suis reçu par le nouvel évêque coadjuteur, monseigneur Suen, qui fut intronisé le 22 février (fête de la Chaire de Saint Pierre à Rome, c'est tout un programme!) en présence de dix mille

fidèles. Comme les seize prêtres que je retrouve à midi, il est habillé à la Mao, car c'est encore l'usage en province, même si la coutume est de plus en plus abandonnée dans les villes.

Revoir chaleureux, échange de souvenirs, le tout scellé dans un bon repas autour de deux tables rondes. J'y suis en sandwich entre les deux évêques.

Après la sieste d'usage, entretiens successifs avec chacun des deux évêques. Monseigneur Han (Monseigneur Han est décédé le 21 décembre 1991. NDLR.) habite mon presbytère qui n'a plus été ravalé depuis cinquante ans! La pauvreté est apparente, mais ce n'est pas la misère. Elle est peut-être nécessaire pour ne pas trancher sur l'ensemble des habitations.

Nous visitons les lieux. L'hôpital est propret maïs très simple. (Le diocèse a ouvert d'autres petits hôpitaux dans cinq autres paroisses, dont Linfen où se trouve l'hôpital central.) Ce projet, commencé par mon confrère Michel Keymolen vers 1946, porte ainsi de nombreux fruits. La maison des Sœurs où je photographie les vingt jeunes religieuses, toutes habillées de noir, pantalon et veste au col Mao. La supérieure aux cheveux blancs m'interpelle : « Me reconnaissez-vous ? Je suis la petite Kong de Fan Ts'uen ! »

Pour la facilité, je loge à Linfen et j'y retourne à moto. Le lendemain, de vieux chrétiens viennent me voir : ils ont appris mon arrivée. Nous évoquons des souvenirs... Les officiels, responsables du Bureau des Affaires Religieuses pour le sud de la province, me rendent leurs devoirs. Ils sont venus avec une voiture pour me montrer la ville (deux cent mille habitants) et quelques monuments. J'apprécie leur geste et fais avec eux visite et photos d'usage. Ensuite, le curé nous recevra tous à dîner.

C'était là l'essentiel de mon court séjour. J'ai rencontré des chrétiens bien portants et très pieux, conscients de leurs responsabilités et désireux d'entreprendre. Ils jouissent de plus de liberté et vivent mieux depuis qu'ils peuvent, eux-mêmes, organiser leurs cultures.

J'ai poursuivi mon voyage en bus (neuf heures pour mes péchés dans un bus de chantier surchargé et inconfortable !) avec arrêt à Loyang et visite des fameuses grottes de Longmen, puis entrain-couchettes, classe dure jusque Shanghai. Mon ami et correspondant depuis douze ans, Matthias Mei, l'ancien servant de messe de Charles Meeus, m'accueille chez lui comme un frère et se coupe en quatre pour me rendre le séjour aussi agréable qu'intéressant. Échanges et partages fraternels avec lui, sa femme et son fils, que j'avais baptisé en secret il y a dix ans.

J'en profite pour faire un saut à la cathédrale et rencontrer les Pères Jésuites de Zikawei. Nous obtenons l'adresse du Père Vincent Tsu (Le Père Vincent T'su est décédé en 1994.), un prêtre de l'église clandestine, deux fois condamné à de longues peines de prison. Il est logé dans une maisonnette de jardinier et prisonnier sur parole. Nous passons quatre heures en sa compagnie à écouter le récit émouvant de ses épreuves. I1 semble les avoir bien surmontées car, à septante-quatre ans, il reste vigoureux et lucide. Il est le neveu d'un des six premiers évêques chinois, monseigneur Simon Tsu, évêque de Haimen, qui fut le diocèse de nos confrères Pardoen, Meeus, Willichs et Massin.

Je garde de ce voyage en Chine le souvenir d'un pays en paix, peuple de gens à bicyclette, commerçants avisés et actifs dans les villes et agriculteurs soigneux, cultivant un gigantesque potager, dans les campagnes. Pendant tout mon voyage, à part un camion de militaires armés, je n'ai pas rencontré de soldats.

J'ai parlé avec beaucoup de Chinois. Ils sont en bonne santé, aucun ne souffre d'obésité. Ils travaillent ferme au renouveau ou à la croissance du pays. Ils ont le désir de progresser personnellement et, s'ils sont des intellectuels, nourrissent le secret espoir d'aller un jour parachever leurs études à l'étranger. Ils reconnaissent les impératifs parfois pesants du régime. La famille est pénalisée à partir du deuxième enfant. Mais ils s'en accommodent, faute de plus de liberté. Il faut bien admettre qu'avec un milliard cent dix-sept millions d'habitants, la surpopulation est flagrante. Cependant dans la pratique, on voit les libertés gagner du terrain et rendre le régime plus humain et plus acceptable. Prions pour que le Vatican trouve la formule qui permette de rétablir un certain type de relation avec l'Église de Chine. Après quarante ans de libération, cela semble nécessaire.

Ceux qui sèment dans les larmes (1994)

Durant la dernière semaine de mai 1994, j'ai pu réaliser un rêve fou que je nourrissais depuis des années: après 50 ans d'absence, retourner sur les lieux où

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j'avais fait mes premiers pas comme jeune missionnaire. C'est pour vous permettre de découvrir les progrès accomplis au diocèse de Hungtung, à 750 km au sud-ouest de Pékin que je vous livre ces dernières lignes

Grâce à la collaboration efficace de notre ambassade, j'ai pu obtenir de partir sans séjourner à Pékin, si ce n'est le temps de rencontrer notre obligeant secrétaire d'ambassade, Michel Malherbe, qui me délivra le billet de train et la réservation de couchette demandée.

Dès le mardi de Pentecôte, j'étais au cœur du diocèse après avoir brûlé la gare de Hungtung — où fanfare et majorettes m'attendaient en vain — et débarquais trente km plus loin à Linfen, où personne ne m'attendait! Il faut reconnaître que de Belgique, il n'est pas facile d'être au courant des horaires de train et qu'il faut s'attendre à des approximations. Un jeune taximan voulut bien me conduire à l'église pour un prix raisonnable — il faut à nouveau discuter le prix avant de s'embarquer ! — en me confiant que j'étais « le premier étranger qu'il véhiculait depuis deux ans ».


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À Linfen, l'église est à côté de l'hôpital des yeux et se confond avec celui-ci. Il y a une trentaine de lits et j'avais occupé un de ceux-ci lors de mon passage trois ans plus tôt. Le curé et aussi médecin de l'hôpital avait pris l'initiative de me loger. J'avais même reçu la visite d'officiels de la ville qui m'avaient, dans leur voiture, fait les honneurs des monuments importants de leur cité. Néanmoins après mon départ ils avaient mis le curé à l'amende pour ne pas m'avoir fait loger à l'hôtel des étrangers. Ce me fut de nouveau imposé à la fin de mon séjour, à Linfen.

Mais à Hungtung, par contre, je n'ai rencontré aucune difficulté de parcours et de séjour. Arrivé là dès le mardi après-midi, j'organise ma visite avec l'évêque et deux curés, celui de Hungtung (Zhuang Yuan) et celui de Zhao Cheng, une ville en développement à trente km au nord.

Mon désir était de visiter les chrétientés que j'avais fréquentées ou évangélisées jadis, c'est-à-dire de 1939 à 1943. Cela fait plus de 50 ans et je ne m'attendais pas à autre chose qu'à rencontrer quelques anciens qui se souviendraient encore de ce jeune missionnaire samiste, seul étranger dans la région, venu servir un diocèse nouvellement fondé.

Il me faut reconnaître que l'accueil dans une dizaine de villages où se trouvaient des communautés chrétiennes et des églises m'a tout simplement bouleversé et ému parfois jusqu'aux larmes. Grâce à des véhicules empruntés, jeep ou petite camionnette permettant de se faufiler souvent dans des chemins poussiéreux de montagne, j'ai parcouru le diocèse pendant cinq jours du sud au nord et d'est en ouest, faisant plus de 300 km.

Dans la plupart des villages, j'étais attendu à l'entrée par des jeunes portant des drapeaux puis des majorettes avec leur tambour et une fanfare de musiciens. Le temps d'arriver dans l'enclos de l'église, on retrouvait les chrétiens et l'on entrait dans le sanctuaire pour le temps d'une prière commune chantée. Après cela, commençait l'accueil avec tasse de thé ou rafraîchissement, présentation par un des prêtres, discours et remerciements. Le tout se clôturait par les photos de circonstance dont les Chinois sont très friands. Au départ cortège en sens inverse et parfois aussi concert de pétards !

C'est vous dire que j'ai trouvé une église extrêmement vivante. Les bâtiments du culte ont été restitués à peu près partout. Ils sont en cours de réparation ou de transformation. L'évêque m'a dit qu'il avait construit quatre églises l'an dernier. J'en ai photographié plusieurs. Elles ne sont malheureusement pas de style chinois, mais elles veulent affirmer, souvent avec un clocher, la présence de l'église dans le village.

Les chrétiens sont dynamiques et les chrétientés grossissent. Des exemples : Hanloyen, un village de 120 chrétiens il y a 50 ans, en compte 400 à présent. Linfen, une ville sans chrétien en 1945, a maintenant une église et un hôpital et compte 1400 fidèles. Zhao Cheng, une autre ville industrielle, a permis au curé d'acheter un beau terrain à front d'une rue principale ; s'y construit un beau complexe paroissial et hospitalier. Tien Pai Sheng qui comptait une centaine de chrétiens jadis, en compte 400 maintenant. Cette chrétienté a donné trois jeunes prêtres et quatre religieuses au diocèse.

L'autorité publique, communiste souvent, s'est montrée très bienveillante Amon passage et m'a assuré qu'elle souhaitait voir les étrangers aider les Chinois dans leurs réalisations nouvelles.

Sans vouloir généraliser, car la Chine a la dimension

d'un continent et les conditions d'ouverture ne sont pas les mêmes partout, on peut cependant espérer que les relations entre Rome et l'Église du Christ en Chine iront s'améliorant.

Quelques signes avant-coureurs nous permettent déjà d'y croire : plusieurs évêques chinois du continent ont pu se rendre en Europe et en Amérique pour y rencontrer leurs homologues. Des prêtres du continent viennent en stage ou participent à des sessions religieuses dans nos pays et tout récemment des séminaristes chinois sont arrivés à Rome pour y étudier.

Mon pronostic est que les relations Rome-Chine seront normalisées avant l'an 2000.

#

biography

15 June 1915

- Emanuel Hanquet was born at Liege the youngest of a family of 15 children

- After three years at the Daughters of the Cross School he underwent secondary education at St Servais College. He also joined 20th Liege Scouts.

1932-34

- Read Law at Liege University

1934

- Entered the Seminary of S.A.M. (Société Auxiliaire des Missions) at Leuven which was a centre of Theology for the Jesuits.

06 February 1938

- ordained a priest at Liege by Bishop Kerkhofs

20 November 1938

- Left for China via Italy and France.

20 December 1938

- embarked at Marseille on the ss Felix Roussel

20 January 1939

- arrived at Shanghai. After a short journey to Tianjin, visited Haimen the beginning of February 1939,. Studied Chinese at the American Protestant Hua Wen School Beijing until July 1939.

10 July 1939

- left on a months journey for Hungtung (Shanxi Province). Appointed to the secretariat of the Bishop of Hungtung as a teacher, priest and bursar.

08 December 1941

- Imprisoned for four months by the Japanese.

April 1942

Allowed to return to missionary duties as a priest in Hungtung

13 March 1943

- interned in Weihsien (now Weifang Shandong Province) Camp until 17 October 1945. the camp had been liberated two months earlier by American Parachutists. Went to Beijing to recover.

December 1945

- Returned to Hungtung (Shortages, poverty, near starvation)

January 1946

- Joined UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) for two years in a succession of posts Field surveyor, Distribution Officer, Chief Distribution Officer in four Northern provinces (Hebei, Shandong, Shanxi and Chahar (Inner Mongolia) Negotiated with the Communist guerrilla forces under Dine Xiao Ping the means of distributing relief supplies.

10 December 1947

- Left Shanghai for a four month voyage on the Sir John Franklin. (visiting Korea, Japan, Hongkong, Philippines, Singapore, Malaya, Thailand, India, Pakistan, Aden, Djibouti, Haifa, Alexandrie, Genoa) Arrived home at Easter 1948.

1948-1988

- Purser of S.A.M. and Director of V Lebbe Centre (1950-1952)

1950- 1986

- Chaplain of the Lone scouts in Brussels

July 1993

- Brotherhood of “la rue des Buisssons” at Louvain-la-Neuve

- Fr Hanquet visited China in September 1981, May and November 1991 and May and June 1994.