

Document 7.4: Excerpts describing the activities of the “Boxers” during the uprising, by Fei Qihao, 1900

*Fei Qihao was a Chinese Christian living in Shanxi, China. He wrote of his time at a mission, Fen Zhou Fu. While he escaped with his life, most of the people with whom he had associated were killed by Boxers.*

#### IV THE GATHERING OF THE STORM

The people of Shanxi are naturally timid and gentle, not given to making disturbances, being the most peaceable people in China. So our Shanxi Christians were hopeful for themselves, even when the reports from the coast grew more alarming. But there was one thing which caused us deep apprehension, and that was the fact that the wicked, cruel Yu Xian, the hater of foreigners, was the newly appointed Governor of Shanxi. He had previously promoted the Boxer movement in Shandong, and had persuaded the Empress Dowager that the Boxers had supernatural powers and were true patriots.

Early in June my college friend K'ung Hsiang Hsi came back from T'ungzhou for his vacation, reporting that the state of affairs there and at Beijing was growing worse, that the local officials were powerless against the Boxers, and that the Boxers, armed with swords, were constantly threatening Christians scattered in the country.

From this time we had no communication with Tianjin or Beijing. All travellers were searched, and if discovered bearing foreign letters they were killed. So though several times messengers were started out to carry our letters to the coast, they were turned back by the Boxers before they had gone far. It was not long before the Boxers, like a pestilence, had spread all over Shanxi. School had not closed yet in Fen Zhou Fu, but as the feeling of alarm deepened, fathers came to take their boys home, and school was dismissed before the end of June....

Mr. and Mrs. Lundgren and Miss Eldred of the China Inland Mission had come to Mrs. Price's about the middle of June, and after the Boxer trouble began they were unable to leave. Mr. and

Mrs. Lundgren soon heard that their mission at P'ing Yao had been burned....

During the two long months that followed not a word reached us from beyond the mountains. The church in Shanxi walked in darkness, not seeing the way before it.

The wicked governor, Yu Xian, scattered proclamations broadcast. These stated that the foreign religions overthrew morality and inflamed men to do evil, so now gods and men were stirred up against them, and Heaven's legions had been sent to exterminate the foreign devils. Moreover there were the Boxers, faithful to their sovereign, loyal to their country, determined to unite in wiping out the foreign religion. He also offered a reward to all who killed foreigners, either titles or office or money. When the highest official in the province took such a stand in favor of the Boxers, what could inferior officials do? People and officials bowed to his will, and all who enlisted as Boxers were in high favor. It was a time of license and anarchy, when not only Christians were killed, but hundreds of others against whom individual Boxers had a grudge.

Crowds of people kept passing our mission gate to see what might be happening, for the city was full of rumors: "The foreigners have all fled." "Many foreigners from other places have gathered here." "A great cannon has been mounted at the mission gate." "The foreigners have hired men to poison wells, and to smear gates with blood."

I was staying in the compound with the Prices, inside the west gate of the city, and Mr. and Mrs. Atwater, with their children, Bertha and Celia, lived near the east gate. On the 28th of June all day long a mob of one or two hundred roughs, with crowds of boys, stood at the gate of the Atwater place, shouting:

"Kill the foreigners, loot the houses."

Mr. Atwater came out once and addressed the crowd: "Friends, don't make this disturbance; whoever would like to come in, I invite to come, and we will talk together."

When the crowd saw Mr. Atwater come out, they all retreated, but when he shut the gate they thronged back again with mad shouts. This happened several times. By six or seven in the evening the crowd had increased and gathered courage. The gate was broken down and they

surged in, some shouting, some laying hands on whatever they could find to steal, some throwing stones and brickbats at the windows. As they rushed in, Mr. Atwater and his family walked through their midst and took refuge in the Yamen of the District Magistrate, which was near by. The Magistrate, not even waiting for his official chair, ran at once to the mission and arrested two men with his own hands. His attendants followed close behind him, and the mob scattered. The Magistrate then sent soldiers to stand guard at the mission gate, and the Atwaters came to live with the Prices. We expected the mob to make an attack on us that same night, but we were left in peace....

Late in July a proclamation of the Governor was posted in the city in which occurred the words, "Exterminate foreigners, kill devils." Native Christians must leave the church or pay the penalty with their lives. Li Yü and I talked long and earnestly over plans for saving the lives of our beloved missionaries. "You must not stay here waiting for death," we said. Yet we realized how difficult it would be to escape. Foreigners with light hair and fair faces are not easily disguised. Then where could they go? Eastward toward the coast all was in tumult. Perhaps the provinces to the south were just as bad. Our best way would be to find a place of concealment in the mountains. Li Yü and I thought that the chances of escape would be better if the missionaries divided into two companies; they must carry food, clothing, and bedding, and the large company would surely attract attention. Moreover, if they were in two parties, and one was killed, the other might escape. So Li Yü and I went to talk the matter over with Mr. Han, the former helper, and a Deacon Wang. Both of these men had recanted, but they still loved their foreign friends. Deacon Wang, who lived in a village over ten miles from Fen Zhou Fu, wished to conceal Mr. and Mrs. Price and little Florence in his home for a day or two, and then take them very secretly to a broken-down temple in the mountains. Li Yü said to me: "If you can escape with Mr. and Mrs. Price to the mountains, I will try to take the Atwaters, Mr. and Mrs. Lundgren, and Miss Eldred to another place in the mountains."

But when I proposed this plan to Mr. and Mrs. Price, they said:

"We missionaries do not wish to be separated. We must be in one place, and if we die we want to die together."

When I spoke to them again about going, they said:

“Thank you for your love, but we do not want to desert the other missionaries.”

“You will not be deserting them,” I pleaded. “If you decide to flee with me, Mr. Li will do his best to escape with the others.”

Then I brought forward all my arguments to persuade them. Again all consulted together, and decided to go. I think this was the last day of July—the very day of the Tai Ku tragedy. Mr. and Mrs. Price made up two bundles of baggage and gave them to Mr. Han, to be carried secretly to Deacon Wang’s home. Mr. Han paid a large price for a covered cart to wait for us secretly at ten o’clock in the evening at the gate of an old temple north of the mission. We were to walk to the cart, as it would attract attention if the cart stopped near the mission. We could not leave by the front gate, for the four Yamen men were guarding it; and patrolling the streets in front by day and night were twenty soldiers, ostensibly protecting us, but, as we surmised, stationed there to prevent the escape of foreigners. I went privately to the back of the compound and unlocked an unused gate, removing also a stone which helped to keep it shut. I had already made up a bundle to carry with me, and asked Mr. Ren, a Christian enquirer, to take care of it while I was helping Mr. and Mrs. Price to get ready. After I had opened the gate I asked Mr. Ren to wait there until I went into the south court to call the Prices.

Man proposes, but God disposes. A Mr. Wang who had often come to the mission knew that we were planning to escape that night and saw me give my bundle to Mr. Ren. Thinking that it must contain some valuable things belonging to the Prices, an evil thought entered his heart. He watched when Mr. Ren laid the bundle in a small empty room close by the gate, and after he came out, Mr. Wang went into the room. Mr. Ren thought nothing of this, supposing that Mr. Wang was a friend. But in a minute he saw Mr. Wang rush out of the room, leap over the wall, and run away. Going at once into the room and not finding the bundle, he lost his head completely, and set up a loud wail. His one thought was that he had been faithless to his trust, and sitting down in the back gate which I had opened so secretly, he cried at the top of his voice, thus bringing to naught our carefully laid plans to escape. Up ran the four Yamen men and the soldiers from the street. Everyone in the compound appeared on the scene. When I heard his

outcry I thought that he had received some serious injury. All gathered about him asking his trouble, but overcome with emotion he jumped up and down, slapping his legs and crying lustily. Finally he managed to say through his tears, "Mr. Fei, Mr. Wang has stolen the things which you gave me."

When I heard this, I could neither laugh nor cry nor storm at him. The Yamen men and soldiers at once picked up their lanterns and began to search. When they saw that the back gate had been unlocked and the stone removed, not knowing that I had done it, they began to scold and mutter: "These things! How contemptible they are! When did they open this gate in order to steal the foreigners' things?"

As they muttered they locked the gate and replaced the stone, then left two men to guard it.

It was after midnight when this commotion was over, and every gate was guarded. Mr. Price and I saw that it would be impossible to get out that night. Even if we could leave the compound, we could not reach Deacon Wang's before daylight. If we attempted it, the Prices would not be saved, and Deacon Wang's whole family would be endangered.

So I went alone outside the compound to tell Mr. Han to dismiss the cart. As soon as he saw me, he said quickly: "It is indeed well that the Prices have not come. I just came across several thieves, and was mistaken for one of their company. One of them said to me, 'If you get anything, you must divide with me.' If the Prices had come out, I fear they would have been killed."

The next day we consulted again about flight. Li Yü said:

"Let us flee all together to the mountains from thirty to sixty miles away."

So we hired a large cart and loaded it with food and other necessities, and sent it ahead of us into the mountains. Two Christian enquirers went with the cart to guard it. When it had entered the mountains about seven miles from the city, suddenly a man ran up and said to the enquirers:

"Run quick for your lives! Your mission in the city is burning, and the foreigners have all been killed."

As soon as they had jumped down from the cart and run away, rascals came up and stole all that was on the cart.

When we heard this we gave up all hope of escape, especially as we were told that bad men in the city had heard of our intention, and were hiding outside the city day and night ready to kill and rob the foreigners if they should appear. So we talked no more of fleeing, but committed our lives into the hands of our Heavenly Father, to do as seemed to Him best. We had little hope that we would be saved. Still we kept guard every night, Mr. Atwater and Mr. Lundgren being on duty the first half of the night, and Mr. Price and I the last half. At that time all of the servants had left us, and Mrs. Price did all the cooking, Mrs. Lundgren and Miss Eldred helping her. It was the hottest time in summer, and Mrs. Price stood over the stove with flushed face wet with perspiration. Li Yü and I were so sorry for her, and wanted to help her, but alas! neither of us knew how to cook foreign food, so we could only wash the dishes and help to wash the clothes.

Li Yü was so helpful those days. He alone went outside the compound to see the Magistrate, to transact business, to purchase food, and every day to get the news.

August had come, and we were still alive. Could it be that God wishing to show His mighty power, would out of that whole province of Shanxi save the missionaries at Fen Zhou Fu and Tai Ku?

The second day of August, a little after noon, a man came into our compound with the saddest story that our ears had heard during those sad summer days. He was Mrs. Clapp's cook, and two days before, in the afternoon, he had fled from the Tai Ku compound when flame and sword and rifle were doing their murderous work. As he fled he saw Mr. Clapp, Mr. Williams, and Mr. Davis making a last vain effort to keep back the mob of hundreds of soldiers and Boxers, and saw Mrs. Clapp, Miss Partridge, Miss Bird, and Ruth taking refuge in a little court in the back of the compound. Miss Bird had said to him as he ran:

“Be quick! be quick! “

Over the compound wall, then the city wall, he had taken shelter in a field of grain, where he still heard the howling of the mob and saw the heavens gray with smoke from the burning buildings. He hid in the grain until morning broke, then started on his journey to Fen Zhou Fu.

So to our little company waiting so long in the valley of the shadow of death, came the tidings that our Tai Ku missionaries had crossed the river. Several native Christians who counted not their lives dear unto themselves, had gone with the martyr band. Eagerly I asked about my sister, her husband and child. The messenger did not know whether they were living or dead—only that they had been staying in the mission buildings outside the city. Two days later full accounts of the massacre reached us, and I knew that they were among the slain.

Bitter were the tears which we shed together that afternoon. It seemed as if my heart was breaking as I thought of the cruel death of those whom I loved so much, and whom I should never again see on earth. What words can tell my grief? I could not sleep that night, nor for many nights following. I thought how lovingly Mr. and Mrs. Clapp had nursed me through my long illness. I wept for Miss Bird, who had sympathized with me and helped me. “My dear ones, my dear ones, who loved and helped me as if I were your very flesh and blood, who brought so much joy and peace to the lonely one far from his home, who worked so earnestly for God, who pitied and helped the suffering and poor, would that I could have died for you! Could my death have saved one of you, gladly would I have laid down my life.”...

The Tai Ku missionaries were gone, the Christians were killed or scattered, the buildings were all burned. We of Fen Zhou Fu alone were left. We all thought that our day was at hand, but God still kept us for nearly two weeks. And now I want to tell you the story of those remaining days.

## V LAST DAYS AT FEN ZHOU FU

The next day after we heard of the Tai Ku tragedy a man ran in to tell us that several hundred Boxers were coming from the east. They were those who had killed the missionaries at Tai Ku, and now they were resting in a village outside the east gate, prepared to attack our mission that afternoon. We all believed this report, for we were hourly expecting death. There was nothing

the foreigners could do but to wait for the end. Mr. Price urged me to leave them at once and flee. Mr. Price, Mrs. Atwater, Mrs. Lundgren, and Miss Eldred all gave me letters to home friends. All of my foreign friends shook hands with me at parting, and Mrs. Atwater said, with tears in her eyes:

“May the Lord preserve your life, and enable you to tell our story to others.”

Miss Eldred had prepared for herself a belt into which was stitched forty taels of silver. She thought that she was standing at the gate of death and would have no use for money, so she gave it to me for my travelling expenses. Mrs. Price gave me her gold watch and an envelope on which an address was written, and asked me to take the watch to Tianjin and find someone who would send it to her father. Before I went out of the I gate I saw Mrs. Price holding her little daughter to her heart, kissing her through her tears, and heard her say:

“If the Boxers come today, I want my little Florence to go before I do.”

My heart was pierced with grief as I saw the sad plight of my friends, but I could do nothing for them. Had I died with them it could not have helped them....

## VI OUTSIDE THE CITY WALL

*The missionaries were ordered by the Chinese officials to leave.*

...In the front of our cart sat Mr. Atwater with the carter, behind him were Mrs. Atwater and Mrs. Lundgren, and I sat in the back of the cart with the two little girls. On both sides, before and behind, walked the twenty soldiers, while in front of all, mounted on my white horse, with chin held high and a very self-satisfied manner, rode the leader. After ten o'clock the sun's rays grew warmer, and Mrs. Lundgren handed her umbrella to a soldier, asking him to offer it to the leader to shield him from the heat....

As we travelled the young soldier who had taken my horse away walked close behind my cart, never taking his eyes off me. I thought that he was angry because I had objected to giving him the horse, so I gave little attention to it. Then I noticed something strange in his way of looking

at me, as if there was something he wished to say to me....

After we had gone on a little farther with the soldier walking behind the cart, still keeping his eyes on me, he heaved a great sigh, and said: "Alas for you—so very young!"

The soldier walking at the side looked sternly at the speaker and said something to him, which I could not hear, but I heard the reply: "This is our own countryman, and not a foreigner."

When I saw the expression on their faces and heard these words, suddenly it flashed across me that they had some deep meaning, and I asked the young soldier what was up.

"I don't know," he replied.

"If anything is going to happen," I said, "please tell me."

He hung his head and said nothing, but followed still close to the cart, and after a while said to me plainly:

"You ought to escape at once, for only a short distance ahead we are to kill the foreigners."

I jumped down from the cart, but another soldier came up, saying, "Don't go away."

Then I began to think it was true that the foreigners were to be killed, and wanted to get farther away from the cart, but the soldier who had first talked with me, said: "You can't go yet; you must first leave your money with us."

I said, "I have only a little, barely enough for my journey."

But I knew that they would not let me off without money, so I gave my watch to the soldier who had taken my horse. Another soldier demanded money, saying:

"If you have no money you may give me your boots."

So I took off my newly purchased boots and gave them to him, putting on the well-worn shoes

which he gave me in exchange. Another soldier took away my straw hat and the whip which I carried in my hand. It happened that at just this point a little path branched off from the main road through a field of sorghum higher than my head. I started off on the path. While I had been talking with the soldiers Mr. Atwater had conversed with the two ladies, and had not noticed our words. As I left my friends I took a last look at them, saying in my heart:

“I fear that I shall never again on earth see your faces.”

I had no chance to speak to them, for the village where they were to be killed was only a quarter of a mile away, the carts had not stopped, and many people were following close behind. A crowd was also coming out from the village which they were approaching.

I had walked only a short distance on the little path when I heard footsteps following, and looking back saw that it was the two soldiers hastening after me. My heart stood still, for I thought that they were coming to prevent my escape and kill me. I did not dare to run, for they had rifles in their hands. Soon they overtook me, one seizing my queue and another my arm, and saying:

“You must have some money; we’ll only let you escape with your life; your money must be given to us.”

Before I had time to answer, the soldier snatched from my purse all the silver which Mr. Price had given me. I made an effort to get it back, but the soldier said:

“If we kill you, nothing will be yours. If we let you escape with your life, should not your silver be given to us?”

There was some reason in their talk, so I only entreated them to leave me a little money, for I had many hundred miles to travel before I would reach my home. The soldiers had a little conscience, for dividing the silver between them they took out a small piece amounting to about a tael [an ounce], and gave it to me....

When I had gone on a little farther I heard a loud rifle report. By that time I was almost

convinced that they were indeed going to kill the foreigners. So I ran with all my might. It was about one o'clock and the sun beat down fiercely. After I had gone several miles I felt very weary, and though I was not afraid, my heart still fluttered and my flesh crept....

The sun was sinking westward, and I looked up to the sky with a sigh. The atmosphere was clear, wind and light were fair, and I asked myself:

“Can the great Lord who rules heaven and earth permit evil men under this bright heaven, in this clear light of day, to murder these innocent men and women, these little children? It cannot be. Perhaps I can still reach P'ing Yao, and look in the faces of those whom I love.”

Then I thought that if the soldiers had really killed them in that village, as they said they would, they were no longer on the earth, but were happy with God. When this thought came I lifted my face toward heaven, saying: “My beloved Mr. and Mrs. Price and other dear friends, if you are truly in heaven now, do you see my trouble and distress?”

So I walked on, my heart now in heaven, now on earth, a thousand thoughts entangling themselves in my bewildered mind....

*He slept in an inn that night.*

The sun had risen when I opened my eyes in the morning....I forced myself to rise, washed my face, and asked for a little food, but could not get it down.... Sitting down I heard loud talking and laughter among the guests. The topic of conversation was the massacre of foreigners the day before! One said:

“There were ten ocean men killed, three men, four women, and three little devils.”

“Another added, “Lü Cheng San yesterday morning came ahead with twenty soldiers and waited in the village. When the foreigners with their soldier escort arrived a gun was fired for a signal, and all the soldiers set to work at once.”

Then one after another added gruesome [*sic*] details, how the cruel swords had slashed, how the

baggage had been stolen, how the very clothing had been stripped from the poor bodies, and how they had then been flung into a wayside pit....

“Are there still foreigners in Fen Zhou Fu?” I asked.

“No, they were all killed yesterday.”

“Where were they killed?”

“In that village ahead—less than two miles from here,” he said, pointing as he spoke. “Yesterday about this time they were all killed.”

“How many were there?” I asked.

He stretched out the fingers of his two hands for an answer.

“Were there none of our people?”

“No, they were all foreigners.”...

[A Chinese Christian told me the next day that the] poor remains of the missionaries would have been left on the village street had not the village leaders begged that they be taken away. So the soldiers dragged them to a pit outside the city, where they found a common grave.

Source: Fei Ch'i-hao, *Two Heroes of Cathay: An Autobiography and a Sketch*. Ed. Luella Miner. New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1903. 63-128.

Full text available at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1900Fei-boxers.html> or <http://books.google.com/books?id=OgII-grC134C>