

# Kit MacSwiney: An Irish Nun's Life in Japan<sup>1)</sup>

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## <Introduction>

For those who are familiar with the history of Ireland, there is no need to explain who Terence MacSwiney (1879-1920) is. He is of course the Lord Mayor of Cork who died after the seventy-four days of hunger strike, protesting his arrest under the authority of the British court in Ireland. MacSwiney died at Brixton Prison in London on 25 October 1920 aged 41. His body was first laid at Southwark Cathedral in London then returned to Ireland. His coffin was taken directly to Cork on arrival in Ireland. Thousands of people attended his requiem mass, funeral, and burial. His death gained worldwide sympathy, especially in India. Many Indian nationalists regarded him as an exemplar. His death has not been without controversies though. The nature of his death raised moral issues in predominantly Catholic Ireland but the Catholic Church did not perceive his death as a suicide but a death caused by the cruelty and oppression of the English. He was granted a full Catholic funeral and burial. MacSwiney's death and his declaration, 'Victory is won not by those who can inflict the most, but by those who can endure the most', was acutely invoked during the recent conflict in Northern Ireland, especially when ten men died on the hunger strike in 1981 in the Maze Prison.

Terence MacSwiney was one of the seven surviving children of John MacSwiney and Mary Wilkinson. Some of his siblings also have places in the Irish history and Mary MacSwiney (1872-1942) should be the most notable among them. She was an activist of the women's suffrage movement in Ireland and later became a TD (Teachta Dála, member) of the Dáil Éireann (the Irish Parliament) in 1921. She fiercely opposed

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<sup>1)</sup> I express my deepest gratitude to Sister Tsuneko Shimada of the Infant Jesus Sisters, Tokyo, Japan, for giving me the valuable historical materials and her own personal recollections of Kit MacSwiney, who was known as Sister Francis Xavier in the community.

the Anglo-Irish Treaty which was debated at the Dáil from December 1921 to January 1922 and on one occasion she gave two hours and forty minutes of speech urging the members not to accept the Treaty. This was the longest speech of all the Treaty debates. The Pro-Treaty side won the vote at the Dáil and that led to the partition of Ireland. Though defeated, Mary emerged from the Treaty debates as one of the strongest opponents to the Irish Free State, which was newly created under the terms of the Anglo-Irish Treaty. Mary was arrested and interned by the Free State in November 1922 and she too immediately went on hunger strike in protest. Her condition quickly worsened and she was given the last rites by a catholic priest. However, her life was saved when she was released after twenty-one days of hunger strike. Her sister Annie was quite vocal during Mary's hunger strike defending her sister's action. In 1916 Mary and Annie opened a school called Scoil Íte (1916-54) in their home in County Cork. Their brother Sean was also one time a TD (1921-2) and opposed the Treaty.

The life of another sister Kit (Katie or Catherine) MacSwiney (1874-1954) is not very well known. As a missionary nun she spent most of her adult life in Japan when the country went through the drastic changes. This made her life as interesting as any of her siblings'. This article reports her footprints in Japan which the author has discovered in recent days.

### <'Hunger Striker's Sister Catherine MacSwiney Lives in Kouji-machi Ward'>

Terence MacSwiney's hunger strike and his subsequent death were worldwide news of the day. His story was widely reported in the Japanese newspapers and *The Yomiuri* was covering the event most intensely. While the other papers covered the story only for a few times around the time of Terence's death, *The Yomiuri* covered the whole story for dozens of times. Their coverage started on 18 August 1920 reporting the Terence MacSwiney's hunger strike, which had just started five days earlier. Their coverage became more frequent in mid-September and after that they reported the strike as well as the physical and psychological conditions of the mayor almost daily. Sometimes they treated the story in the editorials. On the issue of 30 August, for instance, he and his wife were treated in the editorial section for female readers. It related 'the wife of the Lord Mayor of Cork, who is agreeing with her husband's will to continue his hunger strike' as 'one of the tragedies of Ireland whose population has always wanted to achieve the self-governance and fought against the

British government'. It also gave other examples of hunger strikes in Russia and Japan and concluded that 'the hunger strikes are more passive than aggressive as a method and often successful' and 'mainly used by political prisoners'<sup>2)</sup>. At the time of the death of Terence the coverage was most frequent and the editorial of 27 October examined 'the life of the Irish Mayor who spent his whole life with arrests and imprisonments'. 'He started the strike because as the Lord Mayor of Cork he did not recognise the British laws executed in his court'. 'He is known as an expert of the Celtic language' and 'he left a child with his renowned beautiful wife whose family is quite wealthy'. It also outlined the historical background which had led to the hunger strike of Terence MacSwiney as well as the contentious issue whether the hunger strike should be considered as suicide in the teaching of the Catholicism<sup>3)</sup>. Four days later Terence again appeared in the editorial and this time his motives were examined according to the philosophies of Nietzsche<sup>4)</sup>.

Their last article on the hunger strike appeared on 14 December 1920, nearly two months after the actual death of Terence. It is impossible for us to know why *The Yomiuri* was so much interested in Terence MacSwiney, but their tenacity has led us to this last article which referred to 'Catherine MacSwiney, who is the sister of the mayor who died on the hunger strike'. It seems no other paper reported or even mentioned her name. Again we do not know how *The Yomiuri* got the information on Kit MacSwiney. But this article was the first clue that led me to the investigation of Kit MacSwiney's life in Japan and I quote the whole article here.

'The Hunger Striker's Sister Catherine MacSwiney Lives in Kouji-machi Ward: The Last Letter from Her Brother says "The Death Will Make Me Even Greater"'

We must report the surprising fact here that the sister of Mister MacSwiney, who was the Lord Mayor of Cork in Ireland and died on the hunger strike amid the compassion of the whole population of Ireland as a martyr for his country, lives in this Imperial capital as an English language teacher of a seminary school and no one knew her identity.

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<sup>2)</sup> *The Yomiuri*, 30 August, 1920.

<sup>3)</sup> *The Yomiuri*, 27 October, 1920.

<sup>4)</sup> *The Yomiuri*, 31 October, 1920.

This lady's name is Catherine MacSwiney but called Francis Xavier in her community. She recently acquired her residence at 6 Upper Kouji-machi Ward and teaches English at Saint Maur Female Seminary and earns monthly salaries. She is tall and very elegant, which should be the same traits as her brother's, and her elegance should convince the population of Tokyo who are familiar with the sight of foreigners that she is a very sophisticated lady. She says, 'my brother died that way but he was a true Christian and never afraid of death. He was deeply patriotic since his youth. He wrote a poem called "Nature and Its Duty" in 1901 and it was filled with the love of his country. He graduated a University in Dublin and became a poet and a play writer. His works are not much known in the world but my family treasured them. His marriage was a happy one and he left a child. His widow is a conscientious woman. He sent me his last letter knowing his death was near. He wrote, "my body might be dead but the victory is with us. The death will make me even greater and that thought itself makes me happy". I do not regret my brother's death but his death does not seem to be real to me yet'.

Her emotions for her brother, who was after his death revered by the millions of the Irish people as a saint and a martyr, crimsoned beautifully her face. Her eyes were twinkling like pearls with tears when she said,

"Our beloved father John MacSwiney used to be in the Papal Guard in Rome and our family motto was to be loyal always".<sup>5)</sup>

This article is quite important in itself because this should be one of the very few occasions that Kit expressed her view on her brother's death. However, there are a few erroneous remarks. For example, Terence did not attend a university in Dublin but in Cork. And the Saint Maur, the missionary order that Kit belonged to, did not have a seminary in Japan. The Saint Maur, which today calls themselves as the Infant Jesus Sisters, and her activities in that order will be explained in the next section.

### <Forty-Seven Years of Service>

Kit MacSwiney spent forty seven years in Japan as a missionary nun. She worked at a free school for girls for two years and taught English at high school for girls for

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<sup>5)</sup> *The Yomiuri*, 14 December, 1920.

forty five years. Both schools were run by the Saint Maur.

A record which has been kept by the Infant Jesus Sisters in Tokyo tells us some facts about her life;

Surer Sister Francis Xavier  
Catherine (Kate) Mac Swiney  
Born on 26 September 1874 in London  
Father: John Mac Swiney  
Mother: Mary Wilkinson  
Baptized: 11 October 1874  
First Communion: 8 December 1884  
Confirmation: 1885  
Entered the Infant Jesus Sisters on 9 April 1903 in Paris  
Postulant: 28 September 1903  
The first vow: 1 October 1904  
The final vow: 5 September 1909  
Arrival in Japan: 28 September 1907, Tokyo (Yotsuya)  
Transfer: Interned from 16 July *[sic]* 1942 to 7 *[sic]* November 1944 at the convent in Denen-chofu as an enemy alien by the order of the Japanese government. Forced to live in Karuizawa from 27 March (or 15 June) 1945. Lived in Denen-chofu from 5 October 1945 (Our convent in Yotsuya was burnt down by the aerial bombardment on 13 April 1945).  
Death: At 6 pm on 20 August 1954 at the convent in Denen-chofu, aged 79, buried at a Catholic cemetery in Chofu city.<sup>6)</sup>

When a sister passes away, the Mother Institute of the Infant Jesus Sisters in Paris issues an obituary. Here is the one written for Sister Francis Xavier;

#### 9. Surer Sister Francis Xavier MacSwiney

Kate MacSwiney was born on 26 September 1874 in London as a member of an Irish family whose religious faith was extremely strong. Her love for her country was deep in her heart.

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<sup>6)</sup> Records at the Infant Jesus Sisters, Tokyo, Japan.

She had a desire in her mind that wished to be engaged in overseas missionary works as soon as possible. She gave up her family and her country with a generous heart and entered the Noviciate in Paris. Postulant on 28 September 1903 and the first vow on 1 October 1904. After that she helped to open a new convent in Wolverhampton for a while to serve the community.

Her wish was granted when she finally arrived in Japan on 25 *[sic]* September 1907. She taught English to the students of her schools in Tokyo, to young women, and to ladies for forty five years with her kindness, perseverance, and passion. She especially tried to inspire a virtue in her students' minds. All the graduates felt her love that was firmly based on her faith and showed a genuine gratitude to her.

One of the students wrote about her as following: 'We could never forget the beloved teacher. She was graceful and we loved her beautiful blue eyes and her smile. We know she prayed and prayed and prayed for us for the forty seven years of her life that she spent in Japan. When we were students, we loved our teachers. And now we know that those teachers have sent the God's truth, kindness, and beauty to our minds'. 'When Japan was at war against the United States, I got a permit to visit her in Denen-chofu. She was interned at a building which used to be Sumire Jo-Gakkou\*. I went there in the hope that I could console her but instead she gave me courage. She had been under house arrest and yet she did not bemoan her situation and seemed to have accepted it calmly. I was moved deeply by her way...She taught me many lessons and the one that I would not forget will be, "Be kind to others and be strict with yourself"'.

After the two years of internment, Surer Sister Francis Xavier resumed her service at the convent in Denen-chofu, and there she was to end her life.

She kept on teaching as much as possible in spite of her old age and physical inability. However, in July 1952 she finally gave up her teaching and a few months later she was taken ill.

Two years since, her perseverance, her selflessness, and her devotion to the God were exemplary. When she could not serve the others, she accepted that helplessness in order to save souls. She never complained and never even hinted her own sufferings, just kept on thinking of the others. She always welcomed other sisters who visited her bedside with smiles and kind words. The sisters learnt lessons every time they left her bedside. She prayed and she was

with the God. She received the spiritual strength from the Holy Communion that she was able to receive until the very last day. She longed for the Heaven and repeatedly said "I hope I could see the God's face soon!" but she did not dare to say "please let me die" in respect for the God. She wished to follow the exact way that the God would lead her.

The summer heat consumed her last strength and like a candle expires, Surer Sister Francis Xavier went into a peaceful sleep in the hands of the Lord at 6 pm of 2 August.

Coincidentally, that day fell on to the 'week of the meditation' for the sisters. So that Surer Sister Francis Xavier was able to receive the consolation and encouragements from the priests. The priests were also at the bedside at her last moment. Our Mother Superior Mères Genevieve and all the other sisters were about to finish 'the Prayer of the Last Rites' when she took her last breath.

At her funeral, a priest said, "How much should we praise this missionary order which trains such a holy and an ideal nun? If you wish to devote yourself to the God, you should enter the Saint Maur". On hearing that, many graduates who attended her funeral were filled with joy and gratitude.

Surer Sister Francis Xavier would have celebrated the Golden Jubilee of her final vow in two months' time. Instead, on 1 October she had the celebration in the Heaven.

Surer Sister Francis Xavier took the final vow on 5 September 1909.<sup>7)</sup>

\* Sumire-Jo-Gakkou was a free school for girls run by the Saint Maur

### <The First Nuns Arrived in Japan>

The Saint Maur missionary order was established in France by a French priest Nicholas Barré (1621-86) in 1662. It is also known as the Drishane Nuns in Ireland and England. They have changed their name officially to the Infant Jesus Sisters in 1991.

Five nuns of the Saint Maur arrived in Japan in June 1872 (Meiji 5) and they were the first missionary nuns ever arrived in the country<sup>8)</sup>. In Japan the Christianity had been banned by the state since the mid-sixteenth century. Japan also had been under

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<sup>7)</sup> The Infant Jesus Sisters, Paris, *Nécrologie 1911-66* (Paris, 1954, translated from French by Sister Tsuneko Shimada).

<sup>8)</sup> Hisako Shibukawa and Tsuneko Shimada, *Shinkou to Kyouiku to: Saint Maur Shudou-kai Tokyo Hyaku-nen no Ayumi* (Tokyo: Hyoron-sha, 1981), 21.

the isolation policy from the mid-seventeenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. When the nuns arrived in Yokohama in 1872, the ban on the Christianity was still valid while the country was open to other countries nominally. The public notice boards on the streets, which virtually regulated the lives of the ordinary people in Japan, forbade the Christianity. Those notice boards were withdrawn from the public eye in 1873, the next year of the nuns' arrival. However, the ban was not completely lifted yet. It was gradually relaxed and finally in 1899 (Meiji 32) the Meiji government officially sanctioned the free activities of the Christians, though religious teachings in private schools were not allowed.

The first thing the nuns did in Japan was to open an orphanage in Yokohama in today's Kanagawa prefecture. They received orphans, deserted children, and the destitute. Though Japan had been already an open country, the non-nationals were only allowed to live in the designated areas and Yokohama was one of those areas. They also opened a boarding school in Yokohama. They bought a house and then placed an oratory, school rooms, and boarding rooms in it. The nuns were both teachers and cooks. The number of the students of the boarding school increased but the students came from the non-Japanese families and the nuns, whose aim was to educate the Japanese, were not very much satisfied with this situation.<sup>9)</sup> The local people had a great curiosity in those nuns. One of the nuns later wrote, 'they went out of their houses to take a very good look at us and they murmured to each other whether we were men or women and why we came to this country. A lot of people followed us to our house on a hill'<sup>10)</sup>.

In 1875 (Meiji 8) the nuns opened a convent and a school in Tsukiji, Tokyo. Tsukiji was also one of the designated areas for the non-nationals to live. The school there received orphans, the disabled, and the children of the destitute for free. The school also received the daughters of well-to-do families from the Western countries and the Japanese ladies who wanted to learn French or English, and they paid fees<sup>11)</sup>.

Kit MacSwiney, or Sister Xavier, arrived in Japan in 1907 (Meiji 40). Since 1899 all the non-nationals had been allowed to live outside of the designated areas and the Saint Maur had been looking for a new place in Tokyo to build a convent and schools.

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<sup>9)</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-5.

<sup>10)</sup> Marie-Louise Flachaire de Roustan, *Vie de la Réverende Mère Sainte Mathilde Fondatrice des Missions de Saint Maur en Malaisie et au Japon*, Translated by Tsuneko Shimada as *Hitotsubu-no Mugi no youni* (Yokohama: Yokohama Futaba Gakuen, 2000), 48-9.

<sup>11)</sup> Shibukawa and Shimada, *op. cit.*, 29-31.



In 1909 (Meiji 42) they opened the Futaba high school for girls in Tsukiji area and in the next year moved to the then Kouji-machi ward, where they are still situated today<sup>12)</sup>. Sister Xavier started her work in Japan at Sumire Jo-Gakkou, a free school for orphans and poor children. When the Futaba high school for girls opened with new facilities in Kouji-machi on 1 April 1910 (Meiji 43), Sister Xavier's name was on the list of the teachers. According to the list, she was teaching English twice a week and received no salaries. The list also shows that she started to work at this high school in 1910 and did not have any other occupation. She was listed as a British subject<sup>13)</sup>.

Few people remember Sister Xavier now as a teacher, for she has passed away almost sixty years ago. However, there are a few former students who kept her memories. The Futaba high school for girls sent a questionnaire to their graduates in 1989 as one of the works to commemorate the opening of the school eighty years earlier. Some of the graduates answered anonymously. Asked 'what do you remember most about your school life?', one of them answered, 'the one thing which still stays clearly in my mind is the late Madam Saint Xavier who had the English lesson every day from Monday to Friday, the first class of a day. In her eyes I saw something that I had never known before. Her smile was filled with benevolence and that is something I will never forget and something I remember fondly'. This graduate entered the high school in 1917 at the age of twelve<sup>14)</sup>. Another graduate answered the same question as, 'during the English lesson of Madam Saint Xavier there was an earthquake. Sister said "you must pray" and then she knelt and prayed. All the students were calm and quiet. It was a moving scene'<sup>15)</sup>. Sister Tsuneko Shimada of the Infant Jesus Sisters of Tokyo remembers Sister Xavier personally. As a young nun, she was at the same convent when Sister Xavier passed away and she kept an hourly vigil for her with other nuns during the night. She says, 'I never saw Sister Xavier laugh or even smile. At least she did not smile at me. She always kept her composure. It is no wonder one of her students remembers her word "be kind to others and be strict with yourself". That is exactly how she was. But I am glad her students remember her smiles'. Sister Shimada or anyone else at the convent did not know about her brother Terence and his hunger strike until the visit of the author. Sister Shimada says, 'that event in Ireland might have made her more private. She always kept to

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<sup>12)</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>13)</sup> *Ibid.*, 198-9.

<sup>14)</sup> Futaba Gakuen, *Futaba Gakuen Hachiju-nen no Ayumi* (Tokyo: Futaba Gakuen, 1989), 260.

<sup>15)</sup> *Ibid.*, 262.

herself<sup>16)</sup>.

### <Earthquakes and Wars>

While Sister Xavier was in Japan, she experienced some of the major events that took place in the country. In September 1923 there were a series of strong earthquakes around Tokyo. It is estimated that about one hundred and five thousand people lost their lives and considered as the worst natural disaster ever recorded in Japan. The facilities run by the Saint Maur were affected by the disaster and the worst hit were the ones in Yokohama. More than thirty children and ten nuns were killed there.<sup>17)</sup> Sister Xavier was in Kouji-machi in Tokyo and the facilities there were also damaged. However, there were no casualties. After the earthquakes all the communication to and from Tokyo was down and Sister Xavier's elder brother Peter, who had been living in New York, was extremely worried about his sister. According to his niece Máire, Terence's only child, Peter decided to come to Japan to see whether Sister Xavier was safe. This is rather a surprising story but 'he hitch-hiked from New York to San Francisco and there signed on as an able-bodied seaman with a cargo ship going to Yokohama' though he 'hardly knew how to swim'. Peter safely landed Yokohama and 'he found that all the nuns had died' at the convent run by the order. He 'then made his way to Tokyo to discover, to his relief and delight, that all in Aunt Kit's convent was safe'. Peter returned to New York in the same way.<sup>18)</sup>

In December 1941 Japan went into the war against the United States. From the very day that the war started, those who were considered as 'enemy aliens' were interned by the order of the state. By the end of 1942, at least 672 civilians were interned.<sup>19)</sup> The situation surrounding Ireland was complicated. Ireland became the Irish Free State in 1922 under the Anglo-Irish Treaty. The Irish Free State was consisted of the twenty six counties of the south of Ireland and held a Dominion status within the British Commonwealth. In 1937 the Irish Free State left the Commonwealth and became an independent country as Éire or the Republic of Ireland while the northern six counties, Northern Ireland, remained in the United Kingdom. These

<sup>16)</sup> Sister Tsuneko Shimada at the Infant Jesus Sisters in Tokyo, personal interview with the author, 7 December 2016.

<sup>17)</sup> Shibukawa and Shimada, *op. cit.*, 233-4.

<sup>18)</sup> Máire MacSwiney Brughá, *History's Daughter: A memoir from the only child of Terence MacSwiney* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2006, second and revised edition), 148-50.

<sup>19)</sup> Naimu-sho Keiho-kyoku, *Gaiji Keisatsu Gaikyo 8* (Tokyo: Ryukei-shosha, 1980 reprinted edition), 95.

changes at home affected the Irish citizens who remained in Japan in the 1940s. Their passports could have been issued by the UK, the Free State, or the Republic, but considering the facts that the travels were not very frequent back then and the Irish citizens were able to hold the British passports after the independence of the Republic, those who were in Japan at the beginning of the war could well have held the British passports. Moreover, the Free State did not have the diplomatic relations with Japan, so it was probably almost impossible to enter Japan without the British passports. These circumstances led to their internment<sup>20)</sup>.

On 8 December 1941, the day that the war broke out, the police confiscated the facilities of the Saint Maur in Denen-chofu and used them as the internment camps for the enemy aliens. In September 1942, ten nuns at Kouji-machi were interned and in all nearly thirty nuns of the Saint Maur in Japan were interned. They had nuns from France, Italy, Spain, and Ireland but only the Irish nuns were considered as enemy aliens. The senior members of the convent had had communications with the police and they had known that the Irish nuns would be interned. But somehow they had not told the other members of the convent. In the morning of 16 September when the nuns were having breakfast, the doorbell rang and the police came to pick up the nuns. They ordered the Irish nuns to leave the convent. A French nun who was there uttered 'the police has come to take our Irish nuns. Sister Xavier! Sister Xavier! Oh poor Sister Xavier!'. She was worried about Sister Xavier because of her age. Sister Xavier was almost sixty eight years old. She and other nuns were given only thirty minutes to leave. A Japanese nun who was also there felt sorry for Sister Xavier because she seemed to be 'in great shock'.<sup>21)</sup>

According to the records of the Japanese Foreign Office, Sister Xavier was first interned at the former school building of the Saint Maur in Denen-chofu, which had been confiscated by the police in the previous year. Then she was moved to the Catholic church in Denen-chofu which was also known as the Saint Francis Monastery. This place had been also confiscated by the police and used as the internment camp for the Italians since October 1943. From there she was again moved to the internment camp at the headquarter of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police, which was situated

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<sup>20)</sup> Sister Xavier went back to Ireland in 1937 and this was the only occasion that she went home. She met her sister Peg then, who was also a missionary nun. During her stay, Sister Xavier said to her sister Mary, 'the Union Jack is very useful on the missions for protection'. Mary, a well-known republican, replied, 'Wouldn't you consider doing your missionary work under the banner of Christ rather than under the protection of the Union Jack?' MacSwiney Brugh, *op. cit.*, 147.

<sup>21)</sup> Shibukawa and Shimada, *op. cit.*, 287-8; Futaba Gakuen, *op. cit.*, 176-7.

at the center of Tokyo. She was released from there on 15 September 1944 and returned to the convent in Kouji-machi, although in the next year she was forced to live in Karuizawa, where many other non-nationals were gathered<sup>22)</sup>.

The circumstances of her release are not very clear and there are a few different versions. If we look at the official policy concerning the Irish citizens in Japan, the Japanese government recognized the Irish citizens as members of the British Commonwealth when Japan declared a war against the United Kingdom, hence the internment. Even though the Irish Free State had been established in 1922, the Free State and Japan had not developed a diplomatic relation and those who had wanted to enter Japan had to do so with the British passports. Meanwhile in Liverpool in England, the Japanese Consul there, together with the Japanese citizens in Britain, had fled to Dublin in the Republic of Ireland in order to escape from the bombardments by Germany that had started in 1940. It was decided that the Japanese Consulate should be situated in Dublin and a new Consulate was established in May 1943 in that city. And the Republic, which had become an independent country in 1937, remained neutral during the World War Two. These situations made the Japanese government reconsider the status of the Irish citizens in their territories. However, the treatment of the Irish citizens was arbitrary. The official policy was 'not to listen to individual arguments'. The release of 'the ones with the Free State passports who have long been claiming the Free State nationality' could be considered. But the release of 'the ones with the British passports, no matter how much they might claim the Free State nationality' could be suspended, for 'there in no reliable means to confirm their claim'<sup>23)</sup>. This official policy change could have led to the release of Sister Xavier.

The nuns of the Saint Maur remembers Sister Xavier' release like this. The senior members of the order visited various dignitaries of the state to ask for the release of their Irish nuns. They begged them to realize the fact that 'Ireland is neutral' and told them not to 'confuse Ireland with Britain because they are not the same countries' and 'it would be a shame for Japan if you would continue to do that'. They visited the Minister of the Home Affairs, Michio Yuzawa, but it came to nothing. Then they visited the Director of the Cabinet Planning Board, Suzuki Teiichi. These

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<sup>22)</sup> The Foreign Office Document quoted in Takagi Kazuo, *Taisho Showa Katorikku Kyokai-shi 3* (Tokyo: Seibo no Kishi-sha, 1985), 171-2; Futaba Gakuen, *op. cit.*, 177. See also the website of the Archdiocese of Tokyo, the Catholic Church, <http://tokyo.catholic.jp/archdiocese/church/tokyo/16183/>.

<sup>23)</sup> Naimu-sho, *op., cit.*, 94.

commendable efforts were made in June 1944. Facing the heavyweights in politics in war time Japan should not have been easy, though it is not clear whether their efforts actually made any difference in the state's policy making. In any case, the decision was made 'to release the Irish citizens on 6 November 1944, the All Irish Saints Day'<sup>24)</sup>. If this date is accurate, it means Sister Xavier was released earlier than the other Irish internees and before the official decision was made. According to the nuns of the Saint Maur, the Irish nuns never complained about their lives in the internment camps after their release. They had been isolated and under the severe surveillance. They had not have proper food, and frogs and snails which could have been caught around the camps had been served regularly. Three or four leaves of the spinach had been often served as a meal<sup>25)</sup>.

Sister Xavier's niece remembers differently. When Sister Xavier was interned, 'she was indignant that anyone would suggest that she was a British subject, so she promptly sat down and wrote a history of Ireland, which she handed to the authorities. She was released immediately'<sup>26)</sup>. If indeed Sister Xavier was 'in great shock' when she was about to be interned, it might have been because of the fact that she was recognized as a British subject. It is at least very ironic that Sister Xavier, whose family members were known as staunch republicans and whose brother has been a symbol of the separatist movement in Ireland, was considered British in war time Japan.

She served nine more years in Japan after the war. Her life may not be on the history books. Her pictures may not be the icons of the Irish republicans. And yet it seems to me that her life is as remarkable as her famous siblings'.

(本学非常勤講師)

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<sup>24)</sup> Futaba Gakuen, *op. cit.*, 176; Shibukawa and Shimada, *op. cit.*, 288-9.

<sup>25)</sup> Shibukawa and Shimada, *op. cit.*, 289.

<sup>26)</sup> MacSwiney Brugha, *op. cit.*, 151.

