lying upon the appearance of sudden magic. But this is a minor flaw in an other-
wise nicely-paced story.

The eggs in Nina's nest look "like a miniature flower garden laid out in the
most gorgeous patterns of colors and borders." They are the first "pisanka" eggs
which Katerina gathers and takes to the Spring Festival where their beauty
amazes everyone. She trades them for the supplies she needs and Nina is re-
warded with "a sack of cornmeal." Once introduced into the village culture, the
eggs become part of the spring and Easter rites of renewal and resurrection,
painted by grandmothers.

This solid tale works well with Czernecki's colourful, detailed illustrations.
The intricate, finely drawn pictures of Katerina, her flowers, Nina and the cup-
board are based upon the patterns and motifs of egg painting itself. Given
Nina's diet of flower seeds, it's not surprising to see a brilliant array of floral
patterns on her eggs. Czernecki's illustrations for Nina's treasures are a
delight to the eye, endowed as they are with warm and happy feelings.

Kenneth Radu, a co-editor of Matrix magazine, is also a teacher and writer
whose collection of poetry, Treading water, will be published by Oberon in the

A CHRISTIAN'S CAPTIVITY


A boy's war tells of Michell's childhood experiences as a prisoner of the Ja-
panese in Weihsien Concentration Camp near Tsingtao, Shantung province,
North China during World War II. He recounts his adventures with the remin-
iniscent tone of an adult, but also through the eyes of his childhood self. This
latter perspective presents a different side of captivity, one which includes an
awareness of humour that adults might fail to notice.

The cover blurb is rather misleading. It says A boy's war "is an account more
about children and their adventures than the atrocities of a deathcamp." Yes,
it does describe the children's escapades, but the description of Weihsien as a
deathcamp seems to be an exaggeration; it is clearly an internment camp. The
occupants do not live in great fear of execution. The hardship of having little
food and clothing, few amenities, and no freedom cannot be understated. The
internees are, however, able to smuggle food into the camp with the help of
villagers. Reprisals for disobedience often take the form of a harangue by the
Japanese camp commander. Even when punishment is more severe, it some-
times has a comical side. For example, a missionary priest sits by the wall and
has eggs handed through to him which he hides under his long robe. Ironically,
one of the funniest bits in the story occurs when he is caught. The Japanese give him a fifteen-day sentence in solitary confinement near their quarters. At night he sings, chants, and prays loud enough to keep the soldiers awake. After a week they release him, and there is no need to mention why.

A boy’s war is published by the Overseas Missionary Fellowship, the successor of the China Inland Mission, and Michell is the OMF’s Canadian Director. Clearly, although the story he tells has a potentially wide audience, the explicitly Christian character of the book may limit its appeal. Michell does not fall into evangelical fervour and preaching, but Christ is definitely, if often implicitly, the centre of the action.

Questionable also is the degree of space devoted to the Olympic gold medalist and evangelical Christian Eric Liddell, who was interned in Weihsien at the same time as Michell, and who died there six months before the war’s end. Since Chariots of fire, Liddell’s name is now quite familiar to many, and some reference to his final days was in order; but for the young Michell the man was a hero, and for the older one he approaches sainthood. Judicious cutting was necessary here. But popularity does sell books; it’s not for nothing that Liddell figures in the blurb.

Sabine Nikodem is a member of the Laurentian University Review Project.

C’EST LA VIE QUI EST BIZARRE
