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## A Mosaic of the SVD China Mission based on Missionary Memoirs

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## **A Mosaic of the SVD China Mission based on Missionary Memoirs**

*Andrzej Miotk SVD*



Ur. 1963 w Sierakowicach. Od 1982 w Zgromadzeniu Słowa Bożego. Po święceniach kapłańskich (1990-1993) studia licencjackie z historii Kościoła na Uniwersytecie Gregoriana w Rzymie. Studia doktoranckie z misjologii w Wyższej Szkole Filozoficzno-Teologicznej w Sankt Augustin-Bonn zakończone doktoratem (1999). Autor artykułów naukowych i książki *Aż na krańce świata* (2005). Wykładał historię Kościoła na UWM w Olsztynie i misjologię w MSD Księży Werbistów w Pieniężnie. Aktualnie kieruje archiwum SVD w Rzymie.

### **Introduction**

**M**emoirs have been always a highly readable genre of literature and at the same time an invaluable historical resource. In this study, the selected memoirs of five China missionaries have been used as *tesserae* to piece together a mosaic of the SVD China Mission. Except for the memoirs of Fr. Bruno Hagspiel (1885-1961), all the others are deeply embedded in the authors' long-standing missionary experience in China: 30 years for Fr. Georg Stenz (1893-1900 / 1904-1927), 20 years for Fr. Clifford J. King (1919-1930 / 1932-1941), 25 years for Fr. Johann Bromkamp (1928-1953) and 20 years for Fr. Joseph Henkels (1928-1948). Fr. Hagspiel is an exception because he spent only 6 months in China as Fr. Wilhelm Gier's Secretary, during his Visitation (Aug. 27, 1922 – Feb. 20, 1923). As a result, Hagspiel's memoirs differ substantially from the others, presenting a more panoramic view of the SVD missions and of the Chinese context in general. Even if memoirs deliver a rather random description of the SVD China Mission, they neverthe-

less do provide both valuable information and the direct experiences of missionaries involved in this mission. Memoirs reflect some of the particular characteristics of SVD mission work in China, especially during the 60 years from the beginning of the mission in 1882 until the end of World War II in 1945. After the War, and in particular with the advent of Communism in 1949, all of the foreign missionaries were gradually expelled from the country. This study introduces both the missionaries' understanding of work in China and their perception of the Chinese people in the historical context of culture and religion. The research also includes elements of the authors' background, which helps to shed additional light on some of the details of their missionary involvement in China. Memoirs as a historical source do not aspire to deliver a systematic view of the SVD China Mission. They do, however, help indicate some of its aspects and, more importantly, they help convey a feeling for the missionary experience in the Middle Kingdom<sup>1</sup>.

## 2. Memoirs and the China Vocation of their authors

### 2.1. Fr. Georg Stenz: *Twenty-Five Years in China* (1924)

Among the nearly 550 SVD missionaries who worked in China until the general expulsion in the mid-1950s, Fr. Georg Stenz (1869-1928) was one of the first to write about his missionary life and activity there<sup>2</sup>. He was a prolific writer<sup>3</sup>, and apart from his mem-

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs as a distinctive subgenre under autobiography have the following noticeable features: they straddle the borderline between literature and historical record keeping; they encompass a certain segment of the highlights of a life – how one remembers one's own life; they show more personal thinking; they are the expression of thoughts and emotions in context.

<sup>2</sup> This article does not include the memoirs of missionaries such as: H. Rigney, *Four Years in a Red Hell. The Story of Father Rigney*, Chicago 1956, p. 222; A. Regensburger, *They Called Me Thunder. Twenty-one Years in China* (1933-1954), Homebush 1971, p. 301; H. Schmitz Heinrich, *Des Landes verwiesen. Bericht aus China* (Verbum Supplementum 18), Romae 1971, An-SVD-18, 95 p.; J. Weig, *Chronik der Steyler Mission in Tsingtao 1923-1947*, An-SVD-46, Romae 1980; W. Bungert, *Missionarisches Dienst im Osten Südshantungs (1929-1949)*, Rome 1980, An-SVD 52; A. Krieffewirth, *Erinnerungen* (1932-1952), v. I, Taiwan 1982, p. 173.

<sup>3</sup> Among other things Fr. Stenz published: *Reise-Erinnerungen eines Missionars. Meine Fahrt von Steyl (Holland) nach Shanghai (China) und ins Innere von China*, Trier (1894?); *Der Bauer in Schantung*, „Anthropos“, I, 1906, pp. 435-452, 838-863; *Die Gesellschaft „vom großen Messer“ (Boxer), „Globus“*. *Illustrierte Zeitschrift für Länder-und Völkerkunde*, LXXIX, 1900, pp. 9-12; *Zur Pekingener Volkskunde*, „Globus“, LXXX, 1901, pp. 273-277; *In der Heimat des Konfuzius Skizzen, Bilder und Erlebnisse aus Schantung*, Steyl 1902; *Arzt und Apo-*

oirs, published 19 handbooks, mainly catechisms, grammars, dictionaries and stories for the use of St. Francis Xavier College in Tsining. Upon leaving his homeland for China in 1893, he promised his friends that he would keep a diary. He fulfilled that promise after his first home-leave in 1900. At first he sent the manuscript to the members of his family. They edited it and published selected sections in various magazines. In addition, one of his politically active relatives, Fr. Georg Dasbach<sup>4</sup>, published some passages of the diary in his own magazines. Afterwards, they were collected and appeared in a book form: *Ins Reich des Drachen unter dem Banner des Kreuzes*<sup>5</sup>, an account of the impressions and experiences on his trip to China and of his seven years of missionary work. The publishing firm of Friedrich Albert in Ravensburg (1906) printed the 255-page book, embellished with 22 illustrations. An abridged version in English: *Twenty-Five Years in China (1893-1918)*<sup>6</sup>, published in Techny (1924), covered his work in China until 1918. As an important historical source, Stenz's memoirs convey among other things an eyewitness account of the martyrdom of the two SVD China missionaries, Fr. F. X. Nies and Fr. Richard Henle, as well as his own days of suffering in Rizhao [Jihchao] (9-11 November, 1898).

Fr. Georg Stenz was born in Horhausen, in the Westerwald (Diocese of Trier), into a very traditional catholic milieu with many vocations. There were four SVDs from this area, including Fr. Josef Grendel, who worked in China for 36 years (1907-1931 / 1937-1949). Fr. Stenz's parents, Jacob and Maria (née Dasbach) had four children, but only Georg and Maria reached adulthood. Before his ordination at St. Gabriel

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theker in China, „Globus“, LXXXI, 1902, pp. 383-386; Pater Richard Henle aus der Gesellschaft des Göttlichen Wortes. Ermordet am 1. November 1897, Steyl 1904, 1924; Life of Father Richard Henle, SVD, Missionary in China, Techny, Ill 1921; In Korea, dem Lande der „Morgenstille“, Steyl, (1903); *Ins Reich des Drachen unter dem Banner des Kreuzes*, Ravensburg 1906; Beiträge zur Volkskunde Süd-Schantungs, [in:] A. Conrady (red.), *Veröffentlichungen des städtischen Museums für Völkerkunde zu Leipzig*, Heft 1, Leipzig 1907; Das St. Franz-Xaver-Kolleg in Tsining, „Die katholischen Missionen“, no. 5, 1921-1922, pp. 92-94; *Twenty-Five Years in China (1893-1918)*, Illinois 1924.

<sup>4</sup> The energetic Fr. Georg Friedrich Dasbach (1846-1907), journalist, social reformer and politician, was for many years a member first of the Prussian and then of the German Parliament. He founded the „Trierische Landeszeitung“ in 1873.

<sup>5</sup> In 1902 Fr. Stenz published *In der Heimat des Konfuzius Skizzen, Bilder und Erlebnisse aus Schantung* in Steyl. This book is a mixture of geographical descriptions, travel accounts and a mission diary.

<sup>6</sup> G. Stenz, *Twenty-five years in China (1893-1918)*, Techny 1924, p. 133.

in June of 1893 the Generalate in Steyl, pressed by the men in China to send new missionaries, assigned him and two other new priests to China: Fr. Joseph Hesser (1867-1920) and Fr. Josef Schneider (1867-1896). A distant relative of his, Stephan Puhl<sup>7</sup> wrote about Fr. Stenz in an insightful biography: *Georg M. Stenz SVD (1869-1928) Chinamissionar im Kaiserreich und in der Republik*. Its title situates the historical context of Fr. Georg Stenz's mission activity in China at the turning point between two different epochs of Chinese history: the Chinese Empire (221 BC-AD 1912)<sup>8</sup> and the Republic (1912-1949). The 30-year span of his mission work in China (1893-1927) was marked by two longer breaks in Europe (1900-1904 and eight months in 1923). In China, he resided successively in the following places: Puoli [Puoly] (1893-1895); Wenshang, initially an assistant to Fr. Nies in Jiexiang [Jia-sian, Kia-siang] and then from the autumn of 1896 as a Rector in Zhangjiazhuang [Changkiachwang]; Rizhao (Nov. 1898) and Zhucheng [Chucheng] in Yizhou [Itschau] (Qingdao: 1898-1900); Jining [Tsining] shortly before leaving for Europe; Daijia [Taikia] (1904-1909) as Rector of the Mission House and the founder of the school for youth (1906). The last 18 years in China he spent in Jining (1909-1927) where he founded St. Francis Xavier College and became its Director<sup>9</sup> as well as the Rector of the Mission House (1913-1922). Fr. Georg Stenz was a missionary who dedicated his whole life completely to the mission, barely escaping twice with his life. Although his national patriotism was rather restrained<sup>10</sup>, he was an awkward and intransigent thinker, a fighter for causes that led to conflicts with his Superiors: Bishop Anzer, Fr. Provincial Vilstermann, and Fr. Lenfers. In his conclusion, Stephan Puhl pointed out

<sup>7</sup> S. Puhl, *Georg M. Stenz SVD (1869-1928) Chinamissionar im Kaiserreich und in der Republik*, Nettetal 1994, p. 317.

<sup>8</sup> The Chinese Empire started officially with the unification of China under the Qin Dynasty [秦朝] (221-206 BC). The end of the long imperial era came in the aftermath of the 1911 revolution, which overthrew Qin's imperial rule.

<sup>9</sup> In 1913, there were 180 pupils of whom half were non-Christians. This growth was favoured by the fact that the pupils found easily positions and the school received state recognition in 1913. Some pupils from other provinces even enrolled. G. Stenz, *Twenty-five years in China...*, op cit., p. 126.

<sup>10</sup> Later in China Georg preferred to distance himself from any political involvement. However, as a child of his time, he identified himself uncritically with the German Empire and its economical interests in China, although, he and his sense of justice were sometimes a thorn in the side of the German authorities. His attitude must be understood against the background of the *Kulturkampf*, which questioned the patriotic spirit of Catholics, who sometimes overdid things in their zealous attempts to refute such accusations.

that although Fr. Stenz may not have been a model missionary, he was a model of total missionary dedication<sup>11</sup>.

## 2.2. Fr. Bruno Hagspiel: *Along the Mission Trail* (1927)

Shortly after the publication of Fr. Stenz's memoirs, Fr. Bruno Hagspiel (1885-1961) published the fourth volume of *Along the Mission Trail* (1927)<sup>12</sup>. This volume about the SVD mission in China was the outcome of his six month visitation tour in the country<sup>13</sup>. Although he strove mightily to know the soul of the Chinese people, in reality such knowledge is only possible "through years of patient, benign, and attentive observation, together with an adequate knowledge of the language, intimate customs and habits of the people as a whole"<sup>14</sup>. His travelogue was essentially a result of his intense investigation in the form of description of the places he visited and the people he met. Bishop Henninghaus wrote in the forward: "He was allowed sufficient time to make a competent study of the country and its people, of its

<sup>11</sup> "Stenz was no Matteo Ricci. He lacked the historical uniqueness of one who lays foundations. He failed in Ricci's often praised gentleness and amiability as well in the quality and genius of his long-sightedness. He was no Father Lebbe; for he lacked that charisma and radicalism as well as a feeling for the church's political significance. Stenz was not a giant, not a prophet, he was limited, fully a child of his time, attached to his ideas". S. Puhl, *Georg M. Stenz SVD*, pp. 133-134.

<sup>12</sup> B. Hagspiel, *Along the Mission Trail*, IV, *In China*, Techny 1927, p. 392.

<sup>13</sup> "October 31 found us back in Yenchowfu. Here we wished to take a few days' rest, and to reconnoiter a bit in the vicinity before beginning the visitation of the Western section of South Shandong. It will probably be well for a moment to review this first completed portion of the entire visitation of the South Shandong vicariate. Let it be remembered that we started out from Yanzhoufu [Yenchowfu] (at the close of the retreat which Father General had given at Daijia, and just after my return from a personal trip, northward, to Jinan [Tsinanfu], Tianjin [Tientsin], and Peking), making Qufu [Küfu], the birthplace and burial place of Confucius, as our first destination. From there we reached out into the hill and mountain districts of Southeast Shandong, going first to Sheshui [Szeshui], then to Mengyin [Mungyin], Wangzhuang [Wang-chwang], Yishui [Ishui]; and the Ox-Heart Village, (Niuxin), Dijiashan [Tikiashan], thence to Zhucheng [Chucheng], Jingzhi [Kingchih], Gaomi [Kaomi], Jiaozhou [Kiaochow], and Qingdao [Tsingtao] (the last two by rail). After this we returned westward via rail to Jinan, and finally *Southward* via the Pukow-Tientsin [Pukou-Tianjin] railway to Yanzhoufu, our base headquarters and starting-point. Thus it will be seen that we had made a complete circuit, going first east by southeast, then north-east, and finally westward, then south". *Ibid.*, p. 221.

<sup>14</sup> B. Hagspiel, *Along the Mission...*, op. cit., p. 4.

missions and missionaries and missionary problems"<sup>15</sup>. In the introduction Fr. Hagspiel listed some of the difficulties he encountered in writing his memoirs: making an appropriate selection from the vast amount of materials available on China and finally the confused state of political affairs in a China marked by more than thirty different governments in the brief space of 11 years.

Fr. Hagspiel was born into a mixed family<sup>16</sup> in Schoenwisse (Krasnołęka, a parish of Królewo in Warmia). His homeland was once controlled by Germany and is now part of Poland. When the family moved to Culm (Chełmno), which was predominantly Polish, he received his initial training for the priesthood at the diocesan *Collegium Marianum* at Pelplin. At the age of 14, young Bruno joined the missionary Society of the Divine Word at Holy Cross Mission House in Silesia. He attended the Major Seminary of the Society at St. Gabriel's, near Vienna, Austria, where he was ordained on Feb. 6, 1910. He wanted to work in China. When he handed the Superior General eleven reasons for his desire to go as a missionary to China, he himself jokingly remarked:

"(...) the Superior General must have had twelve reasons why he assigned me to the newly established St. Mary's Mission Seminary, Techny, Illinois, Father Arnold Janssen's last foundation, and the very first Mission Seminary in the United States"<sup>17</sup>.

Although Fr. Hagspiel never worked directly in China, he played a very active part in recruiting and training American mission candidates for China, "the Great Land of Mission Promise."

### 2.3. Fr. Clifford King: *I Remember* (1968)

At the time of Fr. Hagspiel's visit to China, there were already American SVD missionaries. One of them, Fr. Clifford King (1888-1969) was among the first Americans who entered the Techny Seminary in the United States and set out for China. Toward the close of his life, as a chaplain at St. Joseph Hospital in Iowa, Fr. King found the right milieu to write his memoirs: *I Remember*<sup>18</sup>. The eighty-year old China missionary conveys his life vicissitudes in a remarkably well written account.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> His father was from Austria and his mother, Anna Lewkowitz, was of Polish descent.

<sup>17</sup> H.J. Felski, *P. Hagspiel Bruno*, AG SVD, Obituaries 1958-1967, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> *I Remember. Memoirs of Clifford J. King*, Techny 1968, p. 220.

However, in the light of other sources, King's account doesn't reveal the complete history of his missionary life. To some degree he portrayed only the positive and glorious side of his missionary endeavour. He appears not only as chronicler of his personal life story but also as its creator. Through Fathers Dudink and McHenry, Fr. King came into contact with the Pageant Press in New York, which published 4,000 copies of his book on a subsidy basis. King's memoirs reflect much of his own personality.

Fr. Clifford King was a short, stocky man, "peppery", "determined", "full of ideas," and of a "persevering personality"<sup>19</sup>. He came from the coal mining region of Mineville, New York, from the family of coal miner Joseph and Flavie King. The Kings had five boys and eight girls of whom three died in infancy<sup>20</sup>. His mother was a hardworking, pious woman with a talent for storytelling. Years later, he remembered the domestic atmosphere of his childhood as imbued with Christian love. At the age of 21, he determined to pursue his childhood ambition of becoming a missionary. With the help of his local pastor, he corresponded with the rector of the newly founded St. Mary Mission House at Techny, Fr. Peter Janser. He joined the SVD in Techny (1909)<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> The memoirs of Fr. King do not reflect the whole and complex situation of his own person. We learn more about the dark side of his stay in China from the letters exchanged between Fr. Peter Heier and Superior General Wilhelm Gier. Fr. Heier in his letter from Guangzhou [Kwangchow], 1 January, 1931, wrote in a very colloquial way about the special case of Fr. King who considered him as an enemy and stated that Fr. Heier hates him. In fact, Fr. King himself has destroyed his career in Henan and left for Europe: "I am convinced that Fr. King deserves a full respect and sympathy for his zeal and good will. I can wish him He would have more steady, wise and affable character. I could say a lot about Fr. King what would arouse compassion. He left Henan as an injured and deep disillusioned man. When he was about to leave us, nobody was missing him." Apart of his rash character, King's Superior, Fr. Froewiss was to large extent responsible for the situation, because he simply allowed him too much. Fr. Gier concluded: "Nobody can remove skin from himself. So we have to accept Fr. Cleophas as he is and to bear him as he is. Because he was not wanted in the U.S., I sent him to England, where he goes well along with Frs. Bergmann and Janser so far. If he is not allowed to return to China, he would like to go to our new mission in India." See AG 27: 1929-1936.

<sup>20</sup> New York near the mouth of Sweeny Pit. Initially his father worked in the coal mine, then in the cotton mills to Lowell (1894), finally until his death in 1903 as lumberjack to Braga in Upper Michigan. Also Clifford along with brother Peter became lumberjacks.

<sup>21</sup> "As I was explaining (to parish priest Fr. Faust) my desire to become a missionary priest, he interrupted me and exclaimed, What a strange coincidence!

Clifford was one of the best students in leader skills. As a student, in 1918 he founded the nationwide *Catholic Student Mission Crusade*. That same year, he volunteered for China. He recalls an event which took place before the beginning of the autumn semester in 1918:

“On the sixth day of the retreat, toward the end of the last conference, Fr. Janser took from his pocket a letter he had just received from our Father Superior General. He read it in the original German and then gave us a free translation of its message (...) the Chinese Government was preparing to confiscate the valuable properties owned by our Society in the cities of Qingdao [Tsingtao] and Jiaozhou [Kiaochow]. The rent from those houses constituted the principle source of income available to our Shandong [Shantung] Missionaries. Therefore the Superior General (Fr. Blume) asked that two or three of our most advanced Techny seminarians travel to Qingdao as soon as possible, in the hope that as accredited members of the Society, they might be able to prevent the confiscation of these properties”<sup>22</sup>.

Frater King was chosen from among six candidates, along with Frater Robert Clark. They were joined by German born Father Frederic Gruhn (1883-1970), a naturalised American citizen. Clifford completed his theological studies in the major Seminary at Yanzhou [Yenchow] and was ordained together with Clark and three Chinese classmates on Oct. 10, 1920 by the Most Rev. Augustine Henninghaus, Vicar Apostolic of Shandong. During his time in China, he was assigned to the following places: Henan [Honan] (1923); Zhumadian [Chumatien]; Xinyang [Sinyang]; Luoshan [Loshan] (1930-1931); England (1932-1940)<sup>23</sup>; Shandong (1935) and Jining, Macun Fangjiadaogou (1938). When the Japanese invaded China in 1941, King escaped via Beijing to the Philip-

Only yesterday I received a circular from the Divine Word Fathers at Techny, near Chicago, announcing the establishment of a seminary to train young men to become missionaries. Today you are here telling me that you would like to become a missionary. The finger of God is in this affair! If you so wish, I shall write to Techny and ask if they would accept you as a student.” See *I Remember...*, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>23</sup> When King’s bishop asked him to go to USA for fund-raising, Fr. Hagspiel, the Provincial said “(...) that he did not want him in America. He claimed that King was hyper nationalistic, which probably meant, among other things, that he did things his own way and was independent of superiors in America. To these Germans, Clifford King seemed like a loose cannon.” See E. Brandwie, *In the Light of the Word. Divine Missionaries of North America*, New York 2000, p. 255.

piners<sup>24</sup>. He strongly pushed the idea of an American SVD-Mission area, a plan which met some tensions<sup>25</sup>. Clifford's vocation was maturing gradually in an inspiring milieu<sup>26</sup>:

"A big question that had loomed up again and again in my thoughts was the possibility of my eventually becoming a priest and a missionary. I had been in the habit of eagerly reading whatever came to hand about the missions. Repeatedly my reading caused me to recall a statement President Theodore Roosevelt had made several years previously. Roosevelt had deplored the fact that after the Spanish-American War practically no American Catholic missionaries had been sent to the Philippines to replace the Spanish padres, most of whom had returned to their homeland. Catholic literature was always available in our home. For years we had subscribed to one of the country's finest weeklies, *The Catholic News* of New York. The section of that paper I read with most interest was the one

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<sup>24</sup> After over three years of hiding while the Japanese occupied the Philippines, he was forced to flee to Australia by submarine and then he returned to Techny. From 1944 to 1960, he was secretary to the exiled archbishop of Peking, Thomas Cardinal Tien Tien [Tian Gengxin]. At 72, King volunteered for work at a leprosarium in Papua New Guinea (1960-1966). He returned to the United States six years later and died of stroke at the infirmary in Techny on Sunday, 24 August, 1969.

<sup>25</sup> This way differed from the predominantly German China missionaries and led to tensions to the point that Fr. King was on the brink to leave the Society. From the very beginning, especially with the inflow of new American SVD to China, Fr. King was promoter of separate mission field staffed only by American. During Superior General visit in China, Fr. Hagspiel began to correspond with bishop Tacconi, PIME, of Kaifeng and the South-Eastern section of Henan Province was soon ceded for missionary purposes to the SVD and Fr. Gier assigned it to the care of American members of the Society. He spoke about it with Superior General (September 1922): "I conversed with him privately on several occasions and expressed my hope that our community would soon acquire, somewhere in northern China, a mission field, eventually to be placed in charge of Fathers and Brothers from the United States," *I Remember...*, op. cit., p. 98.

<sup>26</sup> In the seminary at Techny, he recalled the radiating faces of lay brothers who strictly followed the monastic axiom *ora et labora*. These examples accompanied at times of difficulties. At one point in the novitiate, he was worried about the financial situation of his family and even thought of having to leave the seminary. In his memory stuck the reaction on it of his Novice Master, Fr. Hermann Richarz who said: "As a member of a religious community you have no right to worry about your relatives, whom you have left in God's care. He will provide for their needs." *Ibid.*, p. 45.

devoted to mission news. It was just such reading that first got me to thinking about becoming a missionary"<sup>27</sup>.

Bishop Froewis, who preached the eight-day retreat before King's ordination, pointed clearly to the required qualification for a China missionary: learning, holiness, apostolic zeal and a very great love for the Chinese people. Bishop Froewis became his personal mentor<sup>28</sup>. In fact,

"King always returned to China for his examples and memoirs of his good times. His talks and sermons invariably began with the words, «In China (...)» or «When I was in China» (...). He (...) fell in Love with the Chinese and their way of going about living their lives"<sup>29</sup>.

#### 2.4. Fr. Johann Bromkamp: *Mission ohne Maske* (1974)

Fr. Johann Bromkamp's (1898-1971)<sup>30</sup> memoirs, written in German, display a very practical approach and are rich in factual material on the Chinese historical context<sup>31</sup>. The book version of Fr. Bromkamp's memoirs appeared three years after his death in 1971 as highly fictionalized account of his 26 years in China. In the introduction we read:

"It should be said bluntly what in many missionary reports has been carefully veiled or heroically represented. The author, who spent half of his life between the Gobi desert and

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 32-33.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 73. For Fr. King bishop Froewis was a mentor and father on his missionary path in China. He admired him. Despite his age, at sixty Fr. Froewis still showed the eagerness and optimism of a raw recruit in the service of the Lord. He was "endowed with a keen sense of humour; the comical aspects of any situation never escaped him. He spoke in very fluent and vivid German, and foreign expressions - Latin, French, Italian, and Chinese - kept cropping up by way of condiment to what he was saying, which was very entertaining to his young American listeners." Ibid., p. 103.

<sup>29</sup> E. Brandwie, *In the Light of the Word*, p. 254.

<sup>30</sup> J. Bromkamp, *Mission ohne Maske. 26 Jahre in China*, Martin-Verlag, Buxheim 1974, p. 257.

<sup>31</sup> Fr. Prefect wrote of him before admission to perpetual vows in the Fall of 1926: "(...) occasional dejection, grumpy nature, aftermath of former scrupulosity, but he is imbued with a good spirit both under the religious and normal aspects. He works with endurance and purposefulness. He attempts to be friendly in dealing with others. He is more practically oriented." See *Bericht über Zulassung*, AG 19:1925-1927.

the mountains in China, is convinced that the truth can never hurt. The account skips over routine missionary work in school, preaching and in the sacramental ministry, because these are basically the same in all countries. The actual missionary work emerges indeed, but is not described in detail. It focuses on the harsh conditions of mission work of the German missionaries in a little-known corner of the world<sup>32</sup>.

Bromkamp focuses his attention mainly on the Chinese context of missionary work, depicted here in terms of political events, culture, and religion. The political setting somewhat dominates the whole account. The memoirs inform us in detail about the everyday life, culture, and religion in China. The diarist presents himself as a very inquisitive observer of the Chinese reality.

Fr. Johann Bromkamp was born to Theodor and Maria (née Vi-enken), in Kirchhellen (Diocese of Münster) on Oct. 6, 1898<sup>33</sup>. During his elementary schooling in Holthausen (1905-1911) he was influenced by Steyl mission magazines and mission stories told by his catechist Fr. Dochber. He joined the SVD in Steyl on Apr. 24, 1911 and studied there until 1917, followed by one semester in St. Wendel. After completing his *Abitur* in 1917, he was drafted into the Army. After his 6-month training, he was sent to the front where he spent two years in harsh French captivity (Aug. 20, 1918 – Mar. 7, 1920). As a prisoner of war he worked on the railway, the tram and in a quarry. After the war, he entered the novitiate in St. Augustin near Hangelar, followed by philosophy and theology at St. Gabriel (Austria). He was ordained on May 26, 1927. He was mainly interested in pastoral work in China, but was also interested in the activities of the mission press in Gansu. He was in fact assigned to Gansu in China and worked in following places: 1928 – Liangzhou [Liangchow] – Xixiang [Sihiang]; 1929 – Lianzhou [Lianchow]; Wuwei City (1930); Minzhou (Minxian) (1931); Wuwei (1941); Gaotai (1948), and in Zhangye. The Communists finally expelled him from China in 1953 and he returned to Germany<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>32</sup> J. Bromkamp, *Mission ohne Maske...*, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> Lit: AG SVD: Nationale der Zöglinge no. 4001-5000 (J. 1910-1914), no. 4203; AG SVD: Bildschen 1970-1971; StChr 1927, p. 51, 54; 1935, p. 131; 1936, p. 203; AN 1948, p. 38; 1949, p. 61; 1951, p. 5; 1953, p. 153; 1955, p. 258; 1971/4, p. 5; StMChr 1973, p. 190; L. Leeb, *SVD in China*, p. 15; *Priesterjubiläum 1927-1952*, p. 23.

<sup>34</sup> In April 1954, Fr. Bromkamp took over the pastoral work in St. Konrad's Parish, then continued in St. Bonifatius parish in Bottrop. He was particularly dedicated to the care of the old and sick. He died in Bottrop on White Sunday, Apr. 18, 1971.

### 2.5. Fr. Joseph Henkels: *My China Memoirs* (1988)

The author of this last set of memoirs, Fr. Joseph Henkels (1901-1997), published a dense and detailed account of his time in China under the title of *My China Memoirs*<sup>35</sup>. He wrote the book because everyone was always asking him for stories about his experiences<sup>36</sup>. Fr. Henkels dedicated his memoirs to Monsignor Thomas Megan, Prefect Apostolic of Xinxiang [Sinsiang], Henan (1936-1951). In the Preface, he recalled:

“One day Fr. Francis Kamp came to visit me with a tape recorder and asked me to tape my memoirs of China. I told him that that was impossible since I did not have the material on hand to do this. I then asked him if he could send me a set of bound editions of *The Christian Family* published by the Techny Press. I told him I was interested in the issues from 1930 to 1950, which contained news and articles written by our missionaries in China and many other mission countries. Very soon afterwards he sent these bound editions to me. Then I asked my sister, Dominica, who lived in our home at Luxemburg, Iowa, whether by chance she still had letters which I wrote to my parents while over there. She found a large pack of them dated from 1928, the year I arrived in Shanghai, until 1944. I also found in my trunk a book of diaries which I kept while over there. In addition, I received much information in letters from Frs. Edward Wojniak, Edward Edwards, George Foffel, and Francis Heier, in reply to my request in this regard. That is how it was possible for me to write these memoirs”<sup>37</sup>.

Fr. Henkels called his memoirs

“(...) a testament of devotion and danger by the northeast Iowa native who pedaled his bicycle from one mission outpost to another in China amid the tumult of the Sino-Japanese War, World War II and the Civil War that resulted in the 1949 Communist victory”<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> J. Henkels, *My China Memoirs (1928-1951)*, edited by Rev. J.A. Heiar, SVD, Techny 1988, p. 222. The memoirs were published by the Otten-Bowers Printing Company of Dubuque during his retirement at Divine Word College in Epworth, Iowa.

<sup>36</sup> M. Nepper, *Priest Recounts Mission Work in China*, “Telegraph Herald”, Dubuque, Iowa, Friday, July 15, 1988, p. 1B.

<sup>37</sup> J. Henkels, *My China Memoirs...*, op. cit., p. VI.

<sup>38</sup> W. Simbro, *Iowan recalls pedalling across China for 23 years as a missionary*, “Des Moines Register”, Sept. 25, 1988.

Joseph Henkels' vocation<sup>39</sup> dated back to his days in elementary school:

"My interest in the foreign missions began when I was in grade school at Holy Trinity Parish in Luxemburg, Iowa. When I was in the fifth or sixth grade a Divine Word Missionary from Shandong, China, Fr. Joseph Koesters, gave us a slide lecture on his mission in South Shandong. He told us about the martyrdom of two of his confreres, Frs. Francis Nies and Richard Henle, who had been murdered by the *Red Spear* bandits some years previously. One of the slides showed the holes in the garments of the two missionaries. These slides made a deep impression on us children and every year we would collect our pennies for the rescue of pagan babies in order to have them baptized. It was there, too, in seventh grade that I realized that I had a vocation to the priesthood. I talked the matter over with my teacher, Sr. M. Albertine, and with my parents"<sup>40</sup>.

But the specific idea to study for the missions struck when the *Catholic Students' Mission Crusade* was introduced at his college in 1919. He wanted first to go to Maryknoll, but Fr. Michael Ambrosy, his spiritual director, advised him to choose Techny because the SVD were a religious congregation and had a greater stability for work in the foreign missions. In addition, during his first visit to Techny he was attracted by the real family spirit among its members. After a year of novitiate in East Troy, Wisconsin, and philosophy and theology at Techny, he was ordained in 1928 and assigned to China:

"When our class of 1928 at Techny was asked, before ordination, to what mission we wished to be appointed, my first choice was Henan, China. My interest in China was already aroused while I was in grade school, and further intensified when I joined the *Catholic Students' Mission Crusade* (...). When in 1924, 1925 and 1926 four of my closest friends in the seminary were appointed and went to Henan, my choice was none other than Henan also"<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> Joseph Henkels, the third of ten children of Peter and Clara Henkels (née Steffen), was born in Dyersville/Iowa on Jul. 19, 1901. He attended the elementary school in Luxemburg (1908-1916) and continued studies in St. Joseph's Academy (1916-1919) and Columbia College in Dubuque (1919-1921), Iowa. He got good marks in Math and in the Sciences and he had a practical bent.

<sup>40</sup> J. Henkels, *My China Memoirs...*, op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

From 1928-1933, he worked among the people in Xinyangzhou [Sinyangchow], in the province of Henan, with a bicycle as his only means of transportation. After a year of language study, he served as an assistant parish priest in Luoshan [Loshan] and Minjiang [Minkiang] (1931-1933). In 1933, he was transferred to the Society's *Fu Jen* University in Peking and became a member of the staff for four years (business manager and English classes in the Middle School). In agreement with Msgr. Thomas Megan, he was transferred at his own wish to the Xinxiang Mission in 1936: "I have never regretted the decision which I made at that time"<sup>42</sup>. Fr. Henkels was appointed a pastor of Xiuwuxian [Siu Wu Hsien] in Henan where he set up a school for catechists in 1938 and worked as Mission Procurator. In 1939, he was transferred to the catechist school in Zhonghuo [Chung-hwo]. From 1942 to 1944, Fr. Henkels worked in Chengchow and Nangang as acting Vicar General because the Bishops of both Vicariates were in a concentration camp in Neehsaing, Henan. When the Japanese crossed the Yellow River at Zhengzhou [Chengchow] in May of 1944, he had to move again to avoid being captured, finally landing in Xian [Sian], Shaanxi [Shensi]. From then until August, 1945, he worked as a civilian chaplain with the 14<sup>th</sup> Air Force in Xian and at the same time taught several classes at the Girl's Middle School at the Catholic Mission in Xian. After years of service, Fr. Henkels was forced to leave China in 1948. He had not seen his homeland for 23 years<sup>43</sup>.

### 3. Historical context of the SVD China Mission

Of the diarists, Frs. King and Bromkamp in particular paid very close attention to the Chinese political setting. Understanding it helps us understand missionary life and work. Fr. Stenz lived in a difficult period of the Boxer Rebellion (1898-1901), a movement which opposed foreign imperialism and Christianity. He wrote: "The people in general had no antipathy to Christianity but certain individuals, usually Confucianists, opposed the entry of the missionaries and stirred up

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>43</sup> Henkels spent his last three years in Asia in Hong Kong, working with refugees from the Chinese mainland. After returning to U.S. he was a vocation director in Iowa and Illinois (1952-1956) and then worked for 22 years in St. Anselm's African American Parish in Chicago (1956-1978). He retired to Epworth (1978-1990) and finally moved to the Divine Word Residence in Techny where he died at the age of 96 on March 18, 1997.

popular riots"<sup>44</sup>. The hostility arose particularly with the spread and radicalisation of the *Boxer* movements. The government took decisive steps against the rebels, accusing them of having robbed Christians. In turn, they sought revenge by persecuting Christians: "We were building a church in Jining, and reports were spread in every direction that we used the hearts and eyes of children for the foundations. We were accused of distributing narcotics in order to bring the children into our hands"<sup>45</sup>. Then, Frs. Nies and Henle were murdered on Nov. 1, 1897. As a consequence, "the blood of the two murdered missionaries bound me and the Christians more closely together"<sup>46</sup>.

In Chapter 14 of his memoirs, Fr. King reports on the Chinese historical and political background of the Henan mission. Well-informed, he describes the ongoing changes in the political scene in China over decades. He highlights the political role of Sun Yat-Sen (Sun Zhongshan, 1866-1925) from Guangdong [Kwangtung], who learned English, and the American democratic form of government during his stay in Honolulu. Sun Yat-Sen contributed decisively to the overthrow of the 4,000 year old Chinese monarchy in 1911 and became the first president of the new Chinese Republic. But devoid of military support, he had to step down, replaced by Yuan Shikai [Yuan Shih-Kai] (1912-1915)<sup>47</sup>, who in turn knew little and cared less about democratic government. As the most powerful military leader in northern China, he aimed at restoring the Empire and founding a new dynasty. However, his sudden death led to the division of the country into a dozen of feudal domains, mutually hostile and independent, and a descent into chaos. Sun Yat-Sen had founded the *Kuomintang* (Guomindang - People's Party GMD), with headquarters in Canton, in order to unify China under a central government. The unifying program was based on "Three Popular Principles"<sup>48</sup>. He also set up the *Whampao* [Huangpu]

<sup>44</sup> J. Henkels, *My China Memoirs...*, op. cit., p. 18.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>47</sup> Yuan Shikai (1859-1916) was an important Chinese general and politician, famous for his influence during the late Qing Dynasty, for his role in the events leading up to the abdication of the last Qing Emperor of China, for his autocratic rule as the second President of the Republic of China (following Sun Yat-Sen), and for his short-lived attempt to revive the Chinese monarchy, with himself as the "Great Emperor of China."

<sup>48</sup> Sun Yat-sen's speech *The Three Principles of the People (Sanmin zhuyi)* was delivered on March 6, 1921, at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National People's Party in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou (Canton). In this speech, Sun elaborated on the three primary tenets of his political doc-

*Military Academy* near Canton as the incubator for a modern Army. He also asked for military supervision and instruction from abroad, approaching Germany, England, and the USA. After these countries declined his invitation, he accepted a Russian offer (1923) that led to the Sovietisation of the Kuomintang<sup>49</sup>. The ailing Sun Yat-Sen died of incurable liver cancer in Peking on March 25, 1925. Two “landlord generals” were engaged in a Civil War in an attempt to gain full control of Henan Province. Chiang Kai-Shek [Jiang Jieshi], who had been chosen by Sun Yat-Sen as his successor, led a military expedition that succeeded brilliantly due to the help received from the Russians. In the spring of 1927, his armies invaded Henan. Winning a victory over landlords, at the Assembly in Zhengzhou [Chengchow], Chiang Kai-Shek proclaimed the supremacy of the Kuomintang and the abolition of the Communist Party in the whole of China. Russian experts were dismissed and sent back to Moscow. However, the Communists not only survived, but would finally gain the upper hand. In Henan, the revolutionary forces in the army and the propaganda corps trained in Hankou [Hankow] under the Russian Michael Borodin, instigated anti-foreign and anti-Christian demonstrations. When passing our missions, they shouted hate-inspired slogans: “Down with the Catholic religion, the opium of the people”. The propagandists used the front wall of our Xinyang mission for a period of three or four months and placed there a billboard with anti-Christian slogans and passages from Communist propaganda books: “There were also crude water-colour paintings depicting foreign missionaries at the table carving up the roasted bodies of Chinese babies”<sup>50</sup>. The SVD mission was a target of various threats on the part of one officer, including the rumors that the mission buildings were to be occupied. On the advice of one officer, Fr. King intervened with General Suin (superior). “General Suin received me

trine: the ethnic nation (*minzu*), the people’s rights (*minquan*), and the well-being of the people (*minsheng*). In English, these principles have often been translated as nationalism, democracy, and socialism. In Chinese, each of these principles contains the character *min*, which means “people”. Sun Yat-Sen likened his principles to U.S. president Abraham Lincoln’s ideals of government (expressed in the Gettysburg Address) “of the people” (nationalism), “by the people” (democracy), and “for the people” (socialism).

<sup>49</sup> The first Guomindang national congress, which convened in Guangzhou with Sun as president, admitted Communists into the party and accepted Soviet advisers, notably Borodin, who proceeded to reorganise the GMD along Soviet lines of “democratic centralism”, which tended to strengthen the leader and party discipline.

<sup>50</sup> *I Remember...*, op. cit., p. 136.

very graciously and assured me that he would investigate the matter and punish the young officer if he found him guilty"<sup>51</sup>. Finally, a horde of spear-carrying peasants succeeding in averting the serious threat which the Communist agitators posed to our mission. In another town of Jingshandian [Tsingshantien], a hostile mob reached our mission at night. Fr. Anthony Humel, who was in charge of the mission, barely escaped by clambering over the compound's rear wall<sup>52</sup>.

From Gansu, Fr. Bromkamp reports at length on the apparent fluctuation of Communist policies. After initially seizing power in China, the Communists pretended to be friendly to the mission. The banner on the wall of the Railway Station announced: "The Communists Party protects religion." They attached small handbills to the walls, addressing all Christians: "Dear Christians, we Communists are your Friends. Do not believe the Imperialists who present us as despisers of religion"<sup>53</sup>. The Christians were well aware of what was going on. Soon the tone changed and there were other posters: "Down with Heaven." The kid glove approach lasted only until military resistance was broken in the mountains and General Tian [Tien] was shot at the gates of the city. Now the Communists showed their real colours. They started to intimidate with slogans such as: "Always stick to the party line." Each Sunday, I had special visitors from the party in the church, they came with chains. I always attempted to speak in a friendly tone about the party and I even bought Mao's portrait and hung it on the wall. Once I spoke boldly about the Communist change and their persecution but I soon realised that I was not ready for martyrdom. Fr. Bromkamp described Communist politics in terms of: agrarian reform; a campaign to catch flies and rats; the atmosphere of denunciations and a structure of systematic provocations. Criticism and accusations led to contemptuous talk about "Imperialist Christians." Accusations were widely spread in the press<sup>54</sup>. Bishop Buddenbrock was a special target

<sup>51</sup> "Somewhat later the young Communist propagandists became so violent in their denunciation of the Catholic Church that they were threatening to do bodily harm to the missionaries, causing us to fear that at any moment our mission might be invaded by that bloodthirsty mob," Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>52</sup> Providentially, the rats helped rid the mission of the "murderous ruffians." When they were holding a meeting in the larger church, a little army of rats began galloping about so that the ignorant peasants, having no ceilings in their houses, became panic-stricken and began to scream that the spirits were coming after them. As they couldn't open doors, they escaped by smashing window-panes. Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>53</sup> J. Bromkamp, *Mission ohne Maske...*, op. cit., p. 210.

<sup>54</sup> J. Schütte, *Die katholische Chinamission im Spiegel der rotchinesischen Presse*.

of the attacks: "What do you say about your chief? Under the cross he carries treason in his heart. For 40 years he played the pious man and now his secrets are unveiled"<sup>55</sup>. The aim of the provocations was to force Bromkamp to leave China. Every evening, they came to discuss dialectical materialism with him:

"Reports about the three principles movement were absolutely explicit. The foreigners always stood alone. So I finally gave up. It was 1953 shortly after Easter. I got permission to travel under the pretext of visiting the graves of my parents in Germany. They said «We will not put any hindrance in the way of our German friends»"<sup>56</sup>.

The parting was difficult because my Christians wanted me to stay. Travelling by train on his way back to Germany, he was accused of being an imperialist from Berlin. He wrote:

"Strangely, as the locomotive pulled away, the radio was not on. An announcer, hidden behind a microphone somewhere, addressed the passengers: «Comrades! Today we have an imperialist in our midst, a man who lived for decades in our country, but who, it now turns out, is an enemy of our glorious People's Government: *Yinlunggang!* [*In-lung-gang!*]. It could be better to call him *Beiningkang* [*Bei-ning-kang*] (*the resistance fighter*), because he has always been an enemy of communism. During the land reform, he sabotaged agriculture by holding so-called religious services against the will of the government. He incited our countrymen against the People's Government and kept them away from work»"<sup>57</sup>.

Fr. Bromkamp also reports on the devastating Sino-Japanese War (1937-1941)<sup>58</sup>, which led to an estimated 10-20 million human

*Versuch einer missionarischen Deutung* (Missionswissenschaftliche Abhandlungen und Texte. Veröffentlichungen des Internationalen Instituts für missionswissenschaftliche Forschungen, nr. 21), Münster Westfalen 1957, p. 394.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 252.

<sup>58</sup> "Without reason Japan invaded an almost defenceless China. As a nation, Japan felt its lack of space and was looking for territory in a place where even the Chinese themselves had long felt a lack of space." See J. Bromkamp, *Mission ohne Maske...*, op. cit., p. 100. The Second Sino-Japanese War occurred from July 7, 1937 to September 2, 1945, although the two countries had been fighting intermittently since 1931. It was a military conflict fought primarily between

losses, including 1.5 million victims of the Huanghe [Hoangho, Yellow River] flooding. He provides information about the Chinese who called the Japanese *Ainu* – “dwarf slaves” (nonentity slaves): “We are like tigers fighting elephants. Obviously, the tiger is subject to the elephants, but when he attacks and bites portion by portion the meat of the elephant’s belly, he eventually brings him to the fall”<sup>59</sup>. China was at war with Japan since 1937 but the area of Minzhou [Minchow], distant from the centre, was peaceful. Japanese air forces often bombarded Lanzhou [Lanchow], so that all the inhabitants sought shelter in the mountains. Fr. Bromkamp was suspected of spying due to his contacts with the aliens. It would, however, be wrong to believe that the war front ran only between the Chinese and the Japanese. In Xinjiang [Sinkiang] Province, there was also a war going on between different ethnic groups. Of the 4 million inhabitants living there, only 6% were Chinese. Uyghurs, Mongols, Kirgiz and Kazaks all lived on the province’s 1.7 million km<sup>2</sup>. The last were especially warlike<sup>60</sup>.

#### 4. Missionary life

Life was harsh for missionaries in China, and not only due to the political situation. It was a stark contrast to the enthusiastic expectations of newly arrived fledglings. Fr. King set out for China as a very zealous and ambitious missionary with a very lofty spirit and notion of the missionary endeavor: “On September 29, 1893, I received my mission cross at Steyl. It was to be at once weapon and banner in my fight for the Kingdom of God.”<sup>61</sup> For the youthful missionary the desire for persecution, martyrdom and death for the faith were the desires of his heart. Instead, the mission reality drifted away from the images cherished by the ordinary “folks at home,” by whom the missionary was held in high respect: “They imagine him journeying through pagan lands holding a crucifix in one hand and instructing and baptising the

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the Republic of China and the Empire of Japan from 1937-1941. China fought Japan with some economic help from Germany, the Soviet Union (1937-1940), and the United States. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the war merged into the greater conflict of World War II as a major front of what is widely known as the “War in the Pacific.” The Second Sino-Japanese War was the largest Asian conflict of the 20th century. *The Second Sino-Japanese War*, [in:] [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second\\_Sino-Japanese\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Sino-Japanese_War) [accessed: 22.12.2012].

<sup>59</sup> J. Bromkamp, *Mission ohne Maske...*, op. cit., p. 140.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 241.

<sup>61</sup> G. Stenz, *Twenty-five Years in China...*, op. cit., p. 7.

pagans whom he meets”<sup>62</sup>. This idealistic view, which had also been presented in the seminary, quickly met the reality check of rough experience:

“Mission life is, indeed, a chain of grief and sufferings. More grievous, however, than the physical privations – at least here in China – are the mental trials. The sense of desertion and homesickness has a most depressing effect. Like a lone tree, one stands in the middle of an arid wilderness, without shelter, a prey to every wind. There is no friend to advise one”<sup>63</sup>.

The sense of loneliness could be very acute. Fr. Hagspiel stressed this aspect of missionary life based on meetings with missionaries and listening to their stories. Loneliness became the missionary’s bogey-man. Missionaries went through periods of almost complete isolation from human relationships during the hours and days of travel on the road<sup>64</sup> and during days and nights of lonely vigil in his far-away mission station, or in some strange wayside stopping place:

“We are able to meet the problem of overwork, hardships, unaccustomed modes of living, poverty, lack of success, and even illness with comparative ease. We have many unspeakably blessed compensations. But when the gnawing pains of loneliness, the thought of isolation, the tremendous sense of distance from all understanding companionship creep in upon us, we find ourselves, until we are able to master these things through returning up rushes of love for our blessed Savior, in the grip of the most terrible and devastating of human experiences which a missionary, or anybody else for that matter, has to face during the entire life-travail – it is, as it were, the echo of that cry, *Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani*, that rang out from Calvary’s awful hour”<sup>65</sup>.

In the context of loneliness, the annual retreat was of great importance for SVD missionaries: “For eleven months of the year such a missionary is very much isolated in the midst of the population alien to him, with whom his only link is his desire to win its members to

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> The missionary is obliged to spend the greater part of his time on the open road. For a missionary located in hilly or mountainous country, the mule is the most dependable means of travel.

<sup>65</sup> B. Hagspiel, *Along the Mission...*, op. cit., p. 146.

God (...)”<sup>66</sup>. A missionary seldom has a confrere nearby to whom he can turn for a word of encouragement or counsel. For the most part he is thrown entirely on his own resources<sup>67</sup>. The one month of common retreat allows them to gain physical, mental spiritual recuperation before going back to their labours for another year. Fr. Henkels reports on one three week vacation in the central SVD house at Zhumadian in South Henan:

“The month of June was the time of the wheat harvest, when the farmers were busy cutting and threshing their grain. At that time all the missionaries would gather for a three week vacation in the central SVD house at Zhumadian. Only two or three would stay at the central mission station to take care of sick calls and funerals in the area. During that time there would be study periods to review moral theology, canon law and liturgy. Moral cases would be proposed and solved during the morning hours. The afternoons were leisure periods when we could visit interesting places in the area or play games. One week towards the end of the period was set aside for our yearly retreat conducted by an experienced retreat master. And at the end of the vacation the new appointments would be announced. It was at this time that I received my first appointment to be assistant to Fr. Clifford King at Luoshan, Henan”<sup>68</sup>.

One very tiring aspect of a missionary life was the long travels on very dangerous roads which created an insecurity and real danger. It didn't help that the distances between villages and towns were very vast. Fr. Henkels notes that the movements of the missionaries in the area east of Xinyang was limited because it was not safe to travel. Signs of the Communists who had invaded Henan were visible everywhere. He travelled on his bike as long as the roads were passable. Aware of the imminent danger of meeting roving bandits, just before entering the gates of Chengyang he spotted two executed bandits and by spring more than eighty bandits had been captured. Fr. Bromkamp spoke

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<sup>66</sup> “(...) seldom or never are there people of similar walks or levels of life so as to make possible anything like a companionship of mutual interest: in fact, the missionary almost inevitably has little or nothing in common with the people with whom he dwells in almost personal contact, with the exception of the common interest of the religious teaching and benefits he is imparting to them.” Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>68</sup> J. Henkels, *My China Memoirs...*, op. cit., p. 13.

about the exhausting trips because of the very difficult conditions of travelling through the mountains: "If you go to Gansu, be sure to pack your headstone (your grave cross)." In the area of Lianggong [Liang-gung] the wealthier big farmers built small castles in the mountains to serve them as places of refuge during the constant incursions of the bandits.

The constant travelling was burdensome and unsafe due to the extremes of heat and cold, frequent hunger and robbers who "believed the missionary had plenty of money because they employed both male and female catechists, built houses of prayer, and cared for the sick and poor *gratis*"<sup>69</sup>. Fr. Bromkamp tells of Sheyuqi [Sche-yü-tchi], the most faithful and most skilful collaborator of Fr. Ernest Vogt<sup>70</sup>, whose corpse was found in the river. On the way back from Tauchow he was attacked by robbers. "The Chinese live and dies for the family." Sheyuqi [Sche-yü-tchi] was the only son, responsible for the whole family. A month later, the perpetrators, part of the Chinese mafia, were caught with Sche-yü-tchi' horse and in payment for their crimes were put to death at the city wall of Taozhou [Tauchow].

Long before, Fr. Stenz noted that in China, a missionary's life was continually under threat because of the ravaging gangs of bandits:

"In many communities we had to appoint two catechists, one of whom was to be on watch day and night. Wherever we went, the Christians established night watches. Very frequently... they had to escort us from community to community. Repeatedly I had to sleep in a room surrounded by the Christians"<sup>71</sup>.

However this image of robbers seems to be one-sided in the light of Hagspiel's observations:

"Generally speaking, the robbers and bandits are friendly to the mission, and have repeatedly displayed a benevolent spirit towards Catholic missionaries. Formerly this was not so, for the bandits at first assumed that the missionaries must be very wealthy, since they bought houses and property. They have since learned that the missionaries have little riches and that their whole lives are devoted to doing good for the people. Furthermore, they know that the missionaries leave them in peace, and do not betray them to the Government. Sometimes, when

<sup>69</sup> G. Stenz, *Twenty-five Years in China...*, op cit., p. 62.

<sup>70</sup> J. Bromkamp, *Mission ohne Maske...*, op. cit., p. 108.

<sup>71</sup> G. Stenz, *Twenty-five Years in China...*, op cit., p. 74.

the bandits are in dire need, they will, indeed, stop a missionary and ask him, most probably, to *lend* them his belongings, and will occasionally take all that the missionary has with him"<sup>72</sup>.

For one foreigner it was the worst to fall into the hands of parties fighting among themselves. Fr. Bromkamp recounts the fates of some of his confreres:

"My confrere Polefka, who wanted to come to Gansu, was stopped in the central China by the war and was involved in the battle. On the *March towards the West* he fell into the hands of partisans who kidnapped him. They, in turn, were then attacked by another group of partisans. Fr. Bernhard Polefka died in an inhuman way. He was buried alive. Another confrere, Fr. Ludwig Woltering, was taken prisoner and was forced to march side by side with red partisans for months on end. Like bread dough, he was kneaded and pounded psychologically, and was subjected to intense brainwashing before finally being released. His classmate from Schwarzwald, Fr. August Hättig, was shot by the partisans"<sup>73</sup>.

While Fr. Bromkamp was passing through the famous *Golden Gate* of Lanzhou [Lanchow], he used the words from Dante's *Comedy*: "Abandon all hope ye who enter here"<sup>74</sup>. Columns of exiles were dragged under this Arch to die in Siberian China, Turkestan or Gansu. The long distances between mission stations and the continuous fighting between the Chinese and Muslim *Dungans* enormously complicated the missionary life. There was a steady danger of typhus and of political instability, triggered by the ceaseless animosity between the Chinese *Han* and the Muslim *Dungans*<sup>75</sup>, who felt superior to the

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<sup>72</sup> B. Hagspiel, *Along the Mission...*, op. cit., p. 284.

<sup>73</sup> J. Bromkamp, *Mission ohne Maske...*, op. cit., p. 141.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55.

<sup>75</sup> The Dungan people, living in today's Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, are the descendants of Chinese Muslims. Two waves of *Hui* migrated to West Turkistan under Russian rule in the late nineteenth century. The first group came in 1878, from Gansu and Shanxi, after an unsuccessful uprising against Manchu rule. The second wave came in 1881, from the Ili River valley in far western region of East Turkistan. The Russians had occupied the region in 1871, but after its return to China with the Treaty of St. Petersburg in 1881, the local people were given the choice of Russian or Chinese citizenship. These two waves of *Hui* immigrants settled mostly in the Chu River valley of Kyrgyzstan, near Bishkek. They called themselves *Dungans*. The Dungan people have lived

Han Chinese because of their faith in one God. Fr. Bromkamp noted: "In China life and death constitute a natural unity."

A newcomer to China had to learn a totally alien language as well as to completely adapt his life to the customs of the native people, not only in term of conduct and respect. Fr. Stenz recalled the very beginning of his adventure with the Chinese language. He was pleased with the good reception he received and with the little mud house for a chapel in the small community of Mujahe [Mu-kia-heol] at the foot of the mountains.

"Their former leader and his wife cared for me exactly as if I were their son (...). During my stay at this place, my host lived only for me. He had ordered the Christians never to leave me alone; thus, from early morning until late at night, I had always someone speaking to me. In this way I was compelled to speak Chinese all day. After two weeks, I composed a little sermon, practiced it with the catechists, and delivered it in the evening. The good people probably did not understand much of my discourse, but their joy that I had learned so much in fourteen days was truly touching. I delivered a few words of instruction every evening thereafter and soon also ventured to hear confessions"<sup>76</sup>.

Fr. King also started pastoral work shortly after he began learning the language. He was given as a helper a young Chinese travelling assistant-catechist Ma Lun [Luin]. With his help King set about memorising the entire text of the little Chinese catechism and a book explaining the five rules for a worthy confession. "We spent about six hours a day studying"<sup>77</sup>. Later arrivals like Frs. Henkels and Cremers

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for more than a century scattered around Central Asia, a region inhabited by many ethnic groups. However, their impressions of their homeland have not become blurred with the passage of time. Even today, more than 90% of them speak the Shaanxi and Gansu dialects. In terms of religious belief, housing, dietary habits, and dress, they still keep the traditions handed down by their ancestors who lived in northwest China. In the first decade of the 20th century, it was estimated that there were 20 million Muslims in China proper (that is, China excluding the regions of Mongolia and Xinjiang). Of these, almost half resided in Gansu, over a third in Shaanxi (as defined at that time), and the rest in Yunnan. In 1911, the provinces of Qinhai, Gansu, and Ningxia fell to Muslim warlords of the family known as the *Ma* clique, including *Ma Bufang* and *Ma Zhongying* [Chung-ying]. See *The Dungans - Cultural Emissaries in Central Asia* [in:] [www.china.org.cn/english/2003/Aug/72893.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/english/2003/Aug/72893.htm) [accessed: 4.01.2013].

<sup>76</sup> G. Stenz, *Twenty-five Years in China...*, op cit., p. 48-49.

<sup>77</sup> *I Remember...*, op. cit., p. 75. "Even after spending thirty-five years in China,

learned Chinese in a more organised way in Xinyang. Fr. Peter Heier taught them the vocabulary and grammar while the Chinese catechist worked on their proper pronunciation while reading. Fr. Henkels explains: "The Chinese language does not have an alphabet, but is written as characters or pictures. It really taxes one's memory, since the meaning of the character and the reading or pronouncing of it must be memorised. In the beginning our progress was very slow. Gradually a person catches on, but in order to master the language one has to work at it as long as one is in China. There was always something new to learn since the original vocabulary that was learned was not enough to cover all the topics. Our aim was to learn the vocabulary for the ordinary conversation with the people and to be able to teach religion and give sermons and then later on, take care of other topics as needed"<sup>78</sup>. Fr. Henkels depicts one humorous situation that arose from his mixing up an expression in his first sermon:

"I recall on one occasion I was talking about the evil of the love of riches. But during the talk I was always saying *Pei-tsai* [*baicai*] (which means cabbage) instead of *Tsai-pei* [*caibai*] (which means riches). After the talk the Chinese nuns who were attending the sermon came to me and said: «but we love cabbage very much, and there is nothing wrong with that, or is there?»"<sup>79</sup>.

## 5. Missionary work

The memoirs of the old China missionaries provide us with an abundant supply of description of the various forms of the SVD mission involvement in China. The most common activity was the ordinary pastoral care for the old Christians and the new converts. Usually, as in case of Fr. King, missionaries were multi-takers: pastoral care, building activity, and charity. In addition, the missionaries were summoned to deal with emergency situations: death, severe illness, arson against Catholic chapels or attacks on the Christian communities. The missionary was usually on the go, living in the main station. He rode on the horseback to administer the sacraments from station to station.

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however, I was often mortified by my inability to express myself with anything resembling the fluency and elegance of the educated Chinese. Fortunately, the Chinese do not expect foreigners to speak their language, except in a very halting way." *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>78</sup> J. Henkels, *My China Memoirs...*, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

He could only visit the more distant stations once a year. When Fr. King, followed on foot by his helper Lun, set out to visit outstations, he was equipped with a Mass kit, a sick call outfit and a big sack of bedding with a pillow and blankets. In the village, crowds of men, women, and children would be kneeling at prayer in the chapel. Many asked him to hear their confessions and he called the first child he baptised "George, in honor of His Eminence, Cardinal George Mundelein, who had come to Techny to hand me the Mission Cross on the day of my departure. The day of my first baptism was November 8, 1920, exactly ten months since I had arrived in China"<sup>80</sup>. On the second tour before Christmas "I had about twenty-five stations to visit"<sup>81</sup>. Since he had no catechist, Ma Lun read passages out of a splendid book by an old Jesuit explaining clearly every article of the creed and each of the commandments. Fr. Stenz underlined that: "During his stay in the community, the missionary would preach twice daily, in the morning and in the evening"<sup>82</sup>. Usually the local community was headed by a *huichang* [*huizhang*] (lay community chief), who had numerous and important tasks:

"He rang the church bell, calling the faithful to morning and evening prayers which were chanted in common by the whole community. He saw to it that all baptized Catholics attended church and received the Holy Sacraments each time the priest came to the village (...). Periodically he submitted to the priest a detailed report on the spiritual condition of the community. He also notified the missionary if a Catholic girl was in danger of being given in marriage to a pagan husband or if a Catholic married man had given scandal by taking to himself an extra wife"<sup>83</sup>.

It was not the missionary's preaching but the activities of the native catechists that were crucial in winning new converts<sup>84</sup>, especially female ones who could approach the secluded women. Fr. Henkel reports:

"During the year that I was in Chengyang, I made it a habit to visit the chapels and schools in the villages where there were Catholics. At each of these villages a male catechist taught the children in the school and conducted the Sunday service for the

<sup>80</sup> *I Remember...*, op. cit., p. 78.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

<sup>82</sup> G. Stenz, *Twenty-five Years in China...*, op. cit., pp. 57-59.

<sup>83</sup> *I Remember...*, op. cit., p. 80.

<sup>84</sup> G. Stenz, *Twenty-five Years in China...*, op. cit., p. 67.

Catholics and catechumens. This service consisted of saying the Sunday prayers and reciting one of the parts of the catechism. The catechism had four sections: the Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Sacraments, and an explanation of the prayers. The catechist would then give them a detailed explanation of the catechism systematically so that the whole catechism would be explained during the year. Every month the catechist would come to Chengyang to get his monthly salary, to report on the progress made during the month, and to pick up the supplies needed for the school<sup>85</sup>.

Then Fr. Henkels replaced Fr. Joseph Jansen in Mingjiang [Mingkiang]. There were four villages with Catholics, a school for the children, and a catechist to instruct all those within a radius of fifteen miles of the main station of Mingjiang [Mingkiang]. Fr. Henkels visited them regularly: "I would take a Mass kit along, stay there overnight, and give the people an opportunity to go to confession and attend Mass in the morning. In one of the villages I had a catechist who was a real gem, named Wang"<sup>86</sup>. While explaining Christian doctrine and the Bible history he would constantly refer to and make comparisons between the teaching of the Church and the stories found in classical Chinese literature.

Fr. Hagspiel saw the far-reaching and deep significance of a catechists' school, wherever one was to be found:

"It is seldom, and one may say never in China, that a missionary priest is able to attend personally to the day-by-day conduct of the missionary and educational work under way in all sections of his missionary territory. Sometimes, he has thirty to fifty hamlets, or even more, in all of which some regular religious instruction is constantly being carried forward. Even if the missionary has an assistant, the two can scarcely do more than to get from place to place as often as possible, to supervise the work, to hear confessions, to settle matters of more serious import that have arisen, and above all, to offer up the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. But between times it is necessary that the missionary should have some lay representative in each place, someone who is a Christian in good standing, well trained and

<sup>85</sup> J. Henkels, *My China Memoirs...*, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>86</sup> Wang had been in the seminary in Shandong and had received the minor orders. Then he discontinued his studies. He had a very good education in Christian doctrine as well as in Chinese classical literature. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

versed in the catechism and in the Holy Scriptures, and a person of sufficient education and ability to command the respect and assume a sort of leadership among the people. Such a person is the missionary's catechist. He is a person who must have been especially selected for his position and very definitely trained for it. For a wise and prudent catechist is an invaluable assistant to the missionary, in keeping him constantly in touch with the trend of local events, passing difficulties or disturbances which may be threatening the work, or auspicious circumstances which it may be well to take advantage of at just the right, psychological moment. From all this it will be seen that the establishment of a catechetical or catechists school is an achievement of no small moment in any section of a mission field. Moreover, it remains to be shown that it is the catechist who assumes the brunt of the early instruction of the people, leads them in regular gatherings for prayer or special non-liturgical devotions, and prepares the most promising catechumens for admission, as soon as provision can be made for them, for a month's intensive training at what is called the *catechumenate*, located at the central mission station where it is under the immediate control of the missionary Fathers<sup>87</sup>.

The catechumenate was a time of preparation for baptism: "a great root work, the seed and source of the whole bulwark of Catholic cultural and spiritual life among the people in our China mission fields"<sup>88</sup>. In the outstations, men and women preformed the work of the catechumenate and cared for the baptised. Generally, a 2-3 year probationary period was required before catechumens were admitted to baptism. Fr. King writes about setting up of a special school for catechumens in Jingzhi [Kingchih] in mid-November of 1921. The course of instruction for 100 men and children from 20 surrounding villages lasted a month. Later, Fr. King had as many as five hundred catechumens to be housed, fed, and duly instructed for about four weeks: "Every day there were four instruction periods in church which all catechumens had to attend"<sup>89</sup>. Each session in church lasted over an hour.

<sup>87</sup> B. Hagspiel, *Along the Mission...*, op. cit., pp. 179-180.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180.

<sup>89</sup> "In the early years, as I was not yet very proficient in the use of the Chinese language, I limited to ten or fifteen minutes, each time explaining two or three questions and answers from the catechism. After this the catechist would repeat what I had said, using many examples and comparisons, to make sure that each basic teaching of the Church was well understood before proceeding

Every night an hour was devoted to a thorough review of the subject matter explained during the four instructions held that day in Church. At the end of the first catechumenate month Fr. King baptised 62 adults and children and 40 of them received their first Communion<sup>90</sup>. Later, Fr. Ernst Hanold, a veteran missionary, helped to prepare 600 souls for baptism. They had learned the catechism “by heart” and were able to chant many prayers”<sup>91</sup>. He continued:

“Of the nine hundred catechumens assembled in Fangjiadaolou [Fangkiataolow] and Liujiaji [Liukiads], six hundred were baptized by the middle of the catechumenate’s third week. Four days later, these neophytes made their first confession. During Holy Mass, on the closing day of the course, they received their first Holy Communion”<sup>92</sup>.

During the three months at the catechumenate the people chanted their prayers, memorised the rudiments of their faith, and studied Bible history.

Fr. Henkels describes the daily order at the Catechumenate in Mingjiang [Mingkiang]:

“These instructions would continue for four to five weeks. The people attending had already learned the customary prayers in the outstations from the catechists who had conducted Sunday services for them for several years previously. Now they gathered to receive a thorough explanation of our faith, reviewing the Bible stories of the Old and New Testament, and a detailed explanation of the Creed, the Ten Commandments and the sacraments. (...) While the people were taking the instructions, they lived in the mission compound during the entire course of instruction. They would receive two meals every day, the first around mid-morning and the second in the later afternoon (...). They would then say morning prayers and attend Mass. After the Mass the catechist would review with them what they had learned the previous day. Then breakfast was served. After breakfast the priest would give them a talk explaining the

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to the next.” *I Remember...*, op. cit., p. 93.

<sup>90</sup> In the neighbouring villages there was a good number of excellent and experienced catechists of both sexes. Fr. King engaged as many of them as he could afford to pay (at an average of five dollars per month), *ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 179.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

Old and New Testament, based upon Shuster's Bible History. At about four o'clock supper would be served, followed by a time for recreation. At seven o'clock all would assemble in the Church for night prayers and benediction, and by nine o'clock it would be bed time"<sup>93</sup>.

Some missionaries presented a more critical approach to the missionary methods employed, questioning the traditional way of mission work. Fr. Georg Stenz was disagreed with some of his confreres who were satisfied with simple baptism statistics. He was convinced that missionary work has to touch the core of the problem without contenting itself with superficial appearances. By this he meant the development of the Catholic press and schools in China in order to deepen the roots of the Christian message<sup>94</sup>. Staying in Qingdao, he wrote:

"In my leisure hours I made preparations for the publication of a Chinese newspaper and a magazine on Chinese topics. Both were projects in which I was deeply interested and which might have become of great importance to the mission. The newspaper was started later by another missionary, but unfortunately it had to be abandoned through lack of funds. The magazine was never started"<sup>95</sup>.

In 1913, Fr. Stenz founded a bulletin for students "Leuchtturm" (lighthouse). He spoke about the deplorable situation of the Catholic schools, noting that there is in all China but one post-graduate and undergraduate Catholic Institution<sup>96</sup>. The enemies of religion appreciate the press; atheists are earnestly trying to corrupt China with their translations of atheistic, anti-Christian, and immoral works. In 1918, Stenz wrote: "If God shall grant me the grace to work another twenty five years in China, my choice is to devote them to these two fields: the schools and the press"<sup>97</sup>. Fr. Bruno Hagspiel, during a visitation tour, noted: Fr. Stenz always has been

<sup>93</sup> J. Henkels, *My China Memoirs...*, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

<sup>94</sup> "My aim was to give the Christians a sound education and to raise them socially. To a very great extent, the Christians belonged to the poorer classes, and for this reason Christianity was held in very high regard by educated people." G. Stenz, *Twenty-five Years in China...*, op cit., p. 124.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>96</sup> "There are eight protestant universities and more than twenty higher professional schools in China." *Ibid.*, p. 131.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

“firmly insisting upon the imperative necessity of reaching the upper and influential classes of the people, as well as those of the humbler levels of Chinese life. He has always argued that effectual power and influence in human affairs seeps downward, as through a rock, gradually permeating, pulverizing, and transforming the whole”<sup>98</sup>.

In this regard, Stenz praised the accomplishments of the Protestant missionaries. Already in 1901, he had expressed a critical assessment of the mission situation in a letter to the Founder and presented concrete suggestions to be implemented: further division of mission territories; more missionaries from Mission Societies for China; stricter control over missionaries, especially by the Superiors in Rome<sup>99</sup>.

One important part of the SVD mission apostolate was the involvement in higher education at *Fu Jen* University. In 1933, Fr. Henkels started a new field of activity at that University:

“After having been a missionary in South Henan for five years and stationed in three different mission stations, I received a new assignment at *Fu Jen* University in Peking (...) teaching courses in English in the boys’ upper and lower middle school. My living quarters were in the middle school dormitory compound. Together with Mr. Xie [Hsieh], we were to supervise the dormitory. The two of us got along really well and we seldom had trouble with the students (...). I enjoyed teaching in the college as well as in the middle school. The students were so eager to learn and so attentive that it was a pleasure to teach them both pronunciation and grammar. It was rather easy for me, having by this time a fairly good command of Chinese, to switch from one language to another in solving their difficulties. Fr. Kowalski, by contrast, having been in China only a year, found it rather difficult and frustrating. After a few months he asked to be relieved of teaching and to be allowed to return to the mission in North Henan to help Frs. Heier and Linzenbach”<sup>100</sup>.

The academic year opened on September 18, 1933, with 590 students. The University consisted of three colleges: liberal arts, sciences and education, and a course of fine arts. Each college had four faculties.

<sup>98</sup> B. Hagspiel, *Along the Mission...*, op. cit., p. 61.

<sup>99</sup> Letters from 7 July, 1901 and 3 October, 1901 to Fr. Arnold Janssen, AG 64.696 and AG 64.698.

<sup>100</sup> J. Henkels, *My China Memoirs...*, op. cit., pp. 37, 39.

The next year out of 600 students 260 were accepted, so that the new school year opened with 675 students as well as 34 professors and 63 lecturers and assistants<sup>101</sup>. A new dormitory as well as a science lecture hall for lectures and experiments in physics and chemistry was built. After the death of Joseph Murphy in September 1935, Fr. Henkels was appointed Acting Rector until the new Rector, Fr. Rudolph Rahmann, took over in November 1936. Meanwhile, the University expanded by acquiring the palace compound across the street to the east of the Fu-Jen campus. This compound was converted into the *Collegio Sinicum*<sup>102</sup> under the patronage of St. Albert the Great. The three large courtyards of the former palace were repaired and remodeled. Two large halls were converted into laboratories. The finest hall, the palace's former reception hall, became the chapel with a main altar, taking the pattern from the world famous "Temple of Heaven." Fifteen side altars, also in Chinese style, clustered around it for the use of the priest students<sup>103</sup>. The College was opened on October 1, 1938, with a good number of Chinese priests from different vicariates and provinces of China assisting. The Nanking Government Inspection of the University (1936) was a success. Inspectors stressed that, out of 14 universities examined, Fu-Jen had made the greatest progress<sup>104</sup>. Fr. Henkels reports on the warm welcome given to

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>102</sup> In 1938, at the instigation of the Apostolic Delegate Archbishop Mario Zanin (1890-1958), the *Collegium Sinicum Ecclesiasticum* was founded within the University compound. This institute offered Chinese priests the opportunity to enhance their level of education by attending the university in order to provide them with the qualifications for teaching in Catholic schools.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

<sup>104</sup> Fr. Henkels gives a chronicle account of the main events at the University, started by American Benedictines in 1925 and formally assigned by the Sacred Congregation of the Faith to the Society of Divine Word on April 27, 1933. He kept a record of the arrival of some prominent guests at the University compound: Marconi – the inventor of Radio, Mario Zanin – an apostolic Delegate to China and Fr. Wilhelm Schmidt SVD-series of lectures. Some of the students travelled to the Nankou [Nan-kow] pass to visit the Great Wall of China during the Easter recess of 1934: "Wan-li-Ch'ang-ch'eng [Wanli changcheng] («10,000 Li long wall», as the Chinese call it), extends from Shan-Hai-kuan [Shanhai-guan], a city on the Yellow Sea to Kia-yu-kuan [Jiayuguan] in Kansu [Gansu] province. The emperor T'sin Shih-hwang [Qin Shihuang] is credited with building it. The Great Wall winds through valleys and plains and climbs over mountains from the sea coast to the highlands in Tibet. Begun in 221 B.C., it took over twenty years to build. Besides, using over three hundred thousand troops, all the criminals of the land were obliged work on it. By the time it was finished, at least a million people had toiled in its construction (...). Ori-

the new SVD journal *Monumenta Serica*, issued twice a year (since 1934) by Fr. Franz X. Biallas. His death from typhus fever on May 28, 1936, was a great loss to the University<sup>105</sup>. One prominent weekly in China wrote:

“The Catholic contribution to the world’s knowledge of things Chinese had for centuries been the most valuable contribution we have had. Leave out Marco Polo and Ibn Battutah and it may be said that the pioneers were all missionaries of the Catholic faith, and the stream of Sinology studies would often have run dry had it not been for the devotion of the Catholic missionaries, not only by their missionary labours, but also by the important task of knowing China and bringing the culture of the West and the East into relationship with each other”<sup>106</sup>.

Fr. Hagspiel stresses the importance of the higher educational system:

“From these mission schools will come forth the future leaders of the Catholic Church in China. Out of their ranks will rise not only the priests and teachers, but also prominent men in all walks of life, engineers, doctors, lawyers, scientists, and businessmen. Knowing and cherishing the Catholic Faith, these men will be able to defend it when attacked and to spread it among the less fortunate of their countrymen. They will, moreover, be able to contribute substantially towards the support of the Church. I am convinced that this is a goal which can well be reached and one which should never be lost sight of by the workers as they move forward in a spirit of missionary cooperation”<sup>107</sup>.

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nally it was used for signalling and defence, but now it just adds a picturesque air to this ancient piece of extraordinary engineering (...). The wall is solidly built with clay inside and with oversized bricks facing both sides. It is built on a foundation of stone.” *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>105</sup> Fr. Henkels reports on losses among Confreres: Fr. Stephan Richarz, Msgr. George Froewis, Fr. Joseph Murphy (Rector of Fu-Jen) and Fr. Franz Biallas. He also recorded the arrival in August and September 1934 of new SVD professors to teach at the University; There were Frs.: Eugene Feifel from Japan (philosophy and Japanese), August Jaentsch from Breslau University (physics department) to replace Fr. Stephan Richarz, Joseph Goertz from the Anselmianum and Universities in Prague and Vienna (philosophy and psychology), Gregory Matthews from Berlin (biology), Heinrich Kroes (history). *Ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>107</sup> B. Hagspiel, *Along the Mission...*, op. cit., p. 67.

Missionaries also took great care to develop the material basis for missionary activities, mainly by the construction of mission buildings and other useful structures. After the end of China's Civil War in the spring of 1926, Fr. King was going to put in effect a long planned building program:

"A number of buildings were to be put up in quick succession. The first job tackled and completed was the girls' school. That was an imposing, one-storey structure, over three hundred feet long, with a cloistered porch extending the whole length. Several smaller houses were built on the grounds. These were: a medical dispensary<sup>108</sup> in charge of our Sisters,<sup>109</sup> an orphanage for girls, a carpentry shop, a smithy, a catechist school, and a minor seminary. The crown of that construction boom was a beautiful church, erected in the middle of the women's compound"<sup>110</sup>.

Fr. Hagspiel delivers a detailed description of the SVD mission buildings in Yanzhou. The mission grounds are divided into two parts by large street which is shaded with acacia trees. The Sisters' buildings, an orphanage with 200-300 children, a school and a small hospital for sick women – are all on one side of the road. The mission buildings include a refectory, a library, and spare bedrooms for the accommodation of missionaries coming in from the outlying mission stations. Then there is the Minor Seminary with over 100 students and the major seminary which offers a seven and a half year course in Philosophy, Theology, Mission Science, and a Mission practicum. The other institutions of Yanzhou included the sisters' Convent, an orphanage, a hospital, an old men's home, a carpenter shop, a locksmith shop, a printing shop, a flour mill, the great kitchen, and a number of single cottages used for the care of the sick in extreme cases.

In the early spring of 1928, Fr. King was assigned to a small city called Luoshan, about forty miles to the east of Sinyang: "I had been

<sup>108</sup> "A medical dispensary, also in charge of the Sisters, served as a very important means of breaking down prejudices and winning friends for our mission." *I Remember...*, op. cit., p. 139.

<sup>109</sup> There was an amusing situation when Fr. Froewis gave the address of Italian dictator Benito Mussolini to Sister Adela. Unaware of who he was, she wrote a begging letter to Mussolini and a few weeks later, "the Italian Consul General in the city of Hankou got a cablegram from the Italian government's Rome headquarters with orders to purchase twenty gallons of castor oil to be sent to Sister Adela, care of the Catholic Mission, Xinyangzhou [Sinyangchow], Henan." *Ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

commissioned to erect on that property a good-sized church, a priest's dwelling, a catechumenate, a boy's school, and a reception room, or large parlour. The old buildings were remodeled and expanded to serve as a girls' school"<sup>111</sup>. His major success was to dig two wells that supplied water. In the mission at Chengyang in 1930, Fr. King and his assistant, Fr. Joseph Henkels, completed building projects at the outstations and together with other priests they helped the famine-stricken people by providing sufficient food during the time of crisis. The soup kitchen they installed provided great relief to the hungry people during the summer flood of 1934. Many homes had collapsed in the flood and people remained homeless. Father King made a little boat from church pews and rowed to reach his people in distress. The homeless were fed at the mission kitchen, something which led large numbers of pagans to embrace the faith. "Father King intended to take into the mission and feed, for a period of three months, all victims of the flood who wished to embrace the Catholic faith"<sup>112</sup>.

Fr. King went on fund-raising tour in the USA to secure funds for building programs<sup>113</sup>. The Henan mission needed about \$75,000 dollars to cover its expenses. He attempted to raise such a large sum within two years, while at the same time conducting a campaign of mission animation. When he reached Techny at the end of April 1924, the mission and home procurator, Fr. Hagspiel advised him to start his campaign by giving stereopticon slide lectures in schools, parish halls, and private homes. So he went to Chicago to buy a projector and about two hundred slides illustrating country and city life in northern China:

"Thereafter, for over a year, I lugged that clumsy projector and those heavy slides through the length and breadth of

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>113</sup> Others besides, King, were also fund-raising: Fr. de Lange for the SVD mission on the Little Sunda Islands (today a part of Indonesia); Fr. Bruno Drescher for the Philippines and Fr. Georg Stenz for China. Fr. Stenz wrote: "This beautiful country, which is choking with wealth (as the saying goes), must be an Eldorado for a beggar: such was my impression, and it was shared by not a few others. On one occasion I sat at one table with nine colleagues of our venerable calling [fund raising]: they had come from all the lands of the world, and were begging for Germany, Austria, China, India, Asia Minor, Africa, etc. And not one of them went away empty-handed. The Americans give much and give willingly. The hospitality of the American clergy is truly magnificent, and I am under a deep debt of gratitude to them." G. Stenz, *Recollections of a Beggar*, "Our Missions," no. 5, 1925, p. 28.

a dozen northern states. I must have given about three hundred lectures, receiving an average of ten dollars as an honorarium for each talk (...). I had not overlooked the possibility of reaching generous benefactors through the medium of our *Techny* magazines «Our Missions», «The Christian Family», and «The Little Missionary». The articles, which I wrote for these publications, helped me to establish contacts with many wealthy individuals eager to help the mission cause, and thus substantial sums were obtained. As part of this advertising campaign I had several small pieces of begging literature printed, including a good-sized pamphlet titled *A Chat on China*. These I distributed somewhat sparingly as I went about on my lecture tours. I know of at least one five-thousand-dollar donation that I received in response to the appeal contained in one of these pamphlets. A necessary result of all this publicity was a very large correspondence, often keeping me at work until the small hours of the morning”<sup>114</sup>. In total, he collected over seventy-five thousand dollars.

## 6. Encounters with China and its people

Memoirs also contain a description of the encounters between the missionaries and the Chinese. The missionaries’ perception of the Chinese was largely influenced by their previous experiences. The encounters aroused a wide range of emotions on both sides. The missionaries were a very specific group with a clear missionary goal. They were announcing a very challenging message whose acceptance would change the life of its receivers. Each missionary could write his own story of his encounter with China. Some were very well versed in the Chinese religious system<sup>115</sup>. Fr. Hagspiel wrote that, initially, the new-

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<sup>114</sup> *I Remember...*, op. cit., pp. 115-116.

<sup>115</sup> We were received with enthusiasm by Fr. Volpert, our Mission House was in the western part of the City. Fr. Volpert was already almost 70 years old and 40 years in China. He knew the “Four Books,” classics of the literature of old China, better than some writers of the younger generation. He could quote literally (from the *Annales* of Confucius) and aroused amazement when he explained the Confucius text from a Christian perspective. His sincerity and straightforwardness could make it awkward for others. When invited to the Town Hall (seat of the Mandarin’s court) he could explain an old inscription to the embarrassment of his host. He gave a plausible explanation with modesty. He was brave and built a small station despite the unrest caused by the bandits.

comers experienced China as odd, repulsive and perhaps utterly unreasonable place: "It is not a country that presents with open face, and all at once, the preciousness of its hidden value"<sup>116</sup>. China offers visitors a particularly ungracious countenance during the autumn and winter months, when the whole landscape assumes a melancholic, gray tone with mounds of graves containing the bones of ancestors. In one word, things are extremely complex and the visitor can hardly win an insight through hard experience.

For Fr. King, life in China meant a striking contrast. He described China's physical and climatic conditions as harsh, in particular because of the extreme cold in the unheated churches. During pastoral tours, he visited the people's homes and learned what food was available to these poor Shandong farmers: "(...) a bowlful of thick millet porridge, a few sweet potatoes and a good-sized biscuit made of coarse turnip flour (...). Most of the Chinese never tasted meat except for weddings or funerals and during the New Year festival."<sup>117</sup> The situation of the farmers in South Henan was much better, on the borderline between North and South China:

"The *Hwai* [Huai] *River*, flowing from west to east, through the center of our new mission field, constitutes an effective boundary. North of the river the people are taller and stronger, of a solid and plodding temperament. Little rice is grown or eaten by them. Aside from wheat, they raise soybeans, sorghum, millet, and sweet potatoes. South of the *Hwai River*, however, the people, even within the boundaries of Henan province, are definitely of the southern type - slightly built, irascible, intelligent, and emotional. Among them infanticide is common. As a rule, not more than two little girls are wanted in any one home. If more are born, they are killed or exposed, to be devoured by roving dogs. Polygamy is very much in vogue, and, as a result, the cost of brides is so high that many poor young men must remain unmarried. These are all conditions which are bound to render our work in this new mission field both difficult and disheartening"<sup>118</sup>.

He told me about terrible experiences he went through in Liangchow in the context of the in-fighting between Chinese and the Muslim Dungans. China had become his homeland. He was accompanied by Fr. Dommers until Lungsi [Longxi]. J. Bromkamp, *Mission ohne Maske...*, op. cit., pp. 57-60.

<sup>116</sup> B. Hagspiel, *Along the Mission...*, op. cit., p. 2.

<sup>117</sup> *I Remember...*, op. cit., p. 82.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

Fr. Bromkamp depicts the very difficult situation of women, which were widely treated as trade commodity:

“I bought a little girl in Gansu at a very low price. Here, there are many mothers who can’t bring up their children. So these children are bought and sold in Turkestan where they can eat, dance, and learn. At the age of 15 or 16, they will end up in *flower houses* (brothels) in the cities of Hami or Urumtschi [Ürümqi]. Everywhere I was received willingly. I presided over the liturgical functions with a strong participation of non-Christians”<sup>119</sup>.

Fr. Bromkamp describes some characteristics of the environment of his missionary work in Gansu. The Gobi desert is an enormous sea of sand, seemingly without life, and the sandy desert is our worst enemy. The “black wind” from the Gobi brings darkness at noon and life there is a steady battle with the desert, which wants to swallow up everything. He mentions Liangchow, “the city in the middle of towers,” to which the Bishop had asked him to travel. This historical city played a significant role in the annals of the Han dynasty. At the time of Marco Polo, there were already Christians living there. In Dongxiang [Dunghsiang], there was a Church which had been destroyed by an earthquake. People were actually living among the ruins. In Liangchow, although the mission station remained intact, there were human corpses scattered about on the streets and the Muslims took over the city for two months<sup>120</sup>.

Fr. Hagspiel depicts the *Imperial Grand Canal* in Southern Shandong:<sup>121</sup>

“(…) when I came to note wagons also coming from the city to the canal, there to dump all the refuse, filth, and sewage of the town, my marvelling turned into a sensation that went down far deeper within me. And this feeling was but increased as I approached the canal embankment. The sluggishly flowing water was of a dubious tinge and contained floating matter that, to speak mildly, was extremely offensive (...). The present condition of the water-way is, however, certainly not a mat-

<sup>119</sup> J. Bromkamp, *Mission ohne Maske...*, op. cit., p. 179.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>121</sup> The Imperial Canal extends from Tianjin to Hangzhou [Hang-chow] (650 miles) and serves as a monumental testimony to the extent of Chinese civilization and engineering skill as it existed over twenty centuries ago. The canal was begun according to the records, in the year 485 B.C.; but some of the final stretches were not completed until one thousand years later.

ter of pride to their descendants. Passing through fertile plains, and linking great inland seas and mighty cities, this canal might still be made to fill an almost incalculably important role in the economic life of the nation – a role for which its builders very evidently intended it, for all time”<sup>122</sup>.

An encounter of a missionary with the Chinese sometimes resulted in particular cases of conversion. In Jingzhi, a brave 12-year girl asked Fr. King for baptism, but her father said he would kill her if she were baptised. Some months later, when a horde of bandits threatened the girl’s home and village, the father begged the nuns to shelter the girls. In return for the favour, the girl was allowed to be baptised and she later became a nun. “On one of her visits home, she succeeded in converting her father and mother and several relatives”<sup>123</sup>.

Fr. Bromkamp in turn recounts the history of a Muslim Dungan, a certain Lao-Hui, who had acquired a good school education. From the time of the Boxer Rebellion, he had read inflammatory literature, which presented Christians as those who gouged out the eyes of sick people. But the inflammatory literature seemed he was too grotesque to be true, so he personally tried to enquire about it. He thus came in touch with Christians and finally became a Christian himself. He also won over to Christianity other neighbouring families, who lived in the same clay huts<sup>124</sup>. Another case of conversion concerned the head of the Christian Community, called Li, who made quite an impression as a scholar. Once he had been an opium addict, close to death, but wanted to be free from opium. After three days of collapse, he finally managed to get himself up and overcome the craving for opium with the help of his faith because he knew that Christ and opium don’t go together. After a week, he received baptism. Opium grows extensively in the area due to the good soil and opium cultivation was widely and generally tolerated<sup>125</sup>.

Fr. Stenz reports on the *en-masse* conversion of the members of the “White Water-Lily” sect in Jiaxiang and neighbouring districts. They loved mystical ceremonies of all kinds and were opposed to the ruling Qing dynasty. They believed in many prophecies, one of

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<sup>122</sup> B. Hagspiel, *Along the Mission...*, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>123</sup> *I Remember...*, op. cit., p. 88.

<sup>124</sup> J. Bromkamp, *Mission ohne Maske...*, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>125</sup> The taxes levied in fact legalise this procedure, because the taxes are nothing compared with the profits. On the other, hand cultivation of opium is the reason for a famine in Gansu, because the best fields were used for opium cultivation.

which spoke about a strange man wearing a white vestment, whom they would have to follow when he came to preach in their town. The Christian doctrine appealed to them, so that many found the way into the Catholic Church<sup>126</sup>. In Puoli, with old Christian communities, some pagans lived side by side with Christians. Fr. Stenz wasn't a fine and highly intellectual expert on China. He was engaged, he didn't mince his words, he was not free from European stereotypes or arrogance towards the Chinese pagans<sup>127</sup>. He spoke about the "yellow pigtail men," the "Chinese rabble," "inflated men of letters," "unwashed Chinese mouths" and about his first indiscretion on meeting Chinese Catholics<sup>128</sup>. At the same time he left no doubt that he cared deeply for "his Chinese" and, first of all, for the Chinese of his mission whom he tried to protect against European prejudices. Fr. King met exceedingly friendly Catholics in Henan (1923), among whom he felt at home right away. They willingly attended the Holy Mass and received the Sacraments. Chinese Catholics attached great importance to public atonement for sins. Despite life's harsh conditions Fr. King was impressed by the piety of Catholics at the outstations. They clung fiercely to their faith for many generations.

He was immediately aware of Chinese circumstances and of the need for adopting a Chinese way of life: "On the day before of our departure we transformed ourselves outwardly into Chinese"<sup>129</sup>. The clothes were of silk, false pigtail attached to the hair and feet into narrow pointed cloth shoes. "It is most comfortable dress for this country, warm in winter and cool in summer"<sup>130</sup>. "For the first time on November 12, 1893, he didn't sleep in a European bed, but on a board, and that evening he had a gun under his pillow"<sup>131</sup>. Fr. King did the same

<sup>126</sup> G. Stenz, *Twenty-five Years in China...*, op cit., pp. 38-42.

<sup>127</sup> He writes "Germans are loyal and sincere, the Swiss live in close touch with the nature and are freedom loving, Italians are dirty, ragged and work-shy." St. Puhl, *Georg M. Stenz SVD*, p. 28.

<sup>128</sup> Fr. Stenz reports on his first cultural misunderstanding when summoned to a dying catechumen in Jiexiang. After he had administered Baptism and Extreme Unction, the old man died and he knelt near the bed to pray for the deceased and to give (as he thought) a good example to those present. However, the catechist accompanying him informed him in no uncertain terms that Christians may not kneel before the dead because the pagan Chinese worship the dead, believing that of the three souls which man possesses, one remains behind in the body. See G. Stenz, *Twenty-five Years in China...*, op cit., p. 43.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 132.

after arriving at Yenchow. At the suggestion of Bishop Henninghaus, he immediately accepted a Chinese name, *Wong Kin-King* [Wang Jin-jing] (King Golden Mirror), and a Chinese garment. The Chinese people attach great importance to externals<sup>132</sup>.

Fr. King also tells of a very generous and noble gesture by one Chinese man he met while returning to Luoshan from Chengyang by bicycle, laden with a clumsy burden. The tall sturdy-looking middle-aged man lifted his bicycle to his shoulders and walked ahead:

“I offered to pay him well for the great service he had rendered me, a perfect stranger, but he would not accept a penny for his trouble. He explained that the old books of China exhorted the people to perform good deeds, not in the hope of obtaining material rewards, but to please the Great Spirit who rules the whole universe (...). Then I mounted my bicycle and pedaled on repeating to myself the Latin saying *Anima humana, naturaliter Christiana*”<sup>133</sup>.

There were people hostile to the mission, often under the influence of the Communist ideology. In early 1929, three young students, fanatics of a pagan cult, entered the mission ground in Loshan. Fr. King reports that one of the young intruders said to him:

“Shut up, you little foreigner’s slave, or I’ll slap your mouth! We are on Chinese soil and won’t allow a little traitor like you to give us orders! (...) Another shouted in a loud voice: «We don’t intend to take orders from an old foreign devil like you! This is a part of China’s territory, and we have more right to be here than you have». Fr. King retorted: «This is part of China, I admit, but this mission has been established with the knowledge and consent the Chinese government. This is my lawful dwelling, and I don’t have to stand here being insulted by the likes of you. Clear out!»”<sup>134</sup>.

The SVD made a good start in Jining:

“Although Bishop Anzer, when he first attempted the establishment of the mission at Tsining, met what was then the usual opposition to endeavours of this kind, it was not long before a remarkably friendly spirit of intercourse and relationship de-

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>133</sup> *I Remember...*, op. cit., p. 155.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

veloped between the people and the missionaries. Even wealthy merchants and distinguished persons among the *literati*, who elsewhere had shown themselves particularly hostile, gave open expression to their good-will, and eventually presented his Lordship with a magnificently carved tablet inscribed with these words: «All Good Comes from the West». The tablet was countersigned by nearly all the district mandarins of higher rank. Thanks to this spirit of good-will, the mission was spared during the Boxer Rebellion, although it is true that at one stage of the uprising the local Boxers got out of hand, and the mandarin of the district was at last obliged to warn the missionaries that he was powerless to protect them further. Happily, however, the Christian converts rallied together at the crucial moment and dealt a crushing blow to the local Boxers: in this manner the mission came unscathed through the crisis<sup>135</sup>.

On 2 June 1930, Fr. King, along with his Chinese servant, were captured by bandits while traveling from Luoshan. The captain of the bandits demanded large sums of money to pay his soldiers. Troops from Luoshan, informed by a faithful cook, managed to rescue them. The chief of the bandits said to Fr. King:

“We Chinese don’t like the new and strange customs you foreign missionaries have been introducing among our people. In that big church of yours in Luoshan you allow large numbers of men and women to crowd in at the same time, thus violating good old Chinese customs. Besides, as I now need money to pay off my men, I would like to borrow a goodly sum from you. Don’t tell me you are unable to let me have a few thousand dollars, rich as you must be. You keep on erecting one costly building after another. Right now I need eight thousand dollars to pay off my soldiers”<sup>136</sup>.

Fr. Stenz states that “The missionary must constantly endeavour to keep on a friendly footing with the mandarin and the notables in the district”<sup>137</sup>. One of the most important things the missionary does in China is to call on all civil and military officials of a village after his arrival. Fr. King knew to strike up friendly relations with the local authorities:

<sup>135</sup> B. Hagspiel, *Along the Mission...*, op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>136</sup> *I Remember...*, op. cit., p. 160.

<sup>137</sup> G. Stenz, *Twenty-five Years in China...*, op. cit., p. 69.

“Whenever I came to a walled city, I immediately visited the local magistrate to present my calling card, introducing myself and informing him of the length of my stay. On one occasion this practice of mine may have saved my life”<sup>138</sup>.

Once in Xiangcheng [Hsiangcheng], Lao Yang Ren [Lao Yang Jen] swept through the whole area at the head of ten thousand desperados and burnt down a large part of buildings within the walls of the city. Endangered by the situation, Fr. King got a letter of invitation from the magistrate to spend the night at his residence: “That evening I had a splendid meal, during which I enjoyed a long and very informative conversation with my host. That was the Chinese hospitality at its best – a cheering experience at a time when I sorely needed it”<sup>139</sup>.

Fr. Hagspiel was very interested in the profile of the Chinese character<sup>140</sup>, to which he dedicated one whole chapter. His description reflects mostly the missionary perception of the character traits and the way of thinking among Chinese pagans. His vision is inspired by a positive theological understanding of nations and races, based on St. Paul’s doctrine of unity (Gal. 3,27-28)<sup>141</sup>. At the same time he recognises the limits of his undertaking to describe the Chinese character:

<sup>138</sup> *I Remember...*, op. cit., p. 107.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 108.

<sup>140</sup> “I had found myself growing more and more perplexed, the longer I remained and travelled in China, over the question of the fundamental characteristics of the Chinese themselves. I seemed to run upon so many contradictory traits, some happy and desirable in the extreme, and some most regrettable and surely to be gravely reprehended, that I really felt helpless to properly or justly size up the race at all. And as I hoped, when I returned home, to write particularly about the Chinese, I felt that I must get cleared up, somehow, in regard to this people, who drew me strongly at one moment, and repulsed me in a second. And it finally turned out that all our talk, this evening, was to this end. But whether I was nearer to really knowing the Chinese, at the conclusion, or not, I must leave the reader to say. However, the whole subject became so involved before we retired for the night that I now find in writing of it that I must devote the many considerations taken up to the following chapter.” B. Hagspiel, *Along the Mission...*, op. cit., p. 233.

<sup>141</sup> “(...) that each nation and racial division, no matter how small, has something of a unique value in qualitative characteristic to contribute to the sum total of human development.” All people are included in the universal design of Salvation, and show the traces of positive values in God’s Creation. The Divine decree of Wisdom brought about a bond of sympathetic interest and eager desire to become closely united with the people of his choice, not only by natural recognition of some values but in view of transforming grace among the people. *Ibid.*, p. 237.

"These reports are never intended to be fully typical in any of their representations, nor general. Furthermore, much of what is related refers, after all, rather to personal and incidental difficulties met with by our own missionaries among the patient Chinese farmers of the poorer classes in Shandong, than to any attempts at a blanket summarising of the Chinese people as a whole"<sup>142</sup>.

He alerts that there is a difference between immediate perception of the Chinese traits of character, which may be repugnant to us at the first sight and the deeper layer of understanding based on the missionary's long-time experiences. The longer they have stayed in China, the more careful the missionaries became in assessing the Chinese and spoke rather about the enigmatic mystery of the Chinese character. Fr. Hagspiel focused his attention on six categories of character differences:

- 1) Modesty, dignity, tact in comportment, a sense of propriety, and self-control are the qualities of the Chinese, to which they assign the utmost importance and value. Every Chinese strives to be well mannered, even robbers. Looking at the conversation of an educated Chinese, one can note that "every word, every action is weighed in the balance." The so-called Chinese *Book of Etiquette* (*Liji* [*Liki*]) contains three thousand rules of conduct. The well mannered life of the Chinese differs from that of the Westerners, with their aggressiveness, forcefulness, roughness and bluntness. The Chinese possess the power of self-control to a remarkable degree while their hearts may be filled with tumultuous emotion. They are trained to be outwardly calm and even smiling. A Chinese servant is always acknowledging his guilt before his master, even if in his heart he is severely criticizing him. Fr. Hagspiel also notes the reverse side of this attitude, which breeds irresponsibility and unreliability resulting from a certain irrepressible independence of spirit.
- 2) Another trait of the Chinese character is dissimulation in order to "save face." Chinese often dissimulate their conduct for politeness' sake in order not to cause pain to another and in order to save the face of another. Asking for truth can be tactless, at least publicly<sup>143</sup>. In fact, the rules of politeness point to a high

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>143</sup> "When a dispute is settled in an amicable manner, it is done not so much in accordance with the laws of justice as we should understand them as in the hope of saving the reputations of both parties to the disagreement." Ibid., p. 245.

standard of morality, even if it is largely superficial (*decorum*), leading ultimately to hypocrisy, lying and all sorts of subtle and nefarious dissimulation. Undoubtedly, the Chinese code of politeness makes their social life pleasant and agreeable and keeps them from falling into certain degrading faults.

- 3) The Chinese display patience, untiring perseverance, frugality, and joyful contentment while modern culture makes people nervous and restless. Most of the Chinese have to struggle mightily for their mere existence, which makes them industrious and frugal: "Wherever they settle down in great numbers, they soon control the land and business. This has been the case in Singapore, Java, and in the Dutch colonies, where they have made themselves simply indispensable"<sup>144</sup>. The so-called Chinese man of iron preserves a relaxed attitude towards life<sup>145</sup>: He speaks about the success of Chinese politics because of their patience and persistence; "their principle is to defer everything as long as possible - to gain time and thus to wear out an enemy"<sup>146</sup>. The above mentioned traits can be ascribed to such factors as: their training; their racial disposition to be content with conditions as one finds them and their blind acceptance of unavoidable fate and resigning themselves to the inevitable. At the same time, the Chinese display a noticeable sense of compassion.
- 4) The Chinese show indifference to creature comforts and conveniences. As an example, Fr. Hagspiel cites the Chinese hotels where *everything* seems to be lacking. In fact, the Chinese themselves demand and expect very little out of life compared with us.
- 5) The Chinese have diligence and a general capacity for work. Everybody works and they love to work in the open. The smallest plot of the ground is carefully cultivated and everything is grown.

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., pp. 246-247.

<sup>145</sup> "Year after year the Chinese farmers almost learn to expect a crop failure, caused either by drought or by floods; and when the worst they feared comes to pass, they sit resignedly on a levee, and there they watch the yellow waters sweep away their fondest hopes. Then, after a time, they will quietly, silently, wander away, with wife and children, perhaps for a hundred miles or more, into some countryside where the harvest has been good and where they can get at least enough to keep body and soul together." Ibid., pp. 247-248.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p. 247.

- 6) Finally, the Chinese distinguish themselves by equanimity. They rarely get excited unduly. "The Chinaman is a practical man of affairs and an egoist"<sup>147</sup>. They have a striking disregard for the value of time; they always have plenty of time. They refuse to become tense or strenuous in their labour. They poke "fun at us for being in such a hurry". Interestingly enough, many Westerners, who have stayed for a long time in China, long to go back to the Chinese people and to their ways and customs. Fr. Hagspiel praises the Chinese Catholics' outstanding patience, perseverance, long suffering, absolute fidelity to all principles once they have made them their own<sup>148</sup>.

## 7. Conclusion

This study, which has been based on the memoirs of five SVD missionaries, provides insight into some of the features of the SVD mission. As stated in the introduction, it portrays a mosaic view of different activities and problems faced by the SVD missionaries by focusing on: genesis of the memoirs; the author's vocation for China; the Chinese historical context, missionary life, mission work, and the encounters with China. Diarists convey their direct mission experiences.

Fr. Stenz distinguished himself for his fighting spirit and for the school and press apostolate, which were to correct the old missionary method then in force. The schools and Catholic press were important means in deepening the faith of the Chinese Catholics and aimed at reaching also the upper class and the influential classes of Chinese Society. He discussed the general atmosphere of unrest in China in the beginning of the SVD mission marked by the Anti-Western and anti-Christian movement which led to the Boxer Uprising. The quasi outsider, Fr. Hagspiel, imparts a more general overview of the SVD missions and China based on his personal studies, impressions and second-hand relations from the missionaries he met.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 254

<sup>148</sup> "I think it is just to say that nowhere else does the missionary come into such close and friendly relations with his convert flock as in China. A missionary in China, as I could well note, everywhere I went throughout Shantung and in other fields outside our own special charge, becomes simply bound up with his people. His interests become theirs, and theirs become his, in so far as disparity of culture will permit; and the fidelity of Chinese Christians, as I have had occasion before to remark, is simply outstanding. Tales almost without number could be told of the way in which Chinese Christians, once become Christian, stand by their holy Faith, often in spite of most trying conditions." *Ibid.*, p. 265.

Fr. Kings depicts the vicissitudes of the political scene, marked by the failed democratisation of the political system. China was steadily devastated by wars among the landlords and polarised between the communist and nationalist blocks, although they later collaborated temporarily in the face of the Japanese invasion. The situation of missionaries was precarious and dangerous, especially in the aftermath of the political turmoil and instability, mainly due to the attacks of robbers and the communist ideology. The communist propaganda portrayed the missionaries as instruments of Western Imperialism and threats for the Chinese national identity. Missionaries had to face the ongoing Communist provocations aiming at their removal from China. Fr. Bromkamp also reports on wars between different ethnic groups in the Xinjiang province.

Missionaries had to face many deprivations. They were continually confronted with various threats, including a violent death. The great distances between mission stations forced them to go on long and dangerous travels. Their everyday life was accompanied by a sense of desertion and solitude. Besides, they had to count with the ever present danger of deadly typhus. They were affected by changing climate with its extremes of heat and cold. In the beginning, they had to wrestle with the Chinese language and adaptation to a totally alien culture. All these factors made missionary work in China very demanding, requiring versatile preparation and spiritual strength.

Apart from administering the sacraments, the missionaries stood by the people in their different needs. The memoirs point to the local catechists as the most important agents of evangelisation and invaluable helpers, especially the women catechists who had a natural access to the secluded and protected female population. The catechists carried out the essential work when the missionary was absent. They were teachers at schools and taught catechism, held religious functions and the Sunday services, they helped during the catechumenate. They were an indispensable link to the local community by providing information and reports on the state of the community. The key preparation for baptism took place within the framework of the catechumenate program, which lasted more or less 2-3 years - less in emergency situations. Missionaries built special schools for catechumenate. In addition, missionaries served as builders of churches, chapels, dispensaries, hospitals, schools, seminaries, orphanages, workshops and wells. In the event of natural disasters, they rushed to help people by providing food (soup kitchen) and shelter. As scholars at Fu-Jen University, they contributed greatly to the knowledge of Chinese culture and formed a bridge to the Western World.

The memoirs also bear witness to some interesting aspects of the missionary encounter with the Chinese. They describe features of Chinese geography, climatic conditions, customs, the social order, and others factors, which conditioned mission work. Social phenomena such as infanticide, polygamy, and the difficult situation of women demanded missionary engagement. They show how stereotypes on both sides impeded the encounter. Missionaries often encountered hostility as foreign devils, deemed to be a threat to the Chinese identity. Generally speaking, missionaries cared a lot for their Chinese and were impressed by the piety of Chinese Catholics who kept strongly to their faith for many generations. They also understood the importance of respecting Chinese authorities and that respect was reciprocated by the authorities. It was especially useful in emergency situations.

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ANDRZEJ MIOTK SVD

**Mozaika misji werbistowskiej w Chinach  
w oparciu o pamiętniki misjonarzy**

**Streszczenie**

Artykuł bazuje na pamiętnikach, których autorami są misjonarze werbiści w Chinach: o. Georg Stenz, o. Bruno Hagspiel, o. Clifford King, o. Johann Bromkamp, o. Joseph Henkels. Ich teksty zawierają osobiste doświadczenia pracy misyjnej oraz opis kontekstu społeczno-kulturowego działalności misyjnej w Państwie Środka. Odwołując się do pamiętników, autor przedstawia cztery zagadnienia: 1) kontekst historyczny misji werbistowskich w Chinach; 2) życie misyjne; 3) pracę misyjną oraz 4) spotkanie z Chińczykami.

Kontekst historyczny uwzględnia Powstanie Bokserów, przemianę ustrojową (przejście z Cesarstwa do Republiki) oraz podział państwa wskutek wojen domowych. Mimo rozwiązania Partii Komunistycznej (1927), komunizm umocnił swoją pozycję w okresie wojny chińsko-japońskiej (1937-1941). Perypetie zakładania i rozwoju misji były ściśle związane z sytuacją polityczną. Dominującymi elementami są tu ogólny chaos, niepewność społeczna i klęski żywiołowe. Z pamiętników dowiadujemy się o najtrudniejszych aspektach życia misjonarza: opanowanie obcego języka, samotność, podróże z narażeniem się na spotkanie z bandami rabusiów. Praca misyjna była wielozadaniowa: opieka duszpasterska, katecheza, praca charytatywna i budownictwo. Ważnym elementem okazała się formacja katechistów.

Odgrywali oni istotną rolę pośredników między misjonarzem a lokalną wspólnotą. Z zapisków misjonarzy wynika, że szczególnie wpływ na stabilizację życia w kraju ogarniętym ideologicznym i ekonomicznym chaosem miało szkolnictwo. W tym zakresie, wiele inicjatyw zrealizowano w oparciu o fundusze z zagranicy. Osobnym rozdziałem jest spotkanie misjonarza z nieprzejeźdną rzeczywistością chińską: bariery i stereotypy kulturowe, wrogie nastawienie Chińczyków podbudowane ideologią komunistyczną, traktowanie misjonarzy jako emisariuszy Zachodniego imperializmu. Podejmując te wyzwania misjonarze przyczynili się do lepszego zrozumienia chińskiej historii kultury, religijności i mentalności. Adaptowali chiński styl życia, próbowali zaradzić bieżącym problemom społecznym: dzieciobójstwu, poligamii, niesprawiedliwości, analfabetyzmowi, klęskom żywiołowym i nędzy. Zabiegali również o przyjazne relacje z mandarynami i władzą lokalną. Generalnie pamiętniki misjonarzy są cennym źródłem historycznym.

**Słowa kluczowe:** historia Chin, historia misji, świadectwo misjonarzy, inkulturacja, kościół lokalny, etos misyjny.

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ANDRZEJ MIOTK SVD

**A Mosaic of the SVD Mission in China  
Based on Missionaries' Memoirs**

**Abstract**

The article is based on the memoirs whose authors are the Divine Word missionaries in China: Fr. George Stenz, Fr. Bruno Hagspiel, Fr. Clifford King, Fr. Johann Bromkamp, Fr. Joseph Henkels. Their texts contain personal experience of missionary work and the description of the socio-cultural missionary activity in the Middle Kingdom. Referring to the diaries, the author presents four issues: 1) the historical context of the Divine Word mission in China; 2) missionary life; 3) missionary work, and 4) meeting with the Chinese.

The historical context takes into account Boxer Rebellion, the transformation of the political system (the transition from Empire to the Republic), and the division of the state as a result of civil wars. In spite of the dissolution of the Communist Party (1927), communism strengthened its position during the Sino-Japanese War (1937-1941). The vicissitudes of the establishing and development of the mission were closely related to the political situation. The dominant elements are here: a general confusion, uncertainty, social and natural disasters.

From the diaries we learn about the most difficult aspects of the missionary life: learning a foreign language, loneliness, traveling with an exposure to a meeting with the gangs of robbers. Missionary work was multitasking: pastoral care, catechesis, charity work and construction. An important element was the formation of catechists. They played an important role of intermediaries between the missionary and the local community. From the writings of missionaries it occurs that a particular impact on the stabilisation of living in a country, engulfed in ideological and economic chaos, had the educational system. In this regard, a number of initiatives were implemented on the basis of foreign funds.

A separate chapter is the meeting of a missionary with the implacable China's reality: the barriers and cultural stereotypes, hostile attitude underpinned by the Chinese communist ideology, the treating of the missionaries as the emissaries of Western imperialism. By taking these challenges, the missionaries have contributed to a better understanding of the Chinese history, culture, religion, and mentality. They adapted the Chinese way of life, trying to remedy the current social problems: infanticide, polygamy, injustice, illiteracy, natural disasters, and poverty. They also sought friendly relations with the Mandarins and the local authorities. Generally, the missionaries' diaries are a valuable historical source.

**Key words:** the history of China, the history of the mission, the testimony of missionaries, inculturation, local church, missionary ethos.