

Dr. Liu T'ung-lun
Born 1893 approx., Died 18 June 1986.

A letter exists, written by Anna Crawford from Chinchow in May 1910, which includes the following sentences; "Liu T'ung-lun is a very clever boy.... five big school boys were baptised yesterday, he was amongst the number.....Alek (Alexander Crawford) first read the names, then asked all separately if they 'before God and men promise... to follow Christ their whole life long' ... then they are baptised." At that time Liu T'ung-lun must have been seventeen or eighteen years old. He joined the first class of students in Moukden Medical College, graduated as a doctor in 1917, and joined the staff of MMC. There followed a short period of post-graduate study in Scotland in 1919-1920, and he then returned to serve in MMC as physician and later Medical Superintendent.

Few people have survived, for ninety-four years, such a life of varied dangers and sufferings as Liu T'ung-lun. The stories of his experiences in prison and under torture during the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in the 1930s and early 1940s are known to his friends. Once, during a later period of deepening trouble and danger, he was asked to tell what lessons he had then learned. He warned us against worrying overmuch about the "less important" fears of imprisonment and death, and urged us to prepare against the "much greater danger, the temptation to hate". That was the quality of his leadership. It is by his life as a much trusted and loved leader and friend that he will be remembered most clearly by his colleagues.

During the second World War, conditions in Moukden were of severe hardship and loneliness which would have caused lesser men to despair. Foreign medical staff were either expelled or interned and staff, money, fuel, drugs, food, bedding, instruments - all the "necessities" for running a hospital - were almost totally exhausted. Dr. Liu not only kept the Moukden Medical College's hospital open, but helped nine other Christian hospitals in the North-east to resist the pressures from the Japanese occupiers to close their doors. Soon after the end of the war a visitor asked Dr. Liu how he had kept the work going, and he replied that it was not he who had done it and he called for some of the nurses. "They did it. Look at their hands". The rough hands scarred by frost-bite told the story.

For the following three years contact was renewed with the churches and supporters in the West, old friends returned and money and equipment began to arrive. Then came Liberation and with it more profound change. Dr. Liu's great interest had always been the treatment and prevention of tuberculosis, and when the Moukden Medical College was merged into the China Medical University and he was removed from his position as Medical Superintendent of the hospital he was sent to work in a sanatorium in Pushun, later moving to the outskirts of Moukden (now called Shenyang). Here he carried out work on the control of tuberculosis and wrote a book based on his experience.

During the so-called "Cultural revolution" in the years 1966 to 1976, he was subject to severe attacks, both physical and mental and his work was rejected. Ironically he himself suffered from the disease he was dedicated to defeat, especially the side-effects of the early antibiotics used in treatment. These facts were learned later, for the almost thirty years from 1950 until 1979 almost no news reached us of friends in China. Then the miracle happened and among the letters which began to arrive were a few from our old friend, now in his 80s, still cheerful, uncomplaining, and undaunted. In 1982 a celebration of Dr. Liu's sixty-five years in the practice of medicine publicly reinstated him and paid tribute to his work of service to the People of China. The group photograph that day shows him surrounded by 145 old colleagues and alumni of the Moukden Medical College and newer colleagues and friends from the China Medical University.

Dr. Liu spent the last years of his life as a patient in the Third Affiliated Hospital of the China Medical University in Shenyang - the successor institution to the Moukden Medical College's Hospital of which he had been the Medical Superintendent. He was surrounded by friends, cared for by one of his daughters, still writing letters, still in touch with the local church. On June 18th. 1986 he died and the world feels emptier without him.

Austin Fulton has told me that on one occasion, during the Japanese occupation, Liu T'ung-lun and another man were taken out from prison to be - they assumed - shot. The other man said, "We're finished" (wan-la). "Not finished, accomplished" (ch'eng-la), replied Liu T'ung-lun. Now, many years later, "ch'eng-la" is the word which sums up the life of a great and faithful man, and we are grateful to God for him.

Agatha R. Crawford
2 December 1986.